

## **Society position statement on the classification of Radiata Plateau**

The Society has exhaustively documented the natural and cultural heritage values of the Plateau (see attached document). The Plateau is unique and highly significant because

- It is the last remaining undeveloped peninsula Plateau in the Upper Blue Mountains, and provides important bushland and wildlife corridor linkages with existing parts of the Blue National Park to the east and Crown reserves in the Megalong Valley to the south.
- The Plateau has unprecedented scenic values. Its dramatic cliff lines can be enjoyed from many of the key tourism lookouts in the upper Mountains and from the Megalong Valley. Easily accessed lookouts on the Plateau itself enable visitors to enjoy stunning views towards Katoomba of the iconic Blue Mountains southern escarpment
- The Plateau contains nationally and state significant biodiversity values, including the presence of rare Blue Mountain Swamps, a nationally listed threatened ecological community.
- The area is also home to many threatened animals, such as the Spotted-tailed Quoll and Greater Glider.
- The Plateau is only one of ten places where the highly endangered Dwarf Mountain Pine and the shrub *Leionema lachnaeoides* grow, and is a stronghold for these critically endangered species.
- The Plateau includes an extensive network of walking tracks used by local residents, bushwalkers and birdwatchers. Unusually for the Blue Mountains the walking track network is relatively flat and accessible, as it is along the top of the escarpment. The area is also internationally recognised for its rockclimbing crags and walls, and is regularly use by climbers.
- The area has significant Aboriginal heritage values, including the State heritage listed “Blacks Ladder”, a traditional and historic pathway down into the Megalong Valley.

**Given the high natural and cultural values of the Plateau, the Society believes the area should be a national park, either as part of the Blue Mountains National Park or be reserved as a new national park.**

If the NPWS were considering a Regional Park reserve category, to allow for a wider range of uses, the Society would only support a regional park classification if the following applied

- The primary management goal was to conserve the natural and cultural values of the area, not to provide increased recreational opportunities.
- No horse riding (not currently occurring).
- No 4WD or trail bikes (not currently occurring).
- Redevelopment or promotion of the area for mountain bike riding (MTB), as in other Regional Parks, is not supported. There is currently very limited bike riding (usually small family groups of locals using existing tracks).
- Dog walking is permissible in regional parks but only on lead. The Society does not support dog walking in the area but recognises if the area

became a regional park this would be permissible. The Society view is that dog walking on lead should only be permitted on a small number of designated tracks, with impacts being monitored (see for instance Yellomundee POM). The Society has serious concerns in relation to dog walking and the impacts on the natural and cultural values of the park but recognises that there the area is currently heavily for this purpose.

The Society supports current uses such as rock climbing and bushwalking and therefore does not support a nature reserve designation.

If a regional or new national park was being considered, the Society would support consulting with Traditional Owners in order to determine a suitable name in language which was endorsed by Traditional Owners.

The Society strongly encourages the NPWS to consult with the community, including Traditional Owners, local residents and users such as rock climbers on the most suitable reservation category, to ensure the NPWS makes an informed decision.