



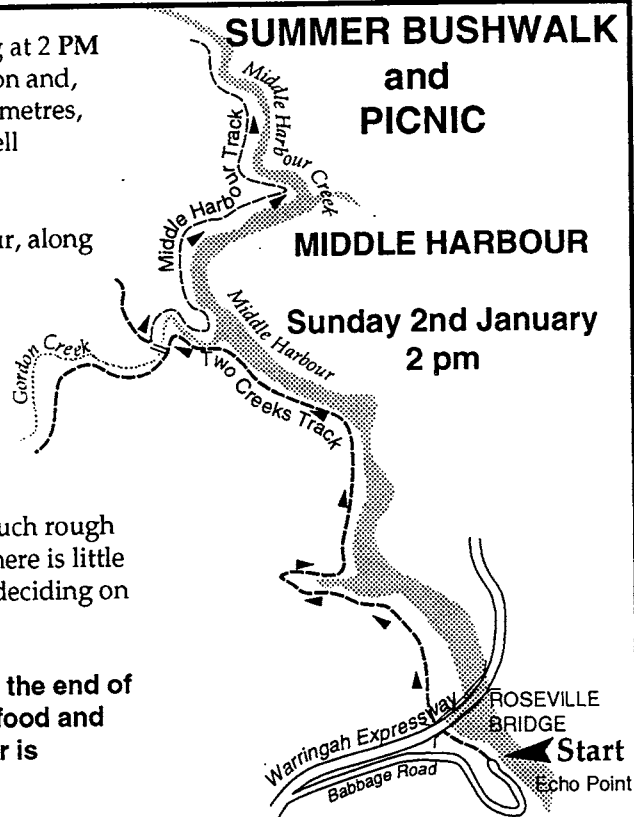
STEP Inc. Newsletter

Community Based Environmental Conservation Since 1978 No. 64 Nov 1993

The **SUMMER BUSHWALK** and **PICNIC** starting at 2 PM on **SUNDAY 2nd of JANUARY** is a family occasion and, though it involves a round trip of about seven kilometres, the gradients are gentle and most of the walk is well shaded, cool and close to water.

The route follows the west bank of Middle Harbour, along the recently upgraded **TWO CREEKS Walking Track**, crossing Gordon Creek and joining the narrow but delightful **MIDDLE HARBOUR Track**. The walk passes through forest, woodland, shady gullies with waterfalls, past spectacular rock lookout platforms, and the quiet waters, channels, mangroves and sandy beaches of the upper tidal reaches of Middle Harbour. The track is a touch rough and narrow in places beyond Gordon Creek but there is little or no climbing and the most difficult part will be deciding on which of the many beautiful spots to picnic at.

Meet at Echo Point Park (by Roseville Bridge) at the end of Babbage Road, Roseville Chase. Bring some food and drink in a backpack, and sun cream. If weather is doubtful phone John Martyn 488 8339



NATIONAL PARKS BUDGET

National parks in the North Metropolitan District are being starved of funds. Parks here include Ku-ring-gai Chase, Garigal, Cattai and Lane Cove as well as local nature reserves.

Recurrent funding has been cut by some 20% after being static or declining over recent years. This means that money for maintenance has been reduced 70% and that money will no longer be available

to repair the effects of vandalism and that many essential projects must be abandoned.

These parks are conservatively valued at \$60 million, cover thousands of hectares, have hundreds of thousand of visitors annually and have been allocated only \$60,000 for maintenance. We will therefore see park infrastructure decline rapidly.

We are appalled at this reckless shortsightedness on the part of the

State Government and will be asking the Minister to review this decision so that our most used national parks can be at least maintained in their present condition.

One simple first step would be to allow parks to keep the revenue they generate, at present the absurd situation exists where all revenue goes into a central fund thus taking away all incentive to generate revenue. We expect more from a free enterprise government priding itself on its management skills.

NEW STEP COMMITTEE

A new committee was elected at the AGM in October. Bruno Krockenberger is our new President and retains his Treasurer's hat as well. Judy Meacham is Secretary.

The remainder of the committee is John Burke, Hal Cogger, Andrew

Jennings, Sue Jones, Neroli Lock, John Martyn, Jennifer Schwarz, Andrew Skidmore, Geoff Suggate and Helen Wortham.

We were sorry to lose Glenn Johnston and Bob Cross who were such valuable committee members but welcome new members Andrew Jennings, Jennifer

Schwarz and Andrew Skidmore.

It is testament to the persistent vitality of STEP that we have been able to continue to attract keen, and talented people to the committee year after year and allow those suffering from burnout, or looking for a change of direction, to have a rest.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE 15th AGM, 14 OCTOBER 1993

This is my third and final report as President of STEP.

