



October/November/December 1992

## Lower Mountains Eco-News

NEWSLETTER OF THE LOWER BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

RETURN ADDRESS:  
LBMCS  
P.O. BOX 119  
SPRINGWOOD 2777

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

8 pm .. Friday, 9 October  
Springwood N'hood Centre  
(Committee meeting commences  
7.30 pm)

### COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Fri. 6 November  
Fri. 11 December  
Fri. 8 January  
Fri. 12 February  
Fri. 12 March

Springwood N'hood Centre  
commencing 7.30 pm.

## AIMS

To inform the public on environmental and conservation issues; research into population and distribution of fauna in the Blue Mountains and neighbouring region.

### MEMBERSHIPS

Australian Conservation Foundation  
Nature Conservation Council of NSW

### OTHER GROUP INVOLVEMENT

Society for Growing Australian Plants  
(Blue Mtns Branch)  
National Parks Association (NSW)  
Upper Blue Mtns Conservation Society  
National Parks and Wildlife Foundation  
The Wilderness Society  
CHANGE  
The Total Environment Centre

Glenbrook Lagoon Society  
Eastern Escarpment 530A Committee  
Darks Common Trust  
Nepean River Committee  
The Colong Foundation (Inc.)  
Australian Museum

### SOCIETY CONTACTS

President: Richard Phillipps (39 2568)  
V.Pres: Margaret Baker (54 1196)  
Margaret Esson (51 1826)  
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## BLUE MOUNTAINS FOR WORLD HERITAGE

World Heritage Listing would ensure that the Blue Mountains is recognised internationally as one of the world's special places. The Blue Mountains World Heritage Committee, with the support of BMCC, is seeking its listing by 1994.

The World Heritage List is a list maintained by the UN of the world's very best natural and cultural sites. *World Heritage Listing is recognition by the world community that an area must be conserved.* Each site on the list has universally outstanding aesthetic, scientific and/or historical values.

The Blue Mountains easily qualifies as such a place. Its spectacular sandstone gorge system is older and more complex than the Grand Canyon. It contains the best and largest open forest wilderness in NSW. The importance of this wilderness to future generations cannot be overestimated. Its variety of animal plant and birdlife includes 157 rare or endangered species. Numerous aboriginal sites in the area provide evidence of some of man's earliest toolmaking technology. The Blue Mountains bears testimony to our early explorers and tourists. It was the cradle of Australia's bushwalking and conservation movement. Watch the mist rising over Wentworth Falls. There are very few places in the world more beautiful.

*Other World Heritage sites in Australia to date are the Great Barrier Reef, Western Tasmania, Uluru (Ayer's Rock), Kakadu, Lord Howe Island, NE rainforests of NSW, the wet tropics and the Tasmanian Central Highlands.*

Everybody - residents, visitors, government at all levels - would be responsible for keeping the Blue Mountains in World Heritage condition. Governments and taxpayers would be required to address issues such as housing, population, water pollution, air pollution, mining and National park Management. Obviously, a financial commitment is needed.

Tourism would be oriented towards advertising, harnessing and conserving the World Heritage values of the Blue Mountains.

Because everybody would be responsible, the Federal Government has decided that it needs assistance and co-operation from the NSW Government in order to proceed with World Heritage nomination. The Federal Government would then need to convince the UN that Australians and their governments were committed to looking after the Blue Mountains. Our challenge is to convince governments at all levels that such a commitment is worthwhile.

For further information, please contact Rowan Huxtable on 047-39 6666 or Keith Muir at the Total Environment Centre.

Rowan Huxtable.

Sept. 92



**FAULCONBRIDGE MALLEE  
HILDERLEIGH CLOSE, FAULCONBRIDGE**

Letter to the Editor, BMG, from Margaret Essen, Vice President, LBMCS.

