



STEP INC.

Community Based Environmental Conservation

NEWSLETTER

No 45, June 1990

THE STEP MAP

It's available

It's wonderful

It's yours for \$5

Enclosed please find two leaflets advertising our beautiful map - one for you at the back of this newsletter, one for a friend or noticeboard. (We have more leaflets available - just let us know if you'd like some - 449 2843.) Judy Meacham, a committee member, has kindly undertaken the map's distribution and will be happy to sell you copies in person or by post. The map will be of interest to any Sydney person who walks in the bush occasionally or regularly, or who is thinking about it. Maps make splendid birthday or Christmas presents; they could even substitute for a bunch of flowers or a box of chocolates when you go visiting. So buy up big! Our map is priced to sell. Please support us by buying as many copies as possible.

We are planning to launch the map on August 12, on the occasion of our Annual Spring Bushwalk. Please save the date; by then we hope that all STEP members will be helping with publicity and the sales will be rolling in.

RELEASE OF FREEWAY LAND

STEP is triumphant.

Land previously reserved for the Lane Cove Valley Freeway, and then indicated on the B1 route, has now been released to Ku-ring-gai Council, and Council is proposing to zone as bushland that area that should remain as bushland.

We began working on this project early in 1989; in June we made a well researched submission to Council, and now, eleven months later, we have the pleasure of seeing our main proposals accepted. The result is that the tract of bushland between the floor of the Lane Cove River Valley and east of Maxwell Street will now become a public reserve, thus preserving this parcel of bushland, preventing further encroachment of housing in this part of the valley, and providing access from Maxwell Street to walking tracks of the Upper Lane Cove Valley. Thanks to Ralph Pridmore for his hardwork on this issue.

This success marks a further step in our overall campaign to gain the release of land reserved for the Freeway between Linley Point and Pearce's Corner, Wahroonga. Everything from Linley Point to Kissing Point Rd now appears to be safe.

VOTING PROCEDURES - written by Glenn Johnson, Committee member.

My interest in voting procedures used to elect Ku-ring-gai Council was first kindled when I observed that a person was able to get more than 40% of the vote in my ward (which elects two representatives) and not be elected. Whatever system of allocation of preferences is used it should be impossible for 40% of the electorate to have no voice in Council from a ward electing two aldermen.

On investigation I was staggered to learn that the system used in Ku-ring-gai gives half the electorate two votes and the rest of the electorate no votes. Under this system all of the votes that are used to elect the first alderman are used again to determine the second alderman, in that their second preferences flow on undiminished in value. A perusal of the allocation of votes at the last election shows that across all the wards in the municipality about 40% of residents had their vote counted twice, while for about 40% of residents their vote had no value (in the sense that their vote was unsuccessful in electing either alderman).

The main criticism of this system is that it produces an elected body where the relative representation of political views is completely different from the representation of those views in the community itself. In Australia we do not have this problem in either of the Houses of our Federal Parliament, in either of the Houses of State Parliament or even in other local councils across NSW. The reason for this is that in none of these spheres is this voting procedure still applied. For single representative elections (as in the lower houses) the optional preferential system is used while in multi-representative elections (as in the upper house) proportional representation is used.

While the preferential system is inappropriate for two-person representation (as in Ku-ring-gai wards) in that it gives some electors two votes (those who happened to vote for the person first elected) and no votes to most other electors, it is also a very unstable voting procedure. With a given voting pattern persons A & B are elected, but with a shift of very few votes (i.e. little change in the desire of the electors), persons C & D are elected. Often A & B will constitute another team with quite a different political perspective. If the votes cast in the electorate are roughly equally split between two teams then the representation on Council should be roughly equal (as we saw happen in the last Federal election); not all of one team should be elected and none of the other.

Having become aware of the inadequacies of the voting procedures used within Ku-ring-gai, I deliberately questioned Alderman Lennon about this matter in a public meeting before the last elections. At that meeting (before a gathering of about 40 people) Alderman Lennon said he was aware of the public disquiet concerning the method of election and that he would ensure that changes were made by Council during the next term of office. (It is important to note that the only practicable way in which the method of election can be changed is by Council itself. For a citizen group to take this on it would need to be able to recommend to the Department of Local Government the actual subdivision boundaries which should be used in any new scheme.)

The existing Council is well into its term of office but there has been no sign of a will to implement any change in this regard. Accordingly I decided to address Council some months ago in order to remind aldermen that there is widespread community concern about this matter. It was clear from the response to that presentation that the matter was not going to receive any attention from Council, even though such a commitment had been given by Alderman Lennon.

