

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



Please note that there will be no monthly meeting in December and no Hut News in January.

As this is the last Hut News for the calendar year, BMCS Management Committee would like to thank all our members for their support throughout the year. Special thanks go to all those who've contributed their time, energy, skills and enthusiasm to serve on sub-committees, organise bushwalks, carry out bush regeneration, propagate plants, man stalls or write letters and submissions, etc. We wish you all a safe, happy and of course 'environmentally-friendly' Christmas and New Year.

Our next monthly meeting will take place in January when we will hear about the Rivers SOS campaign to:

Stop Longwall Mining from Destroying our Rivers



Rivers SOS is a coalition of environmental, community and bushwalking groups (including BMCS) calling for a 1km buffer zone between all rivers and longwall mine workings to protect them from subsidence and pollution.

We will be showing two short films on the topic:

"Rivers of Shame"- the just-released Rivers SOS production looking at examples of riverbed cracking and pollution caused by longwall coal mining in NSW;

"Subsided Ground-Fallen Futures"- from Pennsylvania USA, a state with a 200-year history of coal mining, where longwall mines affect thousands of acres and entire watersheds are being disrupted.

The meeting commences at 7.30pm on Friday 26 January at the Conservation Hut, western end of Fletcher St, Wentworth Falls.

Visitors most welcome!

Photo: Rivers SOS member, Leonie Kelly, shows the size of a typical crack in the bed of the Lower Cataract River, near Douglas Park. Since mining in the 1990s, the river has lost about 50% of its flow down cracks and fractures.

BRAID WINS IN COURT OF APPEAL!

On November 23 2006, after a two-year battle between the developers and the community, the Court of Appeal quashed the decision made by the Land and Environment Court in February to approve a development of 78 dwellings at Parklands in Govett's Leap Road Blackheath.

The proposed development relies on an on-site sewage treatment plant (STP) to dispose of 80% of its effluent and the Court of Appeal ruled that the STP is a "designated development". This means it requires an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as part of a new Development Application before it can be evaluated by Council.

Blackheath Residents Against Improper Development (a subcommittee of RAID Inc) filed the appeal in February on two points of law, following judgments made by Justice Pain in the Land and Environment Court last year. On October 17, BRAID argued before three judges that:

1. Clause 10.8(e) of LEP 1991 is a prohibition, requiring connection to the Sydney water sewer before subdivision and development can occur;
2. the proposed sewage treatment plant is a "designated development" (under Schedule 3 to the EPA Regulation 2000), requiring an EIS.

Blue Mountains City Council joined the appeal as co-appellant, arguing Point 1 alongside BRAID, but not Point 2. But it was the second point only that won. (The Court ruled that Clause 10.8(e) is a development standard, which allows other solutions such as an STP for the disposal of effluent if connection to sewer is not available.)

This landmark decision is a win for Blackheath after two years of community action. Representing the local community, BRAID has withstood some potentially lethal legal tactics and has maintained a challenging schedule of fundraising to achieve this outcome. But the result is also a win for the wider community of NSW. On-site sewage treatment plants across the state will no longer be able to avoid an EIS by being ancillary to another purpose, such as a resort.

BRAID thanks BMCS and its members for their support in so many ways. Due to the costs rulings by the Court, further fundraising will be needed to meet financial obligations for amounts yet to be determined. Watch Hut News in 2007 for details of more exciting BRAID events!

Virginia King, BRAID

Join our new Nursery Sub-committee

The BMCS Nursery not only generates vital funds for the work of the Society, but is one of our most visible activities in the community.

At our meeting on 19 November, Management Committee decided to form a Nursery Sub-committee to perform the following functions:

- carry out ongoing review and improvement of the BMCS nursery's Code of Practice and Operating Procedures to ensure they fully support the aims of the Society.
- provide new ideas to promote sales and the propagation of new species in accordance with best environmental practice.

We are looking for Society members who have nursery experience or knowledge of native plants, conservation biology, ecology, etc. and who would like to contribute in this area. We would welcome your participation.

Contact Kevin Bell, Nursery Manager, on 4787 6436.

HUT NEWS

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CARBON TRADING: A POLLUTER PAYS PHILOSOPHY

A conversation at our bushcare group about a carbon tax or carbon trading raised several questions:

- what is really involved?
- how does it reduce greenhouse gas emissions?
- and why does the Federal Government oppose it?
- In effect, is it beneficial or an economic smokescreen?

I shall try to deal with some of these aspects.

Economic orthodoxy decrees that the need to allocate a commodity or combat climate change, whether by governments, industries or individuals, is best handled through market forces within an essentially level playing field. In effect, market economics controls the apportionment, deployment and price of resources for the overall welfare of the community. This may be too theoretical because perceptions of welfare are egocentric, playing fields are typically bumpy, and adjustments lag disruptions in any dynamic system (so one is always playing catch-up). But irrespective of this, market economics is akin to democracy: it may not be perfect, but it is the best system on offer!

