



Transport for NSW

# Great Western Highway Upgrade

Explorers Tree Community Update | March 2021

The NSW Government is investing \$2.5 billion towards upgrading the Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Lithgow. The program will provide safer, more efficient, more reliable journeys, and better connect communities with the Central West.

## Explorers Tree preserved for future generations

The stump of a large Mountain Ash reputed to have been inscribed more than 200 years ago with the names of three of Australia's earliest European explorers is getting set for a new life.

The Explorers Tree landmark site commemorates the exploration of the Blue Mountains and the forging of a route over the mountains to the west.

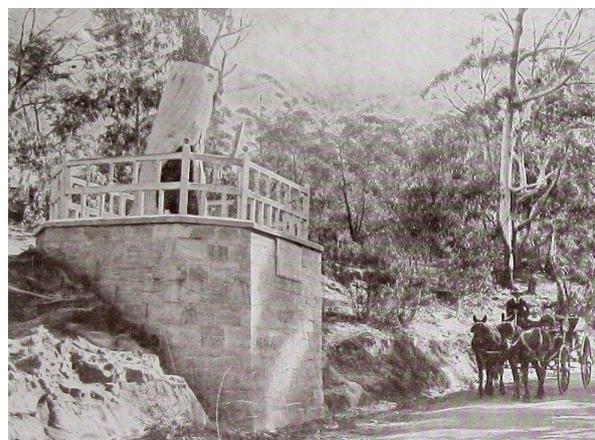
However, this piece of Australia's modern history had significantly deteriorated in recent years.

A number of vehicles have also collided with the tree's supporting structure, further destabilising the sandstone podium.

While very little remains of the actual tree, which died in the 1880s and was filled with concrete decades ago, the landmark site remains one of historical significance and Transport for NSW will work with Blue Mountains Council to ensure that it is not lost.

The community will have a say in the best way to interpret the tree and site, as part of the Great Western Highway Cultural Interpretation Strategy which will celebrate all Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage in the Blue Mountains.

**If you have an idea on how to reinterpret the tree or celebrate the significance of the landmark site, you're invited to email the project team on [gwhd@transport.nsw.gov.au](mailto:gwhd@transport.nsw.gov.au)**



The Explorers Tree landmark site, about five kilometres west of Katoomba.

## Safety concerns prompt removal of Explorers Tree

Transport for NSW (TfNSW) and Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC) have acted to protect motorists, removing the Explorers Tree amid concerns that heavy rain would trigger its collapse into the roadway.

A BMCC inspection on Friday 19 February showed that wet weather had affected the podium and that the stone blocks were separating quickly.

With heavy rain expected that week, TfNSW and BMCC acted immediately to remove the tree and the safety risk it posed for motorists.

TfNSW contractors removed the remnants of the landmark site on Saturday 20 February 2021. The removal was supervised by an independent heritage expert.

Given the emergency nature of the works and the dilapidated condition of the site, there was some damage to the sandstone during both removal and transport, however a significant portion of the sandstone was preserved for use in the reinterpretation.



The Explorers Tree being removed in February.

The marble plinth and plaque were also saved. The Explorers tree stump itself was wrapped for protection during removal and storage.

All items will be catalogued and stored safely while the community is consulted to determine the best way to reinterpret and commemorate the tree.

## New strategy to celebrate all Blue Mountains history

The Explorers Tree will be included in Transport for NSW's Cultural Interpretation Strategy for the Great Western Highway upgrade.

The Strategy will identify opportunities for interpretation and homage of both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stories and heritage of the Blue Mountains.

Transport for NSW will engage consultants specialising in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal heritage to work together to create a strategy that celebrates the incredible history, journey and gatherings experienced in the Blue Mountains.

The community will be invited to take part in the creation of the strategy, which will see public art and interpretations take pride of place on the Great Western Highway between Katoomba and Lithgow.

### Contact the Great Western Highway Upgrade team

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