

# colong bulletin

No. 266 | April 2017

## A Tourism Plan to exploit the Blue Mountains

BY KEITH MUIR

A grab-bag of tourist proposals in the draft Blue Mountains Destination Management Plan now on exhibition seeks to double visitor expenditure but seems to be rather speculative.

The plan's resort proposals would drag visitors away from small businesses while massive plans for coach tourism will place a further tourist burdens on council through parking and waste collection. Some of the Plan's proposals will degrade the World Heritage Area, as well as local town amenity, and will

almost certainly result in uniting the community against it.

The plan's primary focus, how to encourage Blue Mountains visitors to stay overnight is a sensible goal, but unfortunately it deviates into ludicrous and excessive development that the community rejected decades ago.

The Blue Mountains community long ago resolved to build on what it was good at, and with some notable exceptions, has for over a century welcomed tourism based on respect for land, rather than development of bushland. Such tourism ensures that national parks remain sacrosanct, with

no on-park development apart from walking tracks and basic visitor facilities around the edges. This promotion of walking tracks and magnificent scenery has maximised everyone's joy in nature, so it is hard to believe the community is going to deviate from its vision of the Blue Mountains as a city within a World Heritage national park. Promoting this vision will, if properly marketed, ensure less visitors are trapped on Sydney-based day tours, and more stay to enjoy the cultural events and restaurants the region offers. The unique cultural

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*Artists impression from the draft Destination Management Plan of private chalets that are proposed on the Govetts Leap Picnic Ground.*

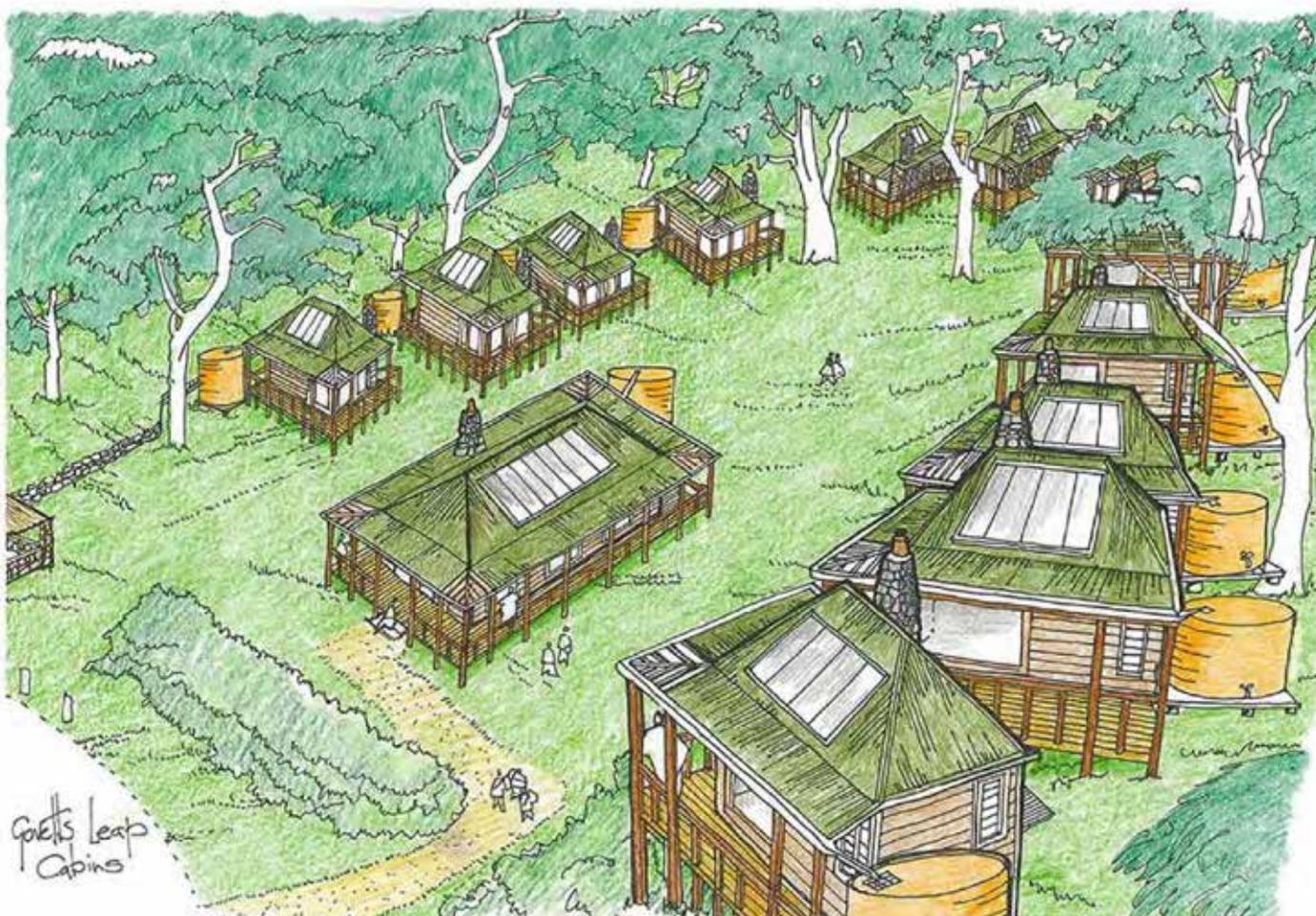


Figure 45: Govetts Leap Eco-Friendly Accommodation Schematic

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The Colong Foundation reminds members to please renew their subscriptions for 2017, if they have not already done so, as they are now overdue.

### Tourism plan to exploit the Blue Mountains

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diversity that works towards being compatible with nature and World Heritage is what makes the Mountains so special. To suggest a U-turn on this vision is remarkably stupid.

The draft plan does propose ways to help visitors more easily find where walks are located when they arrive. If visitors can then also grasp that the region has great restaurants, entertainment and frequent cultural events, as well as authentic nature-based recreation opportunities, then this is surely the winning combination.

