

142–150 Narrow Neck Road, Katoomba**

I write as a resident of Katoomba with sustained, close familiarity with the locality. Through a longstanding association with the Katoomba Christian Convention Centre, situated near the proposed development, I have extensive experience of the surrounding precinct and its environmental, access, and community characteristics.

My submission is based on this lived experience over many years, including direct observation of the area during periods of bushfire, heavy rainfall, and other environmental pressures. I have confined my comments to matters that I know through this long-term engagement with the site and its context.

1. Community Engagement and Scope of Impact

The available documentation suggests that consultation has been limited in scope. While responses from immediate neighbours have been recorded, the proposal has broader implications for the wider Blue Mountains community. The site is adjacent to land that is regularly used for informal recreation and is part of a precinct of increasing public significance. In this context, a more comprehensive and inclusive community engagement process would be reasonable to expect.

2. Scale, Density and Local Character

The scale and density of the proposed development are inconsistent with the established character of Katoomba. The proposed height, massing, and number of buildings are materially greater than those in the surrounding residential area. This is not simply a question of visual preference. Rather, the proposal represents a level of intensification that is not supported by the existing development pattern or the site constraints.

3. Hydrological Considerations

The Blue Mountains environment is characterised by high rainfall variability and rapid surface water movement. The site forms part of a broader catchment system that ultimately contributes to Sydney's drinking water supply. Based on observation of nearby construction activity over recent years, even developments of smaller scale have generated significant runoff and environmental impact during periods of heavy rain. The extent of excavation and construction proposed in this instance raises serious concerns as to whether water flow and sediment control can be effectively managed, particularly during extreme weather events. (Please reference Megalong Valley Landslips, the problems with the railway line between Wentworth Falls and Blackheath, the Victoria Pass situation, the closure of Narrowneck due to landslips et al)

4. Geological and Stability Risks

The underlying sandstone geology of the region is known to be prone to movement and instability. This is evidenced by periodic road failures and closures in the Blue Mountains, including in areas near the site. Recent locally felt seismic activity, together with observable cliff instability along Narrow Neck and Cliff Drive, reinforces the landscape's sensitivity. The scale of excavation required for this proposal introduces additional risk in an already dynamic geological setting.

5. Location and Accessibility

The site is not well located in relation to key services, employment centres, or public transport.

- Approximately 3 kilometres from Katoomba town centre and railway station
- Comparable distance from schools and educational facilities
- Limited public transport, with a single bus route operating within restricted hours

These factors mean that the development would be heavily reliant on private vehicle use. This has implications for affordability, accessibility, and environmental sustainability.

6. Traffic and Road Constraints

Narrow Neck Road is a constrained access route, characterised by its narrow width, winding alignment, and limited capacity. It functions effectively as a single access corridor.

The introduction of traffic associated with approximately 215 dwellings would materially increase vehicle movements along this route. This raises legitimate concerns regarding road safety, congestion, and the capacity of the existing infrastructure to accommodate such demand.

7. Bushfire Risk and Emergency Access

The area is subject to ongoing bushfire risk, and recent history shows the vulnerability of access routes in this locality. The 2019 bushfires, in particular, disrupted movement along Narrow Neck Road and Cliff Drive.

In such circumstances, safe and efficient evacuation is critical. The concentration of many households reliant on a single access road would significantly constrain evacuation capacity and may impede emergency response operations.

8. Affordable Housing and Local Context

While the proposal references compliance with affordable housing provisions, it does not clearly demonstrate how this would translate into meaningful affordability for the local community.

Given the absence of a comparable apartment market in Katoomba and the area's existing income profile, there is a risk that the proposed housing would not be accessible to those most in need. Additionally, the location does not support the broader objective of placing affordable housing near employment and services.

9. Relationship to Employment and Services

The site is located some distance from the primary employment and service centres in Katoomba. Most employment opportunities, including retail, hospitality, and public sector roles, are concentrated in the town centre or beyond.

Essential services, including schools, childcare facilities, and the local hospital, are similarly located several kilometres from the site. This further reinforces the dependence on private vehicles and limits the practical benefits of the development.

Conclusion

In summary, the proposed development is unsuitable for its location. It raises significant concerns about environmental management, geological stability, access, infrastructure capacity, and emergency response.

The scale and intensity of the proposal are inconsistent with the site's character and constraints, and it does not deliver clear or proportionate benefits to the local community.

For these reasons, I respectfully submit that the proposal should be rejected in its entirety.