

To whom it may concern

24 February 2026

**RE: DRAFT REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS FOR CONSTRUCTION & OPERATION OF 3 BUSH CAMPS**

I wish to register my strong **objection** to the proposed glamping resorts as described in the draft Review of Environmental Factors (REF) January 2026. I have previously lodged submissions on the GoS SCA Plan of Management 2022, and public consultation on proposed grant of leases May 2024. I fully endorse submissions by the Gardens of Stone Alliance, and Trish Doyle MP for Blue Mountains.

Those concerns included then, and remain now –

- Commercialisation of our National Parks estate sets a dangerous and unacceptable precedent not only for the Gardens of Stone and Blue Mountains region, but across the whole of NSW;
- Equity & Public access, not to the Resorts but associated scenic sites eg. Birds Rock Lookout;
- Unacceptable impacts on pristine, undisturbed, sensitive, scenic, and biodiverse landscapes;
- Flawed consultation & approval process with NPWS being both Proponent and decision maker;
- Deficient REF, Ecological Assessment, and flora searches outside the proper survey window;
- NPWS lied that no threatened flora species occurred, and an EPBC Referral is now required. *Banksia penicillata* (Endangered EPBC Act) occurs throughout & in the soil seed bank of Site 3;
- Failure to consider rare non-listed flora species, placing them at risk of local extinction;
- Failure to assess/report cumulative impacts of all proposed works on all threatened species;
- Failure to acknowledge that after approval commercial-in-confidence agreements will enable a leaseholder and NPWS to avoid publicly disclosing site monitoring details (eg. pollution spills, dieback, erosion) or reporting confidential deals (eg. clearing wider Asset Protection Zones, more frequent hazard reduction burns) further damaging sites & *Banksia penicillata* (E1);

**1. MISLEADING, DECEPTIVE AND DISHONEST REPORTING**

The NPWS has seriously misled the NSW public in the exhibited *Review of Environmental Factors* January 2026 (REF) and *Ecological Assessment Report* November 2025 (EAR) by misrepresenting the three Resort sites as modified/disturbed/degraded landscapes, with no threatened flora species.

Both are grossly untrue. The NPWS is deliberately manipulating public perception to justify its goal.

**1.1 MODIFIED/DISTURBED/DEGRADED LANDSCAPES?**

Throughout the draft REF the NPWS repeatedly make broad statements describing the wider Newnes Plateau landscape as modified/disturbed/degraded, leading the community to assume that the same applies to the three Bush Camps, when in fact they are located in pristine undisturbed landscapes.

For example –

- REF, page 46 *'The reserve has experienced extensive and long-term impacts from logging, mining and damaging recreational use.'*
- REF Page 44 *'Evidence of human activity is clearly apparent throughout the general area, with cleared spaces, impacted vehicle roads, campfires, service roads, and utility infrastructure.'*
- EAR, page 13 *'As detailed in the Site Suitability Assessment (Attachment 6), the proposed Bush Camps are located within a landscape that has been shaped by a long history of logging, mining, and recreation, resulting in a largely modified environment interspersed with pockets of natural bushland and striking sandstone formations.'*
- REF, page 45 *'According to the classifications outlined in the 'Sustainability assessment criteria for visitor use and tourism in NSW national parks' guidelines, the site character of all three sites is considered to be 'partially modified natural and cultural heritage condition';*
- REF, page 45 *'The reserve was created from parts of Newnes, Wolgan, and Ben Bullen state forests, with obvious and permanent environmental changes from previous logging operations and damaging recreational use. Mining activity continues within the reserve with clearly evident infrastructure, including a large active sand quarry located on a visitor entry route.'*
- REF, page 46 *'Overall, the sites are considered suitable for the proposed visitor accommodation given they are in modified landscapes and are strategically aligned with established planning and management objectives for the Gardens of Stone SCA.'*

This misrepresentation of the truth has caused distressing social division within the local community, with good, honest, decent, environmentally-aware, and thinking people who have not visited each site saying to me that the Bush Camps are in disturbed landscapes. I could only urge them to visit each site and judge for themselves whether the NPWS have been honest.

Dissecting some of the above broad statements by the NPWS -

- There is no evidence of any coal mining, sand mining, quarrying, or mine exploration drilling ever having occurred at or near any of the three proposed Resort sites;
- It is highly unlikely that any logging for pit-props, sawlogs or firewood ever occurred at any of the 3 proposed Resort sites, because they are located in treeless heath with no suitable timber;
- No powerlines, pipelines, boreholes, or other utility infrastructure exists at any Resort site;
- The presence of exotic plant taxa is often used as an indicator of modified, disturbed, degraded environments. Not a single introduced or exotic flora species is identified in the REF/EAR at any of the three proposed Resort sites. By comparison Kosciuszko NP contains 23% exotic plant taxa (1577 native, 360 exotic). Based on a 'weediness' criteria, the 3 proposed Resort sites are pristine compared to the largest (and weediest) National Park in NSW - Kosciuszko NP.

- The only visible disturbance is old fire-trails to 2 of the 3 Resort sites, bulldozed by the NSW Government (NSW Forests) for which the NPWS shifts blame to 4WDs & recreational users;
- Fire damage occurred in December 2019 at Resort sites 1 & 2, but not at Resort site 3 which was unburnt. This damage was not the result of a naturally occurring wildfire, but due to deliberate back-burning during extreme fire-weather by the NSW Government (NSW RFS).
- Fire damage from the 2013 State Mine Fire was caused by the Federal Government (ADF) detonating unexploded ordinance during severe fire-weather at Marrangaroo Army Base.

The NPWS must re-exhibit this Review of Environmental Factors for Bush Camps 2026 without the deliberate bias and dishonest misrepresentation of the 3 Resort sites as being disturbed/degraded.

## **1.2 NO THREATENED FLORA SPECIES KNOWN TO OCCUR OR CONSIDERED LIKELY TO OCCUR?**

The NPWS repeatedly state throughout the REF and EAR that no threatened flora species currently listed or currently being considered for listing under Commonwealth or State legislation were recorded or considered likely to be present at any of the three Resort sites. For example -

- Page 32, Section 4.3.5.2 Flora species recorded *'Though considered and targeted during surveys, no threatened plants listed or currently being considered for listing, under the EPBC and/or BC Acts were recorded at any of the proposed Bush Camps.'*
- REF, page 85, Table 9.7 *'No threatened ecological communities or flora species listed under the EPBC Act were recorded during the investigation.'*
- Page viii EAR *'Within the three areas surveyed, no state or nationally listed threatened plants or ecological communities were recorded. No threatened plants were considered to be present within the soil seed bank.'*
- Page 35, EAR *'The proposed activity will not remove any known feed trees, hollow-bearing trees, roosting structures, or nesting habitat of the Sooty Owl, Gang-gang Cockatoo and South-eastern Glossy Black-cockatoo, nor would it fragment habitat or impede movement ....works will not have a significant effect on these three threatened birds or their habitats.'*
- *'An Ecological Assessment Report was prepared to inform this REF (Lesryk 2025; Attachment C). Following site surveys, a desktop review and field assessments, 14 threatened fauna species and no threatened flora species listed under the BC Act were recorded or considered highly likely to be present.'*
- REF, page 16 *'The assessments concluded that the proposal would not have a significant impact on the recorded MNES. The proposal is therefore not a controlled action and will not require referral to the Federal Minister for the Environment and Water for further consideration or approval (Lesryk 2025).'*

The oldest and largest remaining unburnt population of mature *Banksia penicillata* (Endangered EPBC Act & NSW BCA) in the Gardens of Stone SCA occurs in abundance throughout Resort Site 3.

