



Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc

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Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow

10 May 2013

Mr R. Mackay
Chairperson
Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area
Advisory Committee
C/- NSW Office of Environment & Heritage
Blue Mountains Region
PO Box 552
Katoomba NSW 2780

Dear Mr Mackay

Impacts of a proposed Standard Instrument LEP (SI LEP) on the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area

As you know the Blue Mountains Conservation Society is a volunteer community organisation, with around 900 members, dedicated to conserving the World Heritage values of the Blue Mountains Region. As advised at our meeting with you yesterday, the Society recently launched a community campaign, "Hands of our LEPs!" in response to our concerns about the consolidation of the existing Blue Mountains City Council Local Environmental Plans 1991 and 2005 into a Standard Instrument LEP under current NSW planning legislation. Those concerns were outlined in an information sheet – 'Blue Mountains World Heritage Area at risk' – already provided to you.

The Society recently held a public meeting, attended by more than 100 local residents, to highlight our concerns and ensure the community was made aware of the risks to our environment and the World Heritage Area. The meeting outcomes and resolutions have also been provided to you.

In response to one of three resolutions endorsed at that meeting, the Society will be writing to the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities and Blue Mountains City Council requesting they consider the need for a strategic assessment under s.146 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*. The Society now requests that you formally write to Minister Burke advising him of the representations you have received from the Blue Mountains community about our concerns with the current LEP review process, and endorsing the need to consider such a strategic assessment.

While the Society has received verbal reassurances from Blue Mountains council staff, councillors, the NSW Minister for Planning and Infrastructure and the local Member for Macquarie that World Heritage values will be protected, the community remains concerned about the adequacy of the Standard Instrument LEP to protect those

significant values, especially in view of proposed major reforms to NSW planning legislation and processes outlined in the NSW government's recent White Paper.

To date the NSW Minister for Planning and Infrastructure has offered little, if any, flexibility to other councils in terms of departing from the Standard Instrument LEP and has refused to give an exemption to Blue Mountains City Council from the requirement to prepare a Standard Instrument. It seems highly unlikely that greater flexibility will be offered to Blue Mountains City Council in its application of environmental protection provisions, especially given the tight timeframe imposed by the NSW government for finalising the consolidated SI LEP.

The Society believes the Blue Mountains has a best practice, contemporary planning framework already in place, developed after extensive and thorough community input, and the SI LEP will be a significant and fundamental downgrade on LEPs 2005 and 1991. It represents a monumental step back in terms of environmental protection, the level and detail of mapping and information, and controls to ensure appropriate development in our unique City within a World Heritage National Park.

The introduction of a SI LEP is likely to result in negative impacts on the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, potentially risking its continuing World Heritage listing. As conservation of World Heritage Areas is a responsibility shared by both the State and Commonwealth governments, we believe the Commonwealth should be actively involved on this issue at the earliest possible stage. We have already expressed our concerns about the planning process to the federal Member for Macquarie, Mrs Louise Markus and the local federal duty Senator, Mr Doug Cameron, as well as the Federal Minister for the Environment and we will be writing to all relevant agencies requesting that they collaborate on a strategic assessment of the draft SI LEP as a matter of urgency.

I look forward to continuing discussions with you on this important issue.

Yours sincerely

Sue Morrison
Community Campaigner
Hands Off our LEPs
Blue Mountains Conservation Society