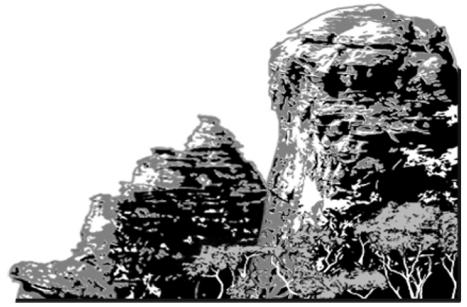




# Protect the Gardens of Stone

“Say NO to open cut mining!”



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**MEDIA RELEASE: For immediate release**

## “Halt the assault on Ben Bullen State Forest”

The NSW Government has failed to respond to calls to protect the Ben Bullen State Forest, ignoring the letters of thousands of environmental supporters to stop open cut mining in the internationally important Gardens of Stone and paving the way for another potentially disastrous proposal to be put forward.

“It’s not enough that the residents of Cullen Bullen face an alarming future of living with potentially harmful dust particles from Coalpac’s proposed Consolidation project; now the Lithgow community must deal with a second ecological threat, with important native fauna under attack from a new mining proposal,” says Justin McKee of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

Enhance Place Pty Ltd has lodged an application to expand its Pine Dale operations near Lithgow NSW. The expansion would involve open-cut mining into 210 hectares of the Ben Bullen State Forest. This is an additional attack on the forest, following the ‘Coalpac Consolidation Project’ which seeks to create an open-cut and highwall mine across 1088 hectares.

“The Ben Bullen State Forest is the western gateway to the internationally significant Gardens of Stone area and must be protected. If these applications are approved, the habitats of the Regent Honeyeater, Tiger Quoll and Powerful Owl, at least 32 threatened native animals and hundreds of native plant species will be lost forever,” says Mr McKee.

Environment groups are urging the State Government to respond to calls to protect the Ben Bullen State Forest within a State Conservation Area after the second proposal threatening to open-cut the forest was lodged with the Department of Planning & Infrastructure.

“The threats to the destruction of the Ben Bullen State Forest are very real and imminent. Having the forest declared as a State Conservation Area would protect it from destructive open-cut mining activity. Low impact, underground mining is a very real alternative that should be at the top of the State Government’s agenda, conserving a publicly-owned area of conservation and recreational importance, says Mr McKee.

“It’s time to halt the assault on Ben Bullen State Forest. The complicity of the Government in not responding to environment groups is sending the wrong message to mining groups, which is evidenced by this latest proposal. As long as the NSW Government does nothing, mining and other high-impact activities can be proposed to destroy what should be a national treasure.”

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