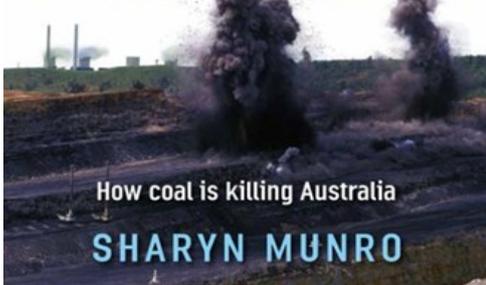




"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



## Rich Land, Wasteland



How coal is killing Australia

SHARYN MUNRO

To order your copy of *Rich Land, Wasteland* or for more information go to <http://richlandwasteland.com/>. Don't forget to enter the code COALNSW at check-out to receive a 15% discount off the RRP.

The Greater Blue Mountains  
World Heritage Experience  
[www.worldheritage.org.au](http://www.worldheritage.org.au)

### MONTHLY MEETING

7.30 pm, Thursday, 25 October, 2012  
at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls

### Rich Land, Wasteland: Sharyn Munro

Sharyn Munro recently spent nearly a year visiting the country's coal mining communities. Throughout her journey, she spoke to numerous people affected by mining and prospecting for new coal deposits or coal seam gas.

She exposes the real story of coal in her life-changing new book, *Rich Land, Wasteland*, presenting an impassioned account of the human price individuals and communities are paying for the coal rush.

Incidences of asthma, cancers and heart attacks show alarming spikes in communities close to coal mines and coal power stations. Once reliable rivers and aquifers are drying up or becoming polluted. Once fertile agricultural land is becoming unusable, and what was once a 'rich land' is becoming a wasteland.

Sharyn is not anti-mining, but opposes inappropriate development of any sort, driven by the impact of mining she'd watched overwhelm parts of the Hunter Valley in New South Wales. "I am motivated by concern for the health and futures of my grandchildren who have been living in the coal-afflicted Hunter, and for everyone else's grandchildren who must breathe such polluted air and who face devastated and de-watered landscapes that will be unusable."

Visitors are very welcome.

**Sharyn Munro** is a freelance writer, author, essayist and award-winning short story writer. She lives in the Upper Hunter Valley in NSW. Her first book, *The Woman on the Mountain* (Exisle), was published in 2007, and her second book, *Mountain Tails* (Exisle) in 2009. She has written and recorded many nonfiction pieces for broadcast on ABC's Bush Telegraph program.

**STOP**  
**CSG**  
*Blue Mountains*

### STOP CSG Blue Mountains

Rally: 11.00 AM  
Saturday 13th October  
Glenbrook Park



A march through Glenbrook shops and then speakers.

Bring your family, your friends, and your signs!

The O'Farrell Coalition government has given the green light to coal seam gas (CSG) exploration in NSW. It has ignored the electorate whose more than 1,500 submissions asked the government to protect our land and water. It has removed environmental protections, renewed controversial licences which had expired, removed a ban on "fracking", and is set to approve exploratory drilling in our water catchment..

In August the go-ahead was given for a CSG production well just 40 metres from the banks of the Nepean River, despite concerns about water contamination and without a public consultation process.

Come to a public rally at Glenbrook on Saturday 13 October. (Read more on page 3.)

"Hut News", the newsletter of  
Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.  
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**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT  
ISSUE OF HUT NEWS IS  
21 SEPTEMBER 2012**

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JOIN Blue Mountains Conservation Society,  
or renew your membership online.  
[www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au)

## Nursery News

This month's article is being devoted to just one plant but it is a very special plant. A natural distribution map of the whole country for this plant shows just a single dot covering a tiny area from Wentworth Falls to just beyond Katoomba. This is the home of our special Dwarf Mountain Pine, which has gone through several scientific name changes. It was first described by Ferdinand von Mueller in 1881 as *Dacrydium fitzgeraldii*, then renamed in 1882 to *Pherosphaera fitzgeraldii*, then came in 1951 the name by which most of us know it, *Microstrobos fitzgeraldii*, but it has now reverted to the previous name.

