



District Information Pack

1. District Details

The Blue Mountains is a unique World Heritage area and is also one of the most bush fire prone areas in the World. The Blue Mountains area is located 55 kilometres west of the Sydney Metropolitan Area and stretches to 95 kilometres from Sydney GPO, New South Wales and includes the Local Government Area of Blue Mountains City Council.

The Local Government Area covers 143,000 hectares of land in the Greater Sydney Region and has a population of approx. 80,000 as at 2020. About 70 percent of the area is incorporated into the UNESCO World Heritage Blue Mountains National Park, with approximately 11 percent of the total land area in private ownership.

The District is comprised of 28 separate townships and villages, with approximately 60 schools, including kindergartens, primary and secondary schools. The majority of human settlement is located in an urban band, built predominantly on the ridgelines of the dissected plateau connected by the central Great Western Highway, between Lapstone and Mt Victoria (Sources: LGA Profile / Blue Mountains City Council Website and Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2016).

Some are small, isolated rural settlements while others are large, urbanised areas. The major population centres are Katoomba and Springwood. Isolated settlements include Yellow Rock, Hawkesbury Heights, Mt Tomah, Mt Wilson, Mt Irvine, Bell and the Megalong Valley. Access between and within towns is limited. The ridgeline topography means there are limited roads between. These diverse centres include highly urbanised towns and isolated rural townships and 18 key commercial/industrial precincts prone to bush fire impact.

The Local Government Area is serviced by 23 Rural Fire Brigades and 8 Fire and Rescue NSW Stations (2 Permanent and 6 Retained).

The nominated Level 3 multi-agency Incident Control Centre is located at Katoomba (3-9 Valley Road, Katoomba NSW 2780) and is co-located with the Emergency Operations Centre and SES Unit Control Centre.

The District experiences on average per year, 140 bush, grass or forest fires of which 3 could be considered significant with major wildfire events occurring every 5-7 years.

The bush fire season generally runs from September through to February. Prevailing weather conditions associated with elevated fire danger conditions in the Blue Mountains area are westerly or north-westerly winds which, if associated with drought-like conditions, can lead to severe weather and fire behaviour.

1.1. Contact Information

District Office Address:	3-9 Valley Road Katoomba NSW 2780
District Office Phone:	02 4784 7444
After Hours Contact:	Via State Operations on 02 8741 5400
A PSN Radio Channel:	101 BLMTN A – Primary Dispatch Channel
B PSN Radio Channel:	201 BLMTN B
PMR Channel:	2201 BLMTN P
ESO Conversion Chart:	Please see file in folder for relevant conversion information
Fire Weather Forecast Area:	Majority Greater Sydney Area, Western Side Central Ranges
Local Government Area:	Blue Mountains

1.2. Topography

The Blue Mountains is a deeply dissected sandstone plateau, broken up by deep river valleys and creek gorges with cliffs and steep ledges. The area forms part of the eastern side of the Great Australian Divide. The elevation gradually increases from the east at Lapstone at a height of 160m Above Sea Level (ASL) to 1094m ASL at Mt Piddington in the west. The western escarpment falls off sharply at this point and forms the western boundary of the District.

The area consists of three major water catchments, these being the Warragamba, Grose and Bungleboori Catchments. The Warragamba Catchment is the major drinking water catchment for Sydney and the mid-lower mountains areas, whilst two of the sub catchments of the Grose (the Blackheath Catchment and Cascades Catchment) provide drinking water for the upper mountains communities.

1.3. Vegetation

The vegetation of the Blue Mountains dissected sandstone plateau is a mosaic of exposed woodland and heath, dry sheltered forest and moist sheltered forest types.

1.3.1. National Parks

The World Heritage listed Blue Mountains National Park consists of the following areas:

- Katoomba Area
- Blackheath Area
- Glenbrook Area
- Lower Grose Valley Area
- Mount Wilson Area
- Southern Blue Mountains Area

Total area: 2,690 km²

1.4. Climate

The climate of the Blue Mountains is somewhat more temperate than the lower Sydney region. There is generally a 2°C drop in temperature every 300 metres increase in altitude. Therefore with Mount Victoria being over 1000 metres above Sea Level, you would expect the temperature to be around 7°C lower than Sydney.

There are two distinctive climatic zones identified within the Blue Mountains Area. The area below 600m ASL is distinctly drier on a yearly basis, experiencing warm to hot summers and mild to cool winters. Levels of relative humidity can fluctuate from medium levels in winter to low in summer.

