

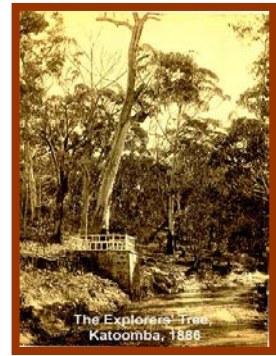
The Pulpit Post™

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

Dedicated to community and environment issues specific to Mt Elphinstone (alias Radiata) Plateau,
Pulpit Hill & Nellies Glen environs.

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The Explorers' Tree
Pulpit Hill, 1886

'Save Radiata Plateau'

Issue# PH91-01

Back in the 1970s at the end of Pulpit Hill Road, an organisation by the rather long name of Maharishi's Global Administration through Natural Law Ltd bought 306.2 hectares of escarpment bushland we know as Mt Elphinstone (alias Radiata) Plateau. The organisation's name has been colloquially referred to as the 'TM Organisation' or 'TMO'; TM being an abbreviation for Transcendental Meditation®. Since acquiring the plateau, the plateau has been left naturally more or less as it was.



Mt Elphinstone (Radiata) Plateau
Trekking through some of its more wilder areas
Photograph taken 14-Oct-07

In 1991, an application by the TM organisation to develop the plateau sparked considerable controversy and a local campaign to Save Radiata Plateau. Then in 2004 when TMO attempted to sell the plateau, a second Save Radiata Plateau campaign sprung up.

Future issues of The Pulpit Post will cover both campaigns in detail, made possible by the detailed records kept by the stalwart campaigner and Pulpit Hill resident, Glenn Humphreys.

Perhaps it is worthwhile to start at the beginning. The TM organisation's story starts in India in 1957. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (born Mahesh Prasad Varma in India) founded the Spiritual Regeneration Movement. Since 1955, he has been teaching a meditation technique, Transcendental Meditation®, he claims is derived from the Vedas philosophy of ancient north Indian.

[Source http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transcendental_Meditation]

Transcendental Meditation®, or TM, is his trademarked meditation technique practiced for twenty minutes twice a day while sitting with one's eyes closed. Its professed benefits include "gaining deep relaxation, eliminating stress, promoting health, increasing creativity and intelligence, and attaining inner happiness and fulfilment."

[Source: <http://www.tmprogram.com.au>]

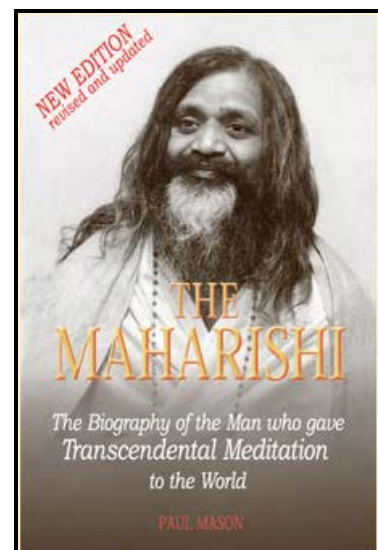
Courses in TM apparently cost upwards of US\$2500.

[Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transcendental_Meditation]

Over the past 50 years, Maharishi's organisation has grown to a worldwide organisation. It claims to have trained over 40,000 teachers in TM globally, opened thousands of teaching centres, and to have founded hundreds of schools, colleges and universities, and taught more than six million people around the world in the TM technique. [Source: <http://tm.org>]

"The Maharishi Mahesh Yogi leapt to prominence in the 1960s when his teaching of TM and his widely-reported involvement with The Beatles and the Beach Boys provoked reactions ranging from reverence to mockery."

A recently revised biography of Maharishi by author Paul Mason is published in paperback by Evolution Publishing UK.



The biography by Paul Mason / Evolution Publishing, 2005 about the man behind the organisation that owns Mt Elphinstone (Radiata Plateau).

The book apparently goes behind the scenes, drawing on scarce and previously unpublished material. It enquires into the aims and methods of the Maharishi Movement. Mason describes the early days of the teachings in the 1950s, through the development of a sprawling bureaucracy, to the fiasco of the attempts to enter mainstream politics with the Natural Law Party. [Source: <http://maharishibiography.com>]

Mason learned the practice of Transcendental Meditation after hitchhiking to India in 1970, when he visited the Maharishi's ashram at Rishikesh (Himalayan foothills). He has maintained an abiding interest in yoga-meditation and Indian teachings as well as composing music that integrates East and West. He has contributed to the magazine Yoga Today, and to Behind The Beatles Songs.

