



Treeline Lurline

Local groups and residents are working together for an avenue of trees along Lurline Street, Katoomba, that will give shade, shelter and seasonal colour.

29 November 2019

Ms Kim Barrett, Manager
Department of Planning and Environment
Blue Mountains City Council
localplanningstatement@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Dear Ms Barrett

Re. Blue Mountains City Council draft Local Strategic Planning Statement

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Local Planning Statement.

We write on behalf of Treeline Lurline, an alliance of local residents, businesses, community groups and professionals working together with Blue Mountains City Council for the sustainable beautification of Lurline Street Katoomba.

Our organisational partners include Katoomba Chamber of Commerce & Community, Blue Mountains branch of the National Trust NSW, Blue Mountains Accommodation & Tourism Association and the Upper Mountains Arborists Alliance.

We write in support of the nine priorities of the draft Local Strategic Planning Statement. We particularly note our support for

LOCAL PLANNING PRIORITY 7: Sustaining a healthy local economy, including a focus on Katoomba as our strategic centre

7.6 Council will investigate opportunities for active transport connections and public space/streetscape enhancement between town centres and significant tourism destinations, with an initial focus on Lurline Street in Katoomba

1. Our Vision

The core vision of Treeline Lurline is to expand Katoomba's 'urban forest' through the re-planting of an avenue of trees down Lurline from Waratah Street to Echo Point.

This vision has been on Council's books since at least 1995. However, the trees cannot be planted in isolation. A 2009 report to Council and a subsequent 2016 consultants' study by Burton Powell detail the technical constraints to extensive tree planting which first requires a comprehensive upgrade of Lurline street infrastructure.

"Lurline Street's public domain needs a complete upgrade" (BMCC Report 10 November 2009).

We propose that the new infrastructure include under-grounding the power lines so the trees' shapes are not compromised and water sensitive design so that stormwater becomes tree and garden water. Seating, water stations, toilets, public art and interpretative signs about the local heritage, environment and sustainable street design would all be part of visitors' and residents' journey along Lurline.

The beautified and revived street would provide shade, shelter, rest, habitat for wildlife and a contiguous physical and visual link between Katoomba and Echo Point.

We see no reason to further delay this important project and ask that it be revived by Council in early 2020 rather than 2025-2040 as proposed in the Draft Local Planning Statement.

2. The Rationale

Katoomba is recognised by the State Government as the strategic centre of the Blue Mountains region. As also noted in the Draft Local Planning Statement, it provides 25 per cent of Blue Mountains jobs with tourism as its main industry. The most popular attraction in the Blue Mountains and second most popular in NSW is the Three Sisters at Echo Point, a designated Aboriginal place, visited by millions every year.

"Lurline Street is the major route to Echo Point, a premier tourist attraction, and the most significant gateway within the Blue Mountains". (Draft Echo Point Plan of Management, EDAW 1995).

Lurline Street is the most significant gateway to the Three Sisters yet the 2.2km street is rundown, unshaded and without basic facilities.

We note that Council is currently working on further upgrades for Echo Point. While we support the new walkway and the gathering place for indigenous performance and storytelling, we think it is time to look and spend beyond Echo Point as a tourism experience. Over a century of focusing on the 'Three Sisters' as the defining attraction of the Blue Mountains combined with the highway upgrades over the last 15 years has led to speed tourism in which coach and car loads can come up from Sydney with pit stops at Leura Mall, Echo Point, Scenic World and return to Sydney in the same day. The biggest beneficiaries are the Sydney hotels and bus companies (and Woolworths).

There is limited economic benefit to Katoomba town centre in this form of tourism, as is evident by the empty shops and constantly changing businesses.

Katoomba and Leura possess no obvious gaps in retail, are economically supported by high level visitation, and Katoomba particularly is likely to draw residents from surrounding villages for shopping opportunities (LSPS, Priority 7, p.84)

This brief summary on Katoomba-Leura retail suggests a much better picture than is the reality for many businesses in Katoomba and even Leura. A considerable downturn has been reported in both towns in the last 12 months despite booming tourism numbers. Businesses have closed or moved away. Something is not working.

For this to change, our tourism needs to be about more than views of three large interesting rocks and a ride into the Jamison Valley at Scenic World. Both are world-class attractions but our tourism needs to fully embrace the natural, cultural and built heritage of Katoomba and the Blue Mountains so that people stay longer, eat out, visit numerous attractions (e.g. the Cultural Centre), and engage with our visual and performing arts and with our unique local shops. The 2.5km between the Great Western Highway and Echo Point including Katoomba's once grand



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Victorian Art-deco commercial centre needs improvement in presentation and facilities so visitors are encouraged to stop and explore.

