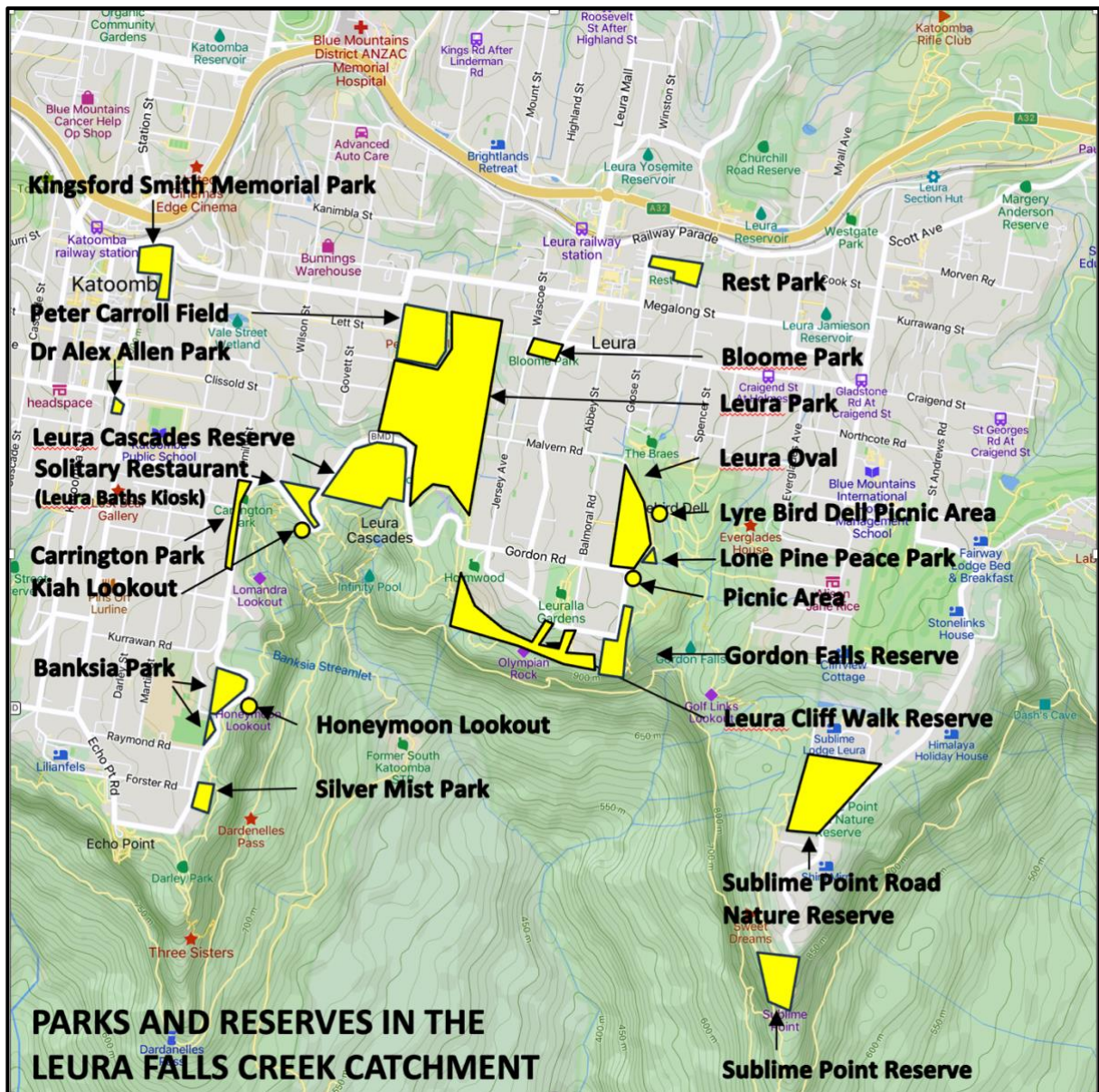




# PARKS AND RESERVES Silver Mist Park



## INDEX

Introduction	2
Silver Mist Park	3
Banksia Park	x
Honeymoon Lookout	x
Carrington Park	x
Kiah Lookout	x
Solitary Restaurant environs	x
Leura Park	x
Leura Cascades	x
Peter Carroll Field	x
Gordon Falls Reserve	x
Leura Oval	x
Lyre Bird Dell picnic area	x
Lone Pine Peace Park	x
Unnamed picnic area	x
Leura Cliff Walk Reserve	x
Sublime Point Road Nature Reserve	x
Sublime Point Reserve	x
Dr Alex Allen Park, Katoomba	x
Kingsford Smith Memorial Park	x
Bloome Park, Leura	x
Rest Park, Leura	x
<b>Appendices:</b>	
Historical Context	x
Strategic Context	x

## INTRODUCTION

2 This is the first iteration of a report that will eventually cover all the parks and reserves in the Leura Falls Creek Catchment.

x During the preparation of the **2023/24 Hotspots Survey**, members of the *Leura Falls Creek Catchment Group* were concerned that many of the parks and reserves within the catchment were badly weed infested, in some cases impacting the adjacent National Park.

x In February 2024 the Catchment Group was given a briefing by representatives of BMCC's *Recreation, Aquatics and Cemeteries Branch*, and this was followed up a few weeks later with a smaller informal meeting. It was agreed that it would be useful for the Catchment Group to provide a commentary about potential short-term and longer-term improvements.

x *Silver Mist Park* was selected by the Catchment Group as the first site to be reviewed, and this interim report includes the group's recommendations for this park.

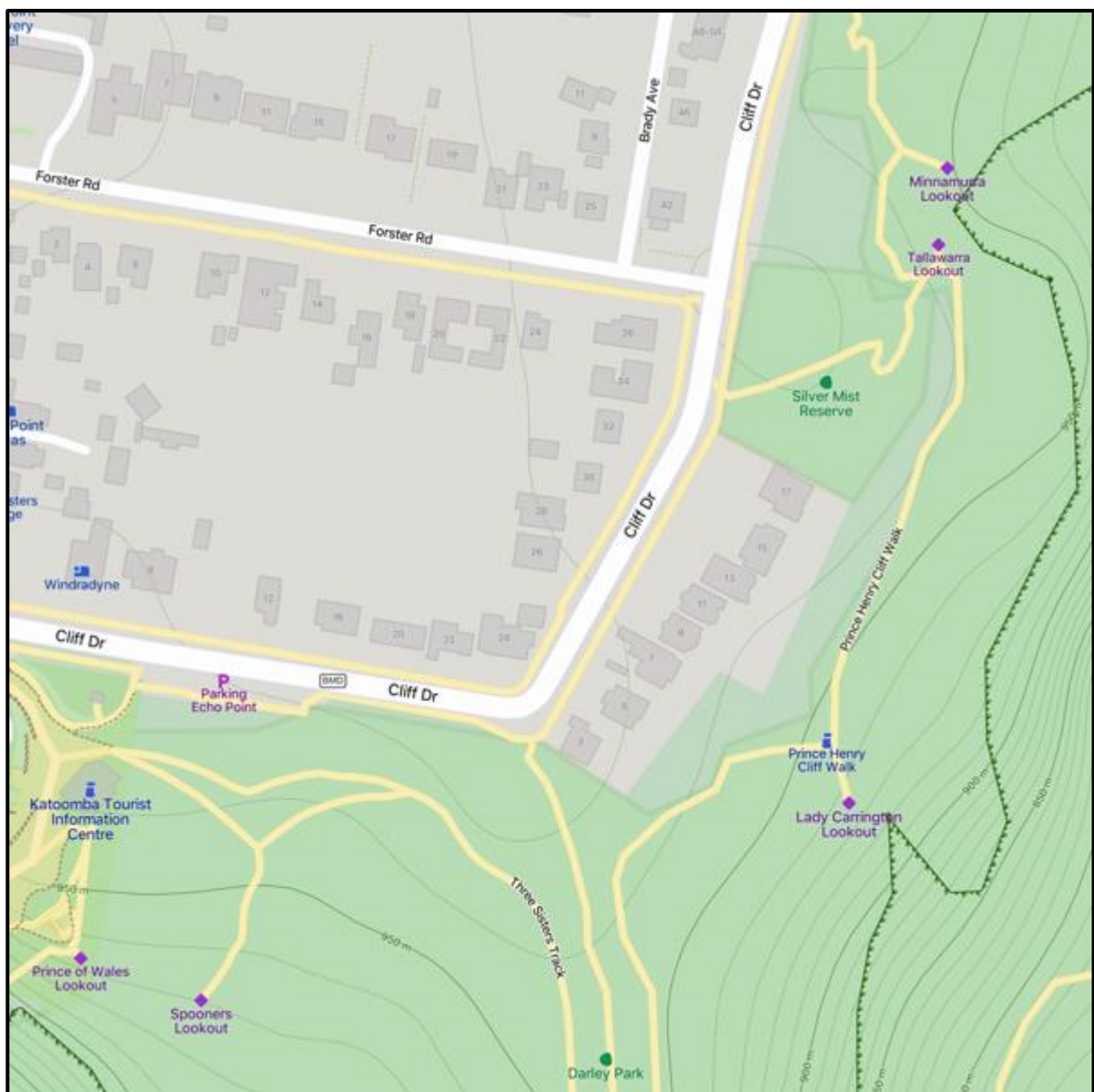
x One issue that affects Silver Mist Park, and most of the escarpment-edge parks and reserves in the catchment, is that they are classified as "*neighbourhood*" parks or reserves. This places them in the lowest priority ranking of the many parks and reserves managed by the BMCC, with implications for funding of maintenance and improvements.

x This categorisation seems inappropriate for facilities in such a spectacular location that have major significance for the local tourist economy, and that function as a major recreational network, linked by the recently completed *Grand Cliff Top Walk*, that is utilised by the local community, together with regional, national, and international visitors.

## SILVER MIST PARK

*“This is a small park off Cliff Drive in Katoomba that is close to Echo Point on the east side. Due to its close proximity, there is high demand for parking and in 2017 the road and footpath was upgraded as well as additional parking meters and landscaping. There are still remnant ornamental plantings and radiata pine that overshadow the park. Several informal tracks lead to the entrance of the cliff top walking track. There is minimal wayfinding signage and outdated tables and seating.”*

Source – Southern Escarpment Masterplan Sites



Basemap - Mapcarta

## Background

Silver Mist Park (or Reserve) is located on three lots near the junction of Cliff Drive and Forster Road. Council obtained a small reserve in 1941 and substantially added to it in 1975.

Source – *Blue Mountains Geographical Encyclopedia, B Fox, M Keats, J Fox, 2018*



Source – *BMCC Digital Mapping*

The site of the park was originally part of the *Lilianfels Estate*, which had been subdivided in 1907-09. The boundaries of the blocks originally extended beyond the escarpment. It is assumed that land from these and adjacent properties was resumed in the 1930s to allow construction of the Prince Henry Cliff Walk.

A cottage known as “*Silver Mist*” and a garage were constructed on the southern block around 1916. The property subsequently changed ownership, and at some time later was destroyed by fire. Remnants of the house and garden are still in evidence, including some beautiful but dilapidated dry-stone retaining walls. There has been some speculation that these retaining walls may have been the work of landscape gardener Paul Sorensen, who had worked on a property he called “*Sylvan Mist*”.

Source – *Blue Mountains Historical Society*

The central lot appears to have been developed as a garden for “*Silver Mist*”, and the northern lot has remained as bushland. This block has recently been partially cleared by Council as an Asset Protection Zone. Several historical sources refer to a *Silver Mist Lookout* being located within *Silver Mist Park*. No evidence of this lookout can be found. Possibly it is an early name for *Tallawarra Lookout* in the National Park.

There is some confusion about whether this is a park or a reserve. The street sign names it *Silver Mist Reserve*. The Plan of Management refers to it as *Silver Mist Park*.

