



GARDENS OF STONE STATE CONSERVATION AREA GLAMPING RESORT PLANS - KEY ISSUES

Presentation to -
Bushwalking NSW 18 February 2026; and
Blue Mountains Conservation Society 19 February 2026

WHAT'S PROPOSED.

Three glamping style resorts in a rare pagoda landscape and each comprised of:

- Six two-person glamping cabins, each with a deck
- A communal area the size of a small house with a kitchen
- Amenities building with 2 showers and 2 toilets, with toilet waste flown out by helicopter
- Three water tanks totalling 30,000 litres
- A solar array for power to run the resort and a utility services hut
- Boardwalks to connect the cabins, common area and amenities block
- A 60m² grey water system with septic tank and a large artificial soil mound sown with exotic grass, regularly mown and the grass carried off site (the big heap of dirt is needed because the sites are on rock!).
- Clearing for the resorts totals 1,935m² - equivalent to about 10 average sized houses.



Resort zone 1 - intact bushland – can you see the (out of scale) resort



Node 5 33.349915°S 150.215234°E



Resort locality I - intact bushland – can you see damage

Image © 2024 Airbus

100 m



Resort zone 2 - intact bushland [at least you can see the (out of scale) resort]

 Node 4 33.32392°S 150.22436°E



Carne Creek

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Resort locality 2 - intact bushland – any disturbance here? Resort is to be located by the pagodas.

Google Earth



Resort zone 3 - intact bushland – best figure in the REF of this proposal



Node 3 33.308794°S 150.185194°E

Resort locality 3 - intact bushland – any damage?

ISSUES

- 1. Harmful Precedent – loss of protection for rare and valuable natural heritage in a NPWS managed conservation area**
2. Conflict of Interest causes Dishonest Assessment
3. The developer "Handout"
4. The secret "Land-Grab"
5. A Developer's Dreamland
6. Loss of equity for Nature
7. Definitional Games

I. HARMFUL PRECEDENT – LOSS OF PROTECTION FOR RARE HERITAGE IN A PARK.

- The commercial resort infrastructure will destroy the natural scenic beauty of rare platy pagoda landscapes in which it is placed.
- Never before has internationally significant heritage in a national park (in waiting) been threatened by resort development. **And it must never happen!**
- These pagoda resorts deny Lithgow visitor nights. Deny Lithgow becoming a Gateway town. Lithgow has infrastructure and needs the jobs. It needs visitor nights, not resorts in parks, and that is what *Destination Pagoda* should deliver.

PRINCIPLES

- Rare heritage sites in national parks (in waiting) must never ever be developed for commercial resorts.
- Resorts should be located outside parks where infrastructure is available and jobs are needed.

2. CONFLICT OF INTEREST CAUSES DISHONEST ASSESSMENT.

- The NPWS is proponent and decision-maker on the three resort proposals - they are “marking their own homework” (conflict of interest 1).
- Without independent scrutiny, the NPWS is trying to get away with dishonestly claiming three rare pagoda heritage sites and localities are disturbed (conflict of interest 2 - degrading what they should protect).
- The dishonest disturbance claim is used to justify resort development that degrades rare, internationally significant pagoda landscapes.
- Conflict of interest (and Ministerial pressure) leads to dishonesty and damage to internationally significant heritage, a travesty of NPWS’s primary duty to protect nature in its parks.

PRINCIPLE

- NPWS must avoid conflicts of interest, especially when it comes to heritage protection.

3. THE DEVELOPER “HANDOUT”.

- The private lessee will benefit from a taxpayer-funded multi-day walk.
- The Gardens of Stone Walk is being handed over for free to support private, heritage-damaging resort developments.
- The Walk was located to suit a commercial tourism demand for resort sites with undisturbed views of iconic pagoda landscapes (and having done that the NPWS then twisted its assessment to say the resort sites were degraded).

PRINCIPLES

- Ban covert involvement of resort developers in reserve design as it will be twisted towards private benefit and against the public interest in conservation.
- Ban “handouts” to national park resort developers. It encourages developers to prefer development of national parks over private land.

4. THE SECRET “LAND GRAB”.

- Secret lease negotiations between Minister Sharpe and the resort developer will put private corporate interests before protection of national parks and rare heritage.
- The proposed lease was sold by Wild Bush Luxury to Intrepid Travel before the Minister even signed it—effectively a "land-grab" trading the public's asset for a private gain.
- Internationally significant heritage landscapes in a “national park in waiting” should not be “sold off the plan”, like a unit in a dodgy high-rise apartment block in Western Sydney secured on a 5% deposit.

PRINCIPLE

- **National parks must be permanent, public and protected;** otherwise rare heritage can become speculative assets sold between tourism corporations.

5. A DEVELOPERS' DREAMLAND.

- The Gardens of Stone Station Conservation Area is a Resort Developers' dream come true.
- Under “Destination Pagoda Deception”, the developer can sit back and relax!
- The NPWS does all the approvals dirty work under your covert partnership!
- Three resorts in internationally significant pagoda landscapes can be approved and given to you on a silver plate. The NPWS reputation gets trashed, while your bright, shiny greenwash stays untarnished!
- You get to monetize the Pagoda Brand, developing rare heritage scenery beyond your wildest dreams!
- It's worst possible abuse of national parks heritage for dollars imaginable!

PRINCIPLE

- NPWS must never, ever become what is effectively a national park development corporation under an opaque partnership with a resort developer.

6. LOSS OF EQUITY FOR NATURE

- Expensive glamping resorts replace a fitness barrier (a low one) with a wealth barrier (a high one). Developers, NPWS and Government talk of equity of access, but what about equity for nature by retaining its protection for rare heritage in national parks.
- The Gardens of Stone Walk is two medium day walks, with vehicle access at Birds Rock between these walks. There is no additional fitness barrier to this Walk, above the ability to walk. There is no equity issue, except the loss of equity for nature's heritage in reservation of a national park (in waiting).
- If you want a bed, go to Lithgow, or pay an outfitter to provide supported camping under a NPWS permit system.

PRINCIPLES

- Basic, low-environmental impact camp facilities is the Australian way of staying in national parks, where we gather as equals, as on the beach and the sports field.
- The NSW Government must not create a monied distinction for exclusive pagoda resorts that provide serviced accommodation that damage rare pagoda heritage.

7. WEAKENED PAGODA PROTECTION.

- The NPWS narrowed the definition of pagoda ‘formations’ to exclude areas of sandstone rockplate where the resorts are proposed to be located. This is a drastic reduction in size of pagoda landscape protection.
- It’s common planning practice to protect a “buffer” around heritage sites, and the (former) Planning Assessment Commission applied a pagoda landscape “buffer” that included the adjoining gullies and woodlands that are to be protected at the highest level. The NPWS is seeking to eliminate entirely this “buffer” protection.

PRINCIPLE

- Apply protection of pagoda heritage defined by the (former) Planning Assessment Commission to protect ‘iconic pagoda views’ from resort development.