

SUBMISSION

Re. Modification 4 of MP06_0310

I wish to lodge an objection to Modification 4 of MP06_0310.

I ask the Department to refuse the modification.

My reasons are three-fold:

- 1) increased helicopter flights are unnecessary;
- 2) an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) has not been conducted;
- 3) World Heritage status and wilderness is effected.

1) Unnecessary

The Wolgan Valley road closure will be coming to an end in August this year, once 2WD traffic are once more able to access the valley. This means that the main justification used by Emirates for increased helicopter flights is completely unwarranted.

2) No EIS

The Emirates proposal seeks to extend the original approval (of 4 flights per week) to 210 flights per week. In other words, this is no longer a case of a private resort with a small number of visitors arriving by helicopter. Rather, it has turned into a busy commercial heliport. Clearly, an Environmental Impact Statement is warranted for a change in usage of this scale.

3) World Heritage Status

This volume of flights will severely effect the World Heritage Status of the Blue Mountains, in particular, its wilderness characteristics. As a bushwalker who has regularly walked in the Gardens of Stone over many years, I can affirm that the wilderness experience of those areas adjacent to the Wolgan Valley depends crucially on minimal visual and noise impact. At present, an occasional commercial airliner flies over, usually at over 20,000 feet. The prospect of 30 helicopters flying over this area every day, at relatively low heights, and with considerable noise and visual presence, will totally destroy any sense that one is visiting a wilderness area.

At present, the NPWS is undertaking extensive work to make the Gardens of Stone a major attraction for visitors to the Lithgow region. This is crucial for the economics of the region, particularly as coal mining winds down. Some of these developments involve the rehabilitation of degraded areas on Newnes Plateau, others involve track work and road work to facilitate

easy access to areas like Lost City. Clearly, these areas will be effected by increased helicopter flights, ruining the experience for these visitors. For those walkers heading further afield, in order to experience the wilderness aspects of the Gardens of Stone, these increased helicopter flights will seriously degrade that experience.

In summary, I urge the Department to reject the proposal to increase helicopter flights into the Wolgan Valley.