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Postponed EDO Talk: Rescheduled for 8 November

Kirsty Ruddock, the Principal Solicitor at the Environmental Defender's Office, will explain the purpose, role and history of the EDO along with typical case histories and outcomes.

The EDO is a not-for-profit community legal centre specialising in public interest environmental law. It has been involved in many high-profile cases and successful in many of them. Current cases include the Australians for Sustainable Development Inc v Minister for Planning, Lend Lease (Millers Point) Pty Ltd and Barangaroo Delivery Authority and Bat Advocacy NSW Inc v Minister for Environment Protection, Heritage and the Arts & Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust.

The EDO has been involved in many cases where built or natural heritage was at risk or biodiversity threatened, e.g. <http://north-shore-times.whereilive.com.au/news/story/court-finds-ku-ring-gais-town-centres-plan-has-no-legal-standing/> - court finds Ku-ring-gai's town centres plan 'has no legal standing'.

Date: Tuesday 8 November 2011

Time: 8 pm

Place: St Andrews Church Hall, corner Chisholm and Vernon Streets, Turramurra



STEP events: End of year BBQ

STEP invites all members to our usual end of year get together to be held from 4.30pm on Sunday 4 December in the park behind Leuna Avenue at the end of Broadway at Wahroonga.

Harry and Neroli Lock will once again supply the barbeque fire and hot water but please BYO everything else. This is always one of the very best opportunities to meet other STEP members and we hope to see many of you there.

In the event that the weather looks really threatening call Neroli Lock on 9484 5794

STEP Walk: Sunday 13 November: Fagans Ridge walk, Fiddletown

See page 12 for full details

STEP Inc. Working for community based environmental conservation since 1978

Scouts still caring for the Environment

Ann Stafford has written to STEP providing details of a recent Scout bush experience in the Lane Cove National Park. The Short Street bush regeneration site has been led by STEP committee member Don Davidson for the past eight years.

During 2010 the Scouts from 1st Balmain took part in a new Environment Programme. The program gives the Scouts a chance to earn their Landcare Badge. This badge is often overlooked as it requires a commitment to looking after the bush, or the land, over a six month period. That's not always easy to fit into busy teenager's lives. During the program the Scouts camped at the Baden Powell Scout Centre in Pennant Hills.

In partnership with the rangers from the Lane Cove National Park, the Scouts worked on bush care sessions at the very aptly named 'Scout Creek' site in Short Street, Thornleigh. The sessions included weeding, watering and planting of new tube stock plants. They also attended a one day workshop which was an introduction to bush regeneration. The bush care site they have worked on was established in 2002, after bush fires swept through the area. A very dedicated team of volunteers was established and they have been caring for the site for the past nine years.

"We feel very privileged to be a part of the fantastic work that has been taking place here. The land is owned in part by the Scouts Association. It's great to be able to help the Scout Association, the broader community and the bush itself of course. The Scouts have really enjoyed their time working as bush regenerators. I am sure the skills they have learned will always be with them. The Scouts have all experienced a great sense of pride in their achievements. Once you have a passion for the bush I don't think that ever leaves you" said Ann Stafford – Assistant Scout Leader. Along with taking part in the bush care sessions the remainder of the program included other activities which had a bush theme. This included, amongst other things,

learning about bush tucker. Again, through the partnership with National Parks, they were able to access an Aboriginal Discovery ranger, Les McLeod. Anne said "Les arrived at our camp site and quietly began to make up some white ochre. The ochre was daubed on our foreheads to let the spirits know we are there ready to learn about the bush. Les's presentation to the Scouts was amazing, an incredible insight into the aboriginal culture". All aboriginals cared for the bush and the bush cared for them. If we all play a part in caring for it too, well, I think that has to be a good thing".

The Balmain Scouts are now in preparation mode for the next Australian Jamboree, which is being held in Maryborough, Queensland in January 2013. After the Jamboree they hope to come back to the Lane Cove National Park and run another Environment Program in a slightly revised format. Their longer term hope is to be able to offer the program to all Scouts in the Iron Cove district.

"We made a lot of friends during our time at the Short Street bush care site. We are keeping in touch and looking forward to working together again in the future. We'll be back, and we are bringing more eager Scouts with us. See you in 2013!" said Anne.

Balmain Scouts Alex (left) and Rowan (right) at Short Street

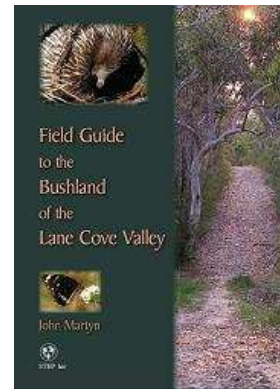


A one STEP guide to the giving of Christmas presents

STEP is as always ahead of the curve and we take this early opportunity to remind all our readers of the array of unique STEP publications, all of which make distinctive and memorable Christmas gifts. These include our full range of bushwalking maps and the two iconic John Martyn books:

- **Field Guide to the Bushland of the Lane Cove Valley**, a complete guide to the Valley from geology to bushwalks. Includes many full colour photographs, maps and illustrations.
- **Sydney's Natural World**, a celebration in photographs and words of the local natural environment which defines the modern world city of Sydney.

Full details of how to order are available on our web site (www.step.org.au) or by using the form on page 15. All Christmas orders come with twelve months of FREE copies of the STEP newsletter!



Annual Report for the year to October 2011.

Retiring STEP President Barry Tomkinson reports back to members on the events of the past twelve months.

The STEP focus continues to be on both local and national issues which we believe are of long term importance to the protection of the environment, and where we believe that our actions and activities can make a real difference. Our bi-monthly newsletter, which some now regard as having grown to be near journal in size and content, covers most of these matters relatively comprehensively and I will today therefore only deal with these in overview.

Committee

STEP depends heavily upon having a hard working and effective committee, which generally meets monthly but more often if required. For 2012 we are fortunate to be able to retain the existing committee and I thank them all for their efforts over the past year. We have also recently had Anita Andrew join the committee. Dr Andrew is currently, amongst other roles, the Honorary Editor at the Australian Journal of Earth Sciences and Adjunct Professor, Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences at Macquarie University. I would like to extend a warm welcome to her.

Tonight I stand down as President but intend to remain active on the committee. Jill Green has nominated for the role of President of STEP and if elected I believe that she will bring both drive and enthusiasm to that role. The continuity of the committee assists STEP to deliver and execute cohesive policy. I would like to urge all STEP members to consider nominating for the Committee in future, as we are always on the look out for fresh ideas and talent.

John Burke

It is with regret that the committee notes that John Burke is standing down as Vice President and will cease to hold an executive position with STEP as from the date of the AGM. John has filled a number of roles within STEP over many years, including serving with distinction as President and editor of STEP Matters. His contribution over has been enormous and this continues to be the case, as can be seen by the recently published *Position Paper on Population*, which is substantially his work. John has decided to stay on the committee and we look forward to many more years of being able to access his wise counsel on a wide range of matters.

Accounts

STEP continues to enjoy a sound financial position, in no small part due to the profitable sale of our publications and also to subscriptions from our solid membership base. We also benefit from receiving a steady flow of generally small but valuable donations. Total revenue for the year is up fourfold compared with 2010, mainly due to the strong sales of our publications, especially the revised edition of the *Field Guide to the Bushland of the Lane Cove Valley*. Our total funds have as a result increased by over 16%, despite an increase in expenses associated with the new publication.

Secretarial

I need to also mention the untiring efforts of our secretary, Helen Wortham. Helen makes sure that our membership records, event organisation, publication sales and much more

are handled in a smooth and timely manner. She is also the editor in chief of many of our publications, including our recent *Position Paper on Population*.

Educational Grants

We continue to support the Young Scientist awards and are always on the look out for worthwhile new avenues by which we can support the education of all members of the community in the value and enjoyment that comes from having access to natural bushland within our local region and beyond.

Bushwalks

This year we again organised a programme of monthly walks for both experienced and recreational bush walkers. STEP is already well known for its series of maps of the various walking trails stretching from Middle Harbour all the way to the top end of Lane Cove Valley and our revised *Field Guide* has now updated many of these local walks. Bush walking is an activity which attracts interest from all age groups and is proving to be an excellent educational medium as well as helping to attract new members to STEP. Our thanks go to Robert Bracht, Andrew Little, John Martyn, Tim Gastineau-Hills, Jim Wells, Jill Green and many others for organising and leading these walks.

Talks

We organised four public talks during the year, the topics of which all addressed key environmental issues. In addition, tonight after the AGM we have the first in what is planned to be an annual event, the STEP Public Lecture. Our intention is to both educate and to question prevailing wisdom. The topic, "Saving civilisation is not a spectator sport", clearly fulfils both of those criteria.

Newsletter

STEP Matters, our newsletter, continues to be our prime method of communicating with our members and also with local councillors, politicians and other like minded organisations. We have seen *STEP Matters* grow in size as we try to cover a greater range of both local and national issues. We know that the newsletter is well regarded in conservation circles and helps to maintain the high profile of the STEP brand. There have been some suggestions that we make the newsletter available via email for those who would prefer to receive it that way; your comments in this regard would be appreciated. Past copies can always be found on our web site.

Submissions

STEP made numerous submissions during the course of the year to a wide variety of local and State bodies on a broad range of topics. These often required committee members to make site visits and to conduct research on a range of topics. I would like to thank all committee and other STEP members who assisted with these submissions. We believe that they have helped in a very practical way to preserve important areas of local bush land from alienation and destruction.

State Election Candidates Forum

STEP pioneered a local Candidates Environmental Forum in February, in partnership with the Nature Conservation Council of NSW. The nine local candidates who agreed to attend the Forum answered a broad range of environmental questions from the local community.

Issues

The issues that STEP consider important are fully covered in the newsletter and on our web site. Many are of a local nature, particular to our northern Sydney region. Most however are issues of substance that concern Australia nationally and internationally. There is no room to repeat them all here, save to say that they will all require solutions that will go to the core of the way we live and work.

They do however have a common and continuing theme, which bears repetition from this same report last year and for which we do not apologise. Namely, that we cannot continue to hold as true the view that we can sustain an economic model that is predicated on the assumption that infinite growth is forever possible in a world of finite resources. A restructuring of the global economy is needed, and in fact has already begun, with renewable energy and resource recycling at last beginning to gain momentum, albeit still too slowly. Our recent *Position Paper on Population* lays out the problems, and some potential solutions, in a coherent manner.

