



**WHERE HAVE WE COME FROM?
1974 - 2001
STRATEGIC PLANNING IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS
AN OVERVIEW**

PREPARED BY BLUE MOUNTAINS CITY COUNCIL

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Sourcing

The 1975 Strategy Plan (Urban Systems Corporation & BMCC)
EMP 2002 (BMCC, Hill PDA, Urban Frontiers Program)



1.0 Introduction

This paper provides an overview of where we have come with regards to strategies for the Blue Mountains since 1974.

The date 1974 is important because that was when the first major strategic planning exercise was undertaken within the Blue Mountains. An analysis of the process that was taken in 1974 and some of the outcomes that have eventuated as a result is provided in Section 2 of this paper.

The strategies and policies that have emerged for the Blue Mountains since 1974 are provided in Section 3.

The impact of Federal and State policies on local planning is discussed within Section 4.

Section 5 outlines some of the trends that have emerged over the past twenty years.

By comparing the differences in situations within the Blue Mountains for issues such as population, environment, heritage we are able to understand how our policy decisions can affect the way we live in the future. In effect, by looking back we can look forward.

1.1 Summary of Major Findings

1975 – 2001: Trends and Comparisons		
	1975	2001
Environment		
Open Space	118,838 hectares	128,720 hectares
Issues and trends <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major improvements with regards to co-ordination and increased funding for environmental management and bushfire risk management Increased requirements for Sydney Water to minimise overflows from sewerage system 		
Economy		
Amount of lands utilised for industrial purposes	12.14 hectares	54 hectares
Proportion of workforce employed in tourism	7%	13%
Proportion of workforce commuting	50%	60%
Issues and Trends <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is now a much higher participation rate of women in the workforce There has been a move away from manufacturing as an economic base towards information technology Katoomba and Springwood remain the major town centres, although growth has not occurred in proportion to the growth in population indicating a major leakage of retail expenditure outside of the LGA There remain more commuters in the lower mountains than in the upper mountains There is a high proportion of professionals compared to adjoining LGAs 		
Transport		
Levels of traffic	8,000 – 10,000 vehicles per day in the lower mountains	25,000 – 38,000 vehicles per day in the lower mountains
Housing		
Proportion of land available for residential development	57%	9%
Proportion of single detached dwellings	88%	96%
Issues and Trends <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential subdivisions over the past twenty years have occurred on fringe areas on private lands. It appears that market demand has shown a preference for low density residential areas in natural areas There has been a generally negative reaction to medium density residential development In 2001 there is an inadequate range of housing choice, with a particularly low availability of rental properties and 1 – 2 bedroom units In 2001 there is increased pressure on remaining available lands 		
Population		
Population	45,798 (1976)	76,929 (2000)
Proportion of people aged over 65	15% (6870)	12% (9321)
Issues and Trends <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By 1975 there had been a major influx of population to the lower mountains, with a large number of families with young children. This resulted in the population being evenly spread between the upper and lower mountains. By 2001 the spread of the population remains fairly consistent, although the lower mountains is experiencing population loss, whilst the mid mountains is experiencing above average rates of growth The trend of a depleted 15-24 age group continues in 2001 as it did in 1975 indicating that there is still little to keep this group within the Mountains The ageing of the population continues with higher proportions of people aged over 65 in the upper mountains. 		

Table 1: Summary of Major Findings

2.0 1974 – Strategy Plan

Strategic planning is a relatively recent phenomenon in New South Wales. It was not until 1946 in fact that work was begun on the Cumberland County Plan, the first regional strategy for Sydney. Unfortunately that plan did not embrace the Blue Mountains and it was the second generation of strategic plans — The Sydney Region Outline Plan of 1968 — that finally recognised the importance of extending regional planning into the Blue Mountains and westward of the Nepean River. The Sydney Region Outline Plan, by drawing attention to the likelihood of significant population growth in the Blue Mountains between 1968 and 2000, in turn spun off the need for a specific Blue Mountains vision of the future.

Further impetus towards strategic planning in the Blue Mountains emerged in the early 1970s when choices had to be made between large increases in the population and maintenance and preservation of the existing natural areas. These choices were forced by the exhibition of a draft planning scheme in 1973 that proposed an increase in the available land for residential development and the densities that were permissible in existing residential areas. Maximum population figures proposed under the draft scheme were within the vicinity of 171,000.

Council effectively lobbied the federal government for a grant to carry out a review of development and conservation conflicts throughout the Mountains and to prepare an overall strategy for the management and resolution of these conflicts.

In 1974 Council released for exhibition the Blue Mountains Strategy Plan; a report that analysed the physical social and economic problems of the Upper and Lower Mountains and which projected a range of "alternative futures". The alternative futures projected the implications of various population growth policies. The alternative futures were limited to some extent by their focus on population. The impact of the population and the lifestyle that would be promoted were not considered broadly within the community, this stifled debate to some extent and limited the exploration of how to live in the Blue Mountains to who could live in the Blue Mountains.

