

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO THE FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF SOUTH
TURRAMURRA ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION

Held 14th June 1979, at South Turramurra Kindergarten.

At this first Annual General Meeting of S.T.E.P., I think it is fitting to remind ourselves of our origins, and to reflect a little on those initial heady days of excitement and frustration.

S.T.E.P. came into being on the night of April 12, 1978..... at a meeting held at the home of Marlene and Brian Darragh to reconstitute the lapsed South Turramurra Natural Bushland Preservation Society.

Office bearers then elected were:

Co-Chairmen Mr. G. Bloomfield

Dr. L. Csengerits

Secretary Mrs. P. Dunne

Treasurer Mrs. R. Ruys.

and a large and enthusiastic committee.

Subsequently Mrs. Dunne was unable to continue, but we were fortunate that Sandra Csengerits was willing to be Co-opted as secretary, as well as carrying out her tasks as media and publicity liason officer.

Mrs Ruys later resigned and her job was taken by Mrs H. Petersen.

Mr. G. Bloomfield also stood down.

The formation of S.T.E.P. was the culmination of a very hectic day for all who were opposed to the bulldozing of the Canoon Rd. ridgetop for netball courts.

It was at 5.15 a.m. that a telephone call from Jan Ruys to our house alerted us to the arrival of a very large bulldozer at the end of Canoon Rd. It was not without some fear and trepidation that I unhesitatingly dispatched my wife to the scene of action to man the barricades with Jan. This prompt action on my part, once again saved the day (and the bush) for the time being, and gave us another short lived respite. It was only eight days earlier that a small band (three) consisting of Jan Catford, Chris Woodhouse and Margaret Booth had bravely confronted the Council bulldozers for the first time and gave the bush its first respite.

Much public lobbying by our very concerned and active

membership followed. Contacts were made with the Mayor, our local member (Mr. John Maddison), the Ministers for Planning & Environment and Local Govt., the Planning & Environment Commission, the State Ombudsman, the F.E.D.&F.A., large sections of the media and many and various conservation groups.

The results were disappointing. Our local aldermen (Mayor & Dep. Mayor) either shilly-shallied or were downright hostile. Both ministers and the various State Government Departments listened politely but declined to enter the fray until much too late.

The union's efforts were frustrated by the use of non-union labour.

It was only the intense media publicity, notably from ABC T.V. and Channel 10, 2SM, 2GB & 2UE, and the Daily Telegraph, and the active intervention of Mr. John Maddison which enabled us to begrudgingly gain a two week moratorium. Brian White on 2SM was among the first to announce (on air) that he was 'in step with S.T.E.P.'

The two weeks grace was used by us to attempt to provide Council with viable alternatives to destroying the bush. Through the unstinting work of Mr. Greg Bloomfield we were able to obtain the release of land at Westbrook tip site, which, however Council thought unsuitable.

In an attempt to convince the Council of the value of our bush, Miss Robyn Buchanan prepared a superb Environmental Impact Report, which has since been offered to, and accepted by, the local library.

Unfortunately the many logical arguments against the development proved fruitless. Despite 77% of local residents being against the proposal, a very ruthless and determined Council eventually successfully bulldozed the site in an operation that included the use of multiple bulldozers running continuously, a film crew to record protest activity, and armed guards (With guard dog.)