



Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc

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Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow

Mr Atticus Fleming
A/Co-ordinator-General, Environment and Heritage
Locked Bag 5022
Parramatta NSW 5022
info@environment.nsw.gov.au

27 March 2023

cc

Mr David Crust, Director, Blue Mountains Branch david.crust@environment.nsw.gov.au

Ms Trish Doyle, MP, Member for Blue Mountains bluemountains@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Ms Kirsten Mayer, Executive Officer, Bushwalking NSW Inc eo@bushwalkingnsw.org.au

Dear Mr Fleming

Purchase of 141 Kent St Bullaburra

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is a community volunteer organisation with over 900 members. The Society aim is to help conserve the natural environment of the Blue Mountains and to increase awareness of the natural environment in general. The Society is writing to you regarding land at 141 Kent St, Bullaburra (Lot 148 DP751646). The land is currently listed for sale and is undeveloped ie there is no structures or houses on the property. The Society believes that the land has significant natural and cultural values and request that it be considered for purchase by the State government as an addition to the Blue Mountains National Park.

Location

The land is located at Bullaburra on the northern side of the Great Western Highway (Figure 1) at the end of a long ridge along a dirt road. The Blue Mountains National Park borders two sides of the property (west and north), while the eastern side borders the North Lawson Crown Reserve managed by Blue Mountain City Council. The southern side of the property borders private land. The land is effectively surrounded by public land managed for natural and cultural values.

Natural values

According to Blue Mountains City Council vegetation mapping the property includes the endangered ecological community Blue Mountains Swamp (see Figure 2). The remainder of the property is Open Forest including stands of Angophora. The natural vegetation of the property is largely intact and is in good condition.

Blue Mountain Swamps are listed under state legislation as a vulnerable ecological community and listed nationally as an endangered ecological community as part of the broader listing of Temperate Highland Peat Swamps. State listed threatened species which depend on Blue Mountain Swamps for habitat include the Blue Mountains Water Skink and the Giant Dragon Fly.

The majority of property is currently zoned Environmental Conservation further indicating its high natural values (Figure 3)

Any future development of the property such as residential development would result in significant vegetation removal due to bushfire requirements and therefore potentially damaging the swamp which is downhill of the area where development is permissible. Stormwater runoff and runoff from on site wastewater systems are known threats to Blue Mountain Swamps.

Heritage values

The property includes a part of “Bruce’s Walk” (see Figure 1) a historic walking track that links Blackheath to Lawson. Bruce's Walk originally began as a maintenance track in 1931 to service an electricity transmission line which was put through north of the Great Western Highway from Blackheath to Lawson. The line passed west of the Grand Canyon, through the bush east of Medlow Bath, across the ridges north of Katoomba, Leura and Wentworth Falls and then across the gullies on the fringes of Bullaburra and Lawson. The State Government then decided to promote the maintenance track as a walking trail, and a pamphlet was published to publicise the walk (see <https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/1002708> and Figure 4). The walk was officially opened on 21 November 1931. The surveyor who planned the track was a Mr A. Bruce, and as a result the track eventually became known as Bruce's Walk.

However, from World War II onwards, the track was neglected. In 1983 a local bush walker named Dick Rushton found a copy of the historic pamphlet published in 1931 and set out to clear and mark the track, and in 1983 he created a new written guide to the track. In 1986, Bruce's Walk had come to the attention of two other walkers, local historian Jim Smith and Wilf Hilder, who organised a group of volunteers to clear the track between Bullaburra and Wentworth Falls, and in the process finding many features of the original historic track including signs, shelter caves, seats and picnic tables.

The historic heritage of the Bruce's Walk is recognised as being of State significance. Bruce's Walk is specifically listed as part of Blue Mountains Walking Track state heritage listing (see <https://apps.environment.nsw.gov.au/dpcheritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?ID=5014091> - NSW State Heritage Register). The listing identifies that “the [overall] complex of Blue Mountains regional walking tracks is of national significance”.

Bruce's Walk traverses the property to meet up with walking tracks in the North Lawson Crown Reserve. The current landowners continue to allow public access to Bruce's Walk where it traverses the property. However, the Society understand that there is no public right of way or easement to ensure public access over the part of Bruce's Walk which traverses the property. This means that the new owners can close off public access to this part of Bruce's Walk, preventing bushwalking access and undermining the tracks historic heritage values. Continuing private ownership of this section of the track also limits the ability of State Government to spend public funds on upgrades and maintenance of this section of the track.

In terms of Aboriginal heritage, it is unknown if there are Aboriginal cultural sites on the property. However, there are a number of known Aboriginal cultural sites nearby, and given the property is along a major ridgeline it is likely that the property would have cultural value to local Aboriginal community members and native title holders. The Society recommends

consultation with native title holders and Aboriginal community members if the national parks is considering purchase.

