



Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc

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Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow

Date: 5 December, 2018

The Hon Melissa Price MP
Minister for the Environment
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Via email: campaigns@environment.gov.au

Dear Ms Price

Radiata Plateau - a missing piece in the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society (BMCS) is a community based volunteer organisation with over 800 members. It is the oldest continuing environmental organisation in the Blue Mountains. The Society's mission is to help conserve the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains region.

The Society is calling on the NSW and Commonwealth Governments to urgently recognise the ecological and heritage significance of Radiata (Elphinstone) Plateau and its valuable place within the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, by seeking to have the Plateau acquired by the NSW State Government, with support from the Commonwealth, for incorporation into the Blue Mountains National Park.

To demonstrate the community's commitment to the conservation of the Plateau, the Blue Mountains Conservation Society co-ordinated a full page Open Letter to the NSW Minister for Environment, Ms Gabrielle Upton, published today in the Blue Mountains Gazette.

A digital version of today's Blue Mountains Gazette can be found here <https://www.bluemountainsgazette.com.au/eedition/>. The Open Letter appears on page 6 (copy attached) and with an accompanying news article on page 9 <https://www.bluemountainsgazette.com.au/story/5787313/open-letter-calls-for-government-to-include-radiata-plateau-in-national-park/?cs=1432>

The Open Letter asks the NSW Government to commit to purchasing the Plateau for inclusion in the Blue Mountains National Park and, ultimately, incorporation into the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. As the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area is a shared Commonwealth and State responsibility, we are calling on the Commonwealth Government to also support the purchase of Radiata Plateau.

Almost 40 local environmental and heritage groups, local community leaders and state-wide environmental groups have signed the Open Letter. The coming together of such a diverse range of community groups and leaders is historic and unprecedented. It demonstrates the wide-spread and sustained community support for this valuable part of the Blue Mountains to be conserved and protected forever.

Radiata Plateau is accessed via Pulpit Hill Road, Katoomba, and is part of the southern Blue Mountains escarpment. Its dramatic cliff lines can be enjoyed from many of the key tourism lookouts in the upper Mountains. The community, including the Society, have campaigned for nearly 30 years for the Plateau to be protected and purchased by the State Government to become part of the Blue Mountains National Park.

As it is undeveloped and covered in natural bushland, many people believe that the Plateau is part of the National Park. In fact, the Plateau is privately currently owned by the transcendental mediation group Maharishi's Global Administration Through Natural Law. Major developments, including a large resort and conference centre, have been proposed by the owner in the past (in the 1990s), but ultimately did not proceed.

In 2016, a number of development applications were lodged by the owner for three new buildings on the Plateau. The development went before the Land and Environment Court for approval. Residents and the Blue Mountains Conservation Society campaigned and made appearances at Court objecting to the developments, and the Court ultimately refused two out of the three buildings. One building was approved, but so far construction works have not commenced.

The Society has been liaising with the Board of the Maharishi's Global Administration Through Natural Law about their future intentions. The latest advice from Mr Tim Carr, Chair of the Board is that they are "considering the options for this property".

The fate of the Plateau is now in the balance as the approved development threatens its future. Fragmentation and development of the Plateau will result in the loss of its high conservation value, and likely prevent ongoing public access.

The Plateau has high conservation significance because it:

- is the last remaining parcel of undeveloped southern escarpment land in the Upper Blue Mountains, with spectacular and stunning views, both from to and from the Plateau;
- contains significant biodiversity values, including the presence of rare Blue Mountain Swamps, a threatened ecological community in NSW;
- is home to many threatened animals, such as the Spotted-tailed Quoll and Greater Glider;
- is only one of ten places globally where the critically endangered Dwarf Mountain Pine and the shrub *Leionema lachnaeoides* grow;
- includes an extensive network of walking tracks used by local residents, bushwalkers and birdwatchers, as well as internationally recognised rockclimbing crags and walls; and
- has significant Aboriginal heritage, including being a traditional pathway down into the Megalong Valley.

More information about the Plateau and the campaign including short videos highlighting its values can be found at <https://bluemountains.org.au/leaveradiataplateauwild>

As the Commonwealth Environment Minister we ask that Society and community representatives meet with you to discuss the Plateau and its future.

Please contact me on the number below to arrange a meeting.