The area above 600m ASL has a more changeable climate with mild to warm summers and cool to very cold winters. Levels of relative humidity usually remain in the medium to high range throughout the year. Rainfall for the area increases with elevation with the Upper Blue Mountains receiving on average 1050mm per year whilst the Lower Blue Mountains receive on average 850mm per year.

During the winter months (June, July and August), the average temperature in the Upper Mountains is around 5°C while in Summer (December, January and February), the average temperature is around 18°C.

The Lower Blue Mountains has a much warmer climate Lapstone located at only 160m ASL through to Faulconbridge which is at 446m ASL. The average temperature is 16°C in winter and 29°C during the summer months.

The typical/ average climate in the Blue Mountains area is warm temperate with an average summer-autumn rainfall peak associated with summer storms (November to June) and a drier early spring. The climate in the higher mountain areas can tend towards cool temperate.

1.5. Average Weather Data

Summary of major climate statistics recorded at Katoomba (Farnells Road) recorded by the BoM (last updated 04 July 2024)

Element (Mean)	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Max Temp (°C)	17.8	20.4	22.5	23.4	22.5	20.4	16.8	13.3	10.2	9.5	11.3	14.7
Min Temp (°C)	7.8	9.9	11.7	12.9	13.0	11.5	8.8	6.1	3.7	2.6	3.3	5.4
Rainfall (mm)	92.3	110.3	121.3	163.1	178.6	174.6	121.9	99.1	116.7	84.8	78.3	71.1
3pm Temp (°C)	15.8	18.5	20.5	21.4	20.8	18.8	15.2	11.7	8.7	8.0	9.6	12.8
3pm wind (km/h)	10.8	9.8	9.8	8.5	7.5	7.3	8.2	9.4	10.9	12.2	12.8	12.1
3pm RH (%)	53	54	55	58	62	63	65	68	71	67	59	54

1.6. Known Radio Comms Blackspots

- Wollamgambe area, north west of Mt Wilson
- Parts of the Central Mountains on the south side of the district are patchy
- The Blue Mountains District has a very good system working along ridge tops, once travel commences down into the valleys reception can become quite patchy
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1.7. Hazards

1.7.1. Transportation

Primary transportation corridors within the Blue Mountains area includes:

- (A32) The Great Western Highway (60km);
- (B59) Bells Line of Road (24km);
- Darling Causeway (10km); and
- Main Western Railway Line (75km) – Sydney to Broken Hill

1.7.2. Human Settlement

There are approximately 33,000 dwellings that are located on the interface and are mapped as bush fire prone land with the majority located on rib and spine configurations across ridgetops. Most residential dwellings are considered as “classic interface”.

1.7.3. Economic

The Blue Mountains is a significant tourist destination with over 3,000,000 tourists visiting the area annually. Of this, 1,000,000 tourists remain overnight. Most of the major town centres support small businesses and local trade centres. Light industrial estates exist at Blaxland, Valley Heights, Springwood, Lawson, Katoomba and Blackheath. In some areas such as Sun Valley, Megalong Valley, Mt Wilson, Mt Irvine and Mt Tomah small rural holdings exist, whilst at the eastern end of the Mountains, a Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) base is situated at Glenbrook.

1.7.4. Special Fire Protection Purpose

There are over 85 identified Special Fire Protection Purpose premises located across the Local Government area, comprising of 2 major hospitals, multiple aged and special care facilities, 6 High Schools and 33 primary / specialist schools. There are a large number of small disability care premises comprised of converted residential premises housing up to 10 tenants. These are located all throughout the area and are often on long dead-end residential streets.

1.7.5. Energy and Utilities

Two major 500kV feeders that traverse the area, supplying power from the Lithgow Power Stations to Greater Sydney. These are located to the north and south of the Great Western Highway and are under the control of Transgrid. These feeders are critical to the power grid for Greater Sydney.

There are critical water supply areas designated as 'Special Areas', providing catchments for Warragamba, Cascade (Upper, Middle, Lower), Greeves Creek, Lake Medlow, and Woodford Dams.

1.8. Land Management Authorities

Land Manager	% of Area
National Parks & Wildlife Service	74.2
Department of Lands	2.8
Local Government	4.2
Private	15.9
All Other	2.9

For more specific data on the Blue Mountains District, please follow the link to the Blue Mountains Bush Fire Risk Management Plan [here](#).

Note: This link will only work with internet coverage.

For further information regarding the Blue Mountains District Information pack, please contact the Operational Improvement team via **email at** operational.improvement@rfs.nsw.gov.au

