



# STEP Matters

Number 141, September 2007

## Another Bumper Issue!

Extending the newsletter to eight pages makes it that much more onerous to compile but it's hard to fit what we think needs to be said into four pages and so here you have another bumper issue to plough through!

In this issue we have been able to announce the release of John Martyn's book, *Sydney's Natural World*. John's commitment to the environment and to STEP is amazing. Thousands of his hours went into the creation of this wonderful publication and because this has cost STEP nothing we are able to offer you the book at a price that belies the effort that went into it.

We have the AGM coming up and there are some proposed changes to the constitution set out on page 2. We look forward to seeing you there. We are of course concerned with urban bushland and hence Michelle's report on a weeds seminar and our look at Ku-ring-gai's bushland management committee will be followed next newsletter by an article on weeds and climate change.

Many of us are probably bemused by the political parties tip-toeing around the subject of climate change, the paper mill and other environmental issues. No doubt they want to offend the fewest people and leave as many options open as possible. That's politics, but I think we expected a bit more of Peter Garrett – it will be interesting to see how he performs if his party forms government. There is no excuse, however, for environmental groups to squib the issues and so we have reproduced an article concerning the behaviour of the ACF. You be the judge.

We must keep returning to the Adventist Hospital and UTS Lindfield proposals because they both threaten large areas of very valuable bushland and both illustrate the effect of the community being frozen out of the decision making process. They both feature developer ethos that seems to count the environment for nought. Well known QC, Geoffrey Robertson, has recently said that Australia has sunk to 35<sup>th</sup> in its press freedom behind Ghana and Bolivia. Recent secondary boycott legislation would restrict one's right to campaign against child slavery if it affected a business!<sup>1</sup> The same politicians who have caused that are eroding our freedom to have a say in our own communities. It seems that traditional rights and freedoms are on the wane in Australia.

Many of you love your cats and we don't mean to offend you in our article on bibs. It is surprising, however, how many otherwise rational people reckon that their cat doesn't hunt – tell that to the 100 million native animals killed each year!

There isn't a lot about the Blue Gum High Forest in this issue but the campaigners there continue on with seemingly unlimited supplies of energy. Go to [www.step.org.au/bgfh.html](http://www.step.org.au/bgfh.html) to see what is happening.

And let us know what concerns you environmentally and what issues you would like to see us address.

The Sydney Morning Herald, August 29 2007. *Our freedoms eroded:QC*

## Alan Fairley - Renowned Author and Naturalist Talks to STEP Rare and endangered plants of the Sydney Basin Tuesday October 23<sup>rd</sup> at 8pm

Immediately following our AGM Alan Fairley will present a talk entitled **Rare and Endangered Plants of the Sydney Basin**

Alan is the author or co-author of many books on native plants and bushwalking including *Native Plants of the Sydney District*, *Discovering Royal National Park on Foot*, *Sydney's Best Bushland Walks*, *Discovering Illawarra's Bushland on Foot* and *West Sydney Wild: Exploring Nature in Sydney's Western Suburbs*.

He grew up on the margins of Ku-ring-gai Chase, and an interest in bushwalking and writing combined with a curiosity about natural systems led to his first book in 1972. His more than 25 books include children's books, guides to national parks, bushwalking and natural history topics.

The AGM will start at 7.45 sharp and, in accordance with tradition, should be over by 8pm.

## Next STEP Walk Sunday 14 October . A short walk to Darling Mills Creek and Bidjigal Reserve 1.45pm

Meet at the trackhead at the end of Blacks Rd at West Pennant Hills. For information John Martyn 9449 79762

## STEP Inc

Community-based Environmental Conservation since 1978  
PO Box 697, Turramurra, NSW 2074

## STEP AGM

Notice is given that the annual general meeting will be held at St Andrews Hall, Vernon Street Turramurra on Tuesday October 23<sup>rd</sup> at 7.45 pm. Business to be transacted includes the confirmation of minutes, receipt of the president's report, election of office bearers and committee, receipt and consideration of the financial statements of STEP Inc and of the STEP Environmental Protection Fund. In addition the following special resolutions to amend the constitution will be considered.

