



Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc

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Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow

1 June 2024

To:

Hon Penny Sharpe MLC

Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, and
Minister for Heritage

cc

Mr Atticus Fleming

Deputy Secretary, National Parks and Wildlife Service

info@environment.nsw.gov.au

cc

Mr David Crust, Director, Blue Mountains Branch

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Ms Trish Doyle, MP, Member for Blue Mountains

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Dear Minister Sharpe

Urgent request to purchase: 68-70 Meeks Crescent Faulconbridge

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society is a community volunteer organisation with over 850 members and has been in existence for over 60 years. The Society's aim is to help conserve the natural environment of the Blue Mountains and to increase awareness of the natural environment in general. The Society is writing to you regarding land at 68-70 Meeks Crescent Faulconbridge (L1 DP 130267, L1 DP; L2 DP 2385; L3 DP 2385; L4 DP 2385; L15 DP 16845; L16 DP 16845; L23 DP 28746, L72 DP 833484; L111 DP 751635; L112 DP 751635, L113 DP 751635, L114 DP 751635).

The land is currently listed for sale and is undeveloped thus there are no structures or houses on the property. The Society along with the local community has been advocating for the purchase and conservation of this private property within the national parks system since the 1990s, as well as a bordering Crown Reserve at 11-49 Hillcrest Avenue.

The Society believes that the land has highly significant natural and cultural values and requests that it be urgently considered for purchase by the State government as an addition to the Blue Mountains National Park.

Location

The land is located at Faulconbridge on the northern side of the Great Western Highway (Attachment 1) with frontages to Shirlow Avenue and Meeks Crescent. The Blue Mountains National Park borders two sides of the property (west and north), while the eastern side mostly borders large bushland acreages off Grose Road. The southern portion of the property borders residential areas. A Crown Reserve at 11-49 Hillcrest Avenue is adjacent to the property to the west.

Natural values

The significant natural values of the property are extensive and have been previously documented by the Society (see Attachment 2). They include:

- **Regionally significant vegetation communities:** Four regionally significant vegetation communities as listed under the Blue Mountains Local Environmental Plan 2015 exist on the property.
- **Threatened Ecological Communities:** The Endangered River-Flat Eucalypt Forest on Coastal Floodplains of the Sydney Basin (NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act) grows in the deep valley of Lot 112 Meeks Crescent. Dominated by *Eucalyptus deanei* (Mountain Blue Gum) of all ages, it provides tree hollows for a variety of threatened species including Powerful Owls.
- **Flora:** Three threatened plant species, as listed under the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act, have been recorded at the property. Most importantly the Hawkesbury Sandstone ridge on the property provides critical habitat for the rare mallee *Eucalyptus burgessiana* (Faulconbridge Mallee Ash). This species has been greatly impacted by residential development and frequent burning from wildfires. The type specimen was only collected from here in 1953.
- **Fauna:** Animals listed as Vulnerable under the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act recorded on the property include the Gang-gang Cockatoo, Glossy Black-cockatoo, Giant Burrowing Frog, Powerful Owl, Red-crowned Toadlet and Spotted-tail Quoll.
- **Water catchment values:** The property sits within the headwaters of Linden Creek, a major lower Mountains tributary of the Grose River. In 2008 the Grose was declared a Wild River in NSW.
- **Wildlife corridor:** Increases connectivity between the existing parts of the Blue Mountains National Park north and south. The property also provides fauna species access to continuous good quality bushland around the fringes of the suburban area.

Heritage values

The property is of great significance to Aboriginal people, with the Darug traditional owners having a strong connection with the sandstone ridgelines in the lower mountains. While no comprehensive cultural survey has occurred on the property, it is likely occupations sites, art sites and tool making sites would be present. The Society recommends consultation with traditional owners if the State government is considering purchase.

Recreational values

The property while privately owned is currently extensively used by the public for bushwalking, birdwatching and geocaching, both by local the community and visitors to the Blue Mountains. The property provides access to walking tracks to Linden Creek,

within the Blue Mountains National Park, which can only be accessed through the property. Access to popular bushwalking spots such as Peggy's Pool and Turtle Falls can only be reached through the property.

The property has been impacted negatively by 4WD use, with the dirt road extending from Shirlow Avenue being poorly maintained resulting in heavy erosion, causing runoff into and damage to adjacent bushland. Unauthorised mountain bike trail construction on the property has also caused damage to native vegetation and is also contributing to erosion.

