

## **INQUIRY INTO PUBLIC TOILETS**

**Organisation:** Sublime Point Escarpment Committee

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(on behalf of the Sublime Point Escarpment Committee)  
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## **NSW Parliament Inquiry Into the Provision of Public Toilets**

**Dear Chair and Committee Members,**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission in what to this community is an ongoing concern and a matter of considerable importance, not just because of significantly and steadily increasing tourist visitation numbers but especially also because of the environmentally negative impact pursuant to there being no public amenities in two high visitation sites in the **UNESCO World Heritage Park of the Blue Mountains**, resulting in water courses contamination and compromised hygiene.

**These sites are at Lincoln Rock in Wentworth Falls and at Sublime Point in Leura.**

**First the good news:** the Blue Mountains were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Park in 2000, and before and since then the numbers of tourists to the Blue Mountains has steadily increased. This is good news because the unique landscapes, hiking, rock climbing and walking paths are a welcome respite for people from more built up urban areas, and (after the Sydney Opera House) the most visited of the currently 20 World Heritage Sites declared by UNESCO in Australia. The majority of these visitors are day visitors, though Airbnb and accommodation facilities are experiencing increasing demand as the years pass. The Blue Mountains Tourist Authority has estimated that in 2023 3.3 million tourist came to the Blue Mountains. With the soon to be opened New Nancy Bird Walton Western Sydney International Airport in 2026, the Authority is expecting these numbers to more than double by 2030.

**More good news:** Since the natural disasters of extreme weather events such as the Bush fires of 2019 and the subsequent land slippages as a result of heavy rain, the Blue Mountains City Council has managed to obtain significant funding from the NSW Government and from the Commonwealth in order to effect repairs to roads as well as to restore hiking tracks. One of several examples is the restoration of the Grand Cliff Top Walk from Wentworth Falls to Katoomba (19kms), which since being re-opened in May 2024 has witnessed significantly increased foot traffic. Further, in 2023 Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC) decided to introduce paid parking for visitors. This is estimated to bring in approximately \$20 m which will be allocated to road repairs and maintenance.

**The not so good news:** with steadily increasing tourist numbers, there is an environmental impact on the natural environment. One concerns safety of visitors as rescues are fairly common, sometimes with use of emergency vehicles including helicopters, police and ambulance, frequently with injured and even fatal results.

Concerning the supply of adequate public amenities in the BMCC, there is an immediate funding issue for the simple reason that BMCC is unique in having a low rate base (resident

population around 80,000) but a huge area to cover, (over 11,000 square kilometers). In practice, this means that BMCC simply cannot fund public amenities without contributing funding from the state and federal sources.

Concerning your inquiry is the absence of toilet facilities between Wentworth Falls and Gordon Falls for the many visitors to Lincoln Rock and Sublime Point. This has resulted in the following scenarios:

- Residents in Leura Mall having to display signs in Chinese that request their front garden not to be used as a toilet.
- Residents at Sublime Point Road regularly seeing evidence of tissues, faeces etc in the reserve the NP&Wildlife of Sublime Point.
- BMCC workers having to sporadically visit and conduct a clean up
- Rock climbers at Sublime Point Road who often spend an entire day climbing, abseiling or canyoning having no option but to relieve themselves where they are or near where they have parked their car at Sublime Point.
- Improved parking facilities at Lincoln Rock and Sublime Point have resulted in more people coming to these places and logically exerting more pressure on the need for public amenities
- Tour guides in buses coming hand out toilet paper rolls to tourists as they emerge from their trip from Sydney at Lincoln Rock making it rather obvious what this is for, with unsurprising result.
- Buses over 10 meters length are signposted not to come down Sublime Point Road as this is a cul-de-sac and cannot turn around. Notwithstanding, smaller buses can and do come down to Sublime Point and again, visitor numbers place a demand on public amenities which currently do not exist.
- Committee members can readily visualize the impact of such unsewered human effluent into the Jamison Valley. Waters from the Jamison valley feed into Lake Burragorang which in turn feeds into Warragamba Dam, which feeds water into the Sydney fresh water supply.

## **Conclusion**

Personally I have recently had the chance to drive from Parkes via Forbes to Griffiths and Nerrandera, returning home via Cowra and was pleasantly surprised how in many such small country towns public facilities have recently been improved. This includes swimming pools, camping grounds, public parks and toilet blocks. By contrast, the Escarpment Committee on behalf of which this submission comes to you, feels that while increasing tourist numbers are welcome for the beneficial effects to visitors in terms of recreational and mental health that accompanies people who exercise in nature, the provision of toilet facilities remains an infrastructural short coming with currently negative environmental consequences.

Both Lincoln Rock and Sublime Point have nearby town water and nearby sewage connected residences, so the provision of infrastructure and public amenities in these two locations are already partially possible. But as Committee members are no doubt aware, the provision of

a toilet block involves multiple contractors and project management, all of which makes such buildings costly.

We thank you for the chance to put our case and await your response in due course.

#### Appendices

##### A. Submission to Councilor in Ward 1, BMCC, Suzie van Opdorp

On 3 Sep 2024, at 10:16, Michael Kindler <[mkindler051@gmail.com](mailto:mkindler051@gmail.com)> wrote:

Dear Councillor van Opdorp

Thank you for all your good work as Councillor for our ward. We are indeed pleased at how much progress has been made in Leura, the Leura Cascades, at Gordon Falls, and next year the walkway down Sublime Point Road. With the refurbished Grand Cliff Top Walk, Sublime Point is receiving greatly increased foot traffic down Sublime Point Road and Willoughby Road. It is good to see so many visitors enjoying this hike.

The reason we are writing is to request you to place **the building of a toilet block at Sublime Point on the agenda for Council's next financial year and to ask Council to allocate an indicative budget for that purpose.** We note that between Wentworth Falls Road and Gordon Falls there are no public amenities, and this regularly results in people relieving themselves both at Lincoln Rock and at Sublime Point. Council is well aware of this situation and while Council staff have sporadically been monitoring the situation, the situation has been getting worse this year, ever since the publicity around the Grand Cliff Top Walk.

Thank you for your ongoing work with Council and we look forward to a reply once local election results have been declared.  
Kind regards

Michael Kindler

##### B. Response from Councilor Suzie van Opdorp

C. Sep 4, 2024, 8:02 AM (8 days ago)

Good morning Michael and other residents

I'm aware that the lack of toilet at Sublime point is a big issue and has water impacts on On residents and visitors.

As I'm sure you are aware building toilets is quite an expensive exercise and requires external funding. Usually the starting point for new projects is for staff to investigate and bring a report to council. I will write a notice of motion to council and

Presented to the first meeting following the election calling for a report on the provision of toilets at Sublime point.

Thank you for bringing this to my attention and for coordinating contact between the various residents and people in this email.

Kind regards

Councillor Suzie van Opdorp  
Ward 1 Councillor  
Blue Mountains City Council  
*Leura - Mount Tomah*

***“We meet and work on Aboriginal Land. I acknowledge the Traditional Owners and pay my respect to Elders past, present and emerging.”***