

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



Your opinions are invited on two important matters which will determine whether a lot of our precious bushland is to be protected or destroyed

These are the zoning of the very significant St Columba's site north of Springwood and the proposed new rules to govern bushfire protection measures over the whole of the mountains for the future. The proposals are part of the Draft Local Environment Plan 2002 display at Council offices and libraries and on Council's website www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au until 10 December 2003. There are another 15 localities of conservation significance where the rezoning is still to be decided.

St Columba's Site, Springwood

The St Columba's site is an important cultural, Aboriginal archaeological and natural heritage site. It is located at the head of the important Blue Gum Swamp which flows into the World Heritage National Park. The provisions that Blue Mountains City Council has proposed in DLEP2002 for this site, if formally approved, will result in one of the greatest victories for the environment and conservation movement in the Blue Mountains.

Councillors have recommended an extension of the Environmental Protection zone to cover all uncleared bushland. This will protect most of the existing bushland which is essential to the conservation of two important sub-catchments: the eastern side of the site drains to Blue Gum Swamp Creek and the western side flows into the Grose River. This western side has already been identified by the NSW Government as a 'conservation sub-catchment' for special protection as part of its policy to improve the health of the Hawkesbury-Nepean River.

The St Columba's property contains 55 recorded Aboriginal archaeological sites with potential for many more. The area of uncleared bushland being recommended for EP zoning contains two archaeological Aboriginal open campsites.

The proposal on display will allow for some increase in development in the existing cleared area. This allows for private recreation and associated land uses and facilities for the community. It will also allow for self supporting accessible housing for the aged and those with a disability. Further educational facilities or a conference centre may be possible.

This is by far a preferable option than any other being proposed. The alternative was to allow for 12 hectares of residential development, a significant

proportion of which would have involved clearing the bushland in this important Middle Nepean catchment.

It is vital to secure this land for its natural, Aboriginal and cultural heritage values. It is important that members support this proposal. Without your support we fear that this precious land could become part of the urban sprawl.

Bulldozed Bushland for Asset Protection Zones

Bulldozing huge swathes of bushland to bare earth around new developments is sadly a common occurrence. The excuse for this is to create an "Asset Protection Zone" and the reason, that it is cheap to use the bulldozer whilst it's there to dig the footings.

Bulldozing for bushfire protection is destructive and unnecessary. Neither the State Government or RFS recommend earthworks to provide bushfire protection. The NSW guideline called 'Planning for Bushfire Protection' recommends that Local Environment Plans include clauses that specify that site disturbance should be minimised. It also suggests specifying that work should "be carried out by hand with trees being felled rather than pushed over". (refer to Appendix 1 clause 2.1.4)

DLEP 2002 offers an opportunity to stop this practice of bulldozing to bare earth. The draft proposals are good but don't go far enough. A clear statement is needed to specify which methods of hazard reduction are not permissible. This is necessary to allow Council to stop this practice of bulldozing.

Other issues

The protection of watercourses, slopes or sensitive vegetation is involved in the other 15 locations we are investigating. See our BMCS website for a discussion of the sites of concern or phone Lyndal for a copy.

Your submission could make a difference

The Society is compiling a submission but this only carries the weight of a submission from one resident. We need all our members to write. You are urged to make your own written submissions. If you need further information to write your letter contact Lyndal Sullivan 4782 1635 or email lyndal@hermes.net.au.

There is not much time. The closing date for comments is 10th December. Letters should be entitled "DLEP 2002 - Exhibition of Deferred Matters" and mailed to the General Manager, Blue Mountains City Council, Locked Bag, Katoomba 2780 or emailed to lep2002@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Waterfalls and Wonder

Images of waterfalls with streaming water are lit up on the new display in the foyer of the Conservation Hut. A story accompanies a lovely image of each of the 12 waterfalls in the Valley of the Waters. A newly named waterfall commemorates the conservation work of Isobel Bowden. This waterfall is in the rainforest glen at the start of Nature Trail, where there is a plaque to honour her. This is just part of a much bigger story about water.