Another issue which has begun to strongly manifest itself is a renewed focus on the usage and value of our local bushland. There are now many interest groups who have come to see local natural bushland as convenient areas available for them to use for their recreational and sporting activities, be they motorised trail bikes, mountain bike cyclists, four wheel driving, sporting groups, horse riders and others. These groups all have a legitimate right to pursue their activities, but

not at the expense of the remaining areas of good quality urban bushland. STEP and other like minded conservation groups have spent much of the past three decades working to ensure that the likes of the Lane Cove Valley National Park are protected as national parks, both now and into the future. There are many in the community who would apparently prefer not to see these national parks remain as natural bushland or wilderness, but to become quasi recreational parks to be used for the economic benefit of tourism operators and thrill seekers. STEP has the view that these areas have a value in their own right and need to be conserved for the benefit of current and future generations, because they are our heritage, and not because someone else sees them as being a useful economic commodity.

Not much good news

Last year in this report we highlighted a number of items of what we regarded as good news. Unfortunately there seems to be less reason to celebrate over the past twelve months, with limited progress being made in delivering an effective climate change policy and with the level of debate and absurd claims reaching new low levels, even by the standards of some of our more polemical politicians. To provide some context, Australia is currently aiming to reduce emissions by 5% by 2020 on 2000 levels, while Britain is aiming to reduce emissions by 50% by 2025 on 1990 levels. In addition, recent research by Oxfam estimates that more than 60% of emissions cuts by 2020 are likely to be made by developing countries. It is clear that rich countries, such as Australia, need to do more.

Publications

STEP's various maps and books continue to enjoy consistent sales and bring in much needed revenue for the organisation. This year has seen the official launch and marketing of the revised *Field Guide to the Bushland of the Lane Cove Valley*, which has been a mammoth job on the part of a dedicated team, led by author and photographer John Martyn.

John's hard work, dedication and enthusiasm continue to astound us all and we thank him for his efforts.

STEP has also recently published its *Position Paper on Population*, under the direction of John Burke. We believe that this well reasoned and fact based Paper should go a long way to establishing a sensible frame work for the ongoing debate of this contentious issue.

The Year Ahead

STEP will continue to question conventional wisdom where we believe that it is deficient and self serving. It is our joint challenge for 2012 and beyond to focus the minds of all of our elected leaders on the real long term environmental challenges facing both Australia and the world at large. STEP will also continue to address the wide range of local environmental concerns, including making detailed fact based submissions on key issues where required. We are fortunate to have well credentialed resources available to us to conduct our work at such a high level, but we are always on the look out for new talent. Our member numbers exceed 400 and over the course of the past year our membership base has continued to grow. A strong STEP is our best defence against those who would alienate the local bushland and we consequently need to continue to grow our membership. Our best recruiters remain our current STEP members; we ask that you all invite your friends to join STEP.

In conclusion

The campaigns led by STEP often make a substantial and positive difference to the quality of the planning decisions ultimately handed down, even if we do not always get one hundred percent of what we want. We look forward to continuing to make a real difference in 2012.

We thank our members for their support of STEP and the various issues with which we became involved during the year.

The new STEP Committee for 2012

Jill Green – President
Barry Tomkinson – Vice president
Stephen Procter – Treasurer
Helen Wortham – Secretary
Andrew Little
Tim Gastineau-Hills

John Martyn
Robin Buchanan
Don Davidson
John Burke
Anita Andrew

Effective Communication: Communities and Bushfire Research Project

Article by Dr Susan Chaplin, Centre for Sustainable Organisations and Work, RMIT University, Melbourne. Dr Chaplin has interviewed several STEP members as part of her research project.

A research team from the Centre for Sustainable Organisations and Work at RMIT University in Melbourne is currently studying how fire agencies communicate with communities about bushfire risks and preparation. This is a three year research project funded by the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre, and is being undertaken in the context of the increasing bushfire risks resulting from rapid climate, socio-economic and demographic change, especially in rural-urban interface, sea change/tourism and rural communities.

The aim of the project is to examine and provide an understanding of the social, political and historical bases of community awareness and resilience in bushfire contexts. The research is focusing on the intersection between community, institutions and organisations in relation to communication. As a broad concept, communication is the process of establishing meaning, encompassing all forms of social interaction from private conversations to public announcements. Communication takes on significance at multiple levels within the community, from organisational and operational communications, such as bushfire warnings, to community education programs and the communication of messages and information via public campaigns. The ready availability of a range of telecommunications services in many areas means that there are new and emerging forms of communication in place. In the bushfire context these include TV and radio announcements, pamphlets, booklets, DVDs, information sessions, community education programs, SMS and other mobile technology among others. Also of interest are community networks and how they may facilitate the understanding of, and response to, messages coming from bushfire agencies.

For residents to appreciate the risk of the 'hazards on their doorsteps', like bushfire, some claim that people should be personally engaged with the messages coming from the emergency services organisations (King, 2000: 226; Prior and Paton, 2007). While others

claim that key messages should be consistent, easy to understand and relevant to the area where people live (Fairbrother et al., 2010). Thus, it is not enough to just send generic material and expect that people have the knowledge and skill to apply that information to their own situations (Prior & Paton, 2007). Bushfire-related communication, whether awareness education, or specific emergency warnings, should engage individuals and social groups directly, provide relevant, tailored information and maintain preparedness, knowledge and motivation to remain prepared and expectant of disaster.