In practice, the market and the level playing field are variously short circuited by attempts to pick the 'best' solution, maintain entrenched disadvantages by subsidies or restrictive legislation, pursue vested interests for the benefit of a minority, make decisions based on the political imperative, enact strong (or desperate!) 'solutions' despite expert advice, or behave entirely selfishly. All this results in market distortions, inefficiencies, misallocation of resources, and irrational decisions.

Political parties and their captive politicians regularly engage in interventionist actions that produce sub-optimal consequences. Unfortunately, the adversarial political system causes governments to take expedient decisions and attempt to pick winners rather than create level playing fields.

The Stern report to the British Treasury has shown that the costs of failing to address climate change (i.e. doing nothing) greatly exceed those needed to ameliorate it. Stern dispelled the argument that combating climate change would destroy the World's major economies. He in fact showed that economies could benefit and even flourish from a market approach to dealing with greenhouse gas emissions. He maintained (as have others before him) that a market-based 'polluter pays' philosophy would concurrently counteract government-generated distortions and ensure the best environmental and economic outcomes.

The implementation of a 'polluter pays' philosophy involves creating a carbon 'tax' or trading scheme. Various forms of energy generation have differing social costs measured in terms of their greenhouse gas emissions. The 'tax' or trading scheme ensures that the differing energy prices reflect their specific social costs. The costs of climate change are therefore proportionately allotted to the modes of energy production, the organizations responsible, and the organizations' customers.

Organizations, families and individuals are price-sensitive, so an impost of (say) \$40 per tonne of carbon (or equivalent carbon) would have significant impacts on energy consumption and emissions. Why? Because of market adjustments reflecting the direct and flow-on effects:

The prices of coal- and (to a lesser degree) gas-fired energy would rise immediately to retain profitability.

The overall price of energy would increase radically, not just because of the coal- and gas-fired energy increases, but also because other energy forms become competitive and enter the market. At start-up, they look for investment-recovery levels of profitability and they take custom from the traditional providers. Both cause upward pressure on prices.

The price-signals cause individual and industrial customers to be frugal and more efficient (= emissions' reduction through less wasted energy). The pricing structure provides incentive for all energy producers to minimise emissions through efficiency increases and technological advancements.

Renewable and low-emission forms of energy would no longer carry a cost premium (as now happens with Green Power), so consumers have no impediment to being 'climate friendly'. In effect, the polluter funds the consumer's choice.

The biggest impediments to world, country and state implementation of carbon trading schemes are politicians and a spectrum of vested interests. And this brings me to the Federal Government's (softening?) opposition.

According to Mark Metherall (SMH, Nov 13 p2) the Prime Minister, who rejected the Kyoto Protocol as being opposed to Australia's economic interests, would only be prepared to consider joining an international emissions trading scheme "...on terms and conditions that don't disadvantage our industries." Likewise, although Peter Costello said that "If the world starts moving towards a carbon trading system we can't be left out..." he rejected the immediate introduction of carbon trading on the grounds that 'crisis thinking' would hamper efforts against global warming. This is strange thinking. An international market already exists through Kyoto, the Stern report has highlighted the need for carbon trading, and numerous authorities have endorsed the need for urgent action.

Our leaders must recognise that climate change is a world problem (not a situation for Australia to manipulate) requiring a world solution. They should stop procrastinating.

Brian Marshall



Visit the BMCS website at: www.bluemountains.org.au

Letter of the Month - December 2006

Nuclear - No Emissions Impact for 15 Years

The draft report of the Government-appointed Switkowski committee makes plain that nuclear power is not economically feasible in Australia, and it would take at least 10 and probably 15 years to get a plant up and running. Nuclear power “will only become competitive in Australia in a system where the costs of greenhouse gas emissions are explicitly recognised” the report concludes. In other words, it’s only an option if the price of energy from coal and gas rises by at least 20-50% courtesy of a carbon tax or some other form of dramatic carbon repricing (Sydney Morning Herald, 22-11-06).

Dr Mark Diesendorf of the Institute of Environmental Studies at UNSW said on the ‘7.30 Report’ (21-11-06) that “Nuclear power is being used in Australia right now politically as a way of distracting attention away from the fact that the present government has failed to deal with the greenhouse problem, it’s failed to promote renewable sources of energy, some of which are available now and are actually cheaper than nuclear power and could be installed much, much faster”.

The recent climate change negotiations in Nairobi “have concluded – inconclusively” (Editorial, Sydney Morning Herald 20-11-06). One of the greatest obstacles to a truly global accord is the refusal of America (and Australia) to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. “While it remains outside Kyoto Australia will be seen as a half-hearted, opportunistic player... profiting hugely from selling the muck that is polluting the planet”.

The report ‘A Clean Energy Future for Australia’, commissioned by the Clean Energy Australia Group, shows that carbon dioxide emissions from the electricity industries could be cut by 80% by 2040 using a mix of efficient

energy use, bioenergy, natural gas and wind power (SMH 22.11.06).

