

*Friend of Kat.  
Falls Creek Valley  
Wild Stream*

**KATOOMBA FALLS CREEK VALLEY  
ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY**

**DRAFT REPORT AND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**prepared for  
BLUE MOUNTAINS CITY COUNCIL**

**F.&J. BELL & ASSOCIATES  
Box 441 P.O. Sutherland 2232**

**June 1993**

Friends of Kat.  
Falls Creek Valley  
Neil Stuart

## KATOOMBA FALLS CREEK VALLEY ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY

### DRAFT REPORT AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

prepared for  
BLUE MOUNTAINS CITY COUNCIL

F.&J. BELL & ASSOCIATES  
Box 441 P.O. Sutherland 2232

June 1993



# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## **KATOOMBA FALLS CREEK ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY**

### **DRAFT REPORT AND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

#### **Objectives**

This report presents an environmental study of Katoomba Falls Creek Valley and an environmental management plan for the valley based on the findings of the study. These have been prepared for the Blue Mountains City Council with the following broad objectives, as given in the Council's brief:

- to ensure protection of the natural and cultural environment,
- to maintain or enhance existing visual qualities and values,
- to promote the quality of life of the local and regional communities.

#### **Key issues**

Key issues identified in the brief are:

- maintenance of water flows and quality to Katoomba Falls,
- protection of Aboriginal and European heritage,
- recognition of the "green space" near the town centre,
- amenity of adjacent residential development,
- opportunities for use for recreational, cultural, and educational purposes, and for local tourist use,
- community perceptions and priorities.

In the course of the study other important issues were identified and addressed. These include the high vulnerability of the soils to erosion, and future uses of Catalina Circuit.

#### **The study area**

Because the quality and quantity of flows at Katoomba Falls was one of the major issues, the study area comprised the entire catchment area upstream of the Falls, as shown in Map A (at end of this Executive Summary). Flows at the Falls may be significantly affected by development and other activities in any part of this area. Most of the present environmental problems, however, are in the public land extending along the valley, namely Frank Walford Park, McRaes Paddock and Katoomba Park (see Maps A and B).

#### **Study procedure and participants**

The study was essentially a co-operative effort between consultants F & J Bell & Associates, Blue Mountains City Council and The Friends of Katoomba Falls Creek Valley (a local environmental group). Guidance was provided by a steering committee consisting of representatives from each of these organisations and from the NSW Department of Planning. In accordance with the Council's brief, it was necessary for most of the work to be completed during a 12-week period from June to September, 1992.

Council staff provided information on various aspects of the study area and also assisted in arranging meetings etc. Field surveys of flora, fauna and landforms were made by The Friends of Katoomba Falls Creek Valley. Most other aspects of the study were carried out by F & J Bell & Associates, including a programme of water quality and flow measurements, analyses of catchment hydrology by mathematical modelling, field soil surveys, community opinion surveys, and preparation of the draft report and management plan. As sub-consultants to F & J Bell & Associates, Dr Val Attenbrow of the Australian Museum investigated the Aboriginal heritage, and Joan Masterman and Stephen Harris advised on planning aspects.



## Main findings of study

The environmental study resulted in the following conclusions:

