

The Pulpit Post™

A not-for-profit local independent newsletter by locals on local issues



Dedicated to community and environment issues specific to Radiata (Mt Elphinstone) Plateau, Pulpit Hill & Nellies Glen environs.
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'Save Radiata Plateau' campaign – an update

Issue# PH91-01

Many residents of Pulpit Hill will be familiar with the Save Radiata Plateau campaign first initiated by locals of Pulpit Hill back in 1991 to fight against the proposed development at 28 Pulpit Hill Road Katoomba of a 10,000m² transcendental meditation (TM) 'Academy' by the World Plan Executive Council of Australia. Hats off to Pulpit Hill locals, Glenn Humphreys and Glenda Kelly who formed and lead the Save Radiata Plateau Group (SRPG) and galvanised support from many individuals and organisations and succeeded in thwarting the development in 1992. This marvellous outcome demonstrates how strong committed action by a local community can be effective in protecting the place they live.

Thirteen years later, on 26th February 2005, an advertisement appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald offering 756 acres of the Plateau up for sale. SRPG reformed and set about campaigning to save the Plateau from development. Many petitions and letters were written calling for an interim protection order and preferably for the Plateau to be acquired by National Parks and incorporated into the Blue Mountains National Park. At State level the ultimate decision rested with the current NSW Minister for the Environment and still does. The land is still apparently up for sale. The owners of the land, the TM Organisation, remain sympathetic to the aims of SRPG and "would prefer the State Government to buy Radiata Plateau, rather than a private landowner" – Blue Mountains Gazette (BMG), 9-Mar-05, p13.

In 1991, the then "Shadow Minister Ms Pam Allen, after a visit to Radiata Plateau, said a Labor Government would create Radiata Plateau as open space" (BMG 1991). On 5th April 2005, the NSW Minister for the Environment, The Hon, Bob Debus MP presupposed that "most if not all of the land zoned for further development has been significantly disturbed by past road making and pine plantations. It is therefore not especially desirable to add to a national park." – SW Legislative Council Hansard p.14966

As for the views of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society (BMCS):

"Following a meeting (Spring 2005) between Minister Debus and three members of the (Blue Mountains Conservation Society) Management Committee, it became abundantly clear that the campaign would fail, irrespective of the relative merits of arguments for and against the purchase of Radiata Plateau. The Society therefore accepted Bob Debus' advice to take stock and look at other options. These included such things as voluntary conservation agreements between the current and future owners and National Parks (NPWS), and looking at the powers vested in Council by zoning and the Local Environment Plans. Effectively, the high-profile campaign will evolve into a series of low-profile discussions aimed at the possible. You can drag a horse to water, but you can't make it drink!" – President of BMCS, Hut News, Nov 05, p.1

What 'low-profiling' has occurred since? What do Pulpit Hill residents think about this stance? Is it simply giving up in the face of resistance by the State Government? Once bushland is disturbed, does that make adjoining bushland automatically valueless? Is it enough to rely upon the good will of the owners of the Plateau, National Parks and local council? Can more be done to protect the Plateau from ongoing development threats?

Council poised to sell off community land on Pulpit Hill

Issue# PH97-01

The stretch of bushland alongside the western side of the Great Western Highway starting from about 100m north of the Explorers Marked Tree right up to the northern access of Explorers Road is community land that Council is poised to sell. The land parcel extends west from the highway for about 200m. The overall area is about 6 hectares and is all mature eucalypt open-forest. Council's Capital Works Programme for 2006-7, which starts in July 2006 lists under its 'Non Program Projects' project 70/127302 Pulpit Hill Subdivision. Plans involve conducting surveys (\$4,000), reports and project briefing (\$12,000), DA Fees (\$3,000), subdivision design (\$9,000) and construction costs & Sydney Water fees (\$ 150,000, bring the total budgeted capital outlay to prepare the land for subdivision and sale to \$178,000.

The site includes 7 land parcels (400, 402, 404, 406 & 408 Great Western Highway, Katoomba (refer map overleaf). The proposal to sell this community land apparently dates back to Council minute #563 of 11-Nov-97. Council's officer delegated to the matter is the acting Property Manager, Steven Kesler, who confirms that the subject land is community land zoned 'Operational Land' (no special management restrictions) and that the intention is to consolidate the 7 lots into 3 lots so as to minimise the density of residential development. A new road is proposed to be bulldozed into mature bush south from the northern end of Explorers Road to provide car access to these properties. Under LEP1991, the seven parcels are zoned 'BC (lot minimum of 1 hectare), Environmental Protection, Land Between Towns (to preserve open space between towns), and inside Cascade Dam's Water Supply Catchment. In its plans to sell the land for housing development it seems that Council may not have previously consulted the local community in reclassifying the community land as 'operational', nor in its plans to now sell the land, nor perhaps considering the site's associated heritage significance.

Current Development Application for 49 Explorers Road, Katoomba

Issue# PH06-01

In the Blue Mountains Gazette (BMG) 14-Jun-06, local council has a posted notification of a development application for the boundary of the vacant paddock block on the south west corner of Explorers Road and Saywell Road to be extended into an undisturbed bush block at the rear (west), which is part of Karuna Sanctuary, 418 Great Western Highway. Both sites are subject to zoning regulations under LEP 1991. The undisturbed bushland block inside Karuna Sanctuary is zoned BCNS preventing subdivision, 'Environmental Protection' and 'Land Between Towns' (to preserve open space between towns). There is no current threat to bushland, but should a house be later built on the corner paddock, bushfire regulations may require an Asset Protection Zone mandating removal of the bush. Council's deadline to receive submissions is 13-Jul-06 [File Ref. No.S06/0031]

Call for local resident meeting

As a local resident keen to conserve Radiata Plateau and Pulpit Hill and as Editor of this new publication 'The Pulpit Post', I welcome the opportunity to meet local residents, to listen to resident's views and to discuss the above development issues likely to impact upon this area. It has been suggested that an informal resident meeting be held to meet and discuss the above issues on Saturday 1-July-06 at 2pm at Herman Kozelj's private residence at 6 Pulpit Hill Road.

For any enquires, or to contribute to this newsletter, or if you are aware of any issues affecting this area, please contact the residents below.