- 1 That clause 1(a) be amended as follows: *To preserve all natural bushland within ~~the Municipality of Ku-ring-gai~~ and its environs from alienation or degradation.* The change is the deletion of the struck through words.
- 2 That clause 1(b) be amended as follows: *To ensure proper management of this bushland in accordance with current conservation and rehabilitation best practice, principles of Australian natural bushland management set out in the 'Plan of Management for South Turramurra Bushland' and 'Ku-ring-gai Council's SEPP 19 Plan of Management'.* The struck through words are to be deleted and the underlined word added.
- 3 That clause 1(d) be amended as follows: *To be concerned with environmental issues affecting within the Municipality of Ku-ring-gai and its environs.* The struck through words are to be deleted and the underlined words added.
- 4 That the present Clause 7(j) be deleted and replaced with a new clause 7(j) which draws on the model rules set out in the Association Incorporation Regulation 1999 of the Associations Incorporation Act 1984. Amendments to the model rules are indicated by striking through. The old and new clauses 7(j) are presented in turn below:
  - 7(j) *Nominations of candidates for election as office bearers or other Committee members may be made prior to or at the Annual General Meeting or in such ways as may be determined by the Association at a general meeting.*
  - 7(j) (1) *Nominations of candidates for election as office-bearers of the association or as ordinary members of the committee:*
    - (a) *must be made in writing, signed by 2 members of the association and accompanied by the written consent of the candidate (which may be endorsed on the form of the nomination), and*
    - (b) *must be delivered to the secretary of the association at least 7 days before the date fixed for the holding of the annual general meeting at which the election is to take place.*
  - (2) *If insufficient nominations are received to fill all vacancies on the committee, the candidates nominated are taken to be elected ~~and further nominations are to be received at the annual general meeting.~~*
  - (3) *~~If insufficient further nominations are received,~~ Any vacant positions remaining on the committee are taken to be casual vacancies.*
  - (4) *If the number of nominations received is equal to the number of vacancies to be filled, the persons nominated are taken to be elected.*
  - (5) *If the number of nominations received exceeds the number of vacancies to be filled, a ballot is to be held.*
  - (6) *The ballot for the election of office-bearers and ordinary members of the committee is to be conducted at the annual general meeting in such usual and proper manner as the committee may direct.*

### Reasons for the proposed changes

Changes 1, 2 and 3 above are to update the constitution. Ku-ring-gai is no longer a municipality and the science of bushland management has moved on since the original words were written. Change 4 is to revert closer to the model rules for elections which your committee believes are more appropriate and workable than the existing very brief rule. If you have any queries about any of these changes feel free to call John Burke after 12 October at 0294873680 or 0418277030 or email at [johnsburke@mac.com](mailto:johnsburke@mac.com). The present constitution can be seen at [www.step.org.au](http://www.step.org.au) .

## NSW Weeds Society Environmental Weeds Seminar

### STEP committee member Dr Michelle Leishman from the Department of Biological Sciences at Macquarie University went to a seminar on weeds – here is her report on proceedings

In July the NSW Weeds Society hosted a seminar day on environmental weeds at Ryde School of TAFE. They invited a range of speakers including scientists from universities, the Department of Environment & Climate Change and the Department of Primary Industries, and practitioners from local councils, noxious weed authorities, consulting companies and Greening Australia. I was invited to speak on training opportunities at tertiary level on environmental weeds. STEP members Noela Jones & Janet Fairlie-Cunningham also attended.

The keynote speakers were Rachel McFadyen [CEO Co-operative Research Centre (CRC) for Weed Management Systems] and Tim Low (author *Feral Future*). Rachel McFadyen outlined the good and bad news for national weed research: the good news was the recent approval of the revised federal Weed Strategy

([www.weeds.org.au](http://www.weeds.org.au)), the establishment of a national invasive species policy, and the increasing availability of data identifying the costs of weeds; while the bad news was the demise of the CRC for Weed Management Systems which provides a co-ordinated voice on weed policy & research, and the lack of continuing funding for weeds research. Tim Low gave his usual passionate speech about weeds and climate change which raised lots of important issues (see the next Newsletter for an article on weeds and climate change!).