One source states that council signposted *Silver Mist Reserve* within *Silver Mist Park* in 1999.

Source – *Blue Mountains Geographical Encyclopedia, B Fox, M Keats, J Fox, 2018*



## Land Status

The site is zoned in LEP 2015 as an *Environmental Protection Zone*. It is a locally listed heritage item as being contained in *Landscape Conservation Area K007 Jamieson Valley*. It is adjacent to the *Prince Henry Cliff Walk* which is a locally listed heritage item (K014). It is also zoned as *Bushfire Prone Land*.

The park has an approved *Plan of Management*.

## Function

The park is well used by both the local community and tourists, operating at peak times as an overflow for Echo Point. Its primary function is as a picnic area, a passive recreation facility, and a convenient access point to the national park. It is understood that it once had fine views into the valley, but these are now filtered through the trees within the national park.

It has excellent adjacent parking and sealed pathways connecting to Echo Point and the adjacent residential areas. The next stage of the *Great Blue Mountains Trail* should provide improved access for cyclists. It is connected to the *Grand Cliff Top Walk* (Prince Henry Cliff Walk) providing popular walking access to Leura Falls and Echo Point.

## Vegetation

The picnic area at the southern end of the park has an extensive lawn. While it appears to be regularly cut, it is in poor condition, with patches of bare soil, and trip hazards including holes, tree stumps, and partially concealed remnants of "*Silver Mist*".

A major concern is the densely planted border on the southern edge that consists mainly of invasive weed species. There is also a significant weed issue in the large planting beds in the

central portion of the park. Weed species, particularly agapanthus, are escaping into the national park in several locations.

Many of the trees are in poor condition and would benefit from dead-wooding to improve safety and appearance.

There is evidence of some weed removal and replanting, but there is considerable scope for further improvement.

### **Amenities and Infrastructure**

The street boundary has both a hedge and a timber fence. The hedge is well maintained, however gaps in the hedge that provided vistas and added security have recently now received infill planting. The timber fence is in poor condition and is probably unnecessary.

The main entrance to the park is in very poor condition and potentially dangerous.

The main path from this entrance to the national park is also in extremely poor condition.

The park provides two rather outdated picnic tables (one of which is in very poor condition) and some limited seating.

The park does not have playground facilities, is not dog-friendly, and does not have facilities for mobility or visually impaired people. It does not provide toilets, barbecue facilities, shelter, water bubblers, or lighting.

There is a garbage bin, but no recycling bin.

Signage is regulatory, and not very welcoming! There is no wayfinding providing directions to the closest toilets (at nearby Echo Point) or to the national park. There are directional signs at Tallawarra Lookout in the national park to Silver Mist Park.

The park is generally clean and unvandalized, but there is evidence of some anti-social behaviour in the less frequented areas.

### **Recommendations**

The most urgent challenge is the removal of invasive weed species and their replacement with more appropriate plants. One option to do this would be to organise a session involving BMCC personnel, NPWS personnel, and bushcare volunteers, based on the recent successful event at the intersection of Kurrawan Street and the Cliff Drive.

A second urgent challenge is to improve the safety of the main entrance, path to the national park, and to remove the trip hazards in the lawn areas. The installation of appropriate wayfinding would also be beneficial.

In the longer term, the park needs a comprehensive rejuvenation. This would best be guided by the preparation of a simple visionary masterplan. This may be achieved through the preparation of a Locality Plan as proposed as part of the Southern Escarpment masterplanning process.

One opportunity that could be considered is to extend the park into the recently cleared Asset Protection Zone at the northern end of the site, with new picnic facilities and a loop path.



*Regulatory signs at the park entrance*



*New planting in the hedge gaps*



*Unsafe entrance to park*



*Front fence in poor condition*



*Weed infestation in the southern border*



*Picnic table in poor condition*



*Weed regrowth in the recently cleared APZ.*



*Dry-stone retaining walls in poor condition*



*Directional signs to the park in the national park*



*A strange artifact – a bath buried in one of the paths!*



*Anti-social behaviour! – bongs in a secluded part of the park*



*Weed infestation in the national park*



## **PARKS AND RESERVES**

### **In the Leura Falls Creek Catchment**

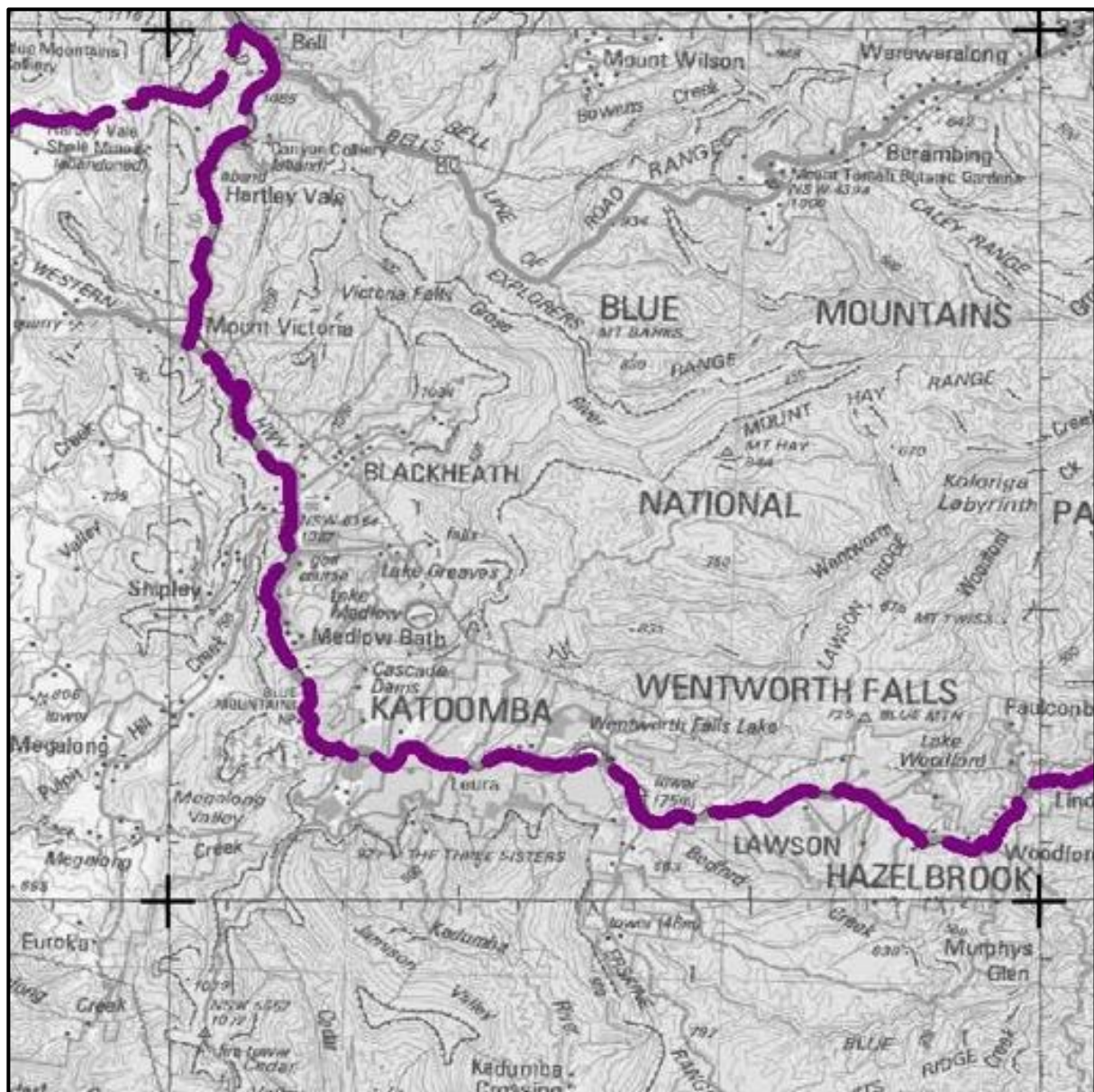
#### **APPENDIX ONE**

<b>Historical Context</b>	x
Early European Exploration	x
The Western Road	x
The Railway	x
Coal and Shale Mining	x
Katoomba	x
Leura	x
Parks and Reserves	x
Walking Tracks	x
Recreation Health and Tourism	x
Local Government	x
The Cliff Drive	x
Prince Henry Cliff Walk	x
Blue Mountains National Park	x

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Blue Mountains have been inhabited for millennia by the *Gundungurra* and *Dharug* people. For Dharug and Gundungurra People, *Ngurra* (“Country”) takes in everything within the physical, cultural and spiritual landscape – landforms, waters, air, trees, rocks, plants, animals, foods, medicines, minerals, stories and special places. It includes cultural practice, kinship, knowledge, songs, stories and art, as well as spiritual beings, and people: past, present and future.

The *Gundungurra* creation story of the Blue Mountains tells that Dreaming creatures *Mirigan* and *Garangatch*, half fish and half reptile, fought an epic battle which scarred the landscape into the Jamison Valley. Examples of Aboriginal habitation can be found in many places. The *Lyrebird Dell Walking Track* leads through spectacular gorges to a huge sandstone cave, which was used as an Aboriginal shelter dating back more than 12,000 years. The Leura Falls Creek Catchment is located within Gundungurra Country.



Detail from *Schedule A to the Gundungurra Indigenous Land Use Agreement Area, 2014*

## **EARLY EUROPEAN EXPLORATION**

The early settlers in Sydney were driven by curiosity and the need for more land into several attempts to cross the Mountains. This was to prove a difficult task. Many journeys were frustrated by a tortuous succession of deep valleys, sheer cliffs and thick vegetation. The pessimism of Governor King's 1805 despatch to Earl Camden in which he judged any further attempt to penetrate the "*confused and barren Assemblances of Mountains*" to be "*as chimerical as useless*".

That a region so abundant in varied flora and fauna could be described as one "*which Men, Animals, Birds and Vegetation has ever been Strangers to*" is illustrative of the alien and mysterious appearance it presented to the imagination of the early settlers.

The eventual crossing of the Mountains in 1813 by Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth, was an event of the greatest significance in the Colony's early development.

Primary source - "*The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Nomination*", New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, in association with Environment Australia, 1998

## **THE WESTERN ROAD**

After Surveyor-General George Evans confirmed the Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth crossing, the process of harnessing the Blue Mountains to the service of civilisation began. In 1815 Cox constructed his rough cart road which linked the coastal settlement to the rich western pastures, generating an expansion inland that resulted in the growth of the pastoral industry and, in the 1850's, the discovery and exploitation of the western goldfields. For fifty years the road gave the Blue Mountains their *raison d'être* in the eyes of the colonists and the tentative efforts at settlement that began on the Mountains in this period all emerged in close association with it. The early military posts and inns offered travellers the opportunity to congregate in security when breaking their journey for the night and, in many cases, established the foundations for later town development.

Primary source - "*The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Nomination*", New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, in association with Environment Australia, 1998

## **THE RAILWAY**

By the late 1860's, when the construction of the Western Railway reinforced the Blue Mountains' function as a major communication artery and reduced the sense of distance from Sydney Town, the years had wrought significant changes in the colony. As the sense of European man's permanency in Australia grew, people began looking at the Blue Mountains from a different perspective, a perspective that included a growing appreciation of the physical characteristics of the Mountains in their own right.

In the decades following the establishment of the railway, the Blue Mountains experienced a rapid and dramatic growth in human settlement. As their British counterparts in India had sought the cooler climate in the hills of Darjeeling and Simla, so the doyens of Sydney's political and business world began establishing country homes in the Mountains or coming to spend the summer in the gracious and fashionable hotels and guesthouses erected to meet the new demand.

