Submission

to the
Planning Assessment Commission –
Public Hearing
re the Proposed Coalpac Consolidation Project

by
Michael Keats
Materials provided to the Planning Assessment Commission


3. Book 3 - The Gardens of Stone National Park and beyond
Bushwalks at Donkey Mountain, Carne Creek, South of the Wolgan River and Mount Cameron; plus Regional Aboriginal Occupation and Historical maps.
Extract from the draft manuscript, pp 23 – 75 regarding Regional Aboriginal Occupation

4. Book 4 - The Gardens of Stone National Park and beyond
Bushwalks in the headwaters of Bungleboori Creek, Wollangambe River, Nayook Creek; plus the Regional River Catchments and Water pollution.
Extract from the draft manuscript, pp 23 –75 regarding Regional River Catchments and Water pollution

5. Book 5 - The Gardens of Stone National Park and beyond
Bushwalks in the Ben Bullen Ranges; plus Regional History and Local Place Names.
Extract from the draft manuscript, pp 134 –230 regarding Bushwalks in the Ben Bullen Ranges

6. Book 6 - The Gardens of Stone National Park and beyond
Bushwalks on the northern Newnes Plateau; plus regional Flora and Fauna.
Extract from the draft manuscript, pp 23 –67 listing regional Flora and Fauna

7. Book 7 - The Gardens of Stone National Park and beyond
Bushwalks in the southern Newnes Plateau; plus the last Three Centuries of European Settlement.
Extract from the draft manuscript, pp 24 -143 aspects of the last Three Centuries of European Settlement.
The undertaking of this work by co-author Brian Kenneth Fox and myself is a result of a combination of factors. These include, but are not limited to, our love and passion for the Australian Bush; our appreciation of the natural world in all its geo and biodiversity; a love of history; a love of wilderness and a driving passion to explore and discover.

We believe absolutely that the Ben Bullen State Forest, the entire Newnes Plateau and the adjoining areas identified by the Colong Foundation for Wilderness should be added to the Gardens of Stone National Park as a matter of urgency and steps taken to remove and mitigate compromising activities.

In making these assertions, we are realistic, and offer positive economic alternatives to coal extraction. Extractive coal mining and ecotourism are both economic goods currently owned by the people of NSW. The Planning Assessment Commission – Public Hearing Proposed Coalpac Consolidation Project has been asked by the NSW Government, on behalf of the people to determine which of these two competing economic goods should be exploited.

Extractive coal mining is a short term, destructive option with severe implications for the health of the people of Lithgow, the environment and post extraction liabilities.

The other, longer term, option is for the active development of a major, internationally important world significant geodiversity and biodiversity destination for tourism. I foresee development opportunities for Lithgow to become a major hub for an expanded tourism market with hotels, restaurants and service industries being developed.

World heritage significant views such as can be found at Pearsons Lookout should be developed on the same basis as Echo Point at Katoomba. It is my opinion that the view from Pearsons Lookout is of far greater tourist impact and importance than Echo Point. The world knows about The Three Sisters. There is no reason why the world should not have the same affection for the Capertee Valley and it’s glories. All that is required is the will and visionary thinking by Lithgow City Council and the NSW State Government to develop appropriate infrastructure and amenities to capitalise on this natural asset. I am sure the people of Lithgow would welcome a thriving, healthy sustainable industry comparable to that of the Katoomba - Leura conurbation.

The Ben Bullen State Forest contains a vast array of assets, in part documented in the Atlas of NSW Wildlife, and recently updated by Chris Jonkers and Julie Favell that have a long term value in excess of the short term gains to be had from the total destruction of the environment, an inevitable legacy from open cut coal mining. Dr Haydn Washington and the Colong Foundation for Wilderness have jointly documented the unique geodiversity of the area.

Aboriginal cultural assets in the form of cave art and habitation places are rated by the Wiradjuri peoples on parity with created European assets such as the Sydney Opera House. For the Wiradjuri, trashing their cultural heritage is akin to permitting coal mining in front of St Marys or St Andrews Cathedrals. To proceed is offensive and
should incur widespread condemnation of those who perpetrate it as well those in a power position who enable such destruction to take place.

I doubt if the Commission has yet heard evidence from a specialist in the value attributed to our national natural heritage as it relates to the mental health and spiritual well being of the community. It is a touchy feely subject, often denied discussion, but I venture to suggest our national natural heritage has an intrinsic value that cannot be measured in dollar terms. What can be measured is the reduced life expectancy, increased rates of depression, aberrant behaviour and downward spiralling expectations of the people who live in coal mining affected communities.

Book 5 ‘The Gardens of Stone National Park and beyond’, bushwalks in the Ben Bullen Ranges; plus Regional History and Local Place Names. This, as yet, unpublished and incomplete manuscript is relevant to the Planning Assessment Commission inquiry into the Proposed Coalpac Consolidation Project.

