

LOWER BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION  
SOCIETY NEWSLETTER.

MAY 1970.

P.O. BOX 119, SPRINGWOOD. 2777.

President; B. Bramsen Ph. 512787 Secretary; A. Hanley 394079.

**NEXT MEETING;**

Friday, June 8th. 8 p.m. Glenbrook Primary School when Phillip Simpfendorfer will again show some of his beautiful photography from his recent trip to India.

**EXCURSION:**

Long Weekend camp to Munghorn Gap near Mudgee, the site being near a small natural spring that attracts a large variety of birds in a generally dry part of the country. For details, contact Mick or Jill Dark, 391764. June 16 - 18th.

**COMING EVENTS:**

June 5th. World Environment Day. The emphasis this year is on "Things we want to Keep, Our Natural Environment". A meeting is being held that night (Tuesday), to discuss the current revision of the five Federal Government Environment Acts. Dr. Moss Cass, Senator Mason, and Stuart McGill will be amongst the guest speakers. The meeting starts at 7.30 p.m., in the Tom Mann Theatre, A.M.W.S.U. Building, 136 Chalmers Street, Surrey Hills.

June 9th - 10th. One of the society's members, Richard Thompson is leading a medium full pack walk in the Kanagra-Boyd National Park, from Gingra Tops down to the beautiful Kowmung River.

June 26th The Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia presents a talk on native plants for Sydney Gardens by Alex Blomberry. 8 p.m. The Environment Centre, 39 Pitt St. Sydney.

July 9th. The National Parks Association is showing a film called "Wilderness" produced by Garry Steer for the NPWS, giving an approach to park management, zoning and the philosophy of park use. 8 p.m., Room 1, 7th floor, GUOOF Building, 149 Castlereagh Street, Sydney.

July 7th - 9th Richard Thompson is leading a medium full pack walk through the Wild Dog Mountains down to the Cox's River. There are limits to the size of the party in both his walks. If interested, phone 02 4283471.

Society's Letterhead.

The Society's correspondence now carries the very beautiful artwork of a Spinebill Honeyeater hovering above the Mountain Devil Honey flower. The Outer Western Regional Council were able to print the letterheads in black and white, presenting a fine motive.



### "DARK'S COMMON".

Again the question of the Crown Land subdivision between Lapstone and Glenbrook has been raised in an over-all objection about the Town Plan. The Plan as presented now allows for a population level of 200,000 if all land is subdivided to its zoned capacity. However, when the scheme was on exhibition, the indication on the part of the residents was for a level of 80,000. The subdivision of "Dark's Common" certainly aggravates the situation. The society has written letters to the various Ministers involved in the decision, registering its disapproval. Member for Nepean, Mr. Peter Anderson has been diligently working towards a solution.

### ERSKINE STATE FOREST.

Following a report of recent logging activities in the upper reaches of the Erskine Creek valley, near Rocky Knob Point, a letter has been received from the Forestry Commission, to explain these activities on the only unpolluted stream in the Blue Mountains.

Erskine State Forest was dedicated in 1959 for multiple-use purposes of timber supply and recreation. Since then, it has been a moderate source of timber for a Blacktown sawmill.

In 1967, 30% of the forest was revoked and added to the Blue Mountains National Park. The remainder of the forest was included in the Greater Southern Blue Mountains National Park in December 1976.

However, despite a formal revocation schedule submitted to the Government by the Forestry Commission, no parliamentary action has taken place to implement the 1976 decision.

The Government has indicated that logging should continue pending the revocation of the forest.

The society has written to the Nature Conservation Council asking for a progress report on the motion put forward at the last annual meeting by Katoomba Districts to include the forest in the National Park.

WOLLEMI NATIONAL PARK. Tuesday, April 24th was a day of celebration when Mr. Paul Landa, Planning and Environment Minister announced the creation of 502, 000 hectares of National Park, the second largest in N.S.W. after Kosciusko. This is the culmination of 15 years of controversy over the fate of the Colo-Hunter wilderness. The hard work by Hayden Washington and fellow members of the Colo Committee in recent years has paid off, and they are thanked for all their untiring efforts. The society also sent a congratulatory message to Paul Landa for his decision.

Some compromises have had to be made. Areas in the north of the park have been set aside for sawmilling for four years. An agreement with the Department of Mines has meant that it is possible to mine the coal deposits underground with a reduced amount of surface disturbance.

### FUNDS.

The society is grateful for the very good response in payment of subscriptions recently, and the Ivy Market at Springwood has proved an excellent opportunity for introducing new members. As a result of our improving finances, the society has been able to give some help to a number of organizations.

A donation of \$50 has been made towards the A.C.F. campaign to stop the damaging changes to the Federal Environmental Legislation. Also, \$50 was given to the Colo Committee to print more pamphlets on the National Park Proposals.



A teach-in was organised by the Aboriginal Land Rights Support Group to bring members of aboriginal communities to Sydney to talk to many representatives of the organizations interested in giving aid. The Society gave \$15 towards bringing the aboriginal people to the city for the talks.