Source - "*The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Nomination*", New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, in association with Environment Australia, 1998

## COAL AND SHALE MINING IN KATOOMBA

The imminence of the railway also stimulated an increase in geological exploration in the region. For the Blue Mountains, however, this was not to lead to the concentration of heavy industry that developed in Lithgow, but rather to smaller scale coal and shale mining enterprises around the cliffs of, particularly, the Jamison and Megalong Valleys. In the Katoomba region these mining activities, though somewhat inconsistent in their success, had an important bearing upon the future of the area. From them emerged the town of Katoomba which was to become known as the "*Queen City of the Hills*", and, by opening access down the cliffs to many of the surrounding valleys during their operations, they helped lay the foundations upon which the future success of the town, and indeed the region, was to depend. The future development of the Blue Mountains was to be bound up with recreation and, in particular, with its commercial expression, "tourism".

Source - "*The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Nomination*", New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, in association with Environment Australia, 1998

## KATOOMBA

Katoomba is the largest and most intensively developed town in the Blue Mountains, providing the civic, commercial and tourist focus for the area. It was also one of the last to be established, with the first permanent settlement being established in the 1870s when coal and shale oil mining industries were established in the valleys to the south.

Small villages evolved near the base and top of the escarpment to provide accommodation for the miners, and over the next 15 years a string of small businesses servicing travellers on the western road was established along the road. Goods trains stopped to take on loose stone ballast (hence the early name for the area as "*The Crushers*"); but no station existed.

The scattered pattern of development along the main road changed rapidly with the opening of the railway station in 1891.

In 1883 the Government had seen the potential for a more permanent settlement in the area and released a Crown Subdivision Plan for the new village of Katoomba. The village was located on the northern side of the railway station and main Bathurst Road and well away from the mines and existing settlement. Most of the subdivision was made available as a single release, but land sales were slow due at least in part to competition from the private town that was being released concurrently on the southern side.

The land south of the railway was owned by entrepreneurs who were quick to provide a range of commercial and cultural infrastructure for the growing tourist population. Local mine owner John Britty North owned what became the western edge of the town between the railway line and the valley below the escarpment; James Henry Neale owned almost the whole of the area occupied by the town today; and Benjamin Backhouse owned the valley to the east below the area known as *The Crusher*".

This southern area was mostly flatter and easier to develop than the terrain to the north; but the main impetus to its development was the proximity to the scenic attractions of the escarpments to the south.

The early releases on the southern side included JB North's subdivision of the head of the valley adjacent to the Bathurst Road. Neale built a house (*Froma*) near the highest point of his property but sold his extensive holding to Frederick Clissold of Ashfield in 1881.

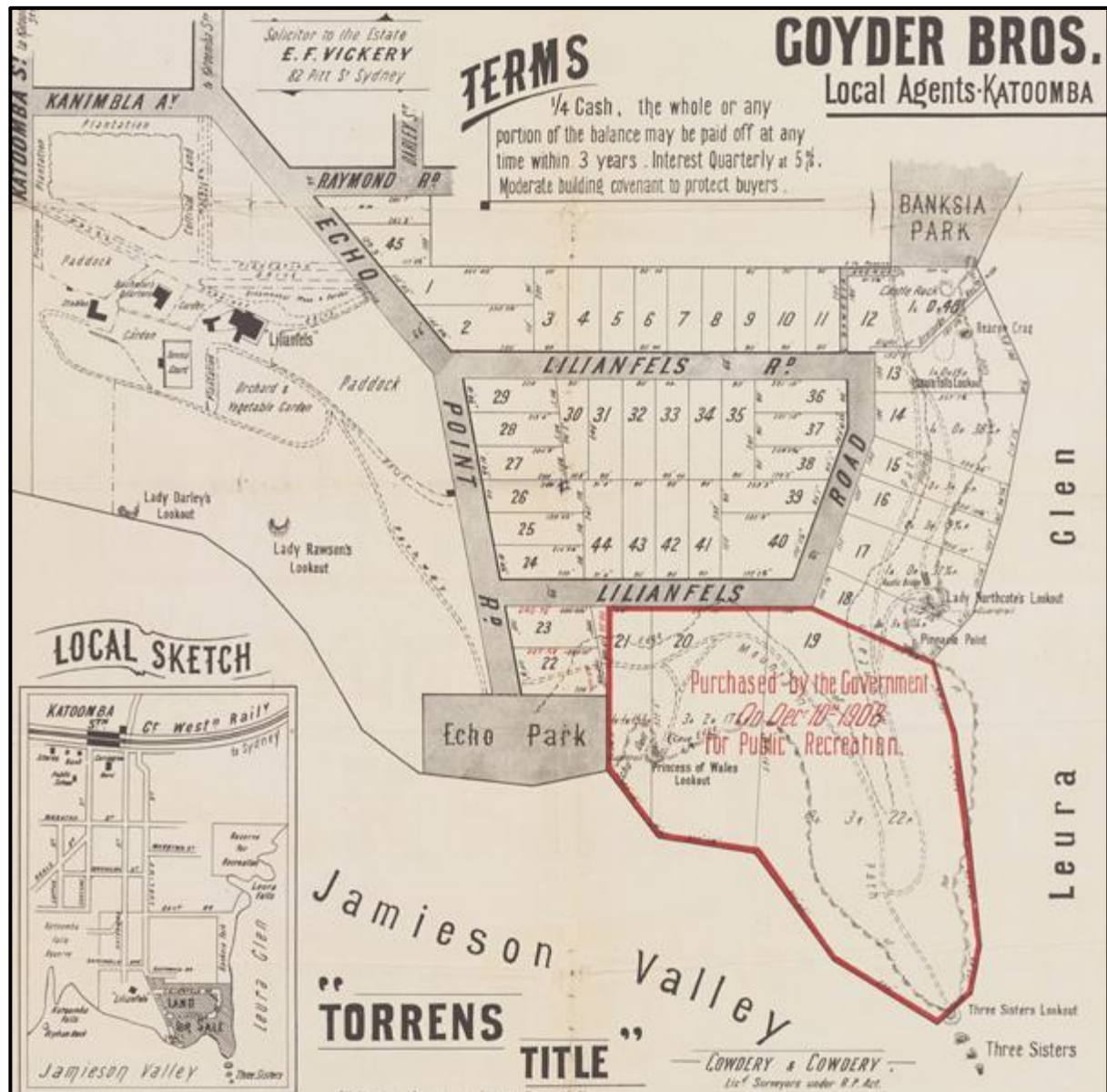


Detail from 1890 Map of Municipal District of Katoomba showing south Katoomba and Leura

Clissold was a wool-merchant and developer who quickly saw the potential of the landscape of the Blue Mountains for the growing commercial tourism industry. He established the *Great Western Hotel* in 1882 (renamed *The Carrington* in 1887), a grand resort hotel close to the railway station and then subdivided the surrounding land to create the commercial core of the town.

This led to a flurry of construction by small developers to provide accommodation, services and entertainment for a range of holiday makers and tourists. These included hotels, large guesthouses, smaller private hotels and guesthouses, holiday flats and individual houses built for casual letting. This concentrated period of development resulted in a consistency of building form and density that can still be seen and interpreted in the landscape today. The nature of accommodation continued to evolve in response to the changing demands of visitors, with motels constructed both on the highway and at the southern end of Katoomba Street in the 1950s and 60s and more recently a revival in Bed and Breakfast and 'boutique' hotel accommodation throughout the town.

Much of the southern end of Katoomba adjacent to the escarpment was within the *Lilianfels Estate*, the mountain retreat of the Chief Justice of NSW, Sir Frederick Darley, which was built in 1889-90. He was obliged to sell much of the Estate from 1907-9 and the area along the clifftop was purchased by the Government and dedicated as a public park. The northern side of the Estate was offered for general subdivision. Some of the property boundaries at that time extended beyond the escarpment into *Leura Glen*.



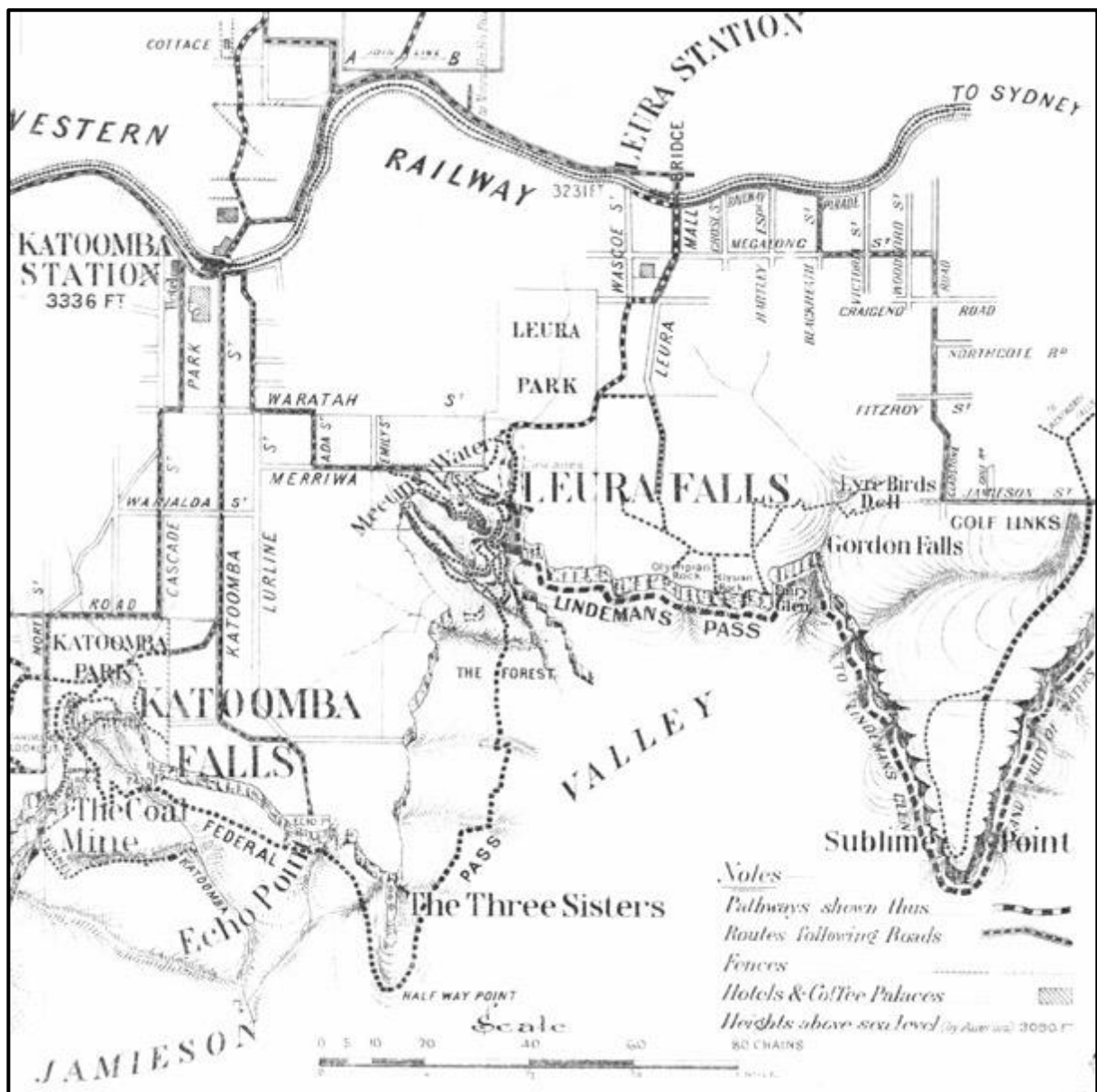
Detail from Auction Poster, *Lilianfels Estate*, 1909

The presence of *Lilianfels* increased the desirability of the southern outskirts of the village and it became dotted with guesthouses set in rich gardens with courts for activities such as tennis and croquet. These were gradually replaced by residential subdivision.

