



**WHERE ARE WE NOW?
ISSUES AND TRENDS FOR THE BLUE MOUNTAINS**

BACKGROUND PAPERS

for Consultation Workshops conducted May / June 2001

PREPARED BY BLUE MOUNTAINS CITY COUNCIL

**Paper No 6
Supporting Documentation for
*Blue Mountains Our Future***

April 2001

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Identity and Image

The setting for urban character in the Blue Mountains is the proximity and dominance of the natural environment – the City within a World Heritage National Park. The protection of the relationship between urban areas and the natural environment is highly valued.

The town character of villages and towns has a built format incorporating intact areas of traditional (ie Federation and Edwardian) housing and commercial areas that link with the heritage of the Blue Mountains. In addition the landscape setting for residential areas is an important unique character element.

Community values implied in the Community Satisfaction Survey 2001 include the ideal lifestyle and environment, the distinct character (bushland character; nostalgia of the Mountains), great quality of life, good place to raise families, affordable housing prices, strong community feel, cultural opportunities and the social character (friendly atmosphere).

The tourism industry is a major and growing part of the local economy, with peaks at weekends. Businesses that service the tourism industry account for about 40% of all jobs in the region. However, about 52% of employed residents work outside the Blue Mountains, which identifies the Blue Mountains area as a significant commuter belt to the Sydney region.

Trends and key issues

- The issue that emerges from the identified town character of villages and towns is that large scale redevelopment of commercial and residential areas of the Blue Mountains will by nature impact on this character as will the increase in residential densities in general.
- There is conflict between consolidation, coping with population growth and retention of character.
- Increasing development and tourism places extra loads on infrastructure already at capacity with increasing risk to the environment, one of the main tourism draw-cards.
- There is economic value in the character of the Blue Mountains for the tourism industry and as a lifestyle factor influencing the location of business and residents.
- The loss of the informal “Bohemian” lifestyle under the pressure of gentrification.
- The national and international profile of the Blue Mountains will be significantly enhanced by the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area listing. Through the legislation and funding opportunities, the listing reinforces the trend towards bioregional planning and cooperative management of local regions.
- The Blue Mountains also has an arts and culture image which is reflected in the “City of the Arts” branding.

Some questions to consider

- Who are we and who do we want to be?
- What values does the Blue Mountains community share?
- What essential elements form the unique and valuable character of the Blue Mountains? How can this character be preserved/enhanced to meet the expectations of today’s demanding consumers (locals and visitors)?

- What international, national and regional profile do we need to develop in order to position the Blue Mountains to maximum advantage?
- How can we support promotion of the BM as a national and international tourist, cultural and events destination and build on the economic strengths and opportunities this provides, while encouraging residents and visitors to value and conserve the City's natural and cultural assets?
- What features of public spaces, streetscapes and new developments improve the city's image?

Constraints

The new LEP will restrict the Mountains population to between 90,000 and 100,000 residents and support gentrification.

Affordable Housing

Housing is a major influence on the quality of life and a major consumer of land in the Blue Mountains. Housing in the LGA is characterized by low density, primarily detached homes with a high proportion of owner occupation and a low level of rental housing. A large proportion of the housing stock is used as holiday or weekend housing.

Changing family structures and households in the Mountains along with relatively low incomes are creating demands for more choice and affordability in housing types to meet the differing needs of the various groups in the community. The Community Satisfaction Survey in 2001 identified that many residents were concerned about the number of people living in the area and that the number of houses was already “too high”. This supported other findings in the survey that people thought the Blue Mountains was becoming “overdeveloped” and “overcrowded”.

The Department of Housing is concerned about the impact of the new LEP on the provision of affordable housing in the Mountains, as little development land is now available. Recent studies on homelessness show that the makeup of homeless people has changed radically from what it used to be with over 50% of homeless people now being women with an average age of 30 years old.

Trends and key issues for the future

- There is a limited range of housing choice in the Blue Mountains with a mismatch between the housing needs of residents (particularly lone persons households) and predominant detached housing (2-3 bedroom) supply. Issues of environmental protection and character mean that this mis-match is hard to address within the framework of the private housing market.
- There is limited public housing provision in the Blue Mountains which results in a significant public housing deficit, including publicly funded aged hostels. Additionally there is limited opportunity for existing stock to be modified to meet housing needs or to cater for the waiting lists in the area.
- The availability of emergency, crisis and supported accommodation is insufficient to meet the scope of demands and there is a lack of specialised housing and support structures for people with special needs.
- The affordability of housing in the Blue Mountains is a major issue and will become more so in the next 20 years. Traditionally the Blue Mountains has provided affordable housing opportunities with lower rental costs and house prices than the Sydney Metropolitan area. In the upper Mountains affordability of housing is being reduced as pressure on housing stock increases.
- The low level of medium density housing puts pressure on the affordability and availability of rental properties. Community generally opposes medium density.
- The conflicts arising from encouraging or allowing a housing component within commercial areas to promote the retention of character, whilst retaining a primary economic role.
- Increasing prices within the private housing market make it more difficult to promote the provision of affordable housing within this sector.
- Public housing stock in the Mountains is ageing and needs to be redeveloped to better utilize these sites, however most of these sites are proposed for zoning for single dwellings which does not address the housing needs of low income families.

Some questions to consider

- Is there the capacity for residents at different stages in the life-cycle (singles, young families, older people) to find affordable, available and appropriate housing choices and accommodation in the Mountains?
- How have changes in housing affordability affected locational choices of consumers and investors?
- What is the best way for managing change in existing urban areas, given some areas may experience significant change while other areas will have incremental change or minimal change?
- Can we use fewer resources to meet housing needs?
- How can affordable housing be encouraged or required at the local level so that it leads to significant ongoing impact rather than being limited to one-off projects?

Constraints

- There is increasing demand for land with limited supply.
- New developments will be mainly infill.
- Infrastructure capacity will limit the number of new dwellings and population that can be accommodated in the Mountains.

Urban Design, Form and Character

The settled portions of the Mountains are remarkable in the way that evidence of all major stages of development from earliest settlement is still visible. Towns and villages, roads and lanes, buildings and landscapes all retain a remarkable unity and character, particularly in the upper Mountains. Many of these areas have been recognized as precincts and protected by planning instruments. The Mountains also has a very distinctive public domain with suburban landscapes characterized by overhanging trees and roads lined with interesting buildings. There is increasing concern being voiced in community surveys of the loss of village character due to increasing “suburbanisation”.

A high quality urban environment is essential to enhancing image, identity and ease of movement. It supports the human quality of a town or a street, encouraging people to interact, to meet and to enjoy their surroundings. Effective urban design can influence and support an identifiable character for the Blue Mountains and its individual areas.

Automobile dependant urban design is characteristic of most towns in Australia, where the layout and planning provide for cars rather than people. Characteristics of this include low density housing, dispersed employment, major shopping areas located away from major transit routes, poor public transport, lots of roads and parking, segregated land uses rather than mix of housing and shops etc. Much of this type of urban design is readily seen in our towns.

Trend and key issues

- While the natural environment is unique, the style of most new homes in the mountains lacks design innovation and fails to contribute to an exciting urban character for now or the future.
- Landscape designs focus on introduced plants.
- There is no streetscape planting plan to identify and reinforce precincts.
- Urban consolidation is occurring at the expense of character.
- Development is forced to more marginal areas of higher conservation value due to the lack of available land for new developments.
- There is a lack of a “sense of arrival” in many villages.
- The lower mountain villages are in danger of becoming a continuous Sydney commuter suburb.
- The need to ensure that new commercial development incorporates sympathetic urban design elements in keeping with local character.
- Scale and type of residential development in villages.
- Indigenous and exotic vegetation that provides a sense of identity for an area.
- Enhancement and protection of views, vistas and landmarks.
- There is little encouragement through the existing or draft planning instruments to encourage creative, innovative, energy efficient buildings that reflect world best practice and capitalize on our unique location.
- Most towns are designed around the needs of cars, not people, thus there are no human scale, traffic free areas. Cars are needed to function in our towns.

Some questions to consider

- How do we ensure that development takes into account the natural, cultural and strategic context of its location?
- Is car access more important than people access in our towns? Is it possible to reallocate some road space to public transport, cycling and pedestrians in town centres??

- What do we mean by “character”? What are the desired character values we want to conserve, promote and enhance in our villages and towns? Is character more than built architecture e.g. Bohemian lifestyle?
- How can new developments be sympathetic to existing character without slavishly copying the architecture of older building styles along with their problems of design and lack of comfort?
- What aspects of urban design improve our sense of place and community?
- Is there a role for future landscaping to address future urban character while preserving the identified historical precincts?

Constraints

- GWH to be upgraded to four lanes to Katoomba and 3 lanes between Katoomba and Mt Vic by 2010.
- No further greenfield sites are available for residential expansion.

Land Use Planning and Development Control

While the City of Blue Mountains was formed in 1947 it was not until January 18th 1980 that the first planning scheme, Interim Development Order 28, was gazetted. However the first comprehensive planning instrument covering the urban areas was LEP 4, gazetted in December 1982. This was followed by LEP 1991, which focused on non urban and environmentally sensitive areas, then DLEP 1997 which was intended to replace LEP 4 and incorporate amendments to LEP1991.

Following exhibition and the public hearing, a decision was made to undertake a thorough review of DLEP 1997 resulting in wholesale changes related to mapping, character analysis and environmental provisions. The result was DLEP 2001. This plan addressed Commissioner Carleton's recommendations arising from the public hearing into DLEP1997 and is being developed in two stages. The first stage is now completed and with DUAP for certification prior to exhibition. The second stage covers the 10 core village areas of the major town centres in the Mountains, and aims to provide place based planning in a way that reflects the community's vision for the future. This stage will be gazetted either in tandem with DLEP2001 Stage 1 or as a series of amendments to DLEP2001, dependant on timing.

DLEP2001 is different from DLEP1997 in that it introduces place based planning and relies on much more accurate environmental and vegetation mapping to identify slope, watercourses and significant vegetation. In addition to infra-red mapping of vegetation, aerial laser scanning has been used to identify environmental constraints to a degree of accuracy not previously available and provided the basis for developing digital terrain models of the LGA. These data have informed the new DLEP2001.

DLEP 2001 is also different from previous LEPs in that it promotes the principle of ecologically sustainable development. This is very different from LEP 4 which, among other things, does not recognize the natural environmental constraints present in the municipality.

DLEP2001 attempts to address some of the issues listed below by including:

- the living conservation, living bushland conservation and character housing zones to preserve the unique character of the mountains;
- the requirement for a range of housing sizes to be incorporated into any multi-unit development and concessions for Dept of Housing housing stock enabling development of dual occupancies; and
- the affordable housing areas increasing opportunities for SEPP5 style housing.

Trends and key issues for the future

- Lack of potential for redeveloping ageing public housing to meet current needs due to existing Public Housing being placed in zones that restrict higher housing densities.
- Few parcels of land available for development, as constrained land which has yet to be developed is now classified as development excluded land.
- Available development land and zoning effectively caps LGA population at between 90,000 and 100,000.
- Very limited medium density provision.
- Limits on infrastructure capacity due to ageing systems and lack of opportunities for revenue raising to fund improvements.

- ❑ Imbalance between existing housing and changing demographics i.e. only 6% of all housing stock is alternative housing forms whereas 23% of households are lone person households.
- ❑ The need to protect the individuality of villages and to maintain separation between towns where this still exists.
- ❑ The identification, maintenance and protection of unique character types of each village.
- ❑ Over-development of residential areas resulting in the erosion of the bushland setting character, particularly in the lower mountains where the differentiation of the Mountains from the suburbs of the Cumberland Plains is at risk.

Some questions to consider

- ❑ How can affordable housing be provided while recognizing the constraints of, and protecting, the natural environment?
- ❑ Infill development will make up the majority of future residential development, yet this is constrained by lack of infrastructure capacity. How can this be overcome?

Waste Management and Recycling

With the advent of increased packaging, fewer home compost heaps and increased consumerism, waste management has become a huge problem for most urban Councils. Reducing the waste going to landfill sites is critical as existing sites are filling faster than new, environmentally licensed sites can be commissioned. Recycling and green waste composting, often using regional composting facilities, are seen as ways to prolong the life of these sites while ensuring that valuable resources tied up in waste are used more than once.

There are a variety of incentives used across Australia to encourage domestic, commercial and industrial resources to be re-used or recycled rather than wasted. However, along with strong education to change behaviour, the key to the long term success of these programs is the successful marketing of the reprocessed goods made from recyclables. Without this market, recyclables often end up as landfill or stored where they become contaminants themselves. There are many examples of this occurring around the world including tyre mountains in Canada and plastic milk container mountains in Australia.

Green purchasing policies and partnership arrangements between “cleaner production” companies are ways which industry, business and government can ensure that materials are in fact recycled and we don't waste the very resources on which our communities depend.

Trends and key issues for the future

- ❑ Recycling crate is awkward and heavy for many residents to lift and move when full.
- ❑ Items blown out of unlidged recycling crate become litter in stormwater and bushland.
- ❑ Very high level of contamination in wheelie bins used for mixed recyclables.
- ❑ Incentives required for householders, businesses and industries to reduce waste.
- ❑ Greenwaste is often dumped in bushland to become a weed source.
- ❑ For recycling and reprocessing costs to be reduced, need to have a market for goods made from recycled plastics and other materials. Our remote location adds to transport costs for recyclables.
- ❑ Limited life for land-fill site in Katoomba will increase costs for waste disposal in the future as waste will have to be transferred to more remote landfill sites.
- ❑ Aftercare of closed landfill sites is problematic.
- ❑ Littering education is effective in primary school age children, but has much less influence in secondary schools.
- ❑ Sharps disposal needs to be better addressed in public areas.
- ❑ Commercial and industrial areas and activities are a major source of landfill and currently have limited participation in reduce, re-use and recycling programs.
- ❑ Domestic waste and recycling is politically important but contributes proportionally much less volume than commercial/industrial/demolition waste.

Some questions to consider

- ❑ How should Council consult and collaborate with communities and residents to develop effective waste management programs? What are the most effective methods to keep residents informed and empowered? What are the gaps and inadequacies in the current methods?

- What incentives/programs could be introduced to reduce domestic/commercial landfill waste?
- How could Council's own purchasing policy support the market for recycled and reprocessed goods? As the largest employer in the LGA, how can Council lead by example in recycling goods and reducing waste?
- Mixed building waste and demolition material is a major waste stream. How can this be reduced on site, and what incentives and education are required? What industry partnerships or programs should we pursue?

Constraints

- Limited landfill sites/capacity within municipality.

Infrastructure and Energy

One of the main considerations in determining a sustainable population and the establishment of land use patterns in the Mountains relates to how infrastructure can be provided. Provision of infrastructure, i.e. water and sewerage systems, road and rail, electricity and telecommunications, is particularly challenging in the Blue Mountains due to the presence of sensitive environments and water supply catchment areas within which urban settlement is located.

Much of the drain, water and sewage infrastructure is ageing and does not have the capacity to service an increasing population. With greater regulation on supply authorities to ensure a clean water supply, there are now very real constraints on urban and population expansion in the Mountains. Significant funding is currently being provided to upgrade sewerage systems and protect water supplies in Sydney's water supply catchment, however historical development has occurred in some areas where this infrastructure would be cost prohibitive to provide.

Council, as the closest level of government to the community has the prime responsibility to respond to the needs of the local community. However Council is only one of a number of organizations and authorities that make decisions that affect the day to day running of a City. In the Blue Mountains organisations with key decision-making responsibilities include the RTA, City Rail, NPWS, Sydney Catchment Authority and Sydney Water. Council has a positive role to play in fostering partnerships, with these and other stakeholders and interest groups, to ensure a coordinated approach to infrastructure planning for the future.

Our communities rely heavily on fossil fuels and other forms of energy to ensure our businesses, transport systems and households continue to function. Most energy used today comes from non-renewable resources that contribute to greenhouse gas generation and climate change. Data from 1989 showed that Australia was second only to the USA in the amount of vehicle fuel it consumed per capita. Australians used 3 times as much fuel in driving vehicles than those in European cities. These and other figures were used to illustrate the dispersed, low density nature of our communities (Aust: 13 people/ha vs Europe: 54 people/ha), and the poor public transport system generally (Australia 7km public transport/1km road vs Europe: 38km public transport/1km road).

Trend and key issues

- The severely elongated physical geography of the Mountains scatters over 72,000 residents in 26 townships strung sequentially along a 100km ridgeline. This geography results in a necessary duplication of services and facilities at significant cost.
- Energy forms a significant part of household expenditure due to the severe mountains climate, the number of commuters and the spread out nature of the region.
- Authorities and agencies with infrastructure responsibilities often have different agendas, time frames and geographical boundaries to those of local government.
- Storm-water drainage in older areas is directed straight into creeks, along with dog faeces, road contaminants and sediment. Urban consolidation in these areas will exacerbate water quality issues in the catchment.
- Blue Mountains residents generate one tonne of waste per head per year, which will fill existing landfill sites within the next 20 years.

- ❑ High levels of dissatisfaction with current waste and recycling systems featured in the latest community survey.
- ❑ While Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) may have the capacity to cope with the current population projections for the Blue Mountains, the Sewage Pumping Stations do not, leading to overflows.
- ❑ Approximately 18% (or ~5000) properties are not sewered, and the backlog program for connections to the sewer addresses less than half these properties.
- ❑ Shallow and/or poor sandy soils do not contain effluent on site, even where land is at least 4000sq m. in area. Even in areas of better soil, after 20 years the soil structure breaks down and phosphorus from septic systems escapes.
- ❑ Blackheath STP is at or above capacity and is ageing, having been constructed in 1930s. This restricts further development in the upper mountains.
- ❑ Water reticulation is not sufficient for existing zonings in Blackheath and Mt Victoria.
- ❑ Residential Investigation Areas in Blackheath, Woodford and Hazelbrook cannot be developed due to infrastructure constraints.
- ❑ Areas where increased density would place too large an impost on sewer and/or water supply infrastructure have been zoned for low-density residential living and/or No Subdivision.
- ❑ Many homes in the Mountains are not built to be comfortable in cold weather conditions, resulting in large energy bills.
- ❑ Council and the community have not engaged with global issues such as climate change that results from use of non-renewable forms of energy.

Some questions to consider

- ❑ What methods would most encourage land use and development that is energy and water efficient?
- ❑ Is there an option to large-scale infrastructure that could satisfy infrastructure needs on a more local or neighbourhood level? What alternative technology could be used to protect the water catchments?
- ❑ What will be the future needs of the different mountain communities and groups and how can they best be satisfied and managed within limited Council/community resources?
- ❑ How can council ensure that it meets the needs of the community and its services are continually improved?
- ❑ Is there a place for a niche industry (eg.sustainable building/housing/design) to be located in the Mountains to facilitate best practice energy use?
- ❑ Should infrastructure provision be better coordinated than now? How?
- ❑ What options are there for more energy efficient transport and how can these alternatives be encouraged?

Constraints

- ❑ Environmental and physical constraints limit the potential to support further infrastructure development in more remote locations.
- ❑ Sydney Catchment Authority is required under its EPA license to reject development where this will lead to system deterioration or increase the frequency of overflows.
- ❑ The cost of upgrading infrastructure in many areas is prohibitive relative to the scale of development.

Roads and Traffic Management

Transport and related access concerns always feature prominently in any discussion of key issues in the Mountains. The limited public transport system, the physical geography of the Mountains and the high numbers of older people, people with disabilities and families with young children combine to make transport issues pivotal to addressing the needs of local residents.

The GWH dominates the transport considerations in the Mountains, cutting through 18 of the 26 villages in the LGA. Used as a primary link between Sydney and the west it also has to service local traffic. In the period 1972-1988, daily average traffic flows on the GWH increased by an average of 230%.

Trend and key issues

- ❑ The number of fatalities resulting from accidents in the GWH is three times the state average
- ❑ The continual widening/ realignment of the GWH has broken the links with its explorer heritage.
- ❑ Local secondary roads, which have been developed to cater for local traffic, are being used by visitors to avoid the heavy weekend traffic on the GWH i.e. rat-running.
- ❑ Funding for road and rail track used for freight is inequitable. In the 1992-93 NSW capital works program, freight rail works got \$90m as interest-bearing loan, while road grants totalled \$1500m.
- ❑ There is currently more coal, grain and wool transported by road than by rail.
- ❑ The hidden social and financial costs of living in the mountains due to isolation or long distance from essential services.
- ❑ Our towns have been designed around convenience for vehicles, not for people.
- ❑ Safety issues for residents and other road-users relating to the GWH being used for local and long distance travel.
- ❑ Environmental issues of having a major highway and heavy truck route passing through natural heritage areas and sensitive catchments.
- ❑ Experience elsewhere indicates that newly upgraded highways reach their capacity relatively quickly resulting in increased traffic congestion.
- ❑ Traffic growth is likely to continue with increasing car ownership unless there is a consistent policy to aggressively market public transport.

Some questions to consider

- ❑ What are the implications if Bells Line of Road becomes the alternative route to the mountains?
- ❑ How can the rail system be made more attractive for freight, taking the pressure off the GWH as a freight road?
- ❑ How can we improve transport options for people who do not have access to public transport, e.g. those in isolated areas, or who are aged or disabled?
- ❑ What infrastructure is required to encourage and facilitate tourism while recognizing and catering for the needs of residents?
- ❑ What can we apply from the lessons learned at the Olympic Games to our public transport?
- ❑ What are the transport and access implications flowing from decisions about medium density development and increasing population in the mountains?
- ❑ What facilities and opportunities need to be provided in the mountains to reduce the amount of travel to retail centres etc elsewhere?

- Is there a role for non-motorized or high occupancy modes of travel in the mountains, and if so, where should it be targeted for best effect?
- How can moving and traveling between locations in the Mountains be made, safer, easier and more convenient with maximum options (walking, cycling, buses etc) and at least cost?
- How can we provide and promote an integrated, high quality transport system what meets the City's needs and its commitment to ecologically sustainable development.

Constraints

- GWH to be upgraded to four lanes to Katoomba and 3 lanes between Katoomba and Mt Vic by 2010.
- GWH will remain the truck route to the west for the next 20-30 years.

Public Transport

Consultation for the Blue Mountains Community Plan identified public transport as a key issue of concern to the community. Public transport revolves around rail and bus services. There is a need for development to an improved and better integrated public transport system that is reliable, efficient and can effectively serve the diverse needs of the community while minimizing the total transport costs and providing more transport choices.

Public transport is a basic and essential need, and in the Blue Mountains has been found to be inadequate, particularly in terms of frequency, reliability and cost. For residents, travel to work, school and shopping etc usually entails traveling long distances which is costly, especially to those on low incomes. The high proportion of elderly people is further restricted by problems of access. Much of the aged population is confined in their homes, and socially and geographically isolated by lack of mobility.

Train services are inadequate and unreliable, with the majority of train services aimed at the commuter and therefore with insufficient provision of off peak and weekend services. This restricts leisure opportunities and access to services by many in the community who rely on public transport.

Trend and key issues

- ❑ A poor public transport system leads to a strong dependence on the use of private vehicles by residents.
- ❑ Lack of security on trains and railway station pose problems, as does the proximity of some stations to hotels.
- ❑ Public transport is inadequate on weekends and public holidays, placing severe limitations on leisure options and access to services for young people.
- ❑ Train and bus services are uncoordinated and unreliable owing to delays, cancellations and constant changes to timetables.
- ❑ Access to some stations is difficult for elderly, disabled, parents with pushers and young children.
- ❑ Difficulty in accessing timetable and other information away from stations themselves.
- ❑ Cost is prohibitive to some sectors dependant on public transport
- ❑ Buses and taxis are unsafe for babies and small children as they do not have the necessary safety restraints.
- ❑ Local bus services are limited in frequency, convenience and reliability. Their routes are also an issue.
- ❑ Trains and timetables are directed at Sydney commuters rather than local journeys, with unacceptably long gaps in services outside peak hours
- ❑ Transport infrastructure (bus stops, shelters, lights, kerb/guttering, rail stations) is a problem that is reducing access to public transport, particularly for the elderly.
- ❑ The hidden social and financial costs of living in the mountains due to isolation or long distance from essential services.
- ❑ Locations which are important to a number of community sectors are not able to be accessed using public transport i.e. Westmead and Katoomba Hospitals.
- ❑ Tourist buses routinely park in Route Service bus stops.
- ❑ The optimum maximum distance from bus routes is 400m, but existing street patterns and ridge-line roads make routes difficult to optimize.

Some questions to consider

- ❑ What forms of public transport are appropriate to the Mountains?
- ❑ How can we increase the use of public transport by tourists? Currently only about 5% of tourists arrive by train, with about 90% driving a private vehicle. What are the current barriers to increased public transport use and how can they be overcome?
- ❑ How can we improve transport options for people who do not have access to public transport, e.g. those in isolated areas, or who are aged or disabled?
- ❑ How can we provide and promote an integrated, high quality transport system what meets the City's needs and its commitment to ecologically sustainable development.
- ❑ Where and to what extent should public transport be improved to substitute for car use?
- ❑ What can we apply from the lessons learned at the Olympic Games to our public transport?
- ❑ How can we increase the use of public transport by tourists? Currently only about 5% of tourists arrive by train, with about 90% driving a private vehicle. What are the current barriers to increased public transport use and how can they be overcome?

Private transport

While the speed and flexibility of the motor vehicle is what users most value, the car's flexibility supports dispersed development and settlement. The ensuing longer travel distances and times eliminate these advantages and give rise to conflicts with local amenity and environmental goals.

Data from 1989 showed that Australia was second only to the USA in the amount of vehicle fuel it consumed per capita. Australians used 3 times as much fuel in driving vehicles than those in European cities. These and other figures were used to illustrate the dispersed, low density nature of our communities (Aust: 13 people/ha vs Europe: 54 people/ha), and the poor public transport system generally (Australia 7km public transport/1km road vs Europe: 38km public transport/1km road).

The car has re-created the urban landscape to the point where vehicles dominate our open spaces and the way we organize our townships. Nowhere is this more the case than in the Mountains, where our towns front onto and are dissected by the GWH, reducing the urban, social and environmental amenity. The broadly dispersed, low density development with limited public transport services characteristic of the Blue Mountains necessitates high dependence on the private car, the main method of travel to work. Even those who use public transport to commute to work rely on the private vehicle to get them to the station.

This has obvious implications for those families with one car, leaving many people, particularly women with your children, isolated and dependant on public transport. Other groups unlikely to have access to private transport include aged and people with disabilities. This is particularly problematic by virtue of the dispersed settlement pattern throughout the mountains and the isolated ridgeline development of many villages.

Trend and key issues

- In the Blue Mountains, the car is the predominant transport mode as the journey to work is often a multipurpose trip.
- While many people commute to work on the train, many need to drive to the station to access it.
- At least 10,000 people in the lower mountains and another 3,500 from the upper mountains drive to work.
- Young people are over- represented in motor vehicle accidents and fatalities in the LGA.
- Increasing petrol prices has not seen a reduction in car use.
- The dispersed nature of the LGA favours the flexibility of cars over other transport modes.

Some questions to consider

- What are the transport and access implications flowing from decisions about medium density development and increasing population in the mountains?
- What facilities and opportunities need to be provided in the mountains to reduce the amount of travel to retail centres etc elsewhere?
- Is there a role for non-motorized or high occupancy modes of travel in the mountains, and if so, where should it be targeted for best effect?
- How can moving and traveling between locations in the Mountains be made, safer, easier and more convenient with maximum options (walking, cycling, buses etc) and at least cost?

Pedestrian and Cycle Access

Many people including children and the elderly do not have access to a car, and depend on cycling or walking to access shops, schools and recreation areas. Cycling has always been a favoured mode of transport for children and adolescents, providing them with low cost mobility.

The Department of Transport is promoting a model which aims to make alternative transport means (walking, cycling, public transport etc) more attractive; to encourage higher density developments at highly accessible locations and to ensure that urban planning and new developments facilitate direct access to these alternative transport modes. Such a model has direct application to the Mountains.

Trend and key issues

- ❑ The narrow roads and unsealed edges are a safety issue for cyclists and pedestrians.
- ❑ There is no provision for traffic free activity centers which would act as a focal point for pedestrians and which would enhance the local and residential amenity.
- ❑ Very few kilometers of dedicated cycle ways exist in the LGA, and mountainous terrain does not encourage widespread cycle use.
- ❑ Shared footpaths or tracks where cycles and pedestrians meet are a safety issue.
- ❑ Footpaths which are not sealed or are unevenly sealed cannot be negotiated by many groups including the elderly, parents with pushers and very young children.
- ❑ Railway stations are not accessible to older people, those with disabilities, mothers and young children.
- ❑ Pedestrian crossings are often poorly located with respect to key destinations and many are dangerous.
- ❑ Street lighting inadequate for pedestrians and cyclists.
- ❑ Street signs designed for cars, not people.
- ❑ No provision for convenient and safe cycle parking facilities at transport interchange points and in town centers.
- ❑ The "Centenary of Federation Track" is proposed in the medium to long term. This privately funded project is predicated on using part of the existing railway corridor and has the potential to provide local and longer distance access for pedestrians, cyclists and others.

Some questions to consider

- ❑ How can we improve mobility for people who do not have easy access to private cars or public transport, e.g. those in isolated areas, or who are young, aged or disabled?
- ❑ How can we improve pedestrian and cycle access in our towns and villages?
- ❑ Many European cities and towns have pedestrianised their town centers, reducing the opportunity for through traffic and reallocating sections of roads to pedestrians and cyclists. Safety and amenity have both increased, returning the public spaces to the people. Is there a role for this type of treatment in our villages?

Commuters

Commuting is a way of life for 58% of the Mountain's employed population. From the 1950s the lower mountains in particular were marketed to new residents based on ease of commuting to Sydney, affordable land prices and attractive landscape. Commuting was further encouraged with the electrification of the railway. The Lower Mountains is now an established commuting base for many people working in Sydney, and while there is a lack of local employment opportunities this situation will probably continue.

The car is the predominant transport mode in the LGA, as the trip to work often has a number of purposes including delivering children to schools and shopping. Commuting by rail is the second most common means to get to work. The majority of train users live in the lower mountains (65.8%), but about 10,000 still drive their cars to work. Car use for commuting in the Upper Mountains exceeds 3,600.

Trend and key issues

- ❑ The considerable social and financial cost of commuting long distances.
- ❑ Car parking facilities for commuters are inadequate or non-existent at most stations.
- ❑ Rail passengers wanting to access non-CBD locations have problems with cross regional transport links.
- ❑ Poor staffing, security and patrols at stations.
- ❑ Lack of secure bike storage at stations.

Some questions to consider

- ❑ Are commuters going to be a major part of the workforce in the Mountains in the foreseeable future? If so, how can we provide more streamlined commuter services to this segment of the workforce?
- ❑ Is there a role for car pooling and if so, should there be a formal program to facilitate it?

Employment and Economic Growth

The basis of a prosperous City is responsible economic development that supports a culturally, socially and environmentally sustainable community. The nature of the Blue Mountains area means that traditional methods of driving economic growth are not possible. Furthermore, given the environmentally sensitive nature of the City, Council is obliged to ensure that all existing and future development is ecologically sustainable.

While the Blue Mountains LGA currently has a higher than average unemployment rate, its position on the edge of Sydney provides an opportunity to capture some of the higher order industries which do not require them to be based in Sydney. The combination of proximity to Sydney and the significant lifestyle opportunities of the Blue Mountains have the potential to attract business to the Mountains.

Trend and key issues

- ❑ The Blue Mountains economy is currently not performing to its optimum. The lack of productivity is due to environmental constraints and limited diversity of existing industry, but there is an opportunity to capitalize on the high level of education and many small businesses in area.
- ❑ Lower Mountains residents have higher incomes, but do much of their spending outside the LGA. Upper Mountains have lower incomes therefore implications for Katoomba as a sub-regional shopping area.
- ❑ The Mountains has the opportunity to attract consultants, contractors and other high value workers who need regular but not daily access to the Sydney market.
- ❑ There is a significant leakage of retail spending to Penrith.
- ❑ Currently 57% of our workforce commute to work outside the LGA, adding significantly to traffic congestion, undermining the sense of community and placing a strain on family life.
- ❑ Employment is not evenly spread across the LGA. Katoomba, with 2,400 workers, is the largest employment centre in the mountains.
- ❑ Employment is lowest in the upper mountains, and youth employment overall is low.
- ❑ Due to the natural constraints of the area, population and retail growth of themselves are not sufficient to drive employment growth.
- ❑ Tourism employs 13% of all employees in the Mountains to cater for 3 million visitors/yr, however relatively little tourist spending occurs in the Katoomba retail center.
- ❑ Katoomba is the dominant retail center in BM but doesn't capture the same relative amounts of the non-food market. Non-food expenditure leaks outside the LGA.
- ❑ The value of goods and services produced in the mountains is lower than elsewhere, supporting the observation that the Mountains economy is different from surrounding areas.
- ❑ 58% of working residents in the mountains travel outside the LGA for work.
- ❑ Unemployment is currently about 6.8% (NSW is 5%) and rising, while reliance on part time work is increasing. The economic growth forecast for the Mountains is less than 2%.
- ❑ The various business sectors, including retail and tourism, are being amalgamated under one organisation to provide more leverage and better represent the BM business community.

Some questions to consider

- ❑ Tourism, IT, arts and crafts, eco-business and media have been identified as opportunities for economic growth in the BM. Are there other sectors which could be grown? How can these business sectors be best supported and promoted?
- ❑ Given the wealthy population who own weekenders in the mountains, is there benefit in encouraging this captive population to live in and work from the Mountains full time, and what would be the strategy to attract them?
- ❑ What strategies can be implemented that support the establishment and redevelopment of facilities and infrastructure to promote investment and employment?
- ❑ What opportunities/constraints does the environment present for business and industry development?
- ❑ How can small business be better networked or integrated to offer a package of goods and services for customers?
- ❑ How can new or existing businesses capture an increased share of tourist spending?
- ❑ How can we use the existing resource base to build economic growth?
- ❑ How can we add value to existing enterprises?
- ❑ As part of a growing region, can we support and compliment some of the growth industries within the region?
- ❑ A recent study by the New South Wales Chamber of Commerce revealed that 75 to 82 per cent of Australians bought products on the basis of social or environmental issues. Is there a way of translating this interest into economic growth for the Mountains?
- ❑ How can proximity to Sydney and an enviable lifestyle be better used to attract new or higher order business enterprises?
- ❑ What opportunities are there for using technology to reduce the need for residents to travel outside the LGA for work?

Constraints

- ❑ “Greenfield” sites for future industrial or manufacturing development are not available.
- ❑ Environmental sensitivity of the mountains limits the types of economic activity which can be undertaken.
- ❑ Population growth is currently constrained by lack of urban expansion, thus will not drive retail expansion.
- ❑ The linear form of the LGA creates problems in accessing the district centres of Katoomba and Springwood.

Community Health and Safety

The health status of a population is influenced by the prevalence of risk factors, health service use and other population characteristics such as the socio-economic structure of the population. Recent work by the Urban Development Health Group on developing community health indicators identified a number of links between our environmental, social and economic status and our health. Work by this group has suggested we use a relational concept of health rather than the presence or absence of health in an individual. The former focuses more on the community than the individual and suggests a continuous gradation in health depending on interactions between social, environmental and economic factors. This inter-relationship is recognized in the key recommendations of a WHO report in 1992 where three main global objectives were proposed:

- Achieving a sustainable basis for health for all. This demands a slowing down and eventual halt to population growth as soon as possible, and the promotion of lifestyles and patterns of consumption among affluent groups and developed countries that are consistent with ecological sustainability.
- Providing an environment that promotes health. This involves reducing the risk of physical, chemical and biological hazards and ensuring that everyone has the means to acquire the resources on which health depends
- Making all individuals and organisations aware of their responsibility for health and its environmental basis.

The implication of this is that health cannot be considered in isolation from the environment and the sustainability of the way of life of the human population.

A safe physical and social environment is closely related to the quality of urban design and the location of services and uses within the living environment. Issues of physical safety are usually focused on reducing traffic accidents and improving urban design.

The 2001 Community Survey identified that “youth problems “ were of concern both locally and across the city. Crime was identified as increasing, along with alcohol and drug use, vandalism and graffiti. The lack of police resources was also identified as an issue. Overall “improving community safety” was identified as the third most important long term goal for the Council out of 13 priority areas.

The survey identified that about 15% of surveyed residents thought the peaceful nature and low crime rate were the things they liked most about living in the Mountains. This contrasted with 4% who identified crime issues such as vandalism, drugs and lack of police as what they liked least about living in the Mountains. Thus there appears to be a split in resident’s perceptions of levels of crime and safety in the Mountains.

Trend and key issues

- An ageing population which will require increasing provision of, and access to, health services and facilities over time.
- Increasing concern about the lack of appropriate provisions for people with mental health problems.
- Due to the elongated ridge-top location of villages, some areas and vulnerable groups have limited access to medical providers and centralized health care services.
- There is a general lack of specialist medical staff in BM, requiring people to travel to Sydney for consultations.

- ❑ Lack of youth workers and services in many areas; no long term drug and alcohol counselling service; Youth workers and Mobile Youth Health Counsellors are only available in Areas 2 and 3; only one youth refuge (6 beds) to cover the entire LGA.
- ❑ Heavy reliance on volunteers to support existing services to frail aged or disabled residents.
- ❑ Police stations are located in Katoomba, Lawson and Springwood, while police contact officers are based at Blackheath, Mt Vic and Winmalee. There is no police presence in Area 5.
- ❑ Lack of youth services and facilities is potentially leading to youth boredom.
- ❑ High youth unemployment is leading to antisocial activities.
- ❑ GWH is impacting on road safety in most villages and towns.
- ❑ Many working residents have to travel large distances to work, thereby increasing their risk on the roads.

Some questions to consider

- ❑ What is the role of non-institutional health provision in the Mountains, and how can this be better supported and integrated with other health services?
- ❑ What strategies can be used to better include young people in the mainstream health and support agencies, and thus to support healthy development and opportunities for leading healthy lifestyles?
- ❑ What role does alternative health care play within our community? How can this be better integrated with other services?
- ❑ What role does community have in lobbying for more and better directed health funding?
- ❑ What role does community policing potentially play in improving community safety? How can the community become more responsible for their safety?
- ❑ What processes could be used to change perceptions of safety in the community, especially in the more vulnerable sectors?
- ❑ Improving the provision of youth employment and recreation appears to be a recurring concern in community surveys. What are the three most useful actions that Council can undertake to address these issues?
- ❑ How can the various Mountain communities reduce their traffic risks posed by the GWH?

Constraints

- ❑ Policing issues are under State government control.
- ❑ GWH is to be upgraded to four lanes to Katoomba and 3 lanes between Katoomba and Mt Vic by 2010 and remain the major truck route for the next 20-30 years.

Sport and Recreation

Recreational activities within the natural environment are an important part of the Blue Mountains experience for both residents and tourists and shape the attractiveness of the area for residents, visitors and investors. Such opportunities potentially have many positive spin offs including employment growth and a healthier population.

Parks, nature trails and open space play an important role in the provision of opportunities for nature based recreation and also contribute to village character and the attractiveness of the Blue Mountains. Such parks may play an important role in the protection and conservation of areas of natural and environmental significance.

Other types of formal and informal recreational opportunity are not dependant on the natural environment for their enjoyment, and these need to be accommodated appropriately. They include skate boarding, BMX activities, team sports (cricket, basketball, football etc) and using play equipment.

Trends and key issues for the future

- The pattern of people's leisure time is changing. Many traditional sports are experiencing declines in participation, as more people take their recreation in their own time and in new ways.
- The provision of sports facilities in the Blue Mountains is characterised by:
 - Resident dissatisfaction with the level of service and the standard of facilities.
 - Frustration by council maintenance staff.
 - Gaps and inconsistencies with information in relation to users and user levels.
 - Irregularities in the way groups use playing fields.
 - Non-compliance with the Local Government Act.
- Interacting with the natural environment represents a significant part of the recreation opportunities available in the Blue Mountains. Activities occur on land managed by NPWS, BMCC and other agencies.
- The issues associated with nature-based recreation include:
 - The clarity of definition, e.g. the ambiguity of the term "passive recreation".
 - The lack of management guidelines for different activities.
 - The lack of knowledge and understanding of nature based recreation, such as demand analysis, user profiles to inform management planning, capital works etc.
 - The lack of management of commercial opportunities for each activity.
 - The informal and uncoordinated relationship between Council and NPWS, and the inconsistency with managing seemingly similar activities.

Some questions to consider

- How can we resolve the conflict between retaining natural values and character, yet providing adequate recreational opportunities?
- What groups in the community are not adequately serviced by accessible recreational opportunities, and how can these be provided with respect to the above?
- What types of club and group cooperation can be facilitated to ensure maximum use of existing facilities? Can more facilities be designed to be multi-use?

- How can we provide more opportunities for physical activities and healthy lifestyles which also encourage the creative expression of our cultural heritage and backgrounds?
- What should be the relationship between the various land managers, and how can this be facilitated?

Constraints

- The limited amount of useable, cleared, operational land available for sporting grounds in the lower mountains.

Meeting Community Needs and Responding to Diversity

Assessing Community Needs

Understanding the diverse and changing needs of the Blue Mountains population is a major component of community wellbeing. Council staff across the organisation, on a daily basis, is in many different ways assessing and addressing community needs. Resources to do this, however, are extremely limited. Effectively targeting available resources is a key issue.

As the sphere of government 'closest to the people', Councils are in a prime position to advocate with other stakeholders on behalf of the community to address identified needs. Council uses various forms of communication and consultation including exhibitions, information directories, public meetings, surveys, local networks, charities, design workshops, steering committees/working groups etc. Despite these broad mechanisms, the information sometimes does not get through while at the same time Council may be duplicating its effort across the organisation and creating consultation fatigue. Follow-through from consultations undertaken is a significant issue needing further attention.

More formal processes of needs assessment have been developed. Council now benchmarks its performance with the community once every 2 years through a Community Survey. A major outcome of the Blue Mountains Community Plan (1995) was the development of a Community Planning Framework for the City of the Blue Mountains and the implementation of an Area Planning process. The Area Planning process, focusing on 5 identified Community Planning Areas, was developed to assist the challenge of providing accessible services and facilities on a more equitable basis across the city within resource constraints.

The Community Planning Framework emphasised improving people's ability to access services through the designation of nodal Service Centres within each Community Planning Area. For services meeting the needs of residents in a number of towns, it is important that they are located in the most central and accessible position.

Since 1997 Area Planning has been undertaken across the city in all 5 Planning Areas. This has involved extensive research into the needs and issues affecting people living in each of the 5 Areas in the Mountains. It involves preparation of Action Plans detailing Council's intended actions over the forthcoming 5 years to address needs and issues identified. The Area Community Planning process has attempted to facilitate the adoption of a holistic planned and integrated approach to the provision of services and facilities. It also emphasises the need for a collaborative or partnership approach to addressing community needs, bringing together all spheres of government, the community and the private sector.

Community Diversity

The demographic makeup of the community is diverse in terms of age structure, household make-up and mobility (see Population Paper).

In 1996 one in ten families in Blue Mountains Local Government Area was a sole parent family.

The 1996 Census indicated that the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders has increased to 702 people or 0.97% from 340 in 1991. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is widely spread over many different towns. This makes service provision extremely difficult. Research has highlighted that there is very limited understanding of Aboriginals and their culture.

The Disability, Ageing and Carers Survey, undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in 1993, estimated that 18% of the Australian population have a disability. The Blue Mountains has a large number of institutions for people with disabilities.

In 1996, the number of people of Non English Speaking Backgrounds (NESB) was 4,258 or 6.25% of the population.

Varying Needs

There are significant differences in incomes, family circumstances and welfare support across the Mountains with some evidence of a growing disparity between the Upper and Lower Mountains, the former having higher levels of disadvantage on a number of key indicators (income, employment and education levels, car ownership).

Changing family structures and households in the Mountains along with relatively low incomes are creating demands for more choice and affordability in housing types to meet the differing needs of various groups in the community. There is a significant public housing deficit, including publicly funded aged hostels in the Mountains. The availability of emergency, crisis and supported accommodation is insufficient to meet the scope of demands and there is also a lack of specialised housing and support structures for people with special needs.

Transport and access are key issues in the Blue Mountains given the dispersed settlement pattern. The sometimes referred to 'hidden costs' of living in the mountains, including the isolation/long distance from essential services, the high travel costs and poor public transport, necessitate a strong dependence on the use of the private vehicle for residents. In 1996 there were 3,133 households (12%) without a motor vehicle with one in 5 households in Area 2 (Wentworth Falls- Mellow Bath) having no vehicle.

The public transport service is primarily aimed at the commuter, with off-peak, evening and weekend services being minimal. The unemployed, the elderly, people with disabilities, youth, and parents with small children are most affected. Access to stations is problematic, an issue that affects use of trains by people with disabilities, the frail and elderly. The State Rail Authority has future plans to improve certain stations in the Blue Mountains.

The local bus services are limited with frequency, convenience, reliability and routing identified as major issues and the trains are directed at commuters rather than local journeys. Transport infrastructure (bus stops, shelters, lights, kerb/guttering, rail stations) is also a problem, reducing access, particularly for the elderly and alternative choices such as cycleway and innovative options need to be explored and developed.

Social isolation and long travelling times are a reality for many residents. The often-infrequent schedules for buses and train services can compound this problem. For

young people travelling from Katoomba in the evenings, including Friday and Saturday nights, the last train down the line leaves at 11.14pm, with the next train leaving at 4.04am.

The Blue Mountains has a large commuting population travelling down to Penrith, Parramatta or Sydney for employment. The bulk of this commuting population resides within the Lower-Mountains, which also has higher median incomes compared to the rest of the City. Employment opportunities for young people within the Blue Mountains are very limited, with the main employers of young people being within the hospitality and tourism industries.

The needs of different age and minority groups vary significantly:

Children and Families

- Isolation, access and transport issues for many families with children
- Support for families caring for a child with special needs (eg disability)
- Affordability of child care

Young People

- The limited nature of recreational and leisure opportunities other than organised sport, has resulted in young people having to travel outside the local area to pursue many of their interests.
- Major issues include the lack of indoor recreational facilities, skating facilities, weekend and after hours entertainment and well planned and maintained cycleway
- Existing youth centres are under funded and consequently are unable to employ full time youth workers.
- Lifestyle factors, including drug and alcohol abuse, violence, poor nutrition, sexuality, stress and depression require attention through health education programs, the expansion of counselling and support services, drug and alcohol free dances and training for youth workers.
- Mainstream health services have limited utilisation by young people, as they are often culturally inappropriate and environmentally alienating. The Warehouse - Penrith Youth Health Centre, provides a limited outreach service to the Mountains.
- There is a lack of local employment opportunities and skills training for youth.

Older people/ People with a Disability

- Rapidly increasing proportion of older and frail aged residents
- Long waiting lists for services
- Acute lack of respite care services
- Inadequate access to health care, housing options, transport and legal aid services
- Need to change community attitudes and enhance community support services

ATSI and NESB People

- Lack of knowledge of services available by some Aboriginals
- Lack of access to services.
- Loss of Aboriginal culture and identity in the Mountains

Racism

- Lack of employment opportunities in the Mountains for Aboriginals
- Lack of awareness and understanding about needs and issues of migrants and ATSI people
- Insensitivity to specific cultural needs of different groups by service providers – need for cross-cultural training

Strengthening and Building our Communities

One of the major attractions for mountains residents is the sense of community engendered by each of the separate villages and townships across the Blue Mountains. This village distinctiveness provides a strong basis for identifying with individual townships and encourages the development of community support structures and broad networks of local organisations and individuals. This is a key aspect of building communities with a strong sense of local identity as well the capacity for self-sufficiency and a willingness to become involved. This is the 'truly civil' society that sustains empowered communities and has been called the 'social capital' or glue that holds everything together.

Trends and Key Issues for the Future

- There is a growing disparity in terms of income and life opportunities between the Upper and Lower Mountains.
- The dispersed settlement pattern and physical environment of the Blue Mountains has necessitated the duplication of many services and facilities throughout the city.
- Resources are limited and need to be effectively targeted.
- The Blue Mountains has a significant and growing commuter population whose needs are not well understood.
- Many state government funded community managed services in the Mountains do not have a funding component for rent, and often look to Council to assist in providing office accommodation and meeting space.
- The direction of both the State and Federal Governments over the last 10 years has been to move people out of institutions and into the community. This direction has been implemented however with limited resources resulting in a number of unmet needs in the local community.
- The long distances to many services and the lack of specialist medical services acutely affects many residents, particularly the sick, older people and people with disabilities. This situation often necessitates regular travel to Penrith, Westmead or the City, leading to severe disruption of family life.
- NESB residents are often isolated from each other and from culturally and linguistically appropriate services and can therefore experience the effect of social and physical isolation severely.
- The growing cultural diversity in the mountains and the need to accommodate a broad spectrum of tourist, commuter and local activities emphasises the importance of developing and supporting inclusive, tolerant and harmonious local communities.
- There is a general community perception that Council does not follow-through well on its consultation initiatives.

Some Questions to Consider

- ❑ How can we strengthen our local communities and encourage resident participation and involvement in community life?
- ❑ Is there capacity for residents at different stages in the life-cycle (singles, young families, older people) to find affordable, available and appropriate housing choices and accommodation in the mountains?
- ❑ How can we better address the needs of commuters?
- ❑ How can moving and travelling between locations in the mountains be made easier, safer and more convenient with maximum options (walking, cycling, buses etc) and at less cost?
- ❑ Can we improve the fair and reasonable distribution of resources, facilities and services across the Mountains?
- ❑ How comfortable and safe do residents feel in the community? Are we friendly, supportive and accepting of the diverse members of our community?
- ❑ What are the most effective methods to involve and inform them?
- ❑ Would the development of a clearly articulated community consultation and information strategy assist Council in ensuring the efficient dissemination of information and the effective use of community consultation processes?

Fostering Human Development

The Blue Mountains possesses a wealth of remarkable cultural resources which, if harnessed and focused, can create a re-vitalised social environment. There are a wealth of artists who practice in all mediums, and community and cultural organisations who deliver arts and cultural programs with very few resources. Art based activities involve all ages, and supply avenues for self-expression to those groups and individuals in the community most easily marginalized. Collectively their activity increases the social and cultural capital of the City, and contributes to economic and social sustainability.

The Blue Mountains is home to many culturally significant buildings, places, landscapes and sites of archaeological significance. While many townships have retained their historic character, not all cultural assets are limited to the past. Sculptures, outdoor monuments and murals all have a place in the cultural life of our City. Moreover the overall value of the cultural assets of the Blue Mountains is not only in the individual heritage items, but also in what they collectively have to tell about the relationship between the people and the natural environment.

In response to the Blue Mountains cultural vision, the City of Blue Mountains has been named as the state's inaugural "City of the Arts". The challenge now is to encourage the development of the Blue Mountains as a cultural destination, which builds upon and enhances the natural splendour of the area, rather than competing with it.

Access to good education builds self-confidence and enhances employability. Education can be viewed as a life-long activity, which empowers individuals to lead full and independent lives. Education and skills development may occur through less formal or structured means, such as through the use of information technology. Internet cafes are becoming very popular, and have replaced printed media as the main information source for many people.

Trend and key issues

- Over half the adult population have post secondary school qualifications, and 60% of these have tertiary qualifications, more than the state average. This means that local people are highly employable, but there are few local opportunities for work and many commute.
- Research from overseas indicates that where you have a tertiary education institution or a university in particular, it benefits the economy of the local area.
- Blue Mountains has a rich history of Bohemian, experimental and emerging new art forms and artists.
- There are fewer than average people in the 20-24 yr old age group in the mountains, suggesting that students move away to complete their university education.
- The Katoomba Charette identified the following issues:
 - Need to improve access to degree qualifications locally to prevent the loss of young people from the area.
 - Need to develop local skills to enable Katoomba to more fully participate in growth sectors.
 - Need to support start-up of new enterprises.
 - Need to develop small business hospitality skills.
 - Need to raise public awareness that everyone in the mountains can assist in the tourism industry.

Some questions to consider

- ❑ How do we encourage the incorporation of art works that are site responsive and form an integral component of public spaces?
- ❑ Cultural tourism has been identified as a way to generate an increased sense of cultural identity, support local industry and generate more local employment. How should this best be supported?
- ❑ How does the City of Arts identity dovetail with the World Heritage identity?
- ❑ What type of support do communities require to express their unique cultural and social identities?
- ❑ How can we measure the value a rich cultural life adds to a city?
- ❑ What role can art play in the design of township entrances or gateways? And how can resident artists be involved in meaningful ways that support their craft?
- ❑ Youth involvement in arts and culture has the potential to provide part of the solution to the “youth issues” problem identified in the Community Survey 2001. What should be the shape of this involvement and how can it be facilitated?
- ❑ What are the particular needs of the arts community which council may be able to facilitate or address?
- ❑ How should we start encouraging Cultural tourism, based on the cultural vision of 1992.
- ❑ How can we strengthen village communities and encourage resident participation and involvement in community life?
- ❑ How can we better match education needs with industry needs? Is there an education niche on which the Blue Mountains can focus eg: education excellence in the environmental field?
- ❑ How can we link education with job opportunities in the mountains to provide local people with local employment?
- ❑ Can existing education facilities be better used for community purposes outside school hours? If so, what uses should be encouraged and promoted?
- ❑ Is the information infrastructure base (e.g. libraries, internet cafes) broad enough to adequately cater for all groups within our community, and if not, how can access be improved? What else needs to be provided?
- ❑ Which community groups or sectors are not provided for within the existing educational environment?
- ❑ How can education be linked with a developing a sense of community identity?

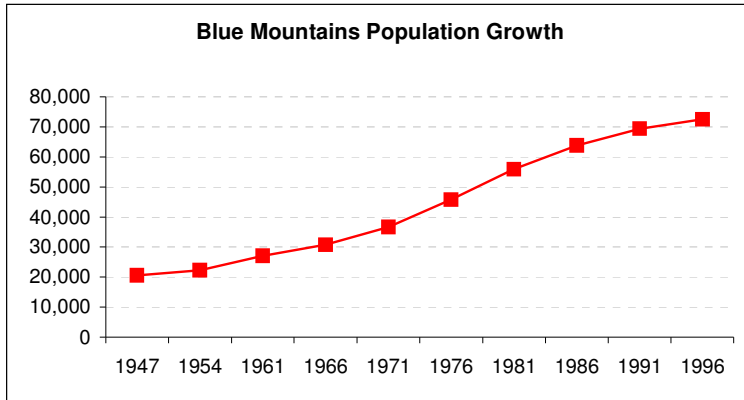
Constraints

- ❑ Lack of funds, support and recognition for artists.

Population Profile

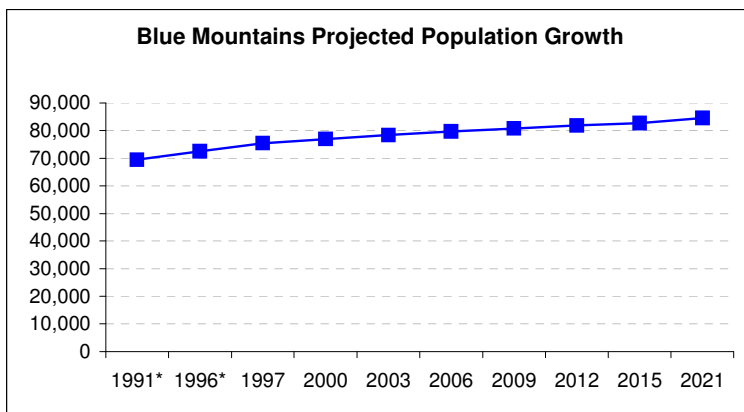
In 1996 at the time of the last census the Blue Mountains had a population of 72,506 people. This represented an increase of 3,086 people or 4.4% since the 1991 Census. Over the same period the Greater Sydney Region had a growth rate of 5.7%. Sydney's population is expected to grow by an average of about 40,000 each year reaching 4.5 million in 2011.

The population of the Blue Mountains has been growing but at a declining rate:



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

Between 1996 and 2021 the Blue Mountains population is projected to reach 84,600 – a growth rate of 16.6 %. This contrasts with a growth rate of 98% over the past 25 years, from 1971 to 1996.



Source: Graph derived from Population Projections, Dept. Urban Affairs and Planning and from Australian Bureau of Statistics Data

The Blue Mountains population is scattered within 27 different townships and villages. Most of these settlements straddle sequentially over 100 kilometres of mountainous ridgeline, running from Lapstone in the east to Mt Victoria and Bell in the west and Mt Irvine in the north. The settlements range from isolated rural hamlets, quaint villages to commuter belt suburban centres.

With a population of 8,544 in 1996, Katoomba is the largest settlement overall and the District Centre for the Upper Mountains. Winmalee with a population of 7,323 is the next largest town, however, Springwood (7,112) is the District Centre for the Lower Mountains given its range of services and more central location on the train line and Highway. Other large centers include: Blaxland (7,041), Wentworth Falls (5,379) and Glenbrook (5,059).

In view of its highly dispersed and elongated settlement pattern the Blue Mountains has been divided into 5 Community Planning Areas each with an identified Service Centre as follows:

| | | |
|--------|-----|---|
| Area 1 | 28% | Blackheath (Service Centre), Mt Victoria, Mt Wilson, Mt Irvine, Mt Tomah, Bell |
| Area 2 | 25% | Wentworth Falls, Leura, Katoomba (Service Centre), Medlow Bath |
| Area 3 | 13% | Woodford, Linden, Hazelbrook, Lawson (Service Centre), Bullaburra |
| Area 4 | 28% | Valley Heights, Winmalee, Yellow Rock, Hawkesbury Heights, Springwood (Service Centre), Faulconbridge |
| Area 5 | 26% | Lapstone, Glenbrook, Mt Riverview, Blaxland (Service Centre), Warrimoo |

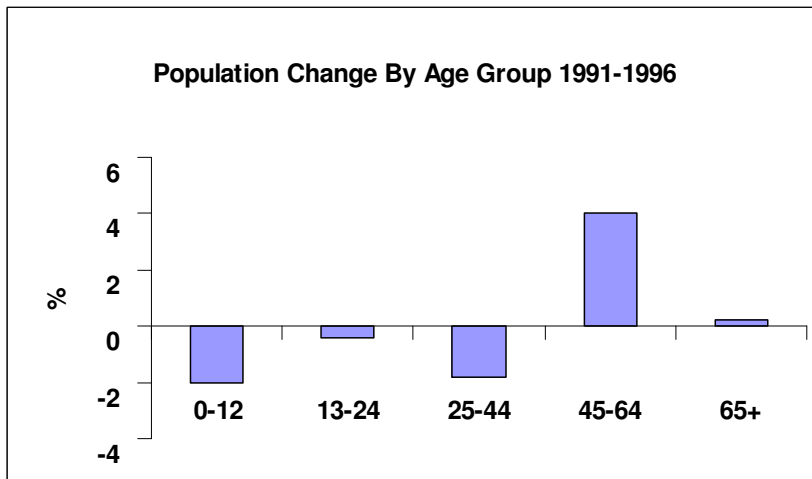
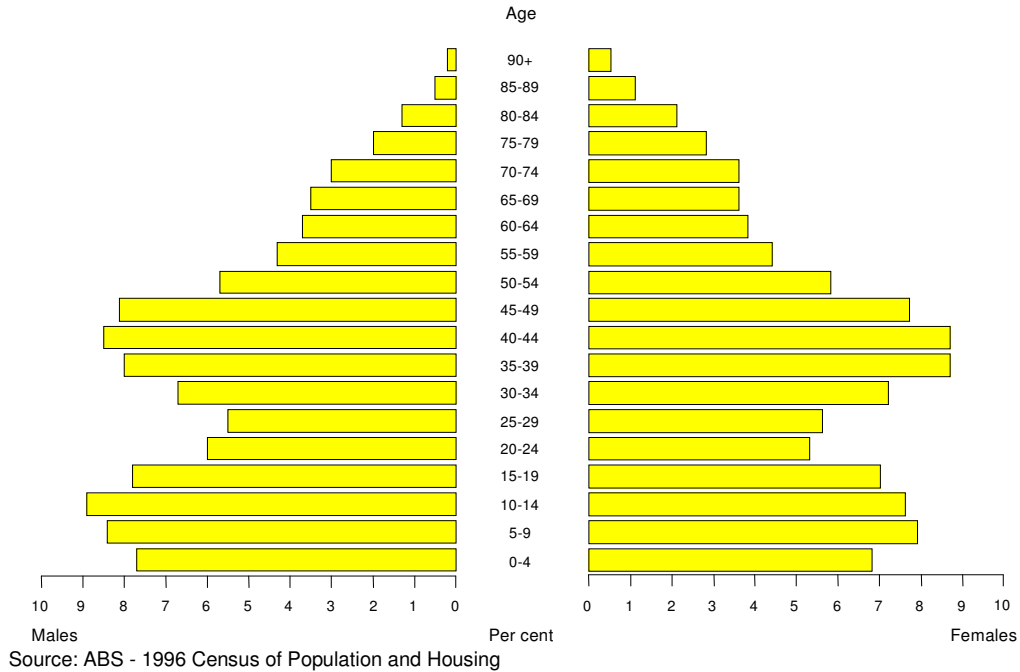
In 1996, Area 4 had the largest proportion of the Blue Mountains population, 28%, while Area 1 had the smallest with 8% (see Table 1).

Table 1: Overview Of Blue Mountains LGA By Area, 1996

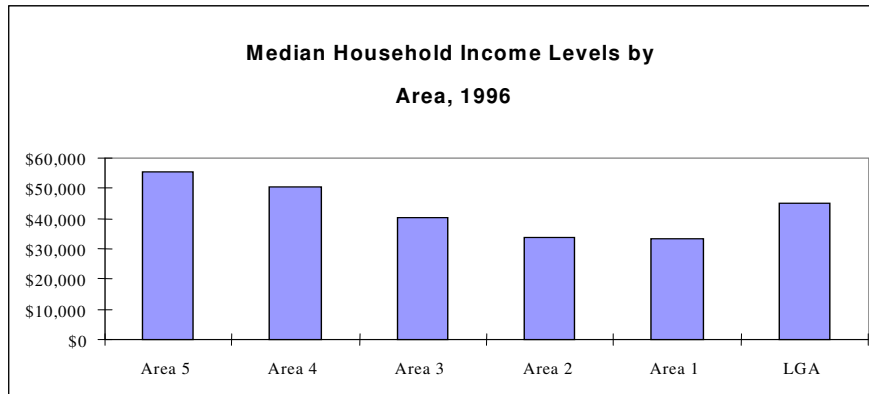
| | Area 5 | Area 4 | Area 3 | Area 2 | Area 1 | Total LGA |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-----------|
| Total population 1996 | 18,544 | 20,546 | 9,783 | 18,148 | 5,485 | 72,506 |
| Total population 1991 | 18,689 | 19,232 | 9,264 | 17,304 | 4,931 | 69,420 |
| % Change 1991-1996 | -0.8 | 6.8 | 5.6 | 4.9 | 11.2 | 4.4 |
| % Blue Mountains population 1996 | 25.6 | 28.3 | 13.5 | 25.0 | 7.6 | 100.0 |
| % Children (0-12 years) | 20 | 22 | 23 | 18 | 20 | 20 |
| % Young people (13-24 years) | 19 | 17 | 14 | 15 | 13 | 16 |
| % Adults (25-44 years) | 30 | 29 | 33 | 28 | 30 | 30 |
| % Adults (45-64 years) | 23 | 20 | 20 | 22 | 23 | 22 |
| % Older people (65 years and over) | 8 | 12 | 11 | 16 | 15 | 12 |
| Older people median age | 73 | 74 | 72 | 74 | 72 | 73 |
| % Same address 5 years ago | 67 | 64 | 59 | 51 | 54 | 60 |
| % Different address 5 years ago, same LGA | 13 | 17 | 18 | 22 | 21 | 17 |
| % Different address 5 years ago, different LGA | 21 | 20 | 22 | 27 | 25 | 22 |
| <i>Source: ABS 1996 - Census of Population and Housing</i> | | | | | | |

The age structure of the Blue Mountains population is relatively young with over a third of people (36%) under 25 years of age and two thirds (66%) under 45 years. The bulk of the population is in the 35 to 44 and 0-19 age groups. Overall the Blue Mountains population, as with the rest of Australia, is growing older as people live longer. The Blue Mountains continues to be a popular retirement area and while accommodation prices have dramatically increased in recent years, prices are still lower than many areas in Sydney.

Age Structure Blue Mountains 1996



The average annual individual after tax income for Blue Mountains residents in 1997/98 was \$25,278 compared to \$26,354 for NSW. In 1996, 25% of households had an annual income less than \$26,000. By comparison, the percentage of households in Sydney with incomes below \$26,000 was approximately 30%. Median household incomes vary considerably between Community Planning Areas:



In 1996 the average household size for Blue Mountains LGA was 2.7 people compared with 2.8 in 1991. At the 1996 Census there were 18,897 families living in Blue Mountains LGA. Of these:

- 10% were sole parents with dependent children;
- 33% were couples only; and
- 44% were couples with dependent children.

