



STEP Inc. Newsletter

Community Based Environmental Conservation Since 1978. No. 83 April 1997

COMING EVENTS

MAURITANIA -- John Martyn has been on his visit to Mauritania, and is keen to tell us about it, on Wednesday 30th April, 1997, at 8.00 pm, at St. Andrews Uniting Church Hall, Vernon St., South Turramurra. John will have some slides and will tell us about the similarities of terrain and climate with a large part of Australia, and the contrasts in land use, and the effects on the environment. This is one talk you should not miss.

AUTUMN BUSHWALK -- On Sunday 4th May, 1997, we will take our Autumn Bushwalk under the guidance of Jenifer Lewis. We will meet at the foot of Welham St., off Beecroft Rd., at 2.00 pm.

It will take one and a half to two hours and we will come back to Welham St. to have a cup of tea.

Fortunately there is still a patch of bush left near Welham St., including high canopy trees, but the motorway has had extensive impact on the Devlin's Creek bushland corridor, causing fragmentation. This will become evident, since the walking tracks have also been cut, so that we will have to walk along streets for part of the way to reach the various remnant patches, which were previously continuous.

URBAN RUN-OFF IN THE LANE COVE VALLEY is the topic of our next talk scheduled for Wednesday 25th June, 1997. Steve Riley from University of Western Sydney has kindly agreed to address us on this subject, which is to a large degree central to our concerns about bushland preservation. The talk will start at 8.00 pm, at the St. Andrews Uniting Church Hall in Vernon St., South Turramurra, unless otherwise notified.



Incorporation of Bushland into National Park

Progress on this issue appears to be accelerating. Since a large part of Ku-ring-gai Council's bushland is located in the upper Lane Cove valley, Comenarra Ward Councillor Elaine Malicki has been nominated by Council as its representative on the inter-Council Committee convened by Gladesville MP, John Watkins. She has had discussions with NPWS officials to explore the implications of transferring control to National Parks.

At the time of writing the next step in this process was to be the meeting of the inter-Council Committee in early May to bring all Councils with bushland under their control together.

Some of the implications of such a

move needing public discussion and debate are:

- * Which parcels are suitable for incorporation?
- * Which parcels are more suited to active public use?
- * Which parcels contain significant natural bushland and act as flora and fauna corridors?
- * Which parcels are sensitive because of location at ridge top or head of gully?
- * How should the normal prohibition of pets from National Parks be accommodated?
- * Should particular areas be set aside for public use with pets under control permitted? Is this possible under National Parks legislation?
- * Should such areas be fenced off?
- * How would such areas be controlled?
- * Will NPWS have adequate resources to take fire control measures?

As is immediately evident, there are many problems, which need to be resolved before any implementation can proceed. Furthermore it will impact on many people, who have in the past enjoyed free access to bushland with their pets in tow and

who will want to be assured that reasonable accommodation is made for such activity.

Not least will be the need to ensure that NPWS will have sufficient resources to properly control, maintain and care for the new additions. The financial details will no doubt be an important aspect of Councils' stance on this issue, but given good will and agreement on a common goal, financial and other responsibilities can be allocated appropriately, as long as all the bushland in the catchment comes under single control in the interest of conservation. The STEP Committee is currently trying to formulate some constructive ideas for the realisation of this consolidation and would welcome any contributions to this process. It has been one of STEP's main objectives since its inception.



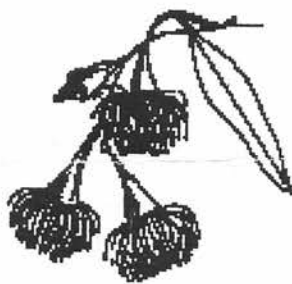
Integrated Development Assessment

In early February, when we were just back from school holidays, and the community was busy trying to deal with the Draft Residential Strategy for Housing in response to the State Government's drive to increase housing, and when the Ku-ring-gai Residents Environment Advisory Committee was in the midst of developing a new residential Development Control Plan, the State Government chose to issue a White Paper and Exposure Draft Bill for Integrated Development Assessment.

(That's a long sentence, but it gives an indication of feelings about this. Ed.)