Source – Draft Heritage Data Form, Blue Mountains Heritage, 2016

## LEURA

The township of Leura is located immediately to the east of Katoomba, and although it reads as a separate settlement when travelling along the highway, the two are linked through the head of the valley that lies between the two towns. One of the most important figures in the development of Katoomba, Frederick Clissold, was also responsible for the planning and subdivision of Leura. Development was slightly slower in the Leura area however due to the lack of a train halt or station until 1892. Although the town also provided access to sites such as Leura Falls, the character of the area was much more that of the semi-permanent and exclusively private 'summer retreat' rather than as a place for mass tourism and this distinction of Leura as in an exclusive residential area continues to define the cultural landscape today.



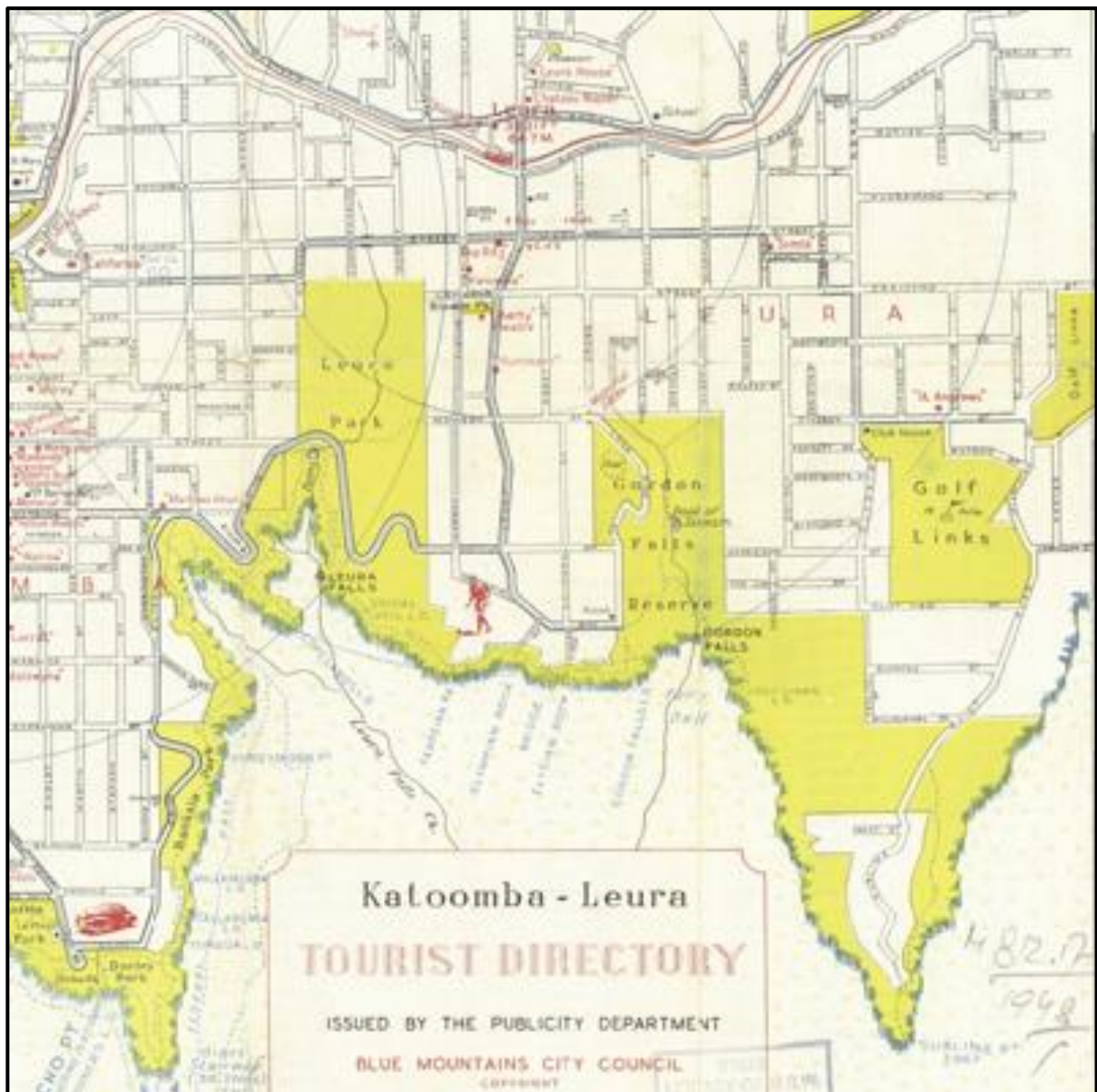
Detail from Tourists' Sketch Map of Katoomba District, 1912

The town includes a small commercial area on Leura Mall in a similar position to that seen at Katoomba. Leura also provided a range of accommodation for tourists, including the *Ritz Hotel*, the grand *Palace Hotel* and a range of guest houses, but these were not on the scale of



In 1888 public parks were proclaimed in the Katoomba/Leura area - Katoomba Falls Reserve, Echo Park, Banksia Park, Leura Park, and Gordon Falls Reserve. As was the case elsewhere in the Blue Mountains, trustees were appointed by the NSW Department of Lands. to administer these reserves. On 10<sup>th</sup> March 1911 the new Katoomba Council became the trustee for the Katoomba/Leura reserves, however the trustees in other locations continued to administer the reserves for a few more decades.

Reserve trustees had virtually complete freedom in the way their grants were spent, and could implement some quite remarkable projects, often under adverse circumstances. One example is the track to Leura Forest constructed in 1893. A crisis was precipitated in 1903 by the failure of the government to supply its promised grant of £240 for the Katoomba reserves, resulting in staff retrenchments.



1948 *Tourist Directory* showing Gordon Falls Reserve extending to Sublime Point.

Most of these parks and reserves were originally considerably larger than their current form. The construction of the Cliff Drive in the 1930s and 1940s impacted many of the reserves, particularly Banksia Park. Then, after the creation of the Blue Mountains National Park in

1959, the management of substantial portions of these reserves was transferred to the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. Banksia Park has now virtually disappeared.

The boundaries drawn up at that time were poorly resolved and have created ongoing management difficulties.

Primary source – *Walking Track Heritage Study*, Jim Smith, 1998

## **WALKING TRACKS**

This region has the densest network of constructed tourist tracks in Australia.

Blue Mountains cliff lines have always constrained human movements. The earliest settlers in the region saw Aboriginal people moving between the valleys and ridge tops using the rare natural passes through the cliffs. They called these passes '*Blacks' ladders*'. One of these, the *Devils Hole*, a place of Aboriginal mythological significance, was upgraded and incorporated into the tourist walking track network, after being used by shale miners between 1892 and 1897.

Both Aboriginal and settler communities mined for minerals exposed in the sedimentary layers of the cliffs. Aboriginal people extracted chert for toolmaking and lumps of sandstone for the portable grindstones used to sharpen basalt axes in the granite country of the Blue Mountains valleys. Non-Aboriginal people extracted some sandstone for grindstones to sharpen steel axes and for building stone but were more interested in the energy containing shale and coal layers. Physical evidence of Aboriginal mining and trade in Blue Mountains chert is subtle but the abandoned infrastructure for the transport of the carbonaceous minerals is dramatic. Some of the miners' access routes and railway lines were incorporated into the tourist track system. The evocative ruins of unnamed, unmapped and unrecorded miners' ghost towns lie close to ancient Aboriginal campsites.

The earliest walking tracks in this location were constructed by wealthy landowners. Sir Frederick Darley started construction of walking tracks at Echo Point in 1889, and James Henry North constructed tracks from his home, *Froma*, to Katoomba Falls and Leura Falls. The tracks constructed by North were subsequently destroyed, swallowed by the residential development of Katoomba.

Walking tracks specifically for tourist use were designed and constructed by local volunteer trusts who administered small annual grants from the NSW Lands Department. Trustees were typically local small businessmen who supplemented the small annual grants with their own locally raised funds and volunteer labour. They overcame some quite extraordinary obstacles to access the 'beauty spots' of each town. Reserve development followed a pattern, with the first tracks accessing lookouts, then the tops and bottoms of waterfalls. Two waterfalls would then be joined by 'passes' at the top and bottom of the cliff line. These large loops would be infilled with a maze of tracks connecting natural features of interest.

A significant aspect of these tracks is that they were not brutally imposed on the landscape. Natural organic materials such as local wood and stone were used whenever possible, and the constructed features were designed to blend in well with the landscape.

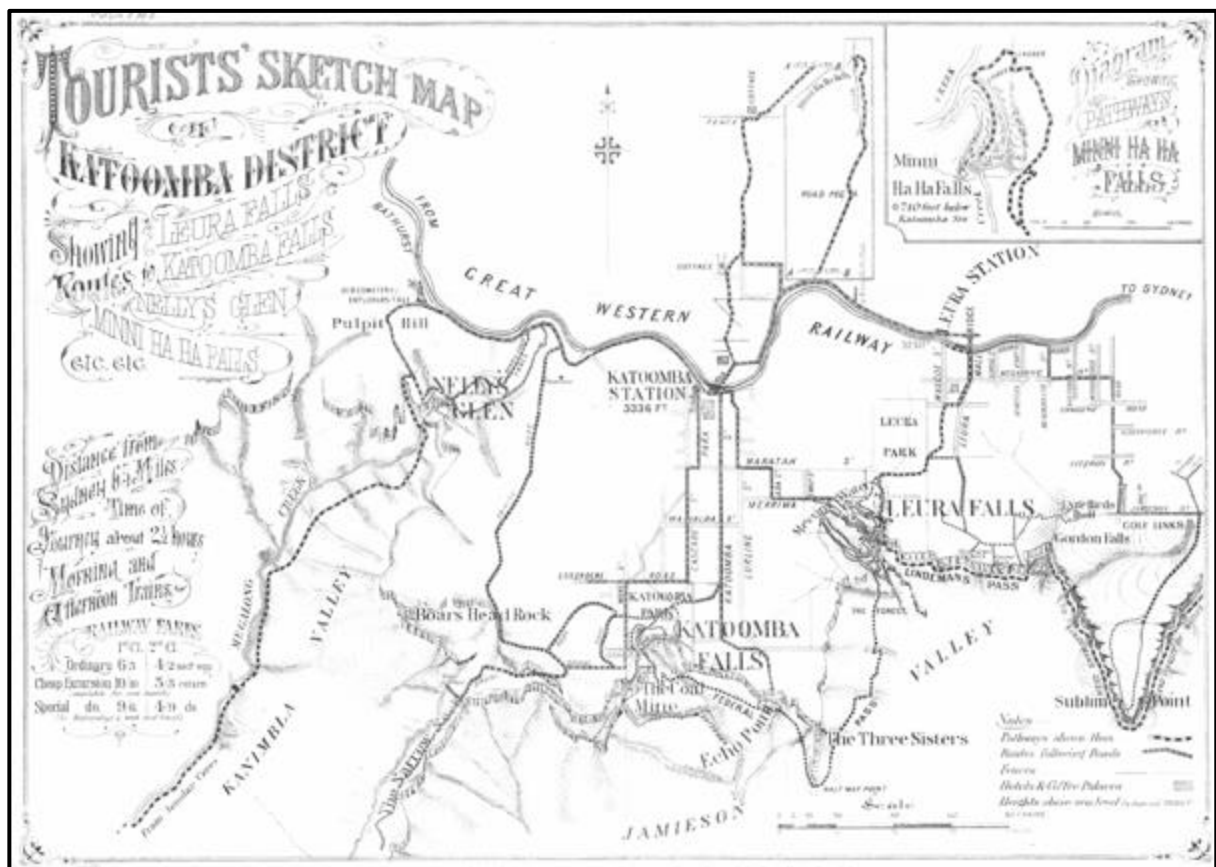
Features of Blue Mountains walking tracks include fine stonemasonry, dry stone walling, elaborate drainage systems, historic carved signage, wooden steps, ladders and bridges and early lookout railings and fences. Timber and rock seats, tables, fireplaces, monuments and

memorials, a wide variety of shelters, toilets, metal structures, dams and wells, tunnels and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal archaeological relics are found in association with the tracks.