Yours sincerely,



Madi Maclean
President
Blue Mountains Conservation Society

mobile 0412 428 202 or email president@bluemountains.org.au

OPEN LETTER TO THE NSW MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT & HERITAGE

RADIATA PLATEAU

A MISSING LINK IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS WORLD HERITAGE AREA

The Hon. Gabrielle Upton, MP
NSW Minister for Environment and Heritage

Dear Minister

Radiata Plateau – home to rare species and threatened ecological communities - is at risk.

Towering high above the rolling Megalong Valley, Radiata Plateau (Elphinstone) is the last remaining undeveloped peninsula-plateau in the upper Blue Mountains, yet it remains unprotected.

Several ancient plant species inhabit the Plateau's complex and convoluted cliffs, heath, shrublands and swamps. It is one of only ten places globally where the highly-endangered Dwarf Mountain Pine and shrub *Leionema lachnaeoides* grow and it is home to many threatened animals, including the Spotted-tailed Quoll and Greater Glider.

An invaluable bushland and fauna corridor between Medlow Bath and Katoomba, the Plateau is a missing link in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. It is the last remaining unprotected stretch of undisturbed southern escarpment.

Popular with local residents, bushwalkers and birdwatchers, the Plateau's extensive network of walking tracks and heritage passes are used daily. It is also the site of internationally recognised rock-climbing crags.

Distinctive and prominent, the Plateau holds significance to the local Aboriginal people, being a traditional pathway into the Megalong Valley.

The Plateau's future has been in the balance for over two decades. Held in private hands, major developments have been proposed in the past but did not proceed due to strong community opposition. However, just last year a development proposal was approved by the Land and Environment Court.

The integrity of the Plateau depends on it remaining untouched. While in private hands, future development threatens its ecological significance and will, most likely, curb public access.

Local residents and the Society have long argued that the Plateau should be purchased by the State and Commonwealth Governments for inclusion in the Blue Mountains National Park.

We find it incomprehensible that an area of such outstanding environmental importance remains unprotected. It deserves ongoing permanent protection. Incorporation into the Blue Mountains National Park will ensure this.

We therefore ask you, Hon. Gabrielle Upton, Minister for the Environment, Local Government and Heritage, to urgently recognise the ecological and heritage significance of Radiata Plateau (Elphinstone) and its valuable place within the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, by seeking to have the Plateau acquired by the NSW Government for incorporation into the Blue Mountains National Park.



**WE CALL ON MEMBERS
OF THE PUBLIC
TO EMAIL Ms UPTON**
to email Ms Upton
info@environment.nsw.gov.au and
support us with our plea to protect this
valuable area.
Send copies of your email to the
Society at
leaveradiataplateauwild@bluemountains.org.au

Yours sincerely,

Aunty Sharyn Halls
Blue Mountains Bird Observers Inc.
Blue Mountains Bushcare Network
Blue Mountains climbers: Simon Carter,
Ben Cossey, Lee Cossey, Monique Forestier,
Andrea Hah, Tom O'Halloran and Amanda Watts
Blue Mountains Conservation Society
Blue Mountains Historical Society
Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute
Colong Foundation for Wilderness
Dr Haydn Washington

Blue Mountains City Council Mayor,
Cr Mark Greenhill
Cr Darryl Bowling
Cr Kerry Brown
Cr Mick Fell
Cr Brent Hoare
Cr Ramola Hollywood
Cr Don McGregor
Cr Daniel Myles
Cr Shae Foender
Dr Peter Smith and Dr Judy Smith, ecologists

Emeritus Professor Dexter Dunphy
Gundungurra Aboriginal Heritage Association Inc.
National Parks Association (NSW)
National Trust of Australia (NSW),
Blue Mountains Branch
Nature Conservation Council (NSW)
Pulpit Hill Road residents: Rodney Mathew, Glenn
Humphreys, Emil Mandyczewsky and Melissa White
Springwood Bushwalking Group
Total Environment Centre
Wyn Jones



**LEAVE
RADIATA
PLATEAU
WILD**

For more information go to the Leave Radiata Plateau Wild website
at www.bluemountains.org.au/leaveradiataplateauwild

Sponsored by Blue Mountains Conservation Society www.bluemountains.org.au
We also thank our campaign supporters Jules Booth, Kamil Sustiak Adventure
Photography and Nathan Smith.

We recognise that the Darug and Gundungurra people are the traditional custodians
of the Blue Mountains, and we pay our respects to Elders both past and present.

Photographs: © Kamil Sustiak Adventure Photography