Proposals of the 1974 Blue Mountains Strategy Plan

The 1974 Strategy Plan looked at five 'alternative futures'. These were based solely on the developmental capacity of land zoned and serviced for urban development, and did not consider either demographic trends or the environmental carrying capacity of the lands concerned. The population of the Blue Mountains in 1974 was about 45,000, roughly equally distributed between the Upper and Lower Mountains. The five categories were:

1. *Development freeze.* Only development currently under permit would be permitted. This would mean no amplification of then existing infrastructure, and the population would peak at 45,000 people.
2. *All current urban zonings developed plus existing subdivided and serviced land.* This future would allow continuing population growth, contingent on amplified infrastructure, until the population reached of the order of 65,000.
3. *All land already subdivided would be developed, regardless of whether it was currently serviced.* In this future, the City would have room to grow until the population reached of the order of 112, 000. Clearly amplification of infrastructure would be required to allow this to happen, and this level of population would also impact upon environmental management objectives.
4. *Proposed zonings in Council's then exhibited planning scheme.* At the time the Strategy was prepared the Council had a planning scheme on exhibition. Zonings proposed in that plan went considerably beyond lands already subdivided. Were all zoned lands to be developed as proposed, then a population of the order of 170,000 would be accommodated (no doubt at considerable environmental cost).



5. *All land capable of being used for urban development brought into that use.*

In this case the potential population was of the order of 275,000. However, the Strategy Plan pointed out that provision of water supply to this population would be a major problem.

The 1974 Strategy Plan made no judgement on which of these 'alternative futures' would be most appropriate, indeed it stated that different strategies would probably be appropriate in different parts of the City. It did, however, include a series of charts for each of the 'futures' indicating what public works, infrastructure, and environmental measures were implied for each level of development" (Assoc. Professor Chris Cunningham; Talk to Councillors and Senior Staff, June 2001).

An analysis of responses received from a questionnaire distributed at the travelling exhibitions and in rates notices indicated that there was a general preference for a more conservation-oriented model. Alternative 2 with a projected population of 65,000 received the most support out of all the options. 74% of the total submissions received indicated support for a population between 47,000 and 112,000.

At the time support from the NSW Planning and Environment Commission and the Federal Department of Urban and Regional Development was for a conservation-oriented model. However there were no guarantees of effective action or support from these government departments to overcome the legalities and financial impediments to achieving this outcome.

The 1974 Strategy Plan was important because it recognised the imperative for long term strategic planning in the Blue Mountains and the results of 1974 directed responsible authorities towards recognition of the need to protect the environment. Massive developments and increases in the population were curtailed, important recreation facilities were provided and upgrading to amenities in town centres was undertaken. In addition the Strategy galvanised authorities responsible for important infrastructure to establish long term plans for the Blue Mountains.

2.1 1976 - Statement of Objectives and Action Plan

In response to the Blue Mountains Strategy Plan, Council released a Statement of Objectives and Action Plan in 1976. It was acknowledged that there were no simple solutions to the issues confronting the Blue Mountains. The Statement of Objectives and Action Priorities were intended as a framework to respond in a practical way to the preferences indicated by the public and authorities through the exhibition of the Blue Mountains Strategy Plan.

Practical outcomes that have their basis within the Statement of Objectives and Action Priorities are listed below:

- Mapping and identifying the extent and nature of environmental areas was identified as a key priority in conjunction with the adoption of measures to protect critical natural areas.
- The reinvigoration of the tourism industry with increased Council involvement in the promotion of tourism, upgrading existing facilities and constructing a tourist information centre in the lower mountains.
- A self-containment policy for the upper mountains was attempted, with the idea that there should be a range of employment, recreation and shopping opportunities locally available for residents. Additional industrial lands were to be released and commercial areas were to be maintained and promoted.
- A comprehensive townscape plan that would look to enhance and reinforce village character was established. Leura Mall was revitalised followed by Wentworth Falls and other town centres.



- The existing urban footprint was to be maintained. There was to be no additional release of lands between towns. Opportunities for the development of a range of housing types that were not readily available (such as villas, townhouses, units) were to be explored.
- It was recognised that commuting to Sydney and the western suburbs for work would remain the major source of employment in the lower mountains and improvements to transport services to facilitate these activities were undertaken.
- The widening of the Great Western Highway to four lanes between Blaxland and Katoomba, in addition to the extension of the freeway between Emu Plains and Blaxland was set in motion.
- Glenbrook Tunnel was widened to accommodate new and additional trains. Improvements to commuter car parking facilities were also identified as a need.
- It was predicted that with a population of 112,000 there would be a requirement for 8 community health centres, 10 primary schools and 5 State high schools.
- Five sports fields were built at no cost to Council by the Water Board, Railways, DMR and Department of Education
- The construction of numerous community facilities throughout the Mountains including libraries, swimming pools, kindergartens, child care centres senior citizens facilities and youth centres.

2.2 Population Outcomes

Council did not commit to a population threshold within the Action Plan of 1976 due to a lack of support from the State and Federal government to achieve a restriction in population.

Despite there being no explicit policy position with regards to population growth over the following years, it was decided through the implementation of the proceeding land use plans that the existing natural areas were to be maintained. In the following decades a series of mapping exercises were undertaken to determine the location of critical natural areas. This eventually culminated in the gazettal of Local Environmental Plan 1991. Ongoing mapping has increased the knowledge of the extent of natural areas and the measures that are required to protect them. The upcoming comprehensive LEP will further address these issues.

Policy direction from the 1976 Statement of Objectives has therefore contained development to some extent and provided the platform for ongoing planning directions.

3.0 STRATEGIC PLANNING AFTER 1976

3.1 Interim Development Order (IDO) 28 (1979)

The draft exhibited scheme of 1974 was determined with amendments by the Minister in 1979. Exhibition of the amended plans occurred in late 1979 and the plan, known as IDO 28 was gazetted in January 1980.