1. The swamps in the Katoomba Falls catchment play an important role in maintaining dry weather streamflows and water quality. To prevent future deterioration of Katoomba Falls as a heritage item and tourist feature it is necessary to protect these swamps from further changes in their hydrological and ecological characteristics.
2. Due to their particular geological origin, the soils in the Upper Blue Mountains have a higher degree of erodibility than most other soils in NSW. The past failure to recognise this has resulted in extensive, irreparable damage around Catalina Circuit and elsewhere in the study area. To avoid further erosion problems, more stringent controls may be required on future development within the catchment.
3. Katoomba Falls Creek Valley has a particularly rich diversity of bird species, apparently due to its altitude, location and habitat characteristics. The area would be an excellent centre for organised birdwatching with special educational, recreational, tourist and scientific values. To protect these values it is desirable to retain the continuity of the tree canopy throughout the valley and to maintain the habitat diversity.
4. The occupation of the valley by Aboriginal people prior to the 1960s should be recognised in a manner consistent with a 1992 Council resolution to acknowledge Aboriginal contributions to the settlement of the Blue Mountains. On the public land in the valley there is an area of special significance to Aboriginal people and several Aboriginal archaeological sites. These all require protective measures.
5. The northern and western parts of Frank Walford Park have much significance for the European history of the Blue mountains. In particular, the site of North's Siding, which is probably within the park boundary, should be recognised as the birthplace of Katoomba and should be listed as such in the Council's Heritage Register.
6. Most local residents want the public land of Katoomba Falls Creek Valley retained in a relatively natural condition and would object to any part of it being alienated from the community. More than 90 percent of local residents currently use the land for purposes such as walking, jogging and family outings. There is a need for a good walking track right along the valley to link up with existing tracks in Katoomba Park.
7. Although the opinions of local residents are apparently divided on whether motor sports should continue on Catalina Circuit, most residents would like to see the Circuit used by the public for a wider range of recreational activities, including walking for the elderly and disabled, rollerblading, skate board riding and cycling.
8. The demand for backpacking and "ecotourism" facilities in Katoomba is likely to increase considerably if the Blue Mountains achieves official World Heritage listing. This is relevant to the study area because (a) it provides further justification for a walking track from Katoomba Station to the Falls, with items of natural and cultural interest along the way, (b) it indicates the need for more of the caravan park, or other nearby land to be made available for tent sites and good quality, low-cost holiday accommodation and (c) it suggests (as a longer term scenario) that a suitable 'world-class visitors' centre and Heritage Area gateway could be located in Frank Walford Park to cater for, and inspire, the expectations of overseas and interstate backpacker/ecotourists.



## Specific objectives of environmental management plan

The environmental management plan has been prepared to meet the broad objectives in the brief and to meet other needs identified in the study. Because of the present environmental problems of the area, the plan necessarily includes a considerable amount of restoration and remedial work. Its specific objectives are:

- to maintain dry weather flows over Katoomba Falls,
- to minimise water pollution in Katoomba Falls Creek,
- to minimise future soil erosion and, where feasible, repair past erosion damage,
- to protect and restore native fauna and flora,
- to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage,
- to protect European cultural heritage,
- to enhance and maintain visual qualities in the public land,
- to promote recreational and tourist values in the public land,
- to promote other aspects of social wellbeing for residents and the wider community.

## Recommended actions in management plan

The full management programme comprises about 60 recommended actions over a suggested five year period, as tabled below. The actions are numbered and the corresponding locations (if appropriate) are shown on Maps A and B. Most of the actions would need to be carried out or initiated by Blue Mountains City Council, although substantial assistance could probably be obtained in some cases from the Water Board or other government agencies.

Detailed costing of all 60 recommended actions was not possible but would probably be of the order of \$100,000 for the first year of the programme and \$60,000 for each of the ensuing four years. Nevertheless, the Council would have good prospects of cost recovery or cost sharing of some of the more expensive items (for example, with the Water Board).

In the table of recommended actions below, the suggested priorities and timing are indicated by numbers and letters in the last column which should be interpreted as follows:

- |                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1 = relatively high priority | A = within 1st year of 5-year programme    |
| 2 = moderate priority        | B = in 2nd or 3rd year of programme        |
| 3 = relatively low priority  | C = in 4th or 5th year of programme        |
|                              | * = continuing action over 2 or more years |