Summer, the first of the Seasonal Change panels to be installed, suggests a cool shady walk into the Valley of the Waters during the summer fire season. A map of the Kedumba region and the World Heritage area is on the restored noticeboard.

The inspiration to tell the story of the Valley of the Waters has come from its natural beauty and human connections. It is an intact and healthy ecosystem and the water flows into the Sydney drinking water catchment. Of course, the Hut is dear to our hearts too.

This interpretive display about the Valley of the Waters catchment has been produced by many hours of volunteer effort.

Our members have walked the valley taking notes, photographs and checking walking tracks throughout the year. Gathering details of the story and involvement in its telling has brought some of us into a much closer relationship with this lovely valley. Delight came as the colourful fungi of autumn appeared and the sweet scented white *Woollisia pungens* of winter followed. Awe silenced us as the silvery waters gushed over Sylvia Falls. The profusion of pink *Boronia* welcomed spring. We have shared wonderment of nature and friendships.

Other members have contributed their knowledge of plants and wildlife in the area. A song has been written about this beautiful valley and was sung at the celebration. Others have spent hours in research, writing and editing sessions, and computer design. Others entertained us to make the celebration special.

National Parks and Wildlife Service have donated time and expertise through their commitment to working with the local community. The new foyer display has been made possible by the funding of \$8000 from Sydney Catchment Authority.

Sincere thanks to all involved in this community project. *Meredith Brownhill.*

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Subdivision in Court

The issue of buffers around significant Blue Mountains native vegetation has come up again.

A proposed subdivision in Orama Road, Hazelbrook was taken to the Land and Environment Court in mid November 2003, after Council rejected the application. A key point of contention was the width of buffers needed between the cleared area around the houses and areas of swamp and heathland. All the experts agreed that buffers around these significant vegetation communities were necessary to conserve them - the question is how wide should the buffers be, and can they include an asset protection zone (APZ), for bushfire protection?

The issues brought up in this case indicate the complexity of decision

making process. The only scientific evidence was presented by Dr Peter Smith on behalf of BMCC, this came from a report commissioned by BMCS and others, and was referred to throughout the case. This report indicated that a 60m buffer was required for the ongoing passive protection and conservation of these valuable vegetation communities and must not include the APZ. It was pointed out to the court that if the 60m buffer included an APZ the area would be used as the 'backyard' and cleared in accordance with Rural Fire Service requirements thus reducing the effective buffer.

A passive method to protect and conserve significant vegetation was discussed versus fences to exclude humans and domestic animals and the active participation of future residents in implementing a Plan of Management. Dr Smith and BMCC recommended the passive approach rather than the need for monitoring and regulation.

The judgment is expected to take about two weeks and will either give legal weight to 'guideline' of the 60m buffer width (as already adopted by BMCC and any variation from this will need justification), or will establish 25m as an adequate buffer.

This case is significant for a number of reasons; it shows that community groups can influence actions of consent authorities. It highlights the importance of the work done to strengthen LEP 91 by the introduction of Amendment 25 and the ongoing work being done by Council to protect significant Blue Mountains vegetation communities by mapping them with their buffers in the DLEP 2002. It also highlighted the problem of having no buffer width specified in the LEP or development control plan (DCP). Had the 60m width been identified clearly as a guideline, it is unlikely that the developer would have brought this case to court. A development control plan could identify the criteria on which any variation to this guideline could be varied.

The case also highlighted the value in independent research to identify such guidelines or benchmarks that can be used in planning instruments and by the Land and Environment Court. *Sue Beever*.

Response to Alarmist Advertising

Were you alarmed by the large advertisement in the 12 November issue of Blue Mountains Gazette entitled "the LEP 2002 is Here".

Don't panic - instead check the facts!