Other interesting speakers talked about how weeds are managed under the NSW Noxious Weeds Act, the Threatened Species Conservation Act and other natural resource legislation, control & management of bitou bush, potential reasons for weed expansion in western Sydney, and aquatic weeds.

I thought that Tim Beshara's talk (Project Manager, Greening Australia) was particularly interesting. Tim spoke about how land use in western Sydney had changed dramatically due to urban expansion. He argued that much private property is simply in a 'limbo phase' waiting for development or is managed by a large variety of landholders (eg 11 state agencies, multiple councils & two federal agencies own tracts of land in western Sydney) who do not intensively manage the land. This means that weed control is no longer being undertaken and we are now seeing the rapid expansion of weeds such as African Olive.

If anyone would like more information, I have the published abstracts. Contact [secretary@step.com.au](mailto:secretary@step.com.au). The NSW Weeds Society can be found at [www.nswweedsoc.org.au](http://www.nswweedsoc.org.au)

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## Sydney's Natural World – Another Publishing Milestone for STEP

Conscientious readers will know that STEP committee member Dr John Martyn has been immersed in the writing of a new book for publication by STEP. We have now taken delivery and are overwhelmed by the quality of the production and the effectiveness of the book!

The first STEP member who saw it bought 10 copies and reckons he will need more!

There are no other books that deal with the natural assets of the Sydney region as well or as completely.

Either with this newsletter or separately you will receive a brochure describing the book from which you can order by mail. You will also be able to see information on the book and order from [www.step.org.au](http://www.step.org.au)

You will also receive an invitation to the launch which is scheduled for 2pm on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> November.

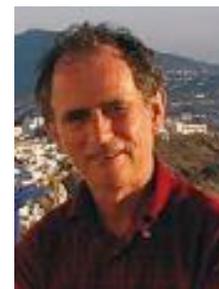
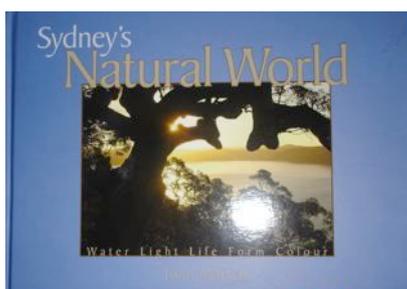
The book will be available at the AGM on October 23<sup>rd</sup> at the price of \$40 and of course again at the launch and at future STEP functions. For those who order by mail the price will be \$50 for members, including packaging and postage in Australia. The non-member price after the launch will be \$50 or \$60 if mailed.

We believe that this will become the iconic benchmark by which Sydney's bushland will be assessed in the years ahead. If some of the destroyers get their way the only place where some of these sites will

remain will be in the pages of Sydney's Natural World.

This book will help us demonstrate just why we are conservationists when it comes to urban bushland.

Sydney's Natural World makes a wonderful gift for anyone interested in Sydney or in urban bushland or for anyone from overseas. It is a great way of showing people just what we have in the Sydney area apart from the Opera House and other built attractions.



The book and the author

## The ACF and Labor – to What End?

STEP is of course apolitical but has no trouble agreeing or disagreeing with anyone on matters environmental. The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) is looking tired. It has an ineffective 37 member council and a staff that writes very long letters to supporters. This article from Crikey on 13/8/07 is interesting. ACF members might think about taking an interest and making their views known to the ACF management and council.

### **Why should green groups take the leap of faith for Rudd?**

*David Spratt, a campaigner with CarbonEquity, writes:*

*Australia's peak green bodies are in a hot spot. Labor's climate policy is vague and lacking urgency, short-term emissions and renewable energy targets. And it is committed to new coal mines and increasing coal exports. Anxious for a Labor victory, what does a good green do? The Australian Conservation Foundation is welding itself onto Labor, and whispering quietly on Labor's climate policy shortcomings. There is a revolving door between the ACF and Labor's front-bench offices, and the ACF conspicuously failed to sign off on the peak green election manifesto "[Turning Down the Heat](#)", or the peak green web campaign "thebigswitch", instead provocatively launching a counter-site.*