Dr Diesendorf says “The barriers are neither technological nor economic, but rather the political power of the big greenhouse gas emitters” (SMH 22.11.06).

We have recently been informed that writing to your local MP can lead to increased pressure on the Prime Minister. **Send a short message using some or all of the following points:**

- At this stage in Australia, nuclear energy is irrelevant. It is not feasible economically, nor would it have any effect on lowering emissions for at least 15 years.
- Ask the government to ratify the Kyoto Protocol and start working realistically on global warming with the rest of the world.
- Ask the government to take action to implement carbon pricing which will make renewable energy more competitive immediately.

Contact Details:

- Blue Mountains residents can write to our local Member, **Kerry Bartlett MP**, at PO Box 376 Springwood 2777, or email Kerry.Bartlett.MP@aph.gov.au

(If you live beyond the Mountains, you can find details for your local Federal MP at <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/members/index.htm>)

- You could also send a copy of your message to the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.

Post to Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600, or email:

The Hon John Howard: <http://www.pm.gov.au/email.cfm>
(This is the only way you can send an email to the Prime Minister.)

The Hon Kim Beazley: Kim.Beazley.MP@aph.gov.au

Rosemary Lathouris and Robin Mosman

CONSOC SUPPORT FOR WASTE MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

The 12th Annual Blue Mountains School Environment Awards, an initiative under the BMCC Sustainability Education Program, involving 11 schools, were this year held at Wentworth Falls Public School on 14th November.

BMCS sponsored the segment covering Waste Management and member Ron Withington made the presentation on behalf of President Brian Marshall.

Lapstone Public School was the 2006 winner of our award. The students created a huge 'Blue Mountains Marsupial Dragon' named Sophia, constructed entirely from recycled materials, bricks and building rubble. Sophia guards the adventure playground, the native bush area, 'Kallaroo', and the award-winning student gardens.

Principal Paul Chisholm has proudly taken on the role of dragon keeper, allowing the kids to climb on her massive body, while her eight-metre-long wings form outdoor classrooms for two classes. Her pouch hides a valuable treasure. During



her 'hatching' she provided learning project opportunities – in the techniques of building, the calculation of materials and the mixing of concrete – and of course she continues to inspire art works and the writing of fantasy stories and poems. Every child at the school has made his or her own ceramic tile to decorate her wings.

Sophia was created by Glenbrook artists and Lapstone Public School parents Lisa Goehner and Kristin Wohlers with the wonderful help and hard work of many other parents.

Sophia is an ingenious example of the re-use of materials that would otherwise go to landfill.

Ron Withington

Above: Lapstone Public School Group at the Blue Mountains School Environment Awards with Deirdree, a Giant Dragonfly!
Left: Sophia the Dragon, unsigned symbol of sustainability.

HAS COUNCIL GONE DEAF?

Have you felt frustrated by Blue Mountains City Council's failure to enforce its own regulations to protect the environment? Is it a lack of resources, of will, or of a strong policy?

In March this year Council called for public comments on its Draft Enforcement Policy. The purpose of this policy is to help council officers decide whether to take action in response to an offence and, if so, what type of action is required. The offences covered relate to environmental protection matters, public safety issues and unauthorised developments.

Although based primarily on the NSW Ombudsman's 'Model Enforcement Policy' (published in June 2002), it is disappointing that Council has not ensured that its own version also reflects the priorities contained in the '25-Year Vision for the City' (adopted by Council in July 2003). In its first Key Direction, 'Looking after the Environment', the Vision makes it a priority to protect the natural environment and minimise the impact of existing and new developments on native flora and fauna".

The Council review of the draft policy and the eleven community submissions failed to seriously consider any of the major issues we raised. It seems our concerns fell upon deaf ears as only three very minor phrases in the draft policy were changed!

Requests for a public meeting concerning the Draft Enforcement Policy were also rejected by both Council staff and the majority of Councillors.

Major Issues

The Society's major proposal was that:

"incidents of environmental destruction currently in progress should be given a 'Priority 1' rating of 'Urgent' and should be responded to within 2 hours, particularly where damage may be averted by an immediate response".

For example, a quick response could prevent further damage in cases such as bushland being illegally bulldozed.

Council's response was that *"a policy document is not the appropriate document to specify operational matters"*. However, this argument does not ring true, as the draft (and final) policy gives other examples of urgent matters and states that urgent matters should be dealt with on the day and nuisance matters within fifteen working days. How can these be 'non operational matters' if our proposal is an 'operational matter'?

Council staff spoke of an 'operational document', currently being drafted, which will address the matters raised. Will the community be permitted to see this document? Will dialogue be invited?

