

Regarding Proposal for development at 142-150 Narrow Neck Road, Katoomba

It is important that this proposal not be allowed to proceed.

It is a gross over-development of the site, it is far beyond the scale of anything else in the area. The proposal is to build nine “predominantly” four storey buildings. One four storey building would stick out like a sore thumb, let alone nine of them. The size of the project would be disruptive if it were placed in the centre of Katoomba (or any other Blue Mountains village), however it is placed on the outskirts of town on a semi-rural road adjoining the National Park, a World Heritage area. The development would be visible from the Park. It would not be allowed to proceed under the Blue Mountains Local Environment Plan, which would never allow a residential development to affect the amenity of such an important area. There are, of course, important obligations in preserving an area with World Heritage status which is also an important tourist feature. Incidentally, it was recently reported that the Blue Mountains National Park receives the most visitors of any NSW National Park.

Owing to its placement, as I am sure will be outlined in other submissions on this matter, there are important concerns regarding bushfire evacuation, environmental effects on water running into the National Park, weed dispersal, as well as the provision of basic services such as sewer and water.

The road is of semi-rural standard (without guttering or paving), and is not suitable for a large amount of traffic. It has previously been subject to closure due to bushfire. Greatly increasing the numbers of people and vehicles in the area is going to create problems for fire fighting services.

This development is opposed by the local council, as well as the local member and a substantial number of existing residents, and it would set a terrible precedent for development. The proposal attempts to get an exemption from normal development controls on the basis of providing needed housing, however it is not convincing that it is really addressing the need for affordable housing, as much of the development is for serviced units, the affordable housing component is only to be supplied for a limited period, and some of the development is for non-residential purposes (art gallery, restaurants, and conference facilities). Also, there is no indication of a demand for apartment living so far from the village. The council has already allowed substantial development to occur on former golf course land along this road, thereby indicating a willingness to allow appropriate housing development to proceed, but this proposal uses this fact to argue that development on an even larger, unprecedented scale should be allowed. The council's opposition is not a case of putting up unnecessary roadblocks to residential development, but one dealing with the difficult issues of proceeding with developments which meet the demands of this unique area.