The research will investigate the interactions between communication and behaviour through a study of the multiple relationships between the local community, authorities and agencies engaged with fire prevention, preparedness and recovery. This will be done by interviewing key officials within the respective state level agencies and authorities, and community case studies in Victoria, Tasmania, Western Australia and NSW. In each state three localities which are bushfire prone will be selected that fit the categories of traditional farming/rural community, tree-change/sea-change/tourism community and rural-urban interface. The respective local government and fire brigade officers will be interviewed and members of community groups and interested individuals will be sought to participate.

In NSW the selected rural-urban interface community is the Ku-ring-gai Council area with a particular focus on West Pymble and South Turramurra. Interviews were conducted during September 2011 and a community report will be produced in early 2012.

An outcome of the project will be the generation of critical knowledge and theory of effective strategies and options for communication in bushfire risk communities as well as providing an understanding of the basis of community mobilisation around risk. It will design, develop and test tools to enable effective communication strategies for optimising community safety.

References

Fairbrother, P., Hart, A., Stratford, J. and Prokopiv, V. (2010) CFA Community Fireguard Review: Improving Quality Control and Assurance, Interim report. Prepared for the CFA Community Safety Directorate; School of Management, RMIT University.

References continued:

King, D. (2000). 'You're on Your Own: Community Vulnerability and the Need for Awareness and Education for Predictable Natural Disasters', *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 8, 223-228.

Prior, T. and Paton, D. (2008) 'Understanding the Context: The value of community engagement in bushfire risk communication and education. Observations following the East Coast Tasmania bushfires of December 2006', *The Australasian Journal of Disaster and Trauma Studies*.

Further information

<http://www.bushfirecrc.com/category/projectgroup/5-effective-communication-communities-and-bushfire>

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Coming soon: 7 billion reasons to rethink how we use the planet

Feedback to STEP

The recently published STEP Inc *Position Paper on Population* has been critically acclaimed by both STEP members and others to whom copies have been sent. Some typical feedback:

"Congratulations to STEP for tackling this one. I am with you; the issue is of more importance than any other matter, but it's the elephant in the room. Your recommendations are fine but SO HARD for people to implement. I presume you'll get a copy into the hands of every politician. The two appendices are excellent also". *Jenny Simons*

"Thanks for sending me the Step Position paper on population growth. It's a pity it can't be mandatory reading for every politician." *David Gordon*

"I am pole-axed to receive such an interesting email from you – because I was getting lonely trying to explain my views on overpopulation (and not doing as much as you about it). Overpopulation is the prime cause of our problems, and global warming/climate change etc is a symptom, at best.

This paper hits on my biggest hobby-horse and I would very much like to discuss it with you. In one page I would have said exactly the same. Rather than rant on, could we meet soon at your convenience to discuss. There is no bigger or more important issue you could have picked on" *Dr Peter Lillywhite*.

Media coverage

The media has also begun to highlight the population issue. The following article by Professor Rod Tiffen appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald on 17 October 2011. *Rod Tiffen is an emeritus professor of government and international relations at the University of Sydney.*

"One day this month, the world's population will reach 7 billion.

It took thousands of years - from prehistory to 1960 - for humankind to reach 3 billion. But then it took only 39 years - to 1999 - to add the next 3 billion. And now it has taken just 12 more years to move from 6 to 7 billion.

Growth has been so rapid that the US Population Reference Bureau estimates that about 5 per cent of all the people who have ever lived are living now. The rate of growth has slowed, but some time around the middle of this century it is projected that the earth shall have 9 billion people.

That will mean that in 250 years the world's population will have increased ninefold since it reached 1 billion in 1804.

In contrast, the population at the time of Christ was probably about one-quarter of a billion, and it took 1800 years to increase fourfold to 1 billion. This period of population growth has coincided with the most technologically dynamic era of human history. The most spectacular changes have been part of the industrial revolution and more recently the digital revolution.

This has meant - in contrast to the many dire predictions that over-population would result in disaster - that population growth has also coincided with far greater longevity, and a

much more comfortable and materially richer life than pre-industrial man could ever have dreamt of.

A key reason that massive population growth has not led to disaster has been the extraordinary growth in agricultural productivity.

However, while continuing dynamism in agriculture is likely, there are some indications that these benefits are starting to slow.

Global food prices showed a relative decline over some decades, but this century they have increased significantly, and some experts predict the upward trend will continue.

Moreover, some agricultural systems may already be operating beyond what is sustainable in the long term. Lester Brown, of the Worldwatch Institute, has estimated that one-third of the world's cropland is losing topsoil faster than new soil is forming. Water tables are being depleted in many countries to support agricultural production, and again this cannot continue indefinitely.

Polls have consistently shown that fewer old people believe in anthropogenic global warming than young ones. Perhaps one reason is a failure to grasp just how much the earth has changed in their lifetimes.

For someone now in their seventies, the global population now is about three times what it was when they were born.

The planetary impact of increased numbers of people can be seen, for example, in the total fish catch. The total world marine fish catch was perhaps 4 million tonnes in 1900, probably about 20 million tonnes in 1950, and 140 million tonnes in 2005.