*Banksia penicillata* was listed as Endangered under the EPBC Act in effect from 4 September 2024 <https://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/species/pubs/91058-conservation-advice-04092024.pdf>. It was formerly ROTAP coded 3RC- and should have searched for and avoided anyway.

This *Banksia penicillata* population has been known for over 30 years. It was first recorded at Resort site 3 on 17 June 1992 [Record: NSW:NSW258074 | Occurrence record | Atlas of Living Australia](#), the Bionet Atlas on 16 January 2013, and 11 records exist on the Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) database.

In cumulative terms more *Banksia penicillata* were likely lost to NPWS works along Broad Swamp – Birds Rock Walking Track, Glowworm Tunnel & Pagoda Track upgrades, a population near Lost City South walking track has disappeared, and more are at risk to the State Mine Mountain Bike tracks.

Furthermore, Banksia's are an important food-source for Red-tailed Black Cockatoo's (Vulnerable EPBC Act & NSW BCA). The EAR, page 84 reported '*Two South-Eastern Glossy Black-Cockatoo individuals were observed flying over Bush Camp 3 (E241821; N 6309150) during the survey period.*' Banksia's are also an important winter food-source for Eastern Pygmy-possum (Vulnerable NSW BCA).

All Banksia's are highly susceptible to *Phytophthora cinnamomii* dieback, likely to be brought into Resort site 3 on construction machinery and the boots of walkers. Altered drainage aids the spread of Phytophthora, a likely consequence of septic tanks, water tanks, and water runoff from cabins.

The Leaseholder will inevitably demand greater Asset Protection by seeking to clear vegetation for a wider buffer, and conduct more frequent hazard reduction burns – lethal for *Banksia penicillata*. Edge-effects around the resorts will prevent seedling recruitment and cause incremental losses.

I find it extremely difficult to accept that this failure by the NPWS to identify, record, or report a Nationally Listed Threatened Flora Species at and within the soil seed bank of Resort site 3 was a simple oversight or error of omission. I find it extremely difficult to accept that the NPWS were not aware long before preparing this EAR and REF that *Banksia penicillata* was being considered for listing.

This failure by the NPWS to identify the oldest and largest remaining unburnt population of *Banksia penicillata* (Endangered EPBC Act) in the Gardens of Stone SCA within Bush Camp 3 is a clear breach of s491 of the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

The presence of *Banksia penicillata* is a Matter of National Environmental Significance (MNES), the proposal is a Controlled Action. An EPBC Referral must be lodged with the Commonwealth.

## 2. DEFICIENT REF, ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT, & FLORA SEARCHES OUTSIDE SURVEY WINDOW

The NPWS appear to have limited flora searches in the REF and EAR to a select few threatened species whilst ignoring others and ignoring rare non-listed species. This places them at risk of local extinction.

For example, *Banksia penicillata* was ROTAP coded 3RC- for 45 years before the 4 September 2024 Endangered listing (The ROTAP Coding System for Plants at Risk defines 3RC- as: 3 = Range more than 100km but in small populations; R = Rare but with no identifiable threat; C = known to occur within a proclaimed reserve; and - = Species is recorded from a reserve but population size is unknown).

Therefore, even if the NPWS claim the REF and EAR were prepared before *Banksia penicillata* was listed as Endangered on 4 September 2024, and were unaware it was being considered for listing long before, it was still listed as a Plant at Risk under ROTAP since 1979, and should have been identified and avoided.

The NPWS are fully aware of which threatened flora species should be searched for and avoided, but don't want to find anything that might be an impediment to its exploitation/privatisation agenda.

Ignorance is no defence in Court however. For the record, below are some of the Threatened, ROTAP coded, and rare unlisted flora species at risk of localised extinction in the GoS SCA Newnes Plateau –

### 2.1 THREATENED FLORA SPECIES LISTED UNDER THE COMMONWEALTH EPBC ACT AND/OR NSW BCA

- *Acacia meiantha* (Endangered EPBC Act. Endangered NSW BCA)
- *Banksia penicillata* (Endangered EPBC Act in effect from 4 September 2024)
- *Boronia deanei subsp. deanei* (Endangered EPBC Act & NSW BCA) – less Bionet than ALA records
- *Caesia parviflora var. minor* (Endangered NSW BCA) – many destroyed by NPWS at Lost City
- *Carex klaphakei* (Endangered NSW BCA) – 10 Bionet records. More known
- *Commersonia prostrata* (Endangered EPBC Act & NSW BCA) – 0 Bionet records. Known
- *Dillwynia tenuifolia* (Vulnerable NSW BCA)
- *Eucalyptus aggregata* (Vulnerable EPBC Act. Vulnerable NSW BCA)
- *Eucalyptus cannonii* (Vulnerable EPBC Act. Vulnerable NSW BCA)
- *Eucalyptus pulverulenta* (Vulnerable EPBC Act. Vulnerable NSW BCA)
- *Genoplesium superbum* (Endangered NSW BCA) – 0 Bionet Atlas records. Numerous known
- *Hibbertia cistiflora subsp. quadristaminae* (Endangered EPBC Act) – 0 Bionet, 4 ALA records
- *Isopogon prostratus* (Endangered NSW BCA preliminary determination 19/06/2025)
- *Kunzea cabbagei* (Vulnerable EPBC Act & NSW BCA) – 19 Bionet records. 30 ALA records
- *Lastreopsis hispida* (Endangered NSW BCA)
- *Persoonia acerosa* (Vulnerable EPBC Act. Vulnerable NSW BCA)
- *Persoonia hindii* (Endangered NSW BCA)

- *Persoonia marginata* (Vulnerable EPBC Act. Vulnerable NSW BCA) – Donkey Steps Wolgan Valley
- *Prasophyllum pallens* (Vulnerable EPBC Act & NSW BCA)
- *Prostanthera cryptandroides subsp. cryptandroides* (Vulnerable EPBC Act & NSW BCA)
- *Pultenaea glabra* (Vulnerable EPBC Act & NSW BCA)
- *Pultenaea furcata* (should be considered Endangered or Critically Endangered)
- *Pultenaea mutabilis var angusta* (should be considered Endangered/Critically Endangered)
- *Pultenaea tenebrosa* (should be considered Endangered or Critically Endangered)
- *Rhodamnia rubescens* (Critically Endangered NSW BCA) – 1 AVH record
- *Velleia perfoliata* (Vulnerable EPBC Act. Vulnerable NSW BCA)
- *Veronica blakelyi* (Endangered NSW BCA) – 125 plants destroyed by NPWS at Lost City
- *Xerochrysum palustre* (Vulnerable EPBC Act) – 0 Bionet, 1 AVH & 6 ALA records. More known

