



STEP Inc. Newsletter

Community Based Environmental Conservation Since 1978 No. 55 Feb. 1992

GOODBYE DAVIDSON AND LANE COVE SRAs.

The State Government has acceded to community pressure to keep the Davidson and Lane Cove SRAs out of the Ministry of Conservation and Land Management and make them both national parks.

Davidson will become part of the new Garigal National Park & Lane Cove will revert to a national park as it was some time ago.

We applaud this decision as the areas will now be administered by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Both of these areas are contiguous with bushland administered by local councils. There is no doubt that the time has come for the councils to transfer all such bushland to the new national parks so that they can benefit from one administration and be given the protection of national park status. This is particularly true of the Lane Cove Valley where the bushland outside the park is more worthwhile than that within it. In particular the bushland between Fox Valley and Cheltenham, which contains some land belonging to the SRA, should be included.

Resistance to this proposal may come from councils who don't want their empire diminished, from the NPWS which may see its budget as inadequate to deal with urban management problems, and from anyone who sees the bushland as an undeveloped reservoir of land for future development.

Councils could contribute towards the management of the areas by agreement with the NPWS - a constructive approach will give us the best of all worlds.

DAVIDSON PARK BUSH WALK

Our companion Ku-ring-gai conservation group KuBES has organised a bushwalk from the end of Barrie St, East Killara on Sunday 15th March at 9am. It will be led by Dr Harley Wright who is an expert on the effects of nutrients on bushland and who knows this area particularly well. We recommend it for anyone who wants to increase their understanding of how urbanisation affects bushland and what can be done about it.

CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY

This annual event is on Sunday 1st March. The local press will carry plenty of publicity for those STEP members who would like to become involved.

MONA VALE ROAD

The fight to keep inappropriate development out of the Mona Vale Rd corridor continues. Council has on display (from 13/2 to 5/3/92) its Draft Local Environmental Plan No 105 for the former Police Driver Training site. This Plan is "designed to rezone the land to Special Uses 5(a) "Municipal Purposes" which allows, with consent, uses which Council supplies in servicing its ratepayers. In addition, it is proposed to allow, again only with Council's consent, the use of the site for Road Safety Education and Ancillary Uses, Police Activities, Environmental Study, Administration and Visitor Centres. Under the proposed rezoning, private Bus Depot or private Sand and Gravel Distribution would not be allowed."

This is hopefully the last stage in this long fight unless the Government or commercial interests decide to take the issue to court.

We don't often ask our members to write letters but in this case short submissions supporting LEP 105, before 5/3/92, would be of great assistance.

Write to The Town Clerk, Ku-ring-gai Municipal Council, 818 Pacific Highway, Gordon, 2072.

COUNCIL REPORT

The Parks and Landscape section of Ku-ring-gai Council is continuing its policy of involving the community in the management and enjoyment of the bushland in our area. It's publication Bushcare News is well worth reading for its technical content and news on volunteer regeneration groups. If you want to get this publication contact Adam Richards on 4980888. The newspaper People in Parks is also available and covers events of interest. To obtain it ring 4980977 and leave your address.

STEP has been critical of some aspects of Council's attitude to qualifications required of those working in the area of bush regeneration and this matter will be pursued until we are satisfied that the effectiveness of the Bushcare program isn't being compromised.

LIKE WALKING ?

STEP continues to search for new members. We have found that letterboxing is effective and that best results have come from people who walk regularly.

If you can help please ring John Burke on 4873680.

WILL WE SURVIVE ? - A BOOK REVIEW

It has been very easy since the advent of the nuclear age and Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* to imagine that we are orchestrating our own demise as a species. New factors such as the ozone hole, the loss of rainforest and, more locally, the distress being shown by our river systems all add to the miserable catalogue of evidence.

There has not, however, been a planet wide framework within which all these factors sit in sensible relationship to one another. This has now changed with the publication of James Lovelock's *GAIA : The Practical Science of Planetary Medicine* (Allen and Unwin 1991). Of course those more alert will have read one of his earlier books and need not read further here.

