



Backgrounder to the Gardens of Stone region Heritage Report

The name '*Gardens of Stone*' was first applied in 1985 to parts of the western Blue Mountains landscape between Lithgow and the Capertee Valley. This region is characterised by 'pagoda' rock formations and contains the last unprotected part of 1932 Greater Blue Mountains National Park proposal compiled by Myles Dunphy for the National Parks and Primitive Areas Council.

Thirty years ago members of the Colo Committee discovered a number of rock falls from cliffs, together with cracks and fissures associated with the Angus Place Colliery on the western edge of the Newnes Plateau, above Lambs Creek near Wolgan Gap. Spurred on by the threat of further damage, the Colo Committee, in association with the Colong Foundation and the Federation of Bushwalking Clubs, prepared in 1985 a proposal for a 'Gardens of Stone' addition to Wollemi National Park.

After years campaigning Stage One of the Gardens of Stone National Park was created in 1994, covering 11,780 hectares. In December 1995 a further 3,600 hectares of the original proposal were added to the Wollemi National Park to protect spectacular Rocky Creek and its cathedral-like slot canyons.

The Gardens of Stone - Stage Two reserve proposal of 2005 seeks reservation for the core part of this pagoda region where coal mining interests have blocked reservation. It covers 39,000 hectares of public land, and mainly comprises state conservation area reserves. Much of the area is threatened by coal mining and unmanaged recreation, with forestry being a secondary concern.

In 2011 and after extensive negotiation, a Mugii Murum-ban State Conservation Area of 3,650 hectares was reserved over the Airly-Genowlan mesas in the Capertee Valley. Concurrently an underground coal mine for the region commenced production in 2011 and seeks expansion. Coal mining also continues under much of Newnes Plateau and nearby open-cut coal mining proposals are planned.

The values of Gardens of Stone Stage Two reserve proposal were only briefly described in 2005. To address this knowledge gap, conservation groups commissioned a consultant to compile a comprehensive heritage assessment of it.

The report presents the national and international heritage values of the Gardens of Stone north of Lithgow. It embraces Maiyingu Marragu Aboriginal Place, Mt York and Crown lands on the Blue Mountains western escarpment lands from Blackheath to Lithgow, as well as the sandstone landscapes of the Newnes Plateau and the broken stone country to the west of the Plateau.

**This Gardens of Stone heritage report will be released at 2pm, Saturday September 17
The New Law Building, University of Sydney**

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