*The ACF's [whoearthcares.com](#) is celebrity-driven greenwash, lacking climate change information or policy analysis. In a double- or triple-counting sleight of hand (depending on whether your hot water is gas or electric), Cate Blanchett shows you how to "save" CO2 emissions by buying greenpower, then "save" more emissions by installing solar hot water, then "save" more emissions by using cold water laundry washing. It is ill-informed and misleading, a triumph of ACF's corporate branding team over its increasingly angry and marginalised climate campaigners.*

*ACF is positioning itself to be close to Rudd in power, but is the approach more than hope and trust that Labor will repay their charity by doing the right thing? Such a strategy (opposed by Greenpeace which wanted to campaign hard on coal) was disastrous in the recent NSW state contest, where a pre-election "commitment" to peak greens by the outgoing environment minister to review emissions targets after the election has simply been dumped by the new minister, who claims not to have heard of it.*

*The election focus for most other peak green groups is around [thebigswitch.org.au](#). The hotch-potch of demands lacks a unifying focus, and candidates should not have too much trouble dancing around it.*

*While Labor is rated 1.75 out of 5 on the website's score card, it would not be hard for a Labor backbencher to score a solid pass without having to seriously cross the party leader's position.*

*And any canny politician can rate more than 30 out of a possible 50 while being opposed to any legislated minimum emission reductions by 2020, being opposed to any legislated renewable energy target by 2020, supporting new coal-fired power stations and opposing the phasing out of the coal industry. It's an odd message for peak greens to be sending.*

## Ku-ring-gai's Bushland Committee

Some 25 years ago, effective lobbying from STEP and KUBES (which later amalgamated with us), led to the formation of the Bushland Management Working Party (BMWP). This was at the start of modern bushland management in Australia but the mainstream didn't really understand. The Bradley Method was a key buzz word and the effect of nutrients was a new concept. The then manager of the Parks Department saw us, with good reason, as a threat. The councillors on the committee soon lost interest but the BMWP soldiered on. We were deprived of support except a room to meet and some staff attendance. We chaired the meetings, bought the minute books and took, typed and distributed the minutes.

In October 1984 the BMWP produced, and had adopted by Council, the *Plan of Management for Bushland Areas* which was written by the members with some input from interested staff. This may have been the first such plan in Australia. But bushland management's time had come. The National Trust was training regenerators, a TAFE course emerged and then courses in environmental management at Macquarie University. Educated parks managers who were trained in bushland management started arriving and resenting the input from 'amateurs'.

And so it was that the BMWP changed in name and nature over the years. The repetitious management upheavals at Council rolled along and Council reclaimed the management of the committee and changed its nature by importing experts at the expense of activists.

The current committee is called the Bushland Catchments and Natural Areas Reference Group. Its charter is *to ensure that community and stakeholder input is considered in Council's wider participation, input and consultation process*. Michelle Leishman & John Martyn as alternate have just taken over from Neroli Lock as STEP's representative. There are representatives (including STEP members Margaret Booth & Nancy Pallin) from other community groups, the Rural Fire Service, NPWS, staff (Steven Head & Peter Davies) and councillors Anita Andrew, Elaine Malicki and Maureen Shelley.

The last meeting discussed current issues including the UTS and Adventist developments, the Rosedale Rd D.A. and mapping of Blue Gum High Forest. There was also the mini-disaster at Mona Street Wahroonga where, as reported in the Sydney Morning Herald on August 20, a council crew undertaking flood mitigation bulldozed important bushland. Now the interaction between council departments working in bushland has been long discussed. That relevant bushland managers should be consulted before work is undertaken has long been policy and we assume it still is. Similarly it is policy that field works are supervised by staff who understand the basics of bushland management and who therefore know when to check before sending in the bulldozers.

It is disappointing therefore that, despite all the management consultants and sophisticated management reviews and upheavals over the past 25 years, such a basic mistake could occur. Nothing should happen in reserves unless the appropriate council manager has signed off on what is proposed. Council staff assured the BCNAR group that policies and procedures have now been changed so that such an incident won't happen again. We live in hope!

## The Adventist Hospital Proposal

### Planning for traffic misery

It seems that there has been no progress on the proposal to develop the San site at Wahroonga but we do know that Council is now more concerned that we are heading towards the project being called in by Frank Sartor under Part 3A of the Act. The San wants this so that it can escape scrutiny by the community. But such an outcome at this stage would be a travesty. Let us explain why.

