

UPPER BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY LTD.

NEWSLETTER NO. 53 - AUGUST, 1963 - Price 20¢.

Editor: R.W. Alcorn, 45 Rutland Road, Nedlow Bath.

COMING MEETINGS: AT THE CONSERVATION HUT, VALLEY OF THE WATERS RESERVE,
VALLEY ROAD, WENTWORTH FALLS.

Friday, September 30, 8.00 p.m. - Members' night. Bring a few of your favourite slides.

Friday, October 20, 8.00 p.m. - Refer to local papers for details.

Friday, November 25, 8.00 p.m. - Refer to local papers for details.

THERE IS NO MEETING IN DECEMBER.

COMING MONTHLY WALKS:

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December 3: Anas Bar-El-Q and cliffside stroll.
Details in November newsletter.

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S T O P P R E S S

COUNCIL ELECTIONS, SEPTEMBER, 1963.

With the number of conservation issues facing concerned residents living in the Blue Mountains, your Society has decided to conduct a 'Meet the Candidates' of Wards 1 and 2. This meeting will be held at Merriwa Street Public School in Katoomba on Saturday 17th September, 1963 from 3.00 to 5.00 p.m.

Come along and hear what the candidates have to say.

ILLNESS OF SOCIETY'S PRESIDENT

Members will be sorry to hear that our President, Graham Alcorn, has been out of action with a long illness in Katoomba Hospital.

He came out Tuesday, 9th August, and will be convalescing for several weeks in Sydney.

We feel sure that Society Members will wish Graham a speedy recovery. His wise leadership has been sorely missed by our Society.

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APPEAL FOR VOLUNTEERS TO HELP AT 'THE HUT'.

Each year our Society gives large donations to other conservation groups to help them preserve our National Heritage. Last year the Society donated approximately \$909 to approved organisations.

The bulk of this money comes from sales at our Hut. Over the years the number of visitors to the Hut has increased enormously, making it almost impossible for only one person to cope with serving them all. We therefore feel we need more people to help with hut duty, so we can have two people on at all times. If you can spare one day every two months, or even less frequently, please phone Beverley Thompson on 57-2076.

This work is not arduous and involves making cups of tea and serving sweets, etc. It is also an opportunity to meet and speak with other interesting people.

PLEASE HELP YOUR SOCIETY.

VOLUNTEER REQUIRED TO TAKE OVER ORDERING OF HUT SUPPLIES

Our Society also needs someone to take on the duties of ordering goods for sale at the Hut such as Soft Drinks, Sweets, etc.

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If you are in a position to help, please ring the Treasurer for full details on 67-7139.

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NOTE: Two basic books on the Mountains -

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GEORGE CALEY, 1770-1825: This makes him 34 years of age when he did his journey. Born in Yorkshire - son of a horse dealer - dissatisfied with his lot, he studied botany and was eventually sent out to New South Wales by Banks to collect natural history specimens - said to be a "difficult" man to get on with, but conscientious. On his journey which commenced at Kurradjong Heights on November 3, he was accompanied by three ticket-of-leave men - they travelled by foot and carried 100-3/4 lbs. between them - he reached as far as Mt. Banks and was dismayed by the sight of the rugged Grose Valley and returned to Parramatta which he reached on November 23 - he left the Colony in 1810 with Governor Bligh.

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As members will know the greatest issue facing conservationists on the Blue Mountains at the moment is the proposal to build a \$25M Resort Centre on part of the lower nine holes of Leura Golf Course.

This has involved your Management Committee and Members of the Society in Special Meetings, and the preparation of articles for the Newspapers, mainly prepared by your President, Graham Alcorn as well as a detailed submission, a copy of which is reproduced in this Newsletter.

The front page story as reported by "The Blue Mountains Gazette" dated 10th August, 1983 reports :-

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The hearing, which had entered its fourth day when the Gazette went to press, attracted a wide variety of groups, with people queuing for more than 20 minutes to be recorded as speakers. (In actual fact, it would have been closer to an hour).

The Gazette further went on to report that:-

"As well, Council has previously received submissions requesting that an inquiry be held under section 60 of the State Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. The hearing is being conducted by Commissioner, Mr. Bill Simpson, who was appointed by the Governor of N.S.W.

