

Crown Lands Division

Crown Lands Division is the property manager for the Department of Lands, managing Crown land for the environmental, economic and social benefit of the people of NSW.

Under the *Crown Lands Act 1989*, Crown Lands Division manages and administers Crown lands held under lease, licence or permit; community and Council managed reserves; lands retained in public ownership for environmental purposes; lands within the Crown public roads network; and vacant Crown land. Crown land is also allocated for public uses – such as schools, hospitals, sporting, recreation and community events.

Crown Lands Division offers a range of services including:

- General enquiries about Crown land and payment of Crown land accounts.
- Marketing and disposal of Crown land for residential, commercial, industrial and rural use.
- Applications for leases, licences, enclosure permits and purchase of Crown land.
- Conversion/purchase of Crown leasehold tenures.
- Management of local community reserves.
- Assisting Community and Local Government Reserve Trust Boards.
- Administration of Crown roads.
- Aboriginal Land Claims.
- Native Title considerations.
- Land Status information.
- Maintenance of 29 Minor Ports along the east coast of NSW.
- Land survey and title creation including investigations of Mean High Watermark definitions and Aboriginal Land Claims.
- Map and aerial photograph sales.

Senior Managers

Graham Harding, General Manager

Terry Bone, Regional Manager Central

Craig Barnes, Regional Manager North Coast

Leanne Taylor, Regional Manager South

Andrew McAnespie, Regional Manager Sydney/Hunter

Management, Strategy and Performance Review

Key Issues

- Crown land comprises approximately half of all land in NSW, with an area of around 39 million hectares valued at over \$8.3 billion.
- Crown land is allocated for public uses such as sporting, camping and recreation areas, as well as lands, which are managed and protected for their environmental importance. This land is managed in the broad community interest.
- A significant portion of Crown land is also available for alternative uses, including leasing for commercial or agricultural purposes, through to land development and sale.
- The magnitude of the Crown estate, including the infrastructure and ecological values, creates a significant demand on State resources.

Objectives 2003/2004

- Develop comprehensive databases, management systems and processes to support continued efficient management.
- Ensure Crown reserves are responsibly managed and natural resources such as water, flora and fauna and scenic beauty are conserved, while still encouraging public use and enjoyment of the land.
- Encourage and support of volunteers to help care for Crown reserves through the mechanism of community trust boards.
- Continue implementation of commercial management of Crown and other State-owned lands through the business unit.
- Develop an auditable system to electronically manage and report information relative to movements in the Crown estate.

Outcomes

- Setting benchmark standards for the effective and efficient management of the State's land assets. Specific achievements in relation to legislative changes, community based agreements and the application of new technology are highlighted below.
- Continued development of the Landirect project.
- Prepared and adapted new business directive for the commercial leasing of Crown land.

- Successfully completed licence negotiations with major communication carriers to use Crown land for mobile telephone communication towers.

Objectives 2004/05

- Responsible land management to judiciously optimise environmental and socio-economic benefits to the State.
- Crown Land Division to move toward a Public Trading Enterprise (PTE) environment.
- Implement reforms to Crown Lands Act.
- Maintain integrity of data to enable accurate internal reporting of the value of the Crown estate.
- Implementation of effective bushfire management strategies for Crown land across the state.
- Progress management of weeds on land under the control of the Department of Lands.
- Implement control programs for emerging pests such as pigs, goats, deer and cane toads.
- Assist the new Game Council to establish procedures for the hunting of game animals on public lands.

Managing Land Assets

The Crown Lands Division practices sustainable management of State-owned lands for the benefit of the people of New South Wales. It includes the property manager for Crown land tenures, reserves and unallocated Crown lands across eastern and central New South Wales – managing a total area of approximately 12.7 million hectares.

Crown land is a valuable public asset, and the department strives to deliver the greatest environmental and socio-economic benefit for our State. Under the *Crown Lands Act 1989*, it manages and administers Crown lands held under lease, licence or permit; community and Council reserves; lands retained in public ownership for environmental purposes; lands within the Crown public roads network; and vacant Crown land. The department also allocates Crown land for public uses – such as schools, hospitals, sporting, recreation and community events.

