



STEP Inc. Newsletter

Community Based Environmental Conservation Since 1978. No. 79 July 1996

COMING EVENTS

THE WANDERING ALBATROSS Durno Murray, a leading authority on albatrosses, will give an illustrated talk on these fascinating birds. Albatrosses are long-lived birds, which may not breed until 8 to 10 years old, and then possibly only every second year. They travel incredible distances over the Southern oceans to forage. Their feeding sources are associated with ocean upwellings or fishing activities. The latter, in the form of long-line fishing, is responsible for some of their problems and is thought to be causing a decline in numbers, which has put them in the endangered category.

Come along to hear the latest information from current studies, at 8.00 pm on Wednesday, 17th July, 1996, at St. Andrews Church Hall, corner of Vernon and Chisholm Sts., South Turramurra.

FREEWAY CORRIDOR ABANDONED

In 1986 STEP took the first initiative to save the bushland in the upper Lane Cove Valley from the development of what was envisaged as a freeway. It sought and received assurances from all political parties, that such a development would not be undertaken. These assurances proved to be just minor obstacles to the power and determination of the DMR/RTA to pursue its road development program, as was demonstrated by the RTA's North West Sector Road Needs Study issued over the Christmas period, 1988. The timing was deliberate, in order to attract least community attention. Fortunately, there were a few people, who had noticed, since this study tried to satisfy the promise not to build, by abandoning the B1 corridor, but leaving the RTA's plans in place by retaining the B2 option and introducing the notion of a B3 option.

At this stage STEP, and other community organisations sponsored a petition to Parliament, and the Coalition Against Lane Cove Valley Freeways was formed to focus the community's efforts in opposing the RTA's proposals.

More than seven years later, and after continued and concerted efforts, politicians of all parties, and key bureaucrats, were persuaded that the

doubtful benefits of such a road were far outweighed by its negative effects, not only on the local bushland, but also on the overall metropolitan planning.

The culmination of the effort, for which STEP claims some credit, came with the statement made by the Minister for Roads, the Hon. Michael Knight, MP, on Wednesday, 19th June, 1996.

Although the statement has already been widely reported, the full text of the press release is reproduced here:

"B2/B3 Freeway Route Abandoned

A controversial corridor of land reserved for a freeway linking the F3 and M2 has been abandoned by the State Government, Minister for Roads Michael Knight announced today.

Mr. Knight said the road zoning on the corridor known as the B2/B3 has been lifted following pressure from the Member for Gladesville, John Watkins.

Abandoning the road corridor will allow 11 hectares of bushland across the Lane Cove River Valley and near Fox Valley to be protected from the prospect of a freeway development, Mr. Knight said.

The decision reaffirms the commitment of this Labor Government to the environment, he said.

The six kilometre corridor was a

proposed road link from the end of the F3 at Pearce's Corner, Wahroonga, through South Turramurra and across the Lane Cove River Park to join up with the M2 near Macquarie University. The decision brings to an end decades of uncertainty for home owners along the route. Although the road was not on the Government's agenda, abandoning the corridor dispels the fears of residents and environmentalists once and for all by removing the possibility that any future Government could build a road which would destroy this bushland, Mr. Knight said.

Member for Gladesville, John Watkins, said lifting the road reservation was a giant step towards the protection of the Lane Cove River Valley. The decision will be welcomed by all those who value the natural beauty of the area, he said. I would like to acknowledge the efforts of those in the community who have battled to achieve this great end result.

Mr Knight said he had been advised by the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, Craig Knowles, that the Government intends that the bushland area remain open space. In determining the exact nature and classification of that open space, the Government will consult extensively with the local community."



OPTUS TOWER, PYMBLE

Following representations made to Optus by residents, community organisations including STEP, and Crs. Malicki and Robinson, which culminated in a site meeting between Optus and Council, Optus announced that the tower would now not proceed on the site near Wallalong Cres., West Pymble. The decision appears to have come after two rare or threatened Australian plants (ROTAPs) were identified on the site, some specimens having been destroyed by Optus contractors' vehicles. The two species are *Darwinia biflora* and *Tetrathecus glandulosa*. They were identified by local resident and STEP member, Noela Jones, and confirmed by NPWS officers, while the report prepared by Optus' consultants had not listed them. This is another illustration that community input is essential and can bear results.