#### Over the top tourism

The draft plan proposes to boost day tours, even by capturing further hordes of cruise ship visitors, a move that's bound to alienate and overwhelm the local

community. Another twenty or thirty buses in Katoomba and Leura will be unwelcome and any plans for more visitor car parking at Blackheath, Scenic World, Leura and Wentworth Falls would need careful assessment and public review.

I can't imagine that the Fairmont Resort or Hydro Majestic would support another 'internationally-branded' 250 to 350 room resort with a 650 to 850 seat conference theatre and a 2,000 person outdoor amphitheatre complete with three-storey carpark. How outdoor entertainment could work in winter remains unexplained.

To diversify outdoor tourism, a six hectare Destination Holiday Park is proposed for 25 cabins, 80 caravans and 100 campsites supported by gimcrack outdoor amusements such as a gondola ride, zip line, luge (toboggan) experience, BMX track and

mini golf. These all-inclusive income generators are foreign to the Blue Mountains and keep tourists from local small businesses and a more genuine Mountains experiences.

#### World Heritage exploitation

The plan includes an unacceptable proposal for 8-10 chalets on Govetts Leap picnic ground with a 'wow-factor' cantilevered viewing platform for the lookout. Another such lookout is proposed at Leura Cascades. The Govetts development would replace free, general public use of the wonderful picnic ground and lookout, with fee-paying tourists. This alienation is justified by what would be a small revenue stream back to national parks, while the Government is expected to pay up front for this development under a public-private partnership. Hostility towards this proposal will no doubt

damage the credibility of the draft plan for it demonstrates that its authors are thinking of nothing but profit. This development is certain to be opposed by Blue Mountains City Council, but then they may not be the determining authority (see - *National Parks targeted for development* in this edition).

More disturbing still is a speculative plan for eco-lodges and/or glamping at Ruined Castle and by the Kedumba River, on the Great Walk over Mt Solitary and around Kedumba Valley. Vehicle access to the Valley would make this walk more viable (read profitable) as the walkers could then carry day packs. The Great Walk would displace existing campers at the Ruined Castle with those who can afford to pay thousands of dollars for a three-day walk.

The absence of resorts in Blue Mountains national parks is described as an 'absence of

overnight in-park trekking' which will amuse most bush walkers.

#### No social licence for national park development

Previously, national parks in Australia didn't need processes to regulate private development because there was broad political agreement that parks were off-limits. The implicit assumption of this draft plan is that this is no longer the case, and on this they are dead wrong.

A hair-brained resort proposal for Govetts Leap picnic ground has no social licence and this national park land grab should be rejected outright by everyone who cares.

Please take advantage of the public comment and review process to protect our vulnerable bushlands and national parks and

*continued on p. 3*

## Burning plastics is worse than coal

Burning plastic produces highly toxic, carcinogenic air pollutants, so it came as a complete surprise when EnergyAustralia announced it had teamed up with ReGroup to examine the feasibility of burning waste for energy in its Mt Piper power plant near Lithgow.

The waste to energy proposal at Mt Piper is at the feasibility stage but should be stopped before it progresses further. If adopted, the plant will pollute our air, generate toxic wastes and undermine zero waste strategies.

Plastic will make up 70% of the proposed energy resource for the waste plant as it has a high calorific value compared to wood or paper, so creates more heat when burnt.

Emissions include highly toxic, carcinogenic and persistent organic pollutants, such as dioxins and furans (PCDD and PCDF),

hexachlorobenzene (HCB), PCBs and brominated persistent organic pollutants. Emissions also include nanoparticles of toxic heavy metals such as lead, mercury and arsenic and acid gases all of which have serious impacts on human health. These acidic gases will also attack the plant's pollution control system reducing its reliability, effectiveness and function.

Australia is a signatory to the Stockholm Convention and approval of this proposed power to energy facility will breach the convention's intent which seeks to eliminate dioxins and furans from the environment.

The location of the proposed plant in the Cocks River catchment poses an unacceptable risk to Sydney's drinking water. Fly ash from the plant will be heavily contaminated with the toxic heavy metals and

persistent organic pollutants described above. Management of the fly ash will be hazardous to workers and the environment of the emplacement area.

Regroup and EnergyAustralia spruik the efficiency improvements burning waste will bring, but this is misleading. Waste burning facilities produce more carbon dioxide per unit of energy generated than coal fired power, and destroy resources such as plastics that could be reused.

Burning plastic stifles sustainability initiatives and costs jobs in the recycling and reuse industries. Further, this waste to energy proposal will seek to obtain subsidies and tax breaks that should be spent on assisting genuine 'green' energy projects such as wind, wave and solar power.

The Federal Renewable Energy (Electricity) Act, 2000 was amended

to classify biomass and waste as renewable energy sources and this is driving the push to burn these resources for electricity. From June 2015 the burning of 'wood waste' and 'biomass-based components of municipal solid waste' can contribute to Australia's Renewable Energy Targets and be subsidised as green energy.

Our waste resources are better conserved through reuse, recycling and composting schemes. This proposal and the well advanced, million tonne a year waste to energy plant proposed at Eastern Creek, will entrench wasteful resource consumption and are steps in the wrong direction if we are to adapt and thrive in the 21st century.



Artists impression of the proposed Eastern Creek waste to energy plant.