Management considerations

Purchase of the property would assist the National Parks and Wildlife Service in terms of management by

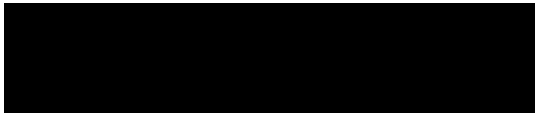
- Assisting in preventing illegal access by trail bikes into the Blue Mountains National Park via Kent Road.
- Ensuring public ownership of a key section of Bruce's Walk, ensuring ongoing maintenance and upgrades of this State heritage listed walking track.
- Assisting with bushfire fighting, fire prevention and other management activities.
- Ensuring inappropriate development does not occur adjacent to the existing national park.

Conclusion

The Society urges the National Parks and Wildlife Service urgently consider purchase of this property for addition to the Blue Mountains National Park in light of its natural and cultural heritage values. These values include parts of the State heritage listed Bruce's Walk.

If you have any queries in regard to this letter please contact me on president@bmcs.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Madi Maclean
President
Blue Mountains Conservation Society



Figure 1 Property showing Bruce's Walk, Blue Mountains National Park (north and west borders) and North Lawson Crown Reserve (eastern border)

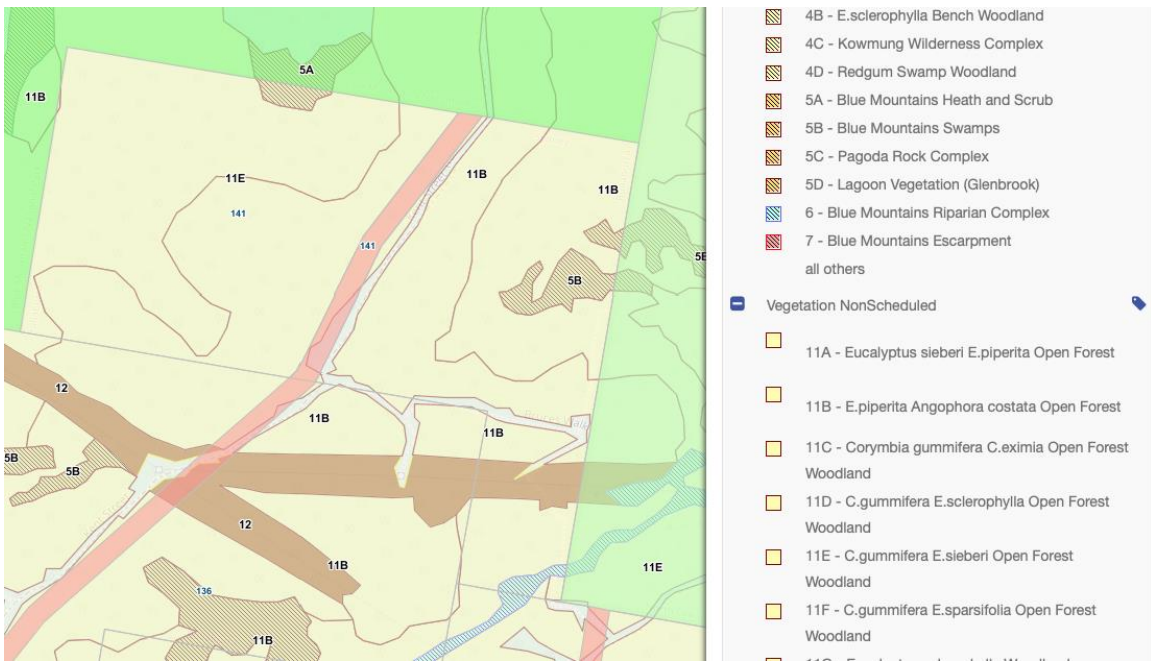


Figure 2 Vegetation mapping – Blue Mountains City Council

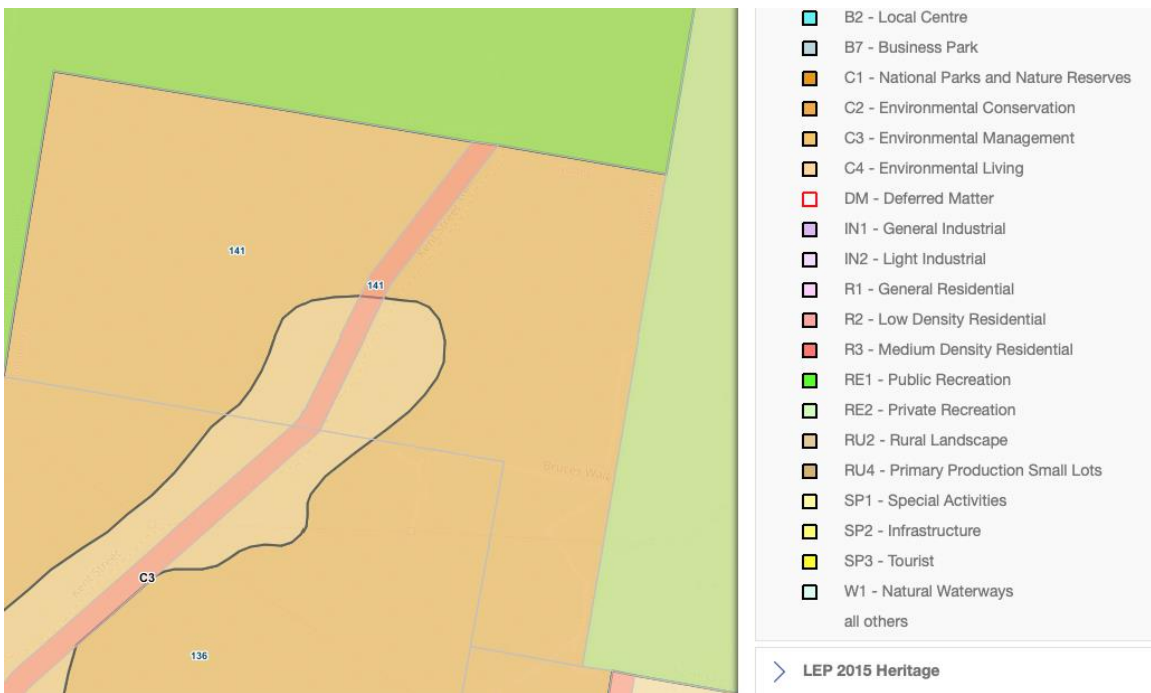


Figure 3 Zoning – Blue Mountains City Council

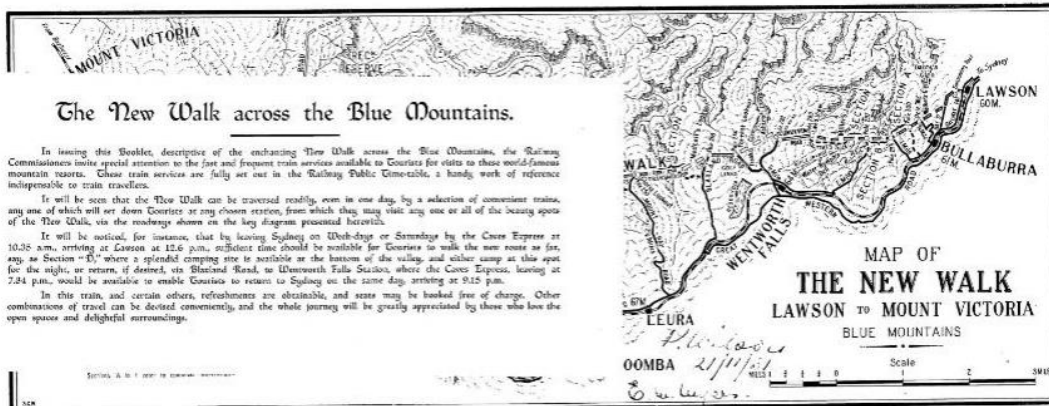
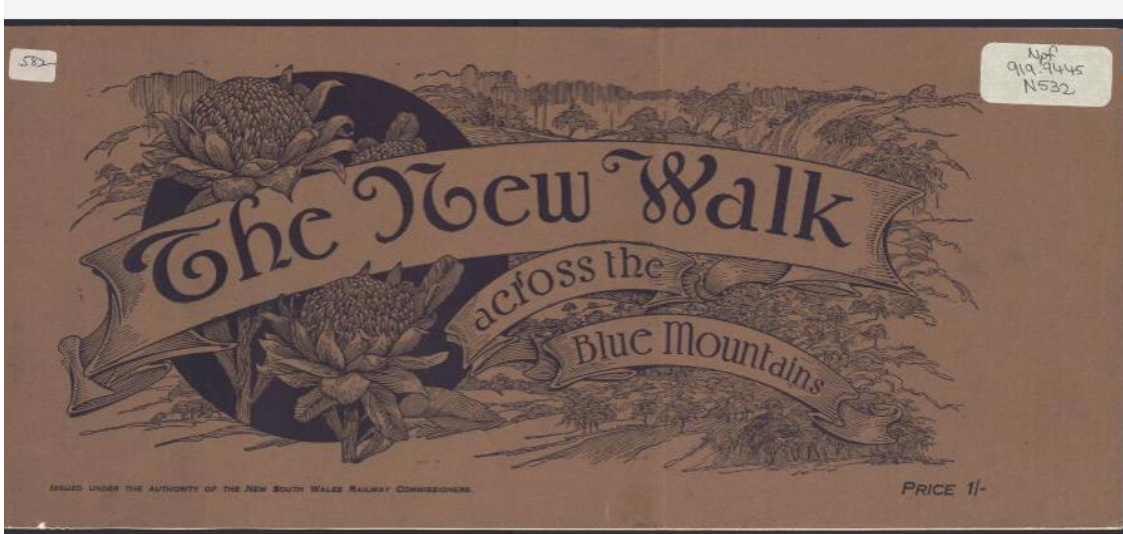


Figure 4 Cover of the 1931 Guidebook for Bruce's Walk