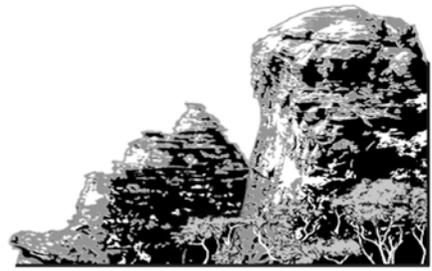




Protect the Gardens of Stone

“Say NO to open cut mining!”



Thursday 28th April 2011

MEDIA RELEASE: For immediate release

“Gardens of Stone under threat”

The Gardens of Stone is a spectacular landscape and a biodiversity hotspot, characterised by rich old-growth forests and named because of its remarkable rock formations. This uniquely scenic and biodiverse area is now at risk of exclusive occupation and destruction by open cut coal mining. Wildlife habitat and natural heritage will be lost forever.

Coalpac Pty Ltd is seeking to ‘consolidate’ its existing coal-mining operations at Cullen Valley and Invincible mines. The ‘consolidation’ project proposes to extend open-cut and highwall mining into a large area of the publicly-owned Ben Bullen State Forest (BBSF), NSW.

“The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (now within the Office of Environment and Heritage) has acknowledged its wish to add BBSF to the conservation reserve system as a matter of priority” says Lachlan Garland, President of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

“Allowing this operation would mean the equivalent of 2,176 football fields of predominantly old growth forest and wildlife habitat of the BBSF being clear-felled and excavated.

“This forest is a publicly-owned area of conservation and recreational importance. The community expects state forests to be protected from destruction in perpetuity.

“Habitats for the Regent Honeyeater, Tiger Quoll and Powerful Owl and at least 32 threatened native animals, 5 of which are listed under the EPBC Act, will be completely removed.

“Our iconic Lyrebirds also use the sides of pagodas to nest and raise their young. Mining will completely remove the protective pathways for adult birds foraging between nesting sites and will destroy their food habitats within the more fertile valley floors.

“The effective privatisation and liquidation of a large part of the forest is an outrageous precedent that should not be set; it is a direct challenge to the state’s efforts to reduce deforestation.

“The Blue Mountains Conservation Society seeks to work with the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Robyn Parker, to continue our important work and safeguard the future of the Gardens of Stone.

“We invite all politicians to visit the Gardens of Stone area with us on Sat 14th May, 2011 to see first hand the stunning areas under threat from mining.”

The NSW Department of Planning finalised the Director-General’s Requirements (guidelines) for the Environmental Assessment on 16 October 2010. The proponent is preparing the Environmental Assessment. Once finalised, this will be released for public comment.

The project, prior to the election of the NSW Coalition Government, was to be assessed by an accredited process under Part 3A; it is not known how the new government will handle these Part 3A issues.

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