

Submission

No 085

**CONSULTATION ON THE MODERN
MANAGEMENT OF COMMONS**

Name: Kate Hughes

Date received: 21/02/2017

Date: 21 February 2017 at 09:02
Subject: SUBMISSION ON ST ALBANS COMMON

To Whom It May Concern,
Dear friend,
Re: Our Living Heritage: The future of St Albans Common.

We have read the documentation regarding the NSW Government's aim to effectively remove local control of St. Albans Common from the community of the Macdonald Valley.

There can be no doubt that reform is needed to better manage all NSW Crown Lands for current and future generations. However, undermining the long history of successful volunteerism that has characterised local management of St Albans Common is not the answer. In short, the 'one-size-fits-all' approach is inappropriate in the case of this Common and cannot deliver a better future.

We know from our former association with the Common what it takes to maintain this lovely area: time, effort and persistence. Without a voluntary trust, who will pay to maintain the lands? Hawkesbury Council says they do not want to administer the Common so who will? A group of public servants with a little power, limited knowledge and few resources? This would cost money [their salaries] so who pays this? Let's face it, from a practical point of view, the proposal has no legs! At best, will it be a NSW Board with some local representation as well as government appointees. We have experienced of this type of arrangement and anticipate conflict due to competing priorities about future management and use of the land. There is a better way to do things.

Regardless of this, we agree in the need for reforms but believe that they must be done through an enforceable Management Plan. It can protect traditional uses and also address issues that current Trustees have not managed to deal with. After all, Common management is voluntary and despite the number of people on the Roll, the majority are unable to help on a regular basis due to ever-present time constraints and competing priorities. However, to take away local control is not the answer. The answer is to create a better administrative, environmental and financial structure so Commons management can improve. There is a great future for these lovely lands that lie within the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. New arrangements can readily embrace expanded usage, albeit under proper management. It is our living heritage and our Common right.

It is no small claim that the St Albans Common was given to the people of the Macdonald Valley by Queen Victoria over 160 years ago. It really means something so please, accept the need to compromise and work things through with local people who understand the situation and are unafraid of a new future for the St Albans Common.

Before I leave you, may I offer a poem from the past which resonates clearly today.

The fault is great in man or woman
Who steals a goose from the Common
But what can be that man's excuse
Who steals a Common from the goose?

Anon; English. Circa 1800

Yours Sincerely

Kate Hughes
Peter Hughes