STEP MEMBERS HONOURED

We are very proud to report that the recent Queen's Birthday Honours List included two STEP members.

Hal Cogger, long time member of STEP, and until recently a Committee member, was honoured for service to science in the field of herpetology as the Deputy Director of the Australian Museum for 19 years.

Hugh Roberts, current Committee member, was honoured for service to the law as Crown Solicitor.

Both are to be Members of the Order of Australia in the General Division (AM).

We congratulate them both.

STEP POSITION PAPER. THE ENVIRONMENT OF KU-RING-GAI: THE NEXT FOUR YEARS:

In the last Newsletter we gave a precis of the STEP position paper prepared by the Committee.

The paper consists of a Vision and Environmental Objectives statement, followed by 8 sections. We reproduce here the Vision and Objectives and sections 1 to 3:

Our Vision

There is a strong view in Ku-ring-gai which rejects interference by Government, by Council and by special-interest "pressure groups" in the lives of the individuals and firms in the Municipality. We have a great deal of sympathy with this view but unfortunately there is no evidence that most individuals and firms, left to their own devices, will act in any other than in their own narrow interests. STEP is unashamedly a single interest group which seeks, while supporting technical and cultural progress and innovation, the preservation of the natural and built characteristics of Ku-ring-gai which we all find so attractive.

Our vision is for Ku-ring-gai 50 years hence to be essentially the same as it is now rather than for it

to metamorphose into another Paddington, Vaucluse or Chatswood. In order to control our own destiny we must first understand those forces for change which are at work in our community.

The Environmental Objectives

The environmental objectives we propose Ku-ring-gai Council should address are:

- 1 The management of all bushland under Council's care and control so that it is conserved as a natural ecosystem in the long term.
 - 2 The protection by conservation agreements or otherwise of all viable bushland in the Municipality which is not under the care and control of Council.
 - 3 The stabilisation of Ku-ring-gai's population at about the current level.
 - 4 The preservation of the Mona Vale Road bushland corridor.
 - 5 The development of a distinctly Australian streetscape.
 - 6 The rejection of freeways and other such road measures as a means of lessening traffic congestion.
 - 7 The provision of accessible and affordable public transport.
 - 8 Continuous lowering of the amount of waste taken to landfill.
- We comment below on all these objectives.

1 Management Of Bushland Which Is Under Council Care

While bushland conservation through management is now a concept that most people subscribe to there is still a very long way to go. The initiatives and work which have characterised the past 15 years have, however, really only slowed down the rate at which we are losing bushland. There is a lot more to be done.

Some of the initiatives which still need to be taken are the province of the State Government but there are still many matters within the control of Council.

We have a new Department of Parks and Landscape and a new Director. A consequence of this should be that bushland management will now

have a more effective advocate within Council. Rather than list priorities here we would prefer to allow the Director, David Young, to do that. We do hope, however, that he will promote the control of feral animals and the return of Australian fauna wherever possible.

We simply ask Councillors to appreciate that without more effective bushland management than we already have then our bush will continue, little by little, to be permanently lost. Loss of bushland will mean loss of the character of Ku-ring-gai, loss of amenity and loss in property values. It is an irreversible process. Once the bush is gone it is lost forever.

2 Management Of Other Bushland

There are areas of bushland in private or public hands which are not protected by reserve status. Often owners will be pleased to preserve this bushland and this is most important where there is some conservation value attached to the particular parcels. It may be that there is land which connects existing reserves or which protects part of a catchment or which is valuable in its own right.

In these cases it is possible that a conservation agreement would be the appropriate vehicle to protect the land without ownership changing. For example at the UTS at Lindfield a large parcel of bushland will be protected under a conservation agreement.

The Bushland Management Working Party has already recommended that Council prepare a list of bushland which is not permanently conserved. The land on this list should then be assessed to determine whether the owners should be approached to enter into a conservation agreement. We recommend that Councillors support this process.

3 The Population Of Ku-ring-gai

Ku-ring-gai's population has been at about the 100,000 mark for some years. There are no more large scale developments such as the develop-

ment of the newer areas of Wahroonga 20 or 30 years ago.

Population changes can only come from a change in the number of people per dwelling, a change in the number of dwellings or a change in the mix of dwellings. The first and third are unlikely to be significant but a change in the number of dwellings is threatening.