Fortunately, the *fitzgeraldii* part of the name has persisted and rightly so as it honours Robert D. Fitzgerald (1830-1892), an Irish botanical artist who produced his monumental work *Australian Orchids* from 1875 to 1894 featuring his own illustrations. Over 100 of his original drawings are held by the National Library in Canberra. Fitzgerald was born in Tralee, Ireland (the source of the famous song *The Rose of Tralee*, referring not to a botanical rose but to a woman) and migrated to Sydney in 1856 where he was employed at the Surveyor-General's Office, eventually becoming Deputy Surveyor-General. He spent the rest of his life in Australia, established at Hunter's Hill, where his family line continued. A grandson, also called Robert D. Fitzgerald (1902-1987) after his father and grandfather, became a major Australian poet.

The Dwarf Mountain Pine is a relic species which once enjoyed a wider distribution, possibly during wetter, less fire-prone periods. Now it is found naturally only within the spray-zone or associated drip lines and seepage areas of south-east to south-west facing waterfalls on steep, sandstone cliffs and ledges between 680 and 1,000m. In 1981, a survey by Jim Smith found a total of just 203 specimens at six locations between Wentworth Falls and Katoomba and a later survey in 1993 by Wyn Jones expanded the range to Nellies Glen with seven locations and 455 individual plants.

It is listed as *Endangered* both under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act* (1995) and the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (1999). Weeds and pollution of creeks supplying the waterfalls are the major threats to its survival in its current locations. Blue Mountains City Council has produced a brochure outlining these threats and is available online by typing in "Microstrobos fitzgeraldii Blue Mountains City Council" into Google.

With such a specialised natural location one may think that it is hard to grow, but specimens up to 1m high and 2m wide have been established in local botanic gardens at Mt. Annan and Mt. Tomah as well as the National Botanic Garden in Canberra and the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney as well as others around Australia. This certainly indicates it must have been much more widespread and can live in less specialised conditions. One of our nursery volunteers, Mary-Jane Shaw, has a thriving plant in her garden at Wentworth Falls, produced from a cutting taken from a plant which resided for years in our shade-house at Blackheath.

We have now produced over 20 plants from cuttings which were struck in December 2011 and produced good roots by early September 2012 and we will be offering these for sale in November so, if you would like one of these rarities for your garden, put in an order now!

The uniqueness of this plant has attracted wide scientific attention and a partial sequence of its DNA (that's short for **Deoxyribo-Nucleic Acid** for a little bit of trivia) has been determined and, to finish on another piece of trivia, *The Rose of Tralee* was the official song of the Irish Rugby team at the 1987 Rugby World Cup.

Kevin Bell, Nursery Manager.  
4787 6436, [kevinbell@eftel.net.au](mailto:kevinbell@eftel.net.au)

## CSG gets the Green Light in NSW Craig Linn

Flying in the face of enormous community opposition the O'Farrell Coalition government has "green lighted" state-wide coal seam gas (CSG) exploration, production, and "fracking". Not one square inch of NSW has been guaranteed protection. Our best agricultural lands and environmentally sensitive areas are all up for grabs. Breaking a raft of pre-election promises the O'Farrell government has effectively ignored the electorate entirely.

### Electorate ignored:

The public consultation process for the draft Regional Land Use Plans attracted nearly 1,600 submissions. And did the government listen to farmers, communities, and environmentalists at all? No, they did not! In the words of the NSW Farmers Association the NSW Government "ignored more than 1,500 submissions asking the government to do a very reasonable thing – protect our land and water."

### Protections that were in draft, removed:

And it gets worse, the NSW Nature Conservation Council notes that: "*In an extraordinary reversal, the NSW Government has removed basic protections for rivers, forests and critical wildlife habitat that were proposed in the draft land use plans. This backward step will leave iconic natural areas like Leard State forest and the Pilliga exposed to the destructive impacts of unprecedented mining and gas expansion.*"

### Controversial expired licences renewed:

Immediately following the release of its new policy the O'Farrell government renewed 22 expired CSG exploration licences, most of which are bitterly and legitimately opposed by local communities. Notable among these is Petroleum Exploration Licence 2 (PEL2) held by AGL that includes much of Sydney's western suburbs and the lower Blue Mountains.\* Yes, it is entirely possible that CSG exploration wells could appear in the Blue Mountains. If you think this unlikely have a look at what is already happening in the

Campbelltown area, see: <http://www.scenic hills.org.au/>

### Ban on "fracking" removed:

The O'Farrell government has also removed the ban on the highly controversial process of "fracking", with all its attendant risks of aquifer damage and contamination.

