

Heritage Strategy

2021 – 2025

*the city within
a World Heritage
National Park*

Acknowledgement

The City of the Blue Mountains is located within the Country of the Darug and Gundungurra peoples. Blue Mountains City Council recognises that Darug and Gundungurra Traditional Owners have a continuous and deep connection to their Country and that this is of great cultural significance to Aboriginal people, both locally and in the region.

For Darug and Gundungurra Traditional Owners, *Ngurra* (Country) takes in everything within the physical, cultural and spiritual landscape - landforms, waters, air, trees, rocks, plants, animals, foods, medicines, minerals, stories and special places. It includes cultural practice, kinship, knowledge, songs, stories and art, as well as spiritual beings, and people: past, present and future.

For countless generations, Traditional Owners have cared for their *Ngurra* in what is now the Blue Mountains and through this, *Ngurra* has sustained and nourished them. Caring for *Ngurra* is central to Aboriginal culture, being recognised as a holistic embodiment of environmental sustainability. Locally, and as a nation, there is much to learn from the special relationship between Aboriginal people and Country.

In order to honour the past and respond to the future it is important to recognise and address the as yet largely unresolved issue of Traditional Ownership by Aboriginal peoples, recognised in part by the *Native Title Act 1993*. The dispossession of Traditional Owners resulting from the European colonisation of Australia, and the ongoing disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal peoples requires redress. This process starts by recognising the deep, strong, unbroken connection to *Ngurra* held by Traditional Owners in the Blue Mountains.

Blue Mountains City Council pays respect to Elders past and present while recognising the strength, capacity and resilience of past and present Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Blue Mountains region.



Message from the Mayor and CEO

The Blue Mountains is one of only two cities in the world within a UNESCO World Heritage National Park. Our distinct towns and villages sit within this unique natural environment, each with its own character and many with extensive, intact heritage buildings and streetscapes.

Conservation and enhancement of our cultural and built heritage is a priority for our community and a part of the Blue Mountains identity. Providing us with a sense of place, identity and belonging, our heritage connects us with the past, and provides great benefit for future generations. We must however acknowledge the complexity of this history. Council has stated its commitment to interpreting our heritage in an open and honest way, which presents both an Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal perspective, as well as other inclusive themes such as class, gender and ethnicity. Opportunities to deliver these interpretive projects are included in the strategy.

The Blue Mountains Heritage Strategy 2021-2025 outlines a new strategic direction for heritage management within the City. Through four key themes – Knowing, Protecting, Supporting and Promoting, this strategy focuses on a commitment to enhanced community engagement on heritage to increase awareness and understanding, and to provide support to owners and managers of heritage properties. Council recognises the rich and diverse legacy of culturally significant places and objects within the Blue Mountains and is committed to conserving, enhancing and celebrating our heritage.

We commend this Heritage Strategy to the community and welcome their comment and feedback.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several sweeping strokes.

Mark Greenhill OAM, Mayor

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a prominent 'R' and 'D'.

Rosemary Dillon, Chief Executive Officer



View of the Carrington Hotel from the Street Art Walk in Beverly Place, central Katoomba

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The remains of Chateau Napier on the Great Western Highway, Leura, which burnt down in the 1957 bushfires.

1 Background



Introduction

The Blue Mountains Heritage Strategy 2021-2025 provides a guiding framework for the management of built heritage within the Blue Mountains local government area, to ensure that the unique heritage of our towns and villages is identified, protected, supported and promoted.

Over time beyond counting, the Darug and Gundungurra Traditional Owners have held a long and respectful relationship with this part of *Ngurra* (Country). Caring for *Ngurra*, ensuring that the physical and spiritual nature of all things therein remain healthy and balanced, being core to Aboriginal culture. Notwithstanding the dispossession of the Darug and Gundungurra Traditional Owners of this part of *Ngurra* and the ongoing impacts of colonisation, the Traditional Owners' enduring connection to *Ngurra* remains integral to the significance of this important landscape. The rich heritage Aboriginal people hold in the tangible and intangible legacy remains from a deep and vibrant relationship with this place

The Blue Mountains is one of only two cities in the world within a UNESCO World Heritage National Park. The World Heritage listing recognises the global importance of its diverse ecosystems and biodiversity. Our towns and villages sit within this unique natural environment.

Our heritage is recognised nationally and internationally, and is a great source of pride for the Blue Mountains community. Providing a sense of place, identity and belonging, our heritage connects the past with the present, and will continue to benefit generations into the future.