## 2.2 ROTAP CODED FLORA SPECIES RECORDED IN THE GoS SCA NEWNES PLATEAU

- *Acacia asparagoides* – 2R (14 Bionet records. 30 ALA records)
- *Acacia matthewii* – 3RC- (0 Bionet records. 1 ALA record)
- *Almaleea incurvata* – 2RC- (1 very old 1914 Bionet record. 5 ALA records in GoS Newnes Plateau)
- *Atkinsonia ligustrina* – 2RCa (0 Bionet records. 3 ALA records in GoS Newnes Plateau)
- *Banksia penicillata* – 3RC- (*Endangered EPBC Act* in effect from 4 September 2024)
- *Burnettia cuneata* - 3RC (2 Bionet & ALA records)
- *Epacris muelleri* – 3RC (0 Bionet records. Known sites yet to record)
- *Eucalyptus gregsoniana* – 3RCa (24 Bionet records. 44 ALA records)
- *Gonocarpus longifolius* - 3RC (0 Bionet records. 1 ALA record)
- *Hakea constablei* - 2RCa – likely to occur
- *Haloragodendron gibsonii* – 2RCat (1 Bionet record. 1 AVH record. 1 ALA record)
- *Leionema lamprophyllum subsp. orbiculare* – 2R (7 Bionet records. 20 ALA records)
- *Leptospermum blakelyi* – 2R (14 Bionet records. 7 AVH records. 21 ALA records)
- *Leucochrysum graminifolium* – 2R (Bionet 9 records. ALA 33 records) – Bush Camp 1
- *Notochloe microdon* - 2RC (16 AVH and Bionet records)
- *Olearia quercifolia* – 3RC (significantly fewer Bionet records than ALA records)
- *Philotheca obovalis* – 3RCa (19 Bionet records. 52 ALA records)
- *Prostanthera hindii* – 2KC (0 Bionet records. 1 ALA record)
- *Pseudanthus divaricatissimus* – 3RC (4 Bionet rcds. 13 ALA rcds. 1 lost to roadworks 2022)
- *Sprengelia monticola* – 2RCi (2 Bionet records. 3 ALA records, more known)

## 2.3 NON-LISTED FLORA SPECIES IN GOS SCA NEWNES PLATEAU AT RISK OF LOCAL EXTINCTION

One example of a rare non-listed flora species is *Asterolasia buckinghamii*. It is not listed as threatened or a ROTAP, but arguably should be. In 2004 Alan Fairley *Seldom Seen. Rare Plants of Greater Sydney* described it as 'rare in remote areas'. The only known population in the Lithgow LGA occurs along Marrangaroo Creek. There is no evidence that the NPWS searched for nor avoided it before building the Lost City walking tracks. That population has been severely reduced, if not made locally extinct.

- *Acacia kybeanensis* – 0 records in GoS SCA Newnes Plateau, occurs just outside
- *Acacia leprosa* var. *uninervia* – 0 records in GoS SCA Newnes Plateau, occurs just outside
- *Acacia lunata* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 0 ALA records. 3 ALA records, 2 near Bush Camp 3
- *Acacia ptychoclada* – 2 Bionet Atlas records. 6 ALA records. 13 iNaturalist records
- *Actinotus gibbonsii* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 4 ALA records, more known.
- *Adenochilus nortonii* (Gnome Orchid) – 1 Bionet Atlas record. 4 sites known
- *Alania cunninghamii* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 4 ALA records
- *Arthrochilus huntianus* (Elbow Orchid) – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 3 known
- *Asterolasia buckinghamii* – many plants lost to NPWS Lost City Walking Track construction
- *Atherosperma moschatum* subsp. *integrifolium* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 12 ALA records
- *Boronia (Cyanothamnus) anemonifolia* – 1 Bionet Atlas record. 11 ALA records
- *Boronia (Cyanothamnus) anethifolia* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 2 ALA records + more to record
- *Boronia (Cyanothamnus) nana* var. *hyssopifolia* – 2 Bionet Atlas records. 6 ALA records
- *Boronia rigens* – 2 Bionet Atlas records. 22 ALA records
- *Boronia rubiginosa* – 1 Bionet Atlas record
- *Burnettia cuneata* (Lizard Orchid) - (2 Bionet & ALA records)
- *Bursaria spinosa* var. *lasiophylla* – host plant for endangered Purple Copper Butterfly
- *Caladenia fitzgeraldii* (Fitzgerald's Spider Orchid) – 0 Bionet records. 1 site known
- *Caladenia transitoria* (Bronze Caladenia) – 1 Bionet Atlas record. 5 ALA records, more known
- *Caleana minor* (Small Duck Orchid) – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 2 ALA records and more known
- *Commersonia dasyphylla* – 0 current records in GoS SCA Newnes Plateau, but occurs nearby
- *Corybas hispidus* (Bristly Helmet Orchid) – 0 Bionet records. Several sites known
- *Corymbia gummifera* – 0 Bionet records. 4 ALA records just outside the GoS SCA
- *Cryptostylis leptochila* (Small Tongue Orchid) – 0 records in GoS ACA Newnes Plateau, but known
- *Cyrtostylis reniformis* (Gnat Orchid) – 1 Bionet Atlas record. 3 ALA records and more known
- *Darwinia fascicularis* – very few Bionet records in GoS SCA Newnes Plateau
- *Darwinia taxifolia* - 2 Bionet Atlas records. 12 ALA records. Near Camp Zone 1 & 2

