

CHRISTINE BURKE

Members of the committee, and all who knew her, were saddened by the recent death of Christine, and we extend our sincerest sympathy to John and his family.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT to the 16th Annual General Meeting, held on 13th October, 1994.

This is the first time I have had the privilege to report to you as President of STEP.

I am very much aware of the fact that it is a privilege, since I am aware of the marvellous work done by those who have held the position before me. Our immediate past President, John Burke, played an outstanding part in developing and consolidating STEP's reputation as a respected force in the community. I take this opportunity to thank him for his great contribution. STEP has not had a shortage of challenges this year and I now present a summary of our efforts during this year, and a brief look forward to the coming year.

ACTIVITIES

The activities this year followed the pattern established in previous years, with talks by Ku-ring-gai Council Fire Officer on Fire Control, and Dr. Carolyn Pettigrew on Waste Management and tonight's by Dr. Alex Ritchie about the Canowindra fossil discoveries, and bush walks led by John Martyn along a stretch of Middle Harbour, Robyn Buchanan in Autumn along the STEP track to view post-fire regeneration, and John Martyn again in Spring to see the wildflowers in Byles Creek.

We supported the efforts to create and establish the Broadway Heritage Park, Wahroonga, which was opened by the Mayor in March of this year.

Our efforts on Clean-up Australia Day were again coordinated by John Martyn for a very worthwhile result.

We also set up an information stand at St Ives Shopping Centre during its promotions week, and at the St Andrews Community Fair, the Kuringgai Wildflower Festival, the World Environment Day festivities at Lane Cove National Park, and at the Ku-ring-gai Community Fair most recently.

Last but by no means least, a tremendous amount of work has been put into the new publication, a **Field Guide to the Bushland of the Upper Lane Cove Valley**, by John Martyn and a number of other people. We had in the past perhaps underestimated the complexity, and therefore given optimistic estimates of its completion, but it's very close now.

NEWSLETTERS

Newsletters were not as well timed this year as usual, the June issue being delayed until August, and consequently a special notice was sent out in June in order to publicise coming events. Nevertheless five newsletters were published during the year.

COMMITTEE

The Committee has met regularly every month to deal with the business at hand. Every committee member has contributed ably to the effective running of the organisation, and I would like to thank them for their efforts. In particular I would like to thank Hal Cogger for his active contributions and expert counsel over the years. Extensive travel and pressure of other duties has made it impossible for him to continue as a member of the committee.

REPRESENTATION

STEP continues to be represented on the following permanent bodies: Ku-ring-gai Council's Bushland

Management Working Party, The Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Gardens Sub-committee, advising Council, The Union of Lane Cove Valley Conservationists, and has reapplied for representation on the Lane Cove Valley Total Catchment Management Committee.

In addition we have been involved in a committee set up by Ku-ring-gai Netball Association and local residents to look at the future of the Canoon Rd. netball courts, the Coalition against Lane Cove Valley Freeways, the committee concerned with the Lady Game Dr. access to the UTS campus, various meetings and conferences dealing with environmental matters, and STEP is a member of the NCC.

STEP has also made formal submissions to The House of Representatives Standing Committee for Long Term Strategies, the NSW DoP Metropolitan Strategy Taskforce, the NSW Cabinet Committee on Bushfire Management and Control, the RTA and its Consultants regarding Pacific Highway concerns at Abbotsleigh, and Wahroonga to Pymble.

ISSUES

The issues which have drawn our attention have been:

Dual Occupancy

We have continued to comment on and oppose dual occupancy, which has in our view undesirable effects on the built and natural environment, especially in cases of inappropriate location and proximity to bushland.

Animals

The impact of domestic pets on our natural fauna in the urban bushland.

Freeways and Other Traffic Issues

The pressures from many directions for so called improvements to traffic

conditions have been evident, and we have continued to draw attention to the negative effects of car dependence on our quality of life and natural surroundings, and advocated long term strategies to improve land use and transport integration.

Netball Courts

An opportunity has presented itself to make some progress on the question of the Canoon Rd. netball courts, and we have participated in the efforts to achieve at least some marked improvements for the local community, and at best the complete relocation of the netball courts.

Bushfire Control and Management

Apart from the formal submissions, STEP has contributed to the public debate to try to forestall unreasoned destruction of natural bush adjacent to residences.

FINANCES

STEP's financial position remains satisfactory, however our funds are not sufficient to finance the publication of the new Field Guide, and your committee will have to consider the best means of meeting that need.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

The challenges that lie ahead of us are still much the same as they were at this time last year.

The pressures for change, that is, for urban consolidation and road enhancement, are still as much in evidence and still threaten to wreak havoc to our built and our natural environment.

We have not yet persuaded our political servants that there is a genuine reason and need for different parts of this metropolis to have different residential characters, which should not be sacrificed on the altar of a uniform planning law. That neither our neighbourhood nor our city's overall characteristics of size, density and transport system should be determined purely by those who

gain from development.

We cannot claim to have made substantive headway against those threats, but we do take seriously the responsibility of working for long term outcomes, which preserve our natural heritage and which convey to the community a heightened appreciation of that heritage. Within that context we see our objectives to fall into three categories:

Forward-looking, to shape the debate where possible,

Reactive, to deal with the day to day issues,

but not forgetting to **provide enjoyment** of our environment for members and the community.

I thank you for your support in the past year and look forward to your support in meeting the challenges ahead, and your participation in our activities.

Bruno Krockenberger,
October 1994.

STEP COMMITTEE

The Committee duly elected at the Annual General Meeting for the next year was:

President -- B.Krockenberger
Secretary -- J.Meacham
Committee Members -- J.Burke,
J.Martyn, J.Schwarz, N.Lock,
S.Jones, H.Wortham, G.Suggate,
A.Skidmore, A.Jennings.

No nominations were received for Vice-President or for Treasurer, the Vice-President's position remaining vacant, however Treasury will be carried on by B.Krockenberger, as it was last year, until such time as a Treasurer can be recruited. The Constitution allows the Committee to make appointments to vacant positions, subject to confirmation at the next General Meeting, which in the normal course of events is the AGM. The Committee will need to address the vacancies during the year.

SUSTAINABILITY

The Easter Island Scenario.

Up to about AD 1600 Easter Island had a population of 7000, and a fascinating reconstruction of their fate has been produced by research over the last two decades.

The pollen record shows that Easter Island was covered with dense palm forests, giant sunflowers and boasted many indigenous birds and seabird breeding colonies. The forests provided timber for boatbuilding, in turn used for deep sea fishing. The wood was also used for fuel, and cleared areas were cultivated for crops.

Then they got "swollen" heads, perhaps too literally.

And this is where a lesson could be learnt by our present society.

The Easter Islanders began an era of mindless self-glorification, carving the huge stone heads from quarries near the centre of the island, and in transporting them to the coast used up all the palm trees for rollers and for fibre ropes to erect them.

By 1600 AD the forests were gone and the land eroded, ending

agriculture, there were no logs to build canoes for fishing, no shelter for indigenous birds which were hunted to extinction to replace lost food sources, and when the seabird colonies were also destroyed the people resorted to cannibalism.

By that time they had used up all available resources and didn't even have the means to escape from the island.

This scenario was painted by Professor Jarred Diamond, author of *The Rise and Fall of the Third Chimpanzee*, and quoted in the AESP Newsletter No 23, September 1994.

One lesson comes through very clearly: **We cannot go on using finite resources on Island Earth unsustainably without running into the same sort of dead end eventually.**

To find the political will to recognise and accept this lesson, and to act upon it, remains the big challenge for us.