Threats

The site is largely zoned C2 Environmental Conservation which allows only for limited development. However, parts of the property are zoned for residential development (C4 Environmental Living) including 6 lots off Shirlow Avenue and 3 lots off Meeks Crescent. Any future development of the property such as housing on the blocks zoned for residential development would result in significant vegetation removal due to bushfire requirements and as well as raise the risk of environmental weed dispersion from non-native gardens. Stormwater runoff from residential development and runoff from on-site wastewater systems on large residential lots are known threats to Blue Mountains streams and waterways, as well as to Aboriginal cultural sites.

If the property remains in private ownership, inappropriate recreational activities may occur. This includes increased 4WD use and trail bike riding on current roads and tracks, and development of further trails resulting in bushland removal, and increased erosion and stormwater runoff. This is a frequent issue on large bushland blocks in private ownership in the Blue Mountains.

Given the high natural and cultural values of the property, active management is required including weed management, bushfire management and erosion control and management of the existing dirt access road – none of this is likely to occur if the property remains in private hands.

The current owner has allowed public access to the property, including access to walking tracks to Linden Creek within the Blue Mountains National Park, and to popular bushwalking destinations such as Peggy's Pool and Turtle Falls, which cannot be reached except through the property. This access is unlikely to continue under new private ownership.

Management considerations supporting acquisition

Purchase of the property would assist the National Parks and Wildlife Service in terms of management by:

- Ensuring ongoing access to existing walking tracks within the Blue Mountains National Park, as well as ensuring ongoing access to other popular bushwalking tracks.
- Ensuring access along the ridgelines in this area of the national park to assist with bushfire fighting and fire management activities.
- Ensuring inappropriate development does not occur adjacent to the existing national park.
- Consolidation of national park boundaries.

Community support for acquisition

There is widespread community support for the land to be acquired and included in the national park system. The Blue Mountains City Council passed an urgency motion on 28 May 2024 asking the State government to purchase the land for inclusion in the national park. Along with the Society, local residents are also actively campaigning to have the land included in the national park (Blue Mountains Gazette May 30). Wilderness Australia is also supporting acquisition.

National Parks and Wildlife Service – priorities for additions to the reserve system

The National Parks and Wildlife Service stated priorities for national parks additions (see [Deciding on land for new parks | NSW Environment and Heritage](#)).

This property meets key priorities the following ways.

Priority	How the property meets priority
Poorly reserved ecosystems, threatened species and habitats – protecting as many different ecosystems as possible will help protect as many species as possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four regionally significant vegetation communities. • One state listed threatened vegetation community dominated by <i>Eucalyptus deanei</i> (Mountain Blue Gum) • Three threatened plant species. • Critical habitat for the rare mallee <i>Eucalyptus burgessiana</i> (Falconbridge Mallee Ash). • Threatened fauna recorded on the property include the Gang-gang Cockatoo, Glossy Black-cockatoo, Giant Burrowing Frog, Powerful Owl, Red-crowned Toadlet and Spotted-tail Quoll.
Connectivity conservation – connecting protected areas allows animals to move between habitats to access food and shelter and allows plants and animals to disperse	Increases connectivity between the existing parts of the Blue Mountains National Park north and south.
Land that improves reserve design – including land that minimises the impacts on a park from adjoining land or resolves access and management issues	Ensures ongoing bushwalking access to the existing national park. Consolidates national park boundaries. Allows ridgetop access into the national park for fire management purposes
Lands within important water catchments	The property sits within the headwaters of Linden Creek, a major lower Mountains tributary of the Grose River which has been declared a Wild River in NSW.
Culturally important landscapes and places – including	Significant Aboriginal cultural values, with high probability of a wide variety of cultural sites. High

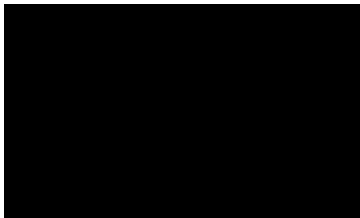
landscapes and places of importance to people for their heritage, aesthetic, scientific or social value	recreational values. Important area for local community including a 30 year campaign to conserve its natural values.
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Conclusion

The Society urges you to urgently consider purchase of **68-70 Meeks Crescent Faulconbridge** for addition to the Blue Mountains National Park in light of its significant natural and cultural heritage values. If acquisition proceeds, we also urge the government to transfer the adjacent **Crown Reserve at 11-49 Hillcrest Avenue** to the national parks system.

If you have any queries in regard to this letter, please contact me on president@bluemountains.org.au or 0450215125.

Yours sincerely



Annette Cam
President
Blue Mountains Conservation Society