

## Land Use Achievements March 2019-March 2020

The Society's Land Use sub-Committee continue to advocate and campaign for improved environmental and conservation outcomes in relation to strategic planning, development and land use within the Blue Mountains community. The past 12 months have been a busy period for the sub-Committee.

In the last 12 months Land Use has

- Lodged 17 submissions or letters in relation to strategic planning and development matters in the Blue Mountains. This included comprehensive submissions to the Draft Local Strategic Planning Statement, BMCC Draft Delivery Program 2017-2021 and Operational Plan 2019-2020 and BMCC Draft Weed Management Strategic Plan.
- Attended a number of meetings with state government agencies and authorities including with senior staff Blue Mountains City Council;
- Attended a number of community workshops as well as attending most monthly Council meetings.
- Met with local Members of Parliament and local Councillors.

The committee also undertook some major campaigns including the following

- *Lawson Crown Lands Masterplan process.* Society representatives attended public consultations, made a comprehensive submission, encouraged members to make submissions including through Hut News, email updates and through articles in the Blue Mountains Gazette.
- *Land clearing at the old "Crocodile park" site at Wentworth Falls.* Council has written to a number of authorities with our concerns about the environmental impact of this land clearing on threatened species and communities, including Blue Mountains Swamps. The Society has made representations to Blue Mountains City Council, Commonwealth Environment Department, and local members Trish Doyle and Susan Templeman. A complaint by the Society to the Building Professional Board resulted in a fine being levied on the private building certifier who issued the compliance certificate approving the bushland clearing on the site.
- *"Zombie" development approvals.* The bushland clearing at the old "Crocodile park" site has highlighted the issue of so called "zombie" developments approvals. These are development approvals which may have been issued up to thirty years ago, and remain valid despite the development never proceeding. The Land Use Committee has been campaigning to have the legislation changed to ensure developments approved must be completed within a specified period, otherwise the approval lapses.

The Land Use Committee has also been involved in the reporting and documenting a number of suspected illegal dumping and pollution incidents, and has been following up on enforcement action with the respective authorities.

## **Leave Radiata Wild Campaign March 2019-2020**

The thirty-year campaign to conserve Radiata Plateau culminated in the Society led *Leave Radiata Wild* campaign which began in 2017. The campaign culminated in the wonderful result of the Plateau being purchased by the NSW Government and for inclusion in the national park system in October 2019.

Post the NSW state election in March 2019, the Society met with senior national parks staff and presented a lengthy and comprehensive document outlining the significant natural and cultural values of the Plateau. The Society lobbied for the National Parks and Wildlife Service to undertake a conservation assessment of the Plateau and provide advice to the new NSW Minister for the Environment Matt Kean.

In July 2019 the Plateau's owners Transcendental Meditation Group put the Plateau up for sale on the open market. The *Leave Radiata Wild* campaign entered a key stage and our efforts accelerated. This included

- An open letter to Minister Kean published in the Blue Mountains Gazette urging purchase.
- Accompanying media campaign in local and state wide media including print and radio.
- Letter writing campaign urging community members to write to Minister Kean advocating purchase.
- Meetings with politicians including local state member Trish Doyle, local federal member Susan Templeman, and NSW Upper House MLC Shayne Mallard.
- Increased social media via the campaign website, Instagram and Twitter sites as well as via the Society's Facebook site.
- Meetings and liaison with the Plateau's owners the Maharishi Foundation.

Then on 8 October 2019 came the amazing news. Minister Kean publicly announced that the State government had purchase the Plateau for inclusion in the national park system. The community's thirty year effort had finally culminated in the Plateau being protected for future generations. In the article in the Sydney Morning Herald announcing the purchase, Minister Kean specifically acknowledged the efforts of the Society to protect the Plateau.

*Environment Minister Matt Kean said he had received hundreds of letters from the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, which has been lobbying governments to protect the land, near Katoomba, for 35 years. "I know from the hundreds of letters I received that the plateau is widely loved by the community and its network of walking tracks are enjoyed regularly by local residents, bushwalkers, climbers and bird watchers," Mr Kean said.*