A new track from Leura Falls to the Leura Forest was opened about 1892 and to join Katoomba Falls to Leura Forest the Federal Pass was opened in 1900, planned by the Katoomba trustees. The next major addition was the construction of the Prince Henry Cliff Walk in the 1930s.

The new sport of nocturnal bushwalking became popular in the 1930s with the installation of floodlighting at Leura Cascades as far as the top of Bridal Veil Falls. The ranger reported that on Christmas night 1933 there were over 2000 people at Leura Cascades. He said *“that on most nights anything up to 200 people have been stationed at the bottom of the Cascades before seven at night...awaiting the lights.”* After the success of this installation, floodlighting was installed at Katoomba Cascades and Falls, Orphan Rock, and the start of the Federal Pass track as far as York Cave at the base of Furber’s steps.

Primary source - *The Blue Mountains Walking Tracks Heritage Study, Jim Smith*



Tourists Sketch Map, 1919, showing the extent of the walking track network



## RECREATION, HEALTH AND TOURISM

In 1879 the official Railway Guide of New South Wales expressed the motivations behind the contemporary influx of people to the Blue Mountains as a desire for *"re-invigoration of mountain air and the refined pleasure afforded by the contemplation of beautiful scenery"*. The struggle to survive and to establish a civilized foothold in a strange and seemingly hostile environment had subsided, at least in the coastal region, and the obstructive and alien aspect of the landscape, epitomised especially by the Blue Mountains in the early years, had begun to soften. The wealthy and well-educated elite who, in the late nineteenth century, contemplated nature from the cliff edge or sought the mysteries of winding bush tracks, changed eventually into the middle class honeymooners and holidaymakers of the 1920's and 1930's who toured the "sights" in their charabancs and then went ice skating or to the new moving pictures. These latter visitors participated, in the "boom" years, to the growth of the towns in the Upper Mountains, but they too gave way in the post-war years to the day trippers and busloads of overseas visitors.

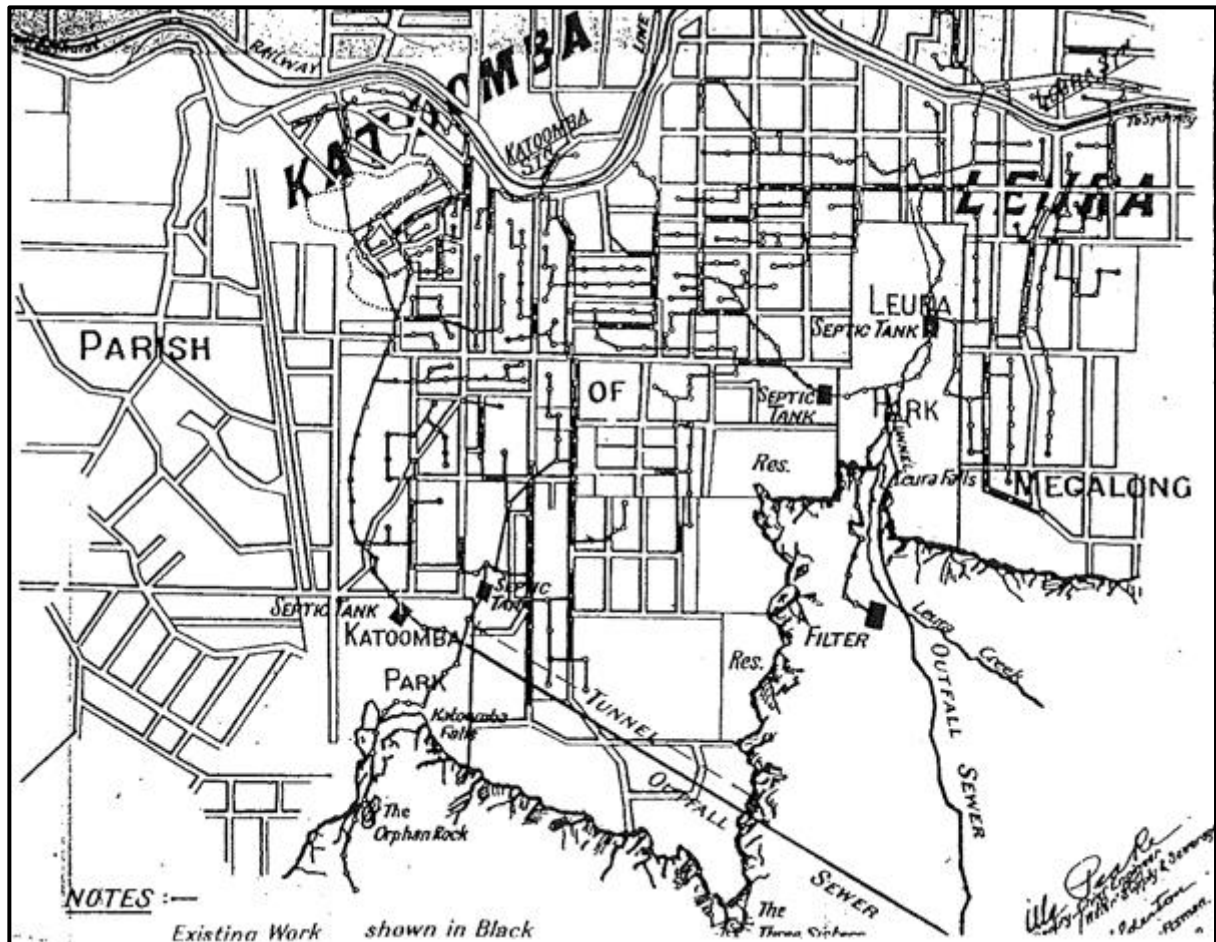
Primary source – *"Blue Mountains Heritage Study"*, Croft and Associates in association with Meredith Walker, 1982

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The first step towards local government in the Mountains was taken in 1889 when Leura and Katoomba became the Municipality of Katoomba. This reflected the rapid rise to prominence of Katoomba because of its mining ventures combined with its success as a tourist mecca. The existence of an elected council, with responsibility for local amenities, helps to explain why Katoomba had a reticulated water supply (after 1907), why a gas works was installed in 1906, why sewerage was introduced on a wide scale between 1907 and 1913, and why public baths were constructed near the Meeting of the Waters in 1913.



*Katoomba Baths and Chelmsford Bridge* – Photographer – Harry Phillips



Detail from *Katoomba Sewerage – Proposed Additions, 1920*.

Following the passage of the *Shires Act* and *Local Government Extension Act, 1905-6*, Katoomba Municipality had remained an urban body, and a shire was created to administer the large area of undeveloped and rural land in the mountains. The new body was initially called Kanimbla Shire in 1906 but within a year changed its name to the Blue Mountains Shire. The boundaries of the Blue Mountains Shire varied over the years because of a bewildering series of mergers and readjustments.

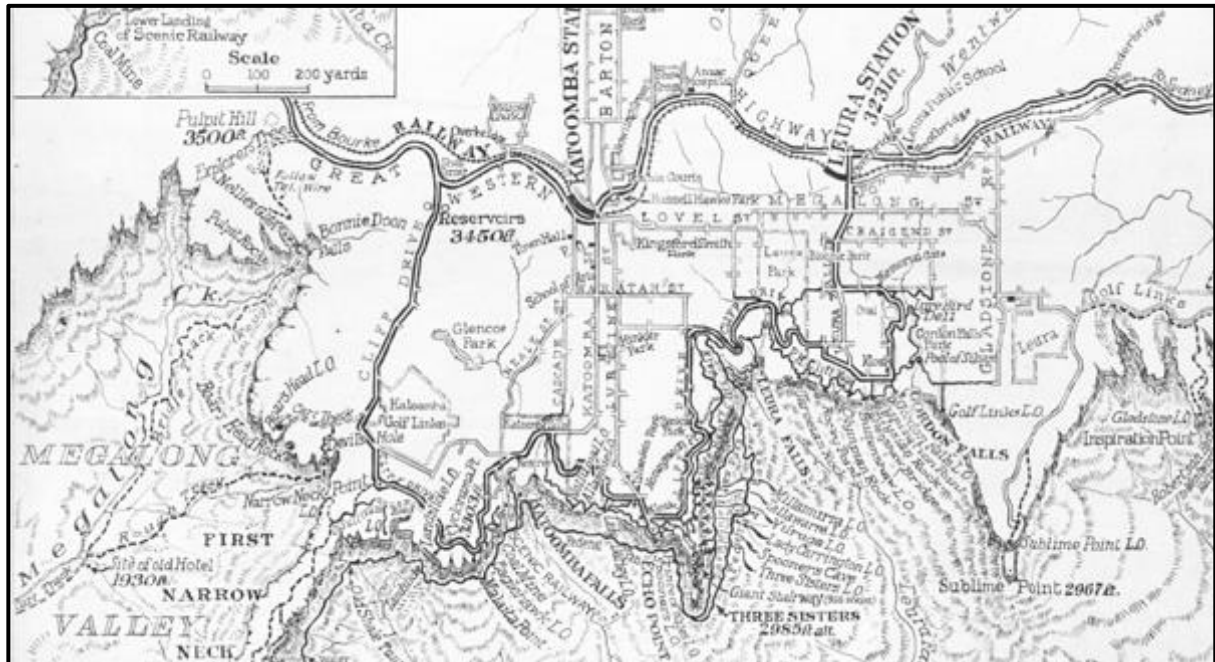
In 1946 Katoomba achieved the distinction of City status but within twelve months had amalgamated with the shire to form the Blue Mountains Municipality which then in 1947 became the City of the Blue Mountains. After acquiring part of Colo Shire in 1960, part of Penrith City in 1963 and part of Windsor Municipality in 1980, the city took its present form.

Source – *Review of Heritage Register and Heritage History*, R Ian Jack, 2002

### THE CLIFF DRIVE

The idea for a Cliff Drive in Katoomba was first suggested in 1923 and was taken up again by Ald. W. Soper in 1933. It was completed in 3 stages. Stage One, costing £16,000, from Shell Corner to Echo Point was opened in Sept 1937. Stage Two from Echo Point to Leura Falls was opened in Jan 1940 at a cost of £57,828 which was provided by the NSW Government. Unemployment relief workers carried out the construction. Two controversies occurred during the building of Stage Two. There were complaints about the destruction of trees, and the Government threatened to withdraw financial support due to the need for war funding.

An exact date for the opening of Stage Three, from Leura to Gordon Falls has not been located. The *Open Road* of 22 August 1940 states that from Leura Falls ...'A hair pin bend and the Drive links up with the road which leads to Gordon Falls'. However, in 1944 a list of proposed post war reconstruction works listed: *Completion of Cliff Drive to Gordon Falls, as originally planned, £28,000*. The original route of the Cliff Drive first appears in a 1942 tourist map. It differs from current route through Leura.



Detail from *Tourist Map of Katoomba and Leura, 1942*

One of the concepts of the Cliff Drive was the provision of parking areas where motorists could alight for short walks to lookouts. *Honeymoon Lookout* and *Kiah Lookout* were constructed as part of Stage two. Short tracks were made connecting sections of Prince Henry Cliff Walk to Cliff Drive, particularly around Katoomba and Leura Falls in line with the philosophy of providing a variety of short round walks from car parks.

During 1974, development beside Cliff Drive became of concern to Blue Mountains City Council and the local community. Council attempted to rezone blocks of land adjacent to Cliff Drive to prevent development to preserve the views. A proposed Buddhist retreat caused some controversy but was eventually approved. Blue Mountains City Council did purchase 12 lots adjacent to Cliff Drive and planned to buy 4 others.

The original concept of Cliff Drive was that motorised tourists could enjoy valley views while driving. By the 1980s tree growth made this difficult. Blue Mountains City Council attempted to restore the views by cutting trees at locations including Honeymoon Lookout but was criticised by the advisory committee for the reserve and accused of vandalism.

Extract – *Draft Heritage Data Form, Blue Mountains Heritage, 2016*

### **THE PRINCE HENRY CLIFF WALK**

The key to the construction of the Prince Henry Cliff Walk was the need to resume clifftop land which had been alienated, to create a corridor for the walk. Local discussion and council resolutions about the need to prevent alienation of the clifftops had occurred since the

1890's. However, little was done apart from the purchasing of land in the Echo Point area when the *Lilianfels* estate was subdivided in 1908 and 1920.

In 1923 Dr Deck offered 3,000 feet (about 1km) of cliff frontages to Katoomba Council, which was accepted. In 1926 Goyder Bros and Mr. G. Lord offered cliff frontages between Gordon and Katoomba Falls to Council. A £5000 loan was obtained to purchase this, but the sale did not proceed.

In 1932 Alderman Soper called for a report on the possibility of creating both a Cliff Drive and Cliff top walk. It was found that only £1000 was available for land resumption. The local member, Mr Joseph Jackson, was approached to ask the Minister for Lands, Mr Buttenshaw for assistance. The latter sent departmental surveyors to determine the need for resumptions and it was found that £1750 would be sufficient. The Government supplied £850 and the council £900. A special Land Board hearing was held to determine compensation for landowners.

In August 1934 the King's permission was obtained to name the walk after Prince Henry (The Duke of Gloucester). It was hoped by the locals that the latter would be able to open the walk. However, the royal person stopped only 20 minutes at the station and the opening was performed on the 20/10/1934 by Eric Spooner, Minister for Local Government. The walk and its extension in 1936 linked some existing lookouts and used existing segments of walk that had been built around the top of Katoomba Falls and Leura Falls from the 1880's. However numerous new short side tracks were built to lookouts from the Prince Henry Walk.

It is of interest that William Blakely of the Royal Botanic Gardens was commissioned both to write a booklet on the flora of the Katoomba Council Area (published 1933) and to select Aboriginal names for the new lookouts on the Prince Henry Cliff Walk. These names were selected from books of 'generic' Aboriginal words from all over Australia and have no local significance.

The opening of the second section of the walk, from Leura Cascades to Gordon Falls was performed by the Hon. E A. Buttenshaw, Minister for Lands, at Elysian lookout on 16/5/1936. The bridge halfway along this new track was named Buttenshaw Bridge.

The design of the Prince Henry Cliff Walk established a new principle in walking track design. The large number of entrance / exit points to the walk, the numerous optional side tracks to lookouts and the many seats along the walk allowed visitors a very high degree of choice in the way they used the track. In contrast to the classical linear layout of most of the State's walking tracks, the Prince Henry Cliff Walk was the first to be designed to allow visitors to "customise" their experience of a walking track. Future walking track construction in the region and the State was influenced by the new design concept of flexibility in visitor usage.

In 1998 Blue Mountains City Councillor Terri Hamilton raised concerns about the poor condition of parts of Prince Henry Cliff Walk. These came before Blue Mountains City Council meetings on 13 October 1998 and 23 February 1999. Council passed a motion calling for a rationalisation of the boundaries between Blue Mountains City Council and the NPWS "*to ensure that the entire Prince Henry Cliff Walk is incorporated into the National Park*". To date this rationalisation of boundaries has not occurred.

The Prince Henry Cliff Walk now forms a major part of the recently completed *Grand Clifftop Walk* from Wentworth Falls to Katoomba, a major initiative funded by the NSW Government.

Primary Source – *Draft Heritage Data Form, Blue Mountains Heritage, 2016*

## **BLUE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK**

The outstanding natural and cultural significance of the area has long been recognised. The escarpment scenery of the Grose and Jamison Valleys was given formal recognition in the 1800s, with several small “*Sights Reserves*” being declared in the vicinity of the upper Blue Mountains towns on the initiative of local communities, individuals and government. A number of these reserves were managed by community-based groups until they were added to Blue Mountains National Park.

In 1875 the entire Grose River catchment upstream from beneath Mt Hay was reserved from further sale. While the official purpose was to safeguard the water quality in the river, the primary motivation was that the area constituted “a national spectacle”. The reservation remained in force until the national park was created.

The seeds of the current park were sown in the 1920s, when bushwalker and conservationist Myles Dunphy started preparing a proposal for a Greater Blue Mountains National Park. The concept was given impetus in 1931-32, when a committee representing the Mountain Trails Club, Sydney Bush Walkers, Boy Scouts Association, Wild Life Preservation Society and others paid a farmer to relinquish his rights to a lease in what became known as the Blue Gum Forest, in the Grose Valley, and persuaded the Lands Department to convert the lease to a recreation reserve.

In 1938, preparation for the construction of Warragamba Dam began and resumption of land within the catchment over the following years assisted in the protection of these areas.

It was not until 1959, however, that an area of 62,000 hectares was dedicated as **Blue Mountains National Park**. Extensive additions were made to the park during the 1970s and 1980s, including some areas within the Warragamba catchment which are still jointly managed with the Sydney Catchment Authority.

The Blue Mountains National Park is one of the eight protected areas that, in 2000, was inscribed to form part of the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Greater Blue Mountains Area.



**PARKS AND RESERVES**  
**In the Leura Falls Creek Catchment**

**APPENDIX TWO**

<b>Strategic Context</b>	x
Climate Change	x
Categorisation of Parks and Reserves	x
Heritage	x
Southern Escarpment Masterplan	x
Katoomba Masterplan	x
Plans of Management	x
Great Blue Mountains Trail (Upper Section)	x
Grand Cliff Top Walk	x
Neighbourhood Parks Program	x

## STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The management of parks and reserves within the Leura Falls Creek Catchment is affected by the following overarching initiatives, issues and constraints:

- Climate change
- Categorisation of parks and reserves
- Heritage
- Southern Escarpment Masterplan
- Katoomba Masterplan
- Plans of Management
- Great Blue Mountains Trail
- Grand Clifftop Walk

### CLIMATE CHANGE

Many parts of the world, including the Blue Mountains, are experiencing changing weather patterns with increasing damage from storm events and bushfires.

The Leura Falls Creek catchment has recently been impacted by extreme damage from storm events to the Leura Cascades Reserve, and along Linda Creek in the National Park resulting in extended closures and costly repairs. Roads, culverts, walking tracks, bridges and other infrastructure is being impacted, as is the natural environment.

The installation by Council of rock lining and biofilters in several locations on watercourses within the Leura Falls Creek Catchment has helped reduce the impacts of stormwater flow, however the extension of this program is considered highly desirable, most significantly at the eastern end of Gordon Road and the Banksia Streamlet swamp.



Recent storm damage to Linda Creek.

## CATEGORISATION OF PARKS AND RESERVES

Council's *Open Space and Recreation Strategic Plan 2018-2028* categorises parks as:

- Regional Parks
- District Parks
- Local Parks
- Neighbourhood Parks

Reserves are categorised as:

- Regional Bushland Reserves
- Local Bushland Reserves
- Neighbourhood Bushland Reserves

All the parks and reserves within the Leura Falls Creek Catchment are categorised as “neighbourhood”, except for Sublime Point Reserve which is categorised as a “local bushland reserve”. There are two sporting facilities in within the catchment. Peter Carroll Oval (located within Leura Park) is categorised as “district sporting facility”. Leura Oval is categorised as a “local sporting facility”. This categorisation is significant in that it affects the allocation of resources for maintenance and upgrading. The current system of categorisation does not seem to reflect the significance of parks and reserves to the tourist economy, to their significance as part of an inter-connected network of escarpment-edge recreation and tourism facilities, and their heritage significance. Without exception, the parks and reserves within the catchment are in a substandard condition.

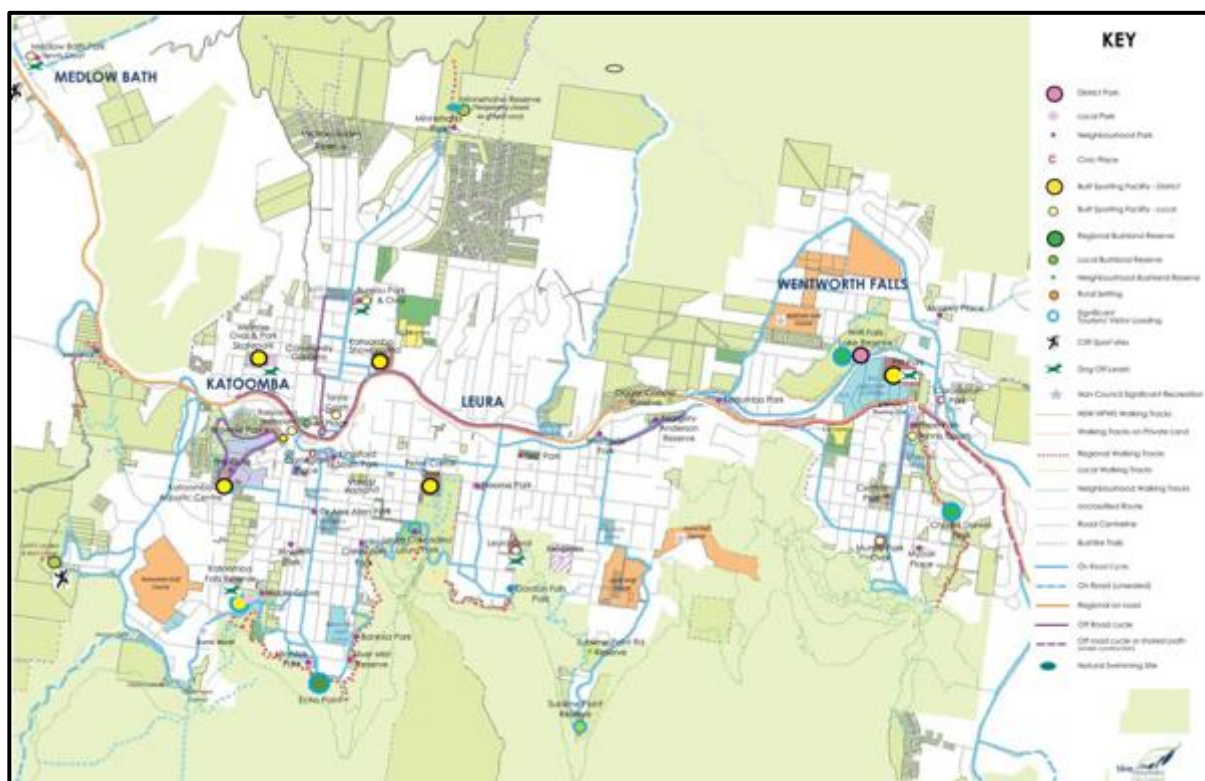


Diagram from the *Open Space and Recreation Strategic Plan 2018-2028*.