### Drilling in Catchment Area:

The O'Farrell government is set to approve CSG exploratory drilling in Sydney's main water catchment area. This is something Barry O'Farrell had personally ruled out *absolutely*, and will add yet another broken promise to the now long list. Prior to the election Barry O'Farrell said: "*The next Liberal/National Government will ensure that mining cannot occur ... in any water catchment area, and will ensure that mining leases and mining exploration permits reflect that common sense; no ifs, no buts, a guarantee.*" And in December 2011 "*I don't intend to allow — particularly after the drought we went through over a decade — mining or any other activity to threaten water resources.*"

### Production well next to Nepean:

In August the go-ahead was given for a CSG production well just 40 metres from the Nepean River in Sydney's south-west. The well operated by AGL was approved "*without a public consultation process*" (See Sydney Morning Herald 23rd August 2012: <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/water-issues/agl-starts-work-on-sydney-coal-seam-gas-well-20120822-24mv4.html>)

The above actions should not come as a shock given the Government's environmental record to date. If you, like countless others around the state, find the O'Farrell government's CSG and Mining policies and actions unacceptable then come along to the "**STOP CSG Blue Mountains**" rally, 11.00AM Saturday 13th October, at Glenbrook Park.

Craig Linn, BMCS Project Officer (Food & Environment)

\*Based on boundaries as shown by the NSW Government's online MinView tool on 25th Sept 2012, that is two weeks after

## Children of Cullen Bullen

The Society has been strongly opposing an open cut coal mining proposal that will clear hundreds of hectares of native vegetation and habitat in the Ben Bullen State Forest and destroy the lives of residents of Cullen Bullen.

Members of the public were given a chance to speak to commissioners of the Planning and Assessment Commission who are reviewing *Coalpac Consolidation Project*. The Minister for Planning has delegated his authority on this matter to the Public and Assessment Commission due to the level of controversy surrounding the proposal. The public hearings were held in Lithgow and Cullen Bullen, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> September 2012 respectively.

A number of local residents spoke to the commissioners, all of whom wish to see a return to their healthy lifestyle which has been disturbed by Coalpac's existing operations. It was clear residents do not welcome the additional stresses to their health, lifestyle or surrounding environment that Coalpac's new proposal would bring.

This tragic impact on rural lifestyle is a harsh reality for many who live or work in open-cut mining communities around the world. The Society has called for a 5km buffer between towns and cities and open-cut mining activity.

(continued on page 4)



## Transport Plan to Nowhere? Don Morison

Public responses are required by October 26 for the draft NSW Long Term Transport Masterplan. Since the Plan's release by the NSW Government in September, it has been rightly criticised for lacking detail on the timing and funding of crucial improvements. There is every reason to fear that upgrading of public transport services in outer Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains will take place too slowly to cope with population growth and will continue to be impaired by rail congestion, ancient carriages, poor facilities and so on.

The reactions of certain conservative spokespeople to issues raised in the draft Masterplan are illuminating. An NRMA official wants the State Government not to expand distance-based tolling on motorways. More use of distance-based tolling is one of the draft Plan's most constructive suggestions about how to fund transport improvements in greater Sydney. The NRMA official is using a well-worn but misleading argument that motorists already pay more than is fair for the burdens their driving imposes on the community. Sydney University's Professor David Hensher said "Roads are possibly the most underpriced of all the public assets." (Sydney Morning Herald, 12/9/12, p11)

A National Party resolution suggests that funding earmarked for the Parramatta to Epping rail link be diverted to a faster upgrade of rural sections of the Pacific Highway. In practice, rearranging the funding would probably not be that simple. However, what their attitude demonstrates is that they don't grasp the economic benefits to New South Wales as a whole of a more efficient public transport system within the urban areas.

The Parramatta to Epping link is one of a number of major improvements which would benefit commuters from the Blue Mountains and outer Western Sydney, allowing better express trains to Strathfield and Central, in addition to improving the accessibility of

northern Sydney.

The draft Transport Masterplan notes that 14% of Sydney's greenhouse gas emissions currently come from transport. It alludes to serious challenges over the next 20 years, such as the growth of Sydney Airport passenger movements from 36 million to 77 million per annum. What it fails to do is provide specific strategies for coping. For example, the NSW Government states that it is against a second Sydney airport and favours a high-speed train to Canberra Airport. But there is no timetable for funding this new rail link.

The draft Plan is far too reliant on expressways feeding traffic into the Sydney CBD. Few international leaders now favour such plans, because they realise it encourages reliance on cars, often only occupied by one person, and the additional traffic generated rapidly congests the newly constructed roads. The draft recommends maintaining a corridor for long-term widening of the Bell's Line of Road. While this may be conceding that such a project has a very low priority, it imposes high opportunity costs on landholders in the area and it impedes implementation of the best management of adjacent sections of the National Park.

Frans Timmerman (Blue Mountains Gazette, 26/9/12) believes the State Government's strategy with both the Great Western Highway and Bell's Line of Road is to encourage more and larger trucks. This would harm Blue Mountains communities safety-wise, environmentally and economically. The Government has ensured that influential bodies such as Infrastructure NSW are dominated by people who have held a vested interest in road transport.

BMCS members are urged to have their say on this draft before October 26. You can download the draft Master Plan at [www.transportmasterplan.nsw.gov.au](http://www.transportmasterplan.nsw.gov.au)

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### Children of Cullen Bullen (continued from page 3)

Blue Mountains Conservation Society has also called on the NSW Government to place the Ben Bullen State Forest into the reservation system as a matter of priority. The Office of Environment and Heritage also wishes for this land to be reserved.

Scientist experts who spoke at the public hearings included Dr Haydn Washington who is calling for the Environmental Assessment of the proposal to be redone. "Coalpac missed 100 plants, which have been found by local botanists. Now, sure, everybody misses one or two plants, but you don't miss 100 plants unless you're not doing a detailed flora survey."

Coalpac has already had to resubmit its environmental assessment after the first was deemed to not adequately address the project's impact on air quality, groundwater, biodiversity and historical and cultural heritage.

**The Society wishes to thank** all those who gave their help, time and great efforts in helping loved ones, supporters and groups in piecing together a broad-reaching number of presentations and submissions on this matter. In particular, we note the courage of those who despite their nerves, shared their personal stories.

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### Eco Homes Tour

Visit some of the most fascinating 'green' homes in the Blue Mountains on Saturday 27th October. Homes of earth, straw, recycled materials and more! Look, listen, learn - discover how others have done it. Be inspired!

A fun and informative bus tour departing from Springwood and led by ECOdesign Architect Nigel Bell. Bookings: <http://www.ecohomestour.com.au> All proceeds go to Katoomba High School's environmental programs. Places are limited and fill fast so book early! [info@ecohomestour.com.au](mailto:info@ecohomestour.com.au)

### BMCS NURSERY PLANT SALES

**Lawson Nursery** –Wednesdays and Saturdays, 9am to noon. The nursery is located in the Lawson Industrial Area on the corner of Park and Cascade Streets, opposite Federation Building Materials (see the map on our website [www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au)).

**Blackheath Community Market**, 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month at Blackheath Public School, 9am to 1pm.

**Maggie Market**, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month at Lawson Public School, 9am to 2pm.

Tube stock \$2.50 each. Larger pots available.

Enquiries Kevin Bell 4787 6436, [kevinbell@efel.net.au](mailto:kevinbell@efel.net.au)

## Loose Feathers, with Carol Probets

One bird that never fails to impress the overseas visitors I guide is the little Superb Fairy-wren (known to most people as the "blue wren"). And it's no wonder: at this time of year the breeding male has his shiny blue plumage which literally gleams in the sunlight. As is so often the case with sexually dimorphic species, the female and young males are much duller - brown with paler underparts and a small reddish patch around the eye. But they are far from uninteresting!

The fairy-wrens are co-operative breeders. This means that more than two individuals care for the young at a single nest. The "helpers" are usually young auxiliaries who don't yet have their own mate or territory and are often siblings of the current brood. They might assist by feeding the young, helping to defend the territory or warn of predators. It's a relatively common phenomenon in Australia: our kookaburras, choughs, apostlebirds, babblers and sittellas are other examples of co-operative breeders. All these species live in groups consisting of a breeding pair and several young helpers.