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## BOOK REVIEW

# Repaying my debt: A conservationist's tale

by Geoff Mosley 1931-  
297 page biography with  
illustrations, softcover, RRP  
\$30.00  
Published by Envirobook, 2017

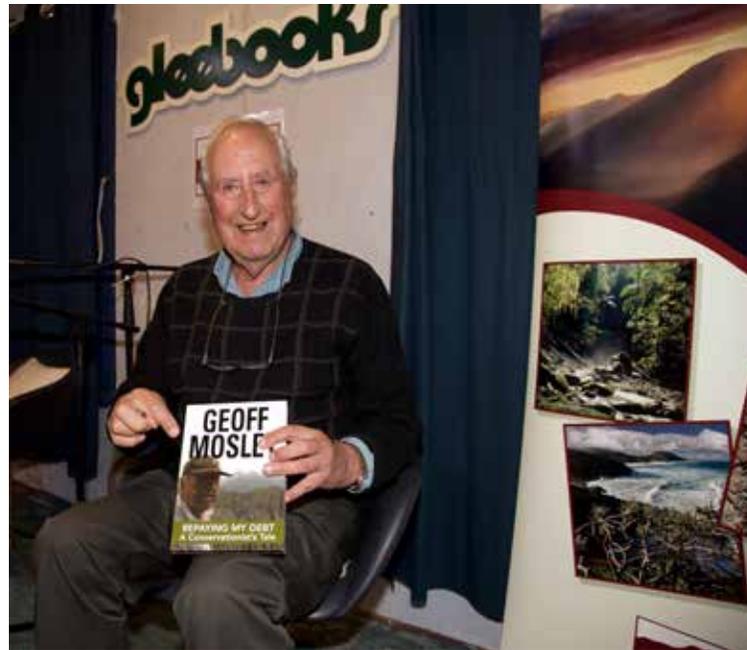
## REVIEW BY KEITH MUIR

The theme of Geoff Mosley's autobiography is that throughout our lives we need to repay our debt to future generations and the planet by treating our environment with respect and making conservation our guiding principle.

He has brought us a vibrant narrative of his early life, education, family and friends that played key roles in his development. Geoff, the adventurous kid who foraged for food in the dales of England's Peak District during the Great Depression, became the student who studied national parks and then the conservationist who saved the wilderness. For most of his life Geoff has grown vegetables and it is this personal connection with the land that has enabled his astounding passion for nature to flourish and gain purpose.

In many ways his biography reminds one of that other great Australian autobiography, *A Fortunate Life* by Albert Facey, as Geoff is a man who draws joy and inspiration from his daily challenges.

After completing a masters on the Peak District National Park, he gained a doctorate on outdoor recreation activities in Tasmania from the Australian



Dr Geoff Mosley launched his memoir at Gleebooks in a conversation with Gregg Borschmann for ABC Radio National's BIG IDEAS. Photo: J. Robens

National University in 1963. With these qualifications Geoff was able to propel his conservation vision into the national and international political arena.

It is also his belief in the benefits of staying connected to nature that saw Geoff tie his bushwalking adventures to nature conservation projects, and in later life brought his children along on these walks.

His contribution to conservation has been honoured as a Member of the Order of Australia and with an Individual Award in the United Nations Association of Australia World Environment Day Awards. He has been the Australian Director of the Centre for the Advancement

of the Steady State Economy since 2008 and worked for nearly twenty years in executive positions leading the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF). He also served as an elected ACF councillor for nearly thirty years, a mark of the popular support for his conservation vision. He also helped save Antarctica from mining and lead dozens of other campaigns that saved threatened natural areas across Australia.

Dr Geoff Mosley is still an active conservationist, an avid bushwalker and gardener. He is one of the greatest figures in wilderness conservation in Australia. Geoff's new book is well worth reading.

Management Plan's proposals in national parks, including built accommodation and intrusive infrastructure, such as large car parks and 'wow-factor' cantilevered lookouts;  Oppose 'Game changer' tourist over-development, particularly in bushland areas, including the proposal for an unnecessary 'internationally-branded' 250 bed mega-resort and conference centre,

an exclusive six hectare Destination Holiday Park and facilitating bus-based day tourism from Sydney; and  Support instead better funding, communication, promotion and integration of existing facilities and events that are compatible with the nature-focused vision of the Blue Mountains as a city within a World Heritage national park.

## Thank you for your support

Without your financial support, which enables us to help protect wilderness, our campaigns are not possible. The following members and supporters made donations to the Colong Foundation last year:

A Keith Lethlean, Adrienne Shilling, Agnes Keen, Alan Dixon, Alex Allchin, Andrew Cox, Andrew Macqueen, Andrew Zelnik, Andy Cairns, Annabelle Andrews, Anne Arndt, Anne Lanyon, Annette Cam, Anthea Hall, Anthony Kelleher, Arnold Ewald, Asu Burik, Bankstown Bushwalking Club, Barbara Briggs, Benjamin Shockley, Betty Mason, Brendan Murphy, Brian Marshall, Bronwyn Stow, The Bush Club, Carl Green, Caroline Davis, Carolyn Ryan, Catherine Turner, Charles Bowden, Charlotte Poole, Chris Walton, Christine Gatehouse, Christopher Hudson, Coast and Mountain Walkers of NSW, Cotter Erickson, Craig and Christine Austin, Craig Whitford, David and Judy Kelly, David Bell, David Butler, David Large, David Mossop, David Noble, David Rostron, Dennis Byrne, Diane Sanderson, Dierk von Behrens, E Chapman-Wade, Edmond Hanvin, Einion Thomas, Elizabeth Elenius, Emanuel Conomos, Emlyn Crockett, Emma Rooksby, Enid Hawkins, Euan Tovey, Garth Coghlan, Gaye Wingett, George Azoury, Gillian Ramsay, Graeme Jessup, Graham Daly, Graham Lalchere, Greg Buckman, Gregor Lawrence, Gregory Middleton, Heather Kenway, Heike Koelzow, Henry Gold, Hugh Paterson and Francoise Matter, Ian Dutton, Ian Fretwell, Ian R and C M Williamson, Ian Sefton, Ian Tanner, James Lawler, James R Stone, Jane Lemann, Janet Cavanaugh, Janet Mayer, Jeffrey Bridger, Jenny Simons, Joe Horacek, John Benson, John Cave, John Davoren, John Whitehouse, John Wrigley, Joy Fleming, Julie Gibson, Kara Petersen, Karen McLaughlin, Karen Wilson, Katharine Stavert, Keith Muir, Kelvin Knox, Kenn Clacher, Kevin Williams, Kim and Anne Wagstaff, Lachlan Garland, Lani Imhof and Mr Michael Smith, Liane Colwell, Lidia Petersen, Lyn Bradley, Lyndal Sullivan, Lyndsay Edmonds, Lyndsay Edmonds, Manfred Lenzen, Marg Beal, Margaret Esson, Mark Weatherley, Martin Bouman, Merridy Cairn-Duff, Michael Ellwood, Michael Holt, Nicole Johnson, Patricia Mills, Pedro Henrique, Peter Bonney, Peter Comino, Peter Drinkall, Peter Hill, Peter Krinks, Peter Meredith, Peter Morris, Peter Watson, Philip Smart, Phillip Cornwell, R and V Degotadi, Reg Woodleigh, Richard Gates, Richard Stiles, Robert Mackenzie, Robert Pallin, Robin Plumb, Roger Browne, Ron Hume, Rosemary Bilton, Rosemary Pearson, Rosie Doyle, Ruth Toop, Samantha Newton, Sasa, Sharyn Cullis, Simon Grover, Simon Lynch, Stephen Allen, Sue England, Susan Caffin, Susan Stevens, Suzanne Aubrun, Sybil Pliner, Thelma Hobday, Thomas Gleeson, Tim Bidder, Timothy Walsh, Tom Brennan, Tommy Wiedmann, Troy Shiels, Valerie Atkinson, Virginia Levell, William Gillooly, William Holland, Winifred Southcott, Wyn Jones and Zing Insights.