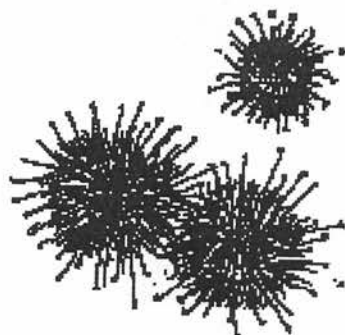
On a reading of this White Paper, it quickly became evident that it contained plenty of dynamite to jeopardise environment protection and would have the potential to undermine the community's influence on development matters, and compromise Council's Housing Strategy.

Consequently the STEP Committee prepared a submission to the Government's regulatory Reform Unit to oppose the proposed Bill in its present form and point out the serious flaws in the document.



Among these were:

* Private approval certification of Development? Building applications would remove from the local community the ability to influence the planning in its area, and would, among other things introduce potential conflict of interest into the process.



* The right of appeal against development decisions would disappear.

* "Exempt" and "Complying" Development would apply as a State wide condition regardless of the vast differences between local character.

* The Minister would be given wider powers to determine State or Regionally Significant Development without the need for a Commission of Inquiry.

In our view the Bill would have the effect of reducing community influence in the development assessment and approvals procedure, which would be a retrograde step, not in keeping with community expectations and unlikely to produce satisfactory outcomes.

In Ku-ring-gai it would have the potential of winding the clock back twenty years, threatening the tree cover and the very nature of the municipality.

Federal Environment Funding

With the sale of Telstra the Heritage Fund of \$1 billion may actually materialise, and although a large proportion of these funds appear to be predestined for "brown" issues relating to land degradation in agricultural areas, some is earmarked for "green" issues. Among green issues the macro concerns such as coastal degradation will probably receive the lion's share.

The leftovers may then become available for local conservation projects, and with this in mind it is necessary to focus on local projects, for most effective use of such funds.

The STEP Committee would be delighted to receive suggestions, which could be promoted as local conservation projects. The opportunity is too good to miss, so let's hear it from the members.

It could range from the purchase of a patch of bushland to take it out of development hands and add it to National Parks, to grants for major bush regeneration works in badly affected areas of the Lane Cove Valley. Or it could be to undertake capital works to control urban runoff at the bushland perimeters. Nominate your favourite project, and see whether it can be achieved through this, probably once-off, opportunity.

Green Games 2000

Green Games Watch 2000 Inc. has prepared a report on community consultation and participation in the efforts to make the Olympic Games an environmentally responsible event.

The report lists the findings derived from surveys of environment groups regarding the issues, which were held to be most crucial.

The largest single concern in all cases was transport.

GGW2000 then convened a summit to discuss transport planning.

The report says:

"The meeting agreed that Sydney should stage a car-free Olympics, and that Olympic transport should focus on:

** more and better public transport for the long term*

** No further road building for the Olympics*

** Massive reduction in the proposed 10,000 car parking spaces at Homebush*

** Ensuring that the village is public transport oriented*

** provision of a regional bicycle and pedestrian network*

** implementation of an integrated ticketing system*

** Convening of a public transport summit."*

It also emphasised that transport strategy should serve the long term.



We reprint a short snippet from The Lane Cove Bushland & Conservation Society's March Newsletter. Ed.:

Sick of Unnecessary Wrapping?

If you feel strongly about the ever growing amount of unnecessary packaging, you may wish to heed Premier Bob Carr's suggestion and take it back to the retailer and dump it with a few words of explanation: "I'd like to buy these products, but not the excessive packaging". Apparently a similar campaign in Germany has been successful in reducing the amount of wasteful packaging.

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The Myth of the Efficient Car

The February/March edition of *Engineering World* had an article penned by Frank Fisher, who is head of the Graduate School of Environmental Science at Monash University.

He points out that rationalists currently hold sway in every aspect of economic life, except in urban commuting, where efficiency and the bottom line does not seem to enter the minds of transport planners.

