

**Précis of Dr John Merson's (Executive Director, Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute)
address to the public meeting held by Blue Mountains Conservation Society at Lawson on
5th May 2013.**

- When the Greater Blue Mountains was being considered for World Heritage listing, an International Union for Conservation of Nature report advised that runoff from the City of Blue Mountains into the Grose and Nepean rivers will always be a problem and will always detract from the integrity of the site.
- The upland swamps on the Blue Mountains plateau work to release water slowly into the ecosystems (national parks, World Heritage Area) below. Many endangered species rely on functioning swamps.
- Urbanisation is the greatest threat to swamps and water quality. Urbanisation results in increased stormwater discharges which increases downstream flooding, and creates declining stormwater quality and decreased groundwater recharge. This can have a very damaging effect on swamps. Urbanisation and development activity can also cause silting of the vulnerable swamps
- Blue Mountains Local Environmental Plans 1991 and 2005 recognised the importance of limiting hard surfaces and allowing soft surfaces and landscaping to absorb water and reduce stormwater runoff. Current Blue Mountains LEPs impose site coverage limitations and include strict provisions for stormwater management.
- [*Additional information:* In its recently released Draft Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney the state government has already set a target of 39,000 new homes in the Hawkesbury, Blue Mountains and Penrith areas by 2031. The target number for the Blue Mountains has not yet been made public, but a figure of 7,000 was mooted under the previous NSW Labor govt.]
- If current environmental protections are undermined by the new Standard Instrument LEP (SI LEP), and state planning policies allowing for an intensification of housing & development are allowed to apply, there could be a very negative impact on hydrology, retention of water in the landscape, upland swamps and swamps, endangered species etc downstream, and a loss of biodiversity and other World Heritage values. Ultimately the Blue Mountains World Heritage listing could be at risk. Some World Heritage areas have been de-listed because of poor management e.g. allowing over-development. The Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area is under scrutiny by UNESCO for this reason. This is a national embarrassment and has broader consequences.
- [*Additional information:* The Blue Mountains City Council has stated its doubts that the stringent stormwater management measures in our current LEPs can be transferred to the SI LEP.]
- Predicted impacts of climate change (drying of the swamps) only exacerbate the threats.
- What managers of national parks and World Heritage Areas, including the Blue Mountains City Council, need is greater flexibility and capacity for adaptation to manage natural systems in these circumstances, not a fixed, standardized management plan such as a SI LEP.