The Ministers determination made the following important decisions that impacted on the urban structure of the Blue Mountains and provided the basis for the existing urban forms:

- A decrease in densities permitted through a range of rural zones
- Introducing a Rural A3 zone prohibiting all uses except basic agricultural activities and alleviating Council of the requirement to acquire these lands. This zone was regarded as a holding measure.
- Elimination of Residential D tourist zones along the highway
- The permissibility of small lots along arterial roads to be developed for residential purposes 0 (due to the denial by the Dept of Main Roads to accept responsibility for the acquisition of these lots).

These restrictions on residential development effectively reduced the potential population yield. However an official population projection figure for IDO 28 was not documented.

3.2 LEP 4 - 1982

In December 1982 Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 4 was gazetted. This plan was one of the earliest comprehensive plans in New South Wales under the new EP&A Act (1979). However LEP 4 lacked any clearly defined environmental management objectives and strategies and gave no clear direction for the future. LEP 4 adopted many of the principles embodied within the land use framework established within IDO 28. Consequential studies of the implications of LEP 4 on future populations indicated a high yield population of 170,000 (*EMP 2 documents*)

3.3 Environmental Management Plans: 1983 - 2002

In 1983 Council resolved to prepare an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) to assess the interaction between the natural and built environment, consider the suitability of land for development and provide guidelines for future growth.

LEP 1991

The EMP process was split into two stages in 1988 in order to expedite management plans for environmentally sensitive areas on the fringe of urban areas. As a result EMP1 delivered LEP 1991 applying to the fringe and rural bushland areas of the Local Government Area in December 1991.

Draft LEP 1997

Between 1994 and 1997 work commenced on EMP 2 focussing on the balance of the LGA not covered by LEP 1991; those areas covering the urbanised and town areas. By late 1997 Draft LEP 1997 implementing the findings of the EMP 2 process was exhibited. EMP 2 estimated the projected population under the new zoning structure to be 99,000 to reach capacity by 2050.

Public exhibition of Draft LEP 1997 generated significant public interest and 1,100 submissions. A Public Inquiry was held and Council subsequently resolved to review Draft LEP 1997 in March 1999.



Draft LEP 2002

A full revision of the planning management strategies has been undertaken in the intervening years. Part of the review process included:

- A review of the application of zones
- A character study of residential and town areas
- Vegetation and riparian corridor mapping review
- Aerial laser scanning of the City to identify areas of slope greater than 20%
- A heritage study of the city

Draft LEP 2000 adopts a precinct-based approach to planning within higher density and higher intensity land uses. Yield models undertaken for the revised planning studies indicate a population projection of 86,098 by the year 2021. This is in synch with ABS projections for 2021 of 84,600. Current estimates of the population in the Blue Mountains in 2002 are 77,898. (ABS 1996)

Council is currently in the process of finalising Draft LEP 2000 and hope to exhibit in 2003.

3.4 Community Planning Framework

In the early 1990s Council initiated a strategic community planning process to ensure needs of the community were being addressed and that appropriate services and facilities were being provided. The first citywide community plan was completed in 1995. This plan developed a three-tiered Community Planning Framework for the city focusing on:

- the City-wide level;
- the Area level; and
- the local or township level.

The framework recognised that at each of these levels different types of services and facilities were required. It also recognised that the key determinant of how many services to provide at each of these levels was not so much "number" of people but rather the ability of people to access services and facilities in particular locations. This concept addressed the difficulties experienced within the Blue Mountains of providing an adequate level of accessible services to a widely dispersed population. It highlighted the need for centralising services and facilities in the Blue Mountains as much as possible within the different levels - citywide, area and town. Five natural human service catchments or Community Planning Areas were identified and within each of them a Service Centre - servicing surrounding townships.

Flowing from the Community Planning Framework - since 1996 Area Community Plans and Area Recreation Plans have been prepared for each of the five Community Planning Areas. These plans each include a five year Action Plan addressing community and recreation needs in the Area.

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4.0 FEDERAL AND STATE POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The policy position of federal government in relation to regional development and direct involvement in factors such as population growth has changed considerably since the 1970s.

In the 1970s there was an emphasis on participation by the federal government in urban and regional development. The National Urban and Regional Development Authority was assigned the task of collaborating with State and Local governments in order to improve equitable welfare of the people of Australia.

Projects such as the Aubury Wodonga and Bathurst Orange decentralisation schemes aimed to take growth and population pressures off the Sydney region by encouraging industry and business to locate in these centres. These schemes were abandoned by the late 1970s and whilst there has been the occasional effort to sustain economies in regional centres through the location of government offices and university campuses, the general attitude from state and federal governments has been to allow the market to determine growth and development within the regions.

The Federal government has progressively reduced direct involvement in urban and regional issues over the last decade. There now exists a policy that encourages self-help within communities along with increasing inducements to create partnerships between non-government organisations and government providers. Funding opportunities for seeding opportunities for various community led programmes for a variety of activities exist, but there is little in the way of co-ordinated long term programmes with full government participation.

The Federal government does not have a population policy at the present time. The reducing fertility rate, increasing life expectancy and general ageing of the population have serious ramifications for the future of Australia society. Immigration continues to provide a source of population growth. At present the Federal government accepts around 85,000 immigrants a year, with an emphasis on business immigrants. Population forecasts estimate that Australia will reach a population of 25 million by the year 2050 (SMH 25/2/01).