The detached dual occupancy threat has subsided for the time being but may well return. Detached dual occupancy is a multi-faceted threat. It seeks to lead us off on an exponential exercise in population growth which will of course demand even more growth over time. On the other hand it seeks to use up the private open space in our backyards, diminish tree cover, increase runoff, create demand for more infrastructure such as playing fields, schools and hospitals and place increased demands upon open space.

We have heard Government and others argue that it is selfish to deny others the right to live in Ku-ring-gai. This is true if the people in question are older residents who want smaller or serviced accommodation. We should build enough retirement accommodation to accommodate the demands of our present population. Any initiative such as detached dual occupancy, which will itself destroy the very values of open and private space which characterises Ku-ring-gai will be counterproductive.

The advocates of higher density housing usually cite the need to contain urban sprawl when arguing their case. They point to the valuable farmland being lost to housing as the city sprawls. They never have an end point in sight, however, other than never ending population growth. They have nothing to offer except medium density sprawl followed eventually by high density sprawl. Certainly they offer us slower sprawl but the long term result of their policies will be a metropolitan area of 15 million people in 130 years time, if population grows at only 1% p.a.

We can contribute to the future by calling a stop to population growth in Ku-ring-gai.

More in the next Newsletter. Ed.



COMPANION ANIMALS

A Green Paper has recently been issued for public comment. It was prepared by the NSW Companion Animals Working Party to advise the Minister for Local Government. It is worth everybody's attention since it tackles a problem, which has been extensively debated, and which has caused a good deal of disquiet among some pet owners. It recognises that uncontrolled pets can have a devastating effect on wildlife, while acknowledging the beneficial effects of pets on their owners.

It defines the concept of responsible care, which is not only required to protect wildlife but to which the companion animal is also entitled. It also summarises what is happening in other States, and then discusses the main issues to be addressed by any proposed legislation. These are listed as: Responsible care, identification and registration, sale & transfer of ownership, numbers of pets, desexing & breeding, cats, curfews, dogs, dangerous dogs, security dogs, trained assistance animals, environmental & health issues, community education and awareness, fees, penalties, costs etc and implementation and enforcement.

Get your copy of the Green Paper from the Hon. Ernie Page, MP, Minister for Local Government.

BOOK REVIEW --- ACT LOCALLY by Kathy Fook and Anne Roberts, NCC .

This 96 page booklet is "a do-it-yourself guide to protecting your local environment in NSW".

It is divided into three main sections, 1. The A to Z of environment issues followed by 2. Dealing with Government and 3. Getting organised.

The A to Z lists all possible environment issues, starting with air pollution touching on chemicals, emf radiation, rivers, transport and waste etc through to wildlife, including everything in between.

Dealing with Government includes local, State and Federal, and touches on elections and F.O.I.

Getting organised is the really serious stuff, which tells you how to start a group, get grants, lobby, use the media, resolve conflict, avoid defamation (very important) and lists the sources of legal advice and other resources.

It has been well researched and is a fount of knowledge on the individual issues of environmental concern, which may present themselves to a local community.

If you have wondered what the difference between National Parks, Nature Reserves, Wilderness, State Recreation Areas, Forestry Reserves, Crown Land and Travelling Stock Reserves are then turn to page 34 of the booklet.

If you want to know what Environmental Planning, State or Regional Plans, LEP's, Rezoning Proposals and EIS's really are the information is in this booklet.

And for particular issues of concern, it gives background to current problems, and suggests solutions.

It's available from the NCC for \$10. Contact the NCC, 39 George St., The Rocks. Ph.247 4206

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Diary Notes

Photo Evening -- We are planning to have a photo evening, on a date in September, when members can exhibit their photos of bush regeneration, wildflowers, birds or wilderness subjects. So far we have one contributor, so don't hang back, if you have photos which fall into the above categories, and which could be of interest to other STEP members, please contact a member of committee (Bruno 449 1985, John 449 7962, Sue 449 4718, Hugh 44 1353). This is your show.

Ku-ring-gai Community Fair -- at Bicentennial Park, Pymble, on 22/09/96

STEP Annual General Meeting -- on Thursday 17/10/96. Entertainment to be advised.

TAIL ENDER

Excerpts from "Act Locally": *"When environmental problems look bad, don't get angry or depressed.....get active.....If some things seem a bit complicated at first, it's not because you're stupid, it's ...because they are complicated;..... remember, you are not alone -- there are thousands of us out there, and together we can make a difference."*