However, more than 40 per cent of this is now drawn from aquaculture, and for fish consumption to keep increasing, aquaculture will need to continue its recent rapid development, because there is no prospect of an increasing catch from the oceans, indeed the opposite.

Despite the increasingly global reach of the industry, fish captured in the ocean have been constant at about 80 million tonnes since the late 1980s; seven of the top 10 marine fish species are fully exploited or over-exploited;

and the average size of the fish caught has decreased.

The increase in the number of people is only part of the equation. Equally important is their rising expectations. As the standard of living increases, so over the generations does the average "carbon footprint" of each individual.

We can see this most easily in the growing number of cars. In 1900, there may have been about 20,000 cars in the world; by 2002 there were about 800 million.

The Institute for Transport Studies at Leeds University estimates that by 2030 there will be more than 2 billion, with most of the increase coming outside the developed world.

But this is a case of where increasing population mixed with the revolution of rising expectations meets planetary boundaries. Oil supplies are not endlessly elastic. Some estimates say that peak oil - the maximum conventional oil production - may already have been reached.

Whether or not that is true, it seems certain that the cost of oil is going to increase substantially in coming decades as still rising demand meets more difficult and more expensive supply.

At some stage, the price may rise sufficiently to challenge many of the transport assumptions on which our present order is based.

We live in a political system in which a week is considered a long time, and so much political and media energy is focused on the short term. But to be short-sighted means we will not be prepared for the inevitable changes that will play out in the coming decades and generations.

The economist Kenneth Boulding once observed that "anyone who believes exponential growth can go on forever in a finite world is either a mad man or an economist".

Similarly, there is an irony that those who think this rapid change can continue indefinitely, who embrace the doctrine of endless growth - of no limits - who endorse the continuing headlong rush into an unknown future, call themselves conservatives."

Why Australia needs a carbon bank.

Article by Paul Burke (pictured). Research Fellow, Crawford School at Australian National University.

The World Bank ranks Australia among the top five countries in the world in terms of its regulatory environment. Australia also ranks in the top ten countries in terms of control of corruption.

International rankings can be fickle things. But when it comes to these measures of institutional quality, there is little doubt that it is better to be nearer the top of the rankings than the bottom. Australia has generally been served well by our key regulatory and governance institutions.

The current balance of Australian politics suggests that we will see a carbon price legislated during 2011. Given that we have bilateral support for emissions reductions, a move to price carbon would be a win for good economic governance. But the carbon governance challenge does not end with the establishment of a carbon price.



Market credibility

A market for greenhouse gases is an unnatural market, the functioning of which relies on the quality of the market's administration. Following the transition to a floating price, the value of emissions permits will depend strongly on the credibility of the market regulator's commitment to limit emissions to the capped level.

A poorly-managed carbon market would open up many opportunities for shonks and shysters. As recent experiences in Europe have shown, fraud tends to occur in difficult-to-predict ways. The future regulator of the Australian carbon market will need to be on its toes.

Porting is a particularly important risk when it comes to links between any Australian scheme and carbon credits generated in countries with weak governance. As he did in 2008, Professor Garnaut has recommended the establishment of a carbon bank to manage the emissions trading scheme, and to administer assistance to emissions-intensive, trade-exposed industries.

The role of the recommended carbon bank is similar to the role of the regulator of the dead-in-the-water Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.

As with other regulatory agencies, a key advantage of the idea is that it keeps the politicians at arm's length from the day-to-day running of markets.

Other models

Garnaut is not the first to call for a carbon bank. Professor Warwick McKibbin of the Australian National University has been recommending a carbon pricing system with a strong carbon bank for years. McKibbin's hybrid model includes a carbon bank that has the ability to set the short-term price of carbon, in much the same way as the Reserve Bank of Australia sets short-term interest rates.

McKibbin's model has many merits. But it appears that for the moment the horse has bolted in favour of a conventional emissions trading scheme (with the government setting the price for the first years) and a more limited carbon bank with mainly regulatory and market facilitation functions.

Independent advice

Carbon pricing will generate big bucks. The past few years have seen a large amount of lobbying by those who want a share of this revenue. An additional suggestion in the latest Garnaut Review is that of providing a role for the Productivity Commission (or another independent agency) to make recommendations on industry assistance.

The Australian public would benefit substantially from having an assistance regime that is based on principled economics rather than political calculations. So the idea of seeking the ongoing

advice of an independent agency on assistance measures is a good one.

Garnaut also recommends that an independent committee be established to provide advice on emissions reduction targets and other matters, an idea modelled on the United Kingdom Committee on Climate Change. High-quality independent advice is a good thing. But ultimately the big decisions will be made by the parliament. Making sure that politicians and the public are better informed about climate science and economics is perhaps the most important prerequisite for sound long-term climate policy.

Editor's note: This article first appeared on 6 June 2011. See: <http://theconversation.edu.au/why-australia-needs-a-carbon-bank-1623#republish#republish>.

For a more recent article see: <http://theconversation.edu.au/keep-calm-and-carry-on-global-market-chaos-shouldnt-affect-the-carbon-tax-2843>

Institutions are key

The carbon bank, or whatever it ends up being called, will need to strive to protect Australia's image of strong institutions. It will be the most important facilitator of Australia's climate change mitigation efforts. Its stewardship will also be important for the health of Australia's financial system more broadly.