In a letter to the San's developer, the Johnson Property Group, on 21 March 2007 Sam Haddad, Director General of the Department of Planning (DoP) said; *I must however advise that prior to my Department considering your request and reporting to the Minister on the matter, all strategic and environmental issues and impacts need to be satisfied, and preferably agreed, as far as possible with both Councils.*

*I request that you continue to liaise with the relevant Councils in better addressing their views and concerns about the proposal. This includes such matters as traffic outcomes; the range, mix and intensity of land uses; as well as visual impacts; riparian and ecological protection; Aboriginal heritage; and bushfire risk measures.*

Following this, Ku-ring-gai did some homework and made a presentation to Johnson. Despite sighting letters from Johnson in May and June, one being over three pages long, we have not seen any attempt by them to address the issues raised by the DoP. They simply reiterate their demand for a Part 3A determination and for all the development they wish to carry out. They have promised, but not delivered, a traffic study. One can only draw the inference that they want a stalemate to develop so that they can tell the DoP that they are getting nowhere with Council and that a 3A determination is the only way out. We hope that the DoP won't fall for that!

It's worth having a closer look on just what this proposal will mean for traffic; an issue that even those not concerned with vandalism to the natural environment will appreciate. One way out of part of the subject property is through Mount Pleasant Avenue in the Hornsby Shire where there are huge resident concerns. Most traffic, however, will have to use Fox Valley Road and/or the Comenarra Parkway. At busy times now these roads are very congested. Traffic can back up from Pennant Hills Road to Fox Valley Road and many changes of traffic lights along Fox Valley Road from the Parkway and from the Pacific Highway.

Now standard traffic engineering tells us the additional 1400 or so dwellings planned will alone increase traffic by some 900 traffic movements in peak hour. Allowing 5 metres for each car and 2 metres in between this is over 6 kilometres of additional cars! Gridlock beckons!

But there's more! Think about the additional hospital buildings – they propose 94,000 square metres of hospital that's 9.4 hectares or 23 acres of floor. Then add to that the traffic induced by a new high school, playing fields, a commercial and retail centre and a new nurses' school.

We await Johnson's promised traffic study with interest. That they propose to have additional entry and exit points onto the Parkway and Fox Valley Road will do nothing but spread the misery a little. This is indeed a plan for traffic misery.

## UTS Lindfield – An Update

The story so far: The University of Technology (UTS) has been trying for years to cash in on the value of its Lindfield campus and move everything to Broadway. They propose to have the site rezoned so that they can sell it with permission to build 500 or so dwellings. We don't like the gross destruction of bushland that this will entail and many in the community want the university retained. If our population is to double over the next 60 years we shall need more universities. The Minister, Frank Sartor, has called the project in under Part 3A of the Act.

Last newsletter we told you that a Community Reference Group (CRG) had been set up by the Department of Planning (DoP). The first meeting has been held. There was an array of interested people; residents, a student, councillors, the National Trust and more. There were people from UTS and DoP.

The CRG is not a debating forum. The DoP controls it and it is to provide information to interested parties who will be making a submission as part of the process. Whether submissions will influence the DoP or the Minister or whether their minds are already made up and we are acting out a charade we simply don't know. Anyway, everyone was very nice to everyone else and we were informed on the process to be followed and heard presentations from the DoP and UTS.

We asked what plans UTS had for the remaining bush and they said they weren't interested in it and would happily give it away. The DoP then agreed that it would be possible to lock it up permanently within the Lane Cove National Park or by some other mechanism such as a conservation agreement. Our task therefore must be to maximise the amount of bush saved and to get that permanently locked away. While the overall proposal is the main problem the next threat to the bush comes from the size of asset protection zone (i.e firebreak) being mandated by the Rural Fire Service. It seems to us that the new rules are a vast over-reaction by the RFS, probably because of legal liability perceptions, and we are glad to know that the Minister can arbitrarily amend their requirements. If the rules the RFS seeks to impose here were universally and retrospectively applied everywhere there would be little viable urban bushland left in Sydney.