Under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*, Crown Land Division researches, prepares and issues Real Property Act titles for Aboriginal land claims granted over Crown land. It also manages, on behalf of the government, applications made under the *Commonwealth Native*

Title Act 1993 affecting land in New South Wales. This includes the making of Indigenous Land Use Agreements aimed at settling these claims.

Crown Lands Division continues to meet the government's environmental obligations, working in partnership with natural resource stakeholders across the state to rehabilitate Crown lands. It also promoted the revegetation and rehabilitation of Crown land tenures by providing rental incentives and supporting community initiatives to enhance the environment.

Through this division, Lands is committed to sharing Crown land resources among the whole community providing recreation for the general public, tourism opportunities for local communities, support for local fishing industry's, communications for regional Australia, and farming opportunities for rural families.

Crown Lands Division managed Crown land tenures, crown reserves and vacant Crown lands totalling 8 million hectares and involved the administration of 45570 road enclosure permits, 17787 licences, 19834 leases, 2916 purchases and 3565 other accounts.

Crown Lands Division also managed vacant Crown land, meeting needs for public safety by spending about \$300,000 on the removal of dangerous and unauthorised structures, including jetties and derelict buildings from 28 sites across the state. In addition, support is provided through recognising community service obligations to non-profit organisations, charity groups, pensioner groups and rural community members encountering hardship. Annual rebates and waivers totalling \$6.3 million were given during the year.

When Crown or other State-owned lands are no longer required for public benefit, Crown Lands Division manages their sale, lease or licensing. Income derived from these activities provided funds of \$49.84 million to Treasury during the year, as detailed below.

The division also networked with other Crown land agencies across Australia, sharing and exchanging information and developing strategic solutions for improved Crown land management.

- The Department of Lands
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- LPI Division Financial Statements
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- Soil Services Division
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Revenue Collected			
	2001/02 (\$ million)	2002/03 (\$ million)	2003/04 (\$ million)
Rent and royalties	21.86	25.63	28.03
Administration fees	0.19	0.21	.04
Application fees	1.48	1.09	1.12
Search fees	0.32	0.27	0.29
Totals	23.85	27.2	29.48
Sales of Crown land			
	2001/02 (\$ million)	2002/03 (\$ million)	2003/04 (\$ million)
Development of remnant sites	23.85	12.45	3.82
Sale of vacant Crown land		2.26	2.19
Sale of Crown leasehold to existing tenants	13.74	9.68	9.18
Sales to other state government departments and agencies	2.11	1.83	5.17
Totals	39.71	23.96	20.36

Landirect

The Landirect project, which will provide Internet-based options for some 250,000 regional and rural customers dealing with Crown land in NSW, has continued to gain momentum this year.

In May, the general transfer of an existing enclosure permit to a new owner was automated for the first time, streamlining the application process for clients and staff.

The first online Landirect application, to enable financial and tenure searches to be undertaken by solicitors and 3rd party conveyancing agents, is still scheduled for delivery in the second half of 2004. This will be followed shortly after by the introduction of an online service for domestic waterfront and certain dry land licences, completing stage one of the implementation program.

Building on the introduction of B-pay in the 2003/2004 year, there has been an excellent customer response to the new technology. B-pay receipts totalled \$3.8 million of land account payments.

In 2001-02, the Valuer General in conjunction with NSW Audit Office, NSW Treasury and the former DLWC completed a detailed valuation of the Crown estate in NSW. An asset-tracking program was implemented to capture and report the base data information relative to all subsequent movements in the estate. This data is now captured electronically with over 6700 movements being recorded so far with a value of \$6.7 million.

Crown Lands Legislation Amendments

The NSW Government introduced important changes to the management of Crown land with effect from 1 July 2004 through the *Crown Land Legislation Amendment (Budget) Act 2004* which amends the *Crown Lands Act 1989* and the *Crown Lands (Continued Tenures) Act 1989*.