## Supporting our future

Leaving a lasting legacy or making a gift in memory of a loved one can be easily done, and whatever you chose to give will make a difference.

If everyone who enjoyed wilderness left a small legacy, bequest or was remembered with a gift, then wilderness protection would be assured.

## Tourism plan to exploit the Blue Mountains

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object to the Blue Mountains Destination Management Plan. Submissions will be received until April 21st at: <http://bluemountainshaveyoursay.com.au/DMP>

### ASK BLUE MOUNTAINS CITY COUNCIL TO:

Oppose the Destination

# National Parks across Australia are being targeted for development

BY KEITH MUIR, WITH ADVICE ON TASMANIA FROM NICK SAWYER, TNPA

## In NSW, Vail buys into Kosciuszko National Park

With climate change upon us, and the snow season shrinking you would not expect ski resort development. Despite science predicting that by 2050 Australian snow resorts will be uneconomic, as snow-making becomes unviable, the Vail corporation has purchased from James Packer and Transfield a proposed 800-bed development in Perisher Valley for \$176 million.

This proposal for five apartment blocks will turn Perisher Village into a town, complete with a shopping complex. It is an attack on core national park values as not only will it pollute alpine streams, it will encourage all kinds of high impact tourism in the surrounding park areas in order to generate a profit.

The Colong Foundation believes the concept plan for this resort proposal lapsed as a park bench and walking trail that was to secure consent for this vast project hadn't been started by October 2, 2016. Vail Resorts should give up investing millions on a resort doomed to be without snow.

Unfortunately, this sort of speculative park development is becoming common in Australia.

## Victorian Alps at risk too

The 'Vision for Mount Buffalo' report by the government-sponsored Mount Buffalo Destination Advisory Group (with no conservation representation) is pushing for park development. The group proposes to carve the resort area from Mount Buffalo National Park, build a glass-bottomed skywalk over a gorge, add a new resort and generate more tourist traffic with amusements, such as a skate park and shops. Such development has nothing to do with nature conservation and is clearly another park grab.



*Walls of Jerusalem, Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, threatened by commercial hut development. Photo: N. Sawyer, TNPA*

The vision document pre-empted the Victorian Government's soon-to-be-released Strategic Directions for Mount Buffalo National Park and is intended to ensure the heritage-listed Mount Buffalo Chalet stimulates economic activity by becoming, among other things, a wedding destination.

No doubt privatising the core of this national park gives certainty for investors, but in doing so it permits the loss of conservation values, reinforcing people-focused visitor management of proposed fee-charging amusements rather than nature-focused management of the park's heritage values. This subversion of values is the common theme of current national park development.

In the nearby Alpine National Park, the Victorian Government has a proposal to commercialise a popular walk from Mt Hotham to Falls Creek using helicopters to service many new huts, thereby maximising the proposal's carbon footprint and degrading the current remote walking experience.

Mt Feathertop, considered by many bush walkers to be the best mountain destination in Victoria, is the key focus for this commercial venture. The proposal estimates that half the bush walkers will abandon the area for the paying tourist horde once a graded walking track is established as the

mountain will then no longer be remote.

The Master Plan considers that private facilities and track construction will also make it unnecessary for walkers to be self-sufficient with food and a tent. Yet as many an exhausted walker knows when climbing Diamantina Spur to Mt Feathertop, it's self-reliance that's the difference between life and death in a white-out or freezing storm.

The commercial tour Master Plan also fails to consider the sensitive ecology of the Alpine National Park, but don't worry, with a cost to benefit to ratio of 1:7.66 the proposal's sacrifices of ecological and 'wild' experiences make economic sense!

## The Tasmanian Government's park development plans

Under new state government legislation, tourist development in Tasmanian national parks may soon be approved without public comment or recourse to appeal decisions in court. Developments could even be approved without the public being aware of them. The Tasmanian Liberal Government was elected in 2014 on a platform which included "unlocking our national parks and world heritage areas" and many of the previous development constraints in national parks have been removed.

Recent changes to local

government planning legislation have removed any role for Councils in the approval of developments within a national park. Previously this provided an opportunity for public comment and appeal rights.

The 2016 management plan for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area has removed constraints on development contained in the 1999 plan. Specific changes include removal of a prohibition on huts on the South Coast Track and loosening of the restrictions on aerial access for float planes and helicopters.

The sole remaining process for control of development of national parks is an inadequate Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) Reserve Activity Assessment process. This provides for public notification and comment only on what PWS determines to be the most major proposals. There is no requirement for any aspect of the assessment to be made public. The assessment is not a statutory process (it is defined only by an internal PWS policy document) so there is no legal requirement to undertake it and no possibility of legal challenge.

The Tasmanian Government is attracting park development proposals by calling for Expressions of Interest on "tourism investment opportunities". The assessment of these proposals is based on compliance with the most basic

legal requirements and with park management plans, but if a proposal "has merit" despite being contrary to management plan requirements, the management plan will be changed to accommodate the development – and this has already occurred for Freycinet, Narawntapu and Tasman National Parks.