State governments are in some respects responsive to Federal government policies with regards to population growth, regional development and housing infrastructure. The New South Wales Department of Urban Affairs and Planning has responded to continuing population growth and immigration to Sydney by releasing lands on the fringe of Sydney's metropolitan area. This policy was particularly pronounced and relied upon throughout the 1980s. By the beginning of the 1990s concern over the cost of releasing fringe lands (new subdivisions on the fringe are heavily subsidised) and under-utilised infrastructure in the inner and middle rings of Sydney resulted in an introduction of urban consolidation policies. This has resulted in a dramatic increase in residential densities within Sydney with 54% of all new dwellings being multi-unit dwellings compared to 27% in 1987-88.

The Blue Mountains has been largely exempt from the policies of urban consolidation. Council achieved exemption from State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) 53 in 1996. However, State government has encouraged an increase in housing choice within the Blue Mountains emphasising that the local government area is responsible for housing its local population. There have been no releases of land within the Blue Mountains via the Urban Development Program.

SEPP No.5 continues to apply to the Blue Mountains LGA having an impact on the urban structure in localised areas. SEPP 5 allows for increased residential densities where the development provides housing for older people and people with a disability. SEPP 5 overrides Council's planning instruments.

Additional State legislation that have impacted on the type of development that occurs within the Blue Mountains are discussed in the following pages.



4.1 Sydney's Drinking Water Catchments SREP 20 & SEPP 58

These policies recognise the impacts that land uses and development within Sydney's drinking water catchment have on the quality of the water supply. The policies require that more stringent controls be applied to development within the drinking water catchment and limit the potential for future subdivision within specified catchment areas. This in effect limits the capacities for urban expansion within these key sub catchment areas

4.2 Shaping Our Cities

This policy does not prescribe legislative requirements. However it directs the strategic aims for the Greater Metropolitan Area of Sydney with sub-regional directions. The strategy that applies specifically to the Blue Mountains area is Shaping Western Sydney. This policy points towards the limitation of development within the Blue mountains and encourages the retention of villages allowing for some infill development to occur within these villages. This has created significant pressure within the Sydney region for housing and infrastructure. The Sydney region currently has a population of 4 million and is growing at a rate of 1% a year. Current projections indicate that the Metropolitan region is likely to top 5.2 million by 2016.

4.3 World Heritage Listing

The listing does not apply to Blue Mountains City Council managed lands and does not, in terms of statutory responsibility for the lands within the World Heritage Area, directly impose any statutory requirements on local government.

The listing does, however, impose additional matters to consider in relation to development control and land management, particularly through the introduction of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) and its identification of activities impacting on World Heritage Areas as matters of national environmental significance. The listing also places a responsibility on Council to ensure that it develops strong, clear and integrated policies and action plans to properly contain and manage growth, protect biodiversity and identify and mitigate adverse impacts on the World Heritage Area deriving from the settled areas of the city.

The listing has reinforced the directions taken in the development of Draft LEP 2002 providing additional emphasis on ecological sustainability as the fundamental basis for the principles, objectives, zone application and provisions contained within the plan.

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5.0 1974 – 2001 TRENDS AND COMPARISONS

5.1 Open Space Resources

This table illustrates the increase in Open Space resources and Protected Natural Areas between 1975 and 2001. Although there has been an increase in development within that period, the amount of land protected and acquired that falls under public management and protection has increased. Consistencies between the tables can be sometimes blurred because of changing responsibilities of authorities or a change in policy emphasis.

Open Space	1975	2000
National Park	70,000	101,321
Crown Lands	no information	9,305
State Forest	6,775	
Catchment Areas	19,917	3,223
BMCC Secure Natural Areas	n/a	1,357
Parks and Recreation	182	673
Recreation – Environmental Protection	n/a	5221
Environmental Protection (EP) & Recreation EP	n/a	1645
Regional Open Space	10,872	40.8
Total Open Space Resources	118,838	128,728

Table 2: Comparison of Open Space and Natural Areas (Hectares)

5.2 Environmental Management

In 1975 the main objectives in environmental management were delineation, preservation and maximisation of suitable uses within urban areas. The legislative requirements to comply with these objectives have been limited particularly in relation to private land. Council's position in relation to environmental management has shifted since the 1970s with increased awareness of the impacts of urban development on environmental areas has come an increase in the investment in environmental management. At present "Protecting the Natural Environment" constitutes 4% of annual costs to Council. There is a strong emphasis on voluntarism and education. Activities that Council are involved in include:

- Facilitating community involvement in environmental protection
- Bushland habitat and catchment protection policy
- Bush regeneration/ weed control
- Environmental education



- Stormwater management strategies
- Tree management

Bush care groups have become an important source of environmental protection and weed management. They originated in the late 1980s with the establishment of a number of community groups interested in looking after particular areas of bushland. By 1992 Council responded by establishing a bush care officer, responsible for the training and co-ordination of bush care activities. There are now 30 groups operating across the mountains with over 350 active volunteers. In response Council now has employed 3 bush care officers.

5.3 Bush Fire

The Blue Mountains is considered one of the more fire prone areas in the country. With increasing areas of residential development encroaching into areas of high bushfire hazard. The risk of bushfire continues to be a major concern associated with living within the Blue Mountains.

The past fifty years of fire history in the Blue Mountains demonstrates overall improvements in coordination and management of wildfires resulting in reducing property loss and death as a result of bush fire.

The bushfire brigades began as small community organisations formed for the protection of property from bushfire. The bushfire brigades underwent increasing development were reformed following the 1957 fires and came under the auspices of Council to help[organise and resource their efforts.