Other points raised in our submission were not even mentioned in the report to Councillors in the Business paper. They included:

- expanding the principle of 'cost effectiveness' to include the long-term implications of failure to take enforcement action;
- adding 'encroachment on public land' to the list of offences covered by the policy;

Our submission challenged Council's oft-stated position that *"because the damage has already occurred, there is no point in taking enforcement action"* and included many examples of Council's failure to take effective enforcement action. This inaction is well known in the community and encourages further environmental breaches.

Action Needed

Giving up is not the answer - we must continue to report incidents of environmental damage whenever we see them. You can do this by lodging a 'Customer Service Request' (CSR) at Council in one of the following ways:

- write to Blue Mountains City Council, Locked Bag 1005, Katoomba 2780;
- ring 4780 5000 (Upper Mountains) or 4723 5000 (Lower Mountains);
- email council@bmcc.nsw.gov.au; or via their website at www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au.

Make sure you report all the details (include photographs, if possible), keep a copy yourself, and get a CSR number. This ensures you can follow up your request and, if you send the details to BMCS, enables us to track its progress as well.

If you are interested in pursuing this issue, contact Lyndal Sullivan (4782 1635, lsullivan@eftel.net.au) or any other member of the Land-Use Subcommittee.

Lyndal Sullivan, Land-Use Subcommittee

The Legacy of Milton Friedman 1912 - 2006



President Bush honours Milton Friedman at a ceremony in 2002

(Photo: Doug Mills/Associated Press,

With the passing of Milton Friedman I wonder if people of the future will regard him as kindly as his acolytes do today? The fundamentalist economic ideology he has so effectively promoted has changed the world, but with environmental and social consequences well beyond the expertise and control of economists and their political followers.

As power has shifted from the public to the private sector, productivity and short-term economic efficiency may have greatly increased, but this has led to our unthinking, resource-wasteful consumerism, and widely resented disparities in wealth.

It has also diverted attention and resources away from broader, longer-term and non-market issues which are essentially the responsibility of governments. People of the future will consequently be faced with a legacy for which Friedman must share considerable blame: global warming, unhealthy air and water, depletion of natural resources and a greatly impoverished biodiversity."

Fred Bell

Dr Fred Bell is an applied mathematician, hydrologist and multi-disciplinary scientist specialising in the quantitative assessment of natural resources and environmental impacts. His professional experience ranges from hydrographer in the Northern Territory to professor of hydrology at Colorado State University and senior lecturer in climatology and applied science at the University of New South Wales.

He currently works as a consultant, specialising in predictive mathematical modelling and multidisciplinary analyses for environmental impact assessment.

(and fills the role of Honorary Editor of the Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society's newsletter, 'O.F.F. News', in his spare time!...Ed.).

The more things change, the more they stay the same!

by Brian Marshall

“Is John Howard fair dinkum in his belated discovery of the importance of climate change? A key test will be whether ... he seeks to harness or frustrate market mechanisms.” (Ross Gittins, SMH, Nov 13 p23).

The Prime Minister's reactions to the draft findings of the Switkowski Report (Peter Hartcher, SMH, Nov 22, p10) would seem to reflect frustrating market mechanisms. He believes the economics of uranium-based nuclear power are 'obvious and compelling', yet refuses to accept that this necessitates dramatic rises in the price of coal- and gas-fired electricity. Being 'pro-uranium' and 'pro-coal', his conundrum comprises promoting the former without penalising the economic advantage of the latter. As an economic rationalist believing in market forces, he should eschew all taxpayer-funded subsidies and allow energy systems to compete on a level playing field through a carbon tax and emissions trading scheme. But as a political pragmatist, he can 'justify' massive taxpayer subsidies for 'clean' nuclear power, because it relatively reduces greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, if he can concurrently delay or avoid introducing a carbon tax (another report?), the life of our 'cheap' taxpayer-subsidised coal-fired energy will be extended, and 'with luck', the industry might develop commercially viable 'clean coal' or carbon sequestration technologies.

John Howard's 'Damascus-like' conversion to the importance of climate change is still subsumed by his expedient perception of Australia's short- to medium-term economic interests. He shows none of the "...*genuine long-term vision and leadership...*" identified by Ian Dunlop (Hut News, No. 231, p3). How long before we are told that a small nuclear power industry will be a moral asset when exporting our massive uranium resources to China, India and any other country that is deemed suitable?

The draft Switkowski Report (SMH, Nov 22 pp1, 10, 11) uses optimistic construction costs for uranium-based nuclear power plants, disregards insurance and decommissioning costs, and largely avoids the direct and indirect costs of establishing plant and waste storage sites. Although emphasising that investment in nuclear power should not proceed in the absence of a carbon tax, the upbeat report nevertheless asks Australians to embrace a nuclear power industry that by 2050 might supply 30% of Australia's power needs. In so doing, it indirectly endorses the mining and export of Australia's uranium resources. So let's ask a few questions:

Do you want a uranium-based nuclear power station in your back yard? Did anyone say yes?

Does anyone truly believe that the proliferation of uranium-based nuclear power and the availability of nuclear weapons are totally divorced from each other? Silence!