A \$15 donation was made towards the production of a film on Southwestern Tasmania highlighting the need to stop the damming of the Gordon River.

The Australian Conservation Foundation has begun a membership drive with the hopes of doubling their membership. This is an attempt to offset the drastic cuts in grants under the Commonwealth Administrative Supports Grant Scheme. Grants to Environmental groups were reduced from \$400,000 (1977/78) to \$350,000 (1978/79), the \$50,000 reduction coming exclusively from A.C.F. funding.

Says Mr. Paul Landa; "Clearly the Commonwealth Fraser Government is attempting to put pressure on the A.C.F. because of the effective role it has developed as a community watchdog organization over policies of the Fraser Government in the environmental area.

The A.C.F. wishes to reach a stage where it will be able to operate efficiently on the basis of its subscriptions without being tied to the whims of Government Grants Schemes. Membership fee of \$12 p.a. includes their worthwhile newsletter, Tjurkulpa, and \$7 more secures you 6 issues of their colour booklet, "Habitat".

#### RURAL SUBDIVISIONS.

Following the trouble experienced at Mulgoa and Norton's Basin with plans for a large rural subdivision to create a prestigious living area complete with country club and attendant facilities, it was gratifying to note that a very similar massive development by the same developer on the shores of a serene Lake Hiawatha (just south east of Grafton) was refused permission to continue by MR. Paul Landa recently.

An article by V. and R. Routley in the April/May edition of the National Parks Journal is well worth reading on the question of small rural subdivisions.

Briefly, their argument is not to penalize the farmer of small acreages on a "non-productive" basis for it also affects the private conservationist and earth farmer. To specifically encourage productive use of the land is to encourage further clearance and much degradation of privately owned bushland.

To penalize those who are living off the land in a low impact way producing food and other requirements for their own needs intensively and organically, is to "enshrine and reinforce, through planning ordinances, taxation and rating penalties, the commitment to an environmentally damaging suburban lifestyle and its energy wasteful, conventional farming complement."

This very question of "productively using" the land has just been raised in Penrith City Council with regards to the rural rating system. People living on small acreages must prove they earn their livelihood from the use of their land, to qualify for a rural rating rather than having to pay higher urban rates.

WIRIMBIRRA SANCTUARY. Four of the society's members went on the camp to the National Trust Property at Bargo. They were able to accomplish a great deal of weeding and some of the heavier work, for which the Ranger was very thankful.



"PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT ACTS = SAFEGUARD OUR HERITAGE"

Whilst the State Government is doing its best to improve State legislation on Environment and Planning matters, the mining companies are doing their best to "destroy and emasculate" five Federal Government Acts concerning our heritage and the environment.

As the acts stand now, they provide only minimal protection of our environment and to have them further weakened would drastically set back conservation in Australia. The acts involved are as follows;

1. The Australian Heritage Act 1975 which has wide powers to conserve and improve the National Estate. The weakness here lies in the fact that a site must first be registered on the Heritage list, whereupon the Minister then decides what is a reasonable attempt to conserve and what is a feasible amount of protection for a National Estate item. Therefore, a great deal depends on the personality and leanings of the Minister.

The Australian Mining Industry Council want to remove the personal obligation of the Minister to be involved in this final decision making, thus relieving the Minister of the personal need to justify to the public any move to de-list a site in order to enable mining operations to proceed.

2. The Environment Protection Act (Impact of Proposals) 1974 which provides for logical environmental procedures for developments coming under Federal Government Control. The weakness here lies in the fact that a public inquiry into development proposals may only be done at the discretion of the Minister. The mining companies want to return the control of environment protection to the States. This would be disastrous for those States, W.A. Queensland and Tasmania where legislation is not strong or effective.

3. The Aboriginal Land Rights (N.T.) Act 1976 which restores some measure of land ownership to dispossessed Aboriginal people. The dispute here is over the right of entry to their land for mining purposes.

4. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975 which provides a mechanism for protecting the Great Barrier Reef and establishing parts of it as a Marine Park. Since this legislation was passed, the Marine Park has not been proclaimed. Meanwhile, whilst decisions are being made about its boundaries, drilling and mining can still take place. The dangers of allowing environmental control of this asset to pass to the State are obvious. The large Marine Park needs to be proclaimed now, and the smaller, specially managed National Parks within the general area can be considered later.

5. The National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975 which established a professional service to acquire and manage national parks for the Federal Government. A campaign to discredit the NPWS is underway by the woodchip industry who are enraged at the requirement to provide an Environmental Impact Statement before starting to log an area.

These Acts form the very basis of environmental protection in Australia. To weaken them is a great step backwards. The amendments proposed by the Australian Mining Industry Council "stand to confer on the States the power to give the green light to overseas mining interests. The Barrier Reef will be mined and "the bulldozers will be back on Frazer Island".