In the early 1970s there was an increase in the number of coordinated prescribed burns undertaken by the bushfire brigades. In 1975 there were eight separate bodies responsible for bushfire management in the Blue Mountains. This resulted in significant variations in fire prevention methods.

By the late 1980s a Blue Mountains District Bushfire Protection Committee was established that coordinated the agencies and land owners responsible for bushfire management. This form of management preceded a legislative requirement introduced under the Bush Fires Act 1947 for bushfire districts to establish Bushfire Management Committees (BFMC).

Following a requirement established under the Bush Fires Act for BFMCs, a Fuel Management Plan was introduced. The Fuel Management Plan coordinated the prescribes burn programs and other fuel reduction works, of the member agencies of the Bushfire Management Committee.

In 1997 the new Rural Fires Act reiterated that a BFMC be established in each rural fire district with the aim of coordinating prevention strategies. In response to this a Bushfire Risk Management Plan (BRMP). This plan was adopted for the Blue Mountains in September 1999. The BRMP identifies and provides a risk classification for all assets including environmental assets within the Blue Mountains. This provides threat ratings for all of these assets (including urbanised areas, service infrastructure and water supply catchments, community facilities, conference centres and resorts and agricultural and natural assets) the asset characteristics, the consequences of fire and the level of risk. The BRMP then outlines a Risk Management Strategy for each of these assets. All member agencies have adopted the BRMP.

In 1975 there were no legislative requirements for bushfire management with fire trails one of the few methods widely adopted. Pressure for land has resulted in continuing development along narrow spurs, as has occurred in and around Winmalee. These areas are exposed to extreme fire risk. However, by 2002 methods such as perimeter roads, vehicular access to bushland gullies and buffer areas between development and bushfire prone areas have become requirements for new subdivision.

In 2001 the focus for bushfire risk management combines prescribed burning in conjunction with the development of permanent buffers around exposed properties. There has been a shift away from broad area burning to strategic hazard reduction. However, with increasing pressure for new land resulting in further encroachments of residential properties on exposed spurs and ridges, the

area exposed to bushfire risk has increased. This results in increased pressure on bush fire brigades at times of bushfire and stretches resources for the management of bush fire risk. It has also resulted in increased reliance on engineering solutions to bush fire management including improved construction standards and a greater reliance on response measures by bushfire brigades.

5.4 Population Profile

In 1975 a major shift in population balance had occurred with a levelling out of populations between the upper and lower mountains. This countered the historic population trends within the Blue Mountains of very low population numbers in the lower mountains and much higher population figures in the upper mountains and reflected the rapid rate of development occurring in the lower mountains during that period. In migration was identified as a major source of population growth. At the same time out migration of the 15-24 age group was identified as a problem in the upper mountains. This trend was attributed to a lack of educational and employment opportunities.

The trends in 2001 show that the ex-migration of the 15-24 age group has become a problem for the mountains as a whole. Population numbers are actually declining in a number of lower mountains towns such as Lapstone, Mount Riverview and Warrimoo which had previously experienced rapid population growth due, largely to an influx of families. Again the lack of locally available opportunities for the 15-24 age group is held responsible for the out migration. It is deduced that the same families that were establishing themselves within the Blue Mountains in the late 70s and early 1980s are now experiencing natural decline as children grow up and move out.

It was identified in 1975 that there were high proportions of people aged over 65 and that this figure was increasing. At the time the proportion of older people in the Blue Mountains at 15 per cent for the whole population, was almost double the New South Wales average. The analysis of the location of these older people within the Blue Mountains revealed that there were significantly higher concentrations of older people within the upper mountains, and specified that this would require that different policy and facility responses would be required within the two areas. For example retirement facilities were considered to be more prevalent in the upper mountains than the lower mountains. Lower land prices and environmental considerations were given in 1975 for the prevalence of retirees.

The trend towards an ageing population continues and whilst this has become a uniform feature of more broader, regional and national trends, the upper Blue Mountains continues to contain a disproportionate number of people aged over 65 with Areas 1 and 2 having 18 and 19 per cent of their respective populations aged over 65. This compares to the average for the Sydney region of 11 per cent. The average for the Blue Mountains as a whole is 12 per cent.

In 1975 family sizes were significantly higher in the lower mountains than in the upper mountains. This trend remains consistent with a higher proportion of couples with children in the lower mountains than in the upper mountains. However the number of couples without children has risen.

It should be noted that the State governments population projection for the Blue Mountains under the Sydney Regional Outline Policy of 1968 was that, "*in the City of Blue Mountains , there will eventually be a population of 65,000.*" This figure was reviewed in 1975 by the State Planning

Authority, to 85,000 by the year 2000. The estimated resident population for the Blue Mountains in 2002 is 77,898 people, based on the ABS Estimated Resident Population (1996). This population has been increasing steadily at a rate of 1 per cent per year in the inter-censal period between 1991-1996. ABS projections, based on current growth rates, estimate that by the year 2021 the Blue Mountains would have reached a population of 84,600. The ability to reach this population figure is affected by the availability of lands and external policy influences.

5.5 Recreation

In 1975 there were significant deficiencies in the provision of recreation facilities. Two major facilities were provided at Catalina motor racing circuit and Katoomba showground. A wide variety of needs were identified in the 1975 Strategy Plan. These included arts and crafts centres, multi-purpose cultural centres.

Since 1975 the number of recreation facilities has been increased considerably. The table below lists facilities, comparing the provision of recreation facilities between 1975 and 2001.

