

**Submission**

**No 112**

# **CONSULTATION ON THE MODERN MANAGEMENT OF COMMONS**

**Name:** St Albans Weed-Wackers (Organisation)

**Date received:** 21/02/2017

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Date: Tue, Feb 21, 2017 at 4:59 PM

Subject: SUBMISSION - COMMONS

To whom it may concern ‘

The Convenor of the Bushcare Group was unable to send the attached submission due to power failure due to storm in our Valley 2 days ago that took many power lines down.

I forwarded this submission on her behalf . please advise if received in time to be included.

I write on behalf of the St Albans Weed-Wackers in response to the review of NSW Commons.

The St Albans Weed-Wackers is a Bushcare Group comprising local volunteers (including some Commoners) who work each 3rd Sunday morning of the month at the local St Albans Park to remove invasive weeds and restore the native bushland adjacent to the park and the river banks of the Macdonald River and around other community assets and surrounding public land to allow native flora to return. Where necessary, we plant local native species. Our work builds on decades of work carried out by local volunteers.

Our community has a strong appreciation and affinity with the natural environment and is one of the most active communities in the Hawkesbury Council area in working to protect local biodiversity through weed management programs, river restoration projects involving local landholders and sustainable farming practices.

Our Valley lies next to an environmental site of international importance – the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. Many rare plants and animal species are found in the Macdonald Valley. There are protected species, endangered species and sentinel species including plants such as *Acacia Matthewii*, *Eucalyptus Deaneii* and animals such as the Lyre bird and rare and threatened species that include the Gang-gang and Glossy Black Cockatoo, Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby, New Holland Mouse, Koala, Turquoise Parrot, Adams Emerald Dragon Fly, Yellow-bellied Glider, Spotted-tailed Quoll, Broad-headed Snake, Lace Monitor, Green and Golden Bell Frog and the Cumberland Land Snail are just some of the threatened species.

We are deeply concerned that the St Albans Common, which is only three kilometers from our work site, is again under threat.

At our last working bee we discussed the Fact Sheet which outlines the intentions, albeit not so clearly, to once again seek to revoke ownership and remove local control of St. Albans Common from the community of the Macdonald Valley.

We write to express our total support for the St Albans Commons to be retained in community hands and controlled and managed by the community (the Commoners).

The St. Albans Common is not Crown Land - it was granted to Commoners (community of St Albans) by Queen Victoria in 1824 for the specific purpose of grazing stock to assist farmers in this area with small land holdings. It has been successfully managed since 1824 by valley residents in accordance with the original deed of grant and at no cost to government. It is self-sufficient. Trustees are not remunerated – they manage the Trust in a voluntary capacity. The members (The Commoners), also in a voluntary capacity, undertake weed management and management of the land.

The Common is an important habitat for wildlife and contributes greatly to the biodiversity in our area. The unique wetlands on the St Albans Common are a haven for black swans, other water birds and marine life. The St Albans Common also provides the “green lungs” for Sydney’s urban residents.

The locals understand the environmental significance of this land and appreciate the need to protect biodiversity more than ever. We are not confident that, at this point in time, the environmental values are appreciated by the current Government as much as they are by our community. The Biodiversity Bill introduced days after the Crown Management Bill 2016 in November last year have given us grounds for such pessimism.

We therefore stress our objection to the taking away of local control and ownership of our Common as this will undermine our community and its long history of successful volunteerism.

We strongly support environmental values be continued to be effectively upheld.

Yours sincerely,

Viki Winton

Convenor

St Albans Weed-Wackers