



THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS LTD.

5th. April, 1990

Ms Lyndal Sullivan,
48 Mort St.,
KATOOMBA 2780.

Dear Lyndal Sullivan,

Thank you for your donation via the ACF. Yes, it will be used for the Blue Mountains World Heritage campaign. Our book was financed in part by a loan from the Myles Dunphy, which your donation will help to repay..

I wrote to the BMCC about the "academy." George Threlfo sent a copy of the letter to the Blue Mountains Gazette, which has published at least part of it. In case they did not publish it all I enclose a copy. The Council has no excuse whatever for allowing a development which is contrary to all its stated principles, objectives and policies, but judging by the Fairmont Resort, they will be keen to approve it.

Yours sincerely,

A. G. Colley

(A. G. Colley O.A.M.)

Hon. Secretary

Monday March 19, 1990

Mr R Fennell
Town Clerk
Blue Mountains City Council
P O Box 189
KATOOMBA NSW 2780

Dear Mr Fennell,

Submission on Proposed Academy on Radiata Plateau

The above proposal is a denial of the principles, objectives and policies covering the natural environment published by Council in 1985. The first objective was "To protect the Blue Mountains unique landscape." The second was "To concentrate and contain the spread of urban development." The third objective was to ensure "Environmentally sensitive design and bushfire protection."

The description "academy" is used by the developer. Under the present Rural 1(a2) zoning such a use is not prohibited, but conflicts with clause 4 of the draft local environmental plan, which has the specific objective of protecting natural ecological elements, maintaining and enhancing the separation between towns, allowing development which is compatible with the natural landscape, and protecting and utilising tourism and recreational potential where this is consistent with the conservation of the natural landscape and environment.

The 7(e) zoning has the aim of protecting environmentally sensitive land and restricting development on land that is inappropriate by reason of physical characteristics or high fire risk.

In greater detail, the proposal conflicts with all of the twelve specific objectives of the draft local environmental plan with regards to the Blue Mountains Ridge.

Taking these seriatim:

- a) It will do nothing to conserve relics and places of historic significance. These include the explorer's tree, the old Bathurst Road hostel stopping place at Cherry Tree Flat and Black's Ladder, the original route into Megalong Valley.

The stream which flows down this route, its tributary and the large pool near the top of the Ladder will be polluted.

- b) It will degrade, rather than conserve, natural ecological elements because of the extensive clearing, construction, roading and servicing facilities entailed. Being the only substantial undeveloped plateau area remaining on the southern escarpment, it is an area of major environmental significance.
- c) Being situated in undeveloped bushland 3 kilometers from Katoomba, it will effectively destroy the natural bushland buffer zone between the towns.
- d) Being situated above the edge of the escarpment it will afford excellent views for guests. For those looking in the opposite direction, from Narrow Neck, Medlow Bath and other points, it will be a scar on the natural scenery.
- e) It degrades, rather than conserves the natural landscape and is inconsistent with the environmental objectives of the Blue Mountains National Park, which it overlooks.
- f) The land is incapable of development if the principles, objectives and policies of the Council covering the natural environment are adhered to.
- g) No appropriate level of servicing is specified. Proposals for water supply are indefinite. Proposals for a pump out system to service 400 guests plus staff may well prove uneconomic, leading to on-site disposal.
- h) This is the worst example of dispersal of development into a fire hazard area that has come to our notice. There have been several disastrous fires on the plateau, and Mr Ben Esgate, who was for many years in charge of the Blue Mountains fire fighting service, informs us that it is impossible to fight the fires which rage up the slopes from the west and north west. Dead timber from the plateau, killed by fires, supplied firewood for some 20 years. Mr. Esgate's address is 4 Mountain View Road Berowra 2081 and his phone number (02) 456-1020 if you would like to confirm this. Earth covering and fire shutters on windows, will not appeal to guests, nor should the volunteer brigades be expected to risk their lives in such an isolated area with one escape route.

- i) See above.
- j) The proposed building is beyond the serviced land within existing town areas and creates an uneconomic and unreasonable burden for the provision of services by reason of its distance from services areas.
- k) Two clean creeks will be polluted and the springs above Nellies Glen (which was devastated by a previous Council) will also be polluted. The water drains into water supply catchments and the National Park.
- l) Because of the prominent position of the project, it is insensitively located.

The only way to minimise environmental and visual impact is to refuse the project.

The rationale for allowing this development, which will be in fact a 415 bed hotel, is that it will be an "educational" establishment. Whether meditation is educational, or whether it can be practiced in this location better than elsewhere is open to question. If development consent is given it will encourage other hotel projects to locate their premises in isolated areas and provide some teaching facilities, which may or may not be used by guests, and call their hotel an "academy."

The first principle of the Blue Mountains Environmental Management Plan is "Ensuring the protection of the unique natural environment of the Blue Mountains." The draft plan purports to achieve this by preserving areas of significant conservation value, controlling escarpment development, preserving bushland between towns, restricting development to areas serviced by reticulated sewerage and excluding development from bush fire hazard area.

Approval of the "Academy" would violate these aims and be a reversion to the uncontrolled development practices of the past, which the Environmental Management Plan seeks to rectify. It would make a complete mockery of Council's attempt to enhance the natural attractions of the Blue Mountains, which are their principle tourist attraction.

Your sincerely,

Alex Colley O.A.M.
Hon Secretary
Colong Foundation for Wilderness