The popularity of the Blue Mountains as a tourist destination is reliant on the interplay between its scenic natural beauty and the charm of its historic villages. The rarity and authenticity provided by heritage places underscores the local identity. As such, heritage character underpins local tourism, and makes a significant contribution to the local economy. The recognition and conservation of heritage is a sign of the value attributed to these places by the community.

In acknowledgment of this connection, Council has commenced the *Ngurra (Country) is Everything – managing Aboriginal Cultural Heritage through Traditional Owners continuing relationships to Country in the Blue Mountains* project.

This first stage Aboriginal cultural heritage study will define a culturally respectful approach to the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage in the Blue Mountains and should be read in parallel with this Heritage Strategy.



The opening of the 'Layers in Time' heritage trail at Woodford Reserve, Woodford

Blue Mountains Heritage Strategy 2021-2025

Blue Mountains City Council has prepared Heritage Strategy 2021-2025 with the contribution and assistance of key stakeholders. The Heritage Strategy sets the strategic direction for heritage management over the next four years and focuses on the proactive management of built heritage in the Blue Mountains.

The strategy has been structured under four key themes:

Knowing: Gathering, collecting and sharing resources and stories of heritage places provides a firm foundation for improving the identification and assessment of heritage significance.

Protecting: Protecting and managing our heritage ensures that conservation is a primary consideration in all elements of planning and place-making. Council will also lead by example and demonstrate best-practice heritage management of its own properties and assets.

Supporting: Council will continue to support the conservation of heritage places through advisory services, incentives and grant opportunities.

Promoting: Council will raise awareness and increase understanding and appreciation of the tangible and intangible heritage of the Blue Mountains.

The development of priorities and actions under these themes has been influenced by and responds to previous heritage work, current Council projects, and the studies and reports in the attached reference list. It is acknowledged that the implementation of some identified actions require support from key external organisations and service authorities.

Council's commitment to heritage

Council recognises the rich and diverse legacy of culturally significant places and objects within the Blue Mountains. Council is committed to conserving, enhancing, and celebrating our heritage, both tangible and intangible, for the aesthetic, historic, scientific, social and spiritual values it embodies, in partnership with the community, for the benefit of current and future generations. Council is also committed to embracing a complete and truthful history in its management of heritage, recognising the role this heritage plays in the process of colonisation of Traditional Owners and Country, as well as incorporating a better understanding of how other aspects around ethnicity, gender and class are often silent.

Council's role

Council recognises that places of cultural heritage significance exist in a dynamic context. This Heritage Strategy reflects the need to address the challenges of conserving our heritage, whilst meeting the diverse cultural, environmental and economic needs of contemporary society.

Council also has a legislative responsibility to identify, manage and protect heritage within the Blue Mountains local government area. This is through the listing of heritage items and conservation areas in the Local Environmental Plan (as detailed below), and assessing development proposals over these heritage places.

As a manager of an extensive heritage portfolio, Council is responsible for the delivery of positive heritage outcomes across a range of public assets. Council's cultural heritage management program has expanded and developed in recent years. This establishes a



risk-based approach which prioritises management actions for higher risk assets with heritage value, to ensure protection of heritage and delivery of public benefit.

Council advocates for the promotion and understanding of heritage both within Council and the community.

Community Engagement

Great value is attributed to the role that the community plays in heritage management and decision-making processes. An emphasis on broader community involvement in heritage is an ongoing component of Council's heritage management program and a key guiding principle for this Heritage Strategy. Community engagement is crucial to ensure that local knowledge is recorded and the places people value are conserved.

Key heritage stakeholders within the City include the Council's Aboriginal Advisory Committee and Heritage Advisory Committee, the Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) Committee, the Blue Mountains Branch of the National Trust, the Blue Mountains Association of Cultural Heritage Organisations, and the many historical societies and local museums.

Community Strategic Plan

The Heritage Strategy aligns with Council's vision for the future as captured in the Community Strategic Plan 2035, which includes the following as a key value – *Local heritage and places of natural, cultural and historical significance are retained and enhanced by the active use of appropriate conservation methods.*

Local Strategic Planning Statement

Blue Mountains 2040: Living Sustainably is the Council's Local Strategic Planning Statement. This statement includes nine local planning priorities to inform and direct land use within the Blue Mountains over the next twenty years. The fifth local planning priority is *Conserving and enhancing heritage, character and liveability.*

The Heritage Strategy translates into recommended policies and actions, a framework for decision-making and conservation activity to ensure that the heritage value of the Blue Mountains is retained and celebrated.