Federal Government lack of commitment to the environment offers no reassurance through development oversight. Its role is limited to consideration of narrowly defined world and national heritage values that are unlikely to be significantly impacted by specific tourist developments. Despite the World Heritage Committee urging "recognition of wilderness character of the [Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area] as one of its key values and as being fundamental for its management" the Federal Government has no interest in it.

For assessment of big tourism developments, the Tasmanian Government has foreshadowed major project legislation which can be expected to remove decisions from the hands of the Parks and Wildlife Service. The threat of a Cable Car from the Cradle Mountain Visitors Centre to Dove Lake could be determined under this process.

## Protect Tasmanian wilderness, write a letter

Express your outrage over private tourist interests grabbing the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area by writing letters to the editor of one for the following Tasmanian newspapers based on the above information:

*Mercury* (Hobart): [mercuryledletter@dbl.newsltd.com.au](mailto:mercuryledletter@dbl.newsltd.com.au)

*Examiner* (Launceston): <http://www.examiner.com.au/opinion/letters/send-a-letter-to-the-editor/>

*Advocate* (North West Coast): <http://www.theadvocate.com.au/opinion/letters/send-a-letter-to-the-editor/>

# Protecting Barrington South's rivers and forests

BY MARTIN FALLDING, NPA  
HUNTER BRANCH

THE BARRINGTON TOPS plateau forms the backdrop to the north-east Hunter Valley. A series of steep valleys fall to the south including the headwaters of the Paterson, Allyn and Williams Rivers. High rainfall, varied microclimates, fertile soils and time have combined to form a mosaic of rainforests and tall eucalypt forests with an altitudinal range of over 1,000 metres.

Most of the high plateau and steep escarpment of the Barrington area north-west of Dungog is protected in Barrington Tops National Park and has been world heritage listed for over 25 years. The Williams River forests are within the Park and have been recognised and protected as a tourist destination since the 1930s. The adjoining headwaters of the Paterson and Allyn Rivers remain State Forest although an integral part



Paterson River, Chichester SF - unprotected wild river and subtropical rainforest. Photo: I. Brown

of the natural area comprising the Barrington South valleys and forests.

The National Parks Association of NSW (Hunter Branch) has made a proposal to the NSW Government to extend the boundaries of Barrington Tops National Park

in the Upper Paterson and Allyn River Valleys. The Barrington South forests deserve protection and investment to both maintain natural values and make nature accessible to an increasingly urbanised Hunter region.

Masseys Creek and part of Chichester State Forest are to the immediate south of the national park and remain available to logging. A gap of about 9,600 ha as shown on the map remains. Lack of active management by NSW State Forests has resulted in degradation of the natural and recreational values of this area, particularly the picnic and camping areas of the Upper Allyn River.

The current national park boundaries are largely an historical accident, not based on logical land management requirements. The proposed extension of Barrington Tops National Park to protect the Barrington South rivers and forests will have many benefits. It will:

- Protect the natural and cultural values of the area, including landscapes and vegetation that are already recognised for their world heritage significance. National park land tenure will remove a gap in the current Barrington Tops National Park boundary especially around Mt Cabre Bald;
- Provide improved

recreation and tourist access to the area especially for walking, mountain biking and camping;

- Support a framework for improved management of the area, consistent with the standards expected of world class national parks; and

- Enable economic opportunities for Dungog and Gresford by increasing the status and recognition of the area as a visitor destination.

Currently, prominent landscapes and features in the national park are substantially bordered by State Forest and can only be accessed through these areas. This adversely affects walking routes, accessibility and protection of their values. Former logging roads are unmaintained and degrading due to lack of management. Existing recreation facilities in the Allyn River are suffering from the same neglect.

Much of the area of the proposed national park extension is not available to timber production because it is either designated flora reserve, or identified within forest management zones that cannot be logged due to steep topography, proximity to streams or other environmental values. Native forest management of the Barrington South forests is uneconomic, with an estimated loss under current State Forest management of \$775,000 annually. The management costs of native forests far exceed financial returns that can be gained by timber harvesting.

The National Parks Association of NSW (Hunter Branch) proposal to the NSW Government is to extend the Barrington Tops National Park boundary in two stages. The first (Paterson River) stage can proceed immediately at little cost. This provides substantial protection to the world heritage area and adjoins the current Barrington Wilderness Area, providing a buffer for the wilderness and the opportunity to extend it in the future. Consistent management by one agency will protect the values of the world heritage area, especially Mt Cabre Bald

and its surrounds.

It would be more cost effective for the NSW Government for all forests in this area to be protected by one authority and to invest in recreational infrastructure. It is estimated that the second stage extension (Allyn River area) requires an investment of around \$7.5m in roads and recreational infrastructure to prevent further degradation and to support sustainable tourism management. This would substantially reduce annual operational expenditure and provide long-term economic benefits for the local area.

The case for protecting Barrington South forests and valleys in an extension to Barrington Tops National Park is extremely strong. The current gap in the park boundary will be filled, current State Forest management liabilities will be reduced, and appropriate capital investment will create significant long-term recreational and tourism benefits and economic opportunities.

As part of the forthcoming renegotiation of the Regional Forest Agreement between the NSW and Commonwealth Governments, the Barrington South rivers and forests should be identified for conservation as national park. The NSW Government has been requested to facilitate the transfer of the first stage of the extension (Paterson River) as a matter of urgency.

During 2017 a number of walks and activities will be organised for people interested in experiencing the natural and recreational values of the area. Scheduled dates for walks are 23 April, 29/30 July and 11/12 November. Mountain bike rides are proposed for 30/31 April and 20/21 May. Dates are subject to change. For details of activities email [broocoloot@gmail.com](mailto:broocoloot@gmail.com).

#### REFERENCE

National Parks Association of NSW  
Hunter Branch (2016) Proposed Additions to Barrington Tops National Park, Upper Allyn & Paterson Rivers, June 2016.