Recreation Type	1975	2001
Sports Ovals	18	28
Local Parks	30	99
Regional Parks	7	5
Swimming Pools	4	5
Tennis Courts	22	50
Golf Courses	6	6
Tacks and Raceways	2	1
Indoor sporting areas	2	5

Source: Draft Recreation Survey 2002 & 1975 Planning Strategy

In 1964 Council adopted a policy that stipulated a minimum of 2.8 hectares per 1000 population. This was on the basis of 3 people per house and a predicted increase in the amount of leisure time of the general population, resulting, it was deduced in an increased demand for leisure activities.

Although working hours have not reduced there are increased expectations for a range of recreational activities that are relatively accessible. In response to this Council has, in the past provided a range and distribution of activities across the Mountains in response to the needs of a range of age and interest groups. This response has been fairly localised and non-strategic in its approach and has resulted, partly due to a lack of resources in a wide distribution of relatively small recreation facilities.

The Recreation Plan being developed within Council proposes to focus new resources on high standard facilities that are centrally located in order to maximise access. In 1975 there were more ovals in the upper mountains, but these ovals were less maintained and provided fewer facilities

than ovals in the lower mountains. High levels of demand on the limited facilities, particularly for ovals resulted in some instances in a reduction in patronage.

5.6 Community Facilities

The demographic analysis within the 1975 plan identified a number of deficiencies in facility provision. It was identified that the upper mountains required an urgent response to the provision of youth oriented social facilities and opportunities for vocational and tertiary education as well as retirement facilities. The lower mountains was deficient, according to the study in respect to the provision of community and child oriented multi purpose centres.

Over the past twenty years community development projects have been established in the Mid Mountains, Lower Mountains and the Upper Mountains. In addition to these projects, Springwood and Katoomba Neighbourhood Centre projects have consolidated their service provision.

The Mid Mountains Community Centre at Lawson brings together a range of Home and Community Care (HACC) programs for older people, people with a disability, local groups and the adjoining Primary school. The Centre opened in March 1991 and provides a Neighbourhood Centre, HACC office space, centre based meals facility, hall and meeting space.

This centre has alleviated the pressure on venues to some degree, however a number of community services in the Mid Mountains are experiencing difficulties in obtaining appropriate venue space. The Mid Mountains Neighbourhood Centre has outgrown this space and in order to expand its programs, needs to seek alternative premises.

Despite these improvements there remain a number of deficiencies particularly in relation to services and facilities (including vocational and recreational) in the Blue Mountains.

5.7 Educational Facilities

School enrolment patterns and trends have changed considerably since the 1970s with increasing proportions of high school students remaining at school through until 6th form. However, there remain deficiencies in the provision of educational opportunities as identified in 1975, particularly with regard to the provision of tertiary and vocational opportunities in the upper mountains.

In 1975 there were identified three major state high schools in the Blue Mountains, these being, Nepean, Springwood and Katoomba. There remains a three state high schools within the area, with the exclusion of Nepean out of the LGA and the opening of Blaxland High School in 1980. The increasing range of options for schooling that has occurred over the past decade has resulted in additional opportunities for private schooling, major private high schools include Blue Mountains Grammar, Korowal High School and Gateway Christian School. In addition selective schools have impacted on enrolment patterns, with local students being drawn out of the area to attend these schools. The closest selective school is at Penrith High School.

5.8 Heritage

In 1975 there were 8 buildings categorised by the National Trust with a possible additional 60 buildings worthy of consideration.



Since that time heritage has emerged as a significant element of the cultural landscape within the Blue Mountains with a high proportion of older buildings remaining in tact and contributing to the overall character of the area.

In 1983, Council appointed heritage consultants to undertake a review of potential heritage listings within the area. The study identified 300 heritage items and 5 heritage conservation areas, which are now protected under Local Environmental Plan 1991.

This heritage study is now being reviewed as part of the studies required for Draft LEP 2001. An additional 62 potential items are being considered in addition to an additional 23 group listings (or heritage conservation areas). These additions only represent a fraction of the final proposed additions as these do not include heritage within the major town centres, or on the fringes of urban areas.

5.9 Housing

1975 identified distinct differences between the upper and lower mountains in terms of housing, with the upper mountains containing much higher proportions of holiday homes and vacant homes, whilst the lower mountains demonstrated very strongly that it was a "new home" area.

In 1975, 88 per cent of all housing stock was single detached dwellings. This compares with 96 per cent of all dwellings being comprised of single detached dwellings. This represents a decrease in the proportion of multi-unit dwellings in the Blue Mountains.

In 1975 there was a higher proportion of multi unit dwellings in the upper mountains than in the lower mountains. This trend appears to have changed to some extent with the major share of multi unit dwellings being located within the two major town centres, Springwood and Katoomba.

In 1975 there remained considerable potential for additional development in the upper mountains. Undeveloped allotments represented 57% of all allotments in 1975. In 2001 that proportion has decreased dramatically to 9% of the total number of residential lots, vacant and serviced or subdividable. It is estimated that, on current take up rates this land will reach capacity by 2010.

Over the past twenty years there have been no large-scale land releases within the Blue Mountains. Over the past decade the bulk of new subdivisions have occurred on privately owned land that is zoned to permit subdivision. Subdivisions are generally small scale, a subdivision of six or seven lots would be considered large. Development of multi-unit housing within existing urban areas have generally attracted hostile opposition from the community.

Most new subdivisions occur on the periphery of urban areas within LEP 1991 lands. This coincides with the trend away from centralised alternative housing forms and the subsequent decrease in the proportion of alternative housing. The trend towards "lifestyle" choices that have encouraged people to come and live in the mountains have encouraged "bush" living creating the pressure or market for the "bush" subdivisions.