If terrorism is the 'new enemy', is it likely to sign a nuclear non-proliferation treaty? No! Is it probable that terrorists will gain access to nuclear weaponry? Highly! And if terrorists are fanatical individuals or groups, how can the threat of nuclear retaliation against a nation deter them? It can't!

Do you prefer uncontrolled climate change or nuclear Armageddon (slow or rapid conflagration!)? Not a fair question because neither is acceptable. Yet they are the end-members of a risk spectrum created by the notion that uranium-based nuclear power is the best way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions without damaging Australia's and the World's economies.

What is the main difference between uranium-based nuclear power and renewable energy sources? The latter can neither be mined nor significantly exported. It neither exploits Australia's strategic uranium advantage, nor panders to Australia's unashamed selfishness, as typified by a Prime Minister who rejects anything that compromises Australia's economic interests.

If uranium-based nuclear power supplies 30%, what supplies the other 70%? Presumably coal, gas and renewable energy resources, but how much of each? And will renewables receive equivalent levels of taxpayer subsidy?

Will a uranium-based power industry resolve Australia's emissions problem? No! If fully implemented, the 25 plants would supposedly lower emissions by 8 to 18% of the 'business as usual' estimate for 2050 (SMH, Nov 22, p11). At least 60% is needed to minimise climate change.

What is the alternative to focussing on uranium-based nuclear power as a 'solution' to climate change? A multifaceted approach is essential (see Hut News No 230 p3), but for re-emphasis:

- Sign the Kyoto protocol – it would help the environment, give Australia international credibility and enable Australia to participate in the international emissions market (currently worth about \$US30 billion).
- Appreciate the message in the Stern report and don't let John Howard avoid another inconvenient truth.
- Recognise that renewable energy resources are currently disadvantaged, so demand a level playing field where market forces can operate unencumbered by government.
- Demand the introduction of an Australian carbon tax – the polluter should pay.
- Accept that the coal industry will pursue ways of mitigating its emissions and remaining competitive.
- Acknowledge that some countries will employ uranium-based nuclear power – perhaps more to fuel economic expansion and maintain energy independence than reduce emissions.
- Appreciate that technology is not static – thorium- and lithium-based nuclear power systems might become commercially viable and be more environmentally compatible than uranium-based systems.
- Become more energy efficient in the work place and at home.

Finally, continue to make your voice heard through emails (see Robin Mosman - Hut News, No 231, p3), petitions (e.g. <http://www.getup.org.au/>, http://www.democrats.org.au/campaigns/nuclear_industry/petition.htm - you don't need to be a Democrat) and letters to the local and national newspapers.

Do not be manipulated into thinking that uranium-based energy is the solution to combating climate change.

Demand that your politicians look beyond party politics.

Anvil Hill Update

The proposed new coal mine at Anvil Hill would produce 10.5 million tonnes of coal a year, which when burned would produce greenhouse gas emissions greater than those of all the cars on NSW's roads (Hut News, No.229).

However, on 27 November, Justice Nicola Pain made the historic decision to set aside the Director-General's acceptance of the Environmental Assessment for the Anvil Hill coal mine, on the grounds that it did not include a comprehensive greenhouse gas assessment.

Centennial Coal, proponent of the Anvil Hill coal mine, may now have to rewrite their environmental assessment to comply with this decision, assessing the impact of greenhouse pollution from coal dug at the mine on the NSW environment.

Both State and Federal governments are worried that the decision could set a precedent for the assessment of all mines, roads and other energy-intensive industries.

The NSW Government is likely to appeal against this landmark ruling.

Sources: *Anvil Hill Alliance website, www.anvilhill.org.au*
Sydney Morning Herald, 29 November 2006.

Recycled water

Apart from reducing our water consumption, we can save it by recycling. There are two levels of recycled water - domestic and institutional. Both are very important and make a huge difference to human consumption, leaving more water for the environment so it can continue its important functions to sustain life as we know it.

Domestic recycling

This is what we can do at home to re-use water and how much we do this depends on our creativity and motivation. There are two ways to re-use grey water. This is water that has washed us, clothes, dishes, and so on; really every use except drinking and cooking:

1. Put it back into the system as we do when using washing machine or hand-basin water to flush the 'loo.
2. Use it to grow food, shade, or other products by putting it onto our gardens over mulch and allowing it to filter through the compost layer and the soil where it is taken up by plants.

In both cases it is very important to add as few contaminants as possible to the water systems at source or in the garden.

Institutional recycling

This is when a water institution decides to accept and clean all "grey" water and either releases it to the environment, or feeds it back to its users. (Black water is sewerage only).

When an institution recycles water it does so to a standard that the pathogen load is almost negligible. Primarily it uses chemicals to do this and so our water is 'chemicalised', very expensive, and presently, the longer term effects of this on human health are unknown. And this water is used for the majority of home/office/shop activities such as clothes washing, dish washing, flushing toilets and watering gardens.

