

**Submission
No 120**

INQUIRY INTO CROWN LAND IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Tweed Wollumbin Aboriginal Education Consultative Group
Date received: 22 July 2016

Deborah Johnson / President Tweed Wollumbin AECG
PO Box 41
Hastings Point NSW 2489

To:

The Director, General Purpose Standing Committee No.6
Parliament NSW
Sydney NSW 2001
gpsc6@parliament.nsw.gov.au

23th July 2016

Re: Submission to the NSW Crown Land Parliamentary Inquiry

To Whom It May Concern,

I am an Aboriginal person with historical links to the Tweed Valley and my grandchildren have ancestral links to the Tweed. Although I now live north of the border in Qld, I still feel I am entitled to express our great concern about changes to Crown Land as a result of the Crown Land management review.

The process for the review was flawed because the Government did not:

- effectively engage the community through genuine and meaningful community consultation;
- undertake a robust assessment of the environmental, cultural and social values of our public land assets
- provide a level of transparency commensurate with Government policy

News of the sale or lease of other NSW Crown Land parcels, without any public consultation has also been alarming. As an example, I refer to NSW Crown Reserve 59360, south of the Gold Coast Airport. Without any public notice or consultation process, an 84 year lease was granted to the Gold Coast Airport (Gazette 138 dated 18 October 2013) for airport infrastructure. The Gold Coast airport is privately owned, so essentially the lease was granted to expand their enterprise and increase the profits for a privately owned entity. The airport's proposed commercial use of Crown Reserve 59360 is contrary to the Environmental Protection and Public Recreation designation. The granting of a lease to Gold Coast airport has been twice refused by other Governments in the past, due to the environmental and Aboriginal heritage values and sensitive ecological communities. The Tweed community fought long and hard against the granting of leases on this land.

The changes to the Crown Lands Act 1989 are a significant shift in the way Government has managed Crown land in the past. Crown land offers important environmental values by providing remnant vegetation and habitat for threatened species in highly cleared landscapes; habitat connectivity and irreplaceable coastal values. 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. The changes propose a noticeable move away from environmental protection and conservation of natural resources as key objects of the Crown

Lands Act, towards management through business case development and emphasis on economic outcomes.

This is land that is publically owned and should be used for public purpose, not sold off to private interests for private profit. Considerations relating to public lands should be guided by the principles of the public good, and prioritise the public ownership and continued retention of all Crown Lands.

Given the significant environmental values of Crown lands, the Minister for the Environment should play a key role in ensuring that our Crown land estate is effectively managed in accordance with the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

Recommendations

We would like to recommend that the NSW government;

- listens to community concern and undertakes further community consultation on the important issues of Crown land management in NSW;
- undertakes a robust and complete assessment of the environmental, Aboriginal cultural or social values of its Crown land assets;
- ensures that the existing objectives of managing Crown land for environment protection and conservation of natural resources are retained;
- manages Crown Land in accordance with the principles of ecologically sustainable development;
- ensures that all Crown Land with important environmental, Aboriginal cultural or social values be maintained as public land.

Yours sincerely,

Deborah Johnson
President
Tweed Wollumbin Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG)