

The practice of not informing the public when a proposal is first mooted results in shutting the door on participatory democracy. By waiting until plans are completed before informing the public, there is already such a great financial commitment that steamrolling becomes imperative.

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Two summers ago, a tyre salesman promoted a motorcar race on the Catalina Circuit and for two days the roar of high-performance engines reverberated throughout Katoomba and Leura. That imposition prompted a meeting of residents who voiced dissatisfaction on many issues concerning the valley and formed the Friends of Katoomba Falls Creek Valley.

A letter was sent to the council asking it to refuse any further applications from that particular user of the circuit. It was ignored, as were all subsequent communications. It seems that the council has a policy of disdaining to reply to the Friends.

The Friends are opposed to three of the developments proposed for the Katoomba Falls Valley and are preparing a plan which would retain and enhance the valley as a public amenity.

We have also undertaken, because of default by the council, to secure an environmental study costing \$10,000.

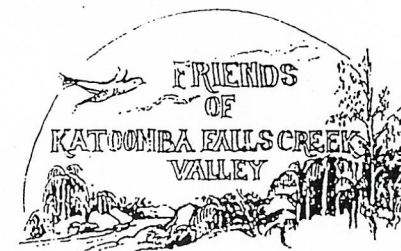
We have succeeded in obtaining a Heritage grant for half the cost -- the rest we must raise ourselves.

We need your support of our street stalls, our garage sales and our raffles. We invite you to join us in weeding the park.

Help us protect Katoomba. Get in touch.

Ring Neil Stuart, 82 1347
or Geoff Young, 82 3332

NEWSLETTER



September, 1991

On the 3rd September the Blue Mts. Council made a decision that will have a drastic impact on Katoomba. By a vote of 6 to 5 they approved the sale of 5.6 hectares of public land within the golf course property and for a developer to erect 160 dwellings thereon. Mayor Williams swept aside objections by some aldermen that they had only four days to study the 300-page proposal, that there was no attempt to find the market value of the land and that the price represented only \$10,000 per dwelling.

The possibility that council elections in eleven days' time could produce a council opposed to the development did not lessen their determination to impose on it a commitment from which it would be prohibitively expensive to disengage.

Other developments proposed for Katoomba Falls Valley are: the caravan park, a motel-restaurant complex opposite the swimming-pool (which would cut the green belt in half) and a medical centre in Cascade Street, the rear of which, five storeys plus, would loom over Frank Walford Park.

In acceding to plans for the valley, the council has neglected to do what it should have done -- secure an environmental survey.

Evidently, our council has been dominated by aldermen who don't seem to be able to say 'no' to developers.

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For some years now, the rate of development in the Blue Mountains has been three times the national average. Now that Sydney is having diffi-

culty in accommodating more people, the towns within commuting distance of Sydney are increasingly bearing the brunt of Australia's growing population.

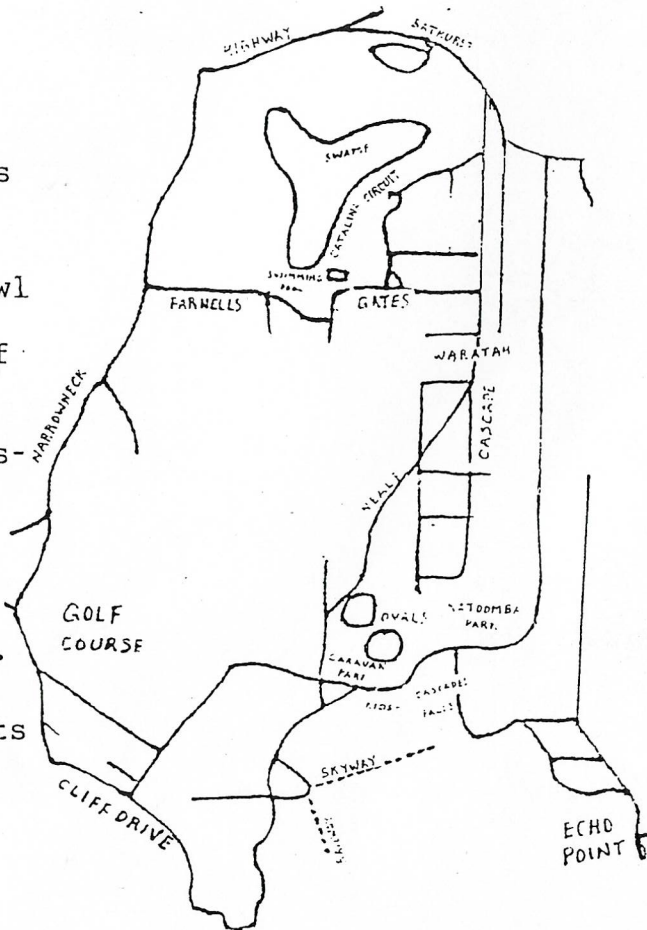
The growth of such towns is the business of the developer. They are the ones who profit; to them, all development is good development. Their organizations and spokesmen try to convince us that development is the key to prosperity.

The 95% of people who never see one cent of development money may be less euphoric. The promise of bringing more money into the area may be true, but those who profit from new enterprises may not live in the Mountains, some not even in Australia.

More jobs may be provided, but the influx of job-seekers ensures that unemployment remains.

The continual sprawl into our environs erodes the feeling of a small country town and steadily moves us towards traffic congestion, traffic lights, parking meters and parking fines. New roads divert moneys from the maintenance of existing amenities.

Unfortunately, the Blue Mountains attracts its share of these developers who have a reckless disregard of the environment and



who have provoked the emergence of resident protest groups.

At Echo Point, the largest building on the edge of the escarpment is nearing completion. There are other plans for even larger developments at the escarpment at Echo Point and at Radiata Plateau.

In the Mountains, we should be especially concerned with preserving natural features which are renowned for their beauty.

Instead of allowing new developments which sometimes exclude the public by occupying the most accessible points overlooking the valley, there should be a policy of: no new developments on the escarpment side of Cliff Drive, no extensions of existing buildings. It would be to the council's credit if there were a fund to buy back the worst-offending eyesores.

Australia's foremost scenic drive deserves more respect. A century of restraint may be undone in a decade.

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The Local Government Act requires councils to conduct meetings openly, but there is a loophole -- committee meetings need not be open. Thus, when the council wishes to discuss any development which may be considered controversial, they can switch into committee mode -- developers may be admitted, but the public excluded, minutes and all documents relating to the meeting are kept secret.

Subsequently, an ad is placed in the local paper informing the public that plans may be inspected at the council chambers and that they have two weeks to lodge objections. The council is not obliged to heed such objections -- all too often they heed not.