

29 August 2019

Office of the Mayor

Reference File: F03928 / 19/189611

New South Wales Department of Industry – Crown Lands  
Attention: Scott Mullen  
GPO Box 5477  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Via email: [airfield.submissions@crowland.nsw.gov.au](mailto:airfield.submissions@crowland.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Sir/Madam

**SUBJECT                      Submission: Proposed Lease of Katoomba Airfield  
Crown Lands Reference: 602686**

On behalf of the Council and residents of the City of the Blue Mountains, we would like to make the following submission to the New South Wales Department of Industry – Crown Lands in relation to the proposed lease of the Katoomba Airfield (Lot 550 DP 751627) to Fly Blue Management Pty Ltd.

Blue Mountains City Council would like to acknowledge the Department in granting an extension for Council to make its submission on the proposed lease until August 30, 2019.

At the Ordinary Meeting of Council held on 27 August 2019, it was resolved, in part:

- 1. That the Council notes that the proposed Lease of the Katoomba Airfield in Medlow Bath by The NSW Department of Industry - Crown Lands for commercial use, has given rise to community concern;*
- 2. That the Council make a submission on the proposed Katoomba Airfield Lease based on information within this report, in response to information published by Crown Lands during the community consultation, and taking into account the views and concerns raised and expressed by the local community;*
- 3. That the Council's submission to Crown Lands object to the proposed lease of Katoomba Airfield for the reasons set out in this report.*

[Minute tbc]

**Council's Preferred Option for Use**

Blue Mountains City Council has had a long standing position in relation to the Katoomba Airfield. Council has, since 1999 consistently advocated that the land upon which Katoomba Airfield is situated should be incorporated into the Blue Mountains National Park, and be retained for emergency use only. Council has restated this position in 2008 and 2019.

### **Community Concerns**

During the public consultation period conducted by Crown Lands, Blue Mountains City Council received copies of a number of submissions made by residents and businesses within the Blue Mountains. These submissions raised a number of consistent themes and concerns for the Blue Mountains Community in relation to the proposed lease. In advocating on behalf of Blue Mountains Residents, Council provides the following summary of issues raised by its residents in relation to the proposed lease:

#### Impacts to Residents

- Impacts on local residential amenity from aircraft noise from fixed wing and helicopter operations;
- Higher impacts to the residents of the township of Medlow Bath, much of Blackheath and North Katoomba, which are all within 5 km radius of the airfield and will be more greatly affected by noise as the aircraft arrive and depart the airfield;
- A lack of an effective mechanism to enforce the Fly Neighbourly Agreement; and
- An increase in vehicular traffic, particularly the transport of aviation fuel on an unpaved, narrow residential road leading to the airfield site. This road also travels across parts of the National Park.

#### Impacts to Flora and Fauna

- There is a growing body of evidence on the impact of aircraft and aircraft noise on natural areas, particularly on bird species. Changes in avian species composition can create additional impacts on floral composition and general biodiversity;
- The impact on birds and fauna of increased air and road traffic; and
- Long term impacts on wildlife, in particular disruption to bird migrations and on fauna reliant on hearing for feeding, mating and caring of young.

#### Impacts to the National Park and World Heritage Area

- The enjoyment of visitor wilderness experience, whether active or passive, will be impacted by any introduction of noise into this space;
- Lack of regulation of airspace over World Heritage Areas, and inadequacy of self-regulation of Fly Neighbourly Agreements; and
- Potential impact on status of World Heritage Area if commercial development proceeds.

#### Impacts to Business and Tourism

- Impacts on natural and nature area tourism and local businesses of aircraft noise which will disrupt the tranquility and detract from the natural quiet of local bushland experiences; and
- The possibility of any upscaling of development over time are real concerns for our local businesses.

#### Process Issues and Concerns

- Lack of community consultation before the issue of the current 3 year licence to a private business; and
- Very little information on flight paths to and from the Katoomba Airfield for fixed wing aircraft and helicopters.

**Attachment 1 - Draft Submission to Crown Lands - Katoomba Airfield Lease**

Preferred Future uses of the Site

- The overall concern of all residents is that the airfield is maintained for emergency use; and
- The land should be incorporated into the surrounding National Park, and that NPWS maintain the Airfield for community use including fire fighting and general aviation safety

**Objection to the proposed lease by Blue Mountains City Council**

As noted above, Blue Mountains City Council has consistently held the position that

1. This site be incorporated into the Blue Mountains National Park. This has consistently been the Council's position on this issue since 1999, and is reinforced by subsequent resolutions in relation to the site in 2008 and 2019;
2. The airstrip be made available for emergency use by helicopters during natural disasters (such as bushfire) for the operation of emergency services such as the New South Wales Rural Fire Service;

As a result, Blue Mountains City Council objects to the proposed lease to Fly Blue Management Pty Ltd for Katoomba Airfield, and advocates for the incorporation of this area into the Blue Mountains National Park.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please contact Mr Gary Parsons, Director, Economy, Place and Infrastructure Tel. No. 4780 5000.

Yours faithfully

MARK GREENHILL OAM  
Mayor