The Hon. Melinda Pavey, MP

Minister for Water, Property & Housing (Crown Lands)
GPO Box 5341

SYDNEY NSW 2001

via https://www.nsw.gov.au/nsw-government/ministers/minister-for-water-property-and-housing

Dear Minister Pavey

**Katoomba Airfield, Blue Mountains**

We suggest you open your letter with a sentence about your interest in the Blue Mountains natural environment, for instance:

I live in the Blue Mountains. The Blue Mountains is important to me because….

I am a frequent visitor to the Blue Mountains and the area is important to me because...

I have a keen interest in the Blue Mountains environment because….

Earlier this year, due to overwhelming community opposition, a decision was made by the Department of Planning, Industry and the Environment to reject a lease application over Katoomba Airfield by the company, FlyBlue.

I am very disturbed to hear that, due to pressure from the developer, there was a review into the decision and that the lease application is now currently being re-assessed.

The Katoomba Airfield site is totally surrounded by the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area which is of international environmental significance. It is home to threatened species and sits approx. 700m from one of the country’s most visited bushwalks, the famous Grand Canyon, just above the Grose Valley wilderness and in close proximity to the peaceful townships of Blackheath and Medlow Bath. Any development of this site would have a distinctly negative affect on the threatened and vulnerable species of the area as well as the natural quiet that visitors come for and residents’ value.

It is of great concern that the Department appears to be overlooking the resounding community opposition to the proposed development. A petition, presented in NSW State Parliament in August 2019, had over 12,000 signatories opposing the lease and requesting that the site be added to the surrounding National Park.

I am calling on you Minister Pavey to recognise the significance of Katoomba Airfield by honouring the original decision to reject the proposed lease and have it incorporated into the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area for inclusion in the national park system.

The Airfield site is important to me because …

Here is an opportunity to make a personal statement about why Katoomba Airfield is important to you and why you want to see it conserved.

You may want to include some of the following points in your letter:

* Development of Katoomba Airfield would have a dramatic negative impact on tourism to the area, compromising the visitor experience of the incredibly popular and tranquil Grand Canyon walk and Grose Valley wilderness.
* The site is home to a multitude of threatened and vulnerable species including the Spotted-Tailed Quoll, Giant Dragonfly, Blue Mountains Water Skink, Gang-gang Cockatoo and Scarlet Robin**.**
* The site includes the rare Blue Mountain Swamps, a nationally listed threatened ecological community.
* Any disturbance to the area’s ecosystem will impact the overall sustainability of the UNESCO-recognised Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.
* The site sits within close proximity to the peaceful townships of Blackheath and Medlow Bath, where residents value the natural quiet the National Park offers.
* The area is an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area due to the autumn migration of up to 200,000 Yellow-faced Honeyeaters. Any increased air traffic would negatively this ecologically important event.
* The negative impact of helicopters and light aircraft on birds is well documented.

If you plan to visit you should include this as well. For instance, do you bushwalk, birdwatch, or mountain bike near the Airfield? Do you enjoy the scenic views into the Grose Valley from the clifftops? Do you walk or canyon in the area?

Community opposition to the venture was resounding yet it seems that Crown Lands is now bending to the desires of the developer and giving FlyBlue the opportunity to re-apply. It is only a fair process if there is transparency around the decision.

**Protection of the site is crucial to the future survival of the fragile ecosystems that exist as well as ensuring a memorable experience for the vast number of visitors to the area. I urge you to make a defining commitment to the community, and ensure a fair process, by upholding the original decision.**

**I am therefore making an urgent plea, that you as Minister for Water, Property and Housing uphold the original decision to reject the proposed lease over Katoomba Airfield and respect the wishes of the community, by having it incorporated into the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area for management by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.**

<<Please add any additional points you wish to make here>>

Yours sincerely

<<Please include your name, address, signature and date>>