Legislative Context

Heritage places are managed through a range of legislative frameworks at local, state and federal levels of government, and also internationally:

- The UNESCO World Heritage List identifies sites of outstanding universal value. Australia has 20 places on the World Heritage List, including the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.
- The Commonwealth Heritage List includes indigenous, historic and natural heritage places owned by the Australian Government.
- The National Heritage List includes heritage items of outstanding heritage significance to Australia.
- The NSW State Heritage Inventory is a list of heritage places protected by NSW legislation, whilst the NSW State Heritage Register identifies items of state significance.
- Blue Mountains City Council manages the protection of locally significant heritage places through its Local Environmental Plans in a schedule of places, items and areas.



The NSW Government and local governments share responsibility for the management of heritage within New South Wales. The level of recognised significance for an item will determine its management requirements through provisions contained in the various statutory and planning instruments.

State Context

There are three legislative instruments regulating heritage within New South Wales.

The *Heritage Act 1977 (NSW)* provides for the statutory protection and conservation of heritage. This is administered through Heritage NSW within the Department of Premier and Cabinet. The *Heritage Act 1977 (NSW)* established the NSW State Heritage Register to record heritage items determined to be of state significance.

The *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (NSW)* guides the processes, plans, impact assessment and decisions made by the Department of Planning and Environment and other planning authorities. Heritage is identified as an objective in the Act, to “promote the sustainable management of built and cultural heritage (including Aboriginal cultural heritage)”.

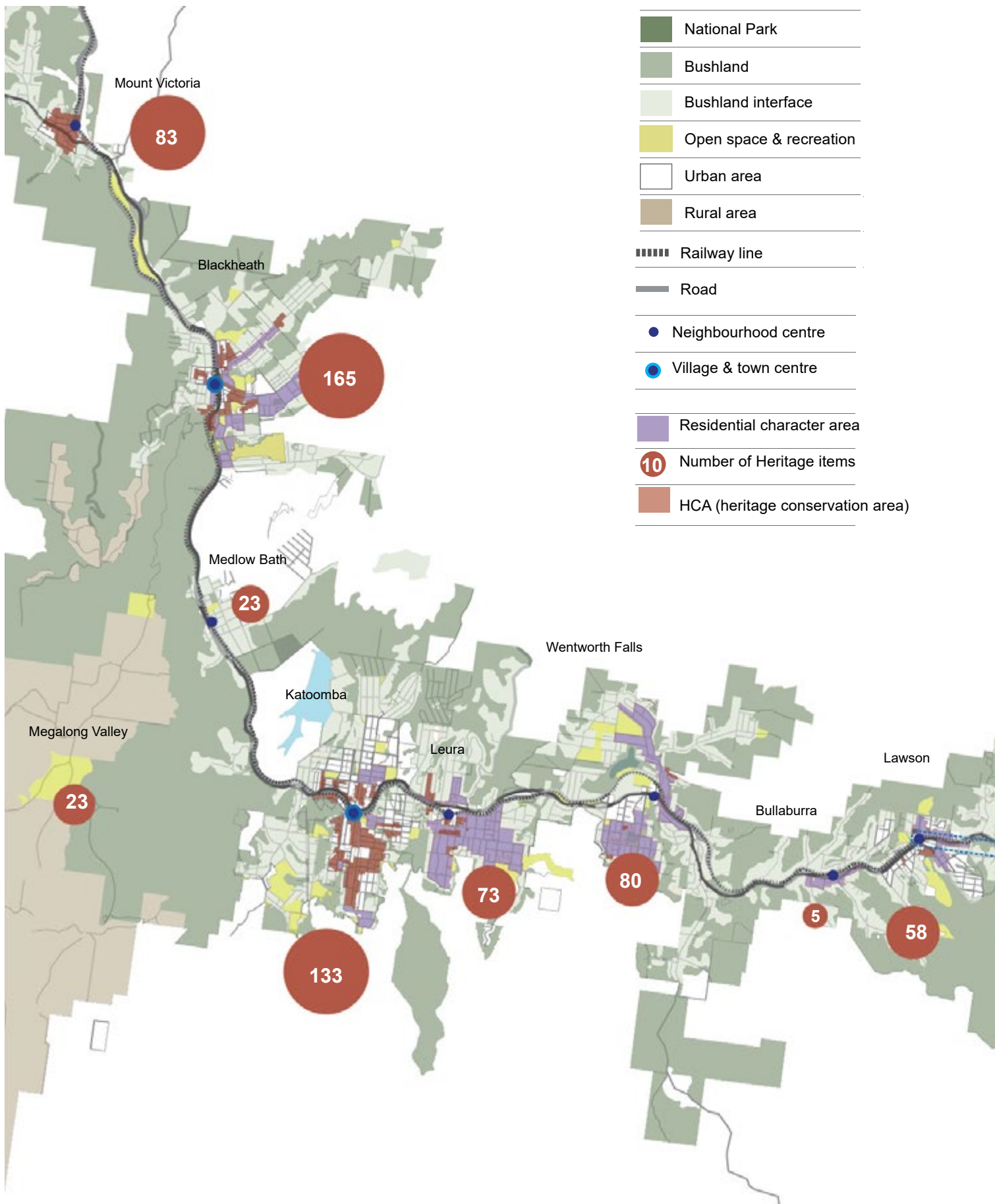
Part 6 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NSW)* provides for the statutory protection of declared Aboriginal Places and objects within NSW. Heritage NSW administers the regulation of Part 6 of the Act, including its provisions for the investigation, assessment and management of Aboriginal cultural heritage. A legislative reform is currently underway, with a Draft Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill being reviewed by the NSW government at the time of writing this document.