In his opening statement to the capacity filled room, Mr. Simpson stressed that he had no connection with the State Department of Environment and Planning, council groups or those presenting submissions either for or against the resort proposal at the hearing.

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During the hearing on Monday, the Mayor, Ald. Quirk was asked to explain Council's involvement in showing the developers the Leura and alternative sites for the proposed resort."

We await with interest the Commissioner's Report.

* Reprinted with kind permission of the Editor, Blue Mountains Gazette.

The following submission was made to the Blue Mountains City Council:-

SUBMISSION TO THE BLUE MOUNTAINS CITY COUNCIL
ON PROPOSED CONFERENCE CENTRE ON LEURA GOLF COURSE.

The Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society makes the following submission in response to the Blue Mountains City Council's advertisement on 22nd June, 1983.

(Cont.)

The Society is of the opinion that the issues raised in this submission are of such significance that they should be the subject of a public hearing before the Council decides whether the Local Environment Plan No. 4 should be varied. We request a hearing under Section 60 (1) (a) of the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act, 1979.

The following are the Society's grounds for objection to the proposed development:-

- 1) Despoilation of the escarpment which is listed in the National Estate.
- 2) Intrusion of development into Reserved Open Space.
- 3) Loss of recreation and buffer land by rezoning.
- 4) Trade-off of our heritage for local employment which cannot be guaranteed.
- 5) Inadequacy of the Nexus Environmental Report.
- 6) Fire danger to the development with the resultant pressure for hazard reduction of adjacent bushland.
- 7) The about-face attitude of Council towards escarpment preservation.

ESCARPMENT PRESERVATION:

We draw attention to Section 4.2, page 4.7, of the Nexus Environmental Report, which states that the Blue Mountains National Park and the south facing escarpments which border the Jamieson and Kedumba Valleys have been listed by the Australian Heritage Commission as part of the National Estate. The Blue Mountains National Park is shown in the Commission's 1991 Report as an example under Criteria No. 6, (i.e. Aesthetic Outstanding Natural or Man-Influenced Landscapes), along with three other examples which are -

- Port Campbell National Park
- South West Tasmania
- The Great Barrier Reef

The last two parks, of course, are World Heritage Areas. The listing of the Blue Mountains National Park as part of the National Estate was upon the recommendation of the Blue Mountains City Council. Whilst this listing limits the activities in the area of Commonwealth authorities only, it nevertheless implies a moral obligation on all planning bodies.

Without doubt, the cliffs and escarpments of the Blue Mountains are the features which give the region its distinctive character and world renowned appeal as a natural scenic resource.

Like the seashores, these areas should belong to the public, and no development should be allowed to interfere with their natural character. To even consider siting a \$25 million, high-intensity development on this prominent part of our national heritage seems to us to be entirely unacceptable both ecologically and morally.

We are appalled that the Department of Planning and Environment has informed Council that a Local Environmental Study is not required for this \$25 million project and we intend to seek legal advice in this matter.

INTRUSION INTO PUBLIC RESERVES

An even worse aspect is that the site is part of a tongue of land which intrudes into public reserves, and is surrounded on three sides by historic national scenic reserves which date back to the last century. Back in 1960 when the lower nine holes were formed, our Society protested vigorously against the granting of a portion of the Valley of the Waters Reserve to the Golf Club, on an exchange basis.

However, at least the land is zoned Private Recreation and with this limited land use, it acts as a buffer between the settlement and the reserves.

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To place any tourist hotel development on this tongue of land must have a drastic effect on the ecology of the reserves. But to place on this site a development so much larger than any existing in the Blue Mountains must multiply the problem three, four or more times.

The aptly named 'Valley of the Waters' has been used by the public for natural recreation for at least one hundred years. It is undoubtedly one of the most pristine and beautiful of all Blue Mountains reserves, and its main features are its streams, pools and waterfalls and a large stand of Cool-Temperate to Warm-Temperate rainforest which extends westward under the cliffs. This is the largest stand of rainforest which has not suffered interference below the southern escarpment. It is particularly important that it should be preserved.

The proposed resort is sited on a ridge overlooking and draining into the Valley of the Waters and into Gladstone Pass Valley. The effect on the hydrology of this wonderful reserve of a tourist reserve covering 9.6 hectares and catering for up to 900 people will be disastrous.