## HERITAGE

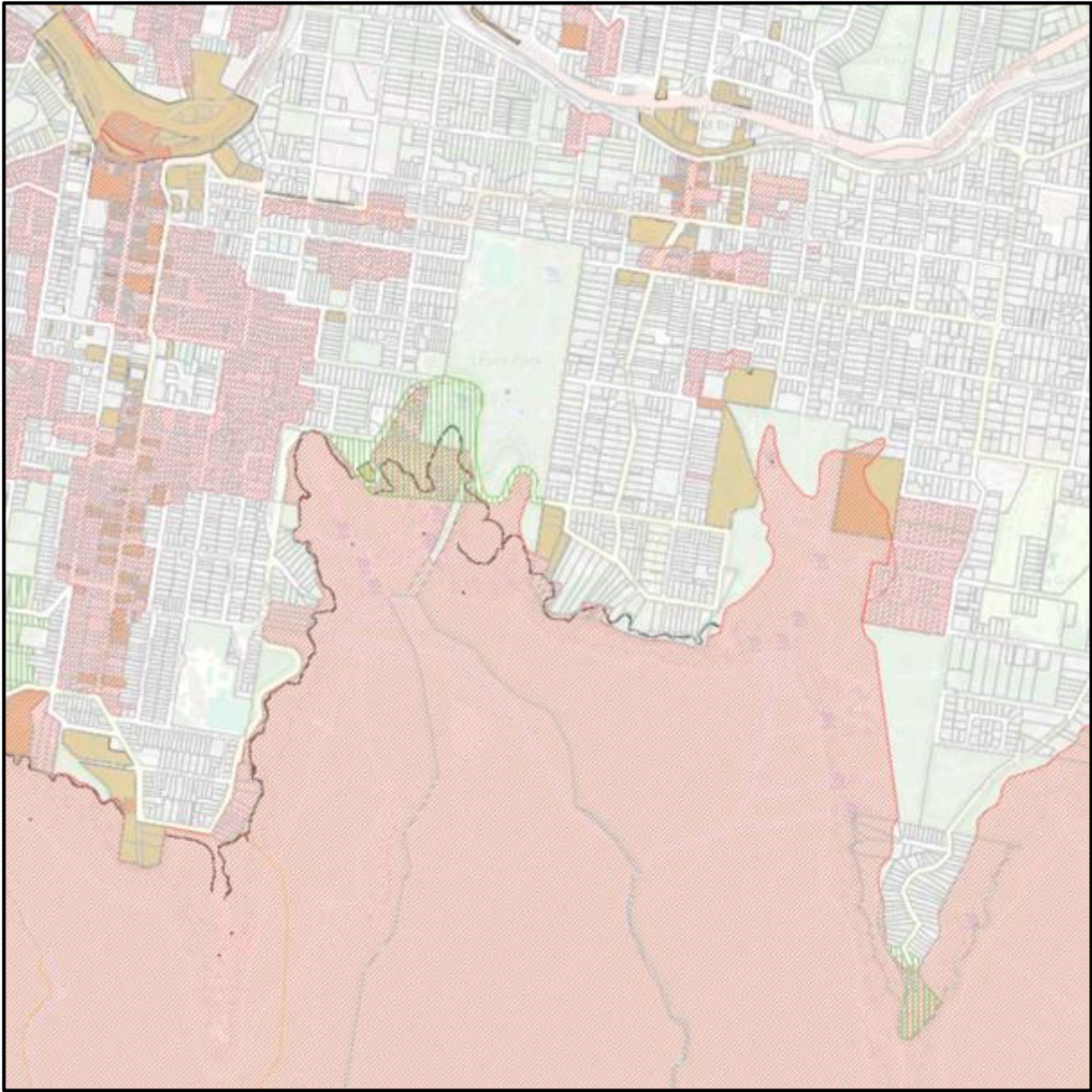
The concept of *heritage* encompasses significant places, buildings, objects, and stories requiring safeguarding for the future.

The relevant legal instrument is LEP 2015 (as amended) which lists heritage items and heritage conservation areas.

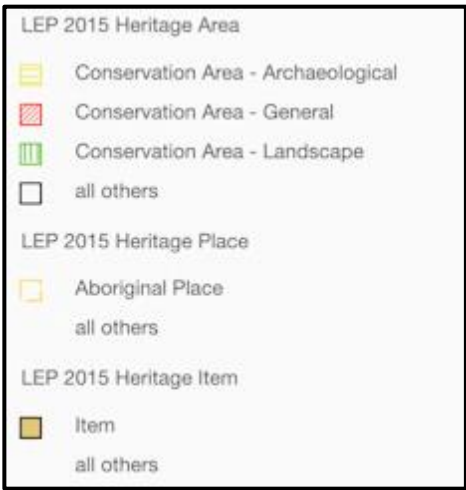
Heritage items or sites that are listed in LEP 2015 and that are within or adjacent to the Leura Falls Creek Catchment include:

- Bloome Park, Leura
- Cliff Drive Lookout and access tracks
- Echo Park, Katoomba
- Everglades and interiors, Leura
- Federal Pass Walk
- Former Leura Baths Kiosk and interiors (Solitary Restaurant)
- Kingsford Smith Memorial Park, Katoomba
- Leura Falls and Cascades Reserve, Leura
- Leuralla, garage, outbuilding, amphitheatre and gardens, Leura
- Lilianfels Park, Katoomba
- Lilianfels, grounds and interiors, Katoomba
- Lone Pine Avenue and Park, Leura
- Lyrebird Dell, Leura
- Prince Henry Cliff Walk
- Queen Elizabeth Lookout, Katoomba
- Sublime Point Lookout Reserve and access tracks, Leura
- The Braes, Leura
- Three Sisters, Katoomba
- Track—Fern Bower—Linda Falls
- Track—Leura Cascades to Amphitheatre to Fern Bower Prince Henry Cliff Walk
- Track—Round Walk: Leura Cascades to Prince Henry Cliff Walk to Leura Cascades
- Track—The Lindeman Pass

LEP 2015 also lists one *Heritage Conservation Area* that impacts parks and reserves within the Leura Park Catchment. This is the extensive *Jamison Valley Heritage Conservation Area* that is indicated by the dark pink cross-hatching on the following diagram.

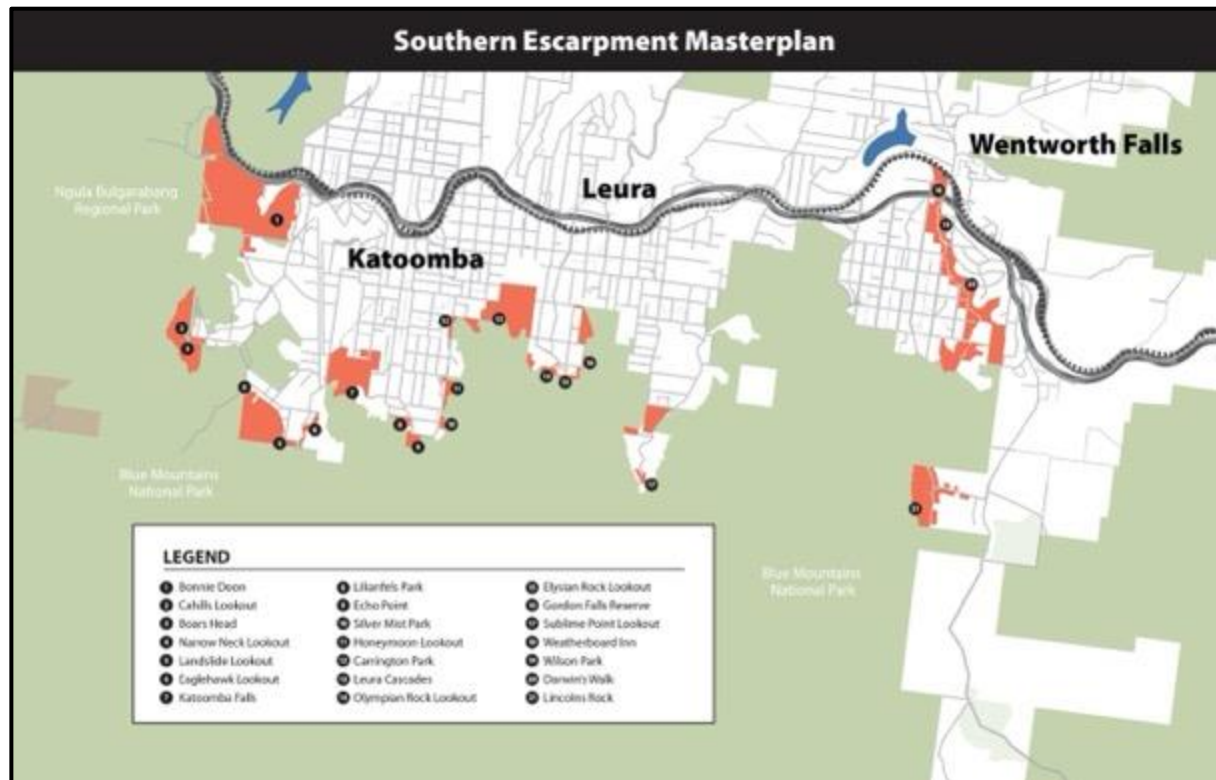


Extract from *BMCC interactive mapping* showing LEP 2015 heritage items and conservation areas.



## SOUTHERN ESCARPMENT MASTERPLAN

The Southern Escarpment Masterplan is a long-term strategic planning document being prepared by the BMCC that will guide future design and development of public spaces and visitor destinations on the southern side of Katoomba, Leura, and Wentworth Falls



The Masterplan will focus on public land managed by Council with high levels of visitor use including community land and Crown land. This includes popular visitor precincts as well as other smaller locations such as the lookouts along Cliff Drive. Consideration will be given to key connections to town centres, adjoining precincts, and to the Blue Mountains National Park.

Many of the sites being considered are located within the Leura Falls Creek catchment.

Council was aiming to complete the Masterplan by early 2022. The final masterplan is currently scheduled for completion in Jan/Feb 2026. Due to the large scale of the Masterplan, sites are being treated in a hierarchy and include *Precinct Plans* and *Locality Plans*.

### Precinct Plans

Sites selected for precinct planning are characterised by:

- high levels of visitation
- significant level of existing facilities and close proximity to public toilets
- a destination with multiple recreation or tourism options
- connections to other attractions or tourism opportunities
- connections to public transport.

Sites within the Leura Falls Creek Catchment that were identified for precinct planning were:

- Gordon Falls Reserve / Elysian Rock Lookout / Olympian Rock Lookout
- Leura Cascades.

A Precinct Plan has been developed for Gordon Falls Reserve / Elysian Rock Lookout / Olympian Rock Lookout. Construction has commenced at this reserve.

Precinct Planning has commenced at Leura Cascades, with the release for community comment of draft concept designs in 2023 which were well received. There is currently no publicly available timeframe for design development and construction.

### **Locality Plans**

Locality plans will be developed for the simpler sites and reflect the low-key nature of those sites. Locality plans are typically characterised by:

- singular destination or attraction
- short term visitation
- good connection and accessibility with transport links and nearby attractions
- supporting infrastructure to accommodate visitor use.

Sites within the Leura Falls Creek Catchment that were identified for locality planning were:

- Cliff Drive Lookouts and Parks, including:
  - Silver Mist Park
  - Honeymoon Lookout
  - Carrington Park
- Sublime Point Lookout

Draft concept designs for Carrington Park and the environs of Solitary Restaurant were prepared concurrently with the draft concepts for Leura Cascades Reserve. While these concepts were supported by members of the Leura Falls Creek Catchment Group some of the concepts were opposed by a small but vocal community group. Council has paused progression of the draft Concept Design to allow for detailed site investigations to take place to further understand the feasibility of possible options. These investigations will include but are not limited to traffic, ecological and heritage studies.

## KATOOMBA MASTERPLAN

A draft Katoomba Masterplan was placed on exhibition in 2022. The consultation period closed in December 2022. The final masterplan was approved by Council on 28 November 2023.

This masterplan has implications for some of the parks and reserves in the Leura Falls Creek Catchment, including the preparation of a precinct plan for Kingsford Smith Park and the preparation of a locality plan for the environs of Solitary Restaurant.



