



Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc

ABN 38 686 119 087

PO Box 29 Wentworth Falls NSW 2782

Phone: (02) 4757 1872

E-Mail: bmcs@bluemountains.org.au Web Site: www.bluemountains.org.au

Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow

6 May 2013

MEDIA RELEASE

Residents call for improved community consultation on new LEP

More than a hundred people attended a meeting at Lawson on Sunday organised by the Blue Mountains Conservation Society to discuss progress on the new Blue Mountains Local Environmental Plan (LEP). The current LEPs are being revised to make them consistent with the NSW government mandated one-size-fits-all Standard LEP format.

The meeting gave almost unanimous support to three resolutions calling firstly on Blue Mountains City Council to improve communication to residents about the new LEP, secondly, to ensure environmental assessment and development controls are at least equivalent to the existing LEPs and thirdly to consult with the Commonwealth Environment Minister regarding a possible strategic assessment of impacts of the draft LEP on the World Heritage Area.

A petition also called for the public exhibition period to be at least three months.

Mayor Daniel Myles reassured concerned residents that every effort was being made to ensure that consolidation of the existing LEPs did not result in reduced environmental protection for the City within a World Heritage National Park.

Council's Manager of City Planning, Mr Andy Turner, explained the background to the LEP review process and the importance of meeting the state government's demand for completion of the new LEP as soon as possible.

Council has now prepared a 'without prejudice' draft plan for review by the NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure and Parliamentary Counsel, which is expected to be available for public exhibition during November/December this year.

Protection of swamps and threatened vegetation communities was one of many issues raised during the public meeting. Executive Director of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute, Mr John Merson, highlighted the importance of flexibility in the LEP provisions to allow for adaptive management of swamps in the face of climate change and urban development pressures.

Peter Ridgeway, President, Blue Mountains Conservation Society said, “We called the meeting as we were concerned that residents had little understanding or knowledge about the new LEP. The Society has a number of concerns, largely due to the requirement that it must comply with the Standard LEP format. While Council may be doing their best, it will be the Department of Planning and Infrastructure and the Minister of Planning who will have the final say. We also think the timetable is too tight and that a three month consultation period on the draft LEP is required.”

Standard LEP zonings are not directly transferable to existing Blue Mountains LEP zones, particularly for Living Conservation and Bushland Conservation areas on the urban bushland interface. “We are concerned some existing environmental protection LEP provisions will be moved to the Better Living Development Control Plan, and will therefore not be legally enforceable” said Mr Ridgeway.

Local architect and Cittaslow convenor, Mr Nigel Bell, expressed concern about retaining the unique character of the towns and villages of the Blue Mountains, particularly Katoomba and Leura which form the basis of the local tourism economy.

The Society’s ‘Hands Off our LEPs’ community campaigner, Ms Sue Morrison, requested at the meeting that Council establish a discussion forum on its Blue Mountains ‘Have Your Say’ website so residents can have an opportunity to express their concerns about the new LEP. “Outcomes of the Public Meeting including residents’ concerns will shortly be made available on the Society’s website, www.bluemountains.org.au.” said Ms Morrison.

The implications of the NSW government’s recently released White Paper ‘A New Planning System for NSW’ will be discussed at the Society’s next monthly meeting at 7.30pm on Thursday 30 May at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls. Everyone is welcome. RSVP to bmcs@bluemountains.org.au or 0418 292 672.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'P. Ridgeway', with a stylized, cursive script.

Peter Ridgeway
President, Blue Mountains Conservation Society