The institution thus supplies:

- clean chemically treated water for drinking and cooking;
- recycled 'chemicalised' water for other uses.

If you grew up on a farm you are familiar with this two-tier water system which usually had two taps over the kitchen sink -

one for drinking and cooking and one for washing up etc. Some Sydney Councils are doing this. And, we are not advocates for recycled drinking water - just a two-tier system.

One issue now concerning authorities is the load of hormone related chemicals from the medicines and tablets so many people take which are not affected by added chlorine and ammonia and would be retained in "recycled" water. The long term effects of these are also unknown. This is the water that Sydney Water releases into the Nepean River from the Wimmalee Sewage Treatment Plant.

We do not know the effect of these hormone related chemicals in the environment and our water cycle. Nor do we know whether there is any research to find ways to remove the worst effects.

If you are now concerned about the water you use for drinking and cooking, and if you are a lucky Blue Mountains resident above the level of the Cumberland Plains pollution, a good rainwater tank with filters is your best option. For extra safety, boil the water before you drink it. It is a fine, luxurious and refreshing nectar - it's yours and it's free and you can control its chemical load.

>>>>> STOP PRESS <<<<<

> Victoria's premier has declared that Victoria will have the biggest and best water recycling plant in the southern hemisphere. Water will be recycled for many uses and some systems will be decentralised. Political analysts say that water and climate change policies were big factors in returning the present Victorian Government - people are very concerned.

> Queensland's Gold Coast City Council won the Global Grand Prize at the recent World Water Congress for its water plan, which is designed to deliver Australia's largest fully integrated sustainable water community. It's won other prestigious awards as well. The plan will save up to 84% of drinking water through the use of Class A+ recycled water and rainwater. The different classes of water will be delivered through different coloured taps.

Why can't we have the same, at least, as Victoria or the Gold Coast City Council?

VALLEY OF THE WATERS BUSHCARE GROUP, 10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Valley Of The Waters Bushcare Group achieved its 10th Anniversary on 21 October 2006.

In the past, some members of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society had undertaken weeding around the Conservation Hut and along the Nature Trail on an occasional basis. However, it was Jessica Yuille who initially formed the Bushcare Group, as part of her role as Bushcare Officer with the Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

Although the Bushcare Group is part of the Blue Mountains Conservation

Society, we work closely with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and also with Council.

Jessica co-ordinated the Group for approximately seven years. Karen Hising has undertaken the co-ordination role for the last five years. Many other people have volunteered their time and efforts over the years and some continue to the present.

The initial problem of the site was a huge amount of Broom after fire and we still continue to remove this weed over the whole area. Agapanthus has now

become the focus weed of the site, particularly in good bush areas, where it is escaping from residential properties. To counteract this problem, we are trying to connect with the local residents to reduce the impact this plant is having on the site.

As the weather conditions on the day of the anniversary were damp and cold, we held our morning tea celebration at the Mosman's home.

It was wonderful to catch up with past and present members of the Group, other Wentworth Falls Bushcare Group members, "Aggie Assaulters", National Parks staff, as well as friends and neighbours to the site.

Karen Hising, Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group Coordinator

BMCS Bushcare

The Valley of the Waters Bushcare group works in the Blue Mountains National Park in Wentworth Falls on the 2nd Saturday of each month.

Tools are provided but bring morning tea, gloves and drinking water. New members are always welcome. Contact Karen on 4757 1929.



Back left: Les Coyne, Mary Coyne, Judy Lake, Dan Lucey, Janet Shields, Warwick Mosman, Kim de Govrik (NPWS A/Manager - Blue Mountains Region), Barbara Harley, Laurel Harris, Margot Turner, Norm Harris, Ruth Ley

Front left: Robin Mosman, Karen Hising, Rosemary Lathouris, Ben Correy (NPWS Ranger, Upper Mountains Area)

SYDNEY WATER'S DECISION on the UPPER BLUE MOUNTAINS SEWERAGE SCHEME how it affect us and the National Park

History and events behind the decision

In 1998 CH2M HILL prepared an Environmental Impact Statement for Sydney Water for a Sewerage Scheme in the Upper Blue Mountains. The preferred option was for local treatment and discharge, to upgrade the existing Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) and install a transfer system for Medlow Bath. Sydney Water selected this option.

However, several events led to a reversal of this decision in favour of sewage transfer through the Blue Mountains sewage tunnel and centralised processing of all sewage at Winmalee. These events included:

- Department of Environment and Conservation opposition to discharge into the Grose River from the Blackheath STP;
- the listing of Blue Mountains for World Heritage status;
- the 1998 contamination incident of Sydney's water supply;
- NSW Health Department advice that the reuse of treated effluent to supplement drinking water supplies was unlikely to be approved in the near future.

In October 2005 Sydney Water called for submissions on the plan to transfer all sewage from Upper Mountains towns to Winmalee for treatment and subsequent release into the Nepean River.