Even the Nexus Environmental Report admits that siltation during construction is going to be a problem, and that it is not possible to construct an adequate trap to stop oil from car parking areas contaminating streams.

This report also admits that the pressure on surrounding bushland reserves and tracks from a concentration of up to 900 people could be deleterious and makes the outrageous suggestion that the bush, and even some of the tracks, be fenced off!

The question of land disturbance, tree removal, siltation and other ecological disturbance arising from the reorganisation of the lower nine holes of the golf course is not even dealt with. This could have quite a considerable effect on the environment.

CHANGE OF ZONING:

One of the great problems facing the Blue Mountains City Council Town Planners is the heritage of the unplanned past where there is already far too much alienated land.

As recently as January, 1982, the Blue Mountains City Council rejected a Leura Golf Club application to rezone four acres of recreation land in St. Georges Road for a residential subdivision. At the time, the Town Planner stated 'There is no shortage of residentially-zoned land that would warrant a review of the zoning of this land.' This statement, and the Council decision on this application, is equally valid for the present one.

It is a matter of some concern that the Nexus Environmental Consultants were not asked to evaluate alternate sites, and it seems to us to be an irresponsible action by Blue Mountains City Council to offer the developer a site zoned for recreation.

It is of interest also to note the historic degeneration of the zoning. First, in 1968, the land is taken from the long established public Valley of the Waters reserve, rezoned Private Recreation and added to the Leura Golf Course. This resulted in the walking track to Inspiration Point being cut off.

Now it is proposed that 35% of the Private Recreation zoned area be rezoned to allow the construction of a huge tourist hotel. The State Conservation Movement is gravely concerned at the general trend in recent years to eat into recreation reserves.

CREATION OF EMPLOYMENT.

Publicity in favour of the development stresses the amount of employment which will be created. If another site were chosen, obviously the same amount of employment opportunity would be created. The implication, therefore, is that the developers will not proceed unless they are offered this favourable site on the escarpment.

If this is accepted, a very, very unfortunate and untenable precedent would be

(Cont.)

set, i.e. let us trade our heritage, and a part of the national and world heritage, for local employment which cannot be guaranteed.

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT:

The report prepared in three weeks by Nexus Environmental Studies Pty. Ltd. is not concerned with whether the resort should be permitted on the proposed site, but with finding ways to justify the development application being granted.

This does not seem to be the fault of Nexus Environmental Studies Pty. Ltd. Mr. Andrews, the Manager, is quoted in the Blue Mountains Gazette, June 29, Page 1, as saying: "The report restricted recommendations to an outline of measures required to mitigate possible impact of the development."

It appears to be a "yes man" report, commissioned by a Council which has already made up its mind that the scheme is to go ahead. The Council is therefore now seeking public justification for the abandonment of its environmental policies and planning principles. Has the "red carpet" been rolled out for the developer?

FIRE HAZARD:

Council is fully aware of the danger of development in natural areas along ridge tops. For this reason, the proposed site is unacceptable. In addition, we believe that the south-west part of the building would be on a slope greater than 1 in 6; which is greater than that recommended by fire authorities.

Construction of the hotel could lead to the owners demanding hazard reduction in the adjoining bush to the south, thus adding more pressure to the natural environment.

PAST BLUE MOUNTAINS CITY COUNCIL ACTIONS AND POLICIES:

Our Society has repeatedly advocated that, in view of the national scenic importance of the Blue Mountains, State and Federal funding was needed to protect the environment. The only Federal Government which has made a significant contribution in this regard was the Whitlam Government, through their Department of Regional and Urban Development.

Significantly, a large part of this money granted to acquire environmentally sensitive land was spent by the Blue Mountains City Council on buying land on the escarpment side of the Cliff Drive, Katoomba and adding it to the adjacent scenic reserve. In this way Silver Mist, near Echo Point, was bought and turned into a pleasant, restful picnic area. An earlier development application for a motel on the Silver Mist site was rejected by the Blue Mountains City Council following protests by residents.

Also, during this period, considerable grant money was spent on environmental studies and reports in connection with the formulation of the Town Plan. Out of these arose the 1974 Statement of Objectives which, under Policy 6, Action Priorities A & C, deals specifically with the need for escarpment preservation.

