

INFORMATION SHEET

Impact on the Blue Mountains of the State Government's New Planning System for NSW and Metropolitan Regional Growth Plan



Did you know?

- The State Government is imposing a new planning regime on NSW that will transform the Blue Mountains into an overdeveloped outer suburb of Sydney. The new planning system for NSW (currently on exhibition as a draft Planning Bill, White Paper and the Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney to 2031) will replace all existing State and local planning and development rules.
- Environmental protection and assessment, orderly and controlled development and residential amenity will be replaced with a new system that promotes economic growth and development above all else. In the Blue Mountains this means all the rules set up over many years to protect the world heritage national parks, waterways, biodiversity, bushland, streetscapes and heritage will be overturned by State Government-imposed rules that guarantee fast-tracked and easy development approval.
- Residents, businesses and neighbours will have no say on at least 80 per cent of development that occurs next door to them or in their area. The first anyone will know about such development is when bushland is cleared and/or construction begins.
- The local community are meant to be involved in the preparation of three new types of State plans (NSW Planning Policies, Regional Growth Plans and Subregional Delivery Plans) that will dictate what happens in their local area. Many of these are being prepared right now without any meaningful local community input or knowledge, yet the NSW Government has declared that consultation on these plans rules out residents' right to have a say on future development.
- The Blue Mountains already has its first State plan under the new system – the Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney Regional Growth Plan. This Plan turns half the Blue Mountains up to and including Faulconbridge, and out to the edge of the national parks, into a Metropolitan Urban Area, targeted for high levels of growth. The rest of the Blue Mountains has been declared a "Metropolitan Rural Area" that can still be targeted for growth.
- The Blue Mountains will be part of a high growth Sydney West subregion joined with Penrith and Hawkesbury councils and targeted for a minimum extra 39,000 new dwellings over the next 18 years. Growth beyond this figure is encouraged. A Sydney West Subregional Delivery Plan will directly rezone land and impose development on the Blue Mountains that overrides local controls and protections in order to achieve this target.
- The State Government has threatened to take over any local councils that fail to reach their subregional growth targets. This means if the Blue Mountains does not release a big enough portion of the 39,000 new lots each year it could be sacked.
- New Local Plans, that have to echo the State plans, will have only a few simple zones such as one residential zone, one rural zone, a "resources" zone (for mining) and only one combined Environmental Protection/Hazard Management zone mainly covering national parks. Under these new Local Plans, the Blue Mountains will lose many existing areas of private and public environmentally protected lands and the ability to ensure a balance between environmental protection, residential amenity and orderly development in the Blue Mountains.
- The new Local Plan with its new simple broad and "open" zones will allow most types of development to occur in most areas, with only the most incompatible types of development needing to go through an assessment process to be approved. Under the new planning regime the State Government has declared that refusal of development, no matter what it is, is not an option.
- The standards and codes applied to development in Penrith or anywhere else in Sydney will be the same as those applied to the Blue Mountains. The Blue Mountains will no longer have its own development control plans. This means the sprawling McMansion style estates spreading across Sydney will also be imposed across the Blue Mountains landscape.
- Most development will be approved by a private certifier (appointed by the developer) under a 10-day tick-box code process with no environmental assessment or consideration of neighbours and no requirement for detailed plans at the development application stage.

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What you can do:

Contact your local State member and write to the Planning Minister Brad Hazzard and Premier Barry O'Farrell (contact details below). Lobby your local councillors to do the same.

Read the Society's submissions on the White Paper and draft Planning Bill and the Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney, available to download from www.bluemountains.org.au. Also read Blue Mountains City Council's submissions available from <http://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/sustainableliving/localenvironmentalplans/newplanningsystemfornsw>.

Use those points and the points on this sheet in your own submission (**due 28th June 2013**). To make a submission, go to <http://strategies.planning.nsw.gov.au/MetropolitanStrategyforSydney/Haveyoursay.aspx> (Metro Plan) and http://planspolicies.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=5927 (White Paper). You can also use these points in your communications with local councillors, local state member, Planning Minister and Premier.

Ask for:

- the Blue Mountains World Heritage National Parks, environmentally sensitive areas, bushland, waterways, and streetscapes to remain protected.
- environmental protection to be given as much weight as social and economic considerations in the new planning system
- local residents and businesses to not only have the chance for significant and meaningful participation at the planning stage in all strategic plans, as it does now, but to also retain its right to comment on development in the local area as it does now.
- the Blue Mountains to not be included in a high growth subregional delivery plan for Western Sydney, and not have such high growth targets so inappropriately imposed on it. Instead the Blue Mountains should be included in a Regional Plan that joins it to the West with which it already has a strong economic, social and geographic connection.
- new local plans to retain a good range of land use zones, particularly environmental zones, so environmental protections, residential amenity and orderly development can continue to occur side by side as they do now.
- the Blue Mountains to be able to have and retain development controls and standards appropriate to its landscape and environment, not a "one size fits all" approach that will allow the sprawling estates across Sydney to be imposed on the highly environmentally sensitive landscape of the Blue Mountains.
- development in environmentally sensitive areas, (most residential development outside the centre of towns and villages) to not be categorised as complying or code so proper environmental assessment can continue as part of the development process. Only minor development in non-environmentally sensitive areas should avoid merit assessment.

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