



# Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc

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**Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow**

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Damien Madigan  
Editor  
Blue Mountains Gazette  
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Dear Sir,

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society (BMCS) does not support the proposed highway upgrade for Blackheath/Medlow Bath for a range of environmental reasons.

The Society recognizes the disruption that these works would cause not only to the Blackheath and Medlow Bath communities but for all communities in the Mountains due to increased traffic including large and increased heavy truck freight.

Freeways only promote more traffic and carbon-polluting transport which will further speed up the climate change process. More creative responses to our freight and transportation needs are required now, not just the 'business as usual' model presented by the proposed highway duplication/upgrade project.

Many community members believe the upgrade is inevitable and are supporting the proposed tunnel options at Blackheath as the least worst option.

A tunnel bypass under the town may sound like a reasonable (if expensive) option in order to avoid demolition of houses, disturbance to infrastructure and the destruction of Centennial Glen. However, residents and *Gazette* readers may not be aware of the inevitable havoc either tunnel option would cause by interrupting groundwater flows.

Tunneling can cut through the permeable layers of sandstone through which flow the groundwater that feeds our upper mountains swamps and creeks, and keeps waterfalls flowing.

No geological studies of the area or modelling of the impact of the tunnel options on groundwater flows have yet been provided. Even when geological and hydrological studies have been done, major damage to aquifers can still happen.

A prime example of this was during the construction of the sewer tunnel from Mt Victoria to the Winmalee Waste Water Treatment Plant in the late 1990s/ early2000s.

Prior to drilling for the sewer tunnel in the upper mountains, Sydney Water geologists admitted to residents that they could not be sure of the location of these aquifers until they were impacted by the tunnelling.

In January 2000 there were two incidents in the North Leura/ North Katoomba area investigated by the EPA. Torrents of water flowed from the boreholes being drilled on to the surface, leaving the rocklayer dry, resulting in swamps drying over the following years. The full extent of the damage may not become evident for 50 years or more. The sewage tunnel itself continues to drain groundwater away from the upper mountains to the Winmalee Treatment Plant.

A tunnel at Blackheath is not the answer – it will only result in the destruction of our beautiful swamps and waterfalls.



Tara Cameron  
President  
Blue Mountains Conservation Society

If you have queries in regard to this letter please contact me.

Yours sincerely

Tara Cameron

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