



Hawkesbury City Council

attachment 1
to
item 131

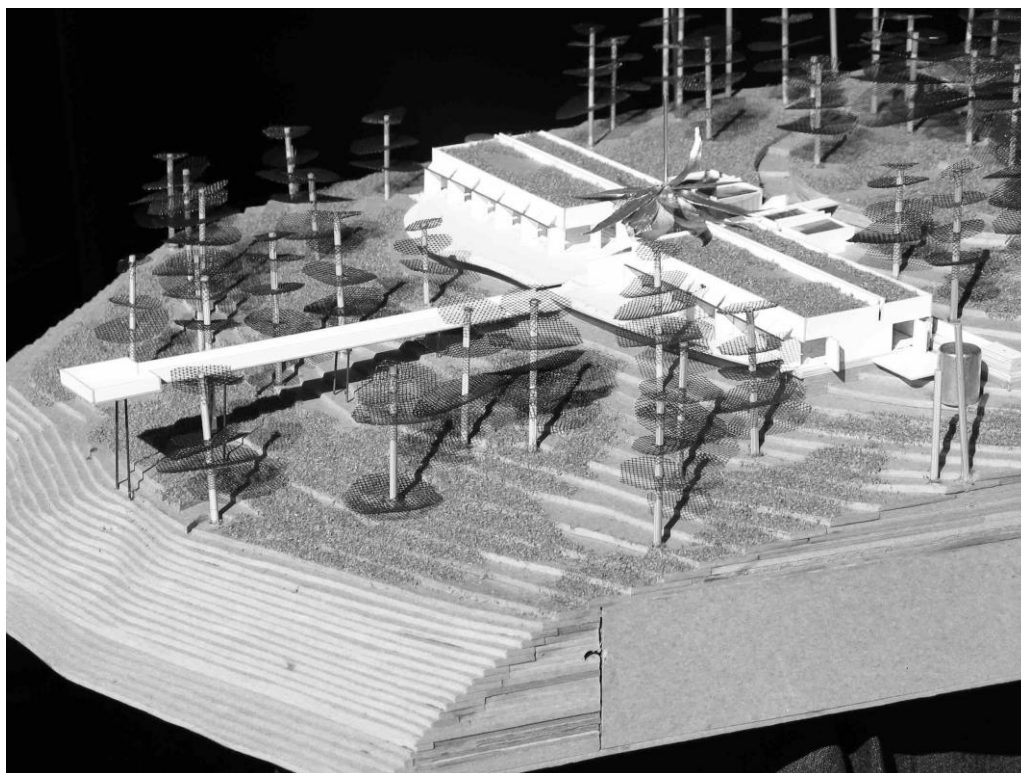
Blue Mountains
World Heritage Centre

date of meeting: 14 July 2020
location: by audio-visual link
time: 6:30pm

Blue Mountains

World Heritage Centre

History of the concept and re-establishing the Proposal



By Lionel Buckett and Clr Sarah Richards

BACKGROUND

This project was proposed in 2004. Funding was allocated, the design was chosen and the site was selected. As you can see by the media release below, funding was available jointly by the Federal and State Government. However, that funding ended up being re-allocated. It has been suggested that the State funding went to The Botanical Gardens at Mt Tomah.