The major concerns raised by the community were:

- the huge amount of water that the scheme would consume;
- the lack of local re-use options.

Sydney Water's decision and report

After considering submissions, in September 2006 Sydney Water released its report and its decision on the Upper Blue Mountains Sewage Scheme for Medlow Bath, Blackheath and Mt Victoria.

Changes and amendments were minor and neither of the two major community concerns has been seriously considered.

Sydney Water rejected re-use/recycling suggestions because of the cost and because of the low level of estimated effluent re-use. It estimated that only 53% of the clean generated water could be reused in the upper mountains towns. So there is a need for disposal of the other 47%. This raises questions about

disposal of treated water into the National Park.

Both Hat Hill and Fairy Dell Creeks currently keep flowing because they rely on effluent discharge from the existing Blackheath and Mt Victoria STPs because of the large number of illegal connections which redirect stormwater into the sewer. Closing down these STPs will reduce water flowing into the creeks to less than their natural flows - unless there is a compensatory strategy to rectify this and there doesn't appear to be one.

Unfortunately, this report and the decisions made by Sydney Water, are the inevitable result of the limitations imposed by the current NSW government. Water is still not being understood as part of a whole "water cycle" and so, future, and environmental needs are not considered.

The opportunity has been lost to explore avenues for water re-use especially when the community is highly motivated. Even if the technology is not currently available, some discussion of the possibilities for investing in and/or retaining infrastructure could prove beneficial. For example, installing an additional pipe during the construction of the reticulation system in Blackheath for a future recycled water system would be relatively cheap and show considerable foresight.

However, there are State elections next year which offer the opportunity for us all to raise the need for water re-use. We need a commitment to develop treatment technologies for quality effluent to satisfy both Health and National Park release requirements and look at the long term effects of added chemicals presently used in our water.

Overall, the Upper Mountains Sewage plans remain the same, with fairly insubstantial tweaking, such as:

- a design change for the crossing of Cascade Dam;
- some additional environmental mitigation techniques!!!

If you wish to see the responses given to the community concerns you can read the report at Sydney Water's Katoomba office.

In the next issue we will cover other aspects of concern in Sydney Water's response, and what we can do.

P.S. Have you sent in your water-saving tips to get the Craig Linn book prize?

CORRECTION Last month's story 'How we can help the Macquarie Marshes', claimed that Rosemary had reduced her daily water use from 85 to 2 litres per day. She's not that good!...it should have read 52 litres.

Nursery News Kevin Bell

As this is the last Nursery News for 2006 it is timely to thank all our valued customers who have given us so much satisfaction by buying the plants we have enjoyed raising. We hope they continue to give you pleasure for many years and we look forward to seeing you all in 2007. We intend to increase the range of species to tempt you but all the old favourites will still be there. Look at our web-site early next year.

The Blackheath nursery will close after trading on Tuesday 19 December and the Lawson nursery one day later: we will re-open on 16 and 17 January 2007 respectively. And for those of you who cannot come to our weekly nurseries, we will be at the Lawson Magpie Markets on Sunday 17 December. But be early as plants sell quickly!- last month we sold just over \$700 worth.

If you are looking for a season's gift for a plant-loving friend or relative, we have gift certificates for \$10, \$20 or \$50, redeemable any time.

To conclude our quick survey of pea-plants raised in the nursery we look at *Dillwynia*, named after the amateur Welsh botanist and conchologist, Lewis Weston Dillwyn (1778-1855).

He began his working career by taking over his father's pottery in Swansea in 1802. In 1817 he became the High Sheriff of Glamorgan and an MP in the First Reformed Parliament of 1834. He was mayor of Swansea in 1839 and one of the founders of the Royal Institution of South Wales and its first President.

He carried his enthusiasm for botany right through his career although he never saw in the wild any of the genus named after him.

We raise just one member of the genus, *Dillwynia retorta*, commonly known as "Eggs and Bacon", which grows prolifically all over the Blue Mountains and its yellow flowers with a touch of red (more egg than bacon) brighten the Spring bushland. It grows to 1-2m and tolerates light shade.

As usual, we welcome suggestions for plants we might raise, particularly if you can provide seeds.

So, from all the nursery volunteers,
Happy Holidays!



Eggs and Bacon, *Dillwynia retorta*.

(Photo: Juli Boddy)

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY BUSHWALKING GROUP

Membership of the bushwalking group is open to Society members. **Cost of insurance and affiliation fees is \$15 per member.**

For further information, contact the Walks Convenor, David Bowskill (4757 3416, davidbow@tpg.com.au).

BEFORE ATTENDING, PLEASE DISCUSS THE WALK WITH THE LEADER (listed below)

- THIS IS ESSENTIAL IF THIS IS YOUR FIRST WALK OR YOU ARE UNSURE OF THE CLASSIFICATION.

MONDAY LEISURE WALKS

Usually 'Short Day' walks of 3-5 hours, suitable for walkers of average fitness. Graded **MEDIUM**, these walks may include some short rock scrambles or sections off track. Bring morning tea and lunch. Carry at least 1 litre of **WATER**, 2 litres on warm days.