The purpose of the reforms is to streamline administration and to achieve a fair and equitable return on the Crown land assets of the State. These reforms also provide an opportunity for perpetual leaseholders to make an application to convert their leases to freehold, subject to certain conditions.

The Act provides for:

- minimum rents and instalments;
- three yearly rent reviews to market with annual CPI adjustments in the intervening years;
- special conversion arrangements for some perpetual leases;
- simplified mechanism for setting administrative fees; and
- removal of the right to make new purchases by instalments.

Environmental Assessment for Perpetual Lease Conversion to Freehold

Consultation is underway with the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) to establish processes and protocols for assessment of environmental and other significant values on perpetual leases under consideration for conversion to freehold under the new Act.

The *Crown Lands Legislation Amendment (Budget) Act 2004* contains explicit requirements for consultation with the Minister for the Environment before conversion of leases that do not have a statutory right to convert. Many of these leases (known as "moratorium leases") have been subject to a long standing assessment and consultation process with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (now part of DEC).

Aboriginal Land Claims

The Minister for Lands is the Minister responsible for determining claims under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*, and in this capacity the Minister determines whether or not land claimed under the Act by land councils is 'claimable Crown land'. If the land is 'claimable', the Minister must grant a freehold interest in the land to the land council.

A total of 161 determinations were made during the year, and a further 514 are in the final stages of investigation by the department. Two hundred and fifty two applications were lodged during the reporting period. A total of 7104 claims have now been lodged

Administrative Arrangements for Crown Reserves

	01-02	02-03	03-04
Community Trust Boards	911	839	758
Council trust management	7,007	7150	6885
Corporations other than Councils	746	780	782
Trusts managing commons	209	206	206
Other bodies	6,564	6534	6528
Under departmental control	17,450	17490	17840

since the Act came into effect in 1984. The total area of Crown land granted under the act is 79,500 hectares.

The Minister is also the State Minister for the purpose of the *Native Title Act 1993* (Commonwealth) and in that capacity has responsibility for the management of native title determination applications made under that Act and lodged in the Federal Court. As at the end of the reporting period, there were 69 native title determination and compensation applications affecting land and water in New South Wales. Eight claims have been resolved during the reporting period by discontinuance, dismissal or agreement. The Department of Lands is responsible for undertaking negotiations for settlement of claims and is currently actively negotiating in 5 matters with a view to settlement.

Crown Reserves

The Crown reserve system provides the people of NSW with a variety of open spaces, including local and regional parks, showgrounds, community halls, picnic areas, caravan parks, camping grounds and travelling stock routes.

Crown reserves comprise about three per cent of NSW and are a valuable component of the State's network of reserved, protected and public lands. The department oversees management of approximately 33,000 Crown reserves dedicated for public purposes in NSW. Local communities, including councils, directly manage almost half of these reserves with the remainder managed by the department. Land management advice is also provided to over 850 reserve trust boards and other Crown land managers.

The Department's role is to ensure reserves are responsibly managed and natural resources and scenic beauty are conserved. Plans of management ensure reserves are sustainably managed into the future and are developed in partnership with the community.

Over the year, 24 plans of management were adopted and a further 39 placed on public exhibition prior to review and possible future adoption.

State Parks

Crown Reserves include a network of 13 State Parks, which are popular with campers, caravanning enthusiasts and those who participate in fishing and boating activities. Most State Parks are located on the picturesque inland water storage areas of the State and attract 700,000 visitors annually.

More than \$1.3 million dollars was granted to State Park Trusts for maintenance or upkeep of recreational facilities and equipment inclusive of assistance with operational and running costs.

The newly formed State Parks Advisory Board meets on three occasions throughout the year. Its achievements include the formation of a new State Parks workers award with consensus obtained from all State Park Trusts and the development of a more integrated advertising and promotions program.

State Parks held their annual conference at Killalea State Park in October 2003.

Public Reserves Management Fund

The department administers the Public Reserves Management Fund, which assists the development, maintenance and protection of Crown reserves in NSW. The Public Reserves Management Fund is self-funding with income derived from loan repayments by trust managers of Crown reserves provided under the fund, and the payment of a levy from the operation of Crown coastal caravan parks. There were 94 grants and 73 loans made to trust managers of Crown reserves.