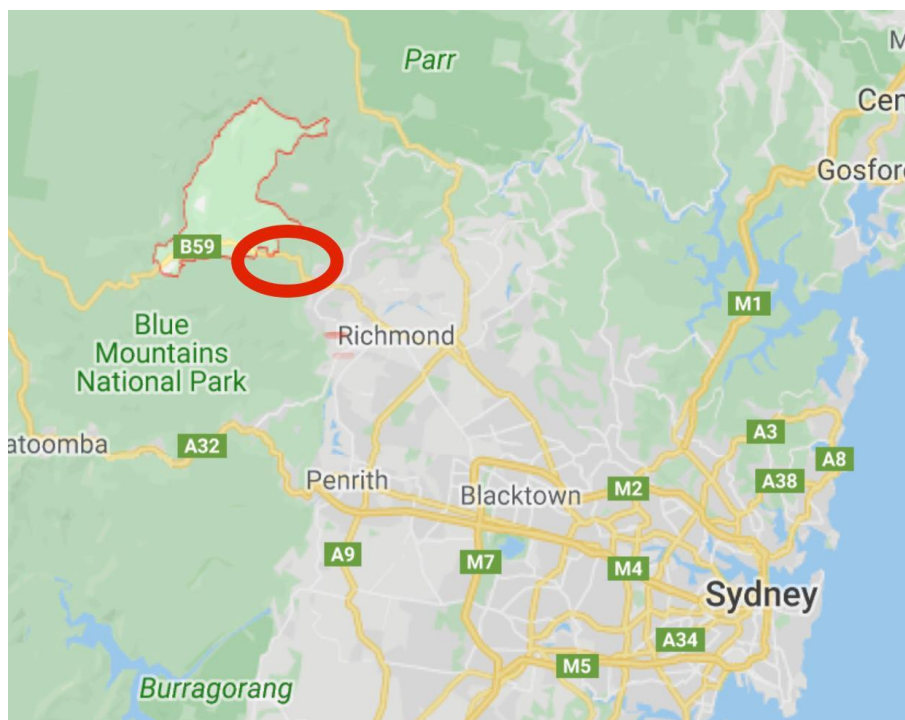
The purpose of this document is to bring all elements of this proposal back to the Government, to seek new funding and bring the historical proposal to life.

To bring it back to the drawing board will not take significant time or effort, as it has already gone through a significant process to the point of being construction ready. It is estimated that this had cost around \$800,000.00 so far in reports and consultation fees.

The proposed site in 2004 was located on Bells Line of Road, approximately 2km East from 'Pie in the Sky'. This land is National Park.

With the recent bush fires in the summer of 2019 / 2020 and the impact nationally to small business and tourism due to the Coronavirus, this facility would be priceless for this area. Fire swept up Bells Line of Road, burning down businesses and scorching the landscape. A facility like this would be a staging area for future bush fires, act as a base, be a place to take injured animals and act as a place of security for locals.

- Approximate location: Sydney region:



- Approximate location: Blue Mountains / Hawkesbury area – Bells Line of Road Bilpin:



The building will be able to do the following:

- House offices for National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)
- Café and souvenirs
- Visitor Information Centre for both the Hawkesbury and Blue Mountains
- Tourist destination (especially as this is one of the major roads for travellers heading west of the state)
- Educational precinct
- Have its own self contained waste water system and conduct solar energy. Use and promote Best Practice Environmental Systems and aim to be carbon neutral.
- Be built to be entirely fire proof
- Act as a base / staging area in times of bushfire.
- Possible use – Koala Hospital (also for other injured wildlife – and house offices for WIRES) (see below)
- Possible use – Starting point for nature walks (see below)

CURRENT AIM

This project should be rejuvenated again to encourage visitation to our beautiful region and capitalise on work already undertaken. All that is required is funding, land acquisition and reignition of community consultation. It would become a focal point of the region.

BENEFITS FOR THE AREA

- Tourism – local accommodation and small business would benefit from visitation.
- The Bilpin Trail of businesses – The NSW Government recently spent \$3 million on a tourism campaign for the Hawkesbury and the Blue Mountains is one of the most iconic destinations for visitors in Australia. With the partnership of Destination NSW, this centre could be marketed as a real place to visit. For more information, visit: <https://www.sydney.com/hawkesbury> and <https://www.visitbluemountains.com.au/>
- Eco-tourism (re-zoning currently needed, as well as better rules around signage)
- Agri-tourism
- Local jobs – this will employ many local people
- Environmental awareness
- Environmental education (school excursions)
- Environmental preservation
- Aboriginal significance
- Promotion of walking trails (waterfall pic)
- Ability for more small businesses to start, especially in education tourism.
- Wildlife recovery – WIRES location
- NPWS offices

2004 MEDIA RELEASE

Winning design for Blue Mountains World Heritage Area

A sustainable architectural design highlighting the unique features of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area has won the competition for the design of the \$1.7 million visitor centre at Bilpin.

Jointly funded by the Federal and State Governments, the centre is expected to be completed by December 2004. Around \$1 million has been provided through the Federal Government's \$2.7 billion Natural Heritage Trust, with the NSW Government providing additional funding and resources.

Announcing the winner today, the Federal Member for Macquarie, Kerry Bartlett, and NSW Environment Minister, Bob Debus, said the winning design team, architect Lindsay Johnston and landscape architect David Moir, had entered the most sensitive design utilising the local environment.

"The whole-of-site design takes advantage of a picturesque north-facing site, with long views to the Wollemi National Park and immediate views into the tree canopy over a sandstone escarpment," Mr Debus said.

"The pre-eminent feature of the design is the roof canopy. A floating sculpture inspired by the shape of eucalyptus leaves celebrates the World Heritage significance of the unique Blue Mountain eucalypt communities.

"This will be complemented by features of aboriginal culture, expressed through elements within the building details, and it is planned to integrate works by local indigenous artists.

"The building will be accessed by a pathway through native vegetation and the interior of the main building will have the capacity to open up to the outside. A small amphitheatre will provide an outdoor classroom."

Mr Bartlett said visitors to the Centre would find a range of interpretive displays on the 1.03 million hectares of Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and information on the 100 species of eucalypt which formed the basis for the listing of the area.

"The design will showcase this internationally recognised area to the public through education and interpretation," he said.

"The building itself would be environmentally sustainable – constructed from materials that have low impact on the environment. Environmental features will include solar heating from solar panels doubling as sun shading canopies, robust high thermal mass materials to moderate indoor temperatures and rainwater harvesting. Options for grey water recycling and on-site effluent treatment are also being investigated.

"It has been designed to resist the threat of bushfire by the use of non-combustible materials, sprinkler systems and fireproof window shutters.

"This project celebrates the natural beauty of the World Heritage Area and is sure to be of tremendous benefit to our local tourism industry.

"It will encourage visitors to maximise their World Heritage experience by using the Sydney-Richmond-Bilpin-Mt Victoria-Blackheath-Katoomba-Wentworth Falls-Glenbrook-Sydney route, rather than the traditional route up the Great Western Highway. This could also encourage more visitors to stay overnight rather than just come on a day trip."

Mr Debus said the Centre would be an invaluable addition to Western Sydney and Blue Mountains attractions and assist to promote local tourism operators and businesses.

"The Bilpin community has been extremely supportive of the project and I thank them for their involvement in the consultative phase of this project," he said.

"Similarly, Hawkesbury Council and Tourism Hawkesbury both have representatives on the Project Team and we'll all be working together to ensure the visitor centre and surrounds are of the highest quality and deliver a superior visitor experience."

13 January 2004

WINNING ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

Architect:

Lindsay Johnson: <https://www.lindsayjohnston.net.au/>

Link to original proposal:

http://www.naturetourismservices.com.au/images/detail-images/GBMWha_pics/GBMWha%20Interpretation%20Plan.pdf

Link to project design:

<https://www.lindsayjohnston.net.au/#/blue-mountains-visitor-centre/>

Commentary:

I won a competition for the design in 2004 run by NPWS. After that we worked for about a year on it and were preparing to proceed to detailed working drawings for contract when NPWS had to re-submit the budget to the minister for approval. The project was 'pulled' and the project re-emerged later at Mt Tomah with Bruce Eales architect, a friend of mine. We were not consulted.

Design Concept:

Lindsay Johnson: *"This is where the car park will be, there will be one huge silver eucalyptus leaf at the side of the road to draw people in, they will get out of their cars and there will be another huge silver eucalyptus leaf lying on the ground which they will be drawn to – about here – now if you can follow me through the trees, we will walk directly along this axis towards the sun – the new centre will reveal itself as the cluster of huge eucalyptus leaves against the view, you won't see the building itself and the flat roof will be landscaped to replicate the natural ground around – now they will descend here, between two ponds of water, under the canopy of huge leaves into the 'meeting place' with the fireplace, and the smell of eucalypt smoke in the air and – "pow" – there will be the view out over Wollemi wilderness. Now keep following me towards the sun – they will walk out onto the viewing jetty – out here – and that will run out on top of this rock outcrop – exactly HERE - with a glimpse back into that little cave below there, and then the stupendous view over the tree tops"*

Project narrative:

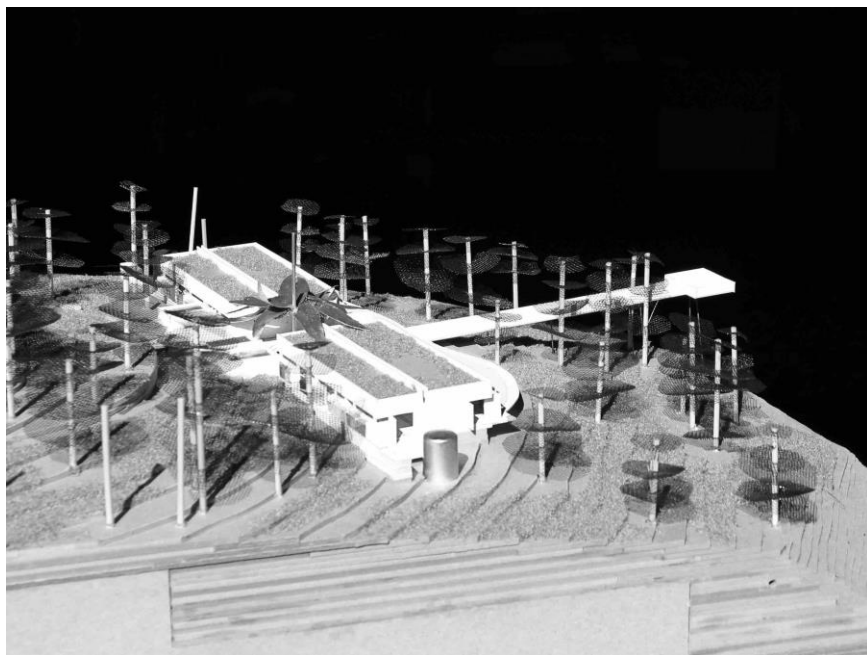
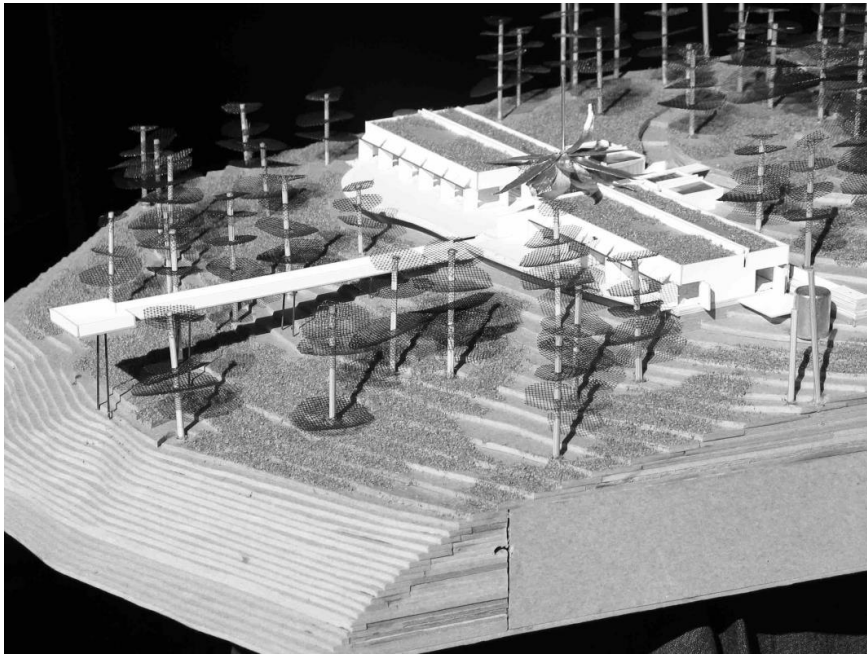
The drawings show the visitor centre and NPWS offices car parking and Bus parking. It has 40 visitor car parking spaces and 3 Tourist bus parking spaces.

The building appears to be fireproof from looking at the cross sections on the plans.