But it's the fairy-wrens which are proving to be the most intriguing. DNA analysis of Superb Fairy-wrens in 1994 showed that 76% of a female's offspring were sired by a male other than her "husband". And 95% of broods contained young fathered outside the group. Of all birds which form pair-bonds, it seems the fairy-wrens are the most unfaithful!

How this could happen was rather puzzling. Males are sometimes observed carrying a flower or petal into a neighbouring territory as a courtship display to a prospective female mate. But this is not immediately followed by mating. The mystery was solved in 2000 when female Superb Fairy-wrens were fitted with tiny radio-transmitters so their movements could be followed. To the astonishment of the researchers, the female embarked on a little journey during the pre-dawn darkness - a nocturnal foray into a neighbouring territory. A few days later the first egg would be laid.

So how does the female choose the "best" male to mate with? It is the males who moult earliest that tend to father the most offspring. Some males attain their blue plumage several months before the breeding season (and as they get older may even keep it all year), and they can thus start their flower-presenting courtship excursions earlier. And the female is duly impressed, and remembers him when the time to mate comes!

But she can sometimes have trouble finding the right male in the darkness, and this is how subordinate males or auxiliaries get their chance. Females will also frequently divorce their partner to move to another territory.... but that's another story. Who would have thought such a tiny bird could lead such a complicated life!

The Superb Fairy-wren is found throughout the Blue Mountains, typically in parkland, farmland and bushland where there are dense shrub thickets with adjacent open areas. Its more colourful relative the Variegated Fairy-wren prefers to keep to dense cover and is more common in forests and heathland.



"Carol Probets,  
[origma@westnet.com.au](mailto:origma@westnet.com.au)

Photo: Male Superb Fairy Wren,  
by Carol Probets

## Membership Application Form

(Use capitals please—even for email address)

Name(s) 1. ....  
2. ....  
3. ....

Address: .....  
.....PC .....

Phone(s) .....

Email .....

MEMBERSHIP FEES (please circle one item)

Single \$30 Concession (Senior/Student)\$20  
Household \$35 Concession (Senior/Student)\$25  
Corporate (open to negotiation) \$100

Bushwalkers only: (\$20 per walker per annum) \$.....

Donation (tax-deductible) \$.....

Send my copy of Hut News by  
Please tick box  mail  internet only

TOTAL AMOUNT INCLUDED \$.....

Note: All fees include GST at the relevant rate.

Would you like to be involved in any of the following activities or working groups? (Please underline): Land use/development issues; Environmental Education; Threatened species issues; Web or database management; Plant nursery assistance; Bushcare; Publicity/photography; Water quality/sourcing studies; Society administration.

**I/We agree to support the aims and objectives of the Society as set out on reverse side of this membership application:**

Please sign if named above.

Signature(s) 1. ....  
2. ....  
3. ....

ENQUIRIES: Phone (02 4757 1872  
Email: [membership@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:membership@bluemountains.org.au)

Please cut out and forward this form with your cheque or money order to:

**Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.**  
**PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls NSW 2782**  
**or pay online at [www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au)**

## BUSHCARE GROUP

The Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group meets on the second Saturday of each month, 9am till noon. Tools and gloves are available. Bring a drink, a snack and a sunhat. New members are always welcome.

## Welcome to new members

Colin Foster, Wentworth Falls  
Gabrielle Foster, Wentworth Falls  
Prue Gargano, Bilpin  
Phillip Doughty, Wentworth Falls  
Therese Devine, Faulconbridge

## BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Blue Mountains Conservation Society is a community organisation working to achieve the preservation and regeneration of the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains.

The Society believes that World Heritage status provides an opportunity for local community members to become custodians of the unique biodiversity and scenery of the Blue Mountains.

The Mission of the Society is to help conserve the natural environment of the Blue Mountains.

The Aims and Objectives of the Society are to:

- Disseminate and foster an understanding of the ideals of Conservation.
- Promote the need for ecological sustainability.
- Protect the natural environment—flora, fauna, habitat, water, land and air.
- Actively oppose those human activities which degrade or destroy the natural environment.
- Repair the adverse effects of human activities upon the environment.
- Encourage the love of the natural environment by conducting a regular program of bushwalks.
- Increase the pool of expert knowledge about the natural environment, through meetings, excursions, research and other activities.
- Provide information to the public on matters of Conservation, especially through the Conservation Hut at the Valley of the Waters, Wentworth Falls.
- Maintain close and friendly relations with like-minded groups.