Portion of diagram from the *Town Centre Investigation Area map*



Portion of diagram from the *Southern Investigation Area map*

## PLANS OF MANAGEMENT

In November 2022, Council adopted *Plans of Management* for:

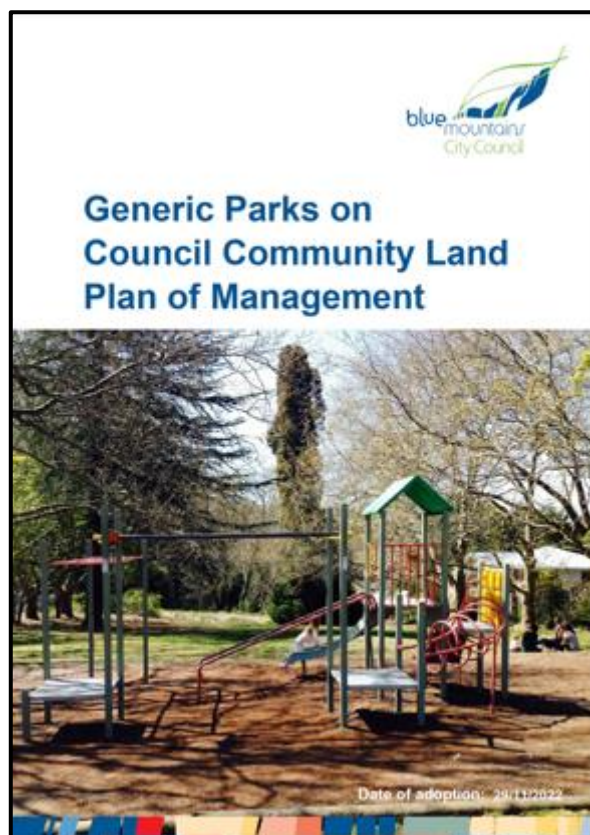
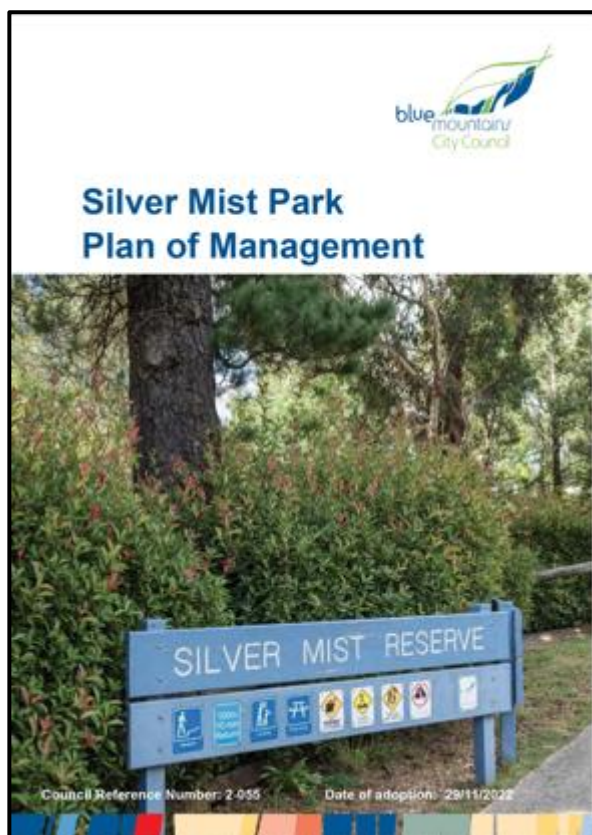
- Kingsford Smith Memorial Park, Katoomba
- Bloome Park, Leura
- Leura Cliff Walk Reserve, Leura
- Silver Mist Park, Katoomba
- Leura Park, Leura (which includes Peter Carroll Field, Leura Cascades, Leura Baths Kiosk [currently called “Solitary Restaurant”], and Carrington Park).
- Leura Oval, Leura (which includes Gordon Falls Reserve, and Sublime Point Nature Reserve)
- Sublime Point Reserve, Leura
- Generic Parks on Council Community Land (which includes Dr Rex Allen Park, Katoomba, and Rest Park, Leura)

Council adopted a *Plan of Management* for the adjacent Echo Point Crown Reserve in September 2000.

Council also adopted a *Conservation Management Plan* for Kingsford Smith Memorial Park in June 2013.

The BMCC website does not list a *Plan of Management* for:

- Banksia Park, Katoomba (Note - ( t is not listed as being included in “Generic Parks on Council Community Land)



## GREAT BLUE MOUNTAINS TRAIL (Upper Section)

The concept of the Great Blue Mountains Trail is the development of a cycling trail from east to west across the Blue Mountains ridgeline, accessible from all towns, villages and train stations along the way. In some locations this will be a shared use pedestrian and cycling track. In other locations it will be a cycling lane within a road.

The Upper Mountains component of the trail will extend from Wentworth Falls through to Mount York and will provide a variety of pedestrian and cyclist opportunities to travel through the scenic natural areas and heritage townships of the Blue Mountains.

Planning for the project commenced in 2008, but implementation is subject to grant funding. Two sections have been completed through Leura Park / Leura Cascades Reserve.

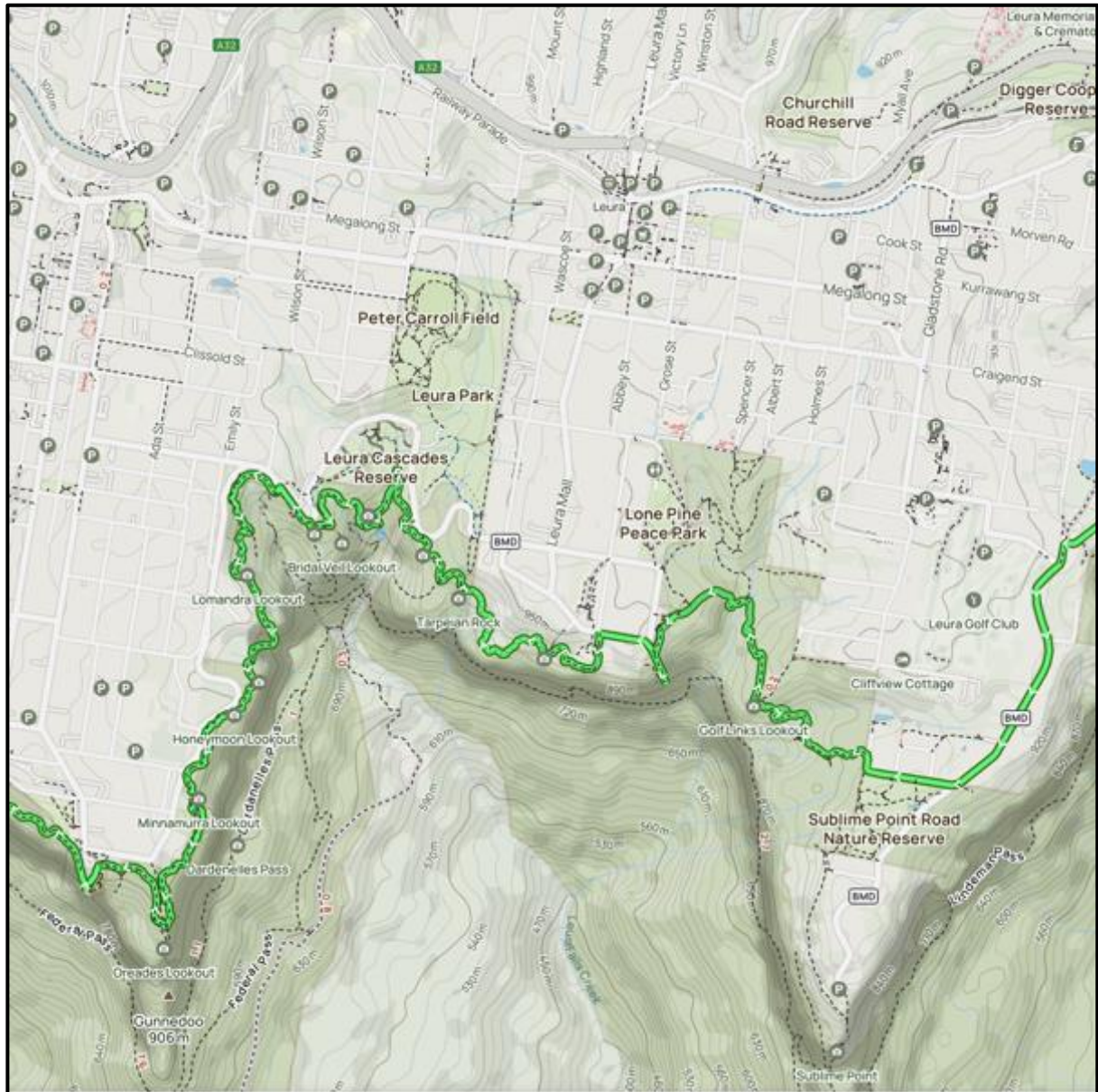


The final alignment of the section from Kiah Lookout to Echo Point may well impact some parks and reserves within the Leura Falls Creek Catchment.

The Trail is identified in the *Blue Mountains Bike Plan 2020*. Council is continuing to seek funding for the completion of the Trail.

## GRAND CLIFF TOP WALK

The Grand Cliff Top Walk is a joint project between NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and Blue Mountains City Council to create a continuous multi-day walk from Wentworth Falls to Katoomba. The project included the upgrading of existing tracks, and the construction of new sections to provide a continuous route.



Detail from the *AllTrails* map of the Grand Cliff Top Walk

The walk crosses the Leura Falls Creek catchment where it incorporates the Prince Henry Cliff Top Walk. It is expected that the opening of this walk will significantly increase the use of the adjacent parks and reserves. The walk is now substantially complete (at June 2024), although many of the side tracks providing links to the Cliff Drive and adjacent parks and reserves have yet to be upgraded, and a safe pedestrian route along Sublime Point Road and Willoughby Road has yet to be constructed.

## NEIGHBOURHOOD PARKS PROGRAM

In April 2024 Council announced a \$6.1 million program funded by the NSW Government's *Western Sydney Infrastructure Grant program*. This will see the upgrading of 16 neighbourhood parks over a four year period. Two parks within the Leura Falls Creek Catchment are to be upgraded as part of this program – *Bloome Park, Leura* in 2026 and *Carrington Park, Katoomba* in 2027.



### Community Newsletter

BLUE MOUNTAINS CITY COUNCIL APRIL 2024

## Blue Mountains City Council launches \$6.1 million Neighbourhood Parks Program

**Council will soon start the first stage of the Neighbourhood Parks Program, a transformative program aimed at upgrading 16 neighbourhood parks across the Blue Mountains over the next four years.**

The \$6.1 million Neighbourhood Parks Program is funded by the NSW Government's Western Sydney Infrastructure Grant (WSIG) program, one of 20 projects Council is undertaking under the WSIG program, designed to revitalise community infrastructure across the Mountains.

- ✓ 2024 will see the upgrade of **Medlow Park, Medlow Bath; Golden Horizons, Hazelbrook; Buttenshaw Park - Stage 2, Faulconbridge; and Thomas Park, East Blaxland.**
- ✓ 2025 will see **Melrose Park, Katoomba; Wilson Park, Wentworth Falls; Bundah Park, Winmalee and Hall Park Mount, Riverview** upgraded.
- ✓ In 2026, **Bloome Park, Leura; Noble Street Park, Bullaburra; Peninsula Park, Valley Heights, and Lennox Park, Blaxland** will undergo upgrades.
- ✓ 2027 will see upgrades at **Carrington Park, Katoomba; Wilson Park, Lawson; Batman Reserve, Springwood and Douglas Smith Reserve, Glenbrook.**

The first phase of the program, which will begin shortly, focuses on community consultation where Council seeks input from residents to understand their wants and needs for the parks slated for upgrade in 2024.

"The Neighbourhood Parks Program underscores our commitment to building inclusive, healthy and vibrant communities and to enhancing community recreational spaces," Blue Mountains Mayor, Cr Mark Greenhill said.

"This initiative will not only improve access to nature and open spaces for all members of our community, it will also create new social opportunities, promoting physical and mental health and reducing social isolation."

"The upgrades delivered by the Neighbourhood Parks Program will also help reduce ongoing maintenance requirements and costs."

**For more information on the Neighbourhood Parks Program go to [bmcc.nsw.gov.au/major-projects](https://bmcc.nsw.gov.au/major-projects).**

**Council has 105 various kinds of parks and playgrounds across the Blue Mountains. These parks all serve different purposes and require different equipment and management.**

Neighbourhood parks are open spaces within walking distance of homes, servicing local neighbourhoods and villages. They are not highly developed, but still offer a place for residents and visitors to gather.