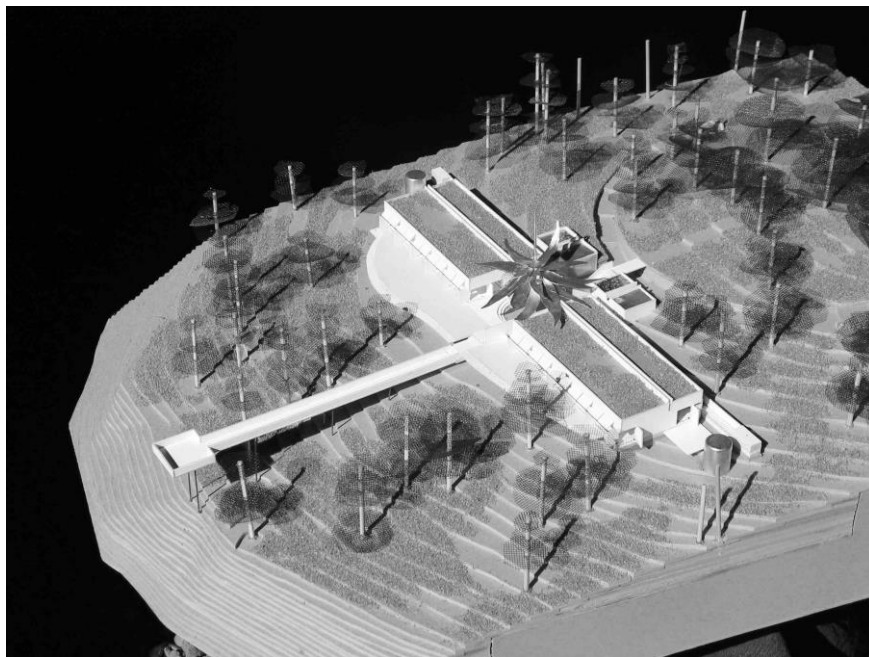
There also appears to be a viewing platform in the drawings

Extensive community consultation was also done along the way, with input from many stakeholders.

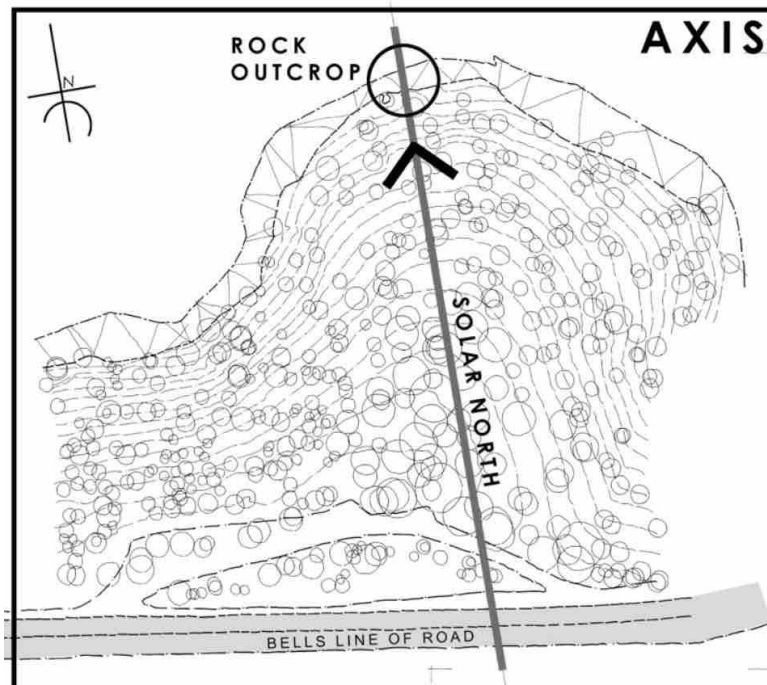
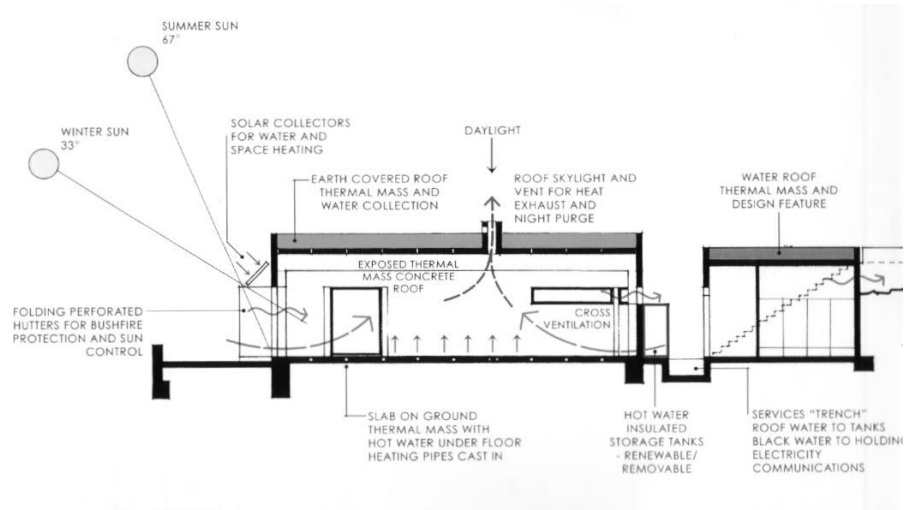
Images:

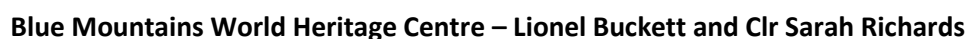


Blue Mountains World Heritage Centre – Lionel Buckett and Clr Sarah Richards

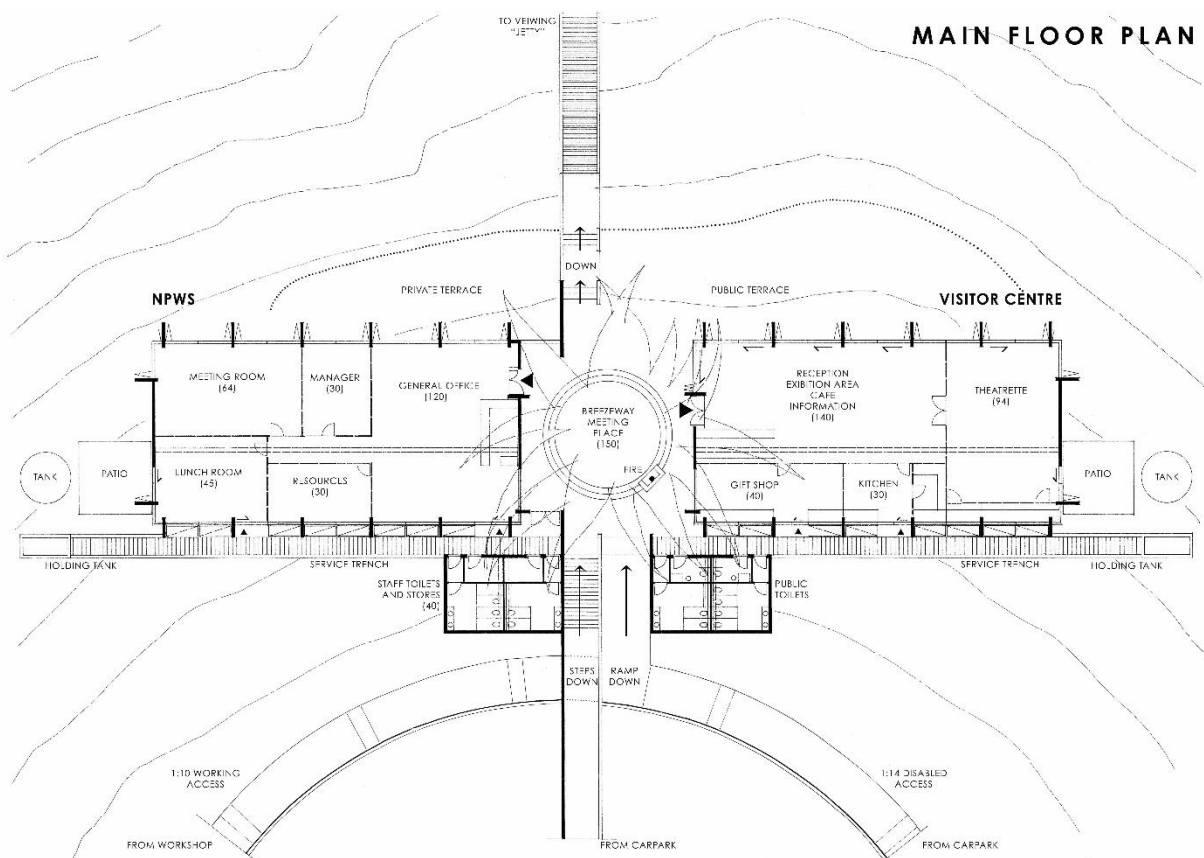
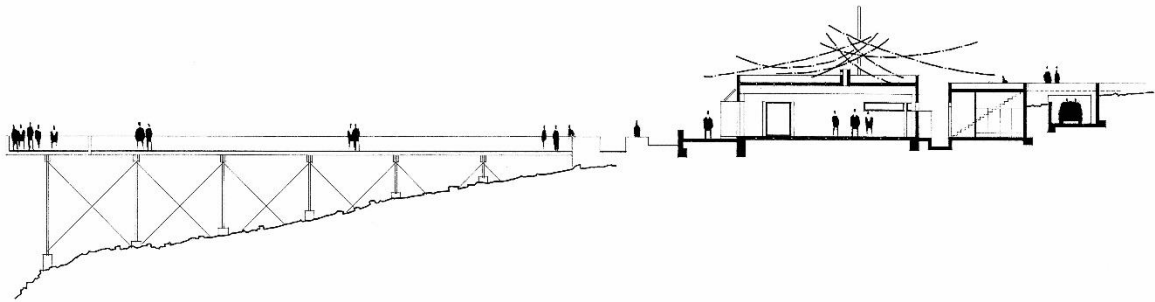