Local Context

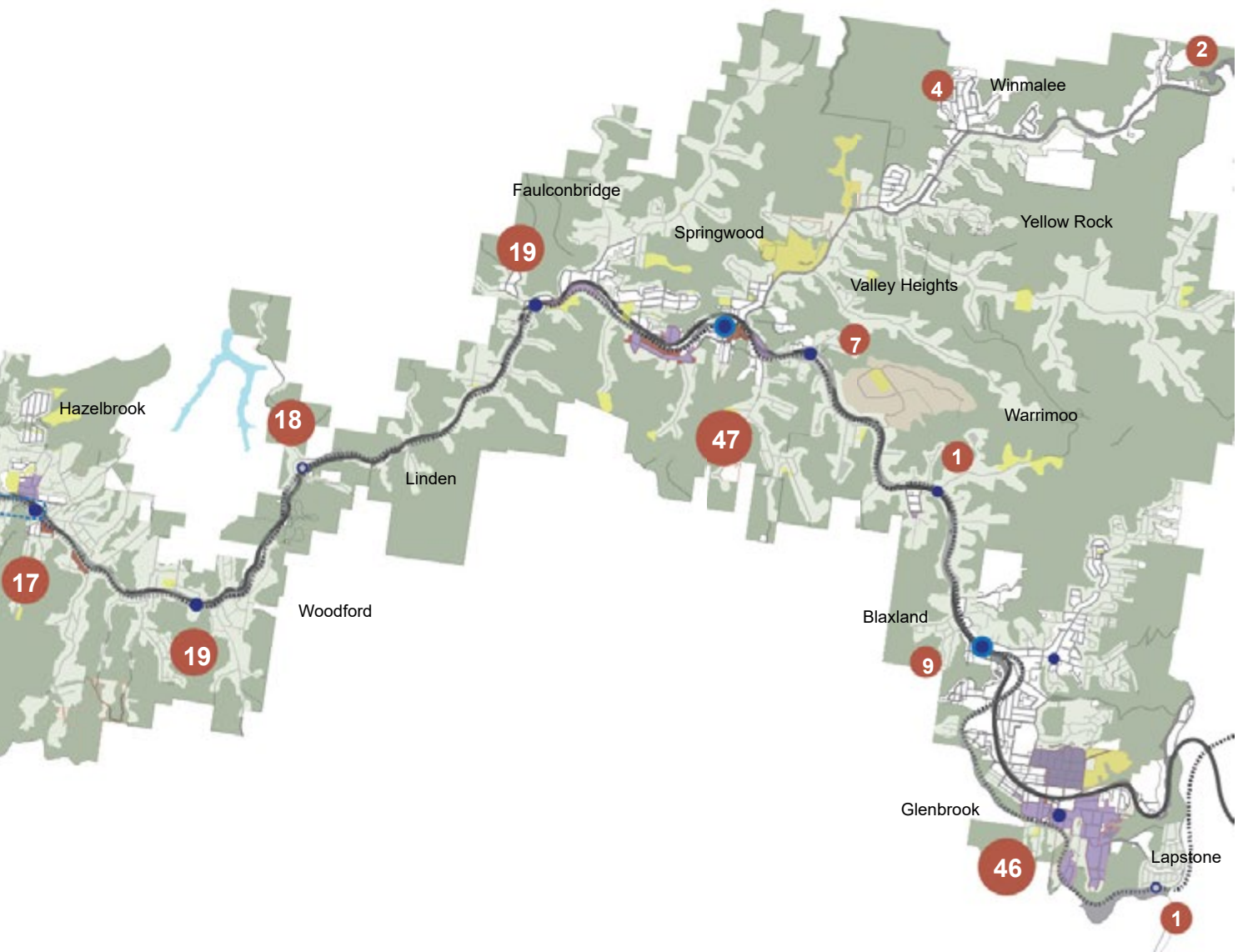
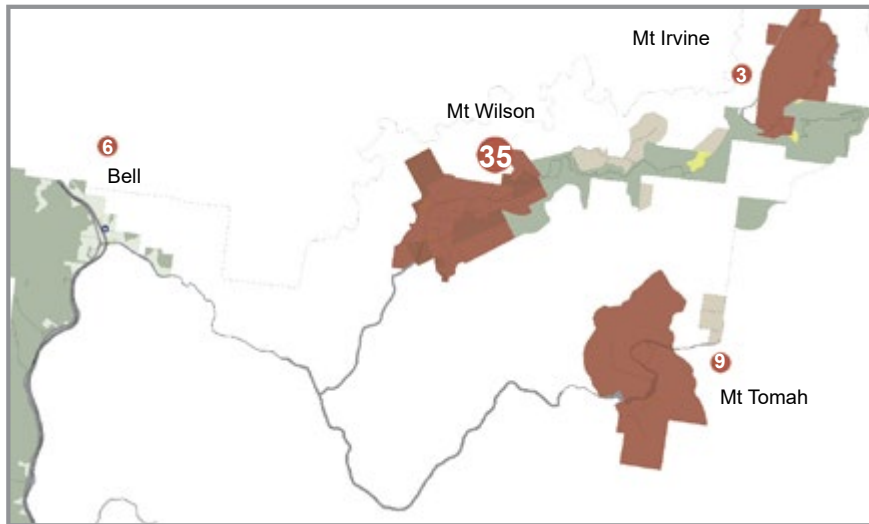
Local heritage items and heritage conservation areas are listed in Schedule 5 of Council’s Local Environment Plan (LEP 2015) and managed in accordance with the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (NSW)*. The LEP seeks to maintain the unique identity and values of the Blue Mountains by providing a clear framework for development.

