



Hunter Bird Observers Club

Affiliated with BirdLife Australia

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Draft State Strategic Plan for Crown Land

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc. (HBOC) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Draft State Strategic Plan.

Making Information available

In Figure 8 the enabling initiative “*Make more of our information available and transparent*” is programmed as long term. If the government is genuine about public accessibility to Crown land data and transparency surely this should be the number one priority to provide the community with an accurate map of all state Crown lands. A long term timeline will be contrary to the statements made in Section 4.1.

The department would then be able to assess and categorise all Crown lands with a view to identifying any biodiversity values and ensuring the maximum benefit from each category. Otherwise much Crown land may be lost to development before identification and classification is completed.

Stakeholders and the public would also be able to review the data and provide meaningful feedback on individual parcels.

Section 2

Section 2 Page 13 - 1st Paragraph

The opening paragraph in Section 2 states : “*Crown land is held in trust by the NSW government on behalf of the community,..... Unlike freehold property, it cannot be bought or sold except under*

special provisions.” This statement is confusing as according to the Crown Land Management Act 2016 No 58 Clauses 1.9 and 5.3 the Minister can sell it.

Section 2 Page 13 - Final Paragraph

The final paragraph advises “*The range of potential uses mean that there are often competing interests or aspirations for the use of Crown land. Where there are competing claims we aim to resolve them in a way that is fair, equitable and aligned with government priorities.*”

What is the option if fair and equitable does not align with government priorities? Are they then resolved in accordance with government priorities?

Figure 2. Page 14 Profile of Crown land in NSW

In the Central and Eastern Division of NSW only 9% of total area is Crown land. That is all that is left in eastern half of the state. Surely this makes what is left more valuable to the community and should be reserved not sold.

Section 3

Section 3.2 Page 28 Adopt a quadruple bottom line approach to the management of Crown land.

As Crown land “*is held in trust by the NSW government on behalf of the community*” we would like to see this statement amended to:-

“To ensure that we generate the best outcomes for the entire NSW community we will seek to optimise the environmental, social, cultural, and economic opportunities generated by activities on Crown land, for current and future generations.”

Once economic opportunities become the driver any environmental, social or cultural values may be diminished or ignored.

Section 3.3 Page 30 Priorities for Crown land

The first priority given is “*Enable jobs growth, commercial opportunities and sustainable economic progress in regional and rural NSW*”

This should not be the first priority and should be moved to priority 4. As first priority it will become the dominant driver of outcomes. Other priorities will suffer or be ignored.

This as first priority also appears to be in conflict with Clause 1.4 a) and b) of the Act - Principles of Crown land management.

Figure 5. Overarching Strategy of the State Strategic Plan – A Vision for Crown Land

As per the comment for Section 3.3 the first priority and outcome should be moved to priority 4 in the overarching strategy.

Crown land is held in trust by the NSW government on behalf of the community.

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“*In the first year of the plan, there will be a focus on planning, consultation and preparation, coupled with delivery of some key enablers and ‘quick wins’.*”

Quick wins for whom? Any use of Crown Land must be environmentally sustainable. These Crown land resources must be managed in perpetuity for the NSW community. Donation to extractive industries such as mining or gas production for short term gain or rebuilding the economy is not environmentally sustainable.

Section 3.3.2 Page 39

Expand green space, sustainable quality of life and climate change resilience Prioritise the use of Crown land for green and open space in urban areas

These principles are fully supported for those Crown lands still having environmental values. As principles these need expansion to all cities and where possible used strategically to provide green corridors in rural areas linking areas of remnant vegetation.

Page 40 Prioritise the use of Crown land for green and open space in urban areas

This is a positive that needs to be rolled out across all urban and rural areas. Utilise forested areas to link national parks and state forest to provide corridors for nomadic and migratory species. This should be the first priority before “development” of Crown land.

“Our goal is to link these parks and other green spaces to form a ‘green grid’ that will stretch right across Greater Sydney and make our city an even better place to live.”

Why limit this to Greater Sydney? This should be a state wide goal.

Page 43 Support and restore environmental values on Crown land

“Crown land across NSW can be used for conservation of landscapes and species, in support of the government’s biodiversity priorities.”

Fully supported. Following the devastating bushfires last summer and horrific wildlife loss restoration and improvement of Crown land environmental values should be given priority. As with land for the green grid this should be the first priority before any development of Crown land.

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“For communities located on the coast, the beach is often the place where people go to connect with nature, meet friends, and enjoy recreation. Most beaches in NSW are on Crown land”.

Care needs to be taken in relation to access and uses on those beaches or sections of beaches where vulnerable bird species nest or roost All beach nesting bird species are in trouble due to unrestricted or illegal use of beaches by 4WD, motor bikes, horses etc.

Section 4

Section 4.1 Page 59 Make more of our information available and transparent

“The department will review the available data regarding Crown land and present it to the public accessible and transparent ways. This may include a digital map of Crown land, searchable text information about tenure status, a database of Crown land managers, and other information useful to the public and potential licensees or leaseholders.”

This must be an imperative before further divesting of Crown land.

Transparency may then be assured.

“We will prioritise areas and regions with the greatest opportunity for new uses of Crown land. “

How does this ensure transparency when prioritised before the review of data and digital mapping?

Section 5

Section 5 Page 65 Outcomes

*“Support and restore environmental values on Crown land “*is a long term project which needs to be commenced in the Short Term. A real opportunity exists for job creation in the environmental restoration area.

Environmental values may be lost in the medium to long term or sacrificed in the rush for jobs growth or rebuilding the economy after Covid19.

Conclusion

With Australia undergoing a wildlife extinction crisis the opportunity is here to preserve those areas of vegetated Crown land to supplement national parks and state forests. Suitable areas could be used to build on the reserve systems by providing green corridors linking green spaces to support wildlife. These corridors would provide for the movement of nomadic and migratory species in addition to allowing genetic interchange which in many cases is currently limited by fragmentation of habitat. This should be the first priority before any “development” of Crown land.

NSW in particular is currently experiencing an unprecedented rate of land clearing and out in front with the potential extinction rate. Suitable Crown lands are an opportunity to arrest the slide into species extinctions and the overall rate of biodiversity decline.

Submission prepared by T. Kendall on behalf of Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc. 16th August, 2020