This brings us back to Lurline Street. As already noted, it is the main connecting route between Katoomba Town Centre and Echo Point / the Escarpment. It is also a key link road for residents who live in South Katoomba. We believe it should be leafy, beautiful and buzzing with galleries, cafes and small retail outlets amongst the existing residences and tourism accommodation.

There are still some galleries on Lurline Street but others have moved away along with the cafes. Making it the promenade to Echo Point would help bring these businesses back. We would also like to see public art along the route, e.g. water features showing off the street's water sensitive design; works by local indigenous artists evoking their cultural connections to Ngunna (Country).

We think that the history of one of Katoomba's oldest streets should be interpreted as people walk it – including the stories embedded in the old properties and route itself and the ancient and enduring indigenous history and culture as advised by Gundungurra and Darug elders. Even the geological and ecological history could be interpreted, e.g. two of the largest Wollemis in cultivation are on Lurline Street on the corner with Waratah.

3. Funding

We are confident that funding could be secured for the project from both public and private sectors.

As a State Government strategic centre for the region, Katoomba is automatically prioritised for infrastructure funding. We have secured in principle support from State and Federal Ministers as well as our local MPs.

The funding would be based on the tourism benefits but, in truth, the biggest benefits would be for the people who live here.

We consider this a model project for that reason.

4. Commentary on Actions

Our vision for Lurline Street fits every priority in the draft LSP but we do have some specific suggestions and requests on the actions:

LOCAL PLANNING PRIORITY 1: Living Sustainably in the City within a World Heritage National Park	
<i>1.12 (2021-2025) Council will develop an Urban Tree Canopy / Urban Forest Project to map the tree canopy within the urban footprint and establish baseline data to monitor change over time.</i>	We would like to see the Urban Tree Canopy/ Urban Forest Project begin in 2020 and include a comprehensive plan for maintenance, regeneration and expansion of the urban forest. Our streetscapes are part of our cultural heritage and will not maintain or plant themselves other than as Privet and Holly. We suggest that expanding our urban forest should start with Lurline Street for the reasons noted in the summary above.
<i>1.14 (2021-2025) Council will investigate opportunities and state government support, to retrofit existing residential properties in 'active</i>	This should also apply to commercial properties and the public domain. Lurline Street's beautification should include water

<p><i>management' catchment areas, with rainwater tanks and other water sensitive urban design measures, to improvement water quality in these catchment areas.</i></p>	<p>sensitive design to direct rainwater onto the tree and garden beds rather than down stormwater drains, possibly also including small rainwater storage units. This design could be showcased in interpretative signage that would educate passers-by and promote the Blue Mountains as a sustainable city led by an environmentally responsible Council.</p>
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LOCAL PLANNING PRIORITY 2: Managing bushfire risk and responding to climate change in our unique environment

<p><i>2.6 (2021-2025) Council will investigate and report on feasibility and options for achieving a low carbon City, with an initial focus on Council operations</i></p>	<p>We would like to see an immediate broader focus by the Council than its own operations. It does not matter who is emitting; it all ends up in the same shared atmosphere. The more people who choose to walk or cycle down Lurline Street, the fewer people are driving it and the fewer emissions. This should be part of the wider strategy – see priority 9 – for walking and cycling connections around the city.</p>
<p><i>2.17 (2025-2040) Council will work towards the establishment of core infrastructure at key locations throughout the City (including bus layovers and transport hubs) to enable the movement of tourists through key village centres (initially focused on Katoomba/Leura and Wentworth Falls), via sustainable modes of transport</i></p>	<p>We support this strategy to help invigorate our town centres without overrunning them with buses. It should complement a Pedestrian Mobility and Bike Plan, see priority 9, that enables visitors and locals to move within and between towns via their own legs or mobility support (e.g. bikes, wheelchairs and buggies). We think this work should start now.</p>

LOCAL PLANNING PRIORITY 3: Planning for the increased well-being of our community

<p><i>3.1 (2020-2021) Council will complete and begin to implement the Community Facilities Strategic Plan</i></p>	<p>We see Lurline Street with an avenue of trees and gardens, seating areas, water bubblers, public toilets, artworks and interpretative signage as an open air community facility for recreation and socializing.</p> <p>There is irrefutable evidence of the increased mental well-being that comes from living and moving amongst large trees filled with wildlife. Similarly the physical and social benefits of walking and cycling facilities that draw people onto the streets interacting with each other and their environment are well documented.</p>
<p><i>3.8 (2025-2040) Council will continue the</i></p>	<p>Lurline Street should be part of a Green Grid</p>