"A rational look at TM. There are many books written by those in the TM movement that are biased with all kinds of claims, from unbelievable health benefits to flying! This book is a very balanced account of Transcendental Meditation."

- Amazon.com reviewer, awarding it five stars.

Since 1990, Maharishi has coordinated the teaching of TM from the town of Vlodrop, the Netherlands, through an organization he calls the Global Country of World Peace.

[Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transcendental_Meditation]

In NSW, the TM Organisation's office is located at Level 4, 47 York St Sydney. It operates TM training at its Maharishi® Health Education Centre and Maharishi Vedic Centre. [Tel: 1300 301 511]

Relevance of all this to Pulpit Hill?

The editor has a neutral view about TM, frankly because he knows little about it apart from the above information obtained online. But what is important and relevant to the Pulpit Hill community is the fact that the TM organisation owns almost all of Mt Elphinstone (Radiata) Plateau and is the largest landholder in the Pulpit Hill precinct. This means that the TM organisation has the potential to have the greatest impact (positively or negatively) on the future amenity of the area. So it makes sense to get to know this landowner and to find out what it may want to do with its 306 hectares.

The editor has made contact with the TM Organisation and is hoping to obtain an informed update from a representative most closely connected to Mt Elphinstone (Radiata) Plateau.

Council counting traffic on Explorers' Road

Issue# PH07/04

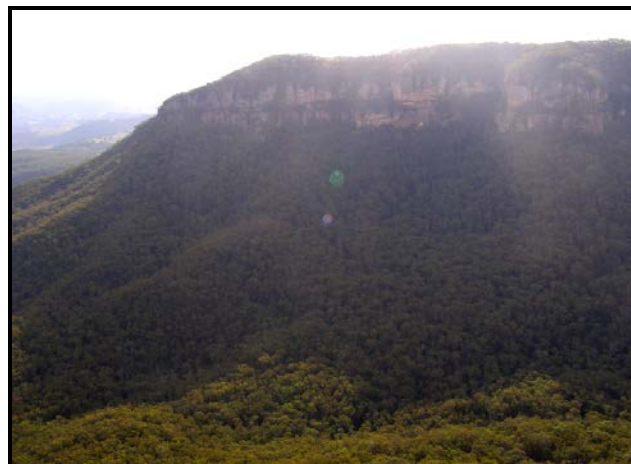
As previously reported, back on the weekend of 23rd-24th June last year contractors were observed counting cars entering Explorers Road. Council's executive officer ultimately advised that Council had no role in this activity. The suggestion is that traffic counting was being undertaken by the Roads and Traffic Authority as part of its plans to widen the Great

Western Highway. Enquiries are being made with the RTA.

Include Nellies Glen in the National Park?

Issue# PH08/01

Below is a photo of the still wild valley between Peckmans Plateau and Mt Elphinstone (Radiata) Plateau taken from Peckmans looking west. This narrow valley is called Nellies Glen, as many locals will recognise. It has also been referred to as Megalong Cleft. It is where the famous Six Foot Track descends 330 odd metres down the steep cleft between the two plateaus then passing alongside Megalong Creek.



Nellies Glen below Mt Elphinstone (Radiata) Plateau looking toward the mid-afternoon sun.
Photo taken 13-May-07

Nellies Glen was named after Ellen North (b1862) daughter of John Britty and Clarissa Mary North. Ellen was affectionately known as Nellie. [Source: Fox, (Brian), 2001, Blue Mountains Geographical Encyclopaedia, Bathurst, p.102]

John Britty North is regarded as the founding father of Katoomba who pioneered the kerosene shale mining industry in the Jamison Valley and in Nellies Glen. At one point a miners' settlement existed in Nellies Glen including a general store, bakery, butchery & public hall. http://www.infoblue mountains.net.au/rail/ksr/kat_tram.htm

Previous issues of The Pulpit Post have considered the prospect of adding the bushland between Narrow Neck and Mt Elphinstone (Radiata) Plateau to the Blue Mountains National Park Estate, including Nellies Glen and the Devil's Hole area below Bores Head Rock.

