



Blue Mountains Residents travel hours to hear their petition debated. Where were the Ministers?

Blue Mountains residents successfully collected more than 12,000 signatures in less than 6 months, opposing the plan for a long-term lease of crown land in what is known as Katoomba Airfield. They presented the petition to local member Trish Doyle MP to force the debate and highlight their concerns.

The petition was debated in the NSW Parliament yesterday at 4:30pm.

The petition was spoken to by Trish Doyle MP, a full gallery of Blue Mountain Residents were in attendance. Kate Washington, Shadow Minister for the Environment also spoke as did the Hon. Member for Dubbo and the Hon. Member for Hawkesbury. Speakers for the government spoke only to the mechanics of the process and offered no benefits to the people of NSW from the proposal

Kate Washington noted that Melinda Pavey, Minister for Water, Property and Housing (Crown Lands), Matt Kean, Minister for Energy and Environment (NPWS) and Stuart Ayres, Minister for Jobs, Investment, Tourism not only failed to speak on the issue but were not even present in Parliament.

'The airfield has been a simple, quiet dirt strip for many decades. It is not a suitable site for commercial operations, particularly helicopter scenic flights above favourite bushwalking tracks and sightseeing lookouts.' Says Mr. Greg Thompson Medlow Bath Resident.

The Katoomba Airfield community group (KACG) say this is not a case of 'not in my backyard', as it is all of Sydney's backyard and the National Park belongs to everyone. It's important to all of NSW and is also a key destination for interstate and international tourists.

Dr John Merson, Executive Director of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute has previously stated *'It is our view that a commercial operation such as the one proposed for the Airfield would have a negative impact on the tourist industry it's designed to support, and on the environment of the World Heritage area which visitors come to experience.'*

The community has repeatedly requested independent economic and environmental impact assessments before any further action is taken but this has also received a stony silence from the government.

Trish Doyle spoke favourably regarding the Katoomba airfield noting the historic use of the airfield as being very small scale with minimal if any impact on residents and tourists enjoying the Blue Mountains and being available for emergency services when needed. Trish further advocated that 'fly-in fly-out' services would not increase the number of people in accommodation or in restaurants. Conversely it would reduce mainstream tourism dramatically impacting local businesses. Trish advocated for the inclusion of the airfield into the national park to be managed by NPWS to ensure its continued availability for emergency services.

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