<p><i>implementation of identified Green Grid projects including Scenic Southern Escarpment, Eastern Escarpment and the Blue Mountains Bike Trail along the Great Western Highway</i></p>	<p>walking and cycling loop for Leura and Katoomba.</p>
<p>LOCAL PLANNING PRIORITY 4: Strengthening Creativity, Culture and the Blue Mountains as a City of the Arts</p>	
<p><i>4.8 (2020-2021) Council will investigate ways of facilitating the integration of sustainability measures (water sensitive urban design), creativity/art and heritage where appropriate, within all new works on public land</i></p>	<p>We would love to see water sensitive urban design for Lurline Street highlighted through complementary public artworks e.g. waterwise water features.</p>
<p>LOCAL PLANNING PRIORITY 5: Preserving and enhancing heritage, character and liveability</p>	
<p><i>5.3 (2020-2021) Council will prepare and begin to implement Ngurra (Country) is Everything project, Managing Aboriginal Cultural Heritage through Traditional Owners continuing relationships to Country in the Blue Mountains</i></p>	<p>Lurline Street is on traditional Aboriginal land and is the modern route to important women's and men's sites at Echo Point. We hope this project will be an opportunity to work with the Traditional Owners on signage, art and possibly also gardens of endemic plants with known traditional uses. This would help open up the meaning of <i>Ngurra</i> and its ongoing relationship with the Traditional Owners to the wider population.</p>
<p><i>5.13 (2021-2025) Council will investigate opportunities for grant funding for interpretive heritage signage throughout the City</i></p>	<p>We would like to see interpretive heritage and signage down Lurline Street 'golden mile' as part of the visitor experience approaching Echo Point with site specific stories of the natural and cultural history of the area. This could start as far back as 50 million years ago with the formation of the Blue Mountains when broadleaved rainforests were replacing Wollemi and other conifers. It would at the very least tell of First Nations people who arrived in the Mountains at least 20,000 years ago; of the colonial era barely visible now; of the early Federation and Inter-war period reflected in many of the buildings and of the last century as the thoroughfare of tourists, artists and celebrities.</p>
<p><i>5.15 (2021-2025) Council will investigate opportunities to incentivise investment in built heritage throughout the City, particularly for the adaptive reuse and activation of disused sites</i></p>	<p>Putting aside our dislike of the word incentivise (what happened to 'stimulate?'), we support this action and would like to see the heritage guesthouses at the top of Lurline Street in particular restored and functioning as an integral part of the town's life. We</p>

	anticipate that the restoration and beautification of Lurline Street including of this top section will help this process. To this end, we strongly support Council advocating for stronger legislation to enable it to compel owners of heritage buildings to maintain them and keep them in active use.
LOCAL PLANNING PRIORITY 6: Meeting the diverse housing needs of our community	
6.2 (2020-2021) Council will proceed with place-based Master planning of key town centres, including a robust community engagement plan, to investigate diverse housing opportunities close to services and transport	As a strategic centre for jobs, services and transport and because of its floor space ratios and permissible heights, Katoomba is already and will continue to be an important provider of new diverse housing opportunities in and around the town centre. This has occurred with old YHA building, now social housing on the corner of Waratah and Lurline Streets, and with the new social housing development underway diagonally opposite. The old Cecil Guesthouse on Lurline Street, now an Anglican Retirement Village, is another example. This is further reason why transforming Lurline into an accessible and enjoyable walking route and recreational space is so important.
6.7 (2021-2025) Council will investigate incremental rezoning opportunities for multi-dwelling housing in appropriate locations, to contribute to the 6-10 year housing target and housing diversity within the City	See comments above.
LOCAL PLANNING PRIORITY 7: Sustaining a healthy local economy, including a focus on Katoomba as our strategic centre	
7.1 (2020-2021) Council will update the Spatial Hierarchy for Service and Public Domain Planning including recognition of Katoomba as a Strategic Centre in the Western City District Plan	We support the recognition and prioritizing of Katoomba as a Strategic Centre as a crucial step for appropriate funding and planning for the town as the destination for 4 to 5 million tourists, many or most of whom will travel Lurline Street at some point.
7.4 (2020-2021) Council will commence preparation of the Katoomba Masterplan, incorporating the Katoomba golf course and Katoomba Civic Centre sites (refer to Structure Plan for masterplan investigation area)	We understand that Lurline Street will be part of this and that it will be a long process. We believe that Katoomba town centre and Lurline Street should be prioritized in the master planning process.
7.6 (2021-2025) Council will investigate opportunities for active transport connections and public space / streetscape enhancement between	Thank you. Yes. But please start in early 2020.