Without confidence in the regulatory regime underpinning the carbon market, emissions trading would be untenable. This would be a significant setback to our efforts to mitigate climate change risks.

30 Years of Reality... Club of Rome predictions revisited

When 'The Limits to Growth' was published by the Club of Rome in the 1970's, the public was stunned. Finally someone was facing up to the reality that finite resources are just that – finite...

However, even more stunning was the speed with which our modern and complex economy would collapse without easy access to the materials we take for free – and for granted. Using a computer model, Limits to Growth predicted collapse sometime in the 21st century based on a business as usual scenario. The book went on to sell 30 million copies worldwide and was published in many different languages.

Despite its popularity, humanity has not been diverted from the business as usual attitude to consuming the Earth's resources. 30 years on from publication, Graham Turner of the Sustainable Eco-Systems division at the CSIRO has completed a comprehensive report – comparing reality, to what was predicted in the book.

The abstract to the Graham Turner report states:

"In 1972, the Club of Rome's infamous report "The Limits to Growth", presented some challenging scenarios for global sustainability, based on a system dynamics computer model to simulate the interactions of five global subsystems; namely population, food production, industrial production, pollution and consumption of non-renewable natural resources.

Contrary to popular belief, The Limits to Growth scenarios by the team of analysts from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology did NOT predict world collapse by the end of the 20th Century. This Paper from Graham Turner focuses on a comparison of recently collated historical data for the 1970 – 2000 with scenarios presented in the Limits to Growth.

The analysis shows that the 30 years of historical data compares favourably with key features of a business as usual scenario (called the "standard run scenario"), which results in a collapse of the global system midway through the 21st Century.

The data does not compare well with other scenarios involving comprehensive use of technology or stabilising behaviour and policies. The results indicate the particular importance of understanding and controlling global pollution. (Editors italics)"

The full report can be found online at: <http://www.csiro.au/files/files/pjje.pdf>

Plenty of funding... but not for our bushland

STEP readers would no doubt have noticed that the STEP predicted increase in “official” mountain bike trails cutting through our remaining areas of bushland has now eventuated. Ku-ring-gai held the official opening of the so called Mountain Bike Park at Golden Jubilee Oval in Wahroonga on 16 October and Hornsby Council recently announced the construction of a new 7 km mountain bike trail, half of it running through good quality bushland. The combined costs of construction of these trails will exceed \$500,000, and the need to properly maintain them for safe usage over the next five years could double that figure.



The State Government is not to be outdone and has got into the act as well. The Sydney Morning Herald announced on 3 October 2011 that “Construction will start on a series of dedicated tracks in parks around Sydney in the next few weeks, including trails in Garigal National Park and Berowra Valley Regional Park on the north shore” The SMH went on the quote the head of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of NSW, Sally Barnes, as saying that *“There is strong community support for providing more recreational opportunities in national parks”*.

The STEP view on mountain bike tracks, as well as walking tracks, is well known. We believe that there are many positive aspects to a system of well-planned and well-maintained tracks and trails in urban bushland. However, it is clear that the construction of such tracks and trails through areas of natural habitat, no matter how carefully done, will always cause some damage to natural bushland. Indeed, every single threat to our biodiversity, as identified in the Ku-ring-gai and

Hornsby Councils official *Biodiversity Conservation Strategies*, is exacerbated by such track and trail construction. STEP recommends therefore that new track and trail construction be confined to areas already degraded or severely degraded (and there are plenty of those!). STEP has therefore agreed to work with the National Parks in inspecting their proposed new tracks, so see that they do in fact meet the STEP requirements (which have now also been endorsed by the Nature Conservation Council of NSW).

What STEP members may not have noticed however is the cutback in funding for bush care and for essential bush regeneration. While funding for recreational pursuits such as new mountain tracks biking appears to be plentiful, the funding for essential bushland maintenance and regeneration work appears to have been cut completely. For example, when the Pennant Hills and Thornleigh Park additions to the Lane Cove National Park were announced, they were accompanied by a guaranteed annual additional budget of \$600,000. Information reaching STEP indicates that the projects which this money used to fund have gradually been starved of funds, to the point that in the next year’s budget there will in fact be no funding at all for these projects, many of which are incomplete and may well now revert back to their previous states. Projects said to be affected include Byles Creek, Comenarra Parkway, Sugarloaf, the Heritage Walk, Middle Creek, Handley Avenue, and many others. In addition, all funding for bush regeneration plant and equipment has been eliminated!

STEP members were given assurances by local MP’s prior to the State election that funding for bush regeneration contracts would be maintained. That does not appear to be the case and STEP will be taking up this matter with the State Government.

However, concerned STEP members may also wish to personally write to their local member asking for their assurance that essential bushland funding is maintained and that the Lane Cove National Park budget be immediately revised accordingly.

Why bother having bushland?

A "Personal Rave" from Robin Buchanan. Robin is an academic, a pioneering educator of bush regeneration in Australia, a STEP Committee member and is the author of a number of well known books, her most recent being "Restoring Natural Areas in Australia".