**TABLE OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

**PRIORITY  
& TIMING**

1	Rezone most of public land to REC-EP as shown on the attached maps	2A
2a	Place posts around swamps and protect from mowing, burning and grazing	2A
2b	Inspect swamps after heavy rainfall and remove litter etc	2B*
3	Construct wet retention basins with shallow excavations	3B
4	Implement a systematic water quality monitoring programme	2A*
5	Construct macrophyte pond and bird breeding island in shallow part of Lake Catalina	3C
6	Repair collapsed embankment and drain	1A
7	Remove horses from McRaes Paddock	1A
8	Revegetate soil on recently excavated sewer line through McRaes Paddock	1A
9	Stabilise the most active areas of erosion to the north of Catalina Circuit	1B
10a	Plan and start programme of weed removal and bush regeneration in the public land	1A*
10b	Adopt policy to survey for rare and endangered species before further bush clearing	1A
11	Protect continuity of tree canopy in this area by prohibiting parking etc	2B
12	Close old BMX road but retain swamp crossing at this location	2B
13	Note area of special significance to Aboriginal people on BMCC records and maps	1A

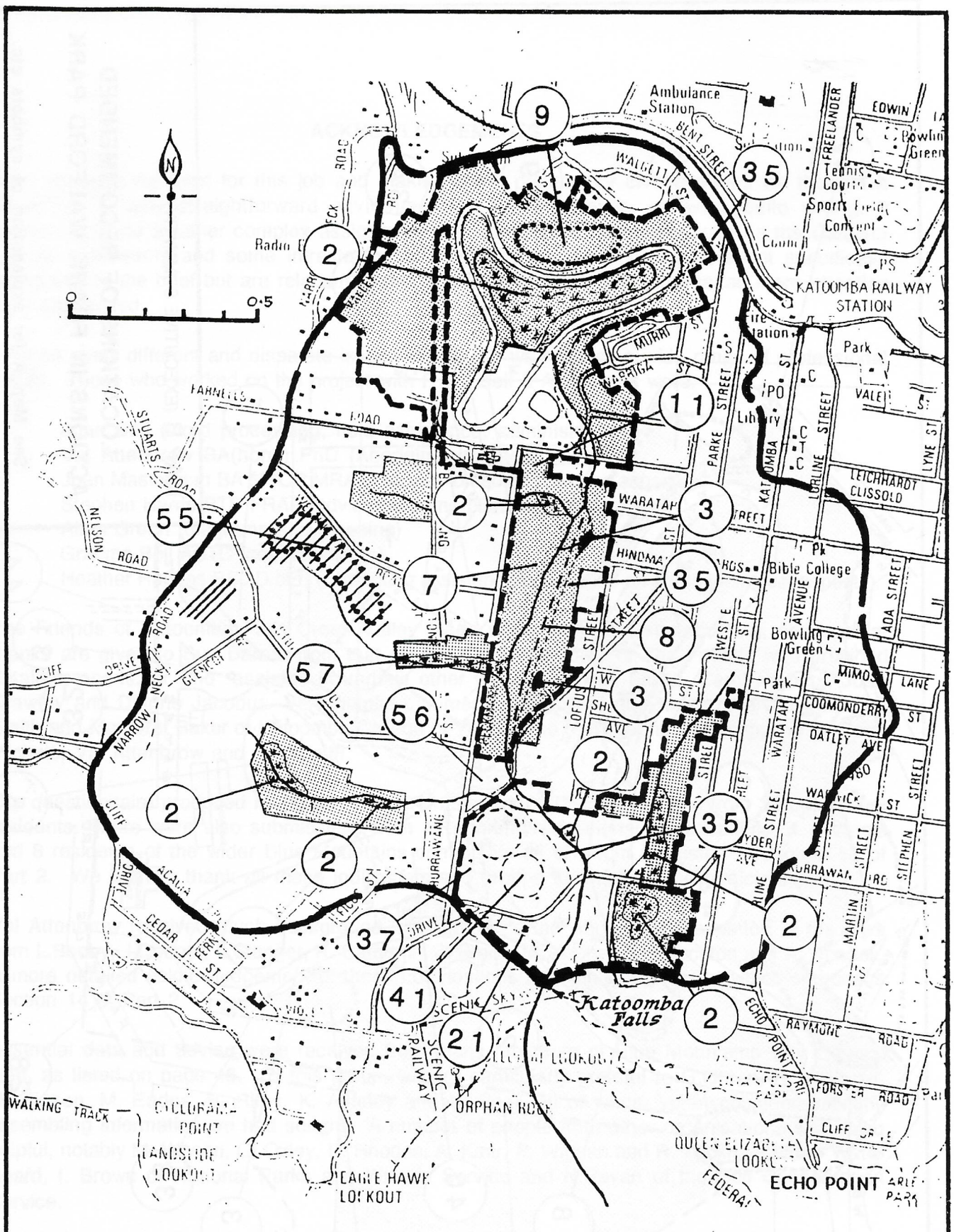


# TABLE OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS (cont'd)

## PRIORITY & TIMING

14	Note Aboriginal heritage sites on BMCC records and maps	1 A
15	Plant shrubs to protect Aboriginal heritage site	2A
16	Place barriers to prevent vehicles disturbing Aboriginal site	2A
17	Place plaque and grove of plants in recognition of former Aboriginal occupation	2B
18	Engage archaeologist to investigate other post-contact Aboriginal sites	2C
19	Nominate North's Siding for BMCC Heritage Register	1 A
20a	Nominate route of cable tram for BMCC Heritage Register	2B
20b	Acquire privately owned route of cable tram through Frank Walford Park	3C
21	Restore heritage qualities of Katoomba Falls Kiosk (see Manidis Roberts' report)	2B
22	Engage historian to examine and document area of early European occupation	2C
23	Consider nomination of Catalina Circuit for BMCC Heritage Register	3C
24	Prevent unauthorised entry of vehicles to undeveloped parts of public land	1A
25	Remove disused pipes, poles and wires from public land	1A
26	Engage a landscape architect to advise on visual aspects of dilapidated buildings etc	2A
27	Allocate particular responsibility for public land to one member of BMCC staff	2 A *
28	Erect entrance gate to car park in view of houses and sports centre	2B
29	Remove tyres and other rubbish from public land	2B
