



## Development Fever: 1,400 Units at the San

STEP has always argued that we suffer from the tyranny of small decisions in the loss of bushland in Sydney. A scout hall here and a road widening there all seem harmless in isolation but at a loss of a few hectares a year it will all be lost or hopelessly fragmented in another 200 years.

Losing a lot of bushland in one go is, however, a different matter. Local papers have reported that the Adventist Conference wishes to build 1,400 dwellings on 60 hectares of its land at Wahroonga along with an expanded school, a nursing college, a leisure centre, a sports field and retail and commercial areas. In order to do this the Church has attempted to bypass Ku-ring-gai Council by going direct to the government to have the site classed as of 'state significance' under Part 3A of the Act (see page 3).

The Church's partner in this is the Johnson Property Group – the outfit that is causing so much heartache at Pitt Town. (See Elizabeth Farrelly's 15 Nov 2006 article at [www.smh.com.au/news/opinion/how-do-you-cook-kellyville-max/2006/11/14/1163266547678.html](http://www.smh.com.au/news/opinion/how-do-you-cook-kellyville-max/2006/11/14/1163266547678.html) (or ask us for a paper copy).

Bushland on the site is on both sides of Fox Valley Road. The eastern side has previously been protected by the now abandoned freeway corridor and contains a Wianamatta Shale plant community. The western side contains the headwaters of the Lane Cove River and some wonderful bushland.

(continued on page 3)

## Murray Hogarth Talk

Tuesday 27 March, 8 pm,  
St Andrews Hall, Vernon Street,  
South Turramurra



Murray will talk on the hottest of hot topics, climate change, covering the essential science, the physical impacts, media, community and government responses and

managing the changes through carbon and emissions trading.

Murray was environmental editor for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, and a reporter for the ABC's *Four Corners*. He joined Ecos Corporation in 1999, a company that advises and assists firms to achieve sustainability with improved productivity through sound environmental practices. Murray also works with Easy Being Green, a purpose-driven Australian company, part-owned by Ecos, helping people to fight climate change in their everyday lives. Murray is a regular speaker and commentator on sustainability issues. He is a member of the advisory panel for the Total Environment Centre's Green Capital Program, and is a long-standing board member of the Environmental Defenders Office of NSW. He is the author of *The 3rd Degree: Frontline in Australia's Climate War*, to be published in April.

This talk will complement that given last year by Dr Lesley Hughes from Macquarie University who dealt with the science of climate change.

Don't miss it!

## Clean Up Australia Day

Sunday 4 March is Clean Up Australia Day. Our new members from TABS will be working as usual at Thornleigh Oval, Handley Avenue between 8.30 am and 1 pm. Good shoes, hat and sunscreen needed and volunteers need to register at the oval first.

Enquiries: Graham Jones, 9484 4220.

## Environmental Law Workshop

The law firm, Environmental Defender's Office (EDO) is holding a workshop at Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden on Saturday 14 April. This is a great opportunity to understand the law governing planning and development, threatened species and pollution as well as one's legal options. See the flyer enclosed.

## Welcome TABS Members

As previously reported the Thornleigh area environmental group, TABS, has joined with STEP. TABS was established in 1987 out of concern about threats to, and degradation of, the bushland around Thornleigh.

The move is complete and both Graham Jones and Barry Tomkinson have joined the STEP committee. There are economies of scale, even for environmental groups, and the additional members and the energy and ideas from Barry and Graham can only make us stronger.

We welcome all the TABS members who have had their membership transferred. We trust that you will stay with us and that you will let us know of any concerns that you have.

Funding is reserved for a signage project planned for Thornleigh bushland. There is no reason that the established Thornleigh regeneration and other activities should not continue, the more the better!

