

8 December 2016

The Hon. Mark Speakman SC MP
Minister for the Environment
GPO Box 5341
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Minister

Protecting the Gardens of Stone

I write to ask you to reserve the Newnes Plateau and other sandstone uploads adjoining the Gardens of Stone National Park so that the Gardens of Stone's significant environmental values can be protected for future generations.

The Gardens of Stone adjoin the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and provide magnificent environmental and heritage values. They boast spectacular scenery including rare landform pagodas, cliff lines, sandstone formations and natural arches, slot canyons, gorges and large caverns, as well as waterfalls, montane sand dunes, highland swamps, Aboriginal rock art and other sites dating back thousands of years. I understand the region supports a number of threatened plants and animals, including two critically endangered animals, and rare vegetation communities. Many of these values are outside the current national park protected areas.

A number of constituents tell me that they regularly go bushwalking, rock climbing and camping in the Gardens of Stone and that they are concerned about mining impacts on the state forest areas.

Mining in the region has had detrimental impacts on the Gardens of Stone: it has collapsed cliffs, cracked pagodas, polluted water sources and dried swamps. Continued mining operations risk severe and irreversible damage to the Gardens of Stone.

I have been told that mine operators previously agreed to restrict mining activities to longwall mining with columns of coal retained to support rock formations, although upland swamps continue to be damaged. I understand that mine operators now seek to mine all coal and expand operations to open cut mining, both of which would have devastating impacts.

Reservation is required to curb the damage and manage the area's outstanding heritage values.

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I share widespread concern that the only way to protect Gardens of Stone environmental, heritage and recreational values is to reserve the Newnes Plateau and other sandstone uplands adjoining the park.

There have been few national park reservations in the past six years and extending the Gardens of Stone National Park would have strong community support.

Could you please reserve the Newnes Plateau and other sandstone uplands adjoining the Gardens of Stone National Park and inform me what action you will take?

Yours sincerely

Alex Greenwich
Member for Sydney

