

Development proposal for 142-150 Narrow Neck Road, Katoomba

State Significant Development

Case ID: SSD-86456706

We (my Partner and I) live in Leura, which is effectively joined to Katoomba, and we would like to submit an objection to:

The development proposal for 142-150 Narrow Neck Road, Katoomba; and to oppose the use of the Housing Delivery Authority (HDA) pathway for projects in the Blue Mountains – A significant World Heritage Site.

We moved here in 2021 specifically because of the area's World Heritage status which we hoped meant it would be protected from the kind of development that we accept is needed around transport nodes in the city. We are strong advocates for density in the right locations. This site is not a transport node and is not in the City.

The proposal is for nine four-storey buildings to be constructed on the 1.6 hectare site at 142-150 Narrow Neck Road, Katoomba.

Eight of the four-storey buildings would contain:

- 214 residential flats, including 15% designated as affordable housing, and
- 52 serviced apartments

This results in a total of 266 apartments.

The ninth four-storey building will be for commercial purposes, including a restaurant.

This is the first development application to be assessed under the NSW Government's new Housing Delivery Authority (HDA). This process bypasses the Blue Mountains City Council, which normally assesses development applications unless they are declared a State Significant Development (SSD).

Why is this proposal wrong?

This proposal is inappropriate not only because of its size, but because of the terrible precedence it could set for Katoomba and the wider Blue Mountains. It seeks approval for a scale of development that goes well beyond what is currently permitted under local planning controls. Decisions made on projects of this nature can have lasting impacts on infrastructure, safety, environment and community character.

If this sets a precedent then the road between Lapstone and Lithgow would need to be significantly enlarged

What could this mean for Katoomba?

If approved, residents may see immediate and long-term changes to the local area, including:

- A scale that is out of keeping with Katoomba's established character and village atmosphere
- Additional pressure on roads, parking and other local infrastructure
- Increased traffic congestion, including on key routes used during emergencies
- Greater complexity and risk during bushfire evacuation events

- Potential impacts on nearby natural areas, including sensitive and protected ecosystems

What could this mean for the Blue Mountains more broadly?

This proposal also matters because it may influence future planning decisions across the region. If a development of this scale is approved outside existing controls, it may encourage similar proposals elsewhere in the Blue Mountains Local Government Area.

That could weaken confidence in the purpose of local planning rules and make it harder to manage future development based on:

- Environmental constraints and ecological sensitivity
- Bushfire risk and evacuation capacity
- Existing infrastructure limits
- Local character and streetscape outcomes
- Community expectations about appropriate growth

Once a planning precedent is established, it can be difficult to contain its wider impact.

Scale and planning controls

The proposed development is substantially larger than what is currently envisaged for this site and for the Blue Mountains more broadly. The land is zoned R3 Medium Density, with an existing maximum building height of 8 metres (around two storeys) under the Blue Mountains Local Environmental Plan. The proposal seeks to move far beyond those controls through rezoning and approval of a much larger four-storey high-density complex.

Many residents consider this inconsistent with the established planning framework and with the scale and character that local controls were designed to protect. Approval could also create pressure for similar oversized developments elsewhere in the region.

Loss of local decision-making

The Housing Delivery Authority pathway removes the proposal from the usual local council assessment process. This means a development of major local significance may be determined without the same level of local oversight.

The Blue Mountains planning framework was developed over many years and reflects local conditions, including environmental sensitivity, bushfire risk, topography, infrastructure limits and community character. We are outraged that these locally tailored controls are being weakened or bypassed.

Environmental impacts

The site is close to environmentally sensitive areas, including Blue Mountains Swamps, a listed Threatened Ecological Community. These ecosystems rely on delicate water flows and groundwater conditions.

Large-scale construction, increased hard surfaces and greater stormwater runoff may alter drainage patterns, reduce infiltration and introduce pollution, weeds and sediment into nearby bushland and waterways. There may also be flow-on impacts for the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and downstream water catchments.

Bushfire safety

The Blue Mountains is one of the most bushfire-prone regions in Australia, and this site is adjacent bushfire-prone land. Residents may be concerned that adding hundreds of additional occupants in an area with limited evacuation routes increases risk during emergencies.

In severe fire conditions, road congestion, delayed evacuation and restricted access for emergency services can become life-threatening. Climate change is also increasing the frequency and severity of bushfire conditions, making long-term risk an important consideration.

Traffic and infrastructure pressure

A development of this size is likely to generate a substantial increase in vehicle movements on not only the local roads that are already constrained, but also the main arterial Road (The Great Western Highway) which is already clogged much of the time due to tourism. Public transport options are limited, which may increase car dependence for residents and visitors.

Community members may also wish to question whether existing sewer, water, electricity, waste and road networks have the capacity to support a development of this scale without costly upgrades or reduced service reliability.

Character, tourism and liveability

Katoomba is valued for its village atmosphere, scenic setting and connection to the natural landscape. A dense multi-storey urban-style complex may be seen as out of step with the scale and identity of the town.

We wish to raise a strong objection about visual impacts, changes to streetscape character, loss of amenity and potential impacts on tourism. The appeal of the Blue Mountains as a destination is closely linked to its unique landscape and built character.

Precedent for future development

This proposal is indeed **State Significant** not only because of the site itself, but because of what it may signal for future planning decisions. If approved, it could set a precedent for further high-density developments that exceed current controls across the Blue Mountains.

As locals we can confirm that everyone we speak to within the community is absolutely appalled by the inappropriate scale of this development and implore decision-makers to consider the long-term cumulative impact of such approvals on the region's environment, safety and identity.

I mean a \$92 Million dollar development on a piece of land that is allegedly valued at \$3 Million dollars – says it all.

Yours

Andrew Macdonald and Telly Theodore