### In this issue

Development Fever at the San	1
Murray Hogarth Talk	1
Clean Up Australia Day	1
Environmental Law Workshop	1
Welcome TABS Members	1
Walks Programme	2
Plastic Bag Survey	2
EDO Public Seminar	3
Population – A Conspiracy of Silence?	3
In Case You Missed It	4
Email Addresses	4
Another Book from STEP	4
The Next Frontier	4

Diary Dates: Talk 27 March,  
Walks 18 March and 1 April.



## STEP Inc

Community-based Environmental Conservation since 1978

PO Box 697, Turramurra, NSW 2074

[www.step.org.au](http://www.step.org.au)

[secretary@step.org.au](mailto:secretary@step.org.au)

ABN 55 851 3472 043

## Population – A Conspiracy of Silence?

So how should we view this proposal? The San courts the community, including councillors, with its squeaky-clean hospital image and the reputedly clean Adventist lifestyle. There is a real goody-goody aspect to it, the corollary of which is that they are beyond reproach and it's therefore unfair to criticise. And who knows when one needs to be admitted?

On the other hand the Adventist Conference has not, to our knowledge, ever expressed the slightest interest in, or concern about, the natural environment. There seems to be a blind spot there that reflects the old Judeo-Christian ethic of taming the wilderness and counting the well-being of the natural world as nought. It would be wonderful to be proved wrong on that score!

Over-development and the removal of bushland for building and for fire buffers will reduce wildlife corridors in the Lane Cove Valley and greatly add to the pollution load and degradation of the Lane Cove River. The loss of flora and fauna would be very significant. There are of course other issues such as the traffic implications and population densities in the area.

While it is early days yet it seems clear that the Church will push ahead with development and, undeniably, that is their right. Private land is not, however, free of planning restraint and the bushland on the site will not necessarily be available for destruction. The Conference should be asked to have a survey of the bushland on the site carried out by a professional acceptable to it, Council and STEP. Only then can we assess with certainty the extent and value of the bushland. Resolution should come through the bushland being gifted to the community as the quid pro quo for permission to develop the remainder.

### EDO Public Seminar – Part 3A and the Public Interest – 7 March

Part 3A is the widely criticised Act that allows the Minister to take larger projects out of the hands of councils. Hear speakers on both sides at a free seminar chaired by Jeff Smith, CEO of the Environmental Defender's Office. Wednesday 7 March, 6 to 8 pm at DLA Phillips Fox in the city. Enquiries: Tisha, 9262 6989, <tisha.dejmanee@edo.org.au>.

In his great book, *Capitalism, As if the World Matters* (2005, Earthscan), Jonathon Porritt says 'One area where environmentalists and the progressive left are 'as one' is in their out-and-out refusal even to discuss the importance of population ... it's hard to explain this conspiracy of silence.' While we carry on about the evils of globalisation and impending peak oil we never stop to ask how we are going to feed our current 6 billion population, let alone the 9 billion it will soon be, when the oil necessary for food production is no longer available at reasonable cost. Porritt tells us that the continuing dramatic growth in the US population is 'nowhere to be seen on the mainstream environmental agenda in the US today'.

Over the last 25 years, while this newsletter did address the issue from time to time, we felt restrained by the absurd political correctness dictum that if you opposed population growth you were a racist – the implication being that you opposed immigration on racial grounds. In an interview on *Radio National* on 17 April 2006, Mark O'Connor, author of *This Tired Brown Land* confirmed that that was exactly the case with the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF).

### The Conspirators are Us

When we look at the ACF website we see that population has been added to the list of issues – right down the bottom. Their Policy Statement No 51, evidently developed in 2003, lacks teeth. In the April 2005 *Habitat* magazine the ACF had an article headed *Population? No Problem* that contained the pathetic advice that if we all reduced our consumption then population growth was quite OK. The ACF claims not to have the resources to campaign on population. They have their priorities back-to-front!