The Year's Activities

Your committee's work over the past year has, as usual, ranged over a wide range of issues. Committee members are involved with Ku-ring-gai's Bushland Management Working Party, the Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden, the Lane Cove Catchment Management Committee, the North Metropolitan District South East Advisory Committee of National Parks, the Union of Lane Cove Valley Conservationists, the ACF and more. Of particular concern during the year has been the UTS access road, the Wildflower Garden wetland proposal, the Broadway Historic Park and urban consolidation. John Martyn's book *A Field Guide to the Upper Lane Cove Valley* is nearing printing and other projects are in hand. We have held three bushwalks and had three speakers, Hal Cogger on frogs and reptiles, Harold Spies on Fungi and tonight's on the environmental history of the Lane Cove Valley. Your Committee has attended to the usual large amount of correspondence and administrative matters. It is never completely fair to mention names but Sue Jones, Judy Meacham and Bruno Krockenburger deserve additional thanks for the fantastic work they have done in attending to all the details essential to the running of the organisation. I must thank them and the other committee members who have worked so hard to keep STEP operating efficiently and also those members who have supported us in various ways.

The Challenges Ahead

The wonderful thing about being involved with STEP now is being able to reap the benefits of the years of hard foundation work done by previous presidents and committees. These people brought STEP from its local beginnings to

be a respected force in Ku-ring-gai. Very few people have not now heard of us and our views are always considered in forums where it matters. Those who are to manage the organisation in the years ahead therefore have a responsibility to ensure that this position is maintained and enhanced. There are certainly no lack of issues and opportunities.

In this annual report I would prefer to look more at the issues ahead rather than the issues behind us.

I believe that the biggest mistake that the environment movement often makes is to concentrate on trench warfare with our opponents on an issue by issue basis rather than on outflanking them by looking ahead and appealing to the community on concepts based on the long term outcomes of our planning and actions. One result of this approach is that only issues which have long term consequences should have high priority. This is not to say that day to day issues should be ignored but that they should be seen for what they are and considered in proper context.

What then are the issues for the future? STEP's objective is to ensure that our urban environment is enhanced rather than degraded over time, that the features which we value are not taken from us under the banner of "progress" and that urban native bushland is valued for its own sake as well as for the pleasure which it gives to most.

The fact is that we are still faced with a future which is frightening. There is no doubt that very many in our community see our urban open space as an opportunity for development and believe that such development is inevitable. Others, including our governments, see our built environment as needing change - the concept of the quarter

acre block is challenged as selfish and out of step. We are told to consolidate ourselves and thus to forever change the nature of our urban environment.

The 20 Year View

If we succumb to these pressures what will the Ku-ring-gai area look like in only twenty years? For a start there will be two freeways in the Lane Cove Valley. The F-2 is almost with us and the F-3 extension is only on the back burner waiting for more favourable times for the proponents. The F-3 from Pearce's Corner to Ryde will traverse Wahroonga and Turramurra. South Turramurra will be cut in two, the Campbell Drive valley will resonate with noise and large areas of bushland will be lost and degraded. These freeways and the other roads will be filled with traffic from the North West Sector, the Central Coast and Northern Beaches developments. Urban consolidation will mean that most of our backyards will have new houses in them and that tree cover will be greatly reduced. Population increase in the order of 50% will mean that all our infrastructure, including open space, comes under ever increasing pressure. Mona Vale Road will look much like Pennant Hills Rd now does and getting to the beach will be more trouble than it is worth. The proponents of this variety of progress will then be able to tell us that the area needs more roads, sewers, sporting fields, shopping centres and schools and Ku-ring-gai will be just another urban disaster in the image of so many other urban mistakes around the world.

In my view this describes the challenge that STEP faces in the future. The enormous shift in community attitudes towards our point of view over the last 10 years must give us hope that as much again can be achieved in the next 10

John Burke, October 1993.

SYDNEY'S FUTURE - POPULATION AND LAND USE

In the last two Newsletters we talked about roads and population pressures on our suburbs. Those topics remain with us and will no doubt attain more urgency as time passes. The debate in the community should become more widespread as the urgency increases.

A timely focus for this debate has been provided by the recent release of discussion papers by the NSW Department of Planning and the NSW Department of Transport, entitled Sydney's Future and An Integrated Transport Strategy for Greater Sydney respectively. It is encouraging to see that these documents were prepared and released in conjunction with each other. Our planners are finally responding to the obvious interrelationship between land use and transport.