On a range of indicators, the Upper Mountains (Areas 1 and 2) appear to experience greater disadvantage in terms of income, employment characteristics and household structure:

Table 2: Socio-Economic Overview of Blue Mountains LGA By Area, 1996

| | Area 5 | Area 4 | Area 3 | Area 2 | Area 1 | Total LGA |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-----------|
| Median weekly individual income (\$) | 395 | 341 | 303 | 267 | 269 | 316 |
| % Individuals with annual incomes <\$10,400 | 32 | 35 | 37 | 40 | 40 | 36 |
| Median weekly household income (\$) | 1,063 | 969 | 775 | 650 | 645 | 866 |
| % Households with annual incomes <\$26,000 | 16 | 19 | 28 | 38 | 37 | 25 |
| Labour Force | | | | | | |
| % Population aged 15+ years in labour force | 69 | 64 | 61 | 53 | 55 | 61 |
| % of labour force unemployed | 5 | 5 | 8 | 10 | 8 | 7 |
| % 15 years and over - not qualified | 47 | 48 | 48 | 49 | 47 | 48 |
| % Employed - managers, professionals | 36 | 35 | 32 | 31 | 29 | 33 |
| Families | | | | | | |
| % Families - sole parents with dependent children | 8 | 8 | 11 | 15 | 13 | 10 |
| Average household size | 2.9 | 2.9 | 2.6 | 2.4 | 2.4 | 2.7 |
| <i>Source: ABS 1996 - Census of Population and Housing</i> | | | | | | |

Trends and Key Issues for the Future

- ❑ Overall, the population of the Blue Mountains has been growing but at a declining rate.
- ❑ Previous official population projections for the Blue Mountains have generally over-estimated future growth with even low projections not being met.
- ❑ Population growth in both the Sydney Region and the Blue Mountains is placing increased pressure on limited housing stock and existing infrastructure, services and facilities. According to a 1994 report, growth combined with changing demographic characteristics was expected to result in demand for an additional 44,000 new dwellings over a 20 year period.
- ❑ The Blue Mountains population is aging as the baby boomers live longer and as people continue to choose to retire here.
- ❑ All age groups from 0-44 years experienced a decrease in overall numbers between 1991-1996 while the 45 plus age groups grew by just over 4%.
- ❑ Household sizes are getting smaller on average.
- ❑ The population is relatively young with 36% being under 25 years of age.
- ❑ The Blue Mountains has a highly mobile population. In 1996 at least one in five households had lived at a different address in the previous 5 years in a different Local Government Area.
- ❑ Residential mobility is highest in Area 2 and lowest in Area 5 where two thirds of residents had the same address five years ago (see Table 1.2).
- ❑ There is a growing disparity in terms of income and life opportunities between the upper and lower/mid mountains.

Some Questions to Consider

- ❑ Is there a limit to the population that the city can sustain without significant environmental, social and economic impact?
- ❑ Do we want to slow population growth?
- ❑ Why is our population so mobile, particularly in the Upper Mountains? Are certain age groups more mobile than others? Eg. Young people seeking employment elsewhere?
- ❑ Do we really understand mobility patterns of our city?
- ❑ Do we want to attempt to influence the mobility and age structure characteristics of our population? If so how?
- ❑ Have we planned adequately to meet the needs of our aging population?
- ❑ Have we planned adequately to meet the needs of our existing overall young age structure?
- ❑ What population do we require in terms of sustaining “desired” retail and transport services/ infrastructure?
- ❑ How can we reduce growing disparity in life opportunities between the upper and lower mountains?

Table 2: Blue Mountains Population by Town

| TOWNSHIP | TOTAL POP 1991 | TOTAL POP 1996 | % Change 1991-1996 |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Blackheath | 3,757 | 4,119 | 9.9% |
| Mt Victoria | 906 | 900 | 0.6% |
| Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine/Mt Tomah/Bell | 172 | 303 | 73.1% |
| Megalong Valley | 107 | 163 | 45.5% |
| AREA 1 TOTAL: | 4,942 | 5,485 | 11.2% |
| Wentworth Falls | 4,998 | 5,379 | 7.4% |
| Leura | 3,622 | 3,777 | 4.4% |
| Katoomba | 8,297 | 8,544 | 2.9% |
| Medlow Bath | 376 | 448 | 18.8% |
| AREA 2 TOTAL: | 17,293 | 18,148 | 4.9% |
| Woodford/Linden | 1,979 | 2,182 | 10.5% |
| Hazelbrook | 4,133 | 4,333 | 5.1% |
| Lawson | 2,234 | 2,250 | 0.8% |
| Bullaburra | 938 | 1,018 | 8.8% |
| AREA 3 TOTAL: | 9,284 | 9,783 | 5.6% |
| Valley Heights | 1,186 | 1,175 | -0.8% |
| Winmalee | 6,883 | 7,323 | 6.4% |
| Yellow Rock/Hws Hts | 946 | 1,143 | 21.7% |
| Springwood | 6,829 | 7,112 | 4.3% |
| Faulconbridge | 3,394 | 3,793 | 11.4% |
| AREA 4 TOTAL: | 19,238 | 20,546 | 6.8% |
| Lapstone | 1,113 | 1,019 | -8.4% |
| Glenbrook | 5,088 | 5,059 | -0.7% |
| Mt Riverview | 3,408 | 3,245 | -4.3% |
| Blaxland | 6,878 | 7,041 | 2.5% |
| Warrimoo | 2,209 | 2,180 | -1.8% |
| AREA 5 TOTAL: | 18,695 | 18,544 | -0.8% |
| BLUE MOUNTAINS | 69,452 | 72,506 | 4.4% |

Source: Blue Mountains Community Plan Social Planning Data Base, 1994; ABS 1991 and 1996 Censuses.

Equitable Community

Access and equity is an issue that affects every Blue Mountains community. An equitable community is one where people have fair access to the resources and services essential to meeting their needs and improving their quality of life. Such a community promotes the fair distribution of resources, and supports people's rights, regardless of race, age, colour, origin or ability. An equitable community is one that enhances and encourages local community diversity, participation and harmony.

BMCC has an Access and Equity Policy (adopted Jan 2000) which commits to progressing access and equity throughout the City.

Trend and key issues

- ❑ A City comprising 27 villages strung sequentially along a narrow 100km long ridgetop leads to varying degrees of geographic isolation, and requires extensive duplication of facilities to service the different communities.
- ❑ The population comprises relatively high numbers of under 18s and over 65s and is aging.
- ❑ Income levels are not uniformly spread across the Mountains, with many lower Mountain families earning significantly more income than many upper Mountain families. Additionally, families in the LGA have significantly less disposable income than the NSW average.
- ❑ Youth unemployment is high and youth facilities and support services are lacking in most Mountain communities.
- ❑ Housing for smaller family units, singles and elderly is not adequate to meet the demand.
- ❑ Local employment opportunities are limited in the Mountains.
- ❑ Aged residents often have limited access to transport and other facilities and services due to poor health or geographic isolation.
- ❑ Aboriginal people and people of a NESB are not very visible in the community and have limited services available to them.

Some questions to consider

- ❑ How can we best arrive at a cohesive, diverse society within the constraints of our geography?
- ❑ Can we improve the fair and reasonable distribution of resources, facilities and services across the mountains?
- ❑ How safe do residents feel in the community? Are we friendly, supportive and accepting of the diverse members of our community?
- ❑ How can we strengthen village communities and encourage resident participation and involvement in community life?
- ❑ Is there a growing disparity between the upper and lower/mid mountains in incomes and livelihoods and how can we provide more opportunities, particularly for young people, to improve their lot?

Constraints

- ❑ Geographic layout of the LGA.
- ❑ Limited rates growth due to limited population capacity.
- ❑ Infrastructure capacity and availability.
- ❑ Duplication of essential services is a necessity.

Sustainability

"The first commandment of economics is: Grow. Grow forever. Companies must get bigger. National economies need to swell by a certain percent each year. People should want more, make more, earn more, spend more - ever more.

The first commandment of the Earth is: Enough. Just so much and no more. Just so much soil. Just so much water. Just so much sunshine. Everything born of the Earth grows to its appropriate size and then stops. The planet does not get bigger, it gets better. Its creatures learn, mature, diversify, evolve, create amazing beauty and novelty and complexity, but live within absolute limits.

BMCC is committed to moving towards a sustainable future, to ensure that our children and grandchildren inherit a tomorrow that is at least as good as today, and preferably better. However, many of our lifestyle impacts are hidden so we do not properly understand the damage caused by the unsustainable practices which underpin our own lives and the workings of our community.

Sustainability is strongly connected to the natural and physical processes of the world. We are not living sustainably while we erode the life support systems on which all living things depend. However it is more than environmental sustainability or ESD. Sustainability is about ensuring that we can meet our **environmental, social and economic** commitments without trading off these commitments against each other. In such a scenario we should be able to reach our economic goals through our environmental goals and vice versa. Sustainability is like a three legged stool, take away one leg and it falls over.

Natural systems are sustainable because they are cyclic in nature, that is, the waste of one process is the raw material for another (eg cow dung is plant food). A sustainable economic and social structure is totally dependant on a healthy environment and a fair and equitable allocation of resources. These are best summed up in the following set of goals developed by The Natural Step®, which if achieved means that we are living sustainably.

- Substances from the earth's crust must not systematically increase in nature.
- Substances produced by society must not systematically increase in nature.
- The physical basis for the productivity and diversity of nature must not be systematically diminished.
- There must be a fair and efficient use of energy and other resources.

There are two features in particular that distinguish a sustainable approach to development, and these are:

- A need to consider in an integrated way the wider economic, social and environmental implications of decisions and actions for Australia, the international community and the biosphere;
- A need to take a long term rather than short term view when making decisions and taking actions.

Trend and key issues

- Almost every aspect of the way we live, both individually and as a community, is unsustainable.

- Most people equate a sustainable lifestyle with a reduced quality of life.
- A growing economy is seen as an enemy to ecological sustainability, however depressed economies focus on satisfying immediate human needs, not environmental or social needs.
- Living sustainably is not a choice, it is a necessity which will be forced on humankind in the near future as Earth's support systems start to falter. The longer we wait, the more expensive, limited and difficult the options become.

Some questions to consider

- Restricting the area available for development to those less environmentally sensitive areas of the Mountains restricts population and may lead to a stagnant economy. Is this an example of a sustainable direction and how can economic and social sustainability be balanced with environmental sustainability?
- Does a small population necessarily live more sustainably than a larger population? Can our community's environmental sustainability be improved overall while allowing for an increased population growth?
- If we want affordable housing, how can it be achieved in the Mountains?
- What does a sustainable future look like and can we identify a clear direction towards achieving it?
- How can we ensure that decisions made in relation to economic, environmental, social and cultural areas are not made in isolation and support the achievement of a more sustainable future?

