



Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc

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Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow

Mr David Crust
Regional Manager Blue Mountains
National Parks and Wildlife Service
PO Box 552
Katoomba NSW 2780
via email david.crust@environment.nsw.gov.au

Dear David

Karuna Sanctuary and Grand Clifftop Walk, Wentworth Falls to Katoomba

As you know, the Blue Mountains Conservation Society is a community-based volunteer organisation with over 800 members. Our mission is to help protect and advocate for the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains.

I am writing to you on two issues – the possible purchase or donation of parts of Karuna Sanctuary to the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and upgrades and maintenance of the Grand Cliff Top Walking Track between Wentworth Falls and Katoomba. We have also written to Ms Trish Doyle MP, Member for Blue Mountains and Matt Kean MP, Minister for Energy and Environment on these issues.

Karuna Sanctuary, Katoomba

The Society very much appreciates NPWS's support and long term efforts in helping to conserve Radiata Plateau, leading to the creation of Ngula Bulgarabang Regional Park.

Karuna Sanctuary is a privately run mediation retreat sited adjacent to Ngula Bulgarabang Regional Park (see attached map). Karuna is a large property which contains extensive natural values including intact bushland, watercourses, escarpment areas and a walking track system. However, in recent years the property has had issues in regard to invasive weeds. The property also includes some cleared areas, and extensive buildings including accommodation facilities.

We understand from local residents that the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is in negotiations with Karuna in regard to purchase of part of the property, or donation of part of the property, for addition to Ngula Bulgarabang Regional Park.

The Society fully supports the efforts of the NPWS in this regard. Addition of parts of Karuna would ensure nearly the entire cliffline of the Plateau would be protected, and several key creeklines incorporated into the park. The addition of parts of Karuna would also assist in resolving management issues including ensuring ongoing access via the track from Pulpit Hill Road, as well as extend the existing track network within the Ngula Bulgarabang Regional Park.

However, the Society believes purchase or donation of land by Karuna should be limited to the largely undisturbed bushland areas, and not the development area containing the retreat and accommodation facilities, which could continue to operate on a separate title.

The Society would appreciate an update on negotiations to date between NPWS and Karuna on this important addition to Ngula Bulgarabang.

Grand Cliff Top Walk, Wentworth Falls to Katoomba

The Society understands the NSW Government has allocated significant funds to upgrade the Grand Cliff Top Track between Wentworth Falls and Katoomba. This funding is very welcome and the Society fully supports this proposal (see our letter dated May 2020 – copy available on line at <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/documents/submissions/2020/bl200506-npws-gordon-falls-and-gctw.pdf>). We also understand that the timetable for track upgrade works has been delayed by COVID 19.

The Society has four bushwalking groups who regularly have parts of the existing Grand Cliff Top Walk in its program. The beauty of the Walk is that it combines a vast array of native flora, unparalleled views of the Jamison Valley, variety of vegetation landscapes, as well as several waterfalls. The walk is also extremely popular with visitors and tourists.

A number of Society members who are bushwalkers recently walked the Grand Cliff Top Walk in the Leura area. They identified a number of serious maintenance issues with this section of the track.

The Grand Cliff Top Walk from Gordon Falls to Leura Cascades is currently closed due to the landslide at Leura Cascades – and before that, parts of the Walk was closed due to the Ruined Castle Bushfire. There are also several near impassable sections between Olympian Rock and Tarpeian Rock. The track from Lyrebird Dell that joins the Grand Cliff Top Walk at the Pool of Siloam is in a very poor state, and this section of track has been deteriorating for several years.

In terms of the upgrade of the Grand Cliff Top Track, NPWS should be aware that along the track there are some uncommon flora that is virtually only found in the Upper Blue Mountains. Protecting these rare plants requires due diligence and care during the upgrade.

The Society is also concerned that funds are allocated for ongoing maintenance needs as part of the upgrade plans.

The Society would be keen to get information on the following:

- the timetable for the upgrade of the Grand Cliff Top Walk, including when sections around Leura will commence/be completed;
- an update on progress to date;
- protections put in place to protect rare flora during the upgrade; and
- assurances that funding for ongoing maintenance will be available.

We look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "T. Cameron".

Tara Cameron
President
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