



Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc

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Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow

Date: 6 December 2017

A/General Manager
Blue Mountains City Council
Locked Bag 1005
Katoomba 2780
via email at council@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Dear Madam

Draft Visitor Infrastructure Plan

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is a community based volunteer organisation with over 800 members. Its mission is to help conserve the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains, and to increase awareness of the natural environment in general. The Society also runs an extensive guided bushwalking program, with approximately 150 guided bushwalks a year, which are open to the general public. The Society therefore wishes to make a submission in relation to the recently exhibited *Draft Visitor Infrastructure Plan*.

The Society strongly supports efforts by Council to raise revenue from visitors and tourists to support the management, upgrade and building of visitor infrastructure managed by Council. Tourist and visitor use of Council managed car parks, walking tracks, camping grounds, lookouts and other facilities is significant but this infrastructure is currently largely managed through revenue raised via Council rates and not through a financial contribution by tourists and visitors.

The Society supports the proposals in the plan as outlined on pp.28 and 29, with the exception of the following

- Charging for Bulls Camp. The Society believes Bulls Camp should remain a free camping ground, given there a few, if any, free car camping sites east of Lithgow. The cost of enforcing camping fees, given there is no on-site Council presence at Bulls Camp, may outweigh revenue. As an alternative fees for showers may be a better alternative.
- The Society strongly supports the Plan's proposal to quarantine revenue raised from fees and charges on tourism and visitation assets and facilities from general Council revenue and re-investing this into the management, upgrade and the development of new facilities. To ensure transparency, public accountability and consistency with the financial impact model in the draft Plan (Figure 2), the

Society strongly recommends the following:

1. Yearly revenue raised from fees and charges on tourism and visitation assets and facilities is reported separately in Council's yearly financial reporting;
2. Yearly Capital Expenditure to support the Visitor Investment Plan is reported separately in Council's yearly financial reporting;
3. Yearly Operating Expenditure to support the Visitor Investment Plan is reported separately in Council's yearly financial reporting;
4. The total amount of funds available in the Visitor Infrastructure Fund at the end of each financial year is reported separately in Council's yearly financial reporting (ie total revenue minus yearly Capital Expenditure and Yearly Operating Expenditure).
5. The total amount expended from the Visitor Infrastructure Fund in the preceding year, as well as a list of projects and funding provided, should be reported separately.

The Society believe the above reporting is consistent with the goals of the draft Plan as well as "transparent, fair and accountable civic leadership and governance", a key outcome under the *Blue Mountains Community Strategic Plan 2035*.

- The Society also strongly advocates, as part of the development of the Guidelines for the Visitor Infrastructure Fund, that Council establishes a community advisory committee to oversee the Visitor Infrastructure Fund. Such a committee would provide transparency of decision-making, ensure accountability and allow community input into any proposed expenditure. The Advisory Committee should be made up of a broad range of community members and be based on skills and expertise. It should not just consist of representatives from the key tourism and business organisations. Tourism and visitation management is an issue for the whole community, as tourism and visitation impacts residents through increased traffic, carparking and noise, through decreased local neighbourhood amenity and through impacts on cultural and environmental values. The proposed Community Advisory Committee would provide advice on Fund Guidelines, the projects proposed to be funded through the fund and should also oversee yearly revenue and expenditure of the Fund. Again the Society believes such a Committee is consistent with "transparent, fair and accountable civic leadership and governance", a key outcome of the *Blue Mountains Community Strategic Plan 2035*.

If you have queries in regard to this submission please contact me on mobile 0412 428 202 or email president@bluemountains.org.au

Yours sincerely



Madi Maclean
President
Blue Mountains Conservation Society

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