



Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc

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Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow

Date: 5 December, 2018

The Hon Gabrielle Upton, MLA
Minister for the Environment, Local Government and Heritage
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Via email: info@environment.nsw.gov.au

Dear Minister,

Radiata Plateau - a missing piece in the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is a community based volunteer organisation with over 800 members. It is the oldest continuing environmental organisation in the Blue Mountains. Our mission is to help conserve the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains region.

The Society is calling on the State Government to urgently recognise the ecological and heritage significance of Radiata (Elphinstone) Plateau and to acquire the Plateau for incorporation into the Blue Mountains National Park.

To demonstrate the community's commitment to the conservation of the Plateau, the Society has co-ordinated a full page Open Letter to you, as the NSW Minister for Environment, which is published today in the Blue Mountains Gazette.

A digital version of today's Blue Mountains Gazette can be found here <https://www.bluemountainsgazette.com.au/edition/>. The Open Letter appears on page 6 (copy attached) and with an accompanying news article on page 9 <https://www.bluemountainsgazette.com.au/story/5787313/open-letter-calls-for-government-to-include-radiata-plateau-in-national-park/?cs=1432>

The Open Letter asks the NSW Government to commit to purchasing the Plateau for inclusion in the Blue Mountains National Park and, ultimately, incorporation into the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

Almost 40 local environmental and heritage groups, local community leaders and state-wide environmental groups have signed the Open Letter. The coming together of such a diverse range of community groups and leaders is historic and unprecedented. It demonstrates the wide-spread and sustained community support for this valuable part of the Blue Mountains to be conserved and protected forever.

Radiata Plateau is accessed via Pulpit Hill Road, Katoomba and is part of the southern Blue Mountains escarpment. Its dramatic cliff lines can be enjoyed from many of the key tourism lookouts in the upper Mountains. The community, including the Society, has campaigned for

nearly 30 years for the Plateau to be protected and purchased by the State Government so that it becomes part of the Blue Mountains National Park.

As it is undeveloped and covered in natural bushland, many people believe that the Plateau is part of the National Park. In fact, the Plateau is privately currently owned by the transcendental mediation group, Maharishi's Global Administration Through Natural Law. Major developments, including a large resort and conference centre, have been proposed by the owner in the past (in the 1990s), but ultimately did not proceed.

In 2016 the owner lodged a number of development applications for three new buildings on the Plateau. The development went before the Land and Environment Court for approval. Residents and the Blue Mountains Conservation Society campaigned and appeared before the court, objecting to the developments. The court ultimately refused two out of the three buildings. One building was approved but, so far, construction has not commenced.

The Society has been liaising with the Board of the Maharishi's Global Administration Through Natural Law about their future intentions. The latest advice from Mr Tim Carr, Chair of the Board, is that they are "considering the options for this property".

The fate of the Plateau is now in the balance as the approved development threatens its future. Fragmentation and development of the Plateau will result in the loss of its high conservation value and are likely to prevent ongoing public access.

The Plateau has high conservation significance because it:

- is the last remaining parcel of undeveloped southern escarpment land in the Upper Blue Mountains, with spectacular views, both from to and from the Plateau;
- contains significant biodiversity values, including the presence of rare Blue Mountain Swamps, a threatened ecological community in NSW;
- is home to many threatened animals, such as the Spotted-tailed Quoll and Greater Glider. The Plateau is also one of only ten places globally where the critically endangered Dwarf Mountain Pine and the shrub *Leionema lachnaeoides* grow;
- includes an extensive network of walking tracks used by local residents, bushwalkers and birdwatchers, as well as internationally recognised rockclimbing crags and walls; and
- has significant Aboriginal heritage, including being a traditional pathway down into the Megalong Valley.

More information about the Plateau and the campaign including short videos highlighting its values can be found at <https://bluemountains.org.au/leaveradiataplateauwild>

The Society and community representatives request an urgent meeting with you to discuss the Plateau and its future.

Yours sincerely,



Madi Maclean
President
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