

**Submission
No 176**

INQUIRY INTO CROWN LAND IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Surfrider Foundation

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SURFRIDER FOUNDATION AUSTRALIA SUBMISSION ON NSW CROWN LANDS MANAGEMENT

Vast areas of the magnificent NSWs coast is Crown Land thanks to the visionary forethought of Australia’s early legislators.

The Surfrider Foundation of Australia* salutes their judgement and trusts their vision will be honoured by this and future State Governments

Surfrider Foundation implores that the coastal Crown Land in NSW be strictly policed with regard to commerce an particular any built development.

Surf Life Saving Clubs

Of special concern is “use creep” in the State’s Surf Life Saving Clubs. More and more clubs are asking for the inclusion of commercial facilities such as restaurants, cafes and bars as well as other commercial activities to help raise funds for club or local council to offset maintenance of the facilities

Many proposals may seem innocuous, but make no mistake what is being proposed **is a huge departure** from what these structures were established to do,that is

provide community service through offering emergency service at our beaches.

The fact that our surf clubs are not like Queensland SLSCs in terms of restaurant/bar developments is not a mistake, but rather a well considered and time honoured respect for the institution of life saving clubs and an understanding for natural coastal processes that will take place without fear of 'loss of livelihood' for the proprietors of such businesses.

Surf clubs hold a **privileged position** in our communities both physically and metaphorically. They historically offered "safe swimming areas" at a time when few could swim. They grew to community hubs where kids were taught beach safety and rescue and resuscitation techniques and then went on to carry out patrols.

Then the sport of surf-lifesaving seemed to take precedence over the "Emergency service" elements of activities. **A blurring of where sport cuts in and emergency service cuts out is now "stock in trade "** for the never-ending requests to "grow our club to meet demands" and demands for what?

Demands for massive sports clubs right on the beach with restaurants and bars to raise the money required to pay off the same restaurants and bars. Excess monies send their competitors to huge interstate surf meets sponsored by large commercial interests.

The clubs will always argue they need more money for....

-more equipment to save lives (don't know of any club without "enough equipment")

-more money to send teams to meets (sporting associations are always attempting to raise money why should a beach be allowed to be developed to allow for this sport to prosper)

-more room to store equipment (one of the great ironies of surf life saving is the way that clubs have expanded greatly to accommodate rescue equipment that has become astonishingly more compact-jet skis and rubber duckies as opposed to wooden rowing boats)

-more room to handle an ever increasing number of nippers (no doubt nippers is an especially well attended activity, some would say too many attend and not enough time. The nippers numbers are better responded to by time management rather than bigger buildings...since when is it required to have all members satisfactorily under one roof and if this the goal god help us as it easy enough to drum up business and thus expand the club accordingly)

All of the above is now in fact about sport. Since the inception of professional beach lifeguards in the metro areas of the state, the surf club members role in emergency service has greatly diminished and rightly so.

Two trained professionals manage our beaches satisfactorily over the summer season often working with (but hardly requiring) volunteers. This is to no way disrespect the service of devoted lifesavers but simply to state fact.

The argument for expansion is economic but the economically rationalistic thing to do would be to get rid

of clubs and house two professionals in a purpose built facility.

Rather than continually chase the tail of the 'expand and develop' to become self-funding (often to pay for the development itself) all efforts must resist this temptation no matter how 'noble the cause'.

Life saving is now professional, indeed a number of those involved in the sport of lifesaving are professional, certainly they have a large professional bureaucracy that are doing a scintillating job convincing councils to allow developments in places where any other developer would be laughed out of town for even asking.

The self-sufficiency argument does not cut it. We all know that these clubs that have been built **BY THE COMMUNITIES** they serve will be **REBUILT** after the next big storm event by the same communities' money. **WHAT IS SELF SUFFICIENT ABOUT THAT?**

These buildings in light of scientific fact, should have a much **lighter footprint** on the beachfront -not heavier, be more flexible- not less, be more temporal- not permanent.

Surfrider is particularly concerned about **PRECEDENT** development that creates an uneven funding source for clubs. Every NSW club will be able to argue for commercial facilities if this genie is let out of the bottle depending on member and visitor numbers and past neglect of building infrastructure.

The Long Reef SLSC on Sydney's Northern Beaches has in recent years tried, with the support of the now defunct Warringah Council, to greatly expand its operations and was met with **massive community backlash**.

At this time the community is holding its ground and no development is proceeding. A great deal of angst was created by this proposal that split the community and club as many in the community and indeed within the club saw no need for such expansion.

The beach is the beach, had our forebears embarked upon such development options way back when volunteer lifesavers were the ONLY realistic way beaches could be patrolled, the business interests that would have arisen would have by now created a totally different beach experience to that which we have fortunately inherited.

Local councils are always trying to raise money and offset costs and are often keen to allow commercial ventures in club houses to help pay maintenance on these structures.

Further any club requiring replacement should "retreat as far as practicable from the active surf zone in view of the rising sea levels associated with global warming.

Surfrider implores the State to always consider the primacy of the beach with regard to any development on or near it, with a view to it expressing the spirit of the beach as a sacrosanct space free from commercial clutter and the obvious unavoidable commercial imperatives of staff and customer parking, deliveries, garbage removal and maintenance.

Coastal Campgrounds

Another major area of concern is the seemingly endangered coastal camping ground, which are often managed by local government.

The trend is to “cabinize” to ensure better returns or indeed to lease out to commercial operations and simply collect an annuity. Any built development needs to be as landward as possible in these places due to the likelihood of storm inundation but sadly the trend has been to build them as seaward as possible to enhance views and thus returns.

Ambulatory Rights to and along beaches.

Finally the “ambulatory rights” of beach walkers needs to be at the front of any discussion of coastal crown land particularly where it abuts private property be it Aboriginal Land Council or other.

The rights of the public to be able to access and navigate a path along any and all NSW beaches must be held as an IRON CLAD article of law.

Surfrider believes free access to and along the states beaches as a right of great importance, a driving force for the organisation here and around the world.

The beach embodies so much of what many Australians believe to be the down to earth character of this country, the “we are all equal in our swimwear” culture and our right to enjoy the common wealth we all share.

Should the opportunity arise, Surfrider would be delighted to discuss all these matters at the proposed Sydney Public Hearing.

For further information please contact Brendan Donohoe on [redacted] or at surfridernb@ozemail.com.au

Yours sincerely

for

Brendan Frawley

Chair,

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Background on Surfrider Foundation Australia*

Surfrider Foundation Australia is a non-profit grassroots organisation dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of oceans, waves and beaches through an activist network comprising 13 branches around Australia. We are also part of the global Surfrider Foundation organisation that was formed in California in 1984 and has over 250,000 supporters, activists and members, as well as over 100 branches worldwide.