

**Submission
No 173**

INQUIRY INTO CROWN LAND IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation : The Great Western Walk

Date received: 1 August 2016

The Great Western Walk

Incorporated in New South Wales

Patron: Professor The Honourable Dame Marie Bashir AD CVO

**The Hon Paul Green MLC
Chair, Enquiry into Crown Lands Committee
NSW Government
25th July 2016**

- Re: (1) Access to Crown Roads associated with William Cox's 1814/15 Road along that part of the original route from Mount York to Bathurst;**
(2) Access to historic Mount Blaxland and the associated Crown Reserve adjacent to the line of Cox's 1814/1815 Road;
(3) Preservation of and continued access to Crown Roads associated with a near intact portion of the Original Mitchell's Line of Road between Bonaventure Road (off the Great Western Highway near Mount Lambie) and Rydall.

Dear Mr Green,

I am writing to you re the three items numbered (1) - (3) above as Chair of the recently formed *The Great Western Walk Committee*. Our Patron is the Honourable Dame Marie Bashir AD CVO.

The major objective of our group is to create a walking track from Emu Plains on the Nepean River (the location where William Cox commenced building Australia's first inland European Road in 1814) to the Flag Staff in Bathurst (the completion point of Cox's Road) keeping as near as practical to the original Line of Cox's Road. With the aid of various interpretation signage, print and other media it is our hope that more Australians and overseas tourists will be able to celebrate foundation events of early colonial and Aboriginal history that are embodied in the proposed Great Western Walk (GWW).

We are concerned that access to significant lengths of the proposed walking route, whilst part of Crown Road Reserves, cannot presently be legally accessed and could even be converted to freehold land.

Since 2013 five major bicentenary celebrations have been held that are related to our project:

- The private crossing of the Blue Mountains by Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth in 1813 as far as what became known subsequently as Mount Blaxland (named by George Evans);
- The expedition of George Evans in 1813 ordered by Governor Macquarie following the route of Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth, eventually arriving at a location much further west than Mount Blaxland that Evans named the Bathurst Plains;
- William Cox's heroic road building feat from Emu Crossing on the Nepean River through to the Bathurst Plains, completed in 6 months in 1814/15;
- Governor Macquarie's historic coach trip with his entourage from Emu Plains to the Bathurst Plains in April/May 1815; and
- Governor Macquarie naming Bathurst on the Macquarie River on May 7th 1815, as Australia's first inland European settlement.

In 2024 Australians will also likely commemorate the proclamation of Martial Law by Governor Brisbane in the Bathurst District on August 14th 1814, leading to British troops marching along Cox's Road to Bathurst in an attempt to bring an end to the Wiradjuri uprising.

The route of our proposed GWW has already been identified from the Nepean River to Mount York. Since Cox's Road has mostly been subsumed by the construction of the Great Western Highway we have identified alternate existing public access tracks and footpaths that will enable safe walking along this section of the proposed GWW.

From Mount York to Bathurst, some of the original line of Cox's Road is protected by appropriate Crown Road Reserves, particularly so between Glenroy Crossing (Jenolan Caves Road) through to the Rydal Hampton Road on the Great Dividing Range. Unfortunately, this 12km section of the original line of road is landlocked by private land and cannot normally be accessed by the general public. Fortunately, sections of the original line of road from the Great Dividing Range through to the Oberon Road south of Bathurst, more or less follow existing public roads and/or Crown Road Reserves.

Historic Mount Blaxland, adjacent to and north of Cox's Road, is an iconic site that every Australian schoolchild has learned about in relation to the Blue Mountains Crossing. Although the summit area is within a public reserve, it too is land locked and therefore cannot be legally accessed by the general public. In this case we need to create a legal access route.

Our committee believes that it should be a right of all Australian to be able to access those sections of Cox's Road that are still contained within Crown Road Reserves as well as being able to access the summit of historic Mount Blaxland. It seems extraordinary to us that public access to these locations has been denied to citizens during the bicentenary celebrations listed above that occurred from 2013 – 2015. This is in spite of the significant attempts by many individuals and groups over a decade, who have sought access to these sites in that period.

I am bringing these matters to your committee's attention to:

- inform you of the current difficulties that face us as a community committee seeking to achieve a public good in establishing the GWW; and
- establish if your committee can help resolve our difficulties in legally accessing relevant Crown Road Reserves/Reserves that are effectively land-locked.
- Inform you of the importance of facilitating continued access to Crown Roads associated with a near intact portion of the Original Mitchell's Line of Road between Bonaventure Road (off the Great Western Highway near Mount Lambie) and Rydall.

The members of our committee represent a broad range of community groups from Bathurst to Penrith, including the Mount Blaxland Reserve Trust. We are also in regular discussions with staff from the lands section of DPI who have always been very helpful and courteous in seeking to resolve this issues we have raised in this communication.

If you wished to meet with a small delegation from our committee in the near future to discuss these matters in more detail then we would welcome such an opportunity.

Yours Sincerely

David Goldney
Chair of the Greet Western Walk committee