

**Submission
No 241**

INQUIRY INTO CROWN LAND IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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Crown land on the Central Coast of NSW:

Much of the Central Coast is Crown Land. I am a resident of Pearl Beach and my village is surrounded by Crown lands with Brisbane Waters National Parks on 3 sides and the beachfront and its associated children's playground and grassed family reserve, on the fourth side. Beyond that are the public waters of Broken Bay. Superb!! And yet, Pearl Beach is simply a microcosm of the Central Coast which is a region comprising many public lands and waters of genuinely hard-to-digest Beauty. The Beauty is a direct outcome of the **public** nature of these Crown lands.

As a volunteer bushfire brigade member & a current member of the Rural Fire Service Trail Bike Support Unit, I have regularly patrolled the Fire Trails within the Crown Lands of Gosford Region. I am well familiar with them.

Crown lands are threatened by 5 major factors:

1. Fires: RFS does a good job preparing to respond and responding to bush-fires. This high state of preparedness and competence is not to be trivialised. I acknowledge it and respect it deeply.

Not with-standing this, IMHO the RFS is much less prepared to address matters of prevention and early detection, both of which are becoming of increasing importance with the inexorable increase in the effects of Climate Change. RFS personnel are sensibly attracted to big machinery such as helicopters, bombers and water-trucks but RFS is less able to comprehend the need for greater community-based engagement and mobilisation of community-based spotters, monitors, scouters and people who can deter arsonists such as uniformed walkers, cyclers, and motor-bike patrollers.

The 'brass' are lop-sided male, and a **type** of male heavily immersed in 'tough and big' macho-male culture, attracted to [appropriate] big machinery answers to the detriment of people-based, community educated, community-engaged strategies for prevention and early detection. Probably as a consequence of this lop-sidedness, I have received several complaints of work-place sexist exclusionary behaviour, dismissiveness, bullying, and promotional discrimination.

2. Floods & beach erosion: with rising sea levels it is clear that property owners should be appraised of expectations, advised as to possible defensive actions they can take, warned of the potential for property values to decline, eventually to nothing in some cases, as the century progresses. I am not knowledgeable enough to submit further on this matter.
3. Neglect/management incompetence or disinterest: many of the Council reserves and parks have well-developed and well-maintained childrens' playgrounds and tables and picnic bar-b-que areas. This is the type of facility Councils should be expanding. Others have nothing to attract usage and lie open to ignorant mis-use, while yet others are a disgraceful mess of lantana and other noxious weeds that infest the reserve and render it useless while also providing a nasty threat to close-by private property owners. Council needs a two-pronged approach: to provide some amenity to each public space; to encourage the local community to meet, determine preferred usage of parts or all of the public land, then collaborate in the management of that land: for dogs, children, elderly, disabled, educative, garden[s], vegetable/fruit provision, picnicking, etc
4. Private development: see below
5. Corruption: see below.

THE NSW GOVERNMENT'S IDEOLOGICALLY-DRIVEN PRIVATISATION OF PUBLIC LANDS

In the world of politics and corruption there are those who advocate for "small government" with appeals to "individualism", "competition" and a "market free from regulation" . This side of politics uses two tools in its quest for 'small government': de-regulation; privatisation.

De-regulation means dissolving or diluting the rules. With no rules there are no Awards ... nothing to protect wages, penalty rates, hours worked, safety, leave essentials ... that is, the interests of workers and those who depend on

cash-up workers such as small businesses. Small government = de-regulation = no rules. This is not in the interests of workers/pensioners.

Privatisation means replacing public ownership with private ownership ... that is, replacing an elected government's responsibility for providing a public service in the interests of the Common Good, with a private responsibility to provide a service for private profit. Small government = privatisation = private profit, with less requirement to serve the Common Good.

In the main, this submission is concerned with the Privatisation of Crown Lands.

On the Central Coast, we are facing the NSW Government's legislation which permits the Baird-appointed "Council" to privatise our public lands. The Central Coast Council has, as a consequence, declared its intention to simply re-classify existing public lands away for "public" to "private" so that it can sell them off before an elected Council, a real Council, a Council representing The People, can govern these decisions. The losers will be us, The People and the Common Good. The winners will be private owners who will develop these ex-public lands for their private profit.

Should this concern me, my friends, my family, my acquaintances, my community?

If one fishes or plays in the extensive public waters, if one swims or surfs on our public beaches, if one walks or rides our National Parks, if one runs the dog, walks for exercise, plays with the kids, strolls in the beauty of our reserves, if one plans to do any of these things in the future with our grand-children ... if we enjoy the beauty of our natural landscape then ... we should KNOW that this is because it is all PUBLIC. We, The People own it and we have free access to it for our common pleasures, education and safety. Rich and poor currently have this access, elaborate corporate yachts have access as do our sweet-as-a-nut tinnies and run-abouts ... we all OWN these public assets and we have free entry to them. We are not locked out by private ownership or commercial barriers.

But, if the NSW Government, or its puppet "Council" sells it off, the Central Coast will look like many harbours, where the developers have sold the waterfronts, sold the best of the heights and vistas, and where beaches and access to the water are owned by privateers.

Right now, under cover of NSW Government legislation, our puppet Council is proposing to sell dozens of public lands, and as such its anti-public policy MUST reward developers and private owners and it MUST hurt us, the public, who currently own these lands and use most of them, despite Council neglect, well.

It is impossible to hide the fact that the Baird-appointed "small government" Central Coast Council is feeding the profiteering developers while destroying the Common Good of the Central Coast people.

I am alarmed at the loss of public land, and especially to the corrupt processes of decision-making which provides a privileged access to public land to the development industry and corporate interests. I regard this as:

[a] corruption

[b] opposite to a preferred method of planning and development which relies on a first and lengthy step of collaboration with the wide community to identify the community's priorities in a 'preferred future followed by the adoption of a development plan ... only then followed by a tendered invitation to developers to undertake work, consistent with the plan, for a reasonable and publicly declared profit.

I do not support the transfer of Crown Land to local councils by the State Government *until there is legislation that divorces developers from the consultation, planning and decision-making processes, and until councils are required to provide encouragement and some resources to assist communities with the process of collaboration concerning the usage of public lands.* This legislation should also acknowledge and embed the responsibilities of Councils to the terms of bequeathment of some lands, Aboriginal claims and significance of some lands, free and generous public access to locations of great beauty or significance, and the memorialisation and history attendant on some lands.

I strongly support, therefore, that:

1. All Crown Land with important environmental, cultural or social values be maintained as public land;
2. A public register of Crown Lands should be freely available to the public;

3. Councils adopt a formal responsibility for encouraging and educating communities to collaborate to plan for usage of local public lands
4. All developers be divorced from all processes of community consultation, Council planning and decision-making, with their skill-set sought only by tender after the plan has been endorsed
5. All planning processes be transparent
6. A set of Anti-Corruption Guidelines for Community Collaboration, Planning and Decision-making be developed and embedded in legislation.

Yours sincerely ... Van Davy

Dr Vanlyn J Davy [JP]