

Crown Reserves & Showgrounds

July 2015

Background

The NSW Crown Estate is large and diverse – making up about 42 per cent of the State – and holds tremendous importance for the social, environmental and economic health of NSW.

In 2014, the Government released the Crown Lands Management Review, recommending a number of reforms to improve the management of Crown land in NSW. Prior to this review, NSW had not undertaken a major reform of Crown land for over 25 years.

The Department of Primary Industries – Lands (DPI – Lands) is responsible for managing some of the most iconic and diverse public land in NSW through the Crown reserve system.

DPI – Lands is implementing the Reserves Governance Project to progress key recommendations of the Crown Lands Management Review relating to the governance and oversight of Crown reserves.

Reserves Governance Project

There are approximately 35,000 Crown reserves in NSW which deliver a range of services, including:

- Access to public land for recreation, tourism, hospitality and retail
- Facilities for recreation and sporting pursuits
- Access to areas of natural, cultural and heritage significance
- Community facilities such as preschools, aged care facilities, museums, places of remembrance and community halls
- Facilities for emergency services such as Rural Fire Service, State Emergency Service and Marine Rescue
- Environmental services such as biodiversity
- Agricultural services such as irrigation, apiary and grazing
- Essential services communication towers, electricity networks, pipelines

Reserve managers are appointed under the *Crown Lands Act 1989* to look after Crown reserves and the affairs of reserve trusts. Crown reserves are managed by local councils, community volunteers, professional boards, not for profit organisations, DPI - Lands and other government agencies.

DPI – Lands oversees the system of management of those reserves by those reserve trust managers. Key components of the current governance and oversight system include:

- Appointment and induction of reserve trust managers
- Support (eg Reserves Trust Handbook)
- Funding (eg Public Reserves Management Fund Program)
- Compliance (eg Crown Reserves Reporting System)

The Crown Lands Management Review recommended improvements to the system of management of reserves by trust boards, of which there are some 700 community trust boards, with 152 Councils also acting as trust manager. A key focus is to support community participation in the management of Crown reserves that encourages good governance.

In late 2014, DPI - Lands commenced a project to develop a new governance and oversight framework for the management of Crown reserves. The project is working towards the following outcome:

Appropriately managed and funded reserves delivering multiple outcomes for the benefit of the people of NSW underpinned by a professional governance and oversight framework.

The research phase of the project is proposed to be completed by September 2015 with implementation to proceed from then onwards, subject to endorsement of any recommendations.

Interesting Facts

The Reserves Governance Project has analysed key assets on Crown land such as showgrounds, racecourses, community halls, state parks and surf clubs to explore governance and oversight issues.

More than 130 showgrounds have been identified on Crown reserves in NSW, along with 34 combined showground and racecourse reserves. This represents approximately 85% of all showgrounds in NSW.

Local communities and Councils play a key role in managing showgrounds on Crown reserves as reserve trust manager appointed under the *Crown Lands Act 1989*.

Each showground has been categorized according to the scale of infrastructure and use, with Category A being the most intensively used assets and Category E being largely open space. Categorising assets is being used to assess whether current management approaches can or need to be tailored to better account for varying risk and service outcomes, as well as governance requirements.

ASSET TYPE AND CATEGORY			
CATEGORY	Showgrounds	Combined (Racecourse/ Showground)	Total
Category A	10	1	11
Category B	23	11	34
Category C	44	16	60
Category D	31	6	37
Category E	28	0	28
Total	136	34	170

ASSET TYPE, CATEGORY AND MANAGEMENT					
CATEGORY	MANAGEMENT				Total
	Corporation	Council	Trust Board	Administrator	
Showground A	1	6	3	-	10
Showground B	2	11	10	-	23
Showground C	3	20	20	1	44
Showground D	3	14	14	-	31
Showground E	1	9	18	-	28
Combined A	1	-	-	-	1
Combined B	-	7	4	-	11
Combined C	-	9	7	-	16
Combined D	-	4	2	-	6
Combined E	-	-	-	-	-
Total	11	80	78	1	170

CATEGORY	DEFINITION
A	Showground, Racecourse or multi-use recreational complex with substantial built infrastructure that is actively utilised all year round.
B	Showground, Racecourse or multi-use recreational complex with prominent built infrastructure.
C	Actively used Showground or Racecourse with moderate infrastructure.
D	Actively used Showground or Racecourse with minimal infrastructure.
E	Sporting oval or open space public recreation with no or limited infrastructure.

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (July 2015). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of the Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.

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