- *Dendrobium teretifolium* (Rat's Tail Orchid) - 0 Bionet records. 1 ALA records, more known
- *Dianella tenuissima* – 0 Bionet records. 9 ALA records. At risk State Mine Mountain Bike tracks
- *Dodonaea truncatiales* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 1 ALA record and more known
- *Doryphora sassafras* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 2 ALA records, more known near Bush Camp 2
- *Elaeocarpus holopetalus* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 12 ALA records
- *Elaeocarpus reticulatus* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 2 ALA records and more known
- *Epacris browniae* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 2 AVH records. 5 ALA records
- *Epacris crassifolia* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 25 ALA records
- *Epacris lithophila* - 0 Bionet Atlas records. 1 AVH record. 3 ALA records
- *Epacris purpurascens* var. *onosmifolia* - 0 Bionet Atlas records. 8 AVH records. 10 ALA records
- *Euphrasia collina* – 0 Bionet records. 4 AVH records. 23 ALA records. Destroyed Lost City carpark
- *Gentianella cunninghamii* – 0 Bionet records. 4 ALA records
- *Genoplesium (Corunastylis) woollsii* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 6 ALA records and more known
- *Grevillea juniperina* subsp. *sulphurea* – 0 Bionet Atlas records
- *Grevillea mucronulata* – 1 Bionet Atlas record
- *Grevillea sericea* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 11 ALA records
- *Isopogon prostratus* – (Endangered NSW Preliminary Determination 19/06/2025). One population already lost to roadworks in 2022 since NPWS took over GoS SCA from NSW Forests.
- *Lasiopetalum ferrugineum* var. *cordatum* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 3 ALA records
- *Leionema dentatum* – 0 Bionet Atlas records.
- *Leionema lamprophyllum* subsp. *orbiculare* – plants at risk to State Mine Mountain Bikes
- *Libertia pulchella* - 0 Bionet Atlas records. 3 ALA records
- *Micromyrtus ciliata* – very few records in GoS SCA Newnes Plateau
- *Micromyrtus sessilis* - very few records in GoS SCA Newnes Plateau
- *Nematolepis squamea* – 1 Bionet Atlas record. 13 ALA records
- *Notelaea ovata* – 0 Bionet records. 2 ALA records
- *Notogrammitis billardierei* – 0 Bionet records. 2 ALA records
- *Ochrosperma oligomerum* – 3 Bionet Atlas records. 10 ALA records. Bush Camp 1
- *Olearia asterotricha* subsp. *glaucophylla* – 2 Bionet Atlas records. 6 ALA records
- *Olearia phlogopappa* – 1 Bionet record. More sites known
- *Olearia ramulosa* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 1 ALA record and more known
- *Philotheca myoporoides* – 0 records but may occur in GoS SCA Newnes Plateau
- *Philotheca salsolifolia* - 0 records in GoS SCA Newnes Plateau, occurs nearby in Ben Bullen SF
- *Phebalium squamulosum* subsp. *ozothamnoides* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 5 ALA records

- *Prasophyllum australe* (Austral Leek Orchid) – 0 Bionet records. 2 ALA records & more known
- *Prasophyllum brevilabre* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 3 ALA records
- *Prasophyllum elatum* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 1 known population
- *Prasophyllum flavum* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 5 ALA records
- *Prasophyllum striatum* – 0 Bionet records. 2 ALA records
- *Prostanthera caerulea* – 1 Bionet Atlas record. 3 ALA records
- *Prostanthera decussata* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. Bush Camp 1 & 2
- *Prostanthera hindii* – 0 Bionet records. 1 ALA record
- *Prostanthera howelliae* – 0 Bionet records. 16 ALA records
- *Prostanthera linearis* – 1 Bionet Atlas record. 20 ALA records
- *Prostanthera rhombea* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 2 ALA records. Bush Camp 2
- *Prostanthera rotundifolia* – 2 Bionet Atlas records. 7 ALA records, and more known
- *Prostanthera saxicola* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 6 ALA records, and more known
- *Pseudanthus divaricatissimus* – 5 Bionet records, 10 ALA record. Several lost to roadworks 2022.
- *Pultenaea furcata* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 5 AVH records. 10 ALA records. More known
- *Pultenaea mutabilis* var. *angusta* – 0 Bionet records. Plants likely lost to NPWS Pagoda Tr works
- *Pultenaea tenebrosa* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 5 ALA records. More known
- *Rimacola elliptica* (Green Rock Orchid) – 0 Bionet records. 3 ALA records. More known
- *Scaevola hookeri* – 1 Bionet record. 4 ALA records
- *Schizaea rupestris* – 0 Bionet records. 2 ALA records
- *Symphionema montanum* – 1 Bionet record. 5 ALA records, and more known
- *Xanthosia atkinsoniana* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 1 ALA record
- *Zieria aspalathoides* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 1 ALA record
- *Zieria compacta* – 2 Bionet records. 7 ALA records
- *Zieria laevigata* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 2 ALA records, and more known
- *Zieria pilosa* – 0 Bionet Atlas records. 1 known

There is no evidence that the NPWS so much as publicly acknowledged in REFs, BDARs, and EARs let alone required targeted searches for or avoided many of the above Threatened, ROTAP, and rare unlisted flora species. This has put them at risk of localised extinction in the GoS SCA Newnes Plateau.

The NPWS has failed to demonstrate how this and directly linked walking and mountain bike tracks have avoided or minimised the loss of rare or threatened species in sensitive Rockplate Heath vegetation, failed to report cumulative losses at all associated sites, and failed to show how that complies with Federal & State Legislation and NPWS Policies and Guidelines intended to protect the GoS SCA.

## 2.4 FLORA SEARCHES OUTSIDE THE RECOMMENDED SURVEY WINDOW

Many rare or threatened species can only be detected/identified when flowering or fruiting. Others only emerge after natural disturbances such as fire (eg. *Actinotus forsythii*, *Burnettia cuneata*).

For example, *Caesia parviflora* var. *minor* (Endangered NSW BCA) is almost impossible to find unless in flower Nov/Dec. Threatened Orchid species likely to occur include *Prasophyllum pallens* (the only possible survey window is Nov/Dec when in flower) and *Genoplesium superbum* (March/April).

It is therefore essential that Flora Surveys and Ecological Assessments for REFs be conducted in the correct survey window for the relevant threatened flora species, and to correctly report on whether a site was affected by natural disturbances such as fire (NSW DPIE 2020 [Surveying threatened plants and their habitats: NSW survey guide for the Biodiversity Assessment Method](#)).

Flora surveys outside the optimal survey time are unreliable, and additional survey time or separate targeted surveys within the appropriate survey season are required, even if in the same habitat.

The only survey times reported by the NPWS in the draft *Review of Environmental Factors* (REF) are found in the *Ecological Assessment Report* (*Appendix C BAM Plot Results, pages 71 – 79*) –

- Bush Camp Site 1 and 2 were surveyed 11/02/2025, and Bush Camp Site 3 on 10/02/2025.

The BAM Plot Field Survey Forms describe Fire Damage at Site 1 as 'N (*not burnt 2019*)', and Site 2 & 3 as 'Y (*2019*)'. Either the BAM Plots are incorrectly labelled, or the Fire Damage assessments are wrong. Camp Site 1 and 2 were burnt in 2019, whereas Camp Site 3 was unburnt in 2019.

Therefore, the only site-specific Flora Surveys conducted at proposed Bush Camp Sites 1, 2 & 3 were single surveys in February 2025. No additional survey time or separate targeted surveys within the appropriate survey season have been reported by the NPWS in this draft REF.

Many of the above rare or threatened species could not have been detected by single flora surveys in February. The NPWS have not abided by the *NSW Survey Guide for the Biodiversity Assessment Method 2020*. This puts into question the quality, rigour and reliability of the information provided in this REF.