Dec-18	Xmas party - BBQ lunch <i>Meat provided, bring salad or dessert to share. For more information, contact Mary on 4787 6584.</i>	Meet for cricket at the duckpond, Blackheath Park	10.00am
Jan-8	Furber Steps and Boardwalk, Katoomba <i>Rainforest walk with great views, return by cable car.</i>	Mary 4787 6918 Outside Gearin's Hotel, Katoomba	8.30am
Jan-15	Pope's Glen, Govett's Leap, Braeside <i>Typical upper mountains creeks and gullies.</i>	Ian 4787 7182 Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre	8.30am
Jan-22	Walls Ledge, Blackheath <i>Mountain heath and valley views.</i>	Norah 4757 4058 Blackheath Station carpark	8.30am
Jan-29	Walls Cave, Lizard Rock. Blackheath <i>Huge overhang at end of creek walk.</i>	Heather 4739 1493 Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre	8.30am
Feb-5	Spit to Manly <i>Sydney Harbour Foreshore Walk.</i>	Mary 4787 6918 Top of escalators at Central Station	9.30am
Feb-12	Thor Head, Mt. Victoria <i>Views over Grose Valley.</i>	Ron 4757 1526 Mt Victoria Station	8.30am

THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS

EASY to MEDIUM grade walks conducted to suit walkers on the day. Slower walkers are catered for; on longer walks there may be an option for a slower group to complete only a section of the walk. Carry at least 1 litre of **WATER**, 2 litres on warm days.

Dec-14 Christmas Party, Wentworth Falls Lake **Simone 4757 3416** **Wentworth Falls carpark (nr clock) 10.45am**
Walk to lake from Village. BYOG and a plate to share. BBQ facilities available.

Thursday walks will resume on January 18, 2007.

Details will be available on our website or from Simone Bowskill on 4757 3416 in January.

WEEKEND WALKS

Before attending, please discuss the walk with the leader or the Weekend Walks organiser, Jim Percy (4758 6009). Carry at least 1 litre of **WATER**, 2 litres on warm days.

Dec-16	Mt Wilson and Christmas Lunch EASY	Bob 4757 2694	Mt Victoria Station carpark	11.00am
<i>Short walk to October Creek bogey hole to work up an appetite for lunch at Sefton Cottage - expected to be \$30 each. Bookings with \$5 deposit essential.</i>				
Dec-30	National Pass	Meet: Wentworth Falls Station carpark	8.30am	<i>These walks are all graded MEDIUM and are along shady tracks.</i> Contact: Ron 4757 1526
Jan-6	Wentworth Pass	Wentworth Falls Station carpark	8.30am	
Jan-13	Federal Pass	Leura Station carpark	8.30am	
Jan-20	Federal Pass	Gearin's Hotel carpark	8.30am	
Jan-27	Porters Pass	Blackheath Station carpark	8.30am	
Feb-3	Little Zig-Zag	Mt Victoria Station carpark	8.30am	
Feb-10	Sassafras Gully	Springwood Station carpark	9.00am	

Missing your favourite walk?

If you would like to lead a walk, or if you haven't seen your favourite walk on the program for a while and you're not confident to lead it yourself, let me know and I will try to get someone to lead it with you. Jim - phone 4758 6009 or email jp34@tpg.com.au.

Want to learn more?

Do you want to learn more about the Blue Mountains or work in environmental land care?

Our local TAFE at Wentworth Falls has some terrific environmental courses, such as Bush Regeneration, Interpretive Guiding and Land Management.

Subjects offered include native plant recognition, treatment of weeds, geology, weather, water testing, reading maps and planning outdoor activities. You can enrol in subjects for personal interest and most involve field trips, so the study has a practical application.

The teachers are our very own local experts, willingly sharing their knowledge and creating an informal and supportive learning environment. It's a great place to learn and to make friends and employment contacts.

The TAFE front office has free brochures available and can advise of enrolment dates in 2007.

Meredith Brownhill

NEWNES PLATEAU

Pine forest roads lead us toward waratahs and wilderness.

I am held by thoughts of Distance, as we travel through spring's bloom of boronia and bish iris.

A moment of suspense...

A flock of yellow-tailed black cockatoos !

Silken black lines poised over lusty smudged earth.

Wafting dead centre with sure weighty wings, they hang mid-distance above the dirt road.

For a moment, ... their flight and ours transfixed... we know the same open way.

Bernadette Hodgson, November 2006

Welcome to new members

Graham Cooke, Parkes
Dianne Honeysett, Springwood
Deirdre Johansen, Medlow Bath
Peter Dietz & Susanne Langer, Springwood
Dave Lockwood, Dundas
Marianne Reich, Little Hartley



MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES

Rod Quirk
Phone 4784 1711
Email: rod.quirk@exemail.com.au
PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782