The Nature Conservation Council has a population policy adopted in 1986 that says some appropriate things in a gentle way but you will have to listen hard to hear them campaigning. The term 'population' on the Greenpeace site seems to mostly concern whales. The Greens are revising their policies but they did have a policy that we accessed in 2006. This is another lukewarm statement akin to saying that one ought love one's mother. When was the last time you heard Bob Brown campaigning to stop the disaster that 9 billion people promises as fervently as to save the beetles and birds of Wielangta?

### The Malthusian Outlook

We should be reminded again just why this is important. It took the world until 1930 to reach 2 billion, another 44 years (1974) to reach 4 billion and it has now reached 6.6 billion on its way by 2025 to 8 billion and on to a current projected 9 billion by 2040.

There are billions who now aspire to, and are reaching out for, our level of consumption. In that scenario lie the seeds of conflict on a world scale as 9 billion people fight over a declining resource base. Then, as the Malthusian vision becomes reality, we will realise that we should have paid some attention to the people as well as to the beetles.

### So What's to be Done?

So what can Australia, with its relatively tiny population and economy, do? It can become an international activist. It can set an example for the world by campaigning for all those things that we already know cause populations to decline: family planning, raising education standards and confronting those churches, the American neo-conservatives and others that are still working to increase world populations.

**What can our environment groups do? They can recognise that an over-populated, under-fed and under-resourced world is the greatest foreseeable threat to Australia's and the world's environment and well-being.**

What can our environment groups do? They can recognise that an over-populated, under-fed and under-resourced world is the greatest foreseeable threat to Australia's and the world's environment and well-being. They can shed their reluctance and campaign against the major political parties, the well-intentioned bleeding hearts and the Business Council of Australia and so raise national consciousness. They can realise that all environmental problems from climate change to biodiversity will be improved more by halving the world's population than by any other action that they might take.

### Weeds or People?

So if we value Sydney's bushland and the natural world beyond we may well be better occupied campaigning for population reduction than in pulling up weeds. Or perhaps we can do both?

## In Case You Missed It

The 2006 NSW State of the Environment report is available at <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/soe/soe2006/> and the Australian report <http://www.environment.gov.au/soe/2006>.

The *NPA Journal* (Vol 51, No 1, Feb–Mar 2007) reports that the NSW opposition has signed an agreement with the horse-riding lobby to remove the ban on horse riding in nature reserves and wilderness areas and to entrench feral horses in national parks such as Kosciuszko and Guy Fawkes River. What next – a conservation order on feral cats and pigs?

New Zealand's environmentally important Campbell Island was until recently 'one of the most rat infested wilderness areas on earth'. The rats have been eradicated and wildlife is recovering. Perhaps Australia's Macquarie Island could be similarly treated. (*ECOS* 134, Dec–Jan 2007)

Luna Publishing has launched a new magazine called 'G' dedicated to a green lifestyle. Six issues a year cost \$30 ([www.gmagazine.com.au](http://www.gmagazine.com.au)).

Worldwide, some 20% of electricity use is for lighting. The next generation of light bulbs, according to *The Economist* (23 September 2006), will be light emitting diodes (LEDs) with efficiencies many times existing lighting. Another five years or so of development is thought to be needed before we are putting them into our light fittings despite the fact that some \$5 billion worth are now sold annually for specialist applications.

The Australian paper industry has, from 1990 to 2005, reduced its energy consumption per tonne of paper produced by 20%, its greenhouse emissions by 20%, its water use by 60% and the biological oxygen demand of its waste water by 80%. (*ECOS* 132, Aug–Sep 2006). In addition Australia recycled 75.4% of all newsprint consumed in 2005.

## Email Addresses

We can communicate with you more easily and economically if we have your email address. So if you are happy with that and we don't have it already please send yours to [secretary@step.org.au](mailto:secretary@step.org.au). Of course we won't bombard you with emails and won't pass your address on to anyone else!

## Another Book From STEP

STEP has a history of publishing stretching back nearly 30 years. Our resident author, Dr John Martyn, has ready for publishing a 200 page book entitled *Sydney's Natural World*. This is a photographic essay of the natural areas around Sydney which is supported by interpretive text.