## Proposed additions to

## Barrington Tops National Park Upper Allyn & Paterson Rivers

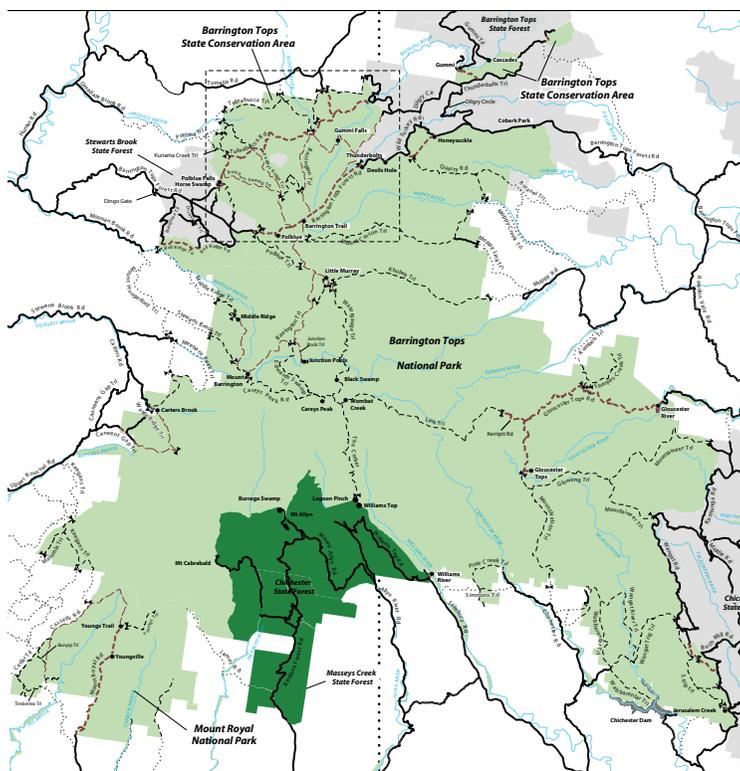


NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF NSW  
protecting nature through community action

### 1. Location & context

Note: forestry and management roads may not be trafficable

- National park estate (existing)
- Proposed additions



## Tale of two mines

Recently Dr Ann Young sent the Colong Foundation a copy of the letter she wrote to the new Minister for Planning, The Hon. Anthony Roberts, about two underground coal mining proposals in drinking water catchments south of Sydney.

This is a summary of Dr Young's concerns regarding recent mining proposals for the Dendrobium mine in the Avon catchment and the Metropolitan mine in the Woronora catchment:

WE KNOW THAT undermining causes drainage of upland swamps. Water tables in the peaty sediments of swamps drop rapidly after undermining; and the swamps wet up again only transiently after heavy rainfalls. Independent reports have shown that water lost from swamps and small headwater streams cannot be proven to re-emerge downstream.

The Department of Planning and Environment's groundwater expert Dr Col Mackie has found that the Dendrobium mine is losing 2.3 million litres a day to mine workings that would otherwise contribute to Sydney's drinking water supplies. Dendrobium's groundwater monitoring has shown that water drains from the uppermost stratum, the Hawkesbury Sandstone. There is also increasing evidence that there can be significant connectivity between the surface fracture system and the fracture system above the mine's goaf (cavern where coal has been removed).

In short, the evidence is strong that mining has led to water loss from streams and swamps; and that this lost water can drain below the level where it is able to flow back into the catchment which as a result suffers broad-scale dehydration.

Recently, the estimated losses at Dendrobium mine from four longwall panels were estimated by the Department Planning and Environment at 803 ML/year, which was dismissed as insignificant. This quantity, however, is equivalent to 3.5% of environmental flows over Pheasants Nest Weir and 15% of the environmental flow from Cordeaux Dam. Such catchment damage is likely to increase as mining moves into more geologically difficult



*Water flows have been lost from creeks in the Dendrobium mining area. Photo: K Muir*

areas and more dissected terrain.

Since 2013, mining at Dendrobium Mine has damaged five upland swamps, Donalds Castle Creek and a tributary of Wongawilli Creek. Dr Young believes that the discounting by mine regulators of catchment impacts needs to stop and approvals must be adapted to stop further damage.

Meanwhile the Metropolitan Mine, which now operates at half the intensity of Dendrobium, plans to mine under stored waters behind Woronora Dam. However Metropolitan Mine has failed to provide data confirming its predicted reductions in subsidence impacts, from operating at lower mining intensities, have actually been observed. Without assessment of the actual damage, the plans to mine under stored waters should not proceed.

I have no in principle opposition to mining, Dr Young says, but I have come to see upland swamps as 'canaries above the coal mine', giving clear early warning signs of a much wider problem.

## Time to retire coal fired power plants

AT A SENATE hearing into the retirement of coal-fired power plants in February, the Colong Foundation argued that making generators pay for the full cost of environmental harm caused by power generation would be an effective way of bringing forward their closure.

Making generators pay for pollution and damage will remove the unfair cost advantage of coal-fired power, and help society understand the choices needed if it wants nature, food production, clean air and water to be protected by power generators.

For example, Mt Piper power plant owned and operated by EnergyAustralia pollutes our air and water, while coal extracted for it wrecks swamps, streams and pagodas in the 40,000 hectare Gardens of Stone reserve proposal.

If power companies were required to pay the hundreds of millions of dollars needed to clean up their pollution and prevent environmental degradation, coal would immediately become uneconomic as a power source compared to renewable energy.

The Colong Foundation found that the cost of adequate treatment of one discharge from Springvale mine near Lithgow would cost around \$100 million in capital works and that only a small handful of the 105 swamps that Springvale mine will damage are likely to be offset.

Mt Piper power plant is not only polluting Sydney's drinking water supply but also undermining the eco-tourism potential of the Lithgow region. The damage to the Gardens of Stone region is not factored into their energy price, and greenhouse gas emissions are of course ignored.

