

Addendum to the summary of consultation outcomes report

This document is a summary of community and stakeholder feedback provided during information sessions and key stakeholder meetings

Background

As part of the consultation activities prescribed by the Community Engagement Strategy (CES) for the proposed lease of Crown land at Medlow Bath (Katoomba Airfield), four community information sessions and two key stakeholder meetings were held during June 2019.

This addendum should be read in conjunction with the [consultation outcomes document](#).

As guided by Section C5 of the [Community Engagement Guidance and Resources](#), this addendum is the summary of participation for the community information sessions and the targeted stakeholder meetings.

Summary of participation

Information sessions

Four information sessions were held in Katoomba: two sessions on Wednesday 19 June 2019 and a further two session on Tuesday 25 June 2019.

The information sessions were designed and advertised as 'drop-in, open house' style as the department was aware of divergent views within the community. This format was chosen to facilitate an equitable, respectful and safe environment for the community to discuss their concerns/support for the proposed lease.

At the time of the information sessions, attendees requested the department implement a town-hall style session, with questions and answers to the department and open forum. This request was accommodated.

At the conclusion of the information sessions, a number of community members expressed fear of 'community backlash' for sharing their views and thoughts on the proposed lease during the town-hall format. The views of these stakeholders was noted equally as those shared during the town-hall sessions.

A summary of participation for the information sessions is provided below.

- around 70-80 people attended each session
- many of the attendees chose to attend more than one information session
- attendees provided feedback that the choice of venue was not appropriate for town-hall style meetings
- there were divergent views expressed at each session
- potential negative impacts raised included:
 - loss of visual amenity
 - noise disruption
 - helicopters flying low and frequently disrupting privacy and creating safety risks,
 - impact on flora and fauna and nature based recreation

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- decline in property values, increased traffic, safety risks, lifestyle disruption
- decline in tourism and flow on impact to local business due to the disruption to the tranquillity of the area
- impact on lifestyle of the area and World Heritage listing
- increased bushfire risks with more aviation fuel on site
- cumulative impact of this proposal with other local and regional development
- potential positive impacts were also identified during the information sessions and included:
 - use of the site for amateur aviation activities
 - site is in a unique location to act as an emergency point in times of bushfire or rescue
 - increase in tourism and positive impact to local businesses as more people can visit the site
 - creation of an aviation link between Blue Mountains and regional communities
 - unique place for recreational aviation activities with a long history of co-existence
- attendees shared with the department the community value of tranquillity and how this was a major tourism advantage as well as lifestyle choice by those who moved to the area
- concerns raised about how lease compliance would be monitored, particularly in regards to flight paths
- discussion of other options for the site should the lease not proceed
- discussion around the history of site, previous lessee and the role of the airfield in emergency situations and recreational aviation
- the option to incorporate the land into the national park

Attendees asked the department a range of questions including the history of the lease, the expression of interest process, lease conditions and term, environment considerations, proposed use of the site and the consultation process.

The department collated the questions from the consultation and published an expanded frequently asked questions document on the department website.

At each session the department outlined how the community and stakeholders could make a submission and the time frame for the public exhibition.

Department staff provided their contact details to attendees for further consultation.

Targeted meetings

Two targeted stakeholder meetings with representatives of community interest groups were held on Wednesday 19 June 2019 and Tuesday 25 June 2019.

The purpose of these meetings was to provide a forum for group/community representatives to discuss the views of their members and to share information, ensuring community members who could not attend had an awareness of the proposed lease and how to make a submission.

Email invitations were sent to a wide range of community groups and community representatives who had also previously expressed interest in the project. Groups included Blue Mountains Economic Enterprise, Katoomba Airfield Community Group, Blue Mountains Conservation Society,

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Medlow Bath Residents' Association, GBM World Heritage Advisory Committee, Blue Mountains City Council, Blue Mountains Aviators Club, helicopter charter operator and Blackheath Resident's Group.

A number of community members also attended.

A summary of participation for the targeted stakeholder meetings is as follows:

- discussions were similar across both meetings
- The concerns and opportunities raised were similar in nature to those raised in the information sessions.
- the Medlow Bath Resident's Association presented the results of a membership vote, indicating majority do not support the proposed lease application
- concerns regarding impact on World Heritage Status were expressed
- aviation representatives shared their experiences of helicopter services across other communities, outlined regulations and requirements
- there was concern regarding the scale of the operation and what would be needed to achieve a return on investment
- participants expressed concern regarding the lack of details on the Fly Blue web site and questioned the previous Land Assessment
- participants suggested the scope of advertising regarding the proposed lease application be expanded

Each attendee was given the opportunity to discuss and share their thoughts with the group and the department noted both concerns and opportunities.

Government agency consultation

Submissions were received from government agencies and were published on the department's website and included in the [consultation outcomes document](#).

Actions following consultation

Following the information sessions and targeted stakeholder meetings the following actions occurred:

- the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) on the website was updated from twenty questions to sixty two, reflecting the questions asked by the community and stakeholders during consultation activities
- advertising was reviewed and increased, including radio and paid social media.

These actions ensured community members and interested stakeholders were aware of the public exhibition period and had access to current information.

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