He says "...the flight from objective rationality....of transport arrangements...must constitute one of the profoundest, and best hidden contradictions...today"

"...despite....the environmental situation getting worse, not better, Melbourne....is joyously embarking

upon a \$2 billion freeway... extravaganza... for driver-only...cars, andthe democratic majority is solidly behind it."

He calculates that a car's efficiency in moving one person is "a few tenths of one percent", when all factors are taken into consideration. When you read the list of factors, which are directly attributable to our car addiction, it appears quite irrational for a society to go to such lengths, while depriving other peoples of energy for production and disadvantaging our own descendants to boot.

He quotes some interesting facts, such as2% of Victoria's cars would provide enough energy to generate all of Victoria's electricity, or the energy used to construct Melbourne's City Link would drive the average car to Mars and back.



Finally he points out that all the heroic efforts to improve fuel consumption pale into insignificance when compared with the simple expedient of putting another passenger into the car, which has the nice side effect of instantly reducing the infrastructure requirements by half. And better still, "...there is the simple nineteenth century technology already in place: the bicycle combined with the train.....together they offer a level of physical, social and environmental joy that can only be appreciated by trying them....the more we persist.. the more joyous the experience."

Shrimpton's Creek

John Martyn managed to get some free time to wander around the bush, as he loves to do, and his way took him to check on Shrimpton's Creek

on the Ryde side of the Lane Cove Valley.

STEP had run a clean up on the Clean-up Australia Days for two years before the M2 Motorway cut off access to it from this side. He was absolutely aghast at the state that the pool at the bottom of Blaxland's waterfall had reached again.

"The water's edge is bordered by drifts of Styrofoam fragments and plastic drink containers. Large pieces of plastic have been caught up at the tail end of the pool. The pool itself has an oil film on the surface, appears scummy and exudes bad odours."

The source of all this material is likely to be within the Macquarie Centre, and consequently we have written to Ryde Council asking them to initiate improvement of the pollution control.

Blaxland's waterfall would have been counted as one of the valley's beauty spots, but even though access has now been severely compromised by the M2, its polluted state is to be deplored.



Clean-up Australia Day

STEP Committee members John Martyn and Jennifer Schwarz again set up a collection point on March 2 and 37 people registered. 27 bags of rubbish and one mattress were collected,

Another good effort, thanks to John and Jennifer and all the volunteers. Next year we will have a skip there.

ENVIRONMENTAL DIARY DATES

Some interesting events for the environmental diary:

- # "On the Brink: Your Bush, their Habitat, our Act" Conference organised by the NSW Nature Conservation Council in conjunction with the Environmental Defender's Office and the Threatened Species Network (NSW). at Sydney University, Faculty of Nursing Lecture Theatre BG01, 88 Mallett St., Camperdown.
May 1 and 2, 1997. Call 9241 2052 for information.
- # "Airport Solutions for Sydney" Forum organised by the Alliance for Airport Location Outside Sydney, to be held at Petersham Town Hall, 107 Crystal St.
May 3, 1997. Call 9241 2702 for information.
- # "Our National Parks: Visions for the Future" organised by the NSW Nature Conservation Council.
July 18 and 19, 1997. Call 9241 2052 for information.

And further afield, ie. if you happen to be in Adelaide, and academically inclined:

- # September 16 to 19, 1997. Australian Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology Symposium, and Landcare National Conference at the Adelaide Convention Centre.

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SOCIETY FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

Tuesday Walks at the Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden.

Meet at the Visitor Centre at 10.00 am for a talk followed by the guided walk, which concludes at 12.00 noon. Contact Pat 9477 3023, Margaret 9489 2960, Val 9484 2106. Topics are:

- May 6 Hakeas and Grevilleas
- May 13 Parts of the Plant III -- the leaves
- May 20 Ferns
- May 27 Aboriginal Use of Plants
- June 3 Plant Evolution
- June 10 Rainforest
- June 17 Longer Walk (Bring lunch)

SGAP North Shore Group Meetings

Contact Sheila Woods 9484 6764, Esme Blackmore 9489 8069, Paul Davies 9456 3779.

- May 9 Photographing Flora in the Field Talk by George Taylor.
- June 13 History of Exploration of Australian Plants Talk by Peter Olde.