

# STEP Inc. Newsletter

Community Based Environmental Conservation Since 1978 No. 56 Apr. 1992

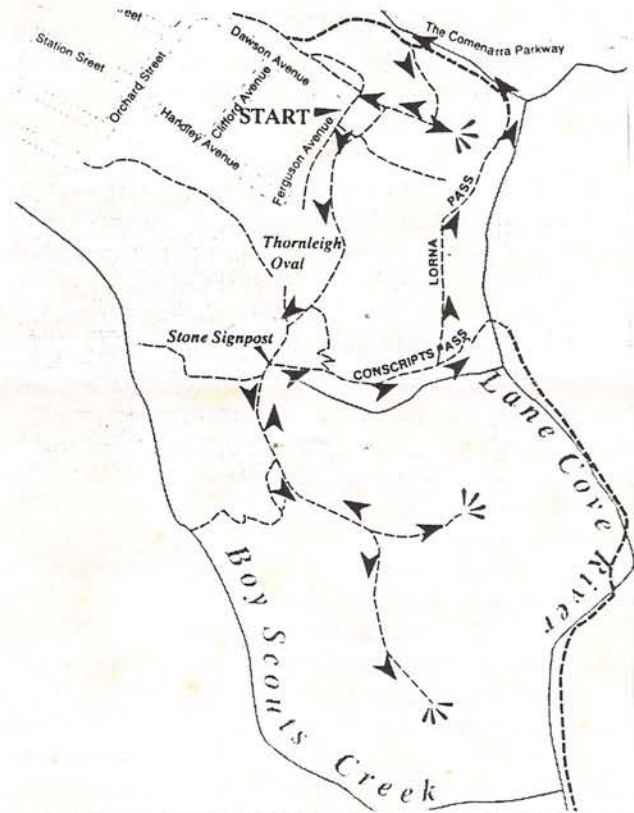
## LORNA PASS - CONSCRIPT PASS BUSHWALK

Our first STEP bushwalk of the year is on Sunday 26th April at 2pm. We have talked experienced and knowledgeable bushwalkers Yvonne and Fred Langshaw into leading it. Meet on the corner of Dawson Ave and Ferguson Ave, Thornleigh. Afternoon tea will be served after the walk at about 4pm.

The walk is one of real surprises for those who have not done it before and one which those who have keep returning to. It traverses wet areas with rainforest species and tall timber as well as heathland. There are spectacular views down the whole Lane Cove Valley to the city and there are interesting man made sights including a rock profile of an early premier of NSW.

Very few cities have such a magnificent natural area and very few people can answer your botanical questions as well as Fred & Yvonne.

Please note that all are welcome - no need to be a STEP member.



## UTS UPDATE

We last mentioned the proposed access road in Newsletter No 54 in November. This road would give access from Lady Game Drive to the Lindfield campus of the UTS. The Lane Cove River SRA Trust did not approve the construction through its land and requested that the UTS prepare a Review of Environmental Factors. This has now been done and is an impressive document some 25 mm thick but it has done nothing to convince us that the road should be built.

The bushland between the UTS buildings and Lady Game Drive is valuable because it is in excellent condition and, because it is inaccessible, is likely to provide a refuge for both plants and wildlife.

The REF restates that there is a traffic problem, that the bushland is very valuable and that the road will damage the bushland. It also restated the desire of the UTS to build the road. It promises all sorts of measures to protect the bushland through which the road will go but retains ownership of the land for the UTS. It is our belief that the REF is nothing more than an attempt to gloss over the real problem of alienation of urban bushland and present a short term palliative for the discomfort caused by the current objections. We believe that the University intends to enforce a tyranny of small decisions whereby the community is lead from one "sensible" short term decision to another as the urban bushland is steadily alienated.

For a copy of our response to the REF please phone 487 3680.

## TAX TIME

STEP has always looked after its funds carefully and has been fortunate to have many expenses covered by donation or favourable prices. Whenever we make a profit on trading, however, such as selling the map of the Lane Cove Valley then any profit is taxable. You will be amazed to hear that we have just paid some \$1,700 in company tax.

### 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.

Thank you for the response to our last request - we shall be contacting you shortly but we need more.

If you can help please ring John Burke on 4873680.



