

**Submission
No 211**

INQUIRY INTO CROWN LAND IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Ms Wendy Harmer

Date received: 25 July 2016

To whom it may concern...

Please consider this submission to the NSW Upper House Inquiry into the management of NSW Crown lands.

July 23. 2016

My name is Wendy Harmer

I have been involved with many in my local community in a long-running dispute over the future of the beach at Long Reef on the Northern Beaches of Sydney, (Dee Why).

The battle to preserve this scrap of precious Crown land has been ongoing. It's something of a miracle it hasn't been developed by now, given the many pressures over the years, but the most recent skirmish about its future was fiercely contested in 2006.

The community held fast and won against proposals that would have deprived the local community of one of the last vestiges of open space that bless this part of Sydney and is loved by all who live here.

The beach is located between the Long Reef headland and its intertidal platforms - which are registered on the National Estate - and the Dee Why Lagoon Wildlife Refuge.

More than 140 bird species are recorded on Long Reef - 40 listed as NSW threatened, significant or internationally protected. This includes some resident and many migratory wader birds. The peak total bird population estimated up to 1500 or more.

To quote the (former) Warringah council's own management plan, this place inspires us because of its: *"grandeur and scale; sense of rugged isolation; wilderness; strong sense of place for contemplation and reflection ;relief from highly built up suburban environment; low key recreational activities and outstanding scenic qualities and extensive views."*

The site is regarded as the “Jewel in the Crown” of the Northern Beaches.

It enjoys the special consideration of the NSW National Trust because the view from afar retains its natural character as recorded by Captain Arthur Phillip.

“We are most concerned that the proposed scale of the development at Long Reef will have an adverse impact on one of Sydney’s most cherished views. From many aspects, Long Reef, at present, can be regarded as a wild landscape, untouched by human development. In this sense alone, it is a rare and precious place in suburban Sydney.”
NSW National Trust.

A rare view indeed!

In recent times development proposals for this beach have included a multi-storey building to house the administration of Surf Life Saving NSW and an upgraded Long Reef Surf Club, replete with overnight accommodation, large function rooms and a 112 seat restaurant.

These obtrusive developments were, of course, accompanied by large surfaced car parks, lights into the night and the obliteration of the natural landscape. All for the benefit of members or those who could afford to pay.

They were pushed by the Warringah Council as a revenue-raising initiative for both the surf club and the Council.

I am pleased to say that after a concerted effort by more than a dozen community groups with massive local support to “Save Long Reef”, such unharmonious plans were blocked. And, I should mention, that community groups worked long and hard to achieve a better outcome for Long Reef Surf Club including commissioning better designs for new premises – but were thwarted at every turn.

The community remains on alert that Long Reef beach will again be assaulted by plans for its development and become only available to those who are able to pay the price of admission. Also, that the rare bird population here will be decimated – many which visit Long Reef in migratory patterns from our Asian neighbours.

I would like to raise with the inquiry the status of Crown land when it is protected by international agreements to protect wildlife. The community believes such treaties and agreements should be taken into consideration and given high priority when development is mooted.

Then there is the consideration of the many community groups including Conservation Volunteers Australia, Neighbours and Friends of Long Reef, Coastcare, Reefcare and many bird clubs, who work tirelessly to replant natural flora and protect local fauna in this place – and many others in the state of NSW.

They should have a say in any future development/use of Crown land sites.

Also, I would ask the inquiry to look at more stringent regulation where Crown lands are given over to private enterprise, especially in the case of sporting clubs where they are rented to commercial enterprises such as restaurants, bars and establishments that include gambling or renting out for private purposes including television production companies, movie makers, advertising companies and such like.

Where do the revenues from such enterprises go? How are they audited? Does the public get any benefit from such uses?

This is a conversation that must be had. It's vital if we are avoid the situation in Queensland where Crown land on the beachfront has been alienated from general public use to "user-pays" through memberships or the ability to afford high prices for entertainment.

As I say, local sentiment here against future plans for Long Reef beach have not abated. Not one bit.

Ad hoc development would be the repudiation of our forebears' view that Crown land should be managed for the benefit of all citizens, I believe this was their intention. Those who live here should be able to enjoy this quiet places like Long Reef beach for "contemplation and reflection".

Also, I'd like to see more co-operation between state government departments – one hand we have an expansion of the "green grid" which aims to "join the dots" on our green spaces, and on the other we have an aim to rationalise public ownership of Crown land.

I thank you for your inquiry, and urge you to protect and preserve Crown land.

We won't be getting any more of it – especially in our increasingly densely populated cities. It's the open spaces which bring such joy to our urban existence.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Most sincerely,

Wendy Harmer.

PS: I am happy to furnish any supporting documents you may require on Long Reef beach.