Minor Ports Program

The NSW Government operates the Minor Ports Program to provide and maintain port infrastructure as well as safe, secure port access. The program benefits the commercial fishing industry, the growing tourism industry, recreational boating and local communities.

The Department has responsibility for care and management of 27 fishing ports throughout NSW. These facilities, with a total replacement value of some \$600M, provide an important role in the ongoing financial success of many NSW coastal regions.

With an annual program budget of \$2.088M, about 50 percent was allocated in 2003-04 to dredging of approach channels in several key fishing ports. Major works completed in 2003-04 included dredging of the approach channels at Yamba, Evans Head and Coffs Harbour fishing ports, breakwater repairs at Wollongong Harbour, stage 1 of site rehabilitation of contaminated land at Tweed Heads and various repairs of wharves, jetties and services.

The dredging operations at Yamba involved the removal of 9,000 cubic metres of sand from navigation channels to improve access to Yamba inner harbour for commercial fishing vessels.

Similarly, at Coffs Harbour 23,500 cubic metres was removed from the entrance channel to the inner harbour. The maintenance dredging provided improved safety for some 300 commercial fishing, eco-tourism and recreational vessels that use the port. The sand removed was used for much needed renourishment of the very popular Park Beach which has been experiencing progressive coastal shoreline recession.

	01-02		02-03		03-04	
Total Grants	88	\$854,480	134	\$1,188,358	94	\$879,414
Total Loans	40	\$2,133,500	87	\$5,036,825	73	\$4,972,190

All trusts are audited to ensure profits are returned to improving public reserves.

Walking Tracks

The Department of Lands administers several significant walking tracks throughout the State, including The Great North Walk, the Hume and Hovell Walking Track and the Six Foot Track in the Blue Mountains, as well as the multi-purpose Bicentennial National Trail.

Lands assisted with the content and production of a brochure for the Harbour to Hawkesbury Walking Track, which links Manly with The Great North Walk at Berowra. Lands worked in association with four councils and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service on the project.

Burial Capacity in the Greater Metropolitan Area

In recognition of the pending shortage of available land for public burials in the Greater Metropolitan Area of Sydney, the Government has formed an Inter-Departmental Committee (IDC) of key stakeholders to investigate and recommend on possible solutions. The Department of Lands chairs and coordinates the IDC. It is anticipated that a report will be forwarded to the Government for its consideration during the 2004-2005 year.

Crown Land Assessment

Before Crown land can be dealt with – either for public or private benefit – a land assessment is undertaken to determine its capability and suitability for different purposes. The land assessment process addresses the principles of Crown land management, and includes public consultation as part of the process.

During the year, 54 land assessments of Crown land were undertaken by the Department.

Additionally, the department reviewed 84 requests for land assessment waivers to facilitate appropriate land use allocation for Crown lands during the year. The Minister has the right of waiver in circumstances of public interest, and where the principles of Crown land management, as listed in the Crown Lands Act, have been taken into account.

Crown Land Caravan Park Management

The Crown land caravan park estate is a significant contributor to caravan park accommodation across NSW through Crown reserves and tenured Crown land. Over 33 per cent of all caravan parks and camping ground sites in NSW are in Crown land caravan parks, with more than 40 per cent of all NSW short-term sites. There are over 10,000 holiday van sites in Crown land caravan parks.

Crown caravan parks are the major contributor to the Public Reserves Management Fund through which

funding allocations are made to trust managers for works and improvements.

The 1990 Crown Land Caravan Park Policy was reviewed this year and an updated policy was drafted. The next stage in the drafting process is dependant on the outcomes of concurrent reviews of the Coastal Crown Lands Policy, the Public Reserves Management Fund, Caravan Parks levy and any changes to caravan park approvals, schemes and regulation by Planning NSW prior to community consultation.

