

NARROW NECK SUBMISSION - OBJECTION

INTRODUCTION

We strongly object to the high density residential Development Proposal for 142 - 150 Narrow Neck Road, Katoomba.

We live in Cliff Drive, off Narrow Neck Road in the immediate vicinity of this proposed development. We moved up here from Sydney in 2019 to enjoy a quiet, tranquil and relaxed lifestyle associated with the Blue Mountains - which we love. We certainly did not anticipate such proposed development within our immediate area when we moved up here.

The EIS stated that a leaflet drop was done some time last year by the applicant as part of their community consultation. However, we did not receive a leaflet or any other information regarding this proposed development from the applicant, and yet our property is well within 1 - 2 km of the site. Our local newspaper, The Gazette raised this issue in its April 8, 2026 edition as have the Blue Mountains City Council and the Blue Mountains Conservation Society. So we question, why were we not notified of this development?

What is more concerning is that the Housing Development Authority (HDA) pathway is attempting to override the Blue Mountains Local Environment Plan (LEP) and does not take into account Council and community consultation which have historically been used in our area to ensure the environmental appropriateness of any new development. As part of this application, the developer proposes rezoning in our Local Government Area (LGA) which seeks to amend the Blue Mountains Environment Plan 2015. Again we question why is the developer attempting to change zoning that is currently working well and has been an accepted part of our Blue Mountains community for at least 11 years? Furthermore, the proposed development is out of character for the area and any such rezoning is inappropriate and indeed the proposed HDA pathway should be considered to be an abuse of the process in this area.

HOW THE PROPOSAL WILL AFFECT US

This proposed development is significantly larger than anything else currently permitted in the Blue Mountains LGA.

Nine four-storey buildings at around 15 metres high would be completely out of character for Katoomba. Why is the developer seeking a rezoning for height doubling in this area?

We currently manage a highly successful short term rental accommodation business in the form of a charming mountains cottage on our property.

This development of 52 more serviced apartments would add further competition to the visitors accommodation market. There are currently over 600 Short Term Rental Accommodation (STRA) properties listed in the Katoomba on booking platforms such as AirBnB and Stayz. We do not believe this area needs 52 more serviced apartments for more visitors who are already inadequately catered for in terms of public transport from the Katoomba train station.

Our cottage guests would need to navigate busier roads (which are currently inadequate for existing traffic loads) with more traffic, and it would be very challenging both during

the construction phase and afterwards. The proposed site is also near the edge of the escarpment and World Heritage area with its beautiful views, and would be very visible from all vantage points in Katoomba. In other words, a monstrosity looming out of the mountains mists.

CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS and INFRASTRUCTURE

The building of this development would have major impacts on everyone who lives in the surrounding area both during construction and subsequently. These are along roads which are mostly inappropriate for the existing traffic especially during holiday seasons. Increased traffic in the form of utes and heavy trucks which would not only further damage Narrow Neck and Glencoe roads, but would generate major hazards for everyone in the area, also impacting the large number of tourist vehicles going up and down Narrow Neck Road and Cliff Drive.

The associated noise both during construction and with the subsequent proposed developments would destroy the natural ambience of the area - which is a major attraction of the area.

Narrow Neck Road is already at saturation levels during peak holiday seasons through the increase of tourist buses and sightseers. This is a real issue as there are no footpaths along Narrow Neck Road and there are many pinch points creating major hazards for traffic, pedestrians, cyclists and runners training for the UTA. Any such development would only exacerbate the situation.

It should be noted that Glencoe Road already needs to be completely rebuilt. Narrow Neck Road and Cliff Drive in this area are not far behind. Any such development as being proposed would only accelerate the degradation of the roads for no community benefit.

There is already limited infrastructure here - such a development would put enormous pressure on the current electricity, water and sewage utilities. As it stands, we regularly experience power blips and outages due to ageing power distribution infrastructure. Similarly, the water distribution network is also under pressure and requires regular repairs of leaks. We note that there is a plan to replace the main water tanks at the top of the hill along Narrow Neck Road. However, these tanks would need to be significantly increased compared to current plans to cater for proposed development.

We note that the developments between Stuarts and Wellington roads, Gracehill, and Yarrabee have not all been fully completed yet. When they do, they will only stretch the existing infrastructure even more than it is already. The proposed development will completely destroy the current infrastructure. For this reason, we do not believe this area could sustainably support large population increases.