Down the Wallaby Track: a backward glance, with John Low

## THE MEGALONG PIANO

Surely one of the most unforgettable images from Australasian cinema is that of the alien and awkward-looking piano stranded on a remote New Zealand beach, a touching symbol of civilization confronting wilderness. Despite their cumbersome bulk, pianos proved remarkably portable during the 19<sup>th</sup> century with something like 700,000 estimated to have arrived in Australia, often transported, with great difficulty and expense, thousands of miles in small ships and then inland over mountains and rivers by bullock dray and sheer tenacity. A remarkable figure that emphasises both their central place in colonial family and social life and their perceived embodiment of the civilizing values of home. Re-reading Mary Shaw's *Historic Megalong Valley* recently I came across a small incident I'd forgotten that offers a local insight into this phenomenon.

When the Scots-Irish Duncan family moved into the Megalong at the end of the 1880s they brought a piano with them, no mean feat when you consider that no proper road existed into the valley until about 1900. Perhaps they got it down Nellies Glen or, more likely, took it the long way round via an old bullock track from Hartley. Whatever, it took its place in the 'Ballymore' homestead and daughter Marjorie was a devoted player, her music (according to family lore) drifting across the sunny paddocks with unexpected results, bewitching their passing neighbour, the scholarly Frank Dyson. English-born Dyson, balancing both literary and business interests with the hard physical labour of pioneer farming, had taken up land on the Coxs River around the same time as the Duncans. When Marjorie and Frank moved into Dyson's home on the Six-Foot Track where it crossed the Coxs River the piano went with them.

The story of its journey became part of valley folklore. Bernard O'Reilly remembered his father Peter recounting it to him as a child. Four miles down the bridal path and over the Pinnacle Ridge took stamina and determination. Dyson "used two strong poles with their front ends through shaft harness on a cart horse, the piano was slung between the poles behind the horse, and the rear ends of the poles were manned by a few strong neighbours. It was an ingenious idea but it took a lot of sweat and language to carry it out." But carry it out they did and the piano's music was woven into the music of the Cox.

Marjorie, however, soon succumbed to the isolation and they left the valley, settling eventually in Katoomba where they purchased 'Cloudlands' in 1931. Frank was not, in any case, your typical farmer. He harboured literary ambitions and his translation (from the French of J. B. Nicolas) of the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* appeared first during WWI and again, in an edition by William Brooks & Co., in 1927. Frank died in 1937 and Marjorie in 1943. Their son, Frank jnr., returned to farming in the valley, his house filled with books when it burned in bushfires in 1936. The fate of the 'pioneering' piano is unknown!

John Low ([grizzlybear3au@yahoo.com](mailto:grizzlybear3au@yahoo.com))

Photo (left) Dyson's Megalong home. Blue Mountains City Library's Local Studies Collection.



## BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

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Blue Mountains Conservation Society

Follow us on Twitter: [bmcsnsw](https://twitter.com/bmcsnsw)

**NSW Government Green Paper on planning reforms – Summary of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society’s submission. Report by Landuse Subcommittee**

Members will have seen the Nature Conservation Council’s bulletins on the proposed planning reforms in recent issues of the Hut News. The NSW government is proposing to replace the current *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, which contains statutory provisions designed to protect the environment, with a system in which there is minimal planning and development control. Gone will be the statutory State Environmental Planning Policies (SEPPs) protecting koala habitat, urban bushland, prime agricultural lands, drinking water catchments, coastal wetlands and so on. These will be replaced by as yet undeveloped and primarily economically-orientated, non-statutory ‘policies’. Planning will no longer be about protecting the environment but about facilitating and managing growth and economic development, in accordance with the government’s 10-year plan to “make NSW number one”. The adverse impact of these proposed changes, especially in highly environmentally sensitive areas like the Blue Mountains, should not be underestimated.