The need to recognise this relationship has been emphasised by STEP ever since we organised one of the first objections to the Lane Cove Valley Freeway. It is disappointing on the other hand that the two documents, although completed in March, 1993, were delayed until the RTA made its determination to proceed with the F2/M2 tollway, since the Integrated Transport Strategy document clearly shows it to be contrary to the principles canvassed in that document. One must conclude that the RTA still plays and dances to a different tune than proper integrated transport/land-use would require.

The Sydney's Future document sets out what we believe to be a sensible direction, but suffers from shortcomings which cause us some concerns. More of those later. On the positive side, the documents emphasise the need for proper infrastructure for any new development in the metropolitan area. That includes the community services infrastructure as well as the basic water, sewer, gas, electricity and transport. There are words saying the right things about the need to

balance active and passive recreation facilities, the need to provide public transport, to reduce the energy use and pollution and to bring living space closer to work-place and shopping, so that travel distances are reduced.

There are words about sustainable development, although the word sustainable does not have the same meaning for everyone. At one end of the spectrum it is interpreted as not building any more roads than we could afford to maintain. But there is mention of the idea that further development must not degrade the state of our waterways and our air any further. As we mentioned earlier, however, there are some areas of concern.

Population Policy Needed

Firstly, there is an acceptance that Sydney's population will rise and rise and that this is a given external variable about which nothing can be done. In discussion with D.o.P. personnel at a recent workshop session it was pointed out that unless a positive policy position is adopted about population growth and the ultimate total population of Sydney, then all the strategies under discussion at this stage would be swept away as we develop into another Mexico City.

D.o.P. recognise this Achilles' heel but seem to regard limitation of ultimate population as impossible. We would suggest that unless a vision is established, it will be impossible to control. However, if there is a vision, then appropriate policy initiatives, e.g. services costing signals, land price signals, urban renewal incentives, inland cities incentives etc., can be devised to achieve that vision.

Secondly, at the recent workshop there appeared to be an acceptance by both D.o.P. and D.o.T. that the RTA could at this stage not be guaranteed to fall into line with the

integrated transport strategies. Participants including STEP emphasised that unless the RTA could be brought into the fold, the strategies would be rendered irrelevant, because the signals sent to industry, commerce and residential developers by RTA-sponsored road developments would perpetuate the current car dependence and urban sprawl.

Urban Consolidation For All?

There is a third concern which is particularly relevant to Ku-ring-gai and like municipalities. That is the document's emphasis on the need to increase the proportion of multi-unit dwellings. We cannot deny the need to reduce urban sprawl and that this implies an increase in population density, since population growth cannot be reduced instantly. But we are concerned that ill-considered development will irreversibly change the nature of our residential areas, whose main attraction is the natural matrix of trees and space.

Increasing population density while decreasing tree cover and open space cannot be seen as either desirable or sustainable. Nor could it be seen as sustainable if the pressures on our urban bushland were increased due to inappropriate dual-occupancy development.

Unfortunately expression of this concern brings accusations of NIMBY-ism. But we believe there is a case to be made for differentiation between suburbs, there is a place for higher density especially near transport nodes, and there are areas crying out for urban renewal. But there is no case for destruction of desirable urban environment.

The two discussion papers are open for comment until 28th February, 1994. STEP plans to make a formal submission and your comments, thoughts and ideas would be very welcome.

RATES AND SERVICES

The last decade or so has seen a vigorous drive by all politicians to reduce taxes and rates. This has helped to improve efficiency in public service departments considerably.

When all cost reductions by elimination of inefficiencies have been achieved, further pressures inevitably lead to a reduction in the

quantity and standard of services, which we as a community need to be aware of. At some point we then need to ask the question: Has it gone too far?

Times are hard and nobody wants to squander their hard-earned dollar, but we still demand the services which we expect Local Government to provide. Council is expected to deal with ever more complex waste management and

recycling issues. Council is expected to continue its excellent work of conservation of our natural heritage. As a community we would not like Council to shirk its responsibilities in these areas.

The question is: Have we reached the stage where we as a community need to face up to the costs which conservation of our special heritage imposes? Is it time perhaps to consider a special levy?

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ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

The STEP map, Walking Tracks in the Upper Lane Cove Valley is an excellent gift.

Another great present for your environmentally aware friends (or for those who should be) is a **membership subscription to STEP**. Don't forget to give us the name and address of the recipient so we can send a welcoming letter and other information on STEP. The membership will be valid until June 1995 - great value!

We still have copies of Winning Back the Cities by Peter Newman and Jeff Kenworthy. This excellent book looks at what others are doing around the world and proposes solutions to our urban sprawl, traffic congestion etc.

Name	Please send;copies of the STEP Map @ \$6
Addresscopies of Winning Back the Cities @ \$11
.....		a STEP gift membership @ \$10 to ---
Cheque enclosed for \$.....	Name	
	Address	