More specific is the Blue Mountains City Council Commission No. 4 on Critical Environmental Areas Prepared by Urban Systems Corporation in 1975.

This report states, on page 31:-

"Large areas of the Mountains are rugged, diverse, natural bushland landscapes. These areas form the basis of what are probably the best known scenic mountain landscapes in Australia. These escarpments and bushland valleys and streams are the chief components of this environment."

All of these last named components in the area will be affected by the development.

On page 20, under the heading 'Council Acquisitions', the report states:-

"Of particular concern are those escarpment areas which are not adjacent to the National Parks rearranged boundaries, which could be used for recreation purposes, (lookouts, picnics, etc.). A band of open space should stretch along all northern and southern escarpment areas all escarpments not suited to

National Park inclusion should be considered for purchase by Council.

In this case of course, the Council is not confronted with the difficult problem of raising funds to purchase the escarpment for its preservation. The land is already zoned Open Space, Private Recreation. In accord with the above policies and precedents, Council should reject any proposals to change the zoning.

The Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society earnestly appeals to Council to very seriously reconsider the consequences of allowing a huge development on such environmentally sensitive land.

We will live to regret it if undesirable developments are permitted to take place in critical environmental areas.

We repeat our request for a Public Hearing under Section 63 (1)(a) of the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act, 1979.

(Signed) Graham Alcorn,
PRESIDENT.

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In a letter to our Society, our Patron voiced his concern:

"You are obviously aware that I am very interested in the trends of Local Government and the environment, and your problem with the Leura Golf Course Tourist Resort Proposal, is a classical example.

I am also concerned about the way in which the Department of Environment and Planning lets Councils off the hook with environmental studies pursuant to Local Environmental Plans. I would be pleased to know if your Society makes any progress with its attempts to obtain legal advice on this matter. There is no doubt that the D.E.P. plays to the developer far too often.

I am somewhat surprised to know that you are having so much trouble with your Council. You might remember that when I visited you some time ago and spoke at a meeting, the new Blue Mountains City Council was just about taking up office and three aldermen attended the meeting. I got the impression that you were to have plenty of sympathy from an understanding Council. Wasn't there some talk of appointing an environmental expert as a member of the staff? What has gone wrong?

There is no doubt that consultants are a waste of time. They always attempt to justify the development of the client and I see no solution to this until there is established, a bank of approved private consultants. We also need public funding so that the financially limited can go to court. It is stupid to provide "standing" for all and sundry and then expect the paupers to find the money for the legal beagles.

All strength to your cause and many thanks for remembering me.

Your sincerely,

(Signed) Allen A. Strom.

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A FURTHER BRIEF REPORT OF SOME OF THE ACTIVITIES OF OUR SOCIETY OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS.

In the February issue of our Newsletter, your Management Committee decided to include details of some of the more important work of the various committees of our Society. This was done so that Members would be better informed as to our Society's activities and achievements. The following is a further listing of some of this work as well as details of correspondence.

* After receipt of a letter from Mr. Bob Debus, M.P. and Member for the Blue Mountains regarding Medium Density housing and Surplus Public Land.

- a special meeting was held. Further correspondence with Mr. Debus and Mr. Eric Bedford, Minister for Planning and Environment has failed to completely satisfy our Society.
- * As mentioned in our Newsletter No. 51, our submission regarding Crown Land at Water Nymphs Dell, Wentworth Falls, together with a most generous donation of adjoining land by Society Member Len Symes has now been approved by the Minister for Local Government and Lands, Mr. A.R.L. Gordon. A wonderful result!
 - * A further submission put to Council on additional measures necessary to protect the whole of Water Nymphs Dell catchment area.
 - * Two special meetings convened by the Colong Committee and held at the "Hut". The purpose of these meetings were to discuss Sand Mining, Environmental Survey, Laura Conference/Resort Hotel and Heritage Study. The meetings were attended by the Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society, Friends of the Earth, the Colong Committee and, of course, our Society.
 - * Members of your Management Committee were invited to attend a meeting at Council Chambers with other interested groups to discuss a Heritage Study to be undertaken by Croft and Associates Pty. Ltd. on behalf of Council. We decided that our input would be on escarpments and endangered creek systems supplying the major tourist waterfalls. A Committee was formed and after several meetings and a number of inspections, a detailed submission was forwarded.
 - * Numerous meetings have been held to formulate Society Guidelines. These are still in the course of discussion.
 - * After a report regarding the dumping of tyres in the bush adjacent to the Blue Mountains National Park at Lawson, an inspection was carried out and the report found to be correct. Council has been informed and are investigating.
 - * The Society has been involved in preparations for a proposed barbecue to be held at Lewnes Plateau for some 200 delegates who will be attending the Australian Conservation Foundation Conference at Blackheath in September of this year.
 - * A submission has been sent fully supporting Council's plans for the preservation and protection of Shipley Plateau. Council was commended for their initiative.
 - * A proposal has been put to Council to build cabins on Kings Tableland Reserve. Meetings have been attended and a submission lodged with Blue Mountains City Council objecting to the proposal.