It was at that point, when I thought I had done as much as could be done, that the general meeting of concerned groups in Ku-ring-gai was organised to draw up a priority list of matters on which Council should focus during its remaining time in office. Somewhat to my surprise, I found that the question of voting procedures was high on many groups' list and one which was generating a great deal of discontent within the community. The feeling was expressed quite generally that there is a lack of adequate representation on Council of widely held views and that the root cause of this is the anomalous procedures used to elect aldermen. Further, it was reiterated by many groups that pressure should be brought to bear on Council to ensure that procedures are changed before the next elections.

As a result of our deliberations at that general meeting, a meeting which represented a wide cross-section of the electorate, we are recommending to Council that the voting procedures be changed from the present system to one of proportional representation. We understand that if this is to be introduced then the number of aldermen in each ward must be increased to three, and therefore recommend that the number of wards be changed from five to four giving a total

of twelve aldermen on Council, instead of 10.

An alternative which we considered was to make the whole community a single electorate. The disadvantage of this proposal is that it provides for the election of persons with relatively small support within the community and of single-issue persons who might bring a very narrow perspective on the broad range of Council deliberations. Maintaining the ward system ensures that any elected person has first preference support of something like 25% of the ward. For this reason we support the continuation of a ward system.

RECOMMENDATION That Council initiates moves to ensure that the next municipal elections will be administered on the basis of four wards each returning three aldermen by proportional representation.

Note : This topic has been important to STEP for many years. A reform of voting procedures for the election of Ku-ring-gai aldermen would permit a wider range of views in Council, and the possibility of a wider sympathy for bushland - Eds.

TOWNHOUSE & VILLA DEVELOPMENTS IN KU-RING-GAI

As you may have heard, Ku-ring-gai Council has resolved that townhouse and villa development will be permitted only in limited areas in Ku-ring-gai - almost all the designated areas are within walking distance of railway stations.

STEP has received a copy of Council's Draft Development Control Plan No 12 : Town Houses And Villa Houses. The provisions for developers which relate to bushland are detailed and comprehensive. STEP is writing to Council to express its satisfaction with the detailed provisions for the safeguarding of bushland. Where we need to be vigilant is in the monitoring of Council's level of supervision of developers and builders. It is all too easy for a developer to take a short cut which may damage bushland, so it is important for Council officers to be seen frequently on building sites to keep an eye on developers who don't feel as respectful of the bush as we would like them to.

LANE COVE VALLEY STORMWATER MANAGEMENT STUDY

This study is a two year project partially funded by the Water Board's Special Environment Programme. The main aims of the project are to determine the impact of stormwater runoff on the stream, bushland and urban environment and to determine a management plan to help alleviate these problems. From the beginning of the study community input has been welcomed and regular public meetings have been held. Enclosed with this newsletter is a copy of the project's magazine "Runoff Review" which provides more details of the study to date.

Currently the Board is negotiating with Councils to set up trial stormwater management techniques. Once these are in place, the project will need assistance from community groups to evaluate the effectiveness of the techniques. STEP has been involved with this project since its inception, and is continuing to offer its expertise, through our committee member, Dr Robyn Tuft. We hope that the study will eventually lead to the development and implementation of a plan of management for the whole valley.

BUSHLAND MANAGEMENT PROJECTS, 1990

The committee of STEP had an informative meeting with Robin Grimwade, Parks and Landscape Manager of Ku-ring-gai Council. Mr Grimwade gave us details of 20 projects which are underway. They cover fire management, walking track signs, trail maintenance, drainage works, bush regeneration, protection of bushland adjacent to building developments, management plans for selected areas and the Bat Colony. In addition, a great deal of conceptual work has been done to attempt to manage bushland planfully and in totality. It is hoped to bring all areas successively under management control, and to minimise the need for "crisis control". Liaison with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Water Board and the

Electricity Commission will continue and improve.

The Committee appreciated Mr Grimwade's attendance at our committee meeting, and felt that we are fortunate to have someone in this position in Council who is a competent planner, a person with vision, and one who is getting on top of the huge task of managing our extensive quantities of urban bushland.

VOLUNTEER BUSH REGENERATION IN KU-RING-GAI

The number of people working as volunteer bush regenerators in Ku-ring-gai is increasing fast. Council is actively supporting these enthusiastic residents in various ways. For example, each new local community group is entitled to on-site training and assistance for the first four sessions of its program. A KMC Volunteer Bush Regenerators Newsletter is now published, edited by Tein McDonald; it is full of news and handy advice. Introductory courses and open days for volunteers are held from time to time. Phone Tein on 498 0811 for further information, and to be placed on the mailing list.

KU-RING-GAI WILDFLOWER GARDEN

STEP has received from Council a copy of a commissioned Interpretive Plan for the Wildflower Garden, prepared by Christine O'Brien for Ku-ring-gai Municipal Council.