The purpose of this book is to provide an inspirational resource for people who already are enraptured by our landscapes and to provide an insight to what is out there for others. The more our natural world is appreciated the less pressure there will be to destroy it.

This will be a beautiful book that we hope thousands will want to own and to give as gifts and will be available later this year.

## The Next Frontier

It's taking some adjustment to get used to the pace of things. There is no point in us carrying on here about the dangers of climate change and the need for emission control. *The Sydney Morning Herald* is doing a far better job at describing the problems and canvassing the solutions. Better late than never!

There are, however, some messages still to be absorbed and we shall try and keep ahead of the game by looking at them rather than going over old ground. The environmental movement has had many successes but also many failures. We have been known far too often for what we are against rather than what we are for.

We have been too timid to address population issues head-on, we have been too busy seeing business and our economic system as the root of all evil to appreciate that within it lies the way to environmental salvation, we have rabbitied on about sustainability without really looking at what real sustainability implies.

Of course there have been visionaries who have taken on the difficult issues but, all too often, they have been marginalised by the huge weight of sceptics funded by vested interests.

We shall try to address these issues and take them to the wider environmental community. The population article in this issue is a case in point. There is not a lot of time left to get it right if the human race is to retain its well-being.

Doubtless you won't always agree but we shall be happy if we stimulate some thought.

**If '06' is printed under your address you are un-financial – please could we have your payment!**



STEP Matters  
If undeliverable return to:  
STEP Inc  
PO Box 697  
Turrumurra, NSW 2074

PRINT  
POST  
PP 246764/00011

POSTAGE  
PAID  
AUSTRALIA



## 2007 Walks

The 2007 walks programme continues last year's theme of exploring new areas in the Sydney Basin having diverse landforms and a variety of vegetation communities. Tea and bikkies will be provided wherever possible after each walk.

For all walks wear good walking shoes and a hat, bring binoculars and telephoto lenses/binoculars, sunscreen and water.

---

### Sunday 18 March, 1.45 for 2 pm Warriewood Wetlands and Irawong Reserve

**Features:** freshwater wetlands, swamp forest and rare swamp mahogany forest, bird life.

**Location:** Garden St, Warriewood/N. Narrabeen, SW section of UBD 138.

**Meet:** in park area adjacent to Katoa Close off Garden Street at North Narrabeen.

**Parking:** in Katoa Close car park or along Garden Street.

**Grade:** easy; boardwalks and easy bush tracks.

**Duration:** about 2 hours.

**Contact:** Neroli Lock, 9489 5794, <harnerlock@ozemail.com.au>.

---

### Sunday 1 April, 10 am Watsons Bay and South Head followed by lunch in the park (Doyles fish and chips is pretty good or bring your own lunch)

**Features:** Fabulous harbour views, gun emplacements, Hornby Lighthouse and keeper's cottage.

**Location:** Watsons Bay.

**Cost:** free.

**Meet:** At Circular Quay, Watsons Bay Wharf, ready for the 10:15 am ferry to Watsons Bay.

**Parking:** None! I expect everyone will come by train.

**Grade:** Fairly easy – permanent pathway with some steps.

**Duration:** about 2 hours for the walk.

**Contact:** Graham Jones, 9484 4220, mobile on the day 0414 871 809 <jonesgra@netspace.net.au>.

---

### Sunday 20 May, 1.15 for 1.30 pm Mitchell Park, Cattai National Park

**Features:** Cattai Creek, gallery rainforest, forest red gums, ironbarks, freshwater swamp.

**Location:** 12 km NE of Windsor, via Pitt Town, off Cattai Road, UBD 68-9. Alternative route via Old Northern Road, then Kenthurst or Cattai Road.