A SELECTION OF A FEW OF OUR LETTERS:

- * To Land Board Office offering assistance in the erection of signs, etc., along the "Six Foot Track". No reply has been received.
- * From Council thanking our Society for its support re the closure of the road to Harrow Neck.
- * From the Nature Conservation Council regarding a meeting to discuss Urban Lushland Management and Fire Protection.
- * From the National Trust seeking the Society's support in achieving the objectives of the Trust Policy Paper "Hawkesbury - Nepean River Basin."
- * From the Nature Conservation Council asking for our support in seeking protection of valuable rainforest areas in the Hastings Valley and Barrington Tops.
- * To the Blue Mountains City Council approving in principle the building of a conference centre on the old Chateau Napier site at Laura. (Not to be confused with that proposed for Laura Golf Course).

LAND PRESERVATION FUND COMMITTEE:

Barbecue: On 24th May we had a very happy day despite rather miserable weather which kept us confined to the Hut. Success was largely due to the delicious salads and biscuits provided and attractively arranged by Beth Sherlock and to the skill of the barbecuer, Keith Sherlock. Many thanks to both of them.

The result was contented customers and \$70 added to the Fund.

COMING EVENTS:

AN OPPORTUNITY TALLE will be held in the Hut over the next long weekend (30th September-3rd October). Members will have first choice at the September General Monthly Meeting. Markita Honinger is the organiser and would like to hear from members who have goods to donate (Phone: 57-191).

THE SPRING SALE OF NATIVE PLANTS will be held in the Hut on 29th and 30th October from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. As usual, there will be an excellent variety of plants suitable for the Blue Mountains at very reasonable prices.

On Saturday, 29th October, at 11 a.m., Jill Dark will give a talk concentrating on local plants, for the benefit of growers and lovers of native plants. Jill is a knowledgeable and popular speaker; members and friends are urged to take this opportunity to learn about the plants they see around them in the local bush.

This version of the Newsletter was re-typed from the original by Phoebe Coster in September 2022 to enable search engines to 'see' the text. Minor changes have been made to correct typographical errors and to add clarity.

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6. Fire danger to the development with the resultant pressure for hazard reduction of adjacent bushland.
7. The about-face attitude of Council towards escarpment preservation.

ESCARPMENT PRESERVATION:

We draw attention to Section 4.2, page 4.7, of the Nexus Environmental Report which states that the Blue Mountains National Park and the south facing escarpments which border the Jamieson and Kedumba Valleys have been listed by the Australian Heritage Commission as part of the National Estate. The Blue Mountains National Park is shown in the Commission's 1981 Report as an example under Criteria No 6, (ie, Aesthetic Outstanding Natural or Man-Influenced Landscapes), along with three other examples which are -

- Port Campbell National Park
- South West Tasmania
- The Great Barrier Reef

The last two parks, of course, are World Heritage Areas. The listing of the Blue Mountains National Park as part of the National Estate was upon the recommendation of the Blue Mountains City council. Whilst this listing limits the activities in the area of Commonwealth authorities only, it nevertheless implies a moral obligation on all planning bodies.

Without doubt, the cliffs and escarpments of the Blue Mountains are the features which give the region its distinctive character and world renowned appeal as a natural scenic resource.