The National Parks Service now owns the escarpment land around Devil's Hole, having acquired it from Scenic World in 2005. The entire tract of bushland under the Peckmans Plateau escarpments between Mt Elphinstone (Radiata) Plateau and Narrow Neck Plateau is now owned by the NSW State Government under the control of three different departments.

The editor is drafting a letter to NSW Premier Iemma recommending that the area be added into the protectorate of the Blue Mountains National Park Estate. It is difficult to spot any difference between the natural integrity of Jamison Valley below the Three Sisters, which lies inside the National Park and that of

Nellies Glen and Devils Hole. However, importantly, comments and feedback are first sought from locals about this proposal. Please contact the editor if you have a view on this topic. Contact details are on the bottom of this page.

Pulpit Hill Heritage Precinct

Issue# PH07/01

The nomination of the Pulpit Hill Heritage Precinct for listing with the State Heritage Office of NSW is proceeding slowly, but steadily.

The nomination includes a number of heritage objects, relics, sites and intangible values associated with the hill and its history, some dating back to 1813. There are nine distinct historical items within the proposed Pulpit Hill Heritage Precinct. The NSW heritage nomination process involves three main steps. The first step is to investigate the precinct's heritage significance including the historical context and fabric of each item and the study area, the community's understanding of the item, local historical themes and relate them to State heritage themes. It involves writing these up using a purpose designed electronic form provided by the State Heritage Office.

The second step involves assessing the significance of each item and the study area, describing the previous and current uses of the item, its associations with individuals or groups and its meaning for those people. It involves assess significance using the NSW heritage assessment criteria, the level of that significance and then preparing a succinct statement of heritage significance for each item.

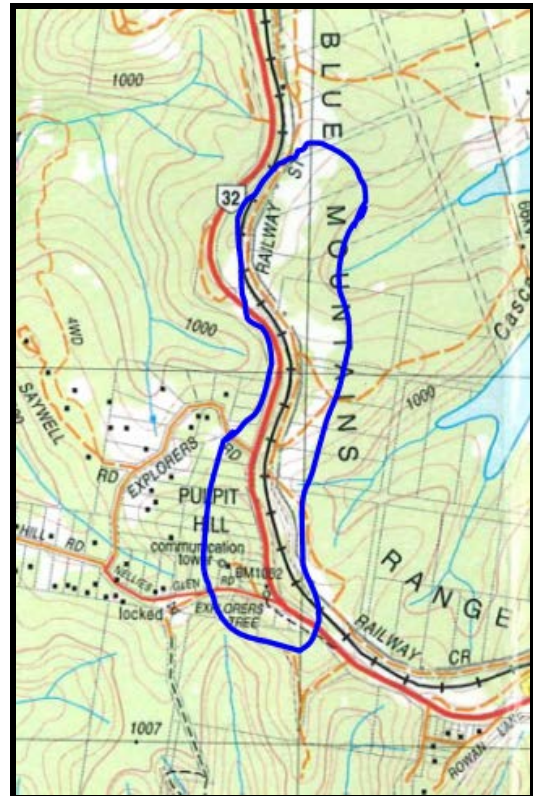
The final step involves consideration of how the conservation of the precinct should be managed. This requires an analysis of the constraints and opportunities arising out of the item's significance, including appropriate uses, analysis of owner and user requirements and statutory controls and their relationship to the item's significance. It involves preparing conservation and management recommendations and proposing a process for how these may be best carried out.

An important aspect of the nomination is to include input and feedback from the local community. Readers are most welcome to have their say and to contact the editor with their suggestions. A community meeting will be scheduled at Pulpit Hill before the nomination is lodged, to encourage community input and participation into this nomination.

Conforming to the requirements of heritage nomination is no mean feat. The draft document has taken on the scale of a small thesis, currently up to 250 pages. Three lever arch folders are packed with historical material related to the precinct. This has been collated from various sources including and with much thanks to the Blue Mountains Historical Society, the Local Studies Section of the Springwood Library and from local historians. Who would have thought that one hill would have so much historical heritage tucked away?