30	Demolish and remove derelict buildings if this is suggested as a result of Action 26	2B
31	Restore Madge Walford Fountain and establish plaque	2B
32	Consider engaging part-time resident manager/ranger (in lieu of Action 27)	2C
33	Carry out minor modifications to Catalina Circuit to enable a wider range of uses	1B*
34a	Construct graded path to provide access to Catalina Circuit for disabled and elderly	1B
34b	Close and revegetate Lake Esplanade	1B
35a	Construct a 1.5 m walking track from Lake Esplanade to Katoomba Park	1A
35b	Extend walking track from Lake Esplanade to site of Action 42a	2C
36	Establish information boards and signposts at points of interest in public land	2B
37	Investigate options for expanding caravan park	1 A
38	Place barriers and improve car park for organised meetings on Catalina Circuit	2B
39	Clear old vehicular track as a preliminary stage of Action 35b	2B
40	Level, revegetate and restore electricity in this part of area enclosed by Circuit	2B
41a	Erect fence around oval in Katoomba Park	2B
41b	Construct shelter shed for oval users and picnickers	3B
42a	Construct steps or other access to walking track from Cascade Street	2C
42b	Close section of Walgett St.	3C
43	Construct boardwalk across swamp if site suitable	3C
44	Close Lomond Street	3B
45	Update facilities in Katoomba Park (as recommended by Manidis Roberts)	2B
46	Mark car spaces on tarmac near Madge Walford Fountain	3B
47	Monitor noise from motor sports on Catalina Circuit	1A
48	Investigate hazards and BMCC liability for recreational activities on Circuit	1A
49	Eliminate dangerous sloping edges of Lake Catalina	2A
50	Form 527 Committee for the public land of Katoomba Falls Creek Valley	2B
51	Consolidate public land and rationalize naming of reserve and park	3B
52	Consider establishment of an Ecotourists' Centre or Mountains Environment Centre	-
53	Amend existing Local Environment Plans for catchment of Katoomba Falls Creek	2A
54	Prepare new Development Control Plans for catchment of Katoomba Falls Creek	2A
55	Note large eroded area which should not be developed without a geotechnical report	1B
56	Acquire this property which is important for maintaining continuity of tree canopy	2C
57	Note dam on private property which should be retained as a sediment /detention pond	2B
58	Investigate 3 possible sites for BMCC Heritage Register	3C
59	Investigate feasibility of walking track extension to Nellies Glen	3B
60	Extend walking track to Nellies Glen if shown to be feasible by Action 59	3C