Like the seashores, these areas should belong to the public, and no development should be allowed to interfere with their natural character. To even consider siting a \$25 million high intensity development on this prominent part of our National Heritage seems to us to be entirely unacceptable both ecologically and morally.

We are appalled that the Department of Planning and Environment has informed Council that a Local Environment Study is not required for this \$25 million project and we intend to seek legal advice in this matter.

INTRUSION INTO PUBLIC RESERVES:

An even worse aspect is that the site is part of a tongue of land which intrudes into public reserves, and is surrounded on three sides by historic national scenic reserves which date back to the last century. Back in 1968 when the lower nine holes were formed, our Society protested vigorously against the granting of a portion of the Valley of the Waters Reserve to the Gold Club, on an exchange basis.

However, at least the land is zoned Private Recreation and with this limited land use. It acts as a buffer between the settlement and the reserves.

To place any tourist hotel development on this tongue of land must have a drastic effect on the ecology of the reserves. But to place on this site a development so much larger than any existing in the Blue Mountains must multiply the problem three, four or more times.

The aptly names "Valley of the Waters" has been used by the public for natural recreation for at least one hundred years. It is undoubtedly one of the most pristine and beautiful of all Blue Mountains reserves, and its main features are its streams, pools and waterfalls and a large stand of Cool-Temperate to Warm-Temperate rainforest which extends westward under the cliffs. This is the largest stand of rainforest which has not suffered interference below the southern escarpment. It is particularly important that it should be preserved.

The proposed resort is sited on a ridge overlooking and draining into the Valley of the Waters and into Gladstone Pass Valley. The effect on the hydrology of this wonderful reserve of a tourist reserve covering 9.6 hectares and catering for up to 900 people will be disastrous.

Even the Nexus Environmental Report admits that siltation during construction is going to be a problem, and that it is not possible to construct an adequate trap to stop oil from car parking areas contaminating streams.

This report also admits that the pressure on surrounding bushland reserves and tracks from a concentration of up to 900 people could be deleterious and makes the outrageous suggestion that the bush, and even some of the tracks, be fenced off!

The question of land disturbance, tree removal, siltation and other ecological disturbances arising from the reorganisation of the lower nine holes of the golf course is not even dealt with. This could have quite a considerable effect on the environment.

CHANGE OF ZONING:

One of the great problems facing the Blue Mountains City Council Town Planners is the heritage of the unplanned past where there is already far too much alienated land.

As recently as January, 1982, the Blue Mountains City Council rejected a Leura Golf Club application to rezone four acres of recreation land in St Georges Road for a residential subdivision. At the time, the Town Planner stated "There is no shortage of residentially-zoned land that would warrant a review of the zoning of this land." This statement, and the Council decision on this application, is equally valid for the present one.

It is a matter of some concern that the Nexus Environment Consultants were not asked to evaluate alternate sites, and it seems to us to be an irresponsible action by Blue Mountains City Council to offer the developer a site zoned for recreation.

It is of interest also to note the historic degeneration of the zoning. First, in 1968, the land is taken from the long established public Valley of the Waters reserve, zoned Private Recreation and added to the Leura Golf Course. This resulted in the walking track to Inspiration Point being cut off.

Now it is proposed that 35% of the Private Recreation zoned area be rezoned to allow the construction of a huge tourist hotel. The State Conservation Movement is gravely concerned at the general trend in recent years to eat into recreation reserves.

CREATION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Publicity in favour of the development stresses the amount of employment which will be created. If another site were chosen, obviously the same amount of employment opportunity would be created. The implication, therefore, is that the developers will not proceed unless they are offered this favourable site on the escarpment.

If this is accepted, a very, very unfortunate and untenable precedent would be set, ie, let us trade our heritage, and a part of the national and world heritage, for local employment which cannot be guaranteed.

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT:

The report prepared in three weeks by Nexus Environmental Studies Pty Ltd. is not concerned with whether the resort should be permitted on the proposed site, but with finding ways to justify the development application being granted.

This does not seem to be the fault of Nexus Environmental Studies Pty, Ltd. Mr Andrews, the Manager, is quoted in the Blue Mountains Gazette, June 29, Page 1, as saying "The report restricted recommendation to an outline of measures required to mitigate possible impact of the development."