The following map shows the suggested perimeter of the heritage precinct. It follows the original Cox's Road and seeks to capture all the known relics and

sites of historical and folkloric values associated with Pulpit Hill. No privately owned land is included. The precinct is all owned by one government agency or another.



Topographical map extract showing (in blue) the proposed perimeter of the Pulpit Hill Heritage Precinct. The perimeter above is roughly drawn but it is emphasised that none of the propose heritage precinct is on privately owned land.
© Department of Lands

An Account of Pulpit Hill in 1836

Blackheath historian and author, Babette Smith, has provided the following valuable historical account of Pulpit Hill, which is to be included in the heritage nomination. Many thanks to Babette.

'..If any proof is needed of the historic significance of Pulpit Hill, a story in The Australian newspaper on 23 February 1836 provides it...'

'The 1830s was the decade of major road-building over the Blue Mountains and on through to Bathurst. Iron gangs and road parties were scattered along the route, with major stockades at Twenty Mile Hollow (now Bull's Camp near Woodford) and No. 2 Stockade at Cox's River (now almost entirely swamped by Lake Lyell).'

'There were outstation stockades also at Hassan's Walls and the foot of Mt Victoria. Traffic was increasing rapidly, backwards and forwards from the coast to Bathurst as settlers sought greener pastures in the west. Curious travellers, particularly from England, were among those testing the road. The wayfarers also included male and female convicts sent for assignment to employers in the west. Or returned to Sydney for misbehaviour.'

'In February 1836, word reached the Australian newspaper of the leisurely progress of parties of the women prisoners. Usually accompanied by only a couple of constables, the women regarded the long journey as an opportunity for rest and recreation. For today's residents, the story highlights the important landmarks on the Mountains' road. Pulpit Hill was certainly one of them as the newspaper made plain.' (The punctuation is original).

'...we may hint that the mode adopted in the conveyance of these [female] cargoes to their destination is not the very best possible; on the Bathurst road for instance, the following has been narrated to us as the general order of procession.

'In the first two days, the caravan gets as far as the Nepean; the next day carries them as far as the Pilgrim; the next to the Valley; the next two days are consumed in reaching the Twenty Mile Hollow; the next to the Weatherboard; next day to the Pulpit Hill; next day to Andrew Gardiner's inn; next to the foot of Mt Victoria (here they generally manage to lose their bullocks for a day or two); the next day to Keinan's public house, thence to enliven the military at No. 2 Stockade; in which good company we shall leave them merely observing that the days journeys above recited are about six miles each on an average and that the remainder of the distance is accomplished at the same grave and dignified pace, comprising a period of altogether from three weeks to a month - during which time the caravan is not, we hear, remarkable for its orderly progress and good regulation.'

'We are aware that there is no railroad from one Factory to another, but we cannot nevertheless imagine that the caravan in question should be longer on the road than a dray load of wool or any other commodity - which latter does the distance in less than ten days.'

[Source: The Australian 23 February 1836]



A second railway culvert found below the original single track railway constructed circa 1865, inside the proposed Pulpit Hill Heritage Precinct.
Photograph taken 30-Sep-07.

Update on Council's plans for Pulpit Hill

Issue# PH97-01

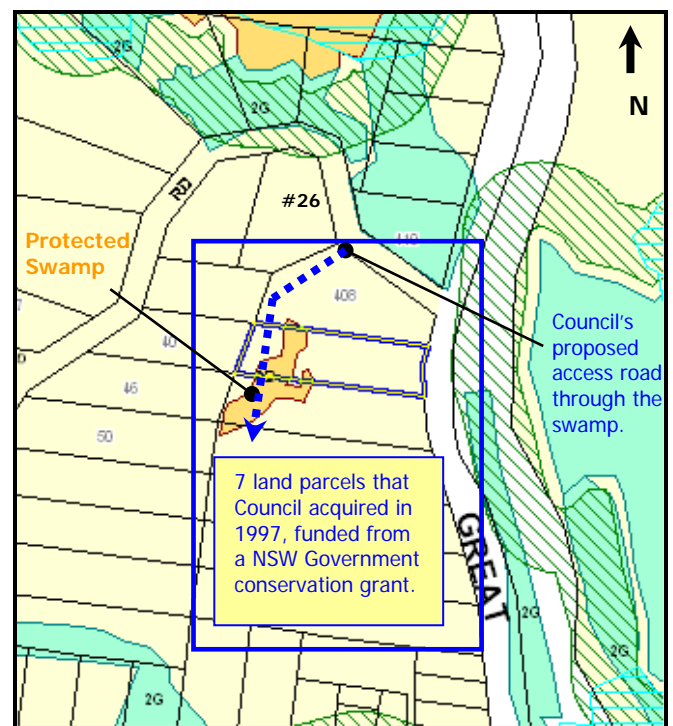
Blue Mountains Council is continuing with its plans to prepare seven lots (covering six hectares of community land) on Pulpit Hill for consolidation and sale for housing development. At Council's End of Year 2006-07 Report of its Capital Works Programme in Council's Ordinary Meeting 28_Aug-07, Item 2, page 19 reads:

