



# Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute

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## **BMWHI Statement re potential changes to the BMCC's LEP - 11.3.2013**

The BMWHI is presently engaged in research to assess the possible environmental impacts of changes to the BMCC's Local Environment Plan due to the State Government's efforts to Standardize LEPs across NSW. One of the issues of critical concern is land use and development changes leading to increased storm water and silt runoff into the vulnerable hanging swamps of the upper Mountains region. These swamps are critical to the biodiversity of the World Heritage area and to the hydrological systems that supply water for the Sydney basin.

In the years before the region was finally awarded World Heritage status in 2000, the United Nations committee reviewing the nomination were concerned that the environmental assets could not be effectively protected given the existence of an entire city established on a ridge line running through the area. These concerns were at least assuaged by the strong environmental controls the Council had established through its 1991 LEP, and its subsequent extension in 2005.

However the removal of many of the locally specific controls on land use and urban development through the imposition of the State Government's Standard Instrument raise very real concerns about wider environmental impacts. In the context of anticipated climate change increases in weather extremes such as floods, droughts and fires there may well be the need for greater environmental control by the Council, not less.

The objective of our research is to assess these possible impacts the planned changes to the LEP may have and report back to the international community. In the final analysis if the UNESCO committee overseeing Natural World Heritage areas is sufficiently concerned they could well issue another notification to the Australian government over its management of a World Heritage asset, paralleling concerns raised in relation to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area last year.

Dr John Merson  
Executive Director

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*We acknowledge the Dharug, the Gundungurra, the Wanaruah, the Wiradjuri, the Darkinjung and the Tharawal Nations as the traditional custodians of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area*