

SOUTH TURRAMURRA ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

June 26th, 1985

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

We have had a comparatively trauma-free year, in that there has been little in the way of "bushfires", figuratively speaking, for us to fight. Such a period is useful for consolidation and new enterprises, and STEP has taken advantage of the lull to forge ahead in certain directions.

Perhaps the most noteworthy of our achievements during the year has been the Diatreme regeneration project at Brown's Field in South Wahroonga, with the benefit of over \$80,000 worth of CEP (Community Employment Program) funding. This has not only enabled a worthwhile environmental job to be done in restoring this valuable gully rainforest remnant to weed-free naturalness, but has provided temporary but satisfying work for a small number of disadvantaged people. Such projects also draw attention to the abundance of environmentally beneficial work which could be provided were funds made available. We have Helen Petersen (on the ground) and Yvonne Langshaw (in the office) to thank for enabling this to happen by devoting many many hours of their personal time to it. You can inspect progress by coming along to our field day on August 4th (see the Newsletter for details).

Continuing active membership of Ku-ring-gai Council's Bushland Working Party by members Helen Petersen and John Burke has helped keep STEP in touch with Council in matters of bushland management. This committee has survived the criticism of one or two of the more dinosaurial aldermen and has turned in a solid and productive performance by organising fundamental needs such as a bushland management plan for the Council, a bushland survey, and a film and pamphlet for the guidance of citizens on how to treat bushland.

We got some distance down the track, so to speak, with the planning and mapping of a series of trails through the "STEP area" (Comenarra Ward), and special thanks are due largely to Jan Ruys for his efforts in securing the services (gratis) of a friend to provide a suitable base map. Some exploration of tracks has taken place. Unfortunately a temporary stop to progress followed the obtaining of quotes for printing a saleable quantity of the map, when we realised this was going to cost rather substantially, and we have since then been awaiting the results of applying for a Bicentennial grant before proceeding further.

Two bushwalks were held. The first was our annual Spring walk on the 19th of August, in which we crossed the Lane Cove River into Pennant Hills Park. The other was in March 1985, and incorporated an inspection of some of STEP's work in bush regeneration and bushfire fuel reduction by non-fire methods. It was conceived as replacing our traditional indoor meeting by having it in the bush. Both walks were fairly well attended.

Bush regeneration has been maintained by a small group of dedicated members. At present the work is proceeding near the end of Vernon Street. There has been some hold-up due to the wet weather: quite apart from the unpleasantness, you can do more harm than good by operating where the soil is sodden. This is very worthwhile work and it is a pity that more bushlovers do not make the effort to turn out for just one half day per month.

Little work in fuel reduction has been undertaken this year, largely due to the wet, but several weekends are to be organised for later in the year. Ultimately, the success of this type of enterprise depends on continued "self-starting" by concerned locals, ensuring that this comparatively light maintenance work is carried out once or twice a year for several hours.

A community in which everybody sailed through life without any set-backs would be unusual. Vice-President Jan Ruys was our casualty this year, but I am immensely pleased to be able to tell you that he is better than ever after by-pass surgery and backin community life.

A very big part of Jan's community life is the Church, and he very successfully combined this and his other great interest and concern - the environment - last September, by organising and taking part in a special "Conservation and the Environment" service at Trinity Uniting Church, Turramurra. This event utilised some quite noteworthy talents, both in the speaking and musical fields, and was followed by a short bushwalk. The moral of the occasion was of course that we, who are the chosen species, should make ourselves more responsible for the care of our planetary home and its other inhabitants, and, moreover, to have respect for the creations of God.

Committee member Elizabeth Dokulil performed a useful service for STEP by writing our early history. "OUT OF STEP" is (as subtitled) "An account of South Turramurra's opposition to the Ku-ring-gai Council's proposal of building a major netball complex in the area in 1978".

This was the project which eventually led to the birth of STEP. We have since our initial specific concern become a much broader-ranging environment group, addressing the variety of problems caused by the interactions of a typical urban community with the bushland which it adjoins. I am proud to consider STEP as having been somewhat more successful in certain fundamental directions than the average local conservation group.

A continuation of STEP's effectiveness could well proceed from any part we may choose to play in furthering a basic thrust being made by the Nature Conservation Council for blanket protection and management of all remaining urban bushlands, a principle which appears to be supported by our promising new environment Minister Bob Carr. Helen Petersen, Janet Fairlie-Cunninghame, and I are members of the NCC's sub-committee working on Urban Bushlands.

Helen is also President of the Union of Lane Cove Valley Conservationists, a group federating conservation groups located around the valley. The Union is to be congratulated for having secured CEP funding for the construction of a walking track through the Valley, which will be part of a greater scheme, which has also attracted funding, for a track linking Sydney and the Hunter Valley. The Union has also prepared a set of guidelines for the management of the Lane Cove Valley.

Other work in which STEP members have been involved is listed as follows:

Schools: Mainly a planting scheme for the High School (Yvonne Langshaw) Plan of Management (STEP) reprint. Issue is imminent.

Bushwalks: The Committee has decided that STEP should offer a program of walks, and Chris Woodhouse has agreed to organise a program. Volunteers for leading walks should contact her (see Newsletter).

Finally, being President for 3 years has been both a privilege and, most times, a pleasure, but it is now time to step down and let someone else have a turn. I most sincerely thank the other office-bearers and the Committee as a whole for their consistent interest and help. While it is difficult and perhaps unwise to single out anyone, I find I cannot avoid alluding to the magnificent work of the Secretary. Yvonne has not only been assiduous (stuffy word, but accurate) but has been most enthusiastic and willing to carry out the many burdens of her office. I have certainly leaned on her!

Thank you one and all Committee, and thanks also to the members, for their confidence over the past 3 years.

Alan Catford