14.9.92

Protection of the environment was not considered important by the majority of aldermen who debated the issue of the Hilderleigh Close subdivision at Faulconbridge, at the meeting of Tuesday 8 September 1992. A decision made to allow 24 lots on this environmentally sensitive land, contravened the previous decision to allow 4 lots only - an amazing about face. How did this happen. There was a loss of five votes which formerly favoured a four-lot development. Aldermen O'Toole and Byrne (for urgent personal reasons) left the meeting early. Aldermen Anderson, Berriman and Hamilton vacillated and took the advice of the barrister acting for the developers and thus joined forces with Aldermen Clarke, Deahm and Neall who opposed the revocation of the development application (approved under delegated authority Feb 91 and valid to Feb 93). Such revocation would have made Council liable for compensation of \$120,000 for expenses to the developers but anything worth while is worth paying for. (Council later voted for \$82,000 worth of extravagant security without hesitation.) This is no ordinary block of land - recognised as significant by the NSW Heritage Council, NPWS and the former Minister for the Environment, Tim Moore, who implemented the Interim Protection Order to protect the rare plant species.

Alderman Pippa McInnes in an eloquent and factual address substantiated Council's reasons for the intention to seek gazettal of changed zoning to 1/ha and to revoke consent. These reasons were given to the developers legal advisors by Council's Legal Officer. They stated the Court's recommendations had not been met in the following ways:

1. (i) .. no "due regard to the topography of the land and the environment in which it is located".  
 (ii) .. "inappropriate as it imposes normal urban subdivision and development standards on the site, and thus will destroy its bushland character."  
 (iii) no "due regard to the preservation of the bushland and the physical features of the site".  
 (iv) .. "does not provide for the subdivision of the land into allotments of substantially larger size than those the subject of the application refused by the court."
2. "The rezoning of the land and the revocation of the development consent is necessary in order to protect the plant species Eucalyptus burgessiana and Acrophyllum australe."
3. "...no regard to the high visibility of the land and thus of any development thereon from other land,"
4. "The subdivision does not take account of its position above an escarpment adjacent to an area of bushland used for recreational pursuits and its development in the manner proposed is inappropriate.
5. The land does not have adequate access.
6. The land is subject to a bushfire risk which makes it unsuitable for development at a density greater than 1 dwg/ha.

These reasons which remain valid and applicable have now been ignored by a Council majority with the exception of Aldermen McInnes, Gaul and Pascoe who have shown regard for the principles of the Environmental Management Plan, the conservation of rare species and biodiversity and the aims of protecting the natural environment of the Blue Mountains for proposed Heritage Listing.

This Society fully and strongly supports them and congratulates them for their independent stand.

What has happened to the Labor support for World Heritage Listing not forthcoming in this instance from Aldermen Anderson, Berriman and Deahm. The Colong Foundation for Wilderness wrote to Council stating development on this land would "reduce the suitability of the Blue Mountains for World Heritage nomination".

Our society does not agree with the claim by the barrister that the Blue Mountains needs more subdivision for residential development, as there are still 8000 blocks on the Blue Mountains awaiting development. These would presumably increase the population by at least 20,000 to 30,000.

The developers proclaim they can adequately protect the rare species on this site, but it is not possible to have a development without impact, direct and indirect.

It is to Council's shame that they are unprepared to do their utmost to finance and strive for conservation of a unique area.

Our Society wishes to thank the many people who have worked during the last six years to try to conserve this land.

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## **BUSH REGENERATION COURSE**

***SATURDAY, 17 OCTOBER***

***9 AM TO 4 PM***

**NATIONAL PARK HERITAGE CENTRE, BLACKHEATH**

**COST: NO CHARGE ..... LUNCH PROVIDED**

For further information contact:  
Virginia Bear, Bush Regeneration Officer  
Blue Mountains City Council, Telephone: 047-82 0777





## DECLINE OF A RAINFOREST

In my description of Mt Irvine in the last issue of ECONEWS, it seems I had not made it clear that Mt Irvine was my birthplace - and my earliest development was into the glorious rainforest. My parents had moved there from the Coonamble district - probably in 1905 - to cut and mill the heavy timber to make way for clearing and orcharding. About 1913 my father considered 110 more trees should be taken - and that the forest left should be allowed to regrow.

He moved the mill to Mt Tomah and the family home had been transferred to Bilpin. He continued working alone there (his brother having gone to West Australia) until 1916. By that time all young men around had volunteered for service in the "great war". He had trained his own workers and was finding difficulty in replacing them. So he took in a partner and continued for a couple of years. But the partnership proved a dismal failure and he sold out. Meantime, Robert Charles Scrivener had been casting around for something to provide occupation and a living for his youngest sons returning from the war. He asked for advice about further milling on Mt Irvine. My father told him that the forest needed ten or fifteen more years of growth before milling would be viable. This advice was disregarded and a mill set up by Scrivener.

