



Protecting Public Lands

'To ensure that significant public lands remain in public ownership and control, properly protected, conserved and managed, for the benefit of present and future generations'

A Planning Policy Initiative



A Fresh Approach

Protecting Public Lands

A Coalition Government will protect significant public lands in NSW by:

- Introducing Public Lands Protection Legislation
- Establishing a Register of Significant Public Lands
- Establishing A Public Lands Trust to assess nominations for inclusion on the Register
- Retaining public ownership of surplus school sites

Rationale

The Coalition regards the availability of large amounts of public open space, in urban National Parks, on beaches and within suburbs, as a defining characteristic of many areas. As the population continues to rise, and with the increased popularity of apartment living, there is a need to protect open space, particularly in inner urban areas. Yet Labor has sought to sell off public land in established suburbs at an alarming rate.

Public land that the Carr Government has attempted to sell off includes Prince Henry Hospital; Rozelle Hospital (Callan Park); Mona Vale Hospital; Manly Hospital; North Head Quarantine Station; Hunters Hill High School; Vaucluse High School; Marrickville High School; Dulwich Hill High School; Redfern Primary School; and Maroubra High School.

In contrast, the NSW Coalition is committed to the preservation of significant public land in public ownership, and with public access.

Public Lands Protection legislation

The Coalition will introduce legislation to ensure that significant public lands remain in public ownership and control.

The principles of the Public Lands Protection Legislation will be to ensure:

- Significant lands are retained in public ownership and control, in trust for the people of NSW
- Uses accord with the assessed significance of the land
- Proper protection, conservation and management
- No residential development on such land
- Maximum public access and appropriate public uses
- Any lease over 10 years to be subject to disallowance by Parliament.

Public Lands Register

The legislation will include a Register of significant public lands, with reference to an assessment of significance. The Register will initially include Callan Park Rozelle, the North Head Quarantine Station, Gladesville Hospital, and Hunters Hill High School.

Other significant property may be added to the Register on the recommendation to the Minister of an assessment body to be known as the Public Lands Trust. Priority sites for consideration will be the Prince Henry Hospital site and Rockdale Wetlands.

The Trust will be created for the purpose of considering nominations of land for inclusion on the Register. Members of the public and community organisations will be able to make nominations. The trust will oversee public hearings if any changes of use are proposed to land that is on the Register.

If nominated land satisfies minimum significance criteria, the Trust would assess it and make a recommendation to the Planning Minister.

The Trust will be appointed by the Minister for Planning and comprise seven individuals from sections of the community versed in preservation, heritage and property management. The panel would include:

- A Member of the Executive of the National Trust, and
- A Member of the Executive of the State Heritage Office

For public land to be deemed significant it must have environmental, heritage, natural, cultural, social, historic, scientific, aesthetic, ecological, or indigenous value, or is capable at present or in the future of having a value or use, the benefit of which to the public outweighs any public benefit from sale or long term alienation by lease.

The Trust will initially undertake a review, and consider for placement on the Register, public land that is;

- On the Register of the National Estate, or
- On the State Heritage Register, or
- Lands reserved or dedicated under the National Parks & Wildlife Act 1974, or
- On the Register of the National Trust of Australia (NSW), or
- Is an item of heritage significance identified in an environmental planning instrument, or
- Subject to an order under the Heritage Act 1977, or
- On a “Heritage and Conservation Register” under s170 of that Act.

If any change of use, or a lease, is proposed for any land already on the Register, the Public Lands Trust may initiate and hold public hearings on the proposal. The Minister may also direct that hearings will be held.

Public Ownership of surplus sites

The Coalition will maintain public ownership of surplus sites and school buildings for a minimum period of 20 years (one generation) recognising that the younger population in an area may fluctuate. In the interim, surplus

school sites will be leased for education related purposes or for relevant commercial purposes. These may include pre-school or childcare, vacation or after-school care, or adult education. School buildings could also be leased for government or private office space.

At the end of the 20 year period or at set periods (the expiry of 5 or 10 year leases), the Government, after consultation with the community, may determine to re-open the school to meet the needs of a new generation of school children in that community.

After 20 years, if the Government determines that there is no demand for a new school the site may be sold or leased for a further set period. If the school site is sold at least 30% of the site must be returned to the community