Well why have we bothered keeping bushland at all? Was it really because we couldn't think of anything to do with it at the time? Is it now just waiting for us to think of a creative idea to make it useful? Generations of conservationists have stood in front of bulldozers, donated time and money; harassed all levels of government to keep areas of bushland. Were the efforts of these generations really so the future generations could use it for whatever they want?



We could say that bushland provides all sorts of ecosystem systems such as: clean air, carbon storage, clean water, regulation of water flow, soil production and protection, nutrient storage and cycling, salinity control, pest control, pollination, fruit dispersal, provision of beauty and recreational opportunities. Yes fisherman on Berowra Creek, some of my bushland contributes to the clean water your fish are swimming in. The storm water on our street sweeps into our place and a sediment trap (built and maintained by us), then the water plunges over a cliff, filters through about 30 vertical metres of sandstone before coming to the surface again clean enough to support sundews, coral fern and Christmas Bells. From there it wanders off on a long journey to meet your fish.

But I don't think these ecosystem services were why we stood in front of bulldozers, donated time and money; harassed all levels of government. I know many of us thought bushland and all its citizens simply have the right to exist. I know I did. All the creatures, both great and small have a right to continue long after my short stay on earth; indeed long after that of the human race. Give or take a few years, gum trees have been around for about 30 million years, humans have only been around for about 200 000 years.

We didn't fight for bushland so that it could be cleared in the future. It wasn't so that mountain bikers could have fun, so that Scouts could have a new hall, a new soccer field could be built, a new storm water treatment structure engineered. Yes they are all good causes; no I am not against them. I am for bushland.

Planners can plan for all these activities in the urban area.

We fought for bush. Just bush.

STEP bushwalk: Sunday 13 November: Fagan's Ridge walk, Fiddletown

This walk follows Fagan's Ridge across Crown Lands leading towards Marramarra National Park. We will have wonderful vistas of this huge naturally vegetated corner of the Sydney Basin. The area was severely burnt by wildfire in 2003 and has recovered now into a vast array of interesting plants with some probably new to and some probably well known to STEP members. Morning tea will be provided.

- Meet:** At the end of Peebles Rd Fiddletown at 8.30am where there is a locked fire trail gate. Map 72 A9 Sydney UBD street directory
- Option:** Those who would like to participate in some bird watching near the walk start should arrive at 7.30
- Length:** Approx 6 km
- Duration:** Approx 3 hours
- Difficulty:** Easy, very rocky and rough surface on the fire trail however
- Bring:** Water, sun protection, binoculars, camera and your preferred field guides
- Book:** Contact Barry Tomkinson on 94849934

Rats and all that (part 2) *This is the second and concluding section of the paper from Nick Cooper, who works in the field of low hazard pest management.*

Sanitation:

Minimising the availability of food and water deters rodents from establishing themselves in a given area and will also limit the number of individuals that a given area will be able to sustain. Storage of foodstuffs in sealed containers off the ground, regular and thorough cleaning of all surfaces, storage of waste in sealed containers or its daily disposal, repair of leaky taps and diversion of hot water service overflow systems will help to reduce the area's attraction.

Possible harbourage areas can also be minimised by cleaning away overgrown vegetation, limiting storage of rubble, timber and other goods in the yard and around the house.

Trapping:

There are several different types of traps:

- Snap traps
- Live traps
- Electrocutation traps
- Glue boards

Traps may initially offer a good form of non-chemical rodent control. Use of commercially available snap-traps baited with fruit (e.g., pear, apple, pumpkin pulp with seeds, tomato) wrapped in plastic wrap and tied to the trigger lever, or electrocution traps are ideal where a small population exists. These should be placed in areas of known activity, and away from reach of children, pets and other non-target animals.

As rats are quite wary of new objects, it can be appropriate to place the traps baited, but unset, for a few days to allow the rats to gain confidence with the potential food source. The traps are best placed along a wall or the like, where the rodents are likely to run (look for the tell-tale signs of runways). Remove all other food sources to ensure a maximum chance of the rodent's attraction to the food on the trap.

Traps should be checked on a daily basis and disposal of dead rats should be undertaken using rubber gloves. Where trapped rodents are still alive, they can be gassed using car exhaust, and then disposed of accordingly. Carcasses may be wrapped in plastic and placed in the garbage bin, buried or incinerated. Check with your local council on appropriate disposal measures for your area.

Another form of trapping is the use of glue-boards placed in the pathway of rats so that they run over the glue and get stuck. These traps are not recommended as they are least humane form

of trapping and may cause unnecessary suffering. (Refer to "The Humaneness of Rodent Pest Control" G Mason and K E Littin Animal Welfare 2003, 12: 1-37)

Low Hazard Options

Baiting:

In situations where rodents have established themselves in a building and trapping is not adequate, the use of chemical baits may be appropriate. Various materials are commercially available in a number of formulations. The anti-coagulant rodenticides are perhaps the most widely established form of bait available and work by depleting a rodent's ability to form clots in its blood. In this way, the rodent will ultimately die of massive internal haemorrhaging.

Rapid control may be achieved with the use of either of the two single-dose anticoagulants, Brodifacoum and Bromadiolone. An advantage of these two chemicals is that they rely only on a single consumption of the bait, rather than repeated feeding. 'Bromakil' and 'Talon-G' are commercially available products that contain these chemicals. Negative considerations include potential for secondary poisoning of cats, dogs or birds that eat poisoned rodents and the greater risk of rodents dying near the area of consumption (i.e. in roof voids, wall cavities and subfloor areas).