Constraints

- The planet has finite resources which we are using and wasting faster than they can be replaced.
- We are producing compounds and materials at a faster rate than can be broken down, thus they accumulate.
- We maintain an inequitable division and use of resources.
- We are destroying biodiversity on which all life ultimately depends.

World Heritage Area

On 29 November 2000 the Greater Blue Mountains was announced as Australia's 14th World Heritage Area. The one million hectare Greater Blue Mountains Area was nominated for its outstanding universal natural values, including the globally outstanding biodiversity of its plant and animal communities, its vegetation dominated by Australia's unique eucalypts and for the superlative beauty of its natural landscapes.

The listed property is made up of seven outstanding National Parks (Blue Mountains, Wollemi, Yengo, Nattai, Kanangra-Boyd, Gardens of Stone and Thirlmere Lakes National Parks) as well as the Jenolan Caves Karst Conservation Reserve. Fourteen LGA border the WHA, but the listing does not apply to BMCC managed lands.

Trend and key issues

- The listing imposes additional matters to consider in relation to development control and land management under the EPBC Act.
- Local government does not have an approval or assessment role under the EPBC Act, although this may change through subsequent federal and state agreements.

Some questions to consider

- What are the implications of World Heritage listing for positioning the LGA in a local, regional and wider context?
- How can the Blue Mountains community and Council best:
 - Present and interpret information for residents and tourists
 - Encourage sustainable tourism and economic development
 - Manage impacts as the adjoining landowner.
- What opportunities does this listing offer for the community in terms of economic, social and environmental benefits?
- What are the existing strengths that the Blue Mountains area can build upon and how do we do that?
- How can we best use the listing to further bioregional planning processes.

Constraints

- The Commonwealth EPBC Act states that adjoining land owners must not cause a significant environmental impact on the WHA without the approval of the Federal Environment Minister.

Natural Environment

The rugged topography of ridges, gorges, cliffs and plateaux are characteristics for which the Blue Mountains are renowned and valued. The region's superlative natural values were recognized in its recent listing as a World Heritage Area. This fragile environment is significant for its capacity to provide drinking water, contribute to biodiversity conservation and to provide a unique bushland setting for urban settlement. The mountain's significant environmental features provide a string visual backdrop creating a distinctive character that is in great demand for residential and recreation uses.

Trend and key issues

- ❑ Most existing development is historical and in many cases has had little regard for environmental management issues. Land close to urban areas is subject to significant pressures and is often degraded.
- ❑ Vegetation clearing, weed invasion, pollution and fauna predation by feral animals are the major impacts on biodiversity in the mountains.
- ❑ A lack of understanding of recreational pressures; impacts of ecotourism in sensitive areas through inappropriate use or over use.
- ❑ Protecting water quality from the impacts of point and diffuse pollution sources to conserve natural and drinking water values is of critical importance, as urban development in the Blue Mountains is at the top of the catchment. Increased flow rates and volumes due to increased hard surfaces within the catchment are causing erosion and scouring.
- ❑ BM sewage systems are still ranked as some of the worst, particularly relating to SPS overflows. Leaking septics, exfiltration and overflowing sewers have a huge impact on water quality. Need to address partial treatment bypasses at Mt Victoria, Blackheath and Winmalee STPs.
- ❑ Conflict exists between retaining indigenous vegetation and the older exotic garden style for which the Mountains are famous.
- ❑ Landfill sites are filling fast and old sites require remediation to limit environmental impacts.
- ❑ Air quality is deteriorating due to emissions from vehicles and solid fuel heaters.
- ❑ Conflict exists between bushfire hazard reduction programs and the appropriate fire regime needed for retaining biodiversity.
- ❑ Noise amenity is poor close to the transport corridors.

Some questions to consider

- ❑ How can we progress beyond our current area planning process to address the entire catchment and thus move into bioregional planning?
- ❑ What do we want the Mountains to look like in 20 years time?
- ❑ How do we best engage with NPWS and other authorities to ensure a coordinated and cost effective management response across tenures to protect the natural values of the area with a minimum of duplication?
- ❑ How can we fairly apportion costs for environmental management/monitoring? Who should pay?
- ❑ What theme would be most appropriate to increase community awareness and to encourage and promote stewardship of the natural environment?
- ❑ Given our urban/bushland interface, how can we continue to enjoy the bushland lifestyle and recreational opportunities, while reducing urban impact on our environment?
- ❑ How can the community participate in protecting the environment from urban impacts so that the environment is a resource available to future generations?

- ❑ How can water quality be improved and protected for the future and how can weed invasion be prevented?

Constraints

- ❑ WHA listing will ensure environment is always a major consideration in the Blue Mountains.
- ❑ The catchment has to be protected to supply drinking water.
- ❑ Waste disposal capacity is limited.
- ❑ Septics are not suitable for most mountain soils
- ❑ GWH will be main western transport corridor for the next 20-30 years.

Tourism

Tourism has the potential to have wide ranging economic, environmental, cultural and social impacts. Specifically, tourism can make a significant contribution to the economy, both directly and indirectly through the generation of employment and business opportunities. The creation of new and expanded infrastructure, services and facilities to meet tourism needs also has the potential to raise awareness and interest in places which have national and international significance and importance to the community's history, whilst also providing financial support to ensure economic viability.

Tourism has the potential to contribute to improved environmental management and preservation by highlighting the importance of environmentally significant areas. Ecotourism in particular has relevance to the Blue Mountains. Ecotourism is a subset of nature based tourism and describes a type of tourism that is based on contact with the natural and cultural environment of an area, where these resources are respected and where the benefits of this type of tourism flow back to both the environment and local communities. Nature based tourism usually applies to tourism undertaken within natural areas, such as visiting a national park. It does not necessarily result in money staying with local communities or the protection of culture. Both these market sectors are increasing in popularity around the world.

Trends and key issues for the future

- While there is an increase in local tourism ventures, mass day-tripper tourism to the Mountains is mainly based out of Sydney, resulting in lower economic inputs to the LGA.
- There is a significant trend towards taking shorter but more frequent vacations. As a result, the potential to develop local tourism opportunities will be increased.
- There is an increasing expectation that tourism facilities will reflect, respect and enhance the environment in which they are situated. Consideration must be given to the best way to ensure that this occurs.
- It is forecast that there will be strong growth in intra-regional travel (both within Australia and within the Asia-pacific region). This forecast growth highlights the need to focus on transport links to the Blue Mountains. A critical mass of tourist infrastructure such as accommodation choices, retail, restaurants and tourist attractions are fundamental to capturing this market specifically and the tourist market more generally.
- The recent listing of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area provides increased opportunities for tourism in the region.

Some questions to consider

- How can we support promotion of the Blue Mountains as a national and international tourist, cultural, conference and events destination and build on the economic strengths and opportunities this provides, while encouraging residents and visitors to value and conserve the City's unique natural and cultural assets?
- What infrastructure is necessary to encourage and facilitate tourism growth?
- Do we want to redirect the current mass tourism trend into more sustainable forms of tourism which have more direct benefit for local communities? What type of tourism might this be?
- Cultural tourism has been suggested as a means to build a link between the needs of the local communities and the cultural interest of visitors to the region. Should this idea be pursued and if so, how?

- ❑ Does the ecotourism business in the Mountains need to be better regulated and monitored for impacts? Who should be responsible for doing this and how should it be done?
- ❑ How do we balance the needs of the wider community with the special interests groups?
- ❑ Is there a role for local businesses to become more "visitor friendly" with a better commitment to customer service? How can this be encouraged?

Constraints

- ❑ Limited land is available for new tourism developments or infrastructure.
- ❑ Funding
- ❑ External regulators overseeing environmental impacts: NPWS, EPA etc.

LEADERSHIP – A VISION FOR THE CITY

Increasingly Council is coming under pressure to demonstrate leadership within the emerging framework of sustainable development and to have regard for the long-term cumulative effects of its decisions on the quality of life in its community.

Councils are now required to think strategically and ensure concentration and focus on the big issues as well as being concerned about performance on the ground. Given the pressure on available resources and the growing pressures on Councils, it is essential that Council builds the skills and knowledge capability to meet the changing priorities and needs, now and in the future. Forming legitimate partnerships with its community and keeping the local and wider community informed about Council's broad range of activities and the need to make choices is a key action in providing good government.

Increasingly local governments are facing the challenge of working more openly and effectively with their communities. It is generally recognised that governments can provide leadership, information, support and advice, but governments alone cannot create sustainable communities. Community sustainability starts at home.

Trends and key issues

- ❑ Local government is now required to be more accountable and transparent in its dealings with community and other agencies.
- ❑ Increasing responsibility is being devolved to local government through legislation, yet local government is often not involved in the decision-making processes which directly affect it.
- ❑ Local government's increased responsibility through legislation requires additional resources, which are generally not made available from sources outside local government.
- ❑ Council has an increasing demand for facilities and services, yet has a decreasing income base.
- ❑ The ownership and management of Council's assets on behalf of the community is an increasingly significant aspect of councils' short (eg regarding risk management) and long term operation. However the acquisition, disposal and management of council assets is often approached in a short term, traditional manner which results in lost opportunity to develop a stable income base in addition to that from rates.
- ❑ There is lack of integration between various levels and arms of government, which often leads to duplication and confusion.
- ❑ An increase in legislation and statutes is seen by some community as an increase in bureaucracy and a decrease in the power of communities to make decisions at the local level.
- ❑ Council is building stronger partnerships with some community groups Eg Bushcare
- ❑ Consultation is seen as part of a tokenistic process by Council, which fails to deliver results or feedback.
- ❑ Whilst consultation is regularly conducted with the community, there are almost no formal mechanisms for community involvement in decision making.
- ❑ There is a perceived inequity between Upper and Lower mountains in the allocation of resources by Council / government.
- ❑ The Council organisation is perceived to not always facilitate economic development and employment opportunities.

Some questions to consider

- ❑ What sort of City do we want to create?
- ❑ How will the issues and trends above help or hinder us in creating our kind of City?
- ❑ How will the role of local government change over the next 20 years, given its increased responsibilities, the increasing demand for services and a shrinking resource base?
- ❑ How can Council provide leadership to set the direction for the long term and at the same time deal effectively with short term political realities?
- ❑ How can Council's policy structure support the creation of a sustainable City?
- ❑ How can Council's expenditures be tailored to realise sustainability?
- ❑ How should the City leverage its resources to facilitate sustainability in its partnerships with the private sector and other agencies?
- ❑ How will the City establish resource-efficient criteria for all its resource allocations?
- ❑ Is the City delivering on community expectations and if not, how can we do better? How can we best involve community and deliver on-ground results?
- ❑ What role should the community have in decision making at the local level?
- ❑ How do we engage with state agencies and departments on a more equal footing? What partnerships should Council be pursuing and how?
- ❑ What mechanisms and partnerships should be developed to ensure that the City can provide the services needed by an ageing community living in a sensitive environment within the existing resource base?
- ❑ How do we involve the community in making choices about the goods and services to be provided within financial constraints?