State Government plan to divide Blue Mountains

By Shane Desiatnik   May 22, 2013, midnight

There is something very special about Faulconbridge according to the NSW Government's Draft Metropolitan Strategy (DMS) that will guide planning for growth, jobs and housing until 2031 — and Blue Mountains City councillors are not amused.

The document — on public exhibition until May 31 — groups the villages from Faulconbridge to Lapstone in a planning category called Metropolitan Urban Area (MUA) while all Blue Mountains villages west of Faulconbridge are listed as part of a Metropolitan Rural Area (MUA).

Blue Mountains City Council is working on a submission that "will challenge" both categories being applied to the Blue Mountains.But Blue Mountains councillors ensured the submission will specifically declare its "clear opposition to the Lower Mountains being classified as MUA" after unanimously supporting an amendment by Deputy Mayor Mark Greenhill."

The draft [metropolitan] strategy basically wants to split the Blue Mountains into two areas," Clr Greenhill said, adding it would result in the Lower Mountains "being treated the same way as western Sydney".

"More hard surfaces and urban development would [hinder and threaten] our World Heritage Area status," he said.

"We don't want a second class Lower Mountains — we want protection of all of it."

Ward 1 Clr Don McGregor said "I cannot see how you can cut it [the region] in half unless you want to Balkanise it — I think it's an appalling concept".

"We also have custodianship of the quality of Sydney's water supply."

Clr Chris Van der Kley said there was a need to protect "our Blue Mountains, not Sydney's Blue Mountains".

"My gut feeling is the State Government bureaucrats — and this goes back decades — have the idea that one size fits all."

Council's general manager Robert Greenwood will consult with neighbouring Hawkesbury and Penrith City Councils on making joint submission, given the three councils are grouped in the DMS as forming the metropolitan West Sub-region.