

Submission Guide - NSW Draft Strategic Plan for Crown lands

Background

The NSW Government is currently developing the first ever [State Strategic Plan for Crown Land](#). The Government is inviting stakeholders to provide feedback on how Crown land can be used over the next ten years to best meet the evolving needs of the community.

Crown land comprises 42% of all land in NSW. This public land is held in trust by the NSW government on behalf of the community. There are processes that determine how the land is used and managed. From urban pocket parks to regional open spaces and bushland, mountains, forests, grasslands, beaches and waterways, Crown land is used for a range of activities. These include farming, recreation, conservation, infrastructure and industry.

Outline of the Strategic Plan

Vision: Crown land supports resilient, sustainable and prosperous communities.

1. Adopt a quadruple bottom line approach to the management of Crown land
2. Support the network of Crown land managers across NSW
3. Empower Aboriginal people to play a central role in delivering this vision
4. Collaborate with government and stakeholders to steward the land in our care

The proposed draft State Strategic Plan comprises four key priorities. These are identified in the graphic below. Under each priority, specific outcomes are proposed (Fig 5, page 30 of the draft Strategy).



Where do conservation, environmental values and biodiversity fit in?

The overriding impression of the draft Strategy is that all Crown land is a “resource” for use. Indeed, this is the rhetoric of the Ministers and Commissioner responsible, who identify housing and employment, supporting growing populations in regional towns, attracting investment in manufacturing and industry as key to the Strategy. These are all important outcomes. Yet, there is not enough emphasis on the environmental values of Crown land.

There is much to be commended in this plan, but there are also gaps and vague statements that need to be explored and clarified.

Our top comments about the draft Strategic Plan

Overall: This is a high level document with huge scope. Creativity and big thinking has been encouraged by the Commissioner. Include your specific experiences of the public land you work with - pressure points, values, how the land will be best served in the future and how this does or does not align with the proposed priority areas.

The priority of wilderness: The ‘quadruple bottom line’ approach will prevent environmental values from ever being the most important consideration. This is a problem. Crown lands in NSW include many areas that still support relatively natural ecological communities

representative of pre-colonised Australia. These landscapes are crucial for the ongoing survival of what's left of the diverse, complex natural landscape and character of NSW.

We feel that the draft Strategic plan has failed to adequately acknowledge this. The overall vision should include a statement about the environment. We will advocate for an additional strategic priority; to enhance environmental values.

Support and restore environmental & cultural values: We are encouraged by the outcomes 'support and restore environmental values on Crown land' and 'build resilience in a changing climate'. However, these statements could be quite at odds with other outcomes described in the document. It is unclear how environmental values will be weighed up against growth, commercial opportunities and economic progress.

There is no clear provision to identify the landscapes that should form part of the reserve for cultural heritage, biodiversity survival, regeneration and climate resilience. There have been numerous ecological and cultural value assessments which have identified high conservation value and significant cultural areas, including travelling stock reserves. Enough data exists to identify priority areas for conservation and/or First Nations management now. These areas should be "quarantined" from development. Transparent assessment of conservation values and publicly available data are essential to achieving the draft Strategy outcomes.

Employment opportunities in conservation and land management have been left unexplored. The Strategy should connect community engagement and job opportunities in conservation and land management with restoring environmental values and climate change resilience.

Native title: Crown lands were stolen from Aboriginal people in NSW. While local land councils make claims on Crown land where they are "allowed" to, the facts of history must be taken into account. We support all work facilitated by this Strategy that will recognise and expedite the realisation of native title rights. We support work resourced by the Government and led by Aboriginal communities to prioritise Aboriginal land transfers and generate appropriate opportunities.

"Green space": Prioritising the expansion of green space holds promise, but in this Strategy, how is 'green space' defined? It seems to be everything from open space to a 'green grid' across greater Sydney. Green space must contribute to urban habitat for threatened species and ecological communities.



Waterways: Water and the protection of catchments are left out of this document entirely. Crown land interfaces with others responsible for waterways, but how do they work together?

Travelling stock reserves (TSR): TSRs are critical conservation assets across much of NSW. They retain threatened species, Endangered Ecological Communities and vegetated remnants. TSRs compliment the protected area network and play an essential role in maintaining the connectivity of habitats at the landscape scale. Local Land Services is responsible for leasing Crown land for grazing - but are permits ensuring sustainable land use? TSRs need special attention that they don't get in this draft Strategy.

Red tape: We are wary of proposals to reduce red tape. The draft strategy suggests doing so in order to allow government entities managing Crown land to more efficiently carry out "low risk" activities. Due process and robust assessment are necessary to prevent damage to these important landscapes. In particular, engaging the community can be time consuming but is necessary, and it can save time if done well.

How to get involved and make a submission

Feedback on the draft State Strategic Plan for Crown land can be provided until midnight **Thursday 20 August 2020**. You can use an online submission tool or fill in a submission form.

Both are available here: <https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/lands/public/on-exhibition/draft-state-strategic-plan-for-crown-land>

NCC is hosting a webinar with the Crown lands Commissioner at 10am, 20 August 2020. Please contact Amy via astrandquist@nature.org.au to RSVP.