

Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc



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Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow

19 June 2023

To:

Mayor Mark Greenhill Email: mgreenhill@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Deputy Mayor Romola Email: rhollywood@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Deputy Mayor Sarah Redshaw Email: sredshaw@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Suzie Van Opdorp Email: svanopdorp@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Brent Hoare Email: bhoare@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Mick Fell Email: mfell@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Dear Councillors

Encroachment Policy for Council Bushland

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society (the Society) is a community-based volunteer organisation with 900 members. Our mission is to help protect, conserve and advocate for the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains.

For the 2021 local council election the Society asked candidates questions related to Council developing a Land Encroachment Policy (see the Society's website at <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/elections/bmce21/documents/bmce21-questionnaire-3nov21.pdf>). The question was *Do you support the development and resourcing of a Council Land Encroachment Policy to address degradation of bushland reserves caused by the use of this land by neighbouring private landholders?*

We are writing to you as a local councillor who was elected to Council and who supported the above proposal. Your response can be found on the Society website at <https://www.bluemountains.org.au/elections/bmce21/bmce21-wx.shtml>

The other elected Councillors who supported the proposal were:

Ward 1 Suzie Van Opdorp (Labor) and Sarah Redshaw (The Greens)

Ward 2 Romola Hollywood (Labor) and Brent Hoare (The Greens)

Ward 3 Mick Fell (Labor)

Ward 4 Mark Greenhill (Labor)

The Society previously wrote to you in June 2021 to get an update on the development of the proposed policy to address and prevent encroachment onto Council bushland by neighbouring landowners and others. At that time, the Society was told that a Councillor briefing on the issue was expected in the near future.

Unfortunately, we have heard nothing further about the development of an Encroachment Policy, although there was clear support for the development of the policy by the majority of the current councillors, including yourself, prior to the election. The Society has raised the development of the policy numerous times with Councillors and council staff, and the commitment to develop and finalise the Policy has been included in previous Council Operation Plans. However, no Encroachment Policy has yet been developed.

In the meantime, the degradation of Council bushland reserves adjacent to private land continues. Indeed, the Council's failure to act on this issue (despite community requests to do so over many years) is likely to be exacerbating the problem because the landowners may begin to feel that they are entitled to encroach on the reserve.

The conservation values of these reserves are being compromised by the encroachment by neighbouring landholders.

The Society would appreciate if you could advise

- if an Encroachment Policy is in fact in development
- if so, when will the policy be finalised, adopted and implemented

Yours sincerely



Annette Cam
President
Blue Mountains Conservation Society
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