

**Submission
No 119**

INQUIRY INTO CROWN LAND IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Mudgee District Environment Group

Date received: 22 July 2016

Submission - NSW Upper House is conducting an Inquiry into Crown land

Mudgee District Environment Group (MDEG) based in the Mid-Western Region local government area in NSW, is working for the conservation of our natural heritage and a sustainable future for our children.

Mudgee District Environment Group (MDEG) strongly oppose privatization of crown land and advocate for protection and to be managed as a natural asset for future.

MDEG wishes to support the following reports and also want to state that through privatisation there is a major concern that following areas will be impacted on, become vulnerable or be lost completely:

1. *Impacts to Nationally endangered species and critically endangered biodiversity remnants such as the critically endangered Grassy Box Gum Woodland*
2. *Disturbance to significant Aboriginal cultural heritage*
3. *Social impacts as Crown Land Reserves offer recreational and high value educational activities.*

The Crown lands estate covers millions of hectares, including significant areas of high conservation value. We are concerned that the proposed option to privatize and sell Crown lands for predominantly economic reasons fails to recognise the significant environmental values, including the future value of protecting and enhancing areas of high conservation value. For example, Crown land, especially in central and western NSW, represents a significant proportion of the remaining vegetation within some catchments. Crown lands in urban areas can contain important remnant vegetation and can be critical to the survival of resident, itinerant and migratory birds and other animals.

Crown lands encompass 93,900 hectares of wetlands, including two Ramsar listed wetlands, and provide habitat for at least 23 migratory bird species protected under international agreements. Crown lands are dominated by ecosystems that have always been a very high priority for conservation. Of the 193 ecosystems that occur within Crown leases, 143 are already endangered. Vegetation on Crown lands is of a suitable size and configuration to provide major habitat refuges, important additions to existing reserves and vital landscape connectivity. Crown lands provide habitat for at least 71 threatened plant species and 111 threatened fauna species. Crown lands include numerous areas of outstanding 'iconic' value to nature conservation in NSW (i.e. the Macquarie

Marshes). In urban areas, Crown land parcels can contain important remnant vegetation and can be critical to the survival of resident, itinerant and migratory birds and other animals.

National Parks Association of NSW and Nature Conservation Council of NSW conducted an assessment of the conservation values of NSW Crown land. The following Crown land types were analysed: Crown reserves – all Crown reserves, including Travelling Stock Routes (TSRs). Crown leases – all forms of leases, distinguishing Western Division leases from other leases. Also Crown waterways – all waterways across NSW.

Through the assessment of Crown lands it was found that Crown Lands have the following significant conservation values:

1. All Crown land types offer a range of highly significant conservation values. These values range from providing remnant vegetation and habitat for threatened species in highly cleared landscapes, habitat connectivity and irreplaceable coastal values.
2. Crown leases and Crown reserves overwhelmingly offer high habitat connectivity, especially the Crown leases of the Western Division.
3. Crown leases in the Central and Eastern divisions and Crown waterways contain extremely important vegetation remnants in heavily cleared landscapes, with many Crown leases forming part of remnants larger than 1,000ha.
4. Significant records of threatened species have been found across all Crown land types, with Crown reserves showing the highest abundance of threatened species recorded.
5. Most Crown lands of Central Division contain endangered ecological communities.
6. Crown leases in Western Division within Western CMA contain extremely high numbers of threatened species records while for most Crown land types, Northern Rivers, Hunter Central Rivers and Southern Rivers CMAs tend to have the highest occurrence of threatened species records.
7. Crown reserves and, to a lesser extent, Crown waterways are important sites for coastal wetlands and littoral rainforests recognised in SEPP designations. Over 2,000 of these Crown parcels contain these values.

The assessment reveals that the Crown lands have significant conservation values. All Crown lease types offer a range of important conservation values. These values range from providing remnant vegetation and habitat for threatened species in highly cleared landscapes, habitat connectivity and irreplaceable coastal values. Crown leases and Crown reserves overwhelmingly offer high habitat connectivity, especially the Crown leases of the Western Division. Crown leases in the Central and Eastern divisions and Crown waterways contain extremely important vegetation remnants in heavily cleared landscapes, with many Crown leases forming part of remnants larger than 1,000ha. Significant records of threatened species have been found across all Crown land types, with

Crown reserves showing the highest abundance of threatened species recorded. Most Crown lands of Central Division contain endangered ecological communities. Crown leases in Western Division within Western CMA contain extremely high numbers of threatened species records while for most Crown land types, Northern Rivers, Hunter-Central Rivers and Southern Rivers CMAs tend to have the highest occurrence of threatened species records. Crown reserves and, to a lesser extent, Crown waterways are important sites for coastal wetlands and littoral rainforests recognised in SEPP designations.

Yours sincerely

Marie Hensley
Secretary
Mudgee District Environment Group