



Pennant Hills District Civic Trust Inc.

'Preserving the residential amenity of Pennant Hills and its environs'

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Crown Land Submission

Thanks for the opportunity to make a submission. Understand this is part of an evolution of the use of Crown land." Please note our inputs to the Crown Land SEPP

1) A key concern is that there must be continuing good governance and transparency. (4.2.3)

Independent and transparent governance structures are crucial and are not much addressed in the Paper.

We note the mention of fast-tracking and proposed reduced permissions to accelerate past "Red Tape." - just like in carpentry there is the adage of "think twice, cut once". We've had 150 years of Crown Land Management through some tumultuous times, so a responsible government cannot unduly rush decisions now. Re-purposing is often not practically reversible. We can sell our Crown Lands only once, ever.

The Real Estate industry is notorious for getting the attention of special interests and coveted opportunities on Crown Land will be no exception. If there is any urgency at all, we recommend to further resource the review structure, rather than to emasculate it. The recent Opal Towers saga is a clear case in point of inadequate oversight right here in NSW, and the NSW Government has publicly conceded that improvement in the oversight and certification system is needed.

Although it can be argued that identifying opportunities to create jobs and economic opportunities for our regional communities, such as the provision of housing and employment, support growing populations in regional towns, and take some of the pressure off populated urban areas, we believe that Crown Land should not necessarily be the first place to go for. There are much better options available, such as reuse of existing abandoned manufacturing industry land. We argue that in NSW, a State where the Government strongly supports Free Enterprise, lands required to attract investment and create jobs in export-orientated manufacturing, energy generation, and new and emerging industries should be acquired from private or commercial owners, and not be handed over through a quick sale of Crown Lands.

A great example of what not to do is what happened to 100+ years of rail assets and infrastructure in the UK with the infamous Beeching Report. Road transport was ascendant at the time, and a lot of Rail infrastructure was rapidly dismantled and liquidated in a very short time period without enough governance and review. Those corridors would still be massively valuable to the public good if they had been retained. We should avoid our descendants saying "what were they thinking of?" as has

been so often said of this Beeching Report. An Australian equivalent is the demise of the once extensive Tram system in the 1960s, which in hindsight would have been managed differently.

With regard to land under Council Control – we believe that is an appropriate level of governance and to confirm that this would continue. Councils have detailed and balanced LEPs in place which regulate the appropriate use of lands, and these can be including Crown Lands.

Policy should also look to liaise with and take proposals from local Community Organisations.

2) Maintaining Urban Green Space (3.3.2)

Green Space in Australian Urban Areas makes for a great differentiator of the Amenity for Residents here in Australia, compared to “concrete jungle” Cities abroad. Crown Land contributes positively to that, and must continue to do so.

In further developing the Crown Lands policy, there needs to be co-ordination with the forthcoming “Greener Spaces” Paper - the two Papers have a significant overlap in scope. The (draft) Green Spaces Design Guide has a strong focus on open space for recreation, urban tree canopy, and bushland and waterways. Many, if not most, of Crown Land in our areas are exactly such spaces. Any sale of these Crown Lands for value-capturing purposes would be diametrically against the above focus and undo the efforts envisioned in the Green Spaces Paper.

Where an urban neighbourhood already has a certain minimum of Green Space/size of Community Facility – we should treat that as a bonus reinforcing the particular amenity of that Suburb. The concern is that there might be re-purposing of the “extra” above a target minimum green or social space. To the livability and sustainability of local communities, there is a huge value in having access to Green Space in general and undeveloped Crown Land in particular. This must not be reduced without good reason to those communities.

The Planning and Decision process needs to be independent and accountable including to Local Communities. Any decision on the change of use to Crown Lands in or near those communities, must have a clear and convincing cost/benefit ratio to these communities. As such, these communities need to have a strong involvement in the decision-making process, and we argue that the best way to do so is through the local Councils.