### Cost of air pollution

In its submission, Environmental Justice Australia estimated that the state's big five power stations – Eraring, Bayswater, Liddell, Vales Point and Mt Piper –



*If the true cost of environmental damage, such as the loss of this waterfall, was paid by coal miners, then coal-fired electric power generation would soon cease. Photo: K. Muir*

emitted about 335,000 tonnes of toxic pollution in 2014-15, including lead and mercury, hydrochloric and sulphuric acid, and fine particles that contribute to the more than 3,000 premature deaths from air pollution annually in Australia. According to Dr Ben Ewald of Doctors for the Environment Australia, Mt Piper produces 5,700 kilograms of sulphur dioxide and 3,800 kilograms of nitrogen dioxides per gigawatt hour. It seems to be worse than the others, as it is three times as polluting as Vales Point station on sulphur and almost as bad when compared to Eraring on nitrogen dioxides.

So it is hardly surprising that Lithgow Environment Group reported to the Senate that Research by CSIRO and the Australian Nuclear Science Technology Organisation (ANSTO) showed that half of the sulphate particles in the airshed at Richmond in western Sydney could be traced back to Mt Piper Power Station 90 kilometres away.

### The NCC transition plan

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW (NCC) called for coal-fired power plants in NSW to be replaced by renewable energy sources and storage technologies by 2030. The NCC is calling on the Berejiklian Government to:

- ☐ Set enforceable targets to source 40% of NSW's electricity from renewables by 2025 and 100% by 2030;
- ☐ Develop a plan for a quick and orderly phase-out of coal-fired power stations that is fair to power-station workers;
- ☐ Create incentives for the development of storage technologies, including batteries and pumped hydro.

The International Energy Agency's modelling of the projected 2 degrees rise in global temperature scenario demonstrates that coal-fired power plants in OECD countries must be almost entirely phased out by 2035. The timeline must be even shorter if we are going to limit temperature rises to 1.5°C, as Australia agreed to in Paris.

## FEATURED WILDERNESS

## Yengo

BY KEITH MUIR

YENGO, THE CLOSEST wilderness to Sydney and Newcastle, has the highest plant diversity of all the Blue Mountains World Heritage listed wilderness areas due to its strong north-south rainfall gradient and landscape complexity. It is a classic sandstone wilderness of interlocking spurs that rises above the Hunter Valley towards a prominent basalt peak – Mount Yengo (668m).

Announcing the declaration of this 119,500 hectare wilderness in June 2009, then Premier Nathan Rees said “wilderness is highest form of protection for natural landscapes” and “Yengo’s wilderness area will protect threatened species including koalas and brush-tailed rock-wallabies and a number of sites of great importance to the Aboriginal community.”

The area is also home to 43 eucalypt species, one of which was only discovered in 2005 – a testament to the treasures that can be found in areas like this. Perched sand beds on the Mellong Plateau are another unusual feature on the western side of Yengo. These are a characteristic of monoclines formed when Australia separated from New Zealand and support their own unique vegetation type – the Sydney Sand Flats Dry Sclerophyll Forest.

Mr Rees confirmed that four-wheel driving and horse riding would not be permitted in the wilderness, and remarked that the boundaries were established following extensive consultation with park user groups. This meant that popular trails for these interests and all of Parr State Conservation Area were excluded. Wilderness protection followed Mt Yengo being declared as an Aboriginal Place of special significance to Wonnarua, Awakabu, Worimi and Darkinjung traditional owners and their descendants, as well as to contemporary Aboriginal communities.



Haydn Washington inspects illegal logging on the Howes Range in Yengo National Park, November 1988.

Photo: K. Muir

Yengo is a very special place but its protection was complicated.

The wilderness declaration was a positive resolution of wilderness controversy compared to the logging disputes that blew up following the creation of Yengo National Park in early March 1988. The incoming Greiner government had promised before its election that there would be no logging or mining of national parks, but transfers of control for logging in Yengo to the NPWS sparked allegations of broken promises. Before logging in the park finally ceased, the National Party Leader and Deputy Premier Wall Murray claimed that the park promise may only apply to old parks, and that the reservation status of new parks might be reviewed.

While the Yengo logging was resolved in a few months, the inflammatory nature of the controversy set the tone for forest conflict to come, as campaigning settled into a decade of trench warfare with blockades, thousands of arrests, frequent litigation and dramatic, heated parliamentary reviews of court

decisions.

After the forest wars, negotiation for Yengo’s protection was in comparison a breeze, but it happened towards the end of the long wilderness reservation campaign that saw the NSW wilderness estate more than triple in size from 1995 to 2011.

Yengo was consolidated by the purchase of several inholdings using the Dunphy Wilderness Fund. Due to broad public concern about the iconic area, other funds were found for the acquisition of the Big Yango, a 1,582 hectare property which included private lands on Mt Yengo, which forms the focus of this wonderful park. While there were concessions to user groups, the identified wilderness in Simpson Valley of 7,400 ha and Sandy Creek valley to the east of the Big Yango clearing were declared wilderness, as well as the northern part of Mogo Creek valley.

Retained were 4WD roads, including the Mt Yengo Loop Track, the Howes Valley and Yango Trails, as well as the Old Convict Road but this last road remains closed at its eastern

end by land owners. Many car camping opportunities are provided at Big Yango – and on the edge of the wilderness at Finchley, Mogo and Heartbreak Hill, among others. These facilities generally follow Myles Dunphy’s original vision, except for the unfortunate 5,000 hectare central wilderness hole, an historic artefact of negotiations, where 4WD vehicle access is regulated by permit.

When visitors step away from their vehicles to embrace this country they will find accessible long ridges covered with remarkable wildflower displays, especially in springtime. The wilderness contains most of the Macdonald River catchment, a recognised but unprotected wild river that flows to the Hawkesbury.

*Discovering Yengo and Dharug National Park on foot* (2001) by Anthony Dunk gives a starting point on walks available, the NPWS website offers further ideas <http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/visit-a-park/parks/yengo-national-park> – contact the NPWS on (02) 4320 4200 for vehicle access information.