To speak about 75% of residential blocks being "rezoned more restrictively" lacks accuracy. What exactly is "more restrictive"?

There are changes to all residential blocks in the areas in the Blue Mountains covered by DLEP 2002. It is an entirely new approach with a new set of zones, much more appropriate to this area, and much less complex.

75% of residential lots covered by DLEP2002 will be zoned either Living-Conservation or Living-Bushland Conservation. Some landowners will find the new zoning less 'restrictive' and many will find there are no changes. If you had wanted to build a granny flat, you can do that now. If your land is a normal sized lot which is less than 1400 sq metres you couldn't subdivide under LEP 4 and you still can't. Under these two new zones land must be at least 2400 sq meters to be subdivided. Owners of land which had been zoned Res 2(a2) may find the lifting of the blanket prohibition on subdivision less restrictive.

About 23% of residential land will be zoned Living-General. This is broadly similar to the old Res 2(a1) with similar minimum lot sizes. Dual occupancies, granny flats and some non residential uses previously not permitted will now be permissible. Residential zones where flats were permitted were called 2 (b 1) (b2), (c1), (c2) or (d). Now multi-unit dwellings will only be permitted in Village Housing zones or Accessible Housing Areas.

This may be more or less restrictive depending on which side of the fence you are sitting!

The facts are that most suitable residential blocks in the Blue Mountains already have houses on them; most are less than the old ¼ acre block (approx 1000sq m). Very little is going to change for these blocks.

Where there are changes will be on the more marginal land, on steep slopes, with creeks, swamps or other endangered plant communities. LEP2002 seeks to contain the adverse impacts we, as humans, inflict on these particularly vulnerable areas of native bush and the animals that live there. It will still allow building but hopefully confine it to where it will cause the least damage.

We urge you to check the facts of this out for yourself - ask to see the Draft LEP and the background studies.

The advertisement also refers to the Vegetation Management Order which, incidentally, no longer exists. The original draft document changed so dramatically it was renamed the Bushland Preservation Order.

The BPO applies only to land with uncleared bushland in one zone under this DLEP 2002 - the Living Bushland Conservation zone. It does not cover the area immediately around the house, only the land more than 35metres in any direction from the house (this is far bigger than the 35 paces quoted in the ad!). It does not apply to normal sized blocks in the town, nor does it apply to established gardens on larger blocks.

The ad also states that "Your rates will rise". This is probably true... rates always rise ... but this will have nothing to do with DLEP2002 or the BPO.

If you wish to discuss the details further contact the Land Use Subcommittee through 4782 1635.

Vale Besse Irvine Bramsen

We have received the sad news that Besse Bramsen has passed away at the age of 94.

Besse was a committed environmentalist and an active member of the Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society until we amalgamated in 1995. Since then she has remained an active member of Society, wrote letters to support our campaigns and, despite her age, would regularly come from Springwood to our general meetings.

Besse had a strong social conscience and over many years was actively involved in Springwood community groups and with the Anglican Church, and wrote frequent letters to the Gazette on social issues. The Fairy Dell Restoration was started in 1989 with Besse a member of the foundation bushcare group, and more recently she was active in the representation and work on the Deanei Reserve at Springwood to have it recognised and protected as an endangered community.

Bessie was born at Mount Irvine where her father was a timber cutter. In a letter printed in December 1998 *Hut News*, Besse recalled those early days "when Lyre Birds were plentiful along most creek lines, and in all rainforest." "Barefoot, with my siblings, we would creep quietly down to near a creek bank — never to crack a stick — where the male bird was singing and dancing on his mound. On one occasion we watched him for two hours. Then, turning to leave the site, we discovered that we were quite close to the female, perched in a low shrub, from where she also was watching the show."

Besse didn't believe in waste and recycled everything. Her native garden was extensive. Besse was an inspiration to us all.