<p><i>town centres and significant tourism destinations, with an initial focus on Lurline Street in Katoomba</i></p>	
<p><i>7.15 (2025-2040) Council will work with the state government and other agencies to manage visitation to ensure the visitor experience is preserved and tourist volumes contribute to the local economy, while also preserving the amenity of local residents</i></p>	<p>We cannot think of a better project for greatly improving the amenity of local residents while drawing on tourism infrastructure funding and enhancing the visitor experience.</p>
<p>LOCAL PLANNING PRIORITY 8: Managing increased tourist visitation</p>	
<p><i>8.5 (2021-2025) Council will deliver the Scenic Southern Escarpment project upgrades at Echo Point, and the Scenic Eastern Escarpment as part of the Liveability Program</i></p>	<p>These upper Mountains projects do not, in fact, deliver 'liveability' to residents. They are squarely tourism infrastructure. If anything, and in the absence of supporting infrastructure for residential areas, they reduce liveability through the overemphasis on Echo Point and the escarpment. The residential areas and town centres become car and coach corridors.</p>
<p><i>8.11 (2021-2025) Council will investigate alternate funding sources for management of areas affected by increased tourism, including funding for visitor infrastructure, natural area management and risk management impacts flowing from increases in visitor numbers</i></p>	<p>Lurline Street as an infrastructure project has already been given in principle support by State and Federal MPs and Ministers. We believe there is also potential for some corporate funding.</p>
<p><i>8.13 (2025-2040) Council will coordinate with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service to deliver on a diversified range of visitation opportunities and locations, to reduce visitation impacts at single points within the local government area</i></p>	<p>The diversification of visitation opportunities needs a greater focus on built areas, specifically Katoomba and other town centres. We are happy to see people enjoying our beautiful world heritage area but nature experiences do not on their own feed the local economy and employment. We return to our theme: Lurline Street is a model for connecting the bush and town experiences, distributing visitor impacts and reducing car use in favour of the much less impactful walking and cycling.</p>
<p>LOCAL PLANNING PRIORITY 9: Improving local transport connections and accessibility, including walking and cycling</p>	
<p><i>9.1 Council will review and continue to implement the Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plans and Bike Plan to prioritise connections around town centres, and advocate for increased state government funding for accessible pedestrian pathways</i></p>	<p>There is a general need for more footpaths and cycle routes in the Upper Mountains where tourism is concentrated, especially around Katoomba and Leura. The PAMP and Bike Plan should recognize the reality that at almost any time there are thousands more people moving around in the Katoomba/Leura</p>

	<p>area than anywhere else in the Mountains. For the safety and amenity of residents and visitors as well as the environmental and tourism benefits, more active transport routes are needed. Lurline Street should be part of the cycling-walking loop supported by both the Leura Village Association and Katoomba Chamber.</p>
<p>9.3 (2021-2025) Council will continue to work with Transport for NSW on the Road Network Plan to ensure transport decisions related to and affecting the local government area, promote the best outcomes for Blue Mountains towns and villages, including advancing the proposal to upgrade Yeaman's Bridge at the entrance to Katoomba town centre</p>	<p>This is an essential project that requires a well-considered traffic management plan. We support investigation of the proposal for a one-way system with Parke Street uphill and Katoomba street downhill and Lurline 2-way. We would also support investigating a second crossing – a tunnel under the railway line at the top of Katoomba street where the old crossing used to be – next to the pedestrian underpass.</p>
<p>9.8 (2021-2025) Council will work with Transport for NSW to advocate for additional train services and improved train carriages for long distance commutes for both residents and visitors (including improved WiFi, dedicated carriages for visitor information)</p>	<p>Additional train services for visitors need to be complemented by active transport routes, electric bicycle hire and good local public transport links.</p>
<p>9.9 Council will continue to seek funding and construct the Great Blue Mountains Trail, creating shared pedestrian and cycleway linkages between Leura, Katoomba, Blackheath and Mount Victoria</p>	<p>The Trail links between the towns should use the railway line not the highway which is unpleasant, noisy and polluted. They should be user-friendly for young families. Leura-Katoomba needs a loop along the south side of the rail corridor with an easy grade that is picked up by Leura Mall at one end and Katoomba-Lurline Streets at the other.</p>
<p>9.13 Council will include Active Transport links as part of Liveability Project, to link town centres with District Parks within the local government area</p>	<p>It is our view that Kingsford Smith on the corner of Lovel and Lurline Streets should be a District Park and also form part of the tourism experience as an historic cool climate garden, park and event space.</p>

Thank you for consideration of our submission.

Yours sincerely
Stephanie Moxham
Administrator
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on behalf of the Treeline Lurline Bole Team