



1/23 Hopetoun Street  
WOONONA NSW 2517  
24<sup>th</sup> June 2015

Dear Mr Blair,

Illawarra Birders Inc. is a group with a strong conservation focus based in the Wollongong/ Illawarra Region of NSW.

In the Illawarra Area we have some significant areas of Crown Land that are regularly utilised by our birders. Killalea State Park is a pristine area of coastal reserve with some of the South Coast's most beautiful beaches, tracts of rainforest, extensive wetlands and seabird breeding areas. Wollongong Harbour and foreshores and Lake Illawarra are important areas for shorebirds, particularly migratory shorebirds. Club Members regularly utilise these sites for research and survey purposes in the study of these birds to contribute to the Shorebirds 2020 Research Program.

Lake Illawarra was, until recently, managed by the Lake Illawarra Authority (LIA), a group established through the state government to care for this significant area. On the state government's website it is quoted in the section relating to the LIA that "*Since the LIA was first established, public expectations for a restored lake environment have intensified. There is a greater awareness among local communities as to the value of the lake. Children are now more aware of the fragility of the ecological environment, and the threats to the lake arising from development and neglect*". This area is critical to the survival of many resident and migratory bird populations, including the endangered Pied Oystercatcher which had successful breeding records in 2012, a recently discovered pair of Sanderling listed as vulnerable and a Beach Stone Curlew listed as critically endangered and reported several times in the past three years. It is imperative that rigid controls remain in place to preserve and maintain the Lake and its surrounding habitats.

Our club recently held a walk along the Bargo River Track near Kiah Ridge in Bargo which sits on the edge of the designated Illawarra Region. This is a walk the club regularly does each year because of the beauty of the walking track, the abundance of bird life and the fantastic wildflowers and fungi that can be found here in all months of the year.

A lot of Crown land has significant environmental value and is necessary to contribute to goals listed in our state's plan such as Goal 22 '*to protect our natural environment*' Crown land play's an important role in providing a necessary habitat for the state's wildlife. Some of the wildlife found in NSW is currently listed as threatened or endangered and it is vital that we protect and preserve it for future generations to enjoy. The review of Crown lands appears to have failed to meet the terms of reference to identify the important public benefits by not conducting an environmental, cultural or social assessment of the assets. These types of assessment of lands are essential for our protected and endangered species to survive.



Travelling Stock Routes are largely on Crown Lands and these lands specifically contribute to a wildlife corridor which is currently absolutely necessary for the survival of many of the state's threatened bird species. Our outback species of birds are particularly dependent upon lands such as these remaining available as they migrate between habitat areas. These lands need to be maintained as they are so they can continue to be utilised by our wildlife.

Any new legislation relating to Crown Lands must include the protection of areas of high conservation value and ecosystems as well as uphold the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Developments. We would be opposed to the sale of any Crown Lands.

It is also necessary for the State Government to maintain its control over the Crown Lands it manages. Local Councils often have their own agendas and some of them have been known to sell off land that has been given or bequeathed to them specifically for public use for commercial and/or residential development. Crown Lands need to have one body responsible for their maintenance and protection.

Our members travel all over our state and appreciate the beautiful and pristine areas we have which need to be protected for both our unique flora and fauna and for people to enjoy. Environmental protection is an important issue that is gathering world-wide interest and media exposure. People are paying more attention to what happens in our environment and Crown Lands are a vital link in the preservation of our wildlife and vegetation communities.

We urge the state government to maintain total control over our Crown Lands and to ensure there is strict protection of the environment these lands comprise. The Crown Lands of the Illawarra and the state of NSW have a vital role to play in the survival of our wildlife. Stringent environmental protection laws are necessary to ensure Australia's unique wildlife is preserved for future generations.

Michelle Rower  
Conservation Officer for  
Illawarra Birders Inc.