



Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc

ABN 38 686 119 087

PO Box 29 Wentworth Falls NSW 2782

Phone: (02) 4757 1872

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

Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow

15 March 2013

The Honourable Brad Hazzard MP
Minister for Planning and Infrastructure
Level 33 Governor Macquarie Tower
1 Farrer Place
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Mr Hazzard

Release of the Planning Review White Paper and subsequent public exhibition period

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is a volunteer community environmental group of over 800 members dedicated to conserving the World Heritage of the Blue Mountains. The Society is also affiliated with the Better Planning Network, a coalition of over 300 community groups working together to achieve a better planning system for NSW.

The Society believes that a robust responsive planning system which includes legislated public input is essential to ensuring environmental and conservation outcomes. In light of this, the Society made a detailed submission to the NSW Government's *A New Planning System for NSW – Green Paper*. The Green Paper signalled a complete overhaul to the NSW planning system, including significant changes in terms of public input and consultation and the way development is controlled, approved and undertaken in NSW. The Society had significant concerns with some of the proposals included in the Green Paper.

The Society is now writing to you in regard to the next stage in the planning reform process – the imminent release of the NSW Government's Planning System Review White Paper. We understand from recent media reports that the White Paper's release has been delayed and is now expected to occur in late April 2013. The Society is writing to you to strongly advocate that the public consultation period for the White Paper be, at a minimum, six months. The Society believes this period of public consultation is more than justified given:

- the complexity and extent of the reforms proposed,
- the general public's poor understanding of planning issues,
- the fact that the planning system, including development approval, impacts on everyone in the community not just one sector or interest group,

- local government needs to consult with local communities and report back through Council meetings – a process which will take time and effort by local Councils which frequently only meet monthly.

The Society also strongly advocates that the NSW Government, through the Department of Planning, organises an effective public consultation process for the White Paper, including an extensive round of community information briefings undertaken in partnership with local councils. In the Society's experience to date, there is little community knowledge or understanding in terms of the planning reforms the NSW government is proposing or their implications. In light of this, and the fact that the proposals are extensive and wide reaching and will impact on everybody, the government is beholden to ensure a thorough community consultation process is undertaken, including a legitimate public consultation period. Merely publishing the White Paper on a website and requesting formal written submissions is not enough.

The Society looks forward to an early reply to our concerns.

Yours sincerely

Lachlan Garland
President
T: (02) 4757 1929
M: 0415 317 078
E: lachlan.a.garland@bigpond.com