## LANDCARE AND TOTAL CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT

It will have passed many of you by that there is a National Landcare Programme. This reads as one of the best initiatives in our history. It arose from discussions between the National Farmer's Federation, the ACF and the Commonwealth Government and involves coordination and cooperation to encourage sustainable land use and help to control land degradation problems. It is supported by the Commonwealth Government.

The NSW Landcare Working Group has just published a report Decade of Landcare Plan, Interim Plan for NSW, A Basis for Community Consultation in 1992. This report is available from PO Box 198, Chatswood, 2057, ph 4135653. We can't summarise it here but do commend it to you - especially if you are feeling overwhelmed by the enormity of the wider environmental problems threatening our land.

Total Catchment Management is the coordinated and sustainable use and management of land, water, vegetation and other natural resources on a water catchment basis so as to balance resource utilisation and conservation. It is supported by a 1989 act of the State Government and cooperates with the Landcare Programme.

It operates through the State Catchment Management Coordinating Committee under which there are Catchment Management Committees (CMCs) for individual catchments.

While most CMCs are in the country they are also being set up in urban areas and STEP is represented on the Lane Cove Valley CMC. Another committee will be soon set up for the Middle Harbour Catchment.

The LCV CMC is chaired by Alderman Jim Hull from Ryde and has another fourteen members

drawn from the Water Board, the Councils on the catchment, the Soil Conservation Service, the SPCC, National Parks, Greening Australia and local environment groups. The committee is still finding its feet as there are no prescriptive guidelines, no formal power and no funding. The committee does have the power to seek the cooperation of state and local government, however, and the ability to seek funding wherever it sees the opportunity.

While it is easy to be cynical about yet another committee we do think that there are real grounds for optimism here. This committee will, at very least, be driven by the community representatives. It appears, however, that the public servants on our committee are just as eager to be effective and if this continues then we may expect some very good results.

Some of the elementary initiatives the committee could take include standardising the approach to urban runoff, bushland management and feral animals throughout the catchment.

We shall keep you informed.

### SOME FACTS

The land area in NSW is broken up as follows;

- \* 16% for cropping
- \* 4.6% for National Parks
- \* 4.6% for State Forests
- \* 15.3% is classified timber/scrub (what is scrub?)
- \* 61% is grazing land, much in the arid Western Division
- \* less than 1% is urbanised.

There is overlap so the figures don't add to 100% (from a Soilcon 1987-88 survey.)

## ARE THE FORESTS SAFE?

You probably think, with all the hoop-la from the forest industry interests, that Australia's forests are really in good hands. Think again.

The CSIRO journal, ECOS (#70), has published a summary of the draft report of the Forest and Timber Enquiry conducted by the Resource Assessment Commission. Some of the conclusions are;

- \* Australia is losing its native forests at a rate of at least 1500 sq. km a year
- \* The survival of some forest types, such as the Queensland brigalow, is threatened
- \* Rates of forest clearing are still high - if clearing was to continue at current rates all our native forests would be gone in 200 years
- \* In NSW the long term clearing rate of about 57,000 ha per year has jumped to 100,000 ha since 1986
- \* Almost all the old growth forests not protected in reserves will be logged in the next 20 years
- \* The biodiversity of our forests is threatened (eg 30 rare or threatened eucalypts found only in forested areas are not represented in reserves.)
- \* No evidence was found that any large area of forest in Australia is being logged on a sustainable yield basis.

We must not fall for the argument that conservation interests have had too many victories and that it is now time to let the loggers have a few. As soon as the timber industry starts to plant native forests, cease logging old growth forests & adopt sustainable yield management we can begin to take them seriously.

### THE PROPOSED WEEDS ACT 1992

We are indebted to STEP member Ralph Pridmore for bringing to our attention this proposed NSW legislation which is to replace the relevant section of the Local Government Act. STEP has made a submission to Kuring-gai Council who, in turn, will comment on the draft legislation when it is available. The new Act promises to be more effective and flexible and should target the problem weeds in any area rather than, as is now the case, only those which are a threat to agriculture.



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## MENAI MEGADUMP MESS

Once again we have been brought face to face with the consequences of our life style, our resistance to change and our lack of foresight. Sydney is fast running out of landfill sites and there is now a proposal from the Waste Management Authority for a major expansion of the Lucas Heights Tip.

