

Mick Veitch MLC

Shadow Minister for Regional and Rural Affairs



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MINISTER ADMITS CROWN LANDS ACT REVIEW SHELVED BY COMMUNITY PRESSURE

The Minister for Lands Kevin Humphries was forced to admit under questioning by the NSW Opposition in Budget Estimates that he has shelved the Liberal and National Government's contentious Crown Lands Act review following an avalanche of over 650 submissions highlighting community concerns.

Crown Land represents about 42% of the state and is valued at approximately \$11 billion.

"The review of Crown land has been nothing more than a push by the Nationals to make it easier for the NSW Government to sell off public land to the highest bidder," Shadow Minister for Regional and Rural Affairs Mick Veitch said.

"Crown lands house thousands of valuable community assets from caravan parks, showgrounds, racecourses, scouts and girl guides reserves, to regional harbours and surf clubs.

"The Minister admitted under questioning in Budget Estimates that the government has received over 650 submissions in response to the review – I have no doubt that a large number of submissions raised real concerns about the government's plans for public land in NSW.

"It's very obvious that when Mr Humphries inherited the portfolio from Andrew Stoner he balked at the idea of forcing these unpopular reforms through the parliament and has shelved them in the lead up to the election.

"My concern is that this is merely a reprieve until after the election – if the Liberals and Nationals are returned after the election it will be back on the agenda and community assets on Crown land will not be safe from the auction block.

"Local communities must have a greater say in how the Crown Land estate is managed and utilised.

"I am very concerned that this is nothing more than an exercise to make it easier for the Liberal National Government to commercialise or sell off our valuable Crown Lands estates – clearly local communities have called the government out on it and they have panicked with an election only six months away.

"The Government should be conducting this review in a sensible manner that puts community interest ahead of selling off public lands to the highest bidder."

*Relevant extract from the Budget Estimate attached.

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EXTRACT FROM THE TRANSCRIPT

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: In relation to the proposed Crown lands legislation, I presume a white paper has gone out. Is there any intention for that legislation to come before Parliament before the end of this session?

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: It would be highly unlikely, given the white paper and given the extent of the discussion. I would be reasonably confident in saying that there may be another iteration of that review, given the comment.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: In terms of the nature of the comments, as you would be aware, a number of stakeholders have flagged with me as the shadow Minister their concerns about a lot of the stuff contained in the white paper and hence whether they will get another look at the actual legislation before it is tabled. That is why I am asking.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: No, there is no intention; not this year.

The Hon. MICK VEITCH: To be clear, there will be another white paper or will a draft bill go out?

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: There will not be a draft bill but there will need to be a focused response from certain sectors of the community that have a significant stakeholding in Crown land. We have received 650 submissions. Ms Brooks might want to comment on this. The report is due to me in September. I do not want to pre-empt that but obviously we have had advice to say that there has been a lot of interest in it. A lot of that interest is genuine in the sense that we might have to go back to some of those sectors for more consultation.