



# Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc

ABN 38 686 119 087

PO Box 29 Wentworth Falls NSW 2782

Phone: (02) 4757 1872

E-Mail: [bmcs@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:bmcs@bluemountains.org.au) Web Site: [www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au)

**Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow**

15 August 2018

To: NSW Department of Industry – Land and Forestry  
Licensing – Crown Land  
via email [licences@crowland.nsw.gov.au](mailto:licences@crowland.nsw.gov.au)

cc Ms Trish Doyle, MP, Member for Blue Mountains  
By email: [bluemountains@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:bluemountains@parliament.nsw.gov.au)  
cc Dr Rosemary Dillon, General Manager Blue Mountains City Council by email  
[council@bmcc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:council@bmcc.nsw.gov.au)  
cc All Blue Mountains Councillors

Dear Sir/Madam

## **Katoomba Airfield, Medlow Bath**

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 writing to the NSW Department of Industry – Land and Forestry about the future of Katoomba Airfield, Medlow Bath. The Society has been making representations about the future use and management of the Katoomba Airfield site since 1997.

We understand that the current private license/lease over the airfield has now expired and that the Department is investigating future uses of the site including a possible new lease. The Blue Mountains Gazette (29 June 2017) reported that Councillor Don McGregor was calling for the Katoomba Airfield to be reopened for use in emergencies and to assist during firefighting operations and that representatives from aero clubs and Careflight are concerned about the airport not being available to them for emergency landings.

Your assistance is requested to provide information on the following:

- Has any decision been made about the future of the site, including any proposed new leasing arrangements?
- Has the Department of Industry undertaken a recent site assessment or environmental assessment of the site to guide any decision-making about its future uses? Is this assessment publicly available?
- What public consultation has been undertaken or is planned in regard to future uses of the site, including any new leasing arrangement?

We are seeking information as to what the future plans for the site are, including whether a new lease or license has been issued or not, the length of time of any lease or license proposed, and what environmental conditions or other requirements are proposed to be included if any new new license or lease is issued. We are also asking to be kept informed about any community consultation and assessment process currently being undertaken or proposed to undertaken by Department of Industry, prior to any lease or licence being issued.

Whilst the Society recognises the value of Katoomba Airfield for emergency uses, we are concerned about the environmental impacts of its operation. A new lease arrangement with an aero club or other private operator is unlikely to keep operations on the site to a minimum and will not adequately safeguard the threatened ecological community on-site nor the likely presence of endangered species. Previous lease operators did not adequately manage the site to prevent soil erosion and sediment movement, groundwater contamination or weed invasion.

Previous government assessments of Katoomba Airfield have consistently recommended that the site be added to the Blue Mountains National Park and only used for emergency uses. In December 1999, Blue Mountains City Council resolved to oppose the continuation of the private lease and requested that the land be incorporated into the Blue Mountains National Park (see Minute No 639 21/12/99).

In 2000, an assessment of the site was undertaken by the then Department of Land and Water Conservation. As one of the contributors to this process, the Society received a letter dated 2 Nov 2000 from the department in which it:

“proposed to add the area to the Blue Mountains National Park upon expiry of the current lease subject to discussions yet to be held between the relevant stakeholders....Upon addition of the area to the National Park it is proposed that those facilities required for bushfire surveillance and suppression including emergency use of the airfield and any infrastructure will be maintained by agreement of the relevant authorities. The areas of the site not required will be returned to natural bushland.”

In 2008, the then Department of Lands undertook yet another assessment process in terms of the site, and invited Blue Mountains City Council to participate in a consultation process for the future use and management of the site. Council’s submission objected to the sale of the land or the reissuing of a private lease. Council’s preferred option was again that the future use of the site be limited to emergency use and for the site to be incorporated into the Blue Mountains National Park (see Minute No 764 2/12/2008).

The Society’s strongly supports the recommendations of Council and the relevant state government agencies in 1999, 2000 and 2008, which were that the land should not be privately leased and that the site be incorporated into the Blue Mountains National Park and used for emergency and bushfire air operations only.

Your assistance in providing the information requested would be much appreciated.  
Please contact me if you have further questions in relation to this letter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Madi Maclean', followed by a period.

Madi Maclean

President

Blue Mountains Conservation Society

mobile 0412 428 202 or email [president@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:president@bluemountains.org.au)