Commonwealth Rifle Ranges

Negotiations are continuing with the Commonwealth Government regarding possible contamination on Commonwealth rifle ranges handed back to the State over a number of years. Consultation is continuing with the Department of Environment and Conservation on contamination and site assessment issues and a trial assessment of a number of sites is proposed.

Trust Services

PricewaterhouseCoopers were engaged to review and re-draft the Reserve Trust Handbook; and to produce a new manual in hard copy and web-based formats. The project is expected to be completed by the end of 2004.

Over 260 Crown reserve trust boards participated in a Group Fire and Damage Insurance Scheme arranged by the Department to keep premiums as low as possible.

Lighthouses

The Department was custodian for 14 lighthouse properties, managed either directly by Lands or through Crown Reserve trusts. Thirteen of the lighthouses on these properties were operated as aids to navigation, with seven of them leased-back to the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA).

In May 2004, AMSA surrendered its long-term leases on 4 of these properties, while retaining property leases for 3 lighthouses, which it continued to operate for the full year. Once AMSA's leases were terminated, management of the lighthouses reverted to either the Department or a Crown Reserve trust. The NSW Waterways Authority carries out operation and maintenance of the light mechanism and associated power system at each of the lighthouses.

The Department is preparing conservation management plans for the lighthouse properties. These plans provide guidance on the management and maintenance of each property, and information on their significance, so that they can be recorded on State and Commonwealth heritage registers.

Crown Land Bushfire Management

The Department has a statutory responsibility under the *Rural Fires Act 1997* to prevent bush fires starting on, or spreading on or from land under its control. In September 2003, the Department appointed four Land Management Officers and a Land Management Coordinator (Bushfire) to assist existing officers address the Department's bushfire responsibilities.

A works program amounting to over \$980,000 (Including \$240,000 from the Department of Lands) was carried out under the Annual Fire Mitigation Works Fund (FMWF) administered by the Bush Fire Coordinating Committee. Consequently more fire trail works and fire breaks works on Crown land were carried out in 2003/04 than ever before. In addition to the FMWF, the Department allocated \$52,163 to address urgent bush fire hazards.

The Department, in cooperation with Bush Fire Management Committees has developed a program to record all fire trails on lands managed by Lands and this is anticipated to be completed by June 2005.

Lands now has representation on the Bush Fire Coordinating Committee, and Bush Fire Management Committees, where there are significant parcels of land managed by the Department. In other, areas the Department has contact officers for the Bush Fire Management Committees.

In cooperation with the Rural Fire Service, considerable effort has been put into implementing the provisions of the *Rural Fires and Environmental Assessment Legislation Amendment Act 2002*. This places more responsibility on public land managers to prevent bush fires and also establishes more stringent bush fire hazard reduction measures for developments adjoining Crown land.

It is anticipated that the coming year will be another record year for works on Crown land, a new agreement will be established with the Rural Fire Service and the Department will have a record of fire trails on its lands. For the year 2004/05 the sum of \$1.2 million is expected to be allocated to bush fire management.

Weed Management on Crown Land

The department is responsible for management of weeds on land under its control. This includes preventing the introduction of new weeds and the spread of existing weeds to adjoining land. NSW Agriculture is the lead agency in weed control matters and Local Control Authorities (Council and Weeds Count Councils) are responsible for the coordination of planning processes and on-ground activities.

During the year, a comprehensive weeds policy was implemented. The policy included representation on State and Regional Weeds Committees, management of weeds on Crown land, assisting lead agencies with research into best practice methods of weed control and the provision of community education about weed control strategies was implemented.

The Department is involved in implementing Regional weed management plans, the federal Weeds of National Significance initiative; the Bitou Bush Threat Abatement plan and Recovery Plans for threatened native species (with the Department of Environment and Conservation). Some 120 grants totalling \$610,000 were made for weed control work. A further \$80,000 was allocated to Regional discretionary projects as part of a 'good neighbour' approach to weed management. A research project investigating biological control agents for lantana was supported.

These actions resulted in a further reduction in the number of complaints about weed management on Crown land.