Further guidance is detailed through provisions in the development control plan (DCP), which supports meeting the objectives and controls in the LEP.





Map of heritage across our City



Heritage Snapshot



World
Heritage
listing

887

heritage
items



33

state heritage
listings



36

heritage
conservation
areas



129

natural
items



32

archaeology
sites



33

memorials



Historic Bathurst Road including the Niagara building

Our unique heritage

What is heritage?

Heritage refers to significant places, objects and stories inherited from the past that are to be protected for future generations. It provides a connection to lived experiences while also forming a part of our contemporary culture and identity. Heritage can encompass intangible values that may be associated with tangible objects and places. Heritage places may also have different meanings for different people that can change over time.

In broad terms, heritage encapsulates natural heritage, Aboriginal cultural heritage and environmental heritage including built heritage (significant buildings and structures, as well as remnants of built fabric, conservation areas, precincts and constructed landscapes), archaeological heritage, movable heritage, cultural landscapes and collections of objects such as historical artefacts, archives, and fossils. Natural landscapes, gardens, views and settings are also key aspects of heritage, particularly in the Blue Mountains.

This Heritage Strategy focuses on built heritage. Our built heritage is an expression of the historic development of our community identity. It contributes to defining a sense of place, and promotes feelings of connectedness and community pride that ultimately enrich daily life.

Development of the Blue Mountains historic environment

The natural environment, including our unique geology, has largely determined the pattern of settlement throughout the Blue Mountains. Our villages are surrounded by the qualities and grandeur of the Blue Mountains National Park and the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. The topography encompasses vegetated ridges and valleys that limit urban expansion, as does land slope, water flow and important natural features. Bushfire hazard and water catchment areas, also influenced by the topography, further limit expansion.

