

# Focus on the Land Use Subcommittee

Carolyn Williams

Have you ever wondered what the Society's Land Use subcommittee does? This rather dull and obscure name may not be an attention grabber, but the subcommittee's work plays a crucial role in helping achieve the Society's objectives to protect, conserve and advocate for the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains.

Our main activity is keeping a look out for, and lodging submissions on, development proposals that we believe will cause unacceptable damage to the natural environment and World Heritage Area. We also engage proactively with local and state government plans, policies and legislation that determine what kind of future development will occur, and where it will occur, in the Blue Mountains.

Some specific examples will help illustrate the work of the subcommittee and its achievements.

- **Stopped intensive development of the lower Blue Mountains.**

In early 2013 the state government decided to categorise the Blue Mountains from Faulconbridge down as a 'Metropolitan Urban Area', earmarked for intensive residential development. Under intense pressure from the Council and the subcommittee's 'Blue Mountains – not another suburb of Sydney' campaign, the government dropped the idea and has not pursued a policy of intensive residential development or high housing targets in the Blue Mountains since.

**Are you concerned about environmental damage or a development related activity in your neighbourhood but don't know who to contact?**

The Society's Planning & Development Resource Kit may help you.

<https://www.bluemountains.org.au/pdrk-welcome.shtml>

- **Safeguarded environmental standards for development.**

In 2013-14 the Subcommittee organised a large public information and engagement campaign supporting the proposed new Blue Mountains Local Environmental Plan 2015. We wanted to ensure (as did the Council) that the high environmental protection standards in our current local environmental plans were carried through into the state government's mandatory new standardised local environmental plan. The huge public response and the strong stand taken by the Council and the Society delivered the most locally tailored Local Environmental Plan in the state, with most of our existing environmental protections preserved intact.

- **Facilitated the protection of Radiata Plateau.**

Most recently, the subcommittee led the Society's campaign to have Ngula Bulgarabang (Radiata Plateau) purchased by the state government for incorporation into the Blue Mountains National Park. The site's purchase in October 2019 was the culmination of a more than 30 year campaign by the Society and other nature conservation organisations, local groups and residents.

The lesson here is that what we take for granted today – the strong environmental protection provisions in our local environment plan and the preservation of the built character and natural heritage of the Blue Mountains – had to be fought for. And we may have to fight the same battles all over again, as we are with the 30-year-old 'zombie' 'croc park/zoo' development on Bodington Hill, Wentworth Falls. We urge members to keep this in mind and 'vote for the environment' in the September Council elections.

Finally, the Land Use Subcommittee has produced an online [Planning and Development Resource Kit](#) for members and the Blue Mountains community. It is meant to help you take appropriate action on environmental and development matters and learn more about the legal frameworks and institutions regulating development in the Blue Mountains.

Enquiries: [landuse@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:landuse@bluemountains.org.au)