Calling all Blackheath-ers

In Blackheath, the beautiful Braeside Creek has its catchment next to the golf course. Our bushcare group meets there on the 4th Saturday of the month to remove gorse, holly and other nasty invaders.

We are making good progress, but would love to have a few more hands to help us restore this lovely creek.

If you could spare one morning per month to help, please contact Martin on 4782.1626. (NPWS provides cake for morning tea!)

Society's Archives

Springwood Library's Local Studies Collection holds a substantial collection (several large boxes) of archive material belonging to the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, much of it being records of the former Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

Local Studies Librarian John Low needs volunteers who can assist to organise, list/index and package this valuable archive, in order to make it accessible.

If you are able to spare any time to help with this important job, please contact John at the Springwood Library, email JLow@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

New Books

Reviewed by Don Morison

Wild Blue by Ian Brown is mainly a setting for trekker Ian's photographs of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area—there is a satisfying balance between remote and accessible areas in the subjects.

Ian has a lens for the soft and the subtle—what a welcome contrast from the Steve Parish glossies of Blackheath labelled 'Springwood' selling at local post offices! If you've ever been afraid of having a love affair with rocks, clouds and mists, Ian's pictures will banish all your inhibitions.

The text provides a good general backdrop to the graphics and reflects the assistance of experts such as Margaret Baker, Tony Garbellini, Wyn Jones, Andy Macqueen and Eugene Stockton. Few tracts of text are obscure but an introductory textbook on geology or physical geography could help the reader with Ian's words about old rocks. The bibliography is extensive—it needs to distinguish between Jim Smith, historian, and Judy Smith, botanist—both very informative writers on the Mountains.

If you don't buy this book yourself, you **must** find a friend who'll let you browse the piccies!

The Duncans of 'Ballimore' by Keith Duncan assisted by Jim Smith and Marlene Jones.

This book employs enchanting black and white photographs and a no-nonsense text, effectively offering the southern Megalong Valley as a case study of rural New South Wales during Keith Duncan's life (80 years so far). Older readers will find this an evocative volume (especially if they have some experience of rural living). Younger readers will discover some surprises also. The use of line drawings in this (and the following book) adds to the mood.

Tomorrow we go to Megalong Valley features 10 short story writers—winners of a contest with judges from Varuna Writers Centre.

Norma Carlon tells of life at Green Gully—its transformation from a pioneer farm to a modern National Park neighbour epitomises Blue Mountains history—and also of the tragic storms of 1967. Leila Bryant's family had an occasionally sad but very rewarding history as Megalong visitors. Diana Levy found the site of the Glen Shale Mine village in prose and haiku. David Mansfield and Heather McNair offer different fantasies about how hypothetical events could impact on a remote part of the Mountains.

Susan Crick paints a portrait of bushman Russell Gracey. Sabine Erica recalls characters and events from a bygone Megalong. Bob Yates explores

confronting elements of human interaction with the valley through a profile of the Duncan family. The sensitivity of the human-horse relationship is especially understood by Tom Williams. My own contribution centres on a BMCS overnight bushwalk. Delightfully illustrated with a foreword by Jim Smith and a poem by Mary Shaw.

All three books are available from selected retailers.

From Windy Cliff Press (4787 1420 or www.windycliff.com.au): **Wild Blue** (RRP Hardcover \$75, Softcover \$50)

From Megalong Tea Rooms (4787 9181): **The Duncans of 'Ballimore'** (Softcover RRP \$20); **Tomorrow we go to Megalong Valley** (Softcover spiral-bound \$20).

Mountain Journeys

A touring map to the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area

(extract of an article by Alex Colley in the *Colong Bulletin*, September 2003)

The NPWS and Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust, with funding provided by the Natural Heritage Trust, have published a beautiful colour touring map of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. The map called "Mountain Journeys" is a metre long and two thirds of a metre across and covers an area extending from Bathurst to Sydney.