Multi-dose anticoagulants mean several feeds are required over a period of days to kill the rodent. Warfarin (previously found in 'Ratsak') is a multi-dose bait, but has been used intensively over the years, causing many rodents to become resistant. We prefer Racumin rodent bait (0.37g/kg coumatetralyl) that has been formulated for reduced secondary poisoning potential, and has been promoted by many wildlife authorities as an alternative to other baits. Bayer claims that Racumin kills rats more quickly than the single dose anticoagulants. (Refer to: Racumin – Fast control of rats and mice. A clear safety record. Bayer 31/1/07)

Baits are available in several formulations and need to be chosen carefully for their required location. We choose to use wax blocks or paste, as they are more effective in areas where there is a high moisture level or the environment is very dusty. Placement of baits should be in accordance with instruction on the packet, understanding that rats have different food and water requirements than mice. Legislation requires that all rodenticides be used in accordance with the label.

As these baits are designed to kill mammals, it is essential that they be placed in areas inaccessible to children, pets and other non-target animals. Particular caution should be taken when baiting in roof-voids, that the baits are not accessible to possums, as these are a protected species. Where there is concern that non-target creatures may contact the baits the bait should be placed in tamper proof bait stations. These prevent children and other non-target organisms entering having small openings only accessible to rodent sized creatures.



Removal of baits within 6-8 weeks following placement is appropriate to prevent them providing attraction for new rodents and also to prevent infestation by various grain pests. Un-used baits should be disposed of in an appropriate landfill, with care undertaken to prevent contamination of waterways and drains.

Nick Cooper is with Systems Pest Management Pty Ltd at Epping where he can be contacted at 9869 3153. That company offers inspection and control services.

The Glade Development

STEP has been following the proposed devolvement of the Glade Oval site (off Tanderra Street, Wahroonga), with close interest and members of our Committee have attended information sessions concerning the proposed development. We have been asked by the Friends of the Glade community to provide expert assistance on the environmental aspects of the proposal. We are indebted to the Friends of the Glade for the following update on this proposal.

“Following receipt of a conditional offer of \$2 million from Knox Grammar and Abbotsleigh Schools to construct and install a 400 metre, 8 lane synthetic athletics track and related facilities at The Glade, Ku-ring-gai Council determined in May 2011 “that Council determine that The Glade is the preferred location for an athletic facility and that the site is further assessed for its suitability as part of a district landscape master planning process”.

- Council will shortly appoint an independent consultant to assess The Glade’s suitability and viability for athletics track and field options and inform a recommendation on whether such facilities should be included in the

district park master plan – refer to www.kmc.nsw.gov.au/TheGlade.

- It is vital that residents and stakeholders take all available opportunities to participate in this process and to express their views on the appropriateness of the proposed athletics facility at The Glade.

Friends of the Glade is opposed to the construction of a synthetic athletics track and associated facilities at The Glade for the following primary reasons:

Community Use: Cricket, soccer, all local schools, local families and children, dog walkers and the general public should have fair use and easy access to The Glade. The schools’ proposal seeks exclusive use for 21 years for their athletes, comprising three hours every weekday afternoon for 40 weeks per year, at the expense of the broader community. A synthetic athletics track would cover about approximately 30% of the oval. Senior cricket would cease as the turf cricket wicket would be removed and the oval would become too small for cricket. All twelve existing synthetic athletics tracks in the broader Sydney - Newcastle - Wollongong region are security fenced and gated to prevent vandalism.

(Continued on back page)

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The Glade (Continued from page 13)

Infrastructure: The narrow and hilly streets around The Glade are inadequate to support high peak traffic volumes and on-street car and bus parking. The schools also have inadequate, restricted parking. All existing synthetic tracks in Sydney-Newcastle-Wollongong have major road access and ample on-site parking with grandstands and other appropriate facilities. They are all floodlit and have a large buffer zone from residential areas. Most are co-located with other sports facilities.

Environment: Apart from providing beautiful green open space, The Glade is home to a State Government protected ecological community of critically endangered Blue Gum High Forest. A synthetic athletics track and related facilities will

almost certainly require the removal of some of this habitat as well as having an impact on the riparian area of Coups Creek, which Council has already spent thousands of ratepayer dollars restoring (through the environmental levy).

Costs / Equity: According to Council's own internal estimates, Abbotsleigh and Knox's \$2M contribution may prove inadequate to cover the substantial costs of a constructing an athletics facility and associated infrastructure. This partially funded proposal will therefore likely require further public funding and entail significant on-going maintenance costs, diverting resources from other worthy projects across Ku-ring-gai.

Further information can be obtained from Friends of the Glade. Send your contact details to gladefriends@gmail.com, call Jon James (0408 554 211), Mark Hancock (0425 320 350) or Jesper Martens (0431 312 050) or visit our website at www.sites.google.com/site/gladefriends for more information."

The newsletter editor for this edition is Barry Tomkinson who has written everything not otherwise accredited. Send complaints, praise, comments or letters to the editor to

secretary@step.org.au. The STEP Committee does not necessarily agree with all opinions put forward in this newsletter.



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