



Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc

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Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow

7 December 2018

Dr Rosemary Dillon,
General Manager
Blue Mountains City Council
By email council@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

cc All Blue Mountains Councillors

Dear Dr Dillon

Katoomba Airfield, Medlow Bath

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

The Society has recently written to the NSW Department of Industry – Crown Lands and Water (the Department) in relation to recent advice we received from them regarding the future of the Katoomba Airfield (copy attached). The Department advised the following:

In 2017, following the surrender of an expired Special Lease of the property, the Department conducted an Expressions-of-Interest campaign to assist in determining the future of the site...As a consequence (of the EOI process), a new Licence, conferring on Derek and Floyd Larsen a right of non-exclusive occupation of the site, for Aerodrome and Land Management Purposes, commenced on 1 February 2018. The Licence is terminable at will, and represents an interim tenure while conditions of a future lease are under negotiation.

As you can see from the letter, the Society has serious concerns regarding the process the Department has undertaken to date, including the lack of community consultation prior to the issuing of the current licence to Derek and Floyd Larsen. We also have a number of concerns in regard to the proposed community consultation to be undertaken prior to the issuing of any long term lease.

Proposed community consultation

We are looking to Council to provide support and advocacy in relation to the Society's request, as outlined in the letter, that given the long term community interest in the site, and the significant environmental issues associated with the site, that a "participate" level of community engagement is adopted by the Department prior to the issuing of any long term lease.

Council's position on the future use of the airfield

The Department also further advised the following:

Your letter makes reference to preferences for future management of the land expressed by Blue Mountains City Council and the National Parks and Wildlife Service between 1999 and 2008. I wish to advise that, in consulting both agencies prior to the 2017 EOI campaign, the Department drew attention to the historically expressed view that Katoomba Airfield should be reinstated within Blue Mountains National Park. Neither agency expressed its opposition to the planned EOI campaign. Nor has either raised any objection to the outcome.

The advice which Council provided to the Department appears to directly contradict previous Council resolutions related to Katoomba Airfield. In December 1999, Blue Mountains City Council resolved to oppose the continuation of the private lease and requested that the land be incorporated into the Blue Mountains National Park (see Minute No 639 21/12/99). Again in 2008, the then Department of Lands undertook yet another assessment process in terms of the site and invited Blue Mountains City Council to participate in a consultation process for the future use and management of the site. Council's submission objected to the sale of the land or the reissuing of a private lease. Council's preferred option was again that the future use of the site be limited to emergency use and for the site to be incorporated into the Blue Mountains National Park (see Minute No 764 2/12/2008).

The Society is concerned that Council appears to have changed a long term and publicly stated position in regard to Katoomba Airfield. We are unaware of any recent Council resolution which over-rides the previous Council resolutions in 1999 and 2008.

The Society's strongly supports the recommendations of Council and the relevant state government agencies in 1999, 2000 and 2008, that is, that the land should not be privately leased and that the site should be incorporated into the Blue Mountains National Park and used for emergency and bushfire air operations only.

Your assistance in providing Council's views on the above two issues would be much appreciated. Please contact me if you have further questions in relation to this letter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Madi Maclean", enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Madi Maclean
President
Blue Mountains Conservation Society
mobile 0412 428 202 or email president@bluemountains.org.au