The reasons for World Heritage listing and seventeen landmarks on the 150 year journey to listing are described. For example: Landmark 9 describes the Sydney Bush Walkers and Mountain Trails Club purchase of the Blue Gum Forest; Landmark 13 covers the Colong and Boyd campaigns; Landmark 14 describes the Wollemi National Park campaign and the events which marked its conclusion; Landmarks 15, 16 and 17 cover the creation of Yengo, Gardens of Stone and Nattai National Parks.

The reverse side of the map representing the mountain scenery and its landmarks, describes the geological history of the Mountains, the evolution of the eucalypts and four mountain journeys.

Four tourists routes are depicted, describing the main features and distances, time required and side trips and stopovers.

Congratulations to the anonymous author, to photographers Ian Brown, Wyn Jones and J Little and to the NPWS and the Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust. The map can be purchased for \$6 from all good map outlets throughout NSW.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Management Meeting: Saturday 20 December at Blackheath. (There will be no general meeting in December)

Bushcare: Saturday 13 December. Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group meets at 9am on the 2nd Saturday of every month. Tools are provided. Bring morning tea, gloves and drinking water. Contact Karen 4757.1929.

Sydney's Water: What is Wrong with the Water System?

In October 2003 Hut News I explained about Sydney's (and Blue Mountains') water—where it comes from, how it is treated, how it is transported. It is a massive system, designed to produce drinking quality water to over four million people. Overall it works and the water quality is usually good. But there is a lot of wastage both in the system and in our water use. Changes need to be made to make our water supply and use sustainable.

Age is the enemy of a lot of the water supply system. Many water mains are approaching their 100 year expected lifespan, and they are not being replaced anywhere near fast enough. The system is designed to produce acceptable water quality, using technology that is not the best available.

Sand filtration cannot remove Giardia or Cryptosporidium, and we still rely on water quality testing and boiled water alerts to protect us if these parasites are found in the water supply. Sand filtration also cannot remove bacteria or viruses. The system relies on Chlorine and Ammonia to kill these nasties before they get to your tap.

Disinfecting organic material with Chlorine is problematic, as the process produces by-products that have been linked to cancer. Membrane filtration could be used to remove almost all problem organisms, reduce Chlorination, and result in cleaner water to the tap with less chemicals and by-products, but at increased cost.

Sydney Water Corporation tend to favour, through their least-cost planning mechanisms, large-scale centralised systems over distributed and decentralised systems (for example the proposed de-commissioning of Greaves Creek WTP). This leaves us open to mass system failures that affect large percentages of the population, and holds back innovations like rainwater tanks and local-scale recycling. Least cost planning also tends to favour systems that use lots of energy and chemicals, rather than advanced technologies. The system also is not designed to allow for recycling of treated sewage effluent, almost all of which is dumped in rivers or the ocean.

Worst of all, Sydney Water Corporation pay a substantial dividend to the State Government each year, money that should be spent on the water supply, sewage treatment and stormwater systems.

Sydney Water Corporation needs to be spending a lot more on infrastructure, alternative systems, recycling, demand management, and reduction of chemical and energy use before it can claim to be a sustainable organisation. *Ross Coster.*

Membership Enquiries
Contact Elizabeth van Reyswoud
Phone 4757.2694
Email: mcreysw@bigpond.net.au
Post: PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY BUSHWALKING GROUP

Our Bushwalking Group provides a range of activities. Membership of the bushwalking group is available to members of the Society. For further information contact the Activity Leader/Coordinator (listed) or Bushwalks Conveyor Bob van Reyswoud 4757.2694 (phone/fax), email mcreysw@bigpond.net.au. Membership details are on page 4. **Cost of insurance and affiliation fees for bushwalkers is \$12.50 per member.**

Pre-School Walks, for parent/grandparent/carer with children under 6 years.

Short, easy walks, approx 1 hour, 1st Wednesday of every month, starting at 10.30am. Bring a snack and a drink. Contact Megan 4759.2734 or Kathy 4759.3669 for more information or if the weather is doubtful.