Essentially, the proposed new planning system for NSW is skewed towards the interests of landowners and developers who are the presumed drivers of the desired economic development. The central concern of the new planning regime is to remove current ‘encumbrances’ on development, such as environmental considerations. In the new regime there will be little consideration of impacts of development on the environment, community or neighbours. This will be facilitated through removing current rights for the community to have input at the Development Application stage. There will be no more advertisements of development applications in the Blue Mountains City Council’s notices in the Gazette and there will be no notices sent to neighbours. This means that there will be no opportunity for residents or groups like the Conservation Society to object to specific development proposals that are inappropriate and will compromise the Blue Mountains environment. Instead, in the new planning regime the community will be invited to be involved in the strategic level of planning e.g. in the development of the current statutory Local Environment Plans or the proposed minimally prescriptive Local Land Use Plans. The community is *least* likely to be engaged at this strategic level of the planning process; it is development in their own neighbourhood that most residents are understandably interested in and concerned with. Knowing this, and removing the community’s current right to object to specific development proposals, it is simply cynical ‘spin’ on the government’s part to proclaim that “community and public interest will be at the centre of the new planning system”.

Apart from our stringent objections to locking the community out at the development application stage, one of the other main features of the proposed new system that the Society objected strongly to in its submission is the process of approving development. There is a presumption of approval for development. Under a proposed new ‘code-based’ system of approval with no merit assessment (and no environmental assessment), developments will not be assessed by Council staff (or an independent panel) as they currently are unless they do not comply with the local strategic plans, or unless

aspects of them are non-complying. Most residential development approval, for example, will be a matter of a simple ‘tick box’ process undertaken by private certifiers. Given the ‘flexible’ provisions of the proposed new local strategic plans and allowances for variation from standards, greater use of private certifiers, along with current and proposed new developer rights—to apply for spot rezonings and to appeal against refusal of rezoning and refusal of approval for even non-compliant development proposals—and a reduction in the community’s and Council’s current right to object, refuse or appeal, the Society believes there will be few instances of development being refused. This undermines the whole purpose of strategic planning and over time will lead to open slather development.

The Society also objected to many other aspects of the proposed new planning system and made a series of recommendations. See the full submission on the Blue Mountains Conservation Society’s website.

The next step will be a Planning ‘White Paper’, which will be released later in the year or early next year.

## **Spring Time in the Mountains**

**Christine Davies**

In recent months I have had frequent early-morning drives from Blackheath to Leura (a 36 km round trip in Nan’s taxi service). Not everyone wants to get up at 6 am for a drive before breakfast, but I have enjoyed the sun rises and, as the days lengthen, seen the streetscapes and gardens come alive and become more and more beautiful as the trees and other plants blossom.

In many parts of Sydney spring merges into summer, autumn into winter, but in the upper Blue Mountains they are very distinctive seasons.

My garden has been just full of little birds — blue wrens, flocks of New Holland Honeyeaters who make quite a racket, and the resident Eastern Spinebills. There have been some unusual birds too, moving with the season.

The upper mountain ridge-tops and especially the exposed slopes at the cliff edges host an amazing variety of wildflowers from October to around mid-November. There are flowers all year, but this is the best time.

There are wonderful wildflower walks, and some come with spectacular views of mountains and ridges and cliffs and valleys. Among them are Walls Ledge at Blackheath, Rigby Hill and Wongarra Ridge near Mount Banks, October Creek at Mount Wilson and Lockley’s Pylon on the Mount Hay Range. On Kings Tableland at Wentworth Falls is the “Hanging Garden” and, at Medlow, the “Wonderland Track”, both very overgrown last time I saw them — it’s sad to see them so neglected.

I’m organising two special wildflower walks for the Thursday Interpretive bushwalkers: October Creek on 25 October and Wongarra Ridge (led by Bob Reyswoud) on 1<sup>st</sup> November, half day walks starting at 9.15 am. We would welcome some new walkers. Contact me on 4787 7246 or email [hutnews@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:hutnews@bluemountains.org.au) if you want more details or a full program.