## 2.5 SITE-SPECIFIC ERRORS OF OMISSION

### 2.5.1 BUSH CAMP 3 – errors and omissions

The Ecological Assessment Report, Page 78-79, describes BAM Site 3 as PCT 3862 Newnes Plateau Rockplate Heath damaged by fire in 2019. It was in fact unburnt. Some 33 flora species are listed as occurring at BAM Site 3. However, in one short visit on 5/2/2026 and without knowing what was listed in the EAR we sighted 11 additional or 30+% more species, including *Acacia lunata*, *Amyema pendula*, *Banksia penicillata* (Endangered EPBC Act), *Callitris rhomboidea*, *Cassytha pubescens*,

*Epacris gunnii*, *Hakea salicifolia*, *Lagenophora sublyrata*, *Lepidosperma urophorum*, *Leptospermum parvifolia*, and *Viola silicestris*. How many other flora species have been missed at Camp Zone 3?

***Acacia lunata* (Lunate-Leaved Acacia)** - There are 0 Bionet Atlas records for this species in the GoS SCA Newnes Plateau. Several plants along the access track to Bush Camp 3 will likely be lost to road works. The NPWS will be ensuring that this locally rare species remains locally extinct in the GoS SCA.

***Banksia penicillata* – EPBC Act Endangered in effect from 4 September 2024, formerly ROTAP 3RC-** The NPWS repeatedly claim throughout this draft REF that no threatened species were recorded or considered likely to occur at or within the soil seed bank of the three proposed Bush Camp sites.

*Banksia penicillata* (Endangered: EPBC Act) occurs in abundance throughout and in the soil seed bank of Bush Camp 3. This population has been known for over 30 years, first recorded at Resort site 3 on 17 June 1992 [Record: NSW:NSW258074 | Occurrence record | Atlas of Living Australia](#).

There are 23 Bionet Atlas records for *B. penicillata* in the GoS SCA Newnes Plateau, but 0 Bionet records since the 2019 RFS backburns. 2 or 10% of those occur at Bush Camp 3. Many populations were burnt in 2013 and again in 2019, but not at Bush Camp 3. Of the remaining plants, many are isolated individuals which will need to self-pollinate and any seed produced may lack viability.

Many if not all of those plants will be lost to proposed roadworks into and building works at Bush Camp 3. In cumulative terms more plants have been lost along Broad Swamp - Birds Rock Walking Track, a population near Lost City South walking track has disappeared, plants were likely lost to Glowworm Tunnel/Pagoda Trackwork, and plants are at risk to State Mine Bike Tracks.

This endangered *Banksia* doesn't have a lignotuber, is an obligate seeder, killed by fire, and seedlings take up to 6 years to produce seed. Researchers Ian Baird and Doug Benson recommend a minimum of 15 years between fires (leaving some for 30 years unburnt) to give populations the best likelihood of survival. It is an important winter food source for threatened fauna species including the Eastern Pygmy Possum (*Cercartetus nanus*), and Red-tailed Glossy Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus lathami*).

Like most Proteaceae species, *Banksia penicillata* is highly susceptible to *Phytophthora cinnamomi* likely to be brought into Bush Camp 3 on construction machinery and boots of bushwalkers. It is spread by altered drainage, likely to occur due to septic & water tanks, runoff from roofs, roadworks.

Like most Proteaceae species, *Banksia penicillata* has evolved over millions of years to thrive in nutrient-poor environments. Phosphorous and nitrogen from septic tanks, sewage spills, cooking and washing-up facilities etc is likely to be highly detrimental to the long-term survival of this population.

Edge effects around resorts will prevent seedling recruitment and cause incremental losses over time.

Newnes Plateau is now a much drier environment because underground mining extracts 20+ billion litres of groundwater each and every year. Fires are now hotter and more intense.

The Leaseholder will inevitably seek, after approval, wider cleared vegetation buffers and more frequent hazard reduction burns for Asset Protection, the final nail in the coffin for *B. penicillata*.

By destroying the largest and oldest known remaining population of *Banksia penicillata* on Newnes Plateau at Bush Camp 3, the NPWS (ably assisted by the RFS and Centennial) are ensuring that this endangered species becomes locally extinct in the GoS SCA Newnes Plateau. Congratulations (not).

The most environmentally responsible option for the NPWS would be to not clear this site, relocate Bush Camp 3, and establish a long-term research site for *Banksia penicillata* instead to study the age and longevity of these plants, seed viability, germination requirements, pollinators, disease and phytophthora resistance, phosphorous and other nutrient tolerance, climate change impacts, etc.

At the very least the NPWS should collect all seed from plants to be destroyed, propagate those in a nursery, and replant seedlings in appropriate areas where they have been lost to NPWS works at Lost City South, Broad Swamp to Birds Rock Trail, Glowworm Tunnel and Pagoda Track, State Mine etc.

The presence of *Banksia penicillata* makes this a Controlled Action. An EPBC Referral must be lodged.

***Callitris rhomboidea*** - The NPWS may assume that it is common, however there are only 7 Bionet Atlas records in the entire GoS SCA Newnes Plateau, and 0 records post 2019. It is killed by fire and all trees that I know of are dead, except at Bush Camp 3. I have seen minimal seedling recruitment post-fire. It is restricted to Rockplate Heath, and is at risk of becoming locally extinct.

***Darwinia taxifolia*, *D. fascicularis*** - There are only 2 Bionet Atlas records for *Darwinia taxifolia* and *D. fascicularis* in the entire GoS SCA Newnes Plateau, so hardly common. I sighted several populations on the edge of the old motorbike track which the Broad Swamp to Birds Rock Walking Track largely follows - one near Camp Zone 1, the other near Camp Zone 2. They are also at risk to Clarence Colliery extensions into the Northern Area and 700 Area. The NPWS are actively enabling localised extinction of *Darwinia taxifolia* and *Darwinia fascicularis* in the GoS SCA Newnes Plateau.

***Hakea salicifolia* (Willow-leaved Hakea)** - There is only 1 Bionet Atlas record for this species in the entire GoS SCA Newnes Plateau. Road works into and construction works at Bush Camp 3 will destroy most plants in that area. The State Mine Gully Mountain Bike network will destroy more. The NPWS are well on the way to ensuring localised extinction of this species in the GoS SCA Newnes Plateau.

***Leonema lamprophyllum subsp. orbiculare*** - Recommended ROTAP 2R-. Only 6 Bionet Atlas records in the entire GoS SCA Newnes Plateau, so hardly common. It is an obligate-seeder killed by fire, only

regrows from seed, is very slow growing, confined to Rockplate Heath, and there is no evidence that the NPWS searched for it before constructing the Lost City Walking Tracks, Broad-Swamp to Birds Rock Walking Track, Glowworm Tunnel/Pagoda Track upgrade, Forest Camp works, or elsewhere. One record is near Bush Camp 3, another near Bush Camp 2. Therefore 33% of the known Bionet records could be destroyed by this one proposal alone. Many more plants are at risk to the intrinsically linked State Mine Heritage Park Mountain Bike proposal, just outside the GoS SCA.