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## Weeds Weeds Weeds

The 14th Biennial NSW Weeds Conference will be held in Wollongong September 25-27, 2007. It will include seminar presentations, field trips, trade displays & an Expo. Keynote speaker will be Rachel McFadyen, CEO of the Weeds Co-operative Research Centre. On the afternoon of September 26 there will be a free open session presenting 'Grow Me Instead' - a session offering practical information on avoiding garden escapes and plants that require lots of water & chemicals. Website is [www.weeds2007.com.au](http://www.weeds2007.com.au)

Good web sites for people who are interested in invasive plants and their control are:

[www.csiro.au/science/InvasivePlants.html](http://www.csiro.au/science/InvasivePlants.html)

[www.weeds.org](http://www.weeds.org)

[www.weeds.crc.org.au](http://www.weeds.crc.org.au)

## Pymble Bridge and other Bottlenecks

From time to time we hear our politicians wanting to improve our lives by widening the Pacific Highway southeast from Hornsby. In the Hornsby Advocate on August 23 Nick Ebbeck was quoted as having the 'widening of the Pacific Highway between Wahroonga and Roseville' on his wish list. Barry O'Farrell has mentioned the need to widen the bridge over the railway at Pymble.

Obviously the Highway is an important road both for North Shore residents and for those passing through. We need it. Just as obvious, however, is that we can't keep widening it without limit. Should we, for instance, double it every time our population doubles? Should Sydney's population double in 60 years then the Highway would have to be 8 or 12 lanes wide. If the population growth continued on at say 1.2% pa then the highway would become 16 and 24 lanes wide a hundred and twenty years from now! Now that is clearly absurd but perhaps helps makes the point that growth has to stop somewhere.

Over the past decades we have effectively kept widening the Highway. We have removed parking and tweaked the road's performance with better turning arrangements, tidal flow changes and other coping mechanisms. But of course the congestion has stayed with us.

Now let's think about the Pymble railway bridge. If you are heading into town in peak time you can be held up as three lanes come into two at the bridge. If widening the bridge to three lanes each way would allow one to drive on uninterrupted to Chatswood or the city than it may well be a great idea. But the situation is that as soon as you get past there you are stopped by traffic banked up at the Livingstone Avenue or Mona Vale Road lights. The bridge is actually a feature that allows traffic to flow over it continuously while the traffic lights are devices that stop traffic dead in its tracks. Should it be widened we would merely be able to join the queue at the next red lights a little faster but consequently wait there a little longer.

Widening the Highway generally would be similarly ineffective as once again we would be just rearranging the bottlenecks. Of course there are some situations where bottlenecks can be usefully removed. Should the F3 be reduced to one lane at some point then obviously widening it there to three lanes would remove a bottleneck - but that's not the Pacific Highway situation.

So what's the answer? Until peak oil kicks in there is no answer to congestion on urban roads like the Pacific Highway. Add another lane each way and they will soon fill as commuters desert public transport and demographic feedback does its work. But if congestion is here to stay we might well ask what about the additional population? How are all the extra people going to get around if the roads don't keep expanding?

The answer has many facets that are all pretty basic except that a surprising number of us don't seem to recognise them. Congestion on roads works to move people onto public transport and to make decisions such as living closer to workplaces. Improvement in our awful public transport system is essential. It might also help if we recognised that for Sydney to stay a nice place to live we can't keep doubling our population every 60 years.

We need leadership from our leaders rather than short-term ill thought-out populist quick fixes. We need to plan for the more distant future, not just for the next election.

## The Silence of the Economists on Japan

### A Case Study

In the 10 years from 1990 we were regaled in the newspapers about the recession in Japan and how this was inextricably linked with its population dynamics. From 1950 to 2005 Japan's birth rate fell from 27.5 to about 7.7 per thousand people and as this trend picked up speed it was fashionable for economics writers to predict catastrophe. Japan's birth rate fell below the replacement rate in the 1970s and is still well below despite a small increase in 2006. But there's a time lag and the population reached 127m before beginning to decline in 2005.