While the title won't engender universal confidence it should be said that Lovelock is a scientist and that the book is an excellent reduction of the principles of geophysiology to a readily understandable format. Gaia was the ancient Greek earth goddess who was "gentle, feminine and nurturing but also ruthlessly cruel to any who failed to live in harmony with the planet."

Lovelock's contention is that the world is not inhabited by life which just happens to find the

physical and and chemical environment hospitable. It is rather a system which is composed of many elements, atmosphere, oceans, rocks and living things, all of which are involved in feedback mechanisms which work to ensure that conditions on earth are favourable to life.

While, on the one hand, he demonstrates quite convincingly the ability of the earth's control systems to recover from trauma he, on the other hand, is equally convincing in warning that everything has its limits. While the earth and life upon it may well recover from anything that people do to it it may take longer than we are able to wait. A million or so years is nothing to the earth but a lot to the human race if we succeed in sabotaging some of the earth's basic control systems.

This book will probably change the way you think about the world. It offers reassurance and issues warnings as it paints the big picture of where our world has come from, where it is, and some hints of where it could go.

Thanks to STEP member Jane Gye who bought the book to our attention and to Dr Harley Wright from whom the last sentence above has been plagiarised.

GARBAGE

It is becoming more and more obvious that one of the major threats to our urban environment and to urban bushland in particular is the disposal of our household garbage. The key point to be appreciated is that the solution is not in finding just one more valley to fill in - that may last Sydney five years or even fifty. After that, however, another valley will be needed, and over the next hundred years garbage will become the dominant feature of the landscape.

This cannot be allowed to happen and hence we may as well fix the problem now as wait until circumstances force us to.

There is only one solution - to minimise the production of garbage and to recycle 100% of the remainder. Obviously this cannot happen overnight but a relatively short time frame is nevertheless essential. It was therefore disappointing to see the State Government reject an initiative of Ku-ring-gai Council to impose an once only \$10 levy to provide containers for

a weekly recycling service.

Please write to Mr Gerry Peacocke, Minister for Local Government, Parliament House, Sydney, 2000 to ask him to reverse this decision.

Another Way

There is no doubt that it is not enough to have an agreed programme. We all had to be subject to the long arm of the law to comply with seat belt and alcohol restrictions - and so it will be with garbage. In the end there will be no alternative to charging for garbage disposal by weight or volume and vigorously enforcing anti dumping laws.

The popular press is full of recycling and precycling ideas which it has taken over from conservationists and so those ideas won't be repeated here.

Council's budget for waste collection and disposal is about \$4,000,000 pa which is recovered through rates. At present the ratepayer who fills only ten percent of the Rapid Rail bin every week pays as much as one who regularly fills it to overflowing. Elimination of this discrimination in favour of anti social behaviour is essential. We cannot think of a better application for the user pays concept.

ARTERIAL ROAD SHAMBLES

Early in 1991 work on the widening and realignment of Arterial Road from Tryon Road to Clarke Place was commenced suddenly, and before completion of all design work, after funding was made available from the RTA. Substantial progress was made with the earthworks before this funding was apparently just as arbitrarily withdrawn. All work ceased many months ago and the open earthworks left to erode into the adjoining bushland.

Protests from STEP and others

enabled funding to be provided for basic erosion protection work to be done but the truth is that it is impossible for this to be fully effective.

Rumour has it that all funds are being diverted to the Gore Hill Freeway and other projects and we know that Arterial Road is not the only project to suffer. One cannot help marvelling, however, at the breathtaking incompetence involved in starting and then stopping this project within such a small period of time.

In the meantime the bushland continues to suffer.

FREEWAYS IN KU-RING-GAI

In the last Newsletter we reported the release of the freeway corridor from St Ives to Belrose. This means that we have only one corridor still on the books - the Lane Cove Valley freeway (known as the B-3/B-2 corridor). Publicity on this has been minimal over the last year with the Castlereagh Tollway (F-2) and the F-5 south of the Parramatta River taking up most of the Government's energies. There is no doubt that the Lane Cove Valley is still under threat, however, and that we must continue to work for its release.

