

Submission

No 100

CONSULTATION ON THE MODERN MANAGEMENT OF COMMONS

Name: Hawkesbury Environmental Network (Organisation)

Date received: 21/02/2017

Date: Tue, Feb 21, 2017 at 3:32 PM
Subject: Submission by HEN on St Albans Common

Dear Department secretary.
Please add our submission (attached) opposing the plan to convert St Albans Common to Crown Land.

Yours Sincerely
Robin Woods
Acting Secretary
Hawkesbury Environment Network Inc.

Re: Recognising and protecting the values of commons.
Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the proposed changes to the Commons Management Act 1989. We support the Trust of St Albans Common, the Royal Australian Historical Society, MacDonald Valley Association and Hawkesbury City Council in opposing the proposed changes.

These proposed changes are not supported by HEN for the following reasons.

1. This site was dedicated in 1824 as a Common and has never been under the title of Crown Land. The amendment to retain commons in this State, made when the Crown Land Management Bill 2016 was passed, was supported unanimously in Parliament. Seizure of all land that is held as commons and delivering ownership to the State of NSW as Crown Land is an obvious 'land grab' for reasons that is cause for deep scepticism, and certainly is not related to care for the management under current arrangements.
2. The commons around the Hawkesbury created in 1804 by Gov Phillip (Nelson Common [later Pitt Town Common] of 2285 ha (5650 acres), Richmond Hill Common (later Ham Common] of 2076 ha (5130 acres) and Phillip Common [later Wilberforce Common]) of 2488 ha (6150 acres) were the first commons in New South Wales. They were the forerunners of all the commons established across Australia, created at a time when the English commons were being 'enclosed' or privatised. Wallambine or St Albans Common was established in 1824. The purpose of commons and rights to their use was well organised and long established even as Sydney grew outwards. The remnants of the 3 large commons are still in evidence despite the growth of villages into them at Pitt Town, Wilberforce and Windsor-Richmond; and green spaces are still enjoyed on these by local communities. St Albans remains a small village with close ties to its Common which has been managed since that time by an appointed Trust. Thus the history of NSW settlement is reflected in the local Hawkesbury history which was celebrated in the time of one of our esteemed Mayors and historians, the late Dr Rex Stubbs. [Ref below]
3. HEN joins with the many groups and individuals who are concerned at the change of management being proposed by the faceless bureaucrats in Sydney. The name St Albans Common would be kept, but the Common Roll and the function of the Commoner and, over time, the right to elect those Trustees who manage the St Albans Common Trust would not. Instead St Albans Common would be managed by Land Managers under Ministerial appointment.
4. Management of this common has been praised for protection of its grazing lands, water, birdlife and natural features. Many of the locals belong to Landcare and Bushcare groups. HEN, as the peak environment body for the Hawkesbury, has close ties with many of the locals who have organised events to care for and celebrate the natural attributes of the Common, and wish to continue this association. This is a 'functioning common' which is worth protecting by its current form.