Weed Management Statistics				
	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04
Number of State and regional weed control plans completed and works commenced	10	40	60	80
Number of weed control projects supported on Crown land and departmental land	96	98	100	120
Number of research projects supported	2	2	2	1
Number of complaints about weeds on Crown land and departmental land	30	24	18	15

Pest Management on Crown Land

Lands also has responsibilities to eradicate pest animals on land under its control. NSW Agriculture is the lead agency for pest control and Rural Lands Protection Boards (RLPBs) are responsible for the planning and coordination of on-ground actions.

The Department's pest animal control programs include support for the Fox Threat Abatement Plan prepared by the Department of Environment and Conservation and Outfox the Fox, an initiative of NSW Agriculture and the RLPBs. The department also supports Regional Wild Dog Management Plans, Recovery Plans for threatened native species and a research project into the effect of aerial baiting of dogs and foxes on native quoll populations.

A very successful rabbit control program is also being implemented on Crown land at Lake Eucumbene in conjunction with lessees, neighbours, the Snowy Mountains Authority and the Cooma Rural Lands Protection Board.

Consequently, there have been very few complaints in relation to pest animals on Crown land managed by the department.

Crown land management issues in 2004/05 include the control of emerging pests such as pigs, goats, deer and cane toads. Lands will also be assisting the new Game Council to establish procedures for the hunting of game animals on public land. The sum of \$875,000 is expected to be allocated to weed and pest animal management for the year 2004/05.

Project Successes

Crown Lands Division continued to meet its environmental, economic and social obligations through:

- Management of 20,000 leases and 18,000 licences, with a majority of these supporting our farmers by enhancing agricultural opportunities with land to graze animals, to farm exotic fruits in the north, sugar cane on the coast, wheat out west, and rice in the Riverina.
- Approximately 7000 licences granted for domestic waterfront purposes providing for wharves, jetties, boat sheds and boat ramps, supporting recreational opportunities for waterfront residents and the general community.
- Management of commercial leases across the state for facilities including some of the biggest marinas, some of the most picturesque caravan parks, and some of the best waterfront restaurants in Australia.
- Supporting the community by recognising community services obligations to non-profit organisations,

charity groups, pensioner groups, rural community encountering hardship by granting concessions to fees and annual rents of around \$6m.

- Management of 29 minor port facilities along the east coast of NSW supporting the local fishing and tourism industry and providing for community recreational use.
- Promoting revegetation and rehabilitation of a number of Crown land tenures in an on-going program to support the retention of native flora and fauna, and to assist in providing native wildlife with a natural habitat. This included making rental incentives available to landholders to encourage joint rehabilitation in collaboration with local councils.
- Providing for the extraction of resources on Crown land through licences for businesses and government authorities including local councils and the RTA for the use of gravel on major roadways, and the building industry for the use of sand to produce materials such as glass and concrete.
- Providing Crown land for the erection of communications towers to create mobile phone and emergency service networks across NSW, as well as improved radio and television transmission to our rural communities.
- Participation in the annual 2003 Coastal Conference held in Port Macquarie. The conference provided an opportunity to market and promote the products and services offered by Crown Lands Division to key stakeholders, with a focus on Crown lands administration and management.
- Rehabilitation of 'One Tree Pit', a roadside gravel pit on the banks of the Mann River at Cangai. 'One Tree Pit' is located on a Crown reserve set against the backdrop of the Gibraltar Range. It had been used to extract gravel for use on roads for more than 30 years under the old Roads Act, but in 1995, the department withdrew support for its continued use given it posed a safety risk to the community and the surrounding areas were of high recreational significance.

A rehabilitation plan was developed by the former Pristine Waters Council in conjunction with the Department of Lands and the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources. Work included consultation on suitable species of grass for the area and the filling and re-shaping of the site and the spraying of much needed grass seed mulch over the area.

The quarry site will now complement an area renowned for its rugged beauty and high recreation and conservation value.