Economists pointed to the ageing of the population, the difficulties in a smaller number of workers supporting a larger body of pensioners, economic dislocations as GDP growth was diminished or reversed and so on. Now, however, Japan has emerged from its difficult decade and is still one of the world's richest and most economically powerful countries. It's a while since we have seen predictions of collapse in Japan from population decline!

So what is happening over there as the population heads down towards 95m by 2050? The Economist tells us that urban sprawl is being curtailed, that cities such as Aomori are being shrunk to the benefit of all. Social rigidities that prevented older people from working are being removed and women are being given more options in what has been a male dominated social structure. The Economist notes that raising the retirement age to 70 would halve the rate of decline in the workforce and that raising the participation rate of women would reduce it further. Thus there are many coping mechanisms available to the community that will help bridge the period where the demography is a little out of balance. Once the population stabilises at, say, 95m of course a more natural age-work balance will be restored and that problem will disappear.

For the environment of Japan this should mean the end of urban sprawl, the end of good farm and forest lands being paved with concrete, a longer life for its non renewable resources, less pressure on its fisheries, less air pollution, the diversion of clever minds from building infrastructure to solving medical and other societal problems and most probably greater per capita wealth and happiness. If only we could convince them to leave the whales alone!

Of course here in Australia we can look forward to none of those benefits. We have the Federal Treasurer urging us on to procreate more. We have spineless political parties and conservation groups that won't even discuss the issue and we have churches that encourage their flocks to procreate and pray for rain.

Four out of ten people now live in countries (including Australia) where the natural fertility rate has dropped below the replacement level. It will be interesting to see whether the Japanese model works elsewhere.

This article has drawn on The Economist July 28 2007, Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics\\_of\\_Japan#Birth\\_rate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Japan#Birth_rate) and Economy Watch, [http://www.economywatch.com/world\\_economy/japan/](http://www.economywatch.com/world_economy/japan/).

### Postscript

It has been suggested that articles such as the one above are designed to make people feel guilty about having children. Nothing could be further from the truth! It's the statistical outcome for the whole country that matters – there should be no pressure to either have or not have as many children as individuals want. Intelligent, free and educated societies seem to sort these things out without coercion. Now there's an opportunity for a PhD thesis!

## Member Feedback

Thank you to those who were kind enough to respond to the last newsletter. It's good to know that it is being read!

There were some strong comments on the erosion of our rights by the sort of government typified by Part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. Stay tuned, more erosion is apparently on the way!

Ralph Pridmore wrote as follows (natural modesty has led the editor to delete Ralph's opening comments). The STEP committee does not necessarily support public executions for environmental transgressions!

*Of particular note in the present issue is the article "Understanding Business;" I entirely agree that commerce is innately part of human society and should be treated as such without favour or exception. I might add that, in my opinion and my small experience, not only do we need appropriate legislation for business (including agricultural business) but we need adequate law enforcement. For example, consider how some farmers are making huge profits from landclearing in NSW and QLD, and getting away with it through lack of appropriate laws, penalties, and law enforcement. Often, a custodial sentence is more effective than heavy fines. To environmentalists in the bush, a well known and particularly galling practice is that of the landclearing farmer and his bank who, with a wink and a nudge, has loaned him a couple of hundred grand to get some land cleared, when both know the land value improvement will pay for the fine several times over. And that's in the uncertain event that the government takes the farmer to court. Although I'm not necessarily a supporter of public executions (every Tuesday, in the market square) or Sharia law (off with his hand), custodial sentences may possibly be more effective than fines.*

*Thank you again for your fine newsletter and please be assured your readers appreciate it and its wide-ranging coverage of matters not merely STEP-societal but environmental.*

We have never had a letters to the editor section in the newsletter but if you would like to contribute please do so.

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## Landscape Plan for South Turrumurra

Local residents of South Turrumurra will want to examine the Sir David Martin Reserve (the Village Green area) draft landscape master plan which is currently on exhibition on Council's website. It will be exhibited for 28 days for public comment.

[http://www.kmc.nsw.gov.au/resources/documents/Copy\\_of\\_Sir\\_David\\_Martin\\_Reserve\\_MP\\_completed\\_for\\_website\(2\).pdf](http://www.kmc.nsw.gov.au/resources/documents/Copy_of_Sir_David_Martin_Reserve_MP_completed_for_website(2).pdf)

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## 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

## The National Parks Association

STEP receives a considerable volume of information from other organisations. One of the most effective is one of the oldest. The NPA has turned 50 and has rightly celebrated that achievement.