Over a period of more than 7 years, I have documented walking experiences in the Ben Bullen State Forest and adjoining areas. As an inquisitive observer, and detailed chronicler, the Ben Bullen State Forest has revealed many aspects of its unique flora, fauna, geodiversity and outstanding scenic beauty. While these experiences are now documented, they should also be capable of repeat enjoyment by others. They should not become lost fables for a wonderland destroyed.
Published works related to Bushwalking


Joint Publications with co – author Brian Fox

“The Passes of Narrow Neck” (2008), Ligare Pty Ltd; ISBN 978064648112-8 (pbk)


Seven additioanal titles in the ‘Gardens of Stone National Park and beyond’ series are in an advanced stage of production.

A summary of the contents of each of the texts 3 to 9 is set out below

Book 3 - The Gardens of Stone National Park and beyond
Bushwalks at Donkey Mountain, Carne Creek, South of the Wolgan River and Mount Cameron; plus Regional Aboriginal Occupation and Historical maps.

Book 4 - The Gardens of Stone National Park and beyond
Bushwalks in the headwaters of Bungleboori Creek, Wollangambe River, Nayook Creek; plus the Regional River Catchments and Water pollution.

Book 5 - The Gardens of Stone National Park and beyond
Bushwalks in the Ben Bullen Ranges; plus Regional History and Local Place Names.

Book 6 - The Gardens of Stone National Park and beyond
Bushwalks on the northern Newnes Plateau; plus regional Flora and Fauna.

Book 7 - The Gardens of Stone National Park and beyond
Bushwalks in the southern Newnes Plateau; plus the last Three Centuries of European Settlement.

Book 8 - The Gardens of Stone National Park and beyond
Bushwalks in the headwaters of Deanes Creek, Rocky Creek and Budgary Creek;
plus Threatened Species and Environments within the Region.

Book 9 The Gardens of Stone National Park and beyond
Exceptional bushwalks across the Gardens of Stone area completed since the earlier books were written, plus the Political History of the Gardens of Stone National Park.

Each book stands alone as a separate work and contains its own index, bibliography and important information.

Copies of Books 1 and 2 have been provided to the Planning Assessment Commission. In addition, relevant extracts from the manuscript for Books 3 - 7 has also been provided. It is emphasised that this material is work in progress and may be modified and or added to before publication. The intent is to inform the Planning Assessment Commission as to the scope and content of this multi book, body of work. When completed, the work will document more than 4,000 pages of text and images about one of the most precious areas of NSW heritage.
Books 8 and 9 in this series are not sufficiently advanced to place materil before the Planning Assessment Commission.
Credentials and relevant background information

I have been an active bushwalker since 2000. I began to chronicle bushwalks in 2003. My outdoor activities include day bushwalking, multi-day pack walking, abseiling and canyoning.

I am a Life Member of the Bush Club Inc, and a member of The Sydney Bushwalkers Inc and a member of the Upper Blue Mountains Bushwalkers Inc.

I am an occasional speaker at the Springwood Bushwalkers, the National Parks Association Cumberland Branch and the Sydney Bushwalkers Inc.

I act as guest editor to the NSW Confederation of Bushwalkers quartery publication, The Bushwalker, from time to time.

I contribute articles and research papers to The Bush Club Newsletter and the Sydney Bushwalker

I am conducting a series of interviews of senior walks leaders with the intention of publishing a history of leadership in bushwalking for the Bush Club’s 75th anniversary in 2014.

I lead bushwalks for the Bush Club, the Sydney Bushwalkers and the Upper Blue Mountains Bushwalking Club. I am usually out walking two to three days per week.
Brian Fox and I support

Statements in the submission from the Office of Environment and Heritage that the whole of the Ben Bullen State Forest has been identified "as being of suitably high conservation value for future reservation under the National Parks and Wildlife Act." We therefore call for this area to be protected in the conservation reserve system as a matter of priority.

The Environment Protection Authority's inability to support the project because of noise issues, including the companies inability to manage noise issues for existing operations, which have been noted by many local residents.

"The EPA considers that the potential for unacceptable noise impacts upon both rural residents and the residents of Cullen Bullen is too great based on the assumptions in the noise modelling of the proposed 24 hours a day/7 days a week operations."

The motion from the Lithgow Environment Group that Coalpac Pty Ltd's environmental assessment grossly understates the natural values of the area by failing to identify a large number of native plant species, and thus, an independent flora assessment should be carried out on the proposal area and within the boundaries of Coalpac's existing development approvals.

The call for a 5 kilometre buffer zone for future open cut mines to apply to villages and towns in NSW as outlined in The Nationals NSW submission to the Director, Strategic Regional Policy NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure, on the NSW Government's Draft Strategic Regional Land Use Policy.

Brian Fox and I note

This decision by the PAC will unfortunately be made out of the context of the 'Gardens of Stone of Stone Stage 2' reserve proposal, which was lodged in 2005. As outlined in its submission, the "OEH has been working with other agencies to maximise positive reservation outcomes in the Gardens of Stone area, including the Ben Bullen State Forest"

Brian Fox and I support

Contact details

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GOS and Coalpac 1/MK