



# Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc

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**Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow**

The Hon Paul Scully MP  
Minister for Planning and Public Spaces

4 June 2024

Cc  
Ms Trish Doyle, MP, Member for Blue Mountains  
[bluemountains@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:bluemountains@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

Councillor Mr Mark Greenhill, Mayor Blue Mountains City Council  
[mgreenhill@bmcc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mgreenhill@bmcc.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Minister Scully

## **Urgent request to meet in regard to the NSW Government's housing reforms**

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is a community volunteer organisation with over 850 members, which has been in existence for over 60 years. The Society's aim is to help conserve the natural environment of the Blue Mountains and to increase awareness of the natural environment in general.

We are writing to you to request a meeting to discuss the application of your government's proposed 'one size fits all' reforms to deliver increased new housing, as outlined in the NSW Government's *Explanation of Intended Effect: Changes to create low- and mid-rise housing*. We are keen to discuss excluding the Blue Mountains Local Government Area from these proposed reforms.

The Society greatly appreciates your interest in the Blue Mountains and the fact you came and met with local residents and Society representatives last year to discuss the proposed state significant "zoo and hotel development" at Bodington Hill, Wentworth Falls. We are also immensely pleased and relieved that the recently released housing completion target for the Blue Mountains is 600 new homes by 2029. This we believe is achievable under the current planning framework of the Blue Mountains Local Environmental Plan 2015 and represents a sustainable and environmentally responsible increase in housing, especially in a city surrounded by a World Heritage listed national park.

You no doubt have seen the Open Letters to Premier Minns entitled "The Blue Mountains – not another suburb of Sydney", sponsored by the Society, which were published in the Sydney Morning Herald on May 13 2024 and the Blue Mountains Gazette on May 15 2024. The letters were signed by an alliance of 17 community groups and organisations representing conservation, heritage and community interests, all of

whom are deeply concerned about the impact of the mid and low rise housing reforms on our local environment.

The Society believes the proposed housing reforms are completely inappropriate for a city within a World Heritage Area. The Blue Mountains is known for its spectacular natural environment and scenic values, the heritage character of its villages and its outdoor recreation opportunities, making the Blue Mountains a popular domestic and international visitor destination. The proposed reforms we believe threaten the environment and heritage of the Blue Mountains, and thus our visitor economy.

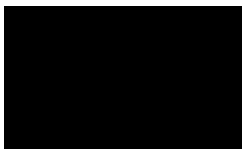
Of most concern is the intended overriding of local planning controls, specifically aimed at protecting the environment. Housing intensification in the Blue Mountains will create more stormwater runoff into the World Heritage Area at increased volumes, velocity and pollution levels, leading to the spread of weeds and the degradation of waterways. The proposed areas targeted for increased mid and low rise housing under the reforms in some instances include, or are adjacent to, areas of significant bushland, including endangered ecological communities. This will inevitably result in degradation or loss of native vegetation and faunal habitat, including potentially damaging the nationally significant Blue Mountains Swamps and endangered lower Blue Mountains forests.

Perhaps the most compelling reason to exclude the Blue Mountains from the reforms is bushfire risk. The Blue Mountains is one of, if not the most, bushfire prone areas in Australia. During the devastating 2019-2020 bushfires almost every village in the mid and upper Blue Mountains was at some point under threat. Recent research has predicted that by 2090, 90 per cent of homes in the Blue Mountains will be exposed to high bushfire risk due to climate change compared to 26 per cent today.

The unique circumstances of the Blue Mountains LGA and the significant constraints on development are recognised by its designation as a Metropolitan Rural Area in the Greater Sydney Regional Plan. These areas are regarded as unsuitable for urban expansion. We also question the need for the application of the low and mid rise housing reforms in light of the recently announced new five year housing target for the Blue Mountains. We believe this housing target is reasonable and sustainable and can be achieved within the current planning framework without the imposition of the low and mid rise housing reforms.

Again we thank you for your interest in the Blue Mountains to date. To arrange a meeting to discuss this important matter, please contact me on [president@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:president@bluemountains.org.au) or mobile 0450215125

Yours sincerely



Annette Cam  
President  
Blue Mountains Conservation Society