***Lepidosperma urophorum*** - There are only 5 Bionet Atlas records in the entire GoS SCA Newnes Plateau, 2 of which (ie. 40% of the known population) are in the Lost City South Walking Track area and may already have been destroyed. A single plant occurs at Bush Camp 3, and should be avoided.

***Ochrosperma oligomerum*** - There are only 3 Bionet Atlas records for this rare species in the GoS SCA Newnes Plateau. One is near the Lost City and may already have been destroyed by NPWS works, another is near Bush Camp 3, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> near Wolgan Falls. I have also recorded it near Bush Camp 1. Potentially 2/3 or 66% of the known populations may or have already been lost to NPWS works.

***Pultenaea tenebrosa*** - A newly described form of *Pultenaea glabra* (Vulnerable EPBC & NSW BCA) with a much more restricted distribution, which should be assessed as Endangered/Critically Endangered. The Bionet Atlas contains 0 records, Australasian Virtual Herbarium (AVH) 4 records, Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) 5 records, and iNaturalist 6 records in the GoS SCA Newnes Plateau. 3 are as close as 370m to Bush Camp 3, and 4 in the Angus Place West Mine proposal. A resort hub with campfires, solar panels, helicopter's removing sewage, increased visitation etc etc will inevitably increase the fire risk for this fire-sensitive obligate-seeder. Failure by the NPWS to even acknowledge this threatened species in the REF let alone conduct targeted searches for it is grossly negligent. The NPWS are clearly prepared to sacrifice 100% of the known populations near Bush Camp 3 and Angus Place West, ensuring localised extinction of *Pultenaea tenebrosa* in GoS Newnes Plateau. The presence of *Pultenaea glabra* makes this a Controlled Action, and an EPBC Referral must be lodged.

***Symphionema montanum*** - Only 1 Bionet Atlas record in whole GoS SCA Newnes Plateau, near Site 3.

### **2.5.2 BUSH CAMP 2 – errors and omissions**

The Ecological Assessment Report, Page 76-77, describes BAM Site 2 as PCT 3862 Newnes Plateau Rockplate Heath damaged by the 2019 fire. 27 flora species are recorded, but no *Prostanthera sp.*

There appears to be some confusion about which Mint-bush species actually occur near Bush Camp 2, as there are records for 4 visually similar species: *Prostanthera granitica*, *P. decussata*, *P. howelliae* (also recorded near Bush Camp 1), and *P. rhombea*. NSW Herbarium staff have speculated that *Prostanthera stricta* (Vulnerable EPBC Act & NSW BCA) or hybrids thereof may occur in the GoS SCA.

Prostanthera species in the Lithgow LGA have historically been poorly described/recorded. For example, *Prostanthera volucris* (Critically Endangered) at Evans Crown Reserve was only described in 2022, *Prostanthera caerulea* was not listed on the Bionet Atlas until after I recorded it in 2020 along Bungleboori Creek, *Prostanthera hindii* and *Prostanthera linearis* records on Bionet are severely lacking, various *Prostanthera saxicola* subspecies occur in GoS and are poorly described including one not far from Bush Camp 2, and *Prostanthera cryptandroides* subsp. *cryptandroides* may occur.

In 2019 I submitted 2 samples from Birds Rock Lookout area to the NSW Herbarium (NSW1057682 & NSW1057686) which were identified as *Prostanthera decussata*. The Bionet Atlas lists 0 records for *P. decussata* in the GoS SCA Newnes Plateau. ALA lists 8 records, 2 of which are near Camp Zone 2 and a 1987 record along Birds Rock Trail. This proposal could destroy 37.5% (3 of 8 ALA records) of the known *Prostanthera decussata* occurrences in the GoS SCA Newnes Plateau.

In cumulative terms, more *Prostanthera decussata* occur near the Forest Camp development currently underway, which may already have been destroyed by the NPWS.

Before destroying any more plants, the NPWS should at the very least be environmentally responsible and determine which *Prostanthera* species actually occurs at Bush Camp 2 and elsewhere, as any one of those might be a new or undescribed species. Before clearing works begin samples should be collected from a range of plants in the area and sent to the NSW Herbarium for positive identification.

Mint-bushes propagate easily from cuttings. The NPWS should do so and replant near sites disturbed.

*Leonema lamprophyllum* subsp. *orbiculare*, *Darwinia taxifolia*, *Ochrosperma oligomerum* and *Olearia asterotricha* have also been recorded near Bush Camp 2 (see above details for these species).

### **2.5.3 BUSH CAMP 1 – errors and omissions**

The Ecological Assessment Report, Page 72-74, describes BAM Site 1 as PCT 3696 - Western Blue Mountains Rocky Scribbly Gum Woodland and PCT 3862 - Newnes Plateau Rockplate Heath damaged by the 2019 fire. In one short visit I recorded 7 species (or 20% more) not listed in the EAR including *Bossiaea heterophylla*, *Cryptandra amara*, *Eucalyptus stricta*, *Hibbertia ericifolia*, *Lepidosperma viscidum*, *Leptospermum macrocarpum*, and *Leucochrysum graminifolium* (ROTAP 2R).

Other rare/threatened species not identified near BAM Site 1 or along North Ridge Rd access track include *Acacia asparagoides* (ROTAP 2R), *Caesium parviflora* var. *minor* (Endangered NSW BCA), *Darwinia taxifolia* (see above), *Leonema lamprophyllum* subsp. *orbiculare* (ROTAP), *Persoonia hindii* (E1), and *Prostanthera decussata/howelliae/grantica/rhombea* (see above).

### **3 FLAWED CONSULTATION & APPROVAL PROCESSES, AND LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE**

The NPWS being both the Proponent and decision-maker with no independent oversight or rights to a judicial review raises significant ethical and legal concerns regarding the legitimacy of granting the leases in the first instance, and subsequent public consultation, assessment and approval processes.

The May 2024 consultation on granting of the leases resulted in 1,773 submissions opposed and only 35 in support. The NPWS ignored >98% opposed and went with <2% (1.97%) who supported leases.

The overwhelming public perception expressed in the 2022 and 2024 consultations was that the GoS SCA lease proposals failed to satisfy legitimacy criteria, and the project had no social licence.

Whilst highly-paid public servants in ivory towers must relish giving the middle finger to >98% of the community because the Minister has their back, such support can be ephemeral and change quickly especially during elections. Community opinion won't change, and they won't forget or forgive.

In terms of legitimacy, this proposal may be in breach of various legislation, policies, and guidelines –

- Section 491 of the *Environment Protection and Conservation Act 1999* (Cth), which references the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth), it is an offence to “knowingly” or “recklessly” provide information to the decision-maker;
- Section 489(2) of the *Environment Protection and Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) provides for up to 1 year imprisonment for recklessly providing false or misleading material;
- Under s 10.6 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (NSW) it is an offence to provide information on a planning matter that the person knows, or ought reasonably to know, is false or misleading information in a material particular;
- Failure to comply with *NPWS Guidelines for Preparing a Review of Environmental Factors 2022*;
- Failure to comply with *NSW Survey Guide for the Biodiversity Assessment Method 2020*;
- Failure to comply with *Accessible Parks Policy, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan 2025 - 2029*
- Conflicts with protected area legislation including the *National Parks & Wildlife Act 1974* which clearly state NSW parliaments expectation they be managed to maintain their natural values.