It appears to be a "yes man" report, commissioned by a Council which has already made its mind that the scheme is to go ahead. The Council is therefore now seeking public justification for the abandonment of its environmental policies and planning principles. Has the "red carpet" been rolled out for the developer?

FIRE HAZARD:

Council is fully aware of the danger of development in natural areas along ridge tops. For this reason, the proposed site is unacceptable. In addition, we believe that the south-west part of the building would be on a slope greater than 1 in 6; which is greater than that recommended by fire authorities.

Construction of the hotel could lead to the owners demanding hazard reduction in the adjoining bush to the south, thus adding more pressure to the natural environment.

PAST BLUE MOUNTAINS CITY COUNCIL ACTIONS AND POLICIES:

Our Society has repeatedly advocated that, in view of the national scenic importance of the Blue Mountains, State and Federal funding was needed to protect the environment. The only Federal Government which has made a significant contribution in the regard was the Whitlam Government, through their Department of Regional and Urban Development.

Significantly, a large part of this money granted to acquire environmentally sensitive land was spent by the Blue Mountains City Council on buying land on the escarpment side of the Cliff Drive, Katoomba and adding it to the adjacent scenic reserve. In this way Silver Mist, near Echo Point, was bought and turned into a pleasant, restful picnic area.

An earlier development application for a motel on the Silver Mist site was rejected by the Blue Mountains City Council following protests by residents.

Also, during this period, considerable grant money was spent on environmental studies and reports in connection with the formulation of the Town Plan. Out of these arose the 1976 Statement of Objectives which, under Policy 6, Action Priorities A & C, deals specifically with the need for escarpment preservation.

More specific is the Blue Mountains City Council Commission No 4 on Critical Environmental Areas Prepared by Urban Systems Corporation in 1975

This report states, on page 3:-

“Large areas of the Mountains are rugged, diverse, natural bushland landscapes. These areas form the basis of what are probably best known scenic mountain landscapes in Australia. These escarpments and bushland valleys and streams are the chief components of this environment.”

All of these last named components in the area will be affected by the development.

On page 20, under the heading “Council Acquisitions”, the report states:-

“Of particular concern are those escarpment areas which are not adjacent to the National Parks rearranged boundaries, which could be used for recreation purposes, (lookouts, picnics, etc.). A band of open space should stretch along all northern and southern escarpment areas....all escarpments not suited to a National Park inclusion should be considered for purchase by Council.”

In this case of course, the Council is not confronted with the difficult problem of raising funds to purchase the escarpment for its preservation. The land is already zoned Open Space, Private Recreation. In accord with the above policies and precedents, Council should reject any proposals to change the zoning.

The Upper Blue Mountains Conservation Society earnestly appeals to Council to very seriously reconsider the consequences of allowing a huge development on such environmentally sensitive land.

We will live to regret it if undesirable developments are permitted to take place in critical environmental areas.

We repeat our request for a Public Hearing under Section 68 (1) (a) of the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act, 1979.

(Signed) Graham Alcorn
PRESIDENT.

In a letter to our Society, our Patron voiced his concern:

“You are obviously aware that I am very interested in the trends of Local Government and the environment, and your problem with the Leura Golf Course Tourist Resort Proposal, is a classical example.

I am also concerned about the way in which the Department of Environment and Planning lets Councils off the hook with environmental studies pursuant to Local Environmental Plans. I would be pleased to know if your Society makes any progress with its attempts to obtain legal advice on this matter. There is no doubt that the D.E.P. plays to the developer far too often.

I am somewhat surprised to know that you are having so much trouble with your Council. You might remember that when I visited you some time ago and spoke at a meeting, the new Blue Mountains City Council was just about taking up office and three aldermen attended the meeting. I got the impression that you were to have plenty of sympathy from an understanding Council. Wasn't there some talk of appointing an environmental expert as a member of the staff? What has gone wrong?

There is no doubt that consultants are a waste of time. They always attempt to justify the development of the client and I see no solution to this until there is established, a bank of approved private consultants. We also need public funding so that the financially limited can go to court. It is stupid to provide “standing” for all and sundry and then expect the paupers to find the money for the legal beagles.

All strength to your cause and many thanks for remembering me.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) Allen A Strom.

A FURTHER REPORT OF SOME OF THE ACTIVITIES OF OUR SOCIETY OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS.

