

**Submission about the proposed extension the Great Western Highway from
Katoomba to Hartley**

My name is Dr Jo Tibbitts. I have the privilege of living in Blackheath, NSW, 2785 on the narrow ridge between the Kanimbla and Megalong Valleys to the west and the Grose Valley to the East. In the last two years I have given \$20 to the NSW Labour Party and \$60 to The Animal Justice Party.

I would like to acknowledge that I live on the traditional lands of the Dharug and Gundungurra people, and pay my respect to Elders past, present and future.

I object completely to any extension of the Great Western Highway (including any sort of tunnel) between Katoomba to Hartley and am totally opposed to allowing the GWH within the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area to be used as a heavy truck corridor between Sydney and the west.

I object to the extension of the GWH (including a tunnel) for the following reasons...

1. The upper mountains ridge is fragile. We frequently have slips and landslides¹ leading to extensive road and rail line damage. The current amount and type of traffic on the upper mountains ridge is causing this damage. No more major construction/development should be allowed on this fragile ridge. Money should be put into fixing the roads and upgrading the rail lines to light rail not extending the roads to take more traffic (and especially not putting in tunnels).
2. The upper mountains ridge is in places very narrow. At points along the upper mountains ridge both the Grose and Megalong/Kanimbla valleys can be seen at the same time. Only one road joins the towns at various parts of all the Blue Mountains ridge. The current amount and type of traffic on the upper mountains ridge far exceeds the maximum capacity the road can hold. No extension of the highway should be allowed on this one connecting road ridge. All pass-through traffic should be redirected to other roads not in a World Heritage Area and the GBMWhA traffic should be local and special pass traffic only.
3. The Katoomba end of the GWH has flow off into the upper mountains town water supply. Any extension of the highway will result in more pollutants contaminating that water supply and should not be allowed. Money should be put into reducing the pollution already going into the water catchment not adding to the problem.
4. The Blue Mountains National Park has 100s of 1000s of Australian Native animals and birds including many on the brink of extinction (Regent honey eater, Koalas, Kangaroos/Wallabies, Wombats and Emus). Air and Water Pollution from construction and the greater density of excessive and large petrol vehicles is going to get into the World Heritage Area and put the health and safety of those animals and birds and their habitat in jeopardy. Money should be put into reducing the pollution already going and gone into the valleys not adding to the problem.
5. Many of our native wildlife especially Kangaroos are killed by vehicles on the GWH from Bathurst and Hartley to Lapstone. The requirements for ensuring the health and safety of our native wildlife to get from one side of the road to the other, in a world heritage area, should be strict and comprehensive but these animals die every in

¹ Blue Mountains City Counsel Our infrastructure recovery program Jun22 to Jun23

great numbers. This shows that the EIS of the RTA for all projects in the GBMWH is not worth the paper it is printed on.

Submission 270 of 2021 Inquiry into Health & Wellbeing of Kangaroo & Macropods

“Kangaroos trapped by urban development often suffer from increased mortality which is the path to localized extinction (see Brunton (2018)). Sometimes they are deliberately killed because they are in the way of development (cases of this in the ACT are clear). In other instances they are simply ignored as development proceeds, and they are pushed out of occupied habitats into surrounding farmland and get themselves involved in the commercial space, or they are dispersed onto roads, or into suburbs, and simply die as collateral.”

Submission 253 of 2021 Inquiry into Health & Wellbeing of Kangaroo & Macropods

“I have lived in Sydney since 1974 and have experienced rapid growth of our city and suburbs in all directions as a resident of the Eastern suburbs, the Western Suburbs and for the last 6 years, Sydney’s South West Macarthur / Camden district. Presently I live in the last remaining semi-rural pocket of our area in Catherine Fields, locally known as Catherine Fields Village, where properties are all roughly 2 acres in size, the final frontier in this area against creeping housing estates from all sides. I have witnessed extensive land clearing for the purposes of urban development.

A sea of dull, grey roofing over a warren of packed cookie cutter houses crammed into lots under 500m square at the expense of iconic native trees, local creeks and waterholes, areas of native bush and vegetation, and every living animal. This is the backdrop to our lives.

A daily occurrence on the drive to work is a procession of roadkill lining our back roads as more and more heavy traffic carve out shortcuts from their estates to the arterial freeways at peak hour. Water hens, wood ducks, cockatoos, galahs, frogs, snakes, turtles, wombats and foxes make up the carnage, and increasingly wallabies and kangaroos. On my drive to work over the last few years, I would see huge mobs of kangaroos in open woodland along the Northern Road, in the Luddenham/Orchard Hills area. Now there are none. As the development of new estates and now the devastation caused by the new Western Sydney airport marches forward in earnest, we are experiencing the presence of more wildlife being squeezed out of the remaining pockets of wild spaces in our area, the terror in their eyes when they try to navigate their way across lines of single minded humans in oversized vehicles ploughing through everything in their path.

To say that the stress of seeing scenes like this in daily life has become distressing is an understatement.”

6. The traditional owners (Dharug and Gundungurra people) have a continuous and deep connection to their Country and that this is of great cultural significance to Aboriginal people, both locally and in the region. Aboriginal Elders need to have a veto vote on what happens to the Blue Mountains National Park and its surrounds.

I am totally opposed to trucks using the GWH as a corridor between the west and Sydney for the following reasons...

1. The weight, length and power source (petrol/diesel) of trucks damage the roads, pollute the air, land and water, are a safety risk to other light traffic (including

pushbikes and pedestrians) and make so much noise that can be heard kilometres away – destroys the ambience of bush land retreats.

2. When accidents happen with trucks they have serious consequences for road uses and if the truck load has pollutants – we should not be exposing our World Heritage Area to these risks.
3. When walking from Stuart St to Govetts Leap (5 minutes) just before 9am; 50 large trucks went by. This continues all through the day and night. This has to stop.
4. Blue Mountains is a tourist area, tourists come here for our wildlife and the tranquillity of nature. Having big trucks everywhere turns the mountains into just another motorway and discourages tourists because tranquillity is gone.
5. Many people cycle between mountain towns, by turning the GWH into a heavy truck corridor RTA has put those people's lives at risk.

Summary

1. The Blue Mountains National Park is an important 'tree sink' for Sydney and the surrounding area. One of the conclusions of COP26 was that to combat climate change we need to plant trillions more native trees and replant forests. We should be reducing traffic on the GWH in GBMWhA to local and tourist traffic only and stop through traffic. Then we should increase the pristine forests of the Blue Mountains National Park to extend to Hartley, Kanimbla, Megalong and further. This type of profit driven development will destroy our tourism, the status of our World Heritage Area and make the climate change crisis even worse.
2. No further development should be allowed in the Sydney basin. We need to preserve and expand the green belts and especially preserve the koala habitats of south west Sydney to combat the massive air pollution generated in the city and surrounding areas. We also need massive wildlife corridors between all protected wildlife habitats.
3. The Blue Mountains National park is personally very important to me and the other people who live in this beautiful region. The bush in this area has healing powers. You can feel it when in a train climbing from Lapstone to Glenbrook. The energy changes. You relax and think I'm home. Destroying the bush is going to adversely affect that energy and our home. A large number of tourists come to the Blue Mountains to tap into this healing energy. The current excessive traffic is already destroying our tourist trade.
4. Rightly so this area is classified as a world heritage area. The current level of traffic on the upper mountains ridge damages the roads and pollutes/destroys the bush. These actions are breaching Australia's obligation under the World Heritage Convention.

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