The Interpretive Plan will be used in the preparation of a Management Plan for the Wildflower Garden which is currently being developed by Council's Parks and Landscape Division. The Interpretive Plan states: "Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden has the potential to establish the Municipality of Ku-ring-gai as the leading force in urban bushland education and interpretation " (p73).

A new management committee for the Garden has been established, and STEP committee member, Pat Dunn, represents us on this committee.

MOLE TRIG AND ADJACENT BUSHLAND

STEP has been following closely the attempts of various commercial groups to get hold of bushland in St Ives for commercial developments, notably a bus and truck depot and a crematorium. Clearly, we oppose destruction of bushland for commercial development and have been active in our opposition. We have joined delegations on several occasions, participated in site inspections with press and politicians, written letters outlining our views, and sent a Votergram in March to all members of both Houses of the NSW parliament. Many responses were received; and from M. Bignold came a reply enclosing an excerpt from Hansard of a question she had asked in the Upper House on the Mole Trig matter.

In addition, the Bushland Management Working Party of Council has made strong representations to Council on the matter.

As this parcel of bushland is the last and only remaining bushland link between Middle Harbour and Broken Bay, it has special importance and significance. It also provides a sudden and welcome bushland parkway experience for users of Mona Vale Rd leaving St Ives.

The best outcome would seem to be annexation to Davidson Park and Ku-ring-gai National Park on the south and north sides respectively of Mona Vale Rd. If this were to be achieved, a wildlife tunnel or tunnels could be constructed underneath Mona Vale Road.

NORTH TURRAMURRA PLAYING FIELDS

This is another current issue in which STEP is playing an important part. Through the Bushland Management Working Party we have attempted to ensure that the current effect of the old tip on adjacent bushland will be modified, with the control of leachates through proper

drainage works.

STEP wrote to Council objecting to the proposed destruction of 0.4 hectares of bushland; we understand that the plans have been modified so as to preserve all bushland. The playing fields will be slightly fewer - so be it.

We think that sporting facilities for local community use should be widely distributed throughout the municipality and not aggregated in just a few places, causing nuisance to residents and overuse/pollution problems.

BAT NIGHT This was a great success, with an attendance of about 100 - 50 children, 50 adults and two charming young grey headed flying foxes. The talk and slide show were excellent; the flying foxes were great ambassadors for their cause. Young Paul Burke was honoured by having his drink of cordial selected by one of the bats for her evenings refreshment.

We raised \$137 for the Bat Colony Committee.

STEP ACTIVITIES As members know, the main purpose of STEP is to work towards protecting the remaining bushland in our municipality. The committee meets regularly and works constantly between meetings to this end. We phone, write letters, attend other meetings, prepare submissions, talk to the press, join delegations and so on. We don't often feel we have the extra time and energy to arrange activities for members, and this is why we don't have many. However, if any STEP members would like to organise activities, we could establish a sub-committee for that purpose. Also, we would appreciate assistance with future activities - e.g. the Map launch in August; so if you have any ideas on this matter or could help on an occasional basis, would you please ring Jenny Simons, 449 8945.

WET WEATHER DAMAGE? A STEP member has reported the demise of a mature Eucalyptus nicholii on her property, apparently as a result of the prolonged wet weather. A Forestry Commission pamphlet may be obtained which offers help to threatened natives.

POST OFFICE BOX STEP has acquired Box No 697 at Turrumurra Post Office. Please use this address for all correspondence to us.

This newsletter was compiled by Jenny Simons, John Burke, Robyn Tuft, Glenn Johnson and Sue Jones.

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WALKING TRACKS in the UPPER LANE COVE VALLEY

P.O. Box 697
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STEP INC.
Community Based Environmental Conservation

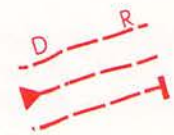
Now available

SCALE 1:10,000

CONTOUR INTERVAL 4 METRES

Metres

KEY



STEP
GNW
447 1 53.7
63.9 35.5

\$6 posted
P.O. Box 697
Turramurra
2074

- Walking Tracks: Disused, Rough
- Major Access Point
- End of Track
- Lookout
- STEP Track
- Great North Walk (Sydney to Newcastle)
- Geodetic Station (with height) Landmark Other
- Horizontal Control Point (with height) Landmark Other
- Spot height
- Contours: Approximate contours
- Depression contours: Auxiliary contours
- Cuts, Escarpments
- Eroded bank, Quarry or Gravel pit
- National Highway marker, State Route marker, Freeway

Collected: \$5

449 2843

(Sth. Turramurra)

NOTES

Prepared with the advice and assistance of Dr Graeme Aplin, School of Geography, University of New South Wales, and the map was prepared and printed by the Land Information Centre of the Paddy Pollin Foundation.



Please post me STEP map(s)

I enclose cheque/m.o. for

Name (please print)

Address