This REF fails any truly objective legitimacy test on multiple grounds, lacks credibility, and trust.

### **4 EQUITY AND PUBLIC ACCESS**

No local is likely to want to or afford to stay at the resorts. However, they do want to continue to visit the resort areas, because all are easy ½ day trips from Lithgow, provide some of the best views, and best access to key sites like Birds Rock Lookout, Cathedral Cave, Carne Creek, etc.

Bird's Rock Lookout was one of my personal favourites to show family and visitors what Newnes Plateau was all about. I have a daughter in a wheelchair, grandchildren in strollers, toddlers unable

to walk far, older family members and friends – all of whom were able to experience the amazing views over Carne Creek from Bird’s Rock lookout in a short 3 hour return drive from Lithgow.

But when NPWS closed Bird’s Rock Trail it involved a 7.6 km return walk, 200m ascent/descent, and steep grades to the Lookout. It was no longer a short ½ day trip, nor possible to push a wheelchair or stroller up those grades, and too hard for toddlers and elderly people. Our access has been restricted.

The same applies to Camp Sites 1 & 3. Once short easy drives, they now involve an 8km return walk & 100m ascent/descent to Site 1, and a 4km return walk and 180m ascent/descent to Site 3.

This is my take on equity of access. The reason NPWS closed vehicular access to Birds Rock Trail and the other sites is obvious – they were selected for the exclusive use of a privileged few who can afford it.

The NPWS of course claim anyone can still go there, no inequitable outcomes for visitors, no access restrictions etc. But in reality only fit, healthy and wealthy visitors can, while time-poor, elderly, mobility-impaired, families with young children etc are excluded by fitness & the walking distance.

And I am not alone. Many locals have expressed their anger about the closure of these 3 trails.

By the NPWSs own definition in the Diversity and Equity Access Plan 2025 – 2029:

*“Barriers to accessing parks are often most acutely experienced by people with a disability. However, everyone may experience access barriers at different times in their lives, including older people, when caring for young children, or experiencing illness or medical conditions.”*

I do not believe that closing Birds Rock and the other trails and excluding the vast majority for the exclusive benefit of a niche group at the Bush Camps is fair, equitable, nor complies with the above.

Furthermore, all proposed Bush Camps and multi-day walks, Wollemi Great Walk, Wolgan Rail Trail etc are within 1 hours drive from Lithgow, Bell, Capertee, Clarence, Cullen Bullen, Glen Davis, Lidsdale, or Wallerawang. A huge range of accommodation options already exist to cater for every budget.

There is no need for high-end tourism accommodation in the GoS SCA, the area is already well-served by off-park accommodation. This will ensure the economic benefits flow to and don’t bypass Lithgow.

## **5 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS AND LOSSES OF THREATENED SPECIES FROM ALL NPWS PROPOSALS**

NPWS ‘Guidelines for preparing a Review of Environmental Factors 2022’ clearly state on page 30 -

*Exercise caution in ‘project splitting’... care should be taken to avoid breaking down projects into smaller components to such an extent that the cumulative impacts of the overall proposal are no longer apparent. For example, the impacts of a project on threatened species may seem negligible when considered in a series of small-scale, standalone REFs spread across a geographical area,*

but the total impact may be significant. The key risks here are an increased chance of environmental damage and an insufficient level of assessment and scrutiny.

The NPWS is clearly breaching its own guidelines in this REF by doing just that - 'project splitting'. The REF only reports on 3 Bush Camps, fully aware they are directly linked to a wide network of proposed, completed, and/or reasonably foreseeable future projects which will also have impacts. Cumulative losses of all threatened species to all NPWS projects in GoS SCA have not been reported in this REF.

There is no evidence NPWS searched for or avoided some of the Threatened species listed above before:

- Constructing the Lost City carpark and walking tracks
- Constructing the Broad Swamp Loop walking track
- Constructing the Broad Swamp to Birds Rock Walking Track
- Constructing the camping area at the old Newnes Afforestation Camp
- Upgrading the Glowworm Tunnels Carpark, Walking Track, and Pagoda Track
- Widening/upgrading State Mine Gully Road, Old Bells Line of Road, Glowworm Tunnels Road
- Proposed linkages between the GOS SCA & State Mine Heritage Park Mountain Bike Tracks
- Proposed Clarence Sands widening and bitumening of Old Bell's Line of Road
- Proposed Wolgan Rail Trail dual use tracks;
- Tacit approval by the NPWS for the proposed Springvale Colliery West; Angus Place West; Clarence Colliery Northern Area, 900 Area and 700 Area extensions.

The NPWS have acknowledged (not in this REF but via GIPA) that 125 *Veronica blakelyi* (Endangered NSW BCA) or 15% of surveyed plants were directly affected by works on the Lost City walking track, however fail to report that the largest remaining population of *Veronica blakelyi* on Newnes Plateau is being impacted right now by the Forest Camp development. Construction of the Broad Swamp Loop destroyed more plants, as did recent Exploration Drilling in the Clarence Colliery 700 Area.

Therefore, using *Veronica blakelyi* as just one example, claims of 'negligible impacts' by 3 stand-alone small project lacks legitimacy given the multiple impacts of intricately linked completed, proposed, and reasonably foreseeable future NPWS projects in the GoS SCA.

Furthermore, the NPWS invariably claim in BDARs, EARs, and REFs that threatened flora species have been adequately mapped on the Bionet Atlas. This is demonstrably false as demonstrated in Section 2 above which shows 0 Bionet Atlas records for many rare/threatened species in the GoS SCA Newnes Plateau, but multiple ALA, AVH, and other records. Failure to check the full range of publicly available biodiversity databases has placed many rare and threatened flora species at risk of localised extinction.