"Investigate and prepare development application for consolidation of seven into three land parcels to allow sale of Council owned land at Pulpit Hill (CWP): Difficulties encountered locating a consultant to undertake the project. Surveyor has now been engaged to design and prepare application for consolidation of existing lots."

Five months have now passed since this report, so it would seem likely that the surveyor's report and proposed design drafts should be completed. The management of this process has been handed over from Acting Property Manager, Steven Kesler, to council's newly appointed Senior Planning Officer, Chris Hancock. A written request has been made by the editor to Mr Chris Hancock for a copy of the consultant's reports including a project update, road feasibility for a proposed access road to the site and turning circle, plus a survey report and flora & fauna report.

Threat to Pulpit Hill's Swamp

Council's proposed new access road is to grade it up hill into the bush from the northern section of Explorers Road. It will cut through an environmentally protected Blue Mountains upland swamp. This little known swamp is shown on the below topographical map of the area.



Pulpit Hill

[http://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/bmccmap/parcel_search.cfm]

Blue Mountains Swamps are characterised as technically as 'Temperate Highland Peat Swamps on Sandstone.' They are protected as nationally listed endangered ecological communities under the Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

Unusually, this swamp is situated almost at the crest of the hill. It lies isolated in a slight depression in the landscape. The swamp vegetation includes native sedges and grasses surviving on waterlogged peat.

"The Temperate Highland Peat Swamps on Sandstone ecological community has a small geographic distribution, totalling approximately 3000 ha. Of this total area, approximately 1300 hectares is reserved in the Blue Mountains National Park, with the rest in a mix of freehold, State forests and Crown land."

Given the location of swamps in the landscape and their dependency on water, they are susceptible to changes in water flow, level of the water table, and structural damage."

[Source: <http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publiclookupcommunities.pl>]

New Restrictions on Council's Plans

The entire seven allotments on this site are zoned within the Water Catchment. Written advice received from the Sydney Catchment Authority (SCA) 4th June 2007 confirmed that "SCA advised Council of the need to complete a Water Cycle Management Study should they wish to pursue a further investigation of the potential for some development on the site."

SCA now requires any development on the site to compulsorily comply with its 'Neutral or Beneficial Effect on Water Quality Assessment Guidelines.' This means that before any works start council must undertake a hydrological study on the entire site. Council must provide SCA with proof that its proposed development will pose no potential risk to water quality on or from the site, nor will cause waste flows, increase erosion, nutrients and sediments, nor change the bio-physical characteristics of the site in any way. It must otherwise produce water of at least equal quality to that contributed by the existing systems.

What does Pulpit Hill mean to you?

Issue# PH07/02

According to the Australian Heritage Commission the Explorers (Marked) Tree holds significance to the extent that it was officially registered on the National Estate Database on 1st August 1999.

The Statement of Significance reads as follows:

"The tree may be one marked by the explorers Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth during the first crossing of the Blue Mountains in 1813. Regardless of its historical authenticity, the tree has been viewed by visitors to the mountains since the 1870s as a memorial to the early explorers and, as such, the tree

has been imbued with a strong symbolic value in the popular mind. It's National Estate values rests in this social significance, whereas its historical significance may never be proved."

Description: "This entry crosses over State, region or Shire boundaries. The historical authenticity of the tree is open to question, not being reported until 1867. The tree was cut down in 1912 and is now a stump sited above a road cutting, fenced and roofed. The site is a well known tourist attraction."