Much against his better judgement, my father in his predicament, entered into a contract to cut and haul logs to the mill. That arrangement continued for a few years until the devastation became too much. He went to the North Coast as a specialist saw sharpener.

During those few years we children spent school holidays back on Mt Irvine with the Scrivener children. To give some idea of what the verdure was still like, even at that time, three of us could be perched in a birdsnest fern high on the trunk of a tree to watch the bullock team snigging logs below us.

But the trees and ferns of that size were vanishing - although the mill continued working until only broom sticks were being manufactured. When that cut out, the owners found other occupations.

Another mill was set up on Mt Wilson, and after a few years more trees were taken for it from Mt Irvine, until the mountains picturesque skyline became just another flat plateau.

Recently, I have re-visited there and learnt that orcharding was not long-lived. In the rich volcanic soil the trees put all their energy into growth and did not bear much fruit.

There are still the original farms, some vegetable growing, sheep grazing and nut trees. There is also a number of new homes. Much of the land still in Scrivener possession has been planted with 10,000 Acacia melanoxylon trees, so some day there will again be much blackwood for cutting. It also grows walnuts and grazes a flock of sheep. There is still some ragged rainforest between the homes. And Bill Scrivener has kept an area of creek-head rainforest, in which there are still many birds - even lyre birds.

There is still a beauty in the rich green, still some tree ferns and ground ferns and a few sassafras berries overhanging the road. But the scene is vastly changed from its grandeur of old.



## **A SINGLE MANAGEMENT BODY FOR THE HAWKESBURY/NEPEAN RIVER SYSTEM**

Legislation to set up a Trust will be considered this week by State Cabinet. The proposed Act will then be put to both Houses within the current session.

CHANGE has been able to modify a number of the proposals and retain some of the powers proposed in Kevin Rozzoli's original bill. However, our representative was swamped within the Task Force by vested local government interests and State bureaucracies on other matters. The worst aspects of the current proposal are the inclusion of three-part-time local government representatives on the Trust itself and the make-up of the Consultative Council. Our concept for the Trust was to have say 6 or 7 professionals (eg. in biology, planning, commerce etc. or combinations of expertise) without parochial interests dominating. It doesn't take much imagination to consider the local government seat warmers who will be nominated - look at the current make-up of the NHCMC.

The Consultative Council was considered to have two roles - act as a watchdog on the operations of the Trust and to ensure community concerns were voiced and acted upon. State bureaucracies would be excluded but called upon by the Trust in task forces on various issues. On the 16 person Council, 5 positions are proposed to come from the largest State Government groups. Community and environmental interests will gain 3 of the positions. In this form CHANGE (and others) predict that the body will be as ineffective as the current NHCMC (which incidentally will still continue under the legislation).

CHANGE is currently lobbying for deletions of the local government representatives on the Trust and for a revision of the make-up of the Consultative Council.

George Threlfo, 9/92.

## **WELCOME REEF DAM PROPOSAL**

This looms as a long term threat to both the headwaters of the Shoalhaven River and to remaining non urban lands of the Sydney region which will be swallowed by urban sprawl.

A broad coalition of rural, coastal, river and urban community groups has been formed to campaign against this proposal. A key issue is the profligate use of water by both private householders and industry groups and whether, over a period of time, State Governments can be persuaded to introduce a total water cycle management for the Sydney region. One element of this would be a user pays system for water use. See the accompanying facts on Sydney's water use as supplied by the NCC. LBMCS is a member of CHANGE which forms part of the Campaign Against Welcome Reef Dam coalition. Note that the availability (or absence) of water and sewerage systems has been used in the EMP 1 as a factor in deciding whether some Lower Mountains lands were given development approval.