The B-3 continues the Newcastle freeway from Pearce's Corner and runs parallel to Lucinda Ave before crossing Fox Valley Rd and the Comenarra Parkway, running parallel to The Broadway and then continuing in bushland to South Turramurra and crossing the Lane Cove River at Browns Waterhole.

This road is designed as a trucking & general route from the inner industrial suburbs and will create an enormous noise problem in Turramurra and Wahroonga. The Campbell Drive valley in particular will resonate with noise as the traffic makes its high speed progress over Fox Valley Rd, through

Georgina Close, and across the Parkway. Fox Valley and South Turramurra will be similarly affected.

STEP has copies of the Policy Statement of the Coalition Against Lane Cove Valley Freeways. If anyone would like to refresh their memory on the arguments against urban freeways or give a copy to a neighbour, please phone for a copy.

COUNCIL COMMITTEES

All positions on the Ku-ring-gai committees will be advertised shortly. The Bushland Management Working Party and the Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden in particular may be of interest to STEP members. Watch the local papers for the advertisements or register your interest with Council now. A phone call to Peter Duncan at Council on 4980888 will ensure that you get sent the application information. For further information on the work of the committees ring John Burke on 4873680.

BUSHWALK BOOK

One of STEP's distinguishing features over the years has been the production of books and the like to help members in their appreciation and enjoyment of the bush and to assist with lobbying.

Most of these have been to do with the Lane Cove Valley bushland because of our concentration of membership in that general area. As membership expands, however, we hope to be able to cover other areas.

Publications to date have included two editions of the Plan of Management for South Turramurra Bushland, the Position Paper on the Lane Cove Valley Freeway & the map, Walking Tracks in the Upper Lane Cove Valley.

Now the STEP committee has accepted a proposal from John Martyn to produce a Bushwalk and General Guide to the Upper Lane Cove Valley. John has a keen interest in bushwalking, in the flora and fauna and also has computer skills in graphics which means that we can produce a high quality publication without the help of experts in mapping, artwork, typesetting, or printing.

This project should be complete in about a year and should provide STEP with funds through sales to the general public.

ACCOUNTS

STEP, since incorporation, has had an obligation to have its books audited and to comply with other corporate statutory requirements. Over the past two years STEP member Jim Mien has been of tremendous assistance to us in auditing our books and letting us know where our accounting methods must be improved. We now believe that we are on top of what is a surprisingly complex accounting and reporting job. The accounts for 90/91 were presented at the AGM but any STEP member who wishes to have a copy should phone. Monthly accounts are also prepared and are submitted to each committee meeting.

DOG AND CAT PROBLEMS

You may have seen the article in the Sydney Morning Herald on January 16th entitled "Why Fido and Joey just don't mix." This was a report from Ku-ring-gi Chase National Park rangers on the continual killing of wallabies & other native animals by dogs and cats.

Pet dogs are allowed to wander all day and as a result many wallabies die very violent deaths. Other native animals are also killed every day by our pets as well as by feral animals. As we have acknow-

ledged before this is a very sensitive subject and we don't want to offend responsible pet owners.

It is, however, disconcerting to realise that if feral animals were eliminated and if people with pets behaved responsibly we could have koalas, wallabies and many other native animals and birds returning to our urban bushland.

DUAL OCCUPANCY THREAT

The new dual occupancy code has come into operation and proposals are starting to be put forward. The result is that a second detached home can now be built on many sites.

This will eventually lead to greatly increased pressure on infrastructure and open space. One conse-

quence is that all our existing open space and other public real assets will become more important.

The sale of government assets which is now in progress may make good sense for our immediate needs but how much sense does it make in the long term? How long will it be before it is proposed to sell bushland reserves to make way for infrastructure such as schools and hospitals. We should beware.

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