The Australian Conservation Foundation Council resolved to call on the Commonwealth Government to defer any review of the Acts until the House of Representatives Standing Committee on the Environment has reported on the legislation. When a report from that committee is available, the government will be requested to take action to protect and upgrade the Acts.

If you are interested in hearing more, a meeting is being held on June 5th at 7.30 p.m. at 136 Chalmers Street, Surrey Hills.

#### NEW ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING LEGISLATION IN N.S.W.

At the State level changes are being made to structure and powers of the Planning and Environment Commission. The Department has published a series of brochures explaining the changes and organisation of the decision-making process involving the Minister, the Department of Environment and Planning, local councils and the citizen. Copies of the Bill are available for scrutiny, and constructive comment is welcomed by Paul Landa before the Bill is read in Parliament. (before the end of July).

Under the Bill, the Planning and Environment Commission will be replaced by the Department of Environment and Planning, which will assume the Environmental Impact assessment functions of the State Pollution Control Commission. The new department will have extensive powers of delegation, and where local Councils demonstrate the capability, they will be delegated responsibility and power.

The main objective of the change is to speed up the decision making process, and provide positive guidelines for development and to foster investment. It is the wish to broaden the scope of planning, to embrace economic, social and ecological considerations in the preparation of environmental plans.

The new department will authorize the preparation of different types and forms of environmental plans designed to deal with the State, the region, and local planning issues. These environmental plans will fulfill the role currently performed by planning schemes and interim development orders. It is hoped these new plans will give a much clearer guide to development and to environmental protection needs. Each environmental plan will be preceded by an environmental study designed to identify the capacity of the area for change, and to identify the social and economic influences on planning decisions.

In an effort to speed up the process, the prior identification of the capacity of the land will reduce the need for further environmental impact statements from individual development proposals. The Department will be essentially concerned with broad plans and land-use of a State or regional significance, whilst the local Councils work within those plans on more detailed matters. A Local Government Liaison Committee will be formed to maintain communication between the State and the Councils.

There is to be a great emphasis on public participation in being able to comment on the study and the aims of local and regional environmental plans. After consideration of these comments, a draft plan will be made, and exhibited for further public comment; upon consideration of which, a final plan will be drawn up and gazetted.

Such an environmental plan may amend any existing plan. However, there will be more flexibility in plans than at present in Town Plans, in order to avoid the necessity for constant minor alterations. Existing local planning schemes and I.D.O.'s will continue in force although some aspects of them will be superseded by the Bill.



Whilst provision is made for any person or group to make submissions during the preparation of the Environmental Plans, it is often difficult to foresee many issues, and society's attitudes may change such that something not seen to be environmentally important now, will be in the future. Further the 'general public' are not known to act until the adverse development is on their doorstep. Likewise, it requires a lot of effort to remain informed on development and environmental issues on a regional level. The brochures stress the need to make this effort, to give the Minister a greater range of information from which to base his decisions.

The process of determining development applications will be streamlined to take a positive approach to development standards, emphasizing levels of performance instead of minimal requirements and restrictions. This appears a boon in comparison to days when it was purely simpler for developers to comply with a Council's minimum requirements; the end result being a minimal environmental quality.

If you are interested in more details of this legislation, write to the Planning Environment Commission. All details of the legislation have not been mentioned here.

#### GLENBROOK LAGOON COMMITTEE.

On Sunday, May 27th a meeting was held at the lagoon, and a motion to construct a road to the water to enable the launching of larger boats was narrowly defeated by 6 votes to 5. Attendance at future meetings is recommended to maintain the quality of the lagoon. Meetings are held on the fourth Sunday in June, July and August at 2 p.m. at the lagoon.

#### OFF-ROAD VEHICLES.

THE N.P.A., with a number of other groups made a submission to the State Pollution Control Board Inquiry on off-road vehicles. Controls are sought to reduce the damaging use of such vehicles and reduce the serious infringement of the rights of other recreation users. These controls include;

1. Registration of off-road vehicles
2. A prohibition on the recreational use of vehicles off roads other than those set aside for the purpose by the appropriate authorities.
3. Legislation to define a "public road", and provision of a means of easy identification of a public road.
4. Elimination of vehicles from wilderness areas.
5. National Park management aimed at separating visitors from their vehicles in order to gain the most of the natural environment experience.

At a recent A.C.F. meeting held to discuss this issue, efforts were made to increase the understanding from both sides of the question. Although the representative of the Land Rover's Club expressed the desire to work together in conservation, the buswalkers were adamant in showing that the whole family can enjoy the bushland without the aid of a four wheel drive vehicle. All speakers agreed that it was the hooligan element, the non-club members who did the most damage. Perhaps one consoling point to come from the evening was to learn that the sales of trail bikes is on the decline.

Most roads can be negotiated with a 2 wheel drive, high clearance vehicle, taking care. If the track is that rough as to require a better equipped vehicle, buy a winch or change the destination, or better still walk. Quietness and tranquility will then be your companion, not the roar of a grinding motor!