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- Erection of signage on Crown land at Evans Head, after 24 mature Banksia trees were deliberately poisoned. Having gaps in vegetation causes a number of environmental problems including the acceleration of wind erosion and salt damage to properties. The signage has attracted attention to the problem within the local community and serves as a deterrent to future acts of vandalism.
- Formation of an action group to lead the fight against the aquatic weed, *Salvinia*, which is infesting Paynes Crossing, near Cessnock.

Multiplying quickly and difficult to eradicate, *Salvinia* is a serious weed that has been declared a noxious plant throughout Australia. The Department of Lands, taking this issue very seriously, formed an action group with Cessnock City Council, the Upper Hunter Weeds Authority, the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources, Landcare and local landholders. Involvement of other agencies included the Hunter/Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority.

The action group has focussed on a combination of methods to control the infestation including the treatment and removal of the weed. The plan will then form the basis for the future local management of this threatening weed.

- Development of land at Tamworth in response to local demand for home sites, which has been particularly strong over the past two years.

The regional community of Tamworth has continued to expand and development of the site makes appropriate use of the available infrastructure.

Development of Northern Hills Estate will occur in three stages comprising around 90 residential blocks in total.

- Hosting an open day at Lake Liddell Reserve, a reserve of regional significance located on Crown land near Muswellbrook, to attract members of the community to sign-up for the Trust board.

Lake Liddell has a range of environmental constraints providing an opportunity for the site to become a "living laboratory". Bush regeneration, organic farming, native farm forestry and conservation farming are all possibilities for the site to counter the salinity, water access and erosion issues associated with the reserve. Of course the reserve also provides recreation opportunities for the community and the Trust will also manage the use and enjoyment of the site.

Community groups, universities, businesses and individuals attended the open day, which proved to be great success. A very keen cross-section of the community expressed interest in the management of the site and the Trust is expected to be up and running by the end of October this year.

- In a rare turn-around, the Department received a parcel of land from National Parks to gazette as Crown Reserve.

As part of a \$7 million State Government project, a cycleway was constructed along Lower Prospect Canal between Guildford Pipehead and Prospect Reservoir along the old Sydney Water pipeline, a total distance of 7.7km.

The cycleway and associated lands did not comply with the reserve criteria of the National Parks and Wildlife Act, and as such, the land could not be classified as a reserve under National Parks. The transfer of control to Lands has seen the land gazetted as a Crown Reserve, ensuring the area will be retained in public ownership and managed at a local level.

A majority of the site has been reserved for public recreation, heritage purposes and environmental protection, reflecting the value of Crown Land to the community.

The reserve has now been handed over to Holroyd Council as Trust Manager to carry out the daily care, control and management of the site.

- Provision of funding of approximately \$200,000 to dredge a high spot at the entrance to the approach channel to Yamba Boatharbour.

The maritime community of Yamba, in particular the commercial fishing industry, had raised concerns over the extensive build up of marine sand jeopardising the safe navigation of vessels within the approach channel to the boat harbour.

Dredged sand from the approach channel was deposited on the offshore bar from Iluka Beach, providing an added benefit by renourishing this popular beach.

An environmental assessment was also completed and special care was taken to ensure Dirrangun Reef, a sacred Aboriginal site of considerable importance about 150m from the dredge site, was not disturbed.

- Provision of funding of approximately \$185,000 to dredge 15,000 cubic metres of sand at the Terranora Inlet shoal on the Tweed River.

As a result of the sand build up, vessels could not access the offshore fishing grounds or, conversely, return to their moorings at any time other than high tide.

The works also included the removal of sands restricting access to the adjacent vessel sewerage pumpout facility, alleviating the environmental and public health risks associated with vessels discharging into the estuary.

The sand removed was transported offshore and deposited in disposal areas nominated by the Tweed River Entrance Sand By-passing Project.

- We continued to provide financial support to drought-affected farmers who lease Crown land.

With official drought figures showing more than 80 per cent of the State still drought-affected, its severity continued to have a devastating effect on landholders and primary producers.

In response to these tough times the division offered farmers, who have amounts due on their Crown Land leases and tenures, the opportunity to apply for extensions of time and payment plans.

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Note: Business hours may vary in
Regional Offices due to fieldwork.