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## BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY BUSHWALKING ACTIVITIES

Membership of the bushwalking group is open to Society members. The BMCS Bushwalking Guide which explains the numbered grades can be found on the Society's website [www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au) or can be posted on request. For more information call Maurice Kerkham 4739 4942 email [mauricekerkham@hotmail.com](mailto:mauricekerkham@hotmail.com) or write to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782. **Late changes to the program will be published on the website.**

**SATURDAY WALKS:** Usually a full day longer walk at a faster pace. Before attending ring the designated contact person or the Group Co-ordinator Jim Percy 4758 6009 or email [jp34@tpg.com.au](mailto:jp34@tpg.com.au)

- Oct 20 **Carlton Creek to Breakfast Creek and more.** Leader: Warwick 4754 1354. Meet at Blackheath Railway CP, 8.00am. 15km, all on track. Grade 4. Maps: Jamison/Jenolan.
- Oct. 22- 25. **Barren Grounds & area.** Daily walks Minnamurra Falls, Jamberoo LO, and lots more. Accommodation at Jamberoo Pub. Contact Lucy 4751 5347 or Karen 4751 9695. Grade 2 & 3. Map Kangaroo Valley.
- Oct 27 **Gardens of Stone.** Wilderness area - party limit: 8. Grade 3. Map Ben Bullen Leader: Hugh. 0423 309 854 (SMS if unanswered). This walk was booked out in August; but please ring if interested, a cancellation list is operative.
- Oct 27 **Devils Hole v Nellies Glen.** Leader: Warren 4787 5403, [admirable@netspace.net.au](mailto:admirable@netspace.net.au) Meet at Katoomba Station CP, 8.30am. 9km. Grade 3. Map Katoomba.
- Nov 3 **Narrow Neck Peninsula.** Solid fire trail walk with spectacular views to Wild Dogs and Cloudmaker. Leader: Meredith 4782 4823. Meet at Katoomba Station CP. 8.30am. 22km, Grade 3. Maps. Katoomba/Jamison
- Nov 10 **Lawson & Hazelbrook Falls.** 6 Waterfalls in all, some creek crossings. Leader: Bob.4757 2694. Meet at Lawson War Memorial 8.30am. Approx 10km, Grade 2. Map Katoomba

### FORWARD NOTICE:

**14 -20 Jan, 2013. Cooma Ski Club Lodge in Perisher Valley.** Space is limited so book early. Leader: **Warwick 4757 1354.** Click on to web page at [rwmosman@bigpond.com](mailto:rwmosman@bigpond.com) for more details.

**MONDAY LEISURE WALKS:** Short Day walks of 3-5 hours, suitable for walkers of an average fitness. Bring morning tea and lunch and adequate water. The Group Co-ordinator is Maurice Kerkham, 4739 4942, [mauricekerkham@hotmail.com](mailto:mauricekerkham@hotmail.com)

- Oct 15 **Parramatta to Ermington.** Walk along Parramatta River, approx. 8 km. Meet Parramatta Rail Station (Westmead end) 9.30 am. Contact Judith 4758 6310. Grade 2.
- Oct 22 **Botanical Gardens and Mrs Macquarie's Chair.** Grade 1. Meet top of escalators, Central, 9.30 am. Leader Kate 4759 1943. Grade 1.
- Oct 29 **Bondi to Coogee, Sculptures by the Sea.** Meet top of escalators, Central, 9.30 am. Contact Judith 4758 6310. Grade 2.
- Nov 5 **Victory Track,** rainforest and creeks. Meet Faulconbridge rail station 9.15 am. Contact Mary 4757 4569. Grade 2.
- Nov 12 **Grand Canyon.** Classic canyon walk. Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 9.30 am. Contact Ros 4733 3880. Car pool. Grade 3.
- Nov 19 **Wentworth Falls Lake Circuit.** Followed by a "Shed Warming" at Tera and Dudley's sausage sizzle. Meet Wentworth Falls Station car park 9.35 am. Car pool to shed warming. Contact Tera 4757 2855. Grade 2

**THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS:** Walks of 2-3 hours conducted at a leisurely pace to suit walkers on the day. Bring morning tea, adequate water and lunch if noted. Group Co-ordinator is Beverley Thompson, 4757 2076, [roybev12@bigpond.net.au](mailto:roybev12@bigpond.net.au)

- Oct 11 **Evans Crown.** Climb up to granite summit with spectacular views. Lunch at Tarana pub or take your own. Car pool \$5. Meet Mount Victoria Station at 9.45 am. Leader: Barrie 4782 9235. Grade 2.
- Oct 18 **Bridal Veil Falls to Gordon Falls Leura.** Cliff top walk with varied scenery Car pool. Meet Cnr Leura Mall and Megalong St Leura 9.30am. Leader Barrie 47829235. Grade 2.
- Oct 25 **Fairfax