The introduction of Amendment 25 (2001) to LEP 1991 has resulted in greater stringency being placed on subdivisions in natural areas, particularly where the Environmental Protection zones

apply. Amendment 25 increases the pressure for developers to provide “cluster” housing, whereby development occurs on the least environmentally sensitive portion of the land with community title prevailing over this land. However, the development industry generally resists this style of development claiming that there is no market demand.

5.10 Workforce and Employment

The characteristics of work have changed considerably since the 1970s. Female participation in employment has increased dramatically along with an increase in part time work and the casualisation of the workforce. In 1975 the employment rate for males was extremely high, and this was associated with a high proportion of commuting workers living within the area, the high proportion of professionals (four times the state average) and the high rate of in-migration to the lower mountains of 25-34 year olds with jobs within the Penrith – Sydney transport corridor.

The employment rate in the Upper Mountains was much lower, although there were more jobs for women. Employment characteristics of upper mountains workers were associated with the entertainment industry, tourism and sport and recreation. It was inferred that the upper mountains displayed characteristics of a “self-contained” area, meaning that there were local work, recreation and shopping opportunities available. This was not the case for the lower mountains.

In 2001 the Blue Mountains as a whole has a high employment rate, with a relatively high participation rate. The unemployment rate in 2001 for the Blue Mountains as a whole was 4.4 per cent, this compares to an unemployment rate of 5.8 per cent for NSW. There is a high reliance on part time work with 34 per cent of the workforce engaged in part time work. Home-based businesses provide an increasing source of employment, particularly for part time work.

There remains a high proportion of highly educated people living in the Blue Mountains, particularly in relation to adjoining areas. 40 per cent of the population have a skilled or basic vocational qualification or higher level of education as compared to 33.4 per cent in Sydney and 31.6 per cent of the population within the Penrith/ Hawkesbury and Blue Mountains sub-region.

Industrial Lands

In 1975 it was identified that there was an industrial imbalance, i.e. a low proportion of industrial activity relative to other areas, within the Blue Mountains. This was largely attributed to the topography of the area and distance from the Sydney market. These factors have not changed and industrial activity continues to play a very minor role in the local economy.

The supply of industrial land in 1975 was strongly biased towards the centres of Lawson and Katoomba where there was significant amount of lands zoned for industrial purposes. The 1975 study argued in favour of self-containment and therefore surmised that additional industrial lands would have to be released in order to promote local employment opportunities.

A radically different industrial landscape has evolved since the 1970s with the significance of manufacturing decreasing. Information Technology has emerged as a strong economic force employing significant numbers of workforces particularly in larger cities. The ability to “tele-commute” within this industry has implications for locations such as the Blue Mountains, that are within commuting range of Sydney but with the ability to provide a “lifestyle” choice out of the suburbs.

In 1975 the Upper Mountains contained the majority of manufacturing activity and employment. With the inclusion of Lawson in the definition Upper Mountains, this remains the case in 2001.

In 1975 there were approximately 111.27 hectares (1973 planning scheme and USC study) of suitable industrial lands. In 2001 under LEP 4 there are 145 hectares. The area that was actually

occupied by industrial uses was 12.14 hectares. As can be seen there has been an increase in the amount of industrial lands currently being utilised.

Industrial Lands	1973	2001
Amount of Industrial Land (zoned/ suitable)	111.27 ha	145 ha 100 ha (suitable)
Amount of land utilised for Industrial Purposes	12.14 ha	54 ha

Table 4: Comparison of Industrial Lands (source: USC, Sydney Water, DUAP)

The trends for economic development will result in a continuation of the reliance on tourism with a growth in home based businesses and cottage/ craft industries.

The proportion of people involved in manufacturing within the Blue Mountains is 4% of the total workforce compared to 15% in 1975. This reflects the national trends in relation to the reduction of the prominence of local manufacturing, but also indicates the decreasing role that manufacturing plays within the Blue Mountains.

Commercial Lands

In 1975 it was identified that Springwood and Katoomba provided the main district centres for the Lower and Upper Mountains respectively. However it was reported that there was an imbalance in terms of choice and range towards the Upper Mountains and Katoomba specifically. It was also identified that the lower mountains exhibited characteristics associated with a dormitory suburb with shoppers required to go out of the LGA for services and shopping.

These trends have been generally maintained, with Katoomba and Springwood remaining the respective district centres and Katoomba providing a greater array of services and choice than Springwood.

Centre	Retail rentable area 1975	Net m2	Retail Gross Leasable Areas * (m ²) 2001	Commercial Net rentable area 1975	Non-Retail GLA 2001 (m ²)
Katoomba	35,351		28,599	6,034	9,115
Springwood	10,503		7,462	1,576	7,068
Blackheath	6,143		6,210	572	1,209
Blaxland	3,171		4,953	1,028	1,403
Lawson	1,479		3,857	107	1,745
Leura	3,231		5,008	237	879
Winmalee	-		3,342	-	522
Glenbrook	305		3,035	195	791
Hazelbrook	1,990		2,654	158	90
Wentworth Falls	1,482		1,708	335	552
Mount Victoria	-		942	-	-
Totals	63,655		67,770	10,242	23,374

Table 5: Comparison Commercial Lands 1975 - 2001

* Net Rentable Area & Gross Leasable Area = includes all areas within the store including storage and preparation areas and internal staff amenities. It does not include arcade areas, public toilets, landscaping or car parking areas

These figures show a slight increase overall in the amount of commercial lands but importantly a decrease in the amount of retail lands in Katoomba and Springwood. This could be due to the difference in calculations especially for shopping centre developments where the total floor space is not factored in to the 2001 figure. The differences may also be attributable to a number of changes within Katoomba such as the dysfunction of the Renaissance Centre, the Goldsmiths



Hardware and Mulvaney's store and possible cross overs between retail lands in industrial areas. However, the statistics should be treated with caution due to differing techniques in collation and definitions.