The photograph below of the Explorers Tree below shows evidence of it being charred by arsonists on 3rd June 2005.



Explorers Tree
National Estate Register No. 002995,
Photograph taken 30-Jun-06.

Highway widening threat to Pulpit Hill

Issue# PH08/02

In the 1998 federal election campaign, the previous federal government committed to its Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS) Auslink programme to fund what it called Roads of 'National Importance'. Under a joint programme with the NSW government, the Federal Government decided to "improve links between Sydney, the Blue Mountains and the central west of NSW" by committing \$100 million in funding to upgrade the Great Western Highway.

The Great Western Highway upgrading continues to involve widening the highway to four lanes between Emu Plains and Katoomba and to mostly three lanes and overtaking lanes between Katoomba and Mount Victoria. The NSW Government has committed \$360 million to the upgrade.

Construction is being undertaken in stages. The closest upgrade thus far to Pulpit Hill has been the Shell Corner bypass, which eliminated the notorious Shell Corner bends. The two-lane highway was realigned and widened to a divided four-lane section between Albion Street and west of Watson Way. A new bridge was built over the railway line, new intersections, bus bays were added plus pedestrian access between Katoomba and the Six Foot Track and Explorer's Tree. Access to Rowan Lane was changed for safety reasons. The Shell Corner section was completed in January 2005 once final road surfacing was laid. Updates on the progress and planning of the upgrade works can be obtained from the RTA at its website:

<http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/constructionmaintenance/majorconstructionprojectsregional/greatwesternhighway/index.html>

The website also lists the RTA contact project manager as Bruce Taggart (ph. 8814 2240, email Bruce.Taggart@rta.nsw.gov.au)

No RTA plans are yet known for widening the Great Western Highway at Pulpit Hill. The present two-laned section currently cuts into the eastern side of Pulpit Hill with the railway running parallel immediately to the east down a steep embankment. How could the highway be widened here and keep Pulpit Hill?

Weeds & Native Plants around Pulpit Hill

Issue# PH08/03

Around the urban fringe where houses meet the bush, many environmental and noxious weeds can be found. But identifying these weeds and distinguishing them from native plants can be a challenge.

For instance, the following photo shows a close up of a spiky thin leaved green shrub which in spring displays bright yellow pea flowers with red blotch in centre. The plant is commonly called Bacon and Egg and is one of Australia's native peas. It grows up to 2.5 metres and can be found across the Blue Mountains including on Mt Elphinstone (Radiata) Plateau where this photo was taken.



'Bacon and Egg'

[Scientific name is *Dillwynia floribunda*]

Photograph taken 14-Oct-07

Compared this with the flower of the Gorse:



Gorse

[Scientific name is *Ulex europaeus*]

A Class 3 Noxious Weed in the Blue Mountains

Like the Bacon and Egg, Gorse is also a spiny branched with thin spiky leaves that also grows up to 2.5 m and produces yellow pea-like flowers through spring. A key difference is the absence of a red centre in the flowers.

Gorse can form impenetrable dense thickets replacing rare native plants and threatening fragile bushland environments. Gorse tends to follow watercourses and infest swamps. Gorse is consequently classified as a Class 3 noxious weed in the Blue Mountains.

Gorse can be a serious fire hazard since it is typically not killed by burning. Fire kills above ground parts of the plant but plants regrow from the root stump. Also, fire does not kill the numerous seeds buried in the soil profile. Fire stimulates seed germination. Therefore any treatment using fire must be followed up with other treatments such as herbicide for at least five years. These shrubs, particularly gorse, produce intense heat and flames when burnt, even in winter.

http://www.wyongsc.nsw.gov.au/environment/Weeds_category_three/Gorse2.pdf

Control of Gorse

Blue Mountains Council recommends the plant fully and continuously suppressed and destroyed by applying the 'Cut and Paint' technique. This involves of sawing off the base of the main stem and then painting the base with herbicide such as RoundUp, but requires yearly follow up inspections to check for regeneration and regrowth removing seedlings for up to five years.

[Source: <http://www.weedsbluemountains.org.au/gorse.asp> & NSW Noxious Weeds Act of 1993]

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