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

The top of Glencoe Road and Narrow Neck Road is an awkward road junction situation with already limited visibility when entering into or out of Glencoe Road. Glencoe itself is very narrow with a blind bend. As noted above, the state of Glencoe Road is very poor with the potholes worsening every time it rains. Heavy haulage trucks with building materials would wreck that road - even worse than the damage sustained on Stuarts Road during the construction works on the development between Stuarts and Wellington

roads. During construction and afterwards, it would no longer be safe for myself and other local dog walkers to take our dogs down to the council approved dog exercise area on the old golf course because of lack of suitable footpaths on Glencoe Road.

BUSHFIRE RISK

The Blue Mountains is an extremely bush fire prone part of Australia. Having lived through the 2019-20 bush fires shortly after moving up to Katoomba, we seriously worry about access in and out of the surrounding area especially if there are a large number of additional people (residents and visitors) and their vehicles. The proposed site is on bushfire prone land with limited evacuation routes out. Noting there is only one main evacuation route from the site leading to the Great Western Highway, and assuming that the Great Western Highway will in fact be a permitted evacuation route in the event of a bushfire. At the moment we are moving from a La Niña weather pattern to a El Niño weather pattern. Any development during the El Niño weather pattern will surely generate additional risks for everyone.

ENVIRONMENT

The site is environmentally sensitive with its swamps and Heath land. Our Blue Mountains ecosystems have the potential to become severely degraded from hard concrete surfaces from the proposed development. This will impact this environment in all directions from changing water flows, above ground via re-direction of stormwater flows, and groundwater flows through decreasing infiltration.

COMMUNITY and LIFESTYLE IMPACTS

The EIS states there would be significant public benefits to having this development in place. In fact the opposite is true, as such a development would threaten the distinctive retro, eclectic, vintage character of Katoomba and surrounding destinations for visitors.

Apart from the 15% “affordable” housing, who is expected to purchase these units and apartments? Possibly a service provider is lined up for the proposed service apartments? Or would they sit empty for a long time because they are too expensive to purchase? Most likely the buildings will need to be substantially rectified due to the sheer number of building defects that seem to be the norm with modern builds these days.

With a combination of “affordable” housing and short term rental accommodation, this proposed development will not usefully contribute to addressing the real housing need. Given the current housing crisis, it would have been expected that the percentage of “affordable” housing would be both higher and permanent, and also that short stay would not be permitted. Short stay accommodation is often being blamed for making the current housing crisis worse.

An onsite restaurant with all its deliveries and waste collections plus associated noise is unsuitable and not in character for our otherwise quiet area. The sterile development such as what is seen at Echo Point is not to be encouraged here in our quiet part of south west Katoomba.

Currently there is limited public transport to this site with only one bus per hour doing its loop around and up to and from town. This bus is often unusable for locals during peak tourist times due to overcrowding.

Such a development will have the potential to divide the local community as it will not foster a sense of community. Existing tourism and liveability would all be negatively affected, especially for nearby residents who would be overshadowed by this development.

As noted above, Narrow Neck Road is too narrow for many cars to be parked on it, noting the Explorer Bus and many other tour buses making loops around several times a day, 7 days a week.

If such development was to be approved, the following conditions must be met by the developer:

- reduction of tower height to permissible 8m levels under current zoning
- architecture to be compatible with the original vintage character of Katoomba
- no short term rental accommodation be permitted and this to be noted as a clause in the sales agreements
- fully fund the construction of footpaths on both sides of Narrow Neck Road the full length from Bathurst Road to Cliff Drive
- redevelopment of Narrow Neck Road and Glencoe Road to modern standards once construction is complete
- fully fund the necessary upgrades to electricity, water and sewage
- ensure all storm water must be treated and disposed of on site through infiltration pits
- ensure any on-site catering be limited to day time service only with closure at 4.00pm

CONCLUSIONS

A number of important questions remain unanswered with this State Significant Development Application. We have raised our many concerns above.

Katoomba community wellbeing would not be enhanced by such a city-like, multi storey development which is being proposed here. The proposed development not only is out of character for this area, and is more suited for medium density areas in Sydney such as the North Shore or Parramatta.

We believe there is the potential for this proposed development to become and feel like yet another suburb of Sydney and that the value of surrounding properties would decrease if this development proceeds. We would have to move from this area, feeling forced out of the Blue Mountains.

Like ourselves, many of our neighbours are feeling they have been blindsided by this HDA pathway because we have not had a chance to be properly involved. We therefore request that our Blue Mountains LGA must be exempted from the HDA pathway and for the proposed site to be retained as heath land.

In conclusion we strongly believe this rapacious development in Katoomba should not be permitted to go ahead. We need our pristine Blue Mountains World heritage area to remain the way it is so it can still be enjoyed by residents and visitors now and in the future.