It is important to acknowledge that the crossing of the Blue Mountains by Europeans and the ensuing construction of Cox's Road facilitated and accelerated the dispossession of Darug and Gundungurra Traditional Owners from Country in the Blue Mountains and numerous communities from their Country to the west.

The historical pattern of European colonial expansion into the Blue Mountains was initially limited to strategic points such as garrisons, inns and associated water sources along the Great Western Road and subsequent railway, which followed a main ridgeline across the range that was based upon, and in many parts built on top of, the ancient pathways of Traditional Owners.

The alignment of the Great Western Road created a string of villages linked along the ridgeline. Following the establishment of the railway, the Mountains became increasingly accessible for settlement and leisure activities.

In the 1870s the Blue Mountains became a destination in its own right. Rail travel became a means to experience the invigorating fresh mountain air and the beautiful scenery, hotels and guesthouses catered to overnight guests. The Mountains began to have value for recreational pursuits, first by a wealthy and educated elite, and by the early twentieth century, for all visitors. Gradually, the motorcar began to rival the train as the means to recreation and holidaying.

Life developed around the railway stops along the line, and further into areas like Mount Wilson and the Megalong Valley. Shops, schools, post offices, hospitals and parks were developed to cater to a growing local population. Many of these buildings and places from the nineteenth and twentieth century remain today and are heritage listed.



Blue Mountains heritage

The Blue Mountains is known for its significant and unique heritage environments. Today our urban form is comprised of 29 villages, towns and settlements, each with its own distinctive character and setting. Beyond the natural environment, visitors to the Blue Mountains are attracted to the historic charm of our towns and villages. Many of these towns and villages retain much of their nineteenth and early twentieth century character due to the intact main streets and streetscapes of heritage dwellings. Other villages and settlements are nestled within the bushland setting and respond to cues from the natural environment.

The towns and villages, including roads and laneways, buildings, monuments, parks and gardens all provide physical evidence of each of the major phases of development. Other physical evidence may be seen in the many examples of building styles, landscape design, projects of prominent architects and engineers, landmark buildings, as well as individual items of particular rarity. The surrounding bushland contains highly significant walking tracks and lookouts, linking the towns and villages to the natural environment. This physical evidence contributes to the outstanding character and heritage significance of the Blue Mountains region.

Whilst each village has historical elements, much of the City's heritage is located in the Upper and Mid (Central) Mountains towns including Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine. These areas were considered a destination apart from Sydney due to their distance and climate, and have been well-preserved over time. They contain high levels of intact earlier housing and entire historic residential areas. This extent of preservation across whole neighbourhoods represents an increasingly unique heritage value, further distinguishing the Blue Mountains from surrounding areas and indeed Greater Sydney. Heritage within the areas from Springwood to Blaxland include important but different aspects of the history of the Mountains.

In this context, our heritage needs to be deeply embedded in the ways we manage and revitalise places when change occurs. The core village areas have historic cues, and many residential areas contain interesting layers of residential development, set against a backdrop of nature reserves, walking tracks and the World Heritage landscape. Historic elements need to be conserved and remain legible.

The Blue Mountains today

The location of the Blue Mountains on the edge of Sydney presents both challenges and opportunities. There is consistent pressure for development and change. The conservation and care of our distinctive local towns and villages, containing multiple significant heritage sites and areas, is a key priority.

Village character and built heritage are key points of difference and defining features of our urban areas, and provide important opportunities. These include clear advantages in relation to amenity and liveability for our residents, as well as benefits to the local economy from various types of tourism.

Further, the retention and preservation of these important heritage places aligns with the values and strategic direction of the Council, towards a sustainable Blue Mountains. The containment of urban development within distinct towns and villages, and the retention and adaptive reuse of existing buildings is fundamental to living sustainably, as recently articulated in *Blue Mountains 2040: Living Sustainably* – the Council's Local Strategic Planning Statement adopted in March 2020.

The value of character and heritage lies not only in what it tells us about our culture and society in the past and present, but also in what lessons it can provide us with for the future. There is a need to understand the connection between places of European heritage value and how these form part of a broader shared story, in order to work towards an honest and inclusive future. The recognition and protection of our unique heritage and culture is an acknowledgement of our respect and care for the places our Blue Mountains community calls home.





Deciduous trees create a seasonal display in Leura