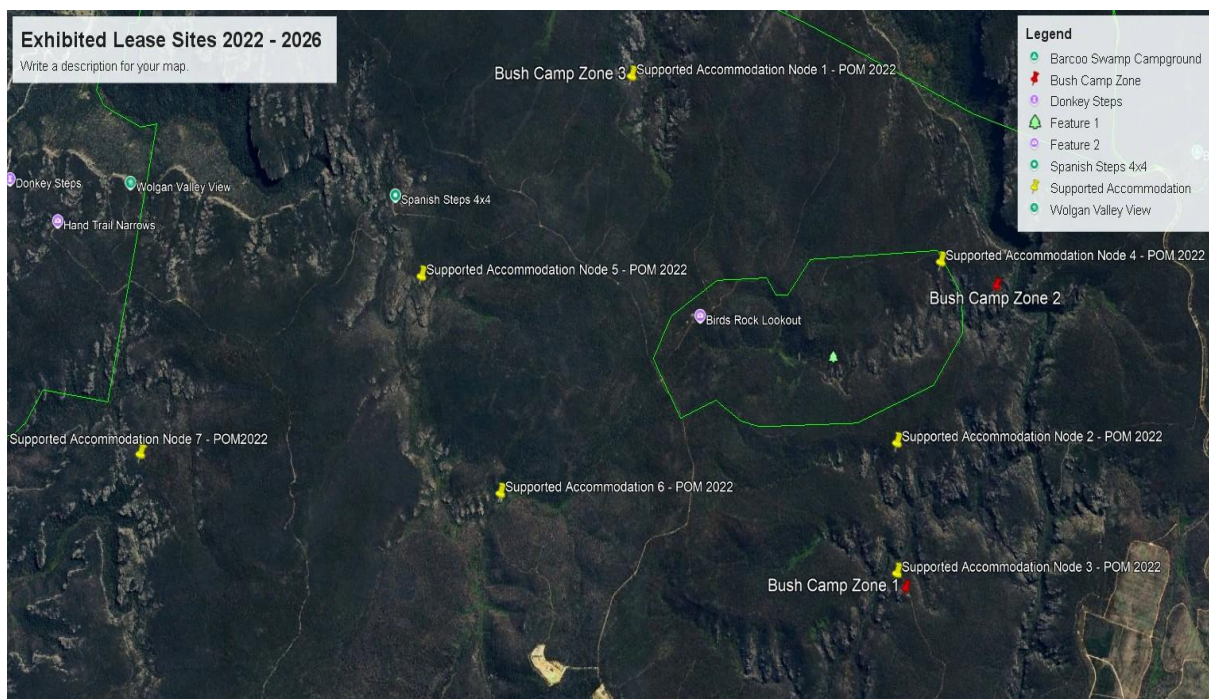
The NPWS appear to also have limited searches required to a select few threatened species whilst ignoring others, and excluding rare non-listed species. Repeated failure by the NPWS to even consider let alone search for or avoid many rare or threatened species in BDARs, EARs and REFs is continuing to place many species at high risk of local extinction in the GoS SCA Newnes Plateau.

When the Gardens of Stone SCA was gazetted in 2022 there was a high community expectation that the biodiversity and conservation values of Newnes Plateau would be better managed by the NPWS than they previously were under NSW Forests. Those community expectations have been shattered.

Failure by the NPWS to consider cumulative impacts of all projects on threatened species is yet another breach of its own guidelines (*Guidelines for preparing a Review of Environmental Factors 2022*), and adds to the overall lack of credibility, legitimacy, and social licence of this Proposal.

## 6 INCORRECT GPS COORDINATES

The NPWS appear incapable of correctly locating the Bush Camps on a map. GPS coordinates in the May 2024 lease notice were wrong, didn't match the shape files, and the NPWS had to readvertise 3 times. To date the NSW public have been shown 9 separate locations, only 3 of which are correct.



Confusion still reigns in this draft REF. The EAR incorrectly numbers and describes BAM Plots 1 & 3. The BAM Plot Field Survey Forms describe Fire Damage at Site 1 as 'N (*not burnt 2019*)', and Site 2 & 3 as burnt. Whereas in fact Bush Camp 1 was burnt, and Bush Camp 3 was unburnt in 2019.

The NPWS can't even locate the 3 sites on a map, yet can advise the Minister & NSW public that all are degraded with no threatened flora species? False advertising doesn't gain public confidence or trust.

## 7 CLIMATE CHANGE

*Banksia penicillata* (Endangered EPBC Act from 4 September 2024) may well be the ‘canary in a coal mine’ for the rapid pace of climate change already impacting high altitude areas such as the GoS SCA.

The NPWS doesn’t even acknowledge *Banksia penicillata* let alone climate change in this draft REF.

Is the NPWS a climate change denier? Because the way the NPWS are flipping the bird at community consultation, rare and unique rockplate heath, pagoda landscapes, threatened flora species etc etc is akin to an environmental pariah not unlike fossil-fuel companies who cover-up, deny, misrepresent, lie, bully, cheat, and scam their way through the DA process to get an approval across the line.

The losses of *Banksia penicillata* to the 2013 and 2019 fires were so dramatic, that the few remaining populations are in a race against time to reproduce before the next fire event. They have survived everything nature has thrown at them for 1000s of years, but no longer have the luxury of time to adapt or migrate higher up mountains to escape the heat. And on Newnes Plateau there is nowhere higher to climb to anyway, and it is literally about to fall off the top of that mountain.

Stronger environmental protection is the only hope to prevent further irreversible losses, and the 4 September 2024 Endangered listing is a step in that right direction. But not when that legislation is dishonestly being undermined by the very department responsible for protecting it – the NPWS.

*Banksia penicillata* doesn’t need the added stress of tourism infrastructure, mountain bikes, and god only knows what other abominations the NPWS plan to dump in the heart of the GoS SCA next. This will be the final nail-in-the coffin for the oldest largest remaining unburnt population at Bush Camp 3.

Wow, what big tough heroes! And you thought of everything – first deny that it exists, destroy it, then cover-up that loss for your leaseholder mate via a commercial-in-confidence agreement! And you’ll probably self-nominate for an environmental sustainability award for best practice greenwashing!

There is no morally, ethically, or environmentally justifiable reason to destroy the oldest and largest unburnt *Banksia penicillata* in the GoS SCA to cater to a niche minority with more dollars than cents.

## 8 ESTABLISH A LONG-TERM RESEARCH SITE FOR BANKSIA PENICILLATA AT BUSH CAMP 3

Just because the NPWS have the power to destroy all *Banksia penicillata* at Bush Camp 3 and to cover it up, doesn’t mean it should. Alternatively Bush Camp 3 could be relocated to a more appropriate location, and a long-term research site could be established instead amongst the oldest and largest remaining unburnt population of *Banksia penicillata* in GoS to study the age and longevity of these trees, seed viability, germination requirements, pollinators, disease/phytophthora resistance, phosphorous and other nutrient tolerance, climate change impacts, etc etc

## **9 SEED COLLECTION, PROPAGATION, AND REPLANTING**

Despite NPWS assertions throughout this draft REF that the three sites are degraded and do not support any threatened flora species or vegetation of any value – there is a remote possibility a few native plants may exist. The NPWS shouldn't just bulldoze those plants because they can, but instead collect seeds, cuttings and other material to replant areas the NPWS has already bulldozed.

Replanting may be a foreign concept to the NPWS – but some might say it's the right thing to do.

### **CONCLUSION**

The primary objective of the NPWS should be to maintain or improve the condition of the GoS SCA for the benefit of future generations, not degrade or exploit it for short-term financial gain.

I am appalled by this draft REF, it is an assault on the very values which I and many others in the community believed the NPWS stood for, and the very reasons the GoS SCA was proclaimed.

Please show some respect for the GoS SCA, and reject this proposal in its entirety.

Thankyou for the opportunity to provide comment.

Your sincerely

Chris Jonkers BSc (Forestry) ANU  
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