



Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc

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Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow

25 July 2017

To: NSW EPA at info@environment.nsw.gov.au

Cc Sydney Water at customerservice@sydneywater.com.au
Mr Robert Greenwood, General Manager, Blue Mountains City Council at
council@bmcc.nsw.gov.au
Regional Manager, Blue Mountains Region, National Parks and Wildlife Service
at NPWS.BlueMountains@environment
Sydney Catchment Authority, Water NSW at
Customer.Helpdesk@waterNSW.com.au

Dear Sir/Madam

Fairmont Resort, 1 Sublime Point Road, Leura, NSW: Report of ongoing pollution incidents involving on-site sewer pumping station

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is a community-based volunteer organisation with over 800 members. The goal of the Society is to promote the conservation of the environment in the Greater Blue Mountains region. The Society is formally lodging a pollution report to NSW EPA in relation to persistent and ongoing issues with the sewer pumping station at the Fairmont Resort, 1 Sublime Point Road, Leura, including failures resulting in sewage overflows into the neighbouring Blue Mountains National Park.

The sewage pumping station at the Fairmont Resort is a private sewage pumping facility operated by the hotel to pump sewage to the mains sewer system. The pumping station is located adjacent to the boundary of the Blue Mountains National Park (see attached map).

In the last three months, Society members have reported the following pollution incidents involving the sewage pumping station at the Fairmont.

- May 3. Fluid was seen leaking from the concrete pipes at the sewage pumping station downhill into the national park. A very strong and offensive smell of effluent was so prevalent the walking party could not remain in the area.
- May 10. Evidence of major sewer overflow with waste flowing downslope of the pumping station into the national park, resulting in significant erosion gullies.
- May 24 Evidence of staining down the slope consistent with a sewer overflow. Presence of Inkweed located at the bottom of the slope below the sewer pump, which is an indicator of high nutrient levels.

- May 30. Area around pumping station had been cleaned and new soil had been placed in the two largest erosion gullies downhill in the national park.
- July 05. Evidence of another major overflow. The pump area was relatively clean but below the pump area there were remnants of waste and the slope was eroded again.

Attached are some photos showing the damage as described above. If required, further detail can be provided by Society members who witnessed the above incidents.

The Society reported the May 10 incident to the NPWS, Blue Mountains Region, and we were advised that both the EPA and Council did not think the “incident triggered an investigation”. The NPWS also informed us after the May 10 incident that the Fairmont “had fixed the problem”. This clearly is not the case. The Society has also been told informally that the pumping station is not adequate for the size of the resort and as a result there are regular sewage overflows.

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is extremely concerned about the current situation given:

- There is clear evidence of current ongoing and persistent issues with the sewage pumping station at the Fairmont, which have not been rectified to date despite reports to local authorities. The Society also understands that issues with the sewage pumping station are not new, and problems including overflows have previously occurred over a number of years..
- There is clear evidence of several recent pollution incidents, resulting in sewage entering into bushland within the Blue Mountains National Park and potentially nearby waterways.
- The Fairmont Resort is located within Sydney’s drinking water catchment. The ongoing issue with the sewage pumping facility and the pollution incidents described above represent a real and ongoing risk to Sydney’s drinking water.
- Due to the location of the sewage pumping station, sewage overflows are entering and damaging the Blue Mountain National Park, creating gully erosion, encouraging the promulgation and spread of weeds and negatively impacting on native bushland through high nutrient levels.
- The location of the sewer pumping station is not consistent with government policy as outlined in *Guidelines for developments adjoining land managed by the Office of Environment and Heritage* (March 2013). Specifically, the Guidelines state that the recommended approach is that:
wastewater disposal, including sewage management, ...should be designed and operated to the highest standards. This will require consideration of compliance measures that will be used to ensure ongoing satisfactory operation of the systems. In addition ...there must be no discharge of wastewater to OEHL land, including nutrient or pathogen export from effluent disposal areas.

We believe that the above are pollution incidents resulting in potential breaches of either sec 116 and/or sec 120 of the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act*. We also believe a potential breach of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act* sec 156 (offence of damaging reserved land) has occurred.

We therefore ask that the EPA:

- immediately investigate the above pollution incidents;
- require the Fairmont to take appropriate remedial action, including upgrading the pumping station so it can adequately deal with the amount of sewage from the resort; and
- require that, as part of the upgrade, the pumping station is moved a considerable distance away from the boundary to the Blue Mountains National Park and adequate measures are put in place to ensure that any sewage overflows that occur in the future do not enter the national park.

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society would like to be kept informed about the progress of the investigation in writing.

If you have any further queries in regard to the above or require further information, please contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Madi Maclean". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a trailing flourish.

Madi Maclean
President
Blue Mountains Conservation Society
mobile 0412 428 202 or email president@bluemountains.org.au

May 10 Top Photo. Clear evidence of sewage overflows including gully erosion. Bottom photo. Inkweed growing below gully erosion



May 30. Repair of gully erosion, including soil placed down slope



July 5. Clear evidence of sewage overflow. Gully erosion below pumping station as well as sewage refuse on site.



