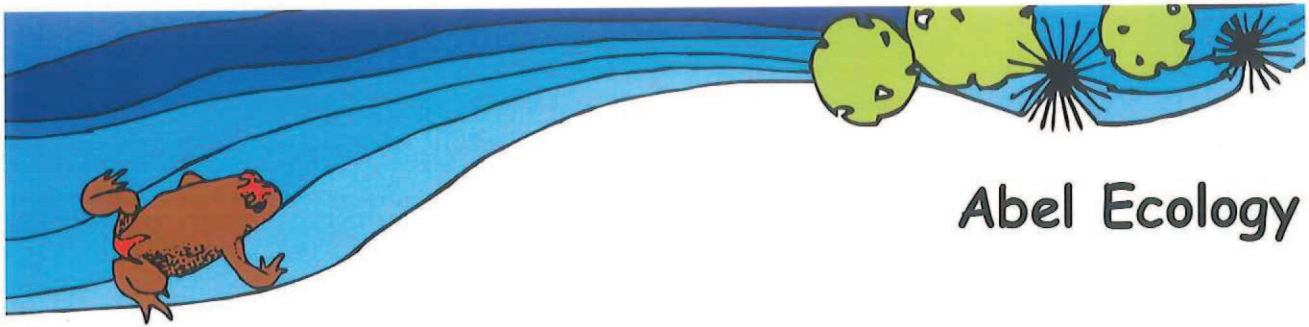


Attachment 3 – Preliminary Ecological Assessment



15 May 2012

Blue Mountains Village
2 Queens Road
Katoomba NSW 2780

To the Board of Blue Mountains Village,

**Opportunities and constraints assessment for Blue Mountains Village,
2 Queens Road, Katoomba**

Introduction

Abel Ecology was requested to undertake a constraints assessment for Flora and Fauna habitat assessment, and Bushfire Assessment for the proposed upgrade and extension of Blue Mountains Village.

Abel Ecology undertook the following constraints assessments on 27 July 2010:

- a) Site inspection
- b) Vegetation assessment: Endangered Ecological Communities
- c) Fauna habitat
- d) Bushfire

Assessment

The site presently consists of heavily disturbed *Eucalyptus oreades* Forest as well as planted ornamental vegetation. *Eucalyptus oreades* Forest is considered as a locally significant vegetation type. The dominant canopy species onsite is *Eucalyptus piperita* and this occurs primarily in the northwest corner as approximately 30 individual trees with a heavily disturbed shrub and herb layer that is mostly cleared. Some locally indigenous shrubs and herb species do occur, though they are mixed in with exotic species. The area was most likely completely cleared at one stage, as the *Eucalyptus piperita* are not mature trees and are all of similar age, suggesting that they are regrowth. This area can expect approval for clearing as it is not considered to be intact forest and has minimal habitat value.

The vegetation to the north of the site consists of large, mature *Eucalyptus oreades* with some natural understory, although this is also heavily infested with weeds. Restoration of that area

Unit 2, 10-11 Ferguson Road
Springwood NSW 2777

T (02) 4751 9487
F (02) 4751 9488
E info@abelecolology.com.au
www.abelecolology.com.au



is possible, but is expensive and time consuming. With regard to Bushfire Hazard, that land has little potential for benefit in increasing an Asset Protection Zone due to the sensitivity of the *Eucalyptus oreades* Forest in this block.

For Bushfire protection purposes, Abel Ecology suggests that an administration building (or similar i.e. not a permanently occupied aged care residency) be proposed in the northwest corner. This would act as a shield for radiant heat, and reduce the onsite vegetation to Inner Protection Area (IPA) conditions.

Fauna habitat present on the site includes large trees that would be suitable foraging habitat for threatened microbats, and suitable foraging habitat for the threatened Gang-gang Cockatoo. Clearing of the area would require a Seven-part Test of significance. The proposal could be offset with the use of Bat-boxes, or integrated design, which incorporates hollow areas for bat roosting.

On the brief site visit, no threatened plant species were recorded. This was not an extensive search, and the result must be confirmed with a detailed survey.



Photo 1. The mature but disturbed *Eucalyptus oreades* Forest that occurs on the adjacent site to the north.



Photo 2. The highly disturbed northwest corner of the site with the remnant *Eucalyptus piperita*. Note the immature size of the trees, as they are most likely regrowth from previous clearing.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Any proposed development as discussed will require a Flora and Fauna assessment and a Bushfire Assessment. Ideally, the Flora and Fauna Assessment process would be as follows:

1. Site evaluation (as per 27 July 2010)
2. Opportunity and constraints report (this document)
3. Develop a proposal and design
4. Prepare impact assessment – Seven-part Test
5. Submit DA
6. Expect a consent with a Vegetation Management Plan (VMP)

The Bushfire Assessment would need to be done prior to final design work, preferably at the same time as the Flora and Fauna Assessment.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Danny Wotherspoon
Abel Ecology