## Monthly General Meetings

have been changed and will now be held at our office at Level 2, Fortuna House, 332 Pitt Street, at 5.00pm on the second Thursday of the month, except for our next meeting which falls near Easter and will be held at 5.00pm on Thursday 27 April. Subsequent meetings will be held on May 11th, June 8th and July 13th. Members and visitors are welcome.

## Annual General Meeting (AGM)

is to be held on Thursday April 27th, 2017 at

5.00pm at the Colong Foundation Office and will:

- Consider the minutes of the preceding AGM;
- Receive and consider the report of the auditor and annual report of the Colong Foundation for 2016;
- Elect a Board of Directors for the ensuing year, including Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and an Auditor, nominations for which should be received by Thursday April 13th 2017;
- Appoint and fix remuneration for the Auditor;
- Set the annual subscription fee;
- Consider any other motion received in the hands of the Hon. Secretary by Thursday April 13th 2017.

## SUPPORT THE COLONG FOUNDATION!

To: The Treasurer, Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd., Level 2, 332 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW 2000  
The enclosed remittance or advice covers the item(s) indicated by a tick. (One cheque payable to the Colong Foundation is sufficient to cover subscription and donation.)

- Membership application for individuals or households (\$30) to 31 December 2017  
(NB Membership application covers Bulletin subscription)
- Colong Bulletin Subscription (\$15) to 31 December 2017 (non members only)
- Membership renewal to 31 December 2017 (\$30)       Life Membership (\$550)
- Tax deductible donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to the Colong Wilderness Fund
- PLUS \$ \_\_\_\_\_ being for publications as indicated on the reverse side of this form.

NAME (Mr, Ms, Mrs, Miss) .....

ADDRESS .....

..... P/CODE .....

PHONE .....

..... EMAIL: .....

SIGNED..... AMOUNT .....

Payment by credit card. Mastercard  Visa  Expiry date \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_

Card # \_\_\_\_\_

Payment by EFT procedure. Account name: The Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd.  
Bank: Westpac Mortdale, BSB: 032 268 Account number: 11 7302

Please add your full name in the Reference Field so that we may trace your contribution and also inform the Colong Foundation by email immediately after you have made a payment. Email foundation@colongwilderness.org.au with your name and address details, so we can mail to you an official tax deductible receipt. We also need notification so as to track all contributions to those who have provided them for our accounting purposes.

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION Why not join or invite a friend to join?

Yes, I wish to become a member of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd. I subscribe to the Foundation's aim of preserving Australia's wilderness remnants. I accept the liability provided in the Colong Foundation's Articles of Association to guarantee \$20 should it be needed in the event of the winding up of the Foundation. Signed .....

### A BEQUEST

Please remember us in your Will.

The Law Society of NSW recommends the following wording... "I bequeath the sum of \$... to the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd. for its general purposes and declare that the receipt of the treasurer for the time being of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd. shall be complete discharge to my executors in respect of any sum paid to the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd."



### ABOUT THE COLONG FOUNDATION

The Colong Foundation, the successor to Myles Dunphy's National Parks and Primitive Areas Council, is Australia's longest-serving community advocate for wilderness. Its proposal for a Wilderness Act was accepted in 1987. To supplement this legislation, our Red Index, audits NSW wilderness areas, identifies threats and formulates site specific protection remedies. There are now 2,100,000 ha of protected wilderness in NSW. However, many beautiful and environmentally highly significant wilderness areas are not protected, such as the Pilliga and Goonoo on the north west slopes, the Deua Valley on the South Coast and the Tabletop and Main Range in the Snowy Mountains. The Colong Foundation for Wilderness has had a long and successful history. From its foundation in 1968 until 1975 it was the fighting force that prevented limestone mining and the destruction of native forest for pine plantations in the southern Blue Mountains. The Foundation not only played a leading role in realising Myles Dunphy's plan for a Greater Blue Mountains National Park, it pushed for its World Heritage listing, as well as the reservation of a Border Ranges National Park and Kakadu National Park. It has initiated successful campaigns for the protection of over a million hectares of wilderness in NSW. The realisation of Myles Dunphy's vision of a comprehensive system of national parks with protected wilderness areas remains the primary objective of the Colong Foundation. Now, more than ever, the Foundation needs your support. Well financed and powerful rural interests, miners, loggers, resort developers, as well as four wheel drive enthusiasts, horse riders and others, have greatly increased the threats facing Australia's wild places. Only with your help, through continued membership and donations, can the Foundation continue its campaigns for the preservation of the natural environment and effective nature-based national park management, and by concentrating on wilderness, these rare areas can be kept safe from development and misuse.

## THE COLONG FOUNDATION

SENDER: THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS  
Level 2, 332 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW 2000



### PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE FROM THE COLONG FOUNDATION

**CELEBRATING WILDERNESS** 60.00

*Edited by Ian Brown, this spectacularly illustrated book with 46 full-page colour wilderness photographs by Rob Jung, David Neilson, Rob Blakers and Ian Brown is essential reading for wilderness supporters (120pp)*

**WILD PLACES** 27.50

*The meticulously researched, beautifully written book on wilderness by Peter Pirneas with photographs by Henry Gold (285pp)*

**BLUE MOUNTAINS WORLD HERITAGE** 50.00

*Alex Colley and Henry Gold's description of the 67 year campaign culminating in World Heritage listing. (136pp)*

**SUSTAINABILITY** 20.00

*Alex Colley provides his vision on a sustainable future. (90pp)*

**REPAYING MY DEBT** 30.00

*A Conservationist's Tale. Geoff Mosley's memoir*

**THE GARDENS OF STONE VISITORS MAP** 10.00

*A full colour double sided touring map and guide to the attractions of the Gardens of Stone reserve proposal*

**THE BATTLE FOR THE BUSH** 27.50

*Geoff Mosley's account of the genesis of the nature conservation movement and saving of the Blue Mountains environment (174pp)*

**MYLES DUNPHY (SELECTED WRITINGS)** 43.95

**CLASSIC BUSHWALKING MAPS** by Myles Dunphy (Gangerang and Kowmung Maps) 6.00ea

**LIVING WITH THE DINGO** 19.00

*by Adam O'Neill (107pp)*

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