Blue Mountains World Heritage Centre – Lionel Buckett and Clr Sarah Richards





SECTION A-A
THROUGH NPWS OFFICES
AND JETTY



OTHER POSSIBLE ADDITIONAL USES ON THE SITE

Koala Hospital: (for all wildlife)

There has been an increase in sightings of koala's in the Hawkesbury / Blue Mountains in recent years. Since the bush fires over the summer of 2019/2020, hurt and burnt koalas (and other wildlife) have been found and taken to private homes to be cared for.

There are other Koala Hospitals set up in NSW, in conjunction with WIRES. This centre could also act as a base for WIRES staff, a drop off point for injured wildlife and a holding facility for them while they recover. It would also be an additional attraction for tourists to see Australian wildlife.

For plans on a previous Koala Hospital being built, please visit

<http://trra.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Koala-sanctuary-DA-2018-534-notes.pdf>

Nature Walks:

There are various bush walking tracks that would come off the World Heritage Centre. Most notable, about 4km away (8km return walk) is the Wheeny Gap Waterfall. (See the photo below.) This would encourage bush walkers and educational groups to come to the area to see our natural beauty.



Image: Jochan Spencer

PROFESSIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS HIGH PROFILE LOCAL SUPPORT

- The New Apple Bar
- Di Lee – Chapel Hill
- Lionel Buckett – Wollemi Love Cabins
- Michael Sperling – Bilpin Springs
- Bilpin Cider
- Hillbilly Cider
- Paul Maher – Loxley on Bellbird Hill
- Phil – The Flower Farm
- Pie in the Sky
- The Fruit Bowl
- Maggie Lou's Bite
- The Hive
- Bilpin Resort

CONCLUSION

The time is right to bring this project back to the table. All that is needed is funding allocated to it again to allow construction to begin, as well as site approval. Discussions regarding funding, site allocation, and development approvals will need a multi tiered approach with all three levels of government, various other government agencies, key stakeholders and the community.

The site identified previously is perfect as it is at the foot of the Blue Mountains and at the gateway to the World Heritage Area.

Funds are sought for a revitalised Business Case into the project and then subsequently, for its construction.

Project proposal by:

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