

Land Use achievements March 2018-March 2019

Planning and Development

Highlights

- *Echo Point Visitor Centre.* The Society made a submission objecting to the use of the adjoining national park as an Asset Protection Zone for the proposed new visitor centre at Echo Point. As a result Council redesigned the proposal.
- *Katoomba Christian Centre.* The Society made a detailed submission objecting to the redevelopment and expansion of the Katoomba Christian Centre. The Society also appeared before the Sydney Western City Planning Panel who refused development consent for the proposed redevelopment.
- *Woodford land clearing case.* The Society alerted Council to the suspected illegal clearing of native vegetation at Woodford, after being alerted by Society members, and continued to follow up with Council during the investigation. The Society is very pleased Council prosecuted the case in court, resulting in hefty fine for the landowner.
- *Strategic Additions to the Blue Mountains National Park.* The Society undertook detailed conservation assessments of a number of privately held landholdings and Crown Land in the Blue Mountains. The Society will be campaigning to have these areas, at Glenbrook, Faulconbridge, Wentworth Falls and Katoomba, purchased and added to the national park due to their high natural and cultural heritage values.
- *Community workshop* jointly held with Environmental Defenders Office in July 2018, to inform residents on how to effectively report suspected illegal clearing and dumping, and how to lodge a submission to a development application.

Ongoing campaigns

The Society has been also actively campaigning on the following key environmental issues throughout the last 12 months (and will continue to do so)

- Masterplan for the Crown Land at Lawson
- Rehabilitation and clean up of Lapstone Tunnel
- Proposed commercial lease for Katoomba Airfield
- Monitoring of new developments at Fairmont Resort
- Reporting (and follow up) of illegal clearing and illegal dumping in various locations across the Mountains

Overall

Over the last 12 months, planning and development has been a key focus for the Society. We have:

- lodged 21 submissions and letters
- made 1 presentation to a planning panel
- had 4 meetings with Council or state government agencies
- held 1 community education workshop

Leave Radiata Wild

The thirty-year campaign to conserve Radiata Plateau continues via the *Leave Radiata Wild* campaign. The Society believe any development on the Plateau would see its conservation values jeopardised, and the only way to secure its long term future is to have it purchased by the NSW Government and included in the national park.

Campaign highlights over the last 12 months include the following:

Open letter in December 2018

As part of this campaign, the Society co-ordinated an Open Letter to the Hon. Gabrielle Upton NSW Minister for Environment and Heritage published as a full page ad in the Blue Mountains Gazette in December 2018. Signatories to the letter included 30 local environmental and heritage groups, community leaders and local residents and state-wide environmental groups. The coming together of such a diverse number of community groups was ground breaking and demonstrated the wide spread and sustained support in the Blue Mountains to see the Plateau conserved and protected forever.

Meeting with Minister for the Environment

Residents and Blue Mountain Conservation Society representatives met with the Minister for the Environment, Hon. Gabrielle Upton, at the Plateau on 13 February 2019. The meeting on-site allowed the Society and residents to brief the Minister about the significant environmental and Aboriginal heritage values of the Plateau. The Minister also learnt directly from community members about the thirty year campaign to have the area conserved.

As a result of the meeting with the Minister, Society representatives met with senior National Parks and Wildlife Service staff to discuss the conservation values of the Plateau. We understand that the Service is now undertaking a detailed conservation assessment of the site, have requested a land valuation and have been in contact with the owners the Maharishi Foundation.

Labor commits to purchase

On the 22 February 2019 Labor announced that if they won office, they would seek to purchase Radiata Plateau and add it to the National Park estate. Local member Trish Doyle and Shadow Minister for the Environment, Penny Sharpe MLC made the announcement at Cahills Lookout overlooking the Plateau. This commitment from Labor would permanently secure the Plateau's long-term future.

This is a critical milestone in the campaign to save Radiata Plateau, as it is the first time a major party has committed to purchase the Plateau and add it to the national park. The Society was hoping that the NSW Liberals would make a similar commitment to purchase the Plateau before the State election, ensuring the conservation of the Plateau had bipartisan support, but this did not occur.

Other campaign activity

In the last 12 months campaign activity has also included:

- Launching of 3 short videos on the importance of the Plateau, featuring local residents and well known local botanist Wynn Jones.
- Numerous meetings with politicians including local state member Trish Doyle, local federal member Susan Templeman, Liberal State candidate Owen Laffin and NSW Upper House MLC Shayne Mallard.
- Social media has been central to the campaign with lots of interest and activity on the campaign webpages, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.
- Over 250 letters from community members advocating for the Plateau's protection sent to State and Federal politicians, as well as almost 150 emailed letters.
- Meetings and liaison with the Plateau's owners the Maharishi Foundation.