**Cost:** \$7 park entry fee unless you have an annual pass.

## 2007 Walks (continued)

**Meet:** grassy area near Cattai Creek, under tall trees, left fork (downhill) at end of access road.

**Parking:** ample parking.

**Grade:** moderate; meandering forest track, moderate hill climb, may be wet underfoot.

**Duration:** about 3 hours.

**Suggestion:** it's a longish drive so consider making a day of it. In the morning visit Scheyville National Park (Cumberland Plain Woodland), Longneck Lagoon (bird life) or the main Cattai National Park next to the Hawkesbury River nearby (grey kangaroos, historic farmhouse).

**Contact:** John Martyn, 9449 7962, 0402 284 366, <johnmartyn@optusnet.com.au>.

---

### June–July

A walk is planned for this period. Look for details in future newsletters and on the STEP website.

---

### Sunday 5 August, 10.45 for 11 am Warrah Trig and Patonga

**Features:** spectacular views, birds and abundant wildflowers.

**Location:** Van Dahls trackhead, Brisbane Waters National Park. Travel via F3 freeway to the Gosford turnoff and follow signs to Woy Woy. Cross the railway line and turn right at the next roundabout into Ocean Beach Road. After about 3 km, turn right at the Umina roundabout. Travel 5.5 km on the road to Patonga.

**Meet:** parking area for Van Dahls Track, on the western side of Patonga Drive.

**Parking:** car park to Van Dahls Track on the western side of Patonga Drive. (If you pass the sign indicating Warrah Trig you have gone too far.)

**Grade:** easy to moderate.

**Duration:** about 5 to 6 hours. Bring lunch, which will be at the cars at Patonga. (A fish and chip shop is located at Patonga, but it is popular and often there is a long wait.) After lunch we will walk in the Warrah Trig area.

**Contact:** Bill Jones, 9498 6052, <billojns@accsoft.com.au>.

---

### Sunday 2 September, 10.45 for 11 am West Head Road, geology, landforms and vegetation (bring a picnic)

**Features:** old plateau surface, tessellated pavement, Aboriginal engravings, heathland, hanging swamps, waterfalls, drowned inlets, vegetation over igneous rocks and laterite, spectacular views.

## 2007 Walks (continued)

**Location:** West Head Road via McCarrs Creek Road, Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park.

**Cost:** \$11 park entry fee unless you have an annual pass.

**Meet:** Elvina Trail car park, 1.3 km on right after right turn at Liberator General San Martin Drive.

**Parking:** ample parking.

**Grade:** mostly easy to moderate short walks; some rough eroded track sections.

**Duration:** about 5 to 6 hours.

**Contact:** John Martyn, 9449 7962, 0402 284 366, <johnmartyn@optusnet.com.au>.

---

### Sunday 14 October, 1.45 for 2 pm Darling Mills Creek and Bidjigal Reserve, West Pennant Hills

**Features:** Attractive mixed tall forest and creekside vegetation, shady throughout.

**Location:** Bidjigal (Excelsior) Reserve, Darling Mills catchment, West Pennant Hills.

**Meet:** trackhead at end of Blacks Road, West Pennant Hills, UBD 171.

**Parking:** kerbside Blacks Road; wide road but avoid parking in turning circle due to buses.

**Grade:** moderate, one short steep climb at end. Track condition good, but potentially slippery creek crossings. Heavy rain will cancel!

**Duration:** about 3 hours.

**Contact:** John Martyn, 9449 7962, 0402 284 366, <johnmartyn@optusnet.com.au>.

---

## Plastic Bag Survey

The Total Environment Centre is conducting a plastic bag survey. Get the questions from the two addresses below before you go shopping so you will know what to look out for and then complete the survey on-line:  
<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=334752665045>  
<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=987282717797>

---

### STEP Committee

John Burke  
Tim Gastineau-Hills  
Graham Jones  
Bruno Krockenberger  
Michelle Leishman  
Andrew Little  
Neroli Lock  
John Martyn  
Barry Tomkinson  
Jim Wells  
Helen Wortham  
Newsletter editor – John Burke