In the February issue of our Newsletter, your Management Committee decided to include details of some of the more important work of the various committees of our Society. This was done so that Members would be better informed as to our Society's activities and achievements. The following is a further listing of some of this work as well as details of correspondence.

- After receipt of a letter from Mr Bob Debus , M.P. and Member for the Blue Mountains regarding Medium Density housing and Surplus Public Land a special meeting was held. Further correspondence with Mr Debus and Mr Eric Bedford, Minister for Planning and Environment has failed to completely satisfy our Society.
- As mentioned in our Newsletter No 51, our submission regarding Crown Land at Water Nymphs Dell, Wentworth Falls, together with a most generous donation of adjoining land by Society Member Len Symes has now been approved by the Minister for Local Government and Lands, Mr A R L Gordon. A wonderful result!
- A further submission put to Council on additional measures necessary to protect the whole of Water Nymphs Dell catchment.

- Two special meetings convened by the Colong Committee and held at the “Hut”. The purpose of these meetings were to discuss Sand Mining, Environmental Survey, Leura Conference/Resort and Heritage Study. The meetings were attended by the Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society, Friends of the Earth, the Colong Committee and, our Society.
- Members of your Management Committee were invited to attend a meeting at Council Chambers with other interested groups to discuss a Heritage Study to be undertaken by Croft and Associates Pty. Ltd. on behalf of Council. We decided that our input would be on escarpments and endangered creek systems supplying the major tourist waterfalls. A Committee was formed and after several meetings and a number of inspections, a detailed sub-mission was forwarded.
- Numerous meetings have been held to formulate Society Guidelines. These are still in the course of discussion.
- After a report regarding the dumping of tyres in the bush adjacent to the Blue Mountains National Park at Lawson, an inspection was carried out and the report found to be correct. Council has been informed and are investigating.
- The Society has been involved in preparations for a proposed barbecue to be held at Newnes Plateau for some 200 delegates who will be attending the Australian Conservation Foundation Conference at Blackheath on September of this year.
- A submission has been sent fully supporting Council’s plans for the preservation and protection of Shipley Plateau. Council was commended for their initiative.
- A proposal has been put to Council to build cabins on Kings Tableland Reserve. Meetings have been attended and a submission lodged with Blue Mountains City Council objecting to the proposal.

A SELECTION OF A FEW OF OUR LETTERS:

- To Land Board Office offering assistance in the erection of signs, etc., along the “Six Foot Track”. No reply has been received.
- From Council thanking our Society for its support re the closure of the road to Narrow Neck.
- From the Nature Conservation Council regarding a meeting to discuss Urban Bushland Management and Fire Protection.
- From the National Trust seeking the Society’s support in achieving the objectives of the Trust Policy Paper “Hawkesbury – Nepean River Basin”.
- From the Nature Conservation Council asking for our support in seeking protection of valuable rainforest areas in the Hasting Valley and Barrington Tops.
- To the Blue Mountains City Council approving in principle the building of a conference centre on the old Chateau Napier site at Leura. (Not to be confused with that proposed for Leura Golf Course).

LAND PRESERVATION FUND COMMITTEE:

Barbecue: On 24th May we had a very happy day despite rather miserable weather which kept us confined to the Hut. Success was largely due to the delicious salads and biscuits provided and attractively arranged by Beth Sherlock and to the skill of the barbecuer, Keith Sherlock. Many thanks to both of them.

The result was contented customers and \$70 added to the Fund.

COMING EVENTS:

AN OPPORTUNITY TABLE will be in the Hut over the next long weekend (30th September - 3rd October). Members will have first choice at the September General Meeting. Markita Honinger is the organiser and would like to hear from members who have goods to donate (Phone: 57-1919).

THE SPRING SALE OF NATIVE PLANTS will be held in the Hut on 29th and 30th October from 10 am to 3 pm. As usual, there will be an excellent variety of plants suitable for the Blue Mountains at very reasonable prices.

On Saturday, 29th October, at 11 am, Jill Dark will give a talk concentrating on local plants, for the benefit of growers and lovers of native plants. Jill is knowledgeable and popular speaker; members and friends are urged to take this opportunity to learn about the plants they see around them in the local bush.
