



STEP Inc

Community-based Environmental Conservation since 1978

President's Report for the year to October 2008

STEP has had another strong year. The issues that we thought important are in the newsletters and they are all on our website. Here I shall give only a brief overview.

Committee

We continue to have an effective committee that meets monthly. The committee will be essentially the same after the AGM, as we have had no nominations other than from current committee members. Bruno Krockengberger has resigned after almost 20 years of service as newsletter editor for many years, treasurer for a time and as president from 1993 to 1997. More about Bruno in the next newsletter! Graham Jones, who came to us from TABS almost two years ago, has ensured that the merger with TABS went smoothly and has otherwise made a substantial contribution to the committee. He leaves us to take up other community work. I have now been resident for almost three years and it is time for a change. Barry Tomkinson will take over the job from when he returns to Sydney early next year. He will bring renewed energy and a fresh set of ideas to confront the environmental problems we face.

Accounts

Jim Wells continues doing a great job as our treasurer and our auditors have signed off the annual accounts. STEP is in a healthy financial position.

Secretarial Work

Helen Wortham continues as our secretary and handles a multitude of jobs around membership records, contact with members, event organisation and much more. In many ways she is the glue that holds the STEP organisation together so effectively.

Grants

This year we awarded \$2,250 grants to Turramurra Primary School and to Turramurra High to support environmental projects they are undertaking. It has become very difficult, however, to attract good applications for such projects and in future we shall widen our horizons beyond schools. We continue to support the Young Scientist awards.

Bushwalks and Talks

We organised five walks and four talks in 2008. These continue to be well attended and the programme will be continued throughout 2009.

Newsletters

We continue to publish five newsletters a year. These go out in the mail and onto our web site. We get some positive feedback but otherwise can only trust that they are read and appreciated. In addition to our members the newsletters go to a substantial free list of councillors, politicians, other groups and government departments.

Membership

We continue to have over 400 members and there is a pretty constant turnover. The offer of discounts for three year memberships has been taken up by many members and greatly eases our administrative work.

Issues

The year's issues are in the newsletters. While we report on events and some administrative matters we see the newsletters as our means of keeping a little ahead of the conventional wisdom. We don't want to rehash what you can read in the newspapers. Thus we have continued to rail against the disgraceful lack of real planning for Sydney and for Australia, against the concept that a finite earth can allow our economy to grow infinitely, and against the pathetic population policies of our political parties and environmental groups. We also write on technical issues including the difficulties in defining vegetation communities, the mismanagement of water borne nutrient problems in bushland and the interaction of weeds and climate change. We also take a close interest in projects such as the UTS Campus at Lindfield and the Adventist site at Wahroonga that threaten our environment and that arise out of bad planning laws.

Blue Gum High Forest

One piece of good news was the successful end to the campaign to acquire the last block of land containing BGHF at Gordon. Congratulations to STEP members Nancy Pallin, Neroli Lock and the others who worked so hard on that campaign. STEP contributed \$5,000.

Publications

We regard publishing as being very important and are very lucky to have John Martyn on our committee who works tirelessly on maps and books. *Sydney's Natural Harbour* has sold well and our walking maps of Middle Harbour and Lane Cove bushland also continue to sell well. While our primary aim is to engender appreciation of the bushland we have also been able to reinforce our finances from these endeavours. John is now completely revising the *Field Guide to the Bushland of the Upper Lane Cove Valley*. This is another huge undertaking.

The Year Ahead

The current global financial mess is already being used as an excuse for countries such as Italy, and for many firms here and overseas to attempt to avoid their environmental responsibilities. The big challenge will be to stiffen the spines of our lawmakers so that they address the environmental crises as well as the financial ones. In the end, the environmental crisis will be far more serious for our economy than the current recession and we run the risk of passing the point of no return.

Finally

I can't think of a better conclusion than I used here last year! So, thanks again to our loyal members. There is strength in numbers and those who support us by being members are essential to the viability of STEP. We look forward to continuing to work for a better world in the year ahead.

John Burke
October 2008