This proposal will provide Sydney with about ten more years of landfill capacity. But that short hiatus in the progress to the inevitable crisis will be bought at a price. The area is fragile and beautiful. Well known author and bushland expert Alan Fairley has said *"It is very rare in Sydney to find a concentration of as many rare and significant plants as occurs at Menai West. The subtle interaction of factors such as adjoining Wianamatta Shale influence, aspect and shallow soils have combined to create mostly weed-free vegetation associations where it is common to find three or four significant plants side by side. I was particularly surprised to find the very interesting regionally rare Allocasuarina diminuta growing beside a stand of the Melaleuca deanii. The Waste Management Authority in developing the present depot managed to avoid one specimen of Melaleuca deanii. There is no way that the proposed extension can proceed without having a major impact on important concentrations of rare plants."* (National Parks Journal Feb 92).

So what is wrong - do the fanatics of the conservation movement find a sacred site everywhere that a development is proposed? Or does every such proposal threaten the very essence of Australia by taking from us bit by bit the things which make us different from the rest of the world and the things which so many of us value so highly?

If this were the only such area to be ever needed then perhaps we could shut our eyes. But if we aren't careful this will only be the beginning. With increasing population we will need to destroy all the bushland around Sydney over the next centuries. A halt must be called sometime. Why not now?

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### HOW DARK IS YOUR GREEN?

Famous historian Geoffrey Blainey has unleashed an attack on the environmental movement (ABM Feb 92) in which he depicts us divided into two groups - dark greens and light greens. The dark greens are the leaders who have filled a void left by the decline of the churches and communism. He says "It would be unwise to ignore the power of this religious strand in the green movement. It provides some of the moral righteousness and the sense of certainty." The mass support, he says, comes from the light greens who just want a better world and are deceived by the darks who are allied with irresponsible TV stations which show evidence of environmental damage.

This is an interesting concept but surely there is a hidden agenda. Blainey is perhaps on a religious campaign of his own which seeks to divide and discredit the environmental movement by attacking the effective leaders while patronising those who are concerned but not activists.

### ACF POPULATION POLICY

Readers may recall that we have called for a population policy for the Sydney region. The same principles apply nation wide of course and the ACF has, after some hesitation, published a draft population policy for Australia.

This policy is too long to reproduce here but advocates stabilisation of Australia's population at about 22.2 million by 2031. This is a reasonable target for Australia but probably implies a Sydney region population of about 5 million. This is too high a number and we shall be making a submission to the ACF that it include sub-strategies limiting the growth of sensitive urban areas to appropriate levels.

It is worth reflecting again on the exponential nature of the world's population growth;

- \* 1800 - 1 billion
- \* 1930 - 2 billion
- \* 1960 - 3 billion
- \* 1980 - 4 billion
- \* 1990 - 5.3 billion

### KU-RING-GAI WILDFLOWER GARDEN

The Wildflower Garden at St Ives is a great educational and recreational resource. It has the potential to introduce people to the bush and educate them in its features and values. STEP committee members John Martyn and Bruno Krockenberger have been appointed to the Wildflower Garden Committee and will act as alternates for one another. The management of the Garden has not had high priority in recent years and we hope to assist in promoting constructive management initiatives for it.

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### TURRAMURRA REGENERATION GROUP

STEP members Geoff and Margaret Morgan are involved with a regeneration group working near Rothwell Rd in the Twin Creeks Reserve. This is an important area & the results to date are very encouraging but they are short of labour & would appreciate some help. If you are interested please ring them on 44 5379.

## SYDNEY'S TRANSPORT

The ACF has organised a public meeting to discuss resolution of the problems being caused by our current transport methods.

There is mounting evidence that increasing reliance on motor cars and urban freeways is degrading our way of life without improving congestion and delay.

If we sit back and wait for the

RTA, council engineers and politicians to deliver we shall get the wrong answers. Community pressure has already forced those people to think a little and to reassess many of their ideas and, to their credit, many of them seem to be accepting this.

Please try and get along to the meeting to at least hear some of the facts and the evidence

The meeting will be led by STEP

member Caron Morrison who is the convenor of CUTS, a NCC Councillor, and a member of the SPCC Air Quality Control Committee

Room WSC 220  
Macquarie University  
7 pm, Thursday, 30th April

(Exact directions at the Balaclava Rd entrance)

For information ring Ian Landon Smith on 299-6053 w, 487 3411 h.

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