Despite the variations in the calculations of the figures there is an indication of the trend that does not support local centres. Increased mobility across the general population is resulting in more people willing to travel further to shop. In addition shopping has become a recreational activity in some respects and super shopping centres located in Penrith and Parramatta providing a major shopping "experience" attracts potential shoppers from greater distances. The figures confirm consultants studies that have concluded that there is a leakage of expenditure reducing the market for businesses, retail and commercial businesses to locate within the Blue Mountains.

Whilst Katoomba is recognised as the most dominant centre within the Blue Mountains, retail studies indicate that Katoomba is under performing in terms of capturing expenditure within the non-food market. A significant percentage of the expenditure on non-food items for Upper and Mid Mountains residents escapes to shopping centres outside the LGA.

Springwood is the main food and grocery shopping centre for Lower Mountains residents, followed by Penrith and Blaxland. More than a quarter of Lower Mountains' residents use non-local centres for their main food and grocery shopping, possibly due to easy access from work-related travel.

Most Mountains residents, especially those living in the Lower Mountains, use Penrith as their main centre for purchasing clothes, home wares and other non-food items. Given the high percentage of residents using Katoomba, Springwood, and to a lesser extent Blaxland, for food and groceries, there may be opportunities for retailers in these centres to increase their expenditure on other items.

Tourism

The 1975 report identified tourism as a major area of imbalance within the Blue Mountains with the Upper Mountains containing the vast majority of tourism destinations. An average of 7 percent of the total local workforce were employed in the tourism industry, with a higher proportion of these workers located in the upper mountains. The report identified day-tripping as the most prevalent form of visitation to the mountains and predicted that this would increase with the urban expansion of Sydney. The 1975 report noted that day tripping was characterised by low expenditure and high costs in maintenance (pollution and litter on bush tracks).

Tourism continues to be a major economic force within the area. The Blue Mountains Tourism Authority estimates that there are in excess of three million visitors a year to the Mountains. The majority of visitors continue to patronise Upper Mountains destinations. In 2001 tourism directly employs 13 per cent of the total local workforce. Day tripping or visiting friends and relatives continues to be the most common form of visitation, and it has been identified that tourism within the Blue Mountains continues to incur costs on maintenance and litter control, and puts pressure on sensitive environmental areas.



5.11 Traffic and Transport

In 1975 annual average traffic volumes recorded in the Lower Mountains were between 8,000 and 10,000, whilst Upper Mountains levels were recorded at 5,000 to 8,000.

These volumes have increased three fold in the Lower Mountains to 25,000 – 38,000 vehicles per day between Emu Plains and Springwood with the number of vehicles decreasing in the upper mountains to between 7,000 – 10,000 vehicles per day between Mount Victoria and Lithgow.

The NRMA holds that a four-lane dual carriageway road is warranted for the entire length of the GWH between Lapstone and Mount Victoria, stating that traffic levels in this area already exceed those which would warrant a four lane dual carriageway (NRMA Engineering and Environment, 1997:4,39).

Commuting

The 1975 report identified that a large proportion of the workforce had to commute out of the area for work, on average 50 per cent of the total workforce commuted out of the area for work. The study broke these findings down into an upper and lower mountains comparison and found that 75 per cent of workers in the lower mountains commuted whilst only 25 per cent of the workforce in the upper mountains commuted out of the area for work.

Figures are not presently available for a direct comparison to these findings, however out of the total workforce in the Blue Mountains 59.7 per cent of the total workforce commutes out of the area for work, representing an increase in the level of commuting. It can be surmised that the lower mountains continues to contain a higher proportion of commuters, though it could be argued that more people particularly in the mid mountains are commuting out of the LGA to work as car ownership and improved roads improve accessibility to the Sydney labour market.



6.0 CONCLUSION

In summarising, the process of strategic planning that commenced in 1974 provided an important catalyst for developing a vision for the Blue Mountains. This vision understood that despite the tenuous foothold that our community has within a vast wilderness, the impact of our human settlement on the environment is huge. As a result of 1974 boundaries limiting the impact of human settlement on the environment began to be set.

The vision for the Blue Mountains also looked towards strengthening the local community, particularly in the Upper Mountains through encouraging self sustaining communities while promoting commuter based lifestyles in the Lower Mountains. There have been difficulties in creating employment and encouraging industries within the Blue Mountains due to external and locational factors. Whilst tourism remains the driving force behind the local economy there have been major changes with regards to the national economy and industry with a general move away from manufacturing and towards information based industries. In some respects this places a location like the Blue Mountains in a good position in terms of future growth in the economy and local employment opportunities.

In 1974 the understanding of how we affect the environment was mainly limited to assessing the impact of raw increases in population. Little consideration was given to the effect of lifestyle on the environment. In 2002 we have the benefit of an increased understanding of how the way a population lives affects the environment. The challenge of moving the Blue Mountains towards a more sustainable future which not only protects the environment but supports healthy and vibrant communities lies before us.