## MAP A

(EXECUTIVE SUMMARY)

## LOCATIONS OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Circled numbers show locations of actions in table.

See Map B for other actions in Frank Walford Park.

Boundary of Katoomba Falls Creek catchment (study area).....

Boundary of public land.....

Recommended Recreation-Environmental Protection (REC-EP) Zone.....

Recommended Environmental Constraint Areas (Action 53b).....







## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

After studying the brief for this job and making some preliminary investigations we thought it would be a fairly straightforward environmental study. However, we were quite wrong. It turned out to be a rather complex assignment with unexpected difficulties such as the Catalina Circuit controversy and some intractable soil degradation. These items were not specifically mentioned in the brief but are relevant to the objectives of the study and needed more attention than anticipated.

With so many different and disparate issues to address we required a wide range of professional inputs. Those who worked on the project with F & J Bell & Associates were:

Joan Bell (word processing, field assistance, administration)  
Val Attenbrow BA(hons) PhD (Aboriginal heritage)  
Joan Masterman BA MTCP MRAP (advice on some planning aspects)  
Stephen Harris BTP FRAP (advice on some planning aspects)  
Allan Green (diagrams and mapping)  
Graeme Bell ASTC (cost estimates)  
Heather Hughes BSc DipEd (computing assistance and advice on some biological aspects).

The Friends of Katoomba Falls Creek Valley made many important contributions, and special thanks are given to Sue Barrett from that group. Other members of The Friends who provided detailed reports, or who assisted in various other ways were Neil Stuart, Carol Probets, Joan Crawley and Dianne Jacobus. Very helpful comments and information were received from Jim Smith and Margaret Baker of Katoomba College of TAFE. The photographs were supplied by Carol Probets, Val Attenbrow and Jim Smith.

Our questionnaire produced responses from 24 members of The Friends and from 33 other local residents. There were also submissions from 12 sporting/recreational organisations, 4 schools and 8 residents of the wider Blue Mountains community all of whom are listed in Section 18 of Part 2. We wish to thank all these individuals and groups for their helpful participation.

Val Attenbrow received much background information on the Aboriginal occupation of the area from L.Booby, J.Cooper, L.Stanger, K. Cameron, J. Smith, M. Keenan, E. Stockton and A. Kondek. A more detailed acknowledgement of these contributions is given in her report which comprises Section 14 of Part 2

Essential data and advice were received from many members of Blue Mountains City Council staff, as listed on page 46. Of this group, we are particularly grateful to G.Green, H. Halliwell, R. Giason, M. Eades, B. Riley, K. Allenby and V. Bear, all of whom spent considerable time assembling information we had sought. A number of people from other organisations were also helpful, notably M. Wheen, C. Oxley, D. Rhodes, A. Kaar, P. Wiggan and R. Wickham of the Water Board, I. Brown of National Parks and Wildlife Service and N.Pavan of the Soil Conservation Service.

Finally, we wish to thank members of the Steering Committee for their guidance and help, notably Tony Miller of the Department of Planning, Alderman John Pascoe, John Price of Blue Mountains City Council, and our main contact person at the Council, Elton Munday.

Fred Bell BSc MSc PhD MEIA  
Principal, F & J Bell & Associates.