The NPA was responsible for the formation of the National Parks and Wildlife Service and for of the creation of the extensive national park system that we now have. It continues campaigning effectively and relevantly. Current campaigns include the Macquarie Marshes and for national parks in Red Gum forest wetlands.

The National Parks Journal is a very effective publication. If you aren't already a member we recommend that you consider becoming one. See [www.npansw.org.au](http://www.npansw.org.au).

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## The Tasmanian Paper Mill

There's a bit of a fuss going on about the Gunns' paper mill proposal. At the time of writing you could send a submission by going to <http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/notices/assessments/2007/3385/invite-comment.html> but submissions could be made only between 20 and 31 August 2007. Now 12 days for public submission on such an important project is pathetically inadequate and can only indicate that the submissions are required to be fast-tracked as well as the approval process. But there is a chance that the period for submission will be extended and thus we have printed the address above.

The campaign by Geoffrey Cousins is to involve the distribution of an article by Richard Flanagan. This is the same author from whom we brought you an article in the last STEP Matters. You can find the article in Monthly Magazine at <http://www.themonthly.com.au/pastIssues/index.html#>

It's a very powerful article – we recommend it to you.

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## Let's Bib the Cat

If you love your cat too much to do the right thing and wring its neck then you will surely be a candidate for a cat bib. Cosmos No 15 (*Bib keeps hunting cats in check*) reported that domestic cats kill an estimated 100 million native Australian animals each year. Mike Calver of Murdoch University in Perth set up a trial to monitor the effectiveness of the bibs. Fifty six cats that lived near bushland and were known to hunt were observed. He found that the bibs stopped 81% of cats from catching birds, 33% from catching reptiles and frogs and 45 percent from catching mammals. Overall he found a 72% reduction in the number of birds killed by cats wearing bibs compared with a 34% reduction for cats wearing bells.

You can find Michael's full paper at <http://www.catgoods.com/autrial.html> and you can buy your cat a bib at <http://www.catgoods.com/product.html>.

It always causes a smile when the same people who campaign for the animal rights of cats are deathly silent on the rights of the 100 million animals killed by cats every year. There is something odd in the human psyche that such disconnected behaviour can occur – especially when a cat inflicted death is often a long drawn-out affair where the cat plays with the animal as it kills it. It seems that the bleeding hearts often bleed in a very selective way.

### Make a difference

Get a friend to join STEP

Send us your email address so we can let you know of events, changes to events, urgent issues and ask your opinions. Email to [secretary@step.org.au](mailto:secretary@step.org.au)

**Be kind** to STEP's administration people who have to keep track – pay your membership dues. An invoice went out with the last newsletter. \$16 for one year (\$40 for 3 years), \$20 family for one year (\$48 for 3 years). Thanks to the many who have done so!

### Venues for STEP Meetings

The jury is still out on whether we should move our public meetings to the Gordon Library Meeting Room. There are arguments both ways and comments from the committee and members have been evenly split. The AGM and Alan Fairley's talk will be held at St Andrew's Hall, Vernon St Turramurra.

### Some Web Sites to Visit

[www.thebigswitch.org.au](http://www.thebigswitch.org.au) for the climate change views of 10 Australian conservation groups

[www.catgoods.com/autrial.html](http://www.catgoods.com/autrial.html) To look at research and buy a cat bib

[www.npa.org.au](http://www.npa.org.au) to look at what the National Parks Association is doing and perhaps to join

[www.publish.csiro.au](http://www.publish.csiro.au) to look at the CSIRO excellent publication ECOS

[www.step.org.au](http://www.step.org.au) to look at what STEP has to say and to buy maps, the Field Guide and Sydney's Natural World

[www.ecoscorp.com](http://www.ecoscorp.com) to see an Australian company is advising business on environmental issues

[www.population.org.au](http://www.population.org.au) for information on population issues in Australia and the world.



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STEP Inc  
PO Box 697  
Turramurra, NSW 2074