George Threlfo. Sept. 92

- \* The user-pays percentage for household bills is only 15% for Sydney water compared with 75% for telephone bills, 99% for electricity bills and 100% for natural gas.
- \* *Households represent 70% of WB costs but the Board only recovers 64% of these costs compared to 200% of commercial costs and about 140% of industrial costs.*
- \* Sydney's profligate households are grossly cross-subsidised by the business sector to the extent that 5% of total business customers contribute 44% of total WB revenues although they incur only 23% of WB costs.
- \* *The cross-subsidy from the business-commercial sector to households is now more than \$200 mill pa (and has increased under the present "economic-rationalist" Coalition Govt) even though 60% of 70,000 businesses use no more water than the average household.*
- \* Because only 15% of the domestic water charge reflects the user-pays principle, people are not receiving strong signals to reduce their water consumption, and moreover if they do save water, the present rebate is so insignificant that it merely enrages the customer.

***Average available in-the-shops now technology (standard pressure valve at the meter, flow controls on kitchen and bathroom taps, water efficient washing machine, dishwasher and shower nozzle, dual flush toilet installed in the average home) would cut internal domestic use by nearly c.40%.***

From NCC Media Release 12/91 and Coalition against Welcome Reef Dam Draft Total Water Cycle Management Policy for the Sydney Region 8/92.



## MOGGY NATIVE FAUNA'S GREATEST PREDATOR AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCOUNDREL? OR IS IT A LOT OF BULL!

- \* Australia's landmass holds 24 million cattle and only 17 million people - one of the highest ratios of cattle/people in the world.
- \* Only 11% of the feed given to cattle goes to produce the beef itself, the remainder is burned off as energy, excreted or absorbed into parts of the body not eaten. Cattle in feedlots produce less than 50 kilograms of protein from the consumption of over 790 kilos of plant protein.
- \* Cattle feedlots are a major source of environmental pollution. They are fed massive amounts of salt and grains treated with veterinary chemicals. The salt in the manure would ruin land already under threat from salination.
- \* The US Council on Environmental Quality has described overgrazing as the most potent desertification force in the country. Australia's topsoil is more fragile than that in the US. The threat is greater here. Heavy hooved cattle cause land degradation - cattle have made a major contribution to this problem.
- \* We have converted 75 percent of the country's land mass to pastoral grazing land, and according to a CSIRO report, one third of this land is vegetationally degraded.
- \* Australia simply cannot sustain the cattle we are grazing on it.
- \* Land cleared for sheep and cattle means habitat loss to native flora and fauna and thus the eventual decline of Australian native fauna and flora species.
- \* Half of Australia's cattle is in the tropical and arid zones, where periodic droughts force cattle to eat the landscape bare.
- \* When tropical rainforests are cleared for cattle, billions of tons of carbon dioxide are released into the atmosphere. In 1987 the clearing of the Amazon rainforest alone contributed 9 percent of the total worldwide addition to global warming.
- \* Energy-intensive cattle raising methods in industrialised nations consume huge amounts of fossil fuels.
- \* Chemical fertilisers are used to grow cattle feed. They produce nitrous oxide, a greenhouse gas. Additionally, cattle emit methane, the most potent greenhouse gas. The world's cattle produce about 20 percent of the methane released into the atmosphere. Agriculture has been reported to produce a third of Australia's greenhouse gases, with the methane blown out by cattle and sheep and nitrous oxide from fertilisers being the main culprits.

Info. courtesy of article by Peter Singer in Modern Times, April 1992, discussing the book "Beyond Beef: The rise and fall of the cattle culture" by Jeremy Rifkin. This book has not been released in Australia but can be ordered from the US through booksellers.

## ***FUTURE ACTION OVER NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PACKAGE***

The Nature Conservation Council (representing all major environment groups) is most concerned over the NSW Government's proposed Natural Resources Management Package. This package would override existing legislation which currently protects the environment and allows public participation. NCC believe the new laws will create confrontation over the future of the natural environment.

As an alternative to this package, NCC suggests the following alternatives:

- Use existing provisions of the EPA Act to produce regional environmental studies and plans. Retain the integrity of a proven, world class piece of legislation.
- Introduce a strong Threatened Species Act - the Threatened Species Network has drafted such a law.
- Pass a separate small bill removing adjudication of environmental impact statement from the proponent and author of the EIS. (This relates to self-monitoring by govt. authorities).
- Support the forest decision making principles of Peter McDonald's Forest (Amendment) Bill.

The NCC is planning activities to draw attention to the package and to give publicity to the alternatives. Phone Sid Walker at NCC on 02-247 4206 to keep up to date with these actions.

### ***TOTAL ENVIRONMENT CENTRE***

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