

The long fight to *Leave Radiata Plateau Wild*

(referred to from the November 2019 Hut News)

1979 Transcendental Meditation (TM) Group (later called the Maharishi Foundation) acquire Radiata Plateau.

1990 A 415-bed conference centre and resort is proposed on the site by TM. Considerable community opposition against the development results in 278 submissions being lodged against the development and a 2,500 signature petition. Intense lobbying and campaigning by the community begins including rallies and meetings, extensive media coverage in the Blue Mountains Gazette, lobbying of politicians and Councillors, street stalls and information nights, and on-site surveys and monitoring. However, despite this Stage One of the conference centre and resort development is approved by the Blue Mountains City Council .

1992. TM fails to commence the approved resort development and so the development approval lapses, and no development can proceed unless a new development application is lodged. The site lays dormant for eight years.

2004 The Plateau is put up for sale by TM. The Conservation Society and other local groups urge acquisition of the Plateau for inclusion in the Blue Mountains National Park. Blue Mountains City Council publicly supports the campaign but the NSW Government deem the Plateau not an acquisition priority. The Plateau is not sold and remains in the ownership of TM. However, no new development application is lodged and the Plateau remains free from development.

2013 The development of the Blue Mountains Local Environment Plan 2015 commences. TM seeks changes in the zoning on the Plateau to allow increased development and publicly expresses future plans for a resort and conference facility.

2015 and 2016 Two development applications are lodged by TM for three new buildings on the Plateau. TM takes their proposal to the Land and Environment Court in order to get approval. Residents and the Society make comprehensive submissions and appear at on-site Court hearings, objecting to the development proposals.

March 2017 The Court refuses two out of the three proposed buildings, largely on the basis of the arguments put forward by residents and the Society.

June 2017 The Blue Mountains Conservation Society *Leave Radiata Plateau Wild* campaign is launched at Winter Magic, with the aim of having the Plateau purchased by the State or Commonwealth Government and included in the Blue Mountains National Park.

July 2017 Initial campaign rally at Cahill's Lookout occurs, including a banner drop by rock climbers off the cliffs of Radiata. First campaign video is launched along with the campaign website and social media sites. Campaign launched attracted local and Sydney based media exposure.

2017/2018 Intense lobbying of local state and federal politicians begins as part of the campaign. A letter writing drive by community members to state and federal Environment Ministers is also launched. Information and community awareness raising is achieved through campaign videos, social media and articles in the Society newsletter Hut News. Late in 2018, TM expresses interest with Council in lodging a new development application to subdivide part of the Plateau and lodge new development applications.

December 2018 A full page Open Letter to Gabrielle Upton, the (then) NSW Minister for the Environment, is published in the Blue Mountains Gazette, asking her to purchase the Plateau for inclusion in the national park system. The ad is paid for by the Society and is signed by over thirty Aboriginal, environmental and heritage community organisations and groups, as well as a wide range of community leaders.

February 2019 The then NSW Environment Minister Gabrielle Upton, along with local MLC Shayne Mallard, visits the Plateau and meets with residents and Society representatives. Labor Opposition Deputy Leader and local MP Trish Doyle subsequently announce that if Labor is elected they will purchase the Plateau for inclusion in the reserve system.

June 2019 The Plateau is put up for sale by TM with an asking price of \$2.8million. Lobbying by the Society of state politicians and National Parks and Wildlife Service intensifies.

July 2019 NSW Minister for the Environment Matt Kean visits the Blue Mountains and states “the NSW Government is having a close look at buying Radiata”.

August 2019 The Society pays for a half page advertisement in the Blue Mountains Gazette asking the NSW Environment Minister Matt Kean to buy Radiata Plateau and “make a landmark decision for conservation and the community”. The Society launches a letter writing campaign urging residents and the community to write to Minister Kean requesting purchase.

October 2019 NSW Government purchases the Plateau for inclusion in the national park system.