Dec 03 Cateract Falls, Lawson. This is a nice little swimming hole so bring bathers if it is hot. Meet at car park/picnic area about 1 km down Honour Ave.

Quoll Club: A monthly newsletter and activities for 12 and under. For more information ☎ David King 4758.8932 (email dking@lisp.com.au).

Monday Leisure Walks: Usually 'Short Day' walks of 3-5 hours suitable for walkers of average fitness. Graded Medium, i.e. can include some short rock scrambles or some short sections off-track. Bring morning tea and lunch, plus carry at least 1 litre of WATER, 2 litres on warmer days.

Dec 01 Florabella Pass. Woodlands and rainforest. Meet Warrimoo Station car park. ☎ Ron 4757 1526.

Dec 08 Bedford Creek, Murphy's Glen. Walk through open forest and swim in Bedford Creek. Meet 9am Woodford Station carpark (south side) 9am. ☎ Jock 4758.6346.

Dec 15 Christmas Bus Trip. Climb Evans Crown and Christmas lunch at Tarana. Departs 8.30 am, BMCC Depot, South Street, Katoomba. Phone Laurel 4784.1554 to book.

Dec 22 River Lett, Hartley. Leisurely walk near river, BBQ lunch. Meet 9.15 am at Mt Victoria Station. ☎ Kees 4759.1958.

Jan 05 Waterworks, Lithgow. Walk to old dam for swim. Meet 9.15 am at Mt Victoria Station. ☎ Jock 4758.6346

Jan 12 Mystery Walk. (It's a mystery!) Meet 9am Leura Station carpark. ☎ Ron 4757.1526.

Thursday Pleasure Walks: *These easy to medium grade walks are conducted to suit the walkers on the day. Times given are approximate. Slower walkers are catered for and on longer walks there is an option of a slower group to complete a section of the walk. Phone the contact for any enquiries about the program, starting times and transport issues.*

Dec 11 Mt Tomah Botanic Gardens Christmas Lunch. Bring a plate of Christmas goodies to share after walk in the gardens. Meet Mt Victoria Station 10am. Entry charge to gardens \$4.40 pp, \$3.30 seniors, \$2.20 pensioners. Contact Joan 4782.2218.

Weekend Bushwalks: *Always discuss with the contact if the walk you would like to do is medium/hard or hard, before attending. If this is your first walk, or you are in any doubt, discuss with the contact or Bushwalks Convener Bob van Reyswoud 4757.2694.*

Dec 13 (Sat) Mount Tomah. Christmas party. Bring a plate. Meet Mt Victoria Station 9.50 am. ☎ Bob 4757.2694. (Entry gardens \$4.40/\$3.30/\$2.20).

NOTE: All bushwalkers need to carry water, 1 litre minimum, a snack for morning tea and lunch for all day walks.

Pre-School Walks

New Co-ordinators Needed

The children of the current co-ordinators of the Pre-School Walks are graduating to the Quoll Club, so we need new co-ordinators for the walks to continue. The job involves organising a program of monthly walks suitable for little children. Lots of support offered from ex-co-ordinators. Please contact Kathy on 4759 3669 or Megan on 4759 2734.

Welcome to New Members

Caroline Oliver, Penrith
Chris Perkins, Penrith
Stephen Procter, Wahroonga
Drago Heler, Medlow Bath
Ron Bell, Mt Victoria
Marie Esposito, Newtown
A Davenport, Katoomba
Ben Tinsley, Blaxland
Mrs K M Kenneth-Tribe, Lapstone.

Mountain Retreat

I talked to a currawong
this morning
his golden eye
on mine
In the crisp quiet
we exchanged
soft sounds

Mist lifting
on ancient
lichen covered trees
damp footsteps
silenced
on leaf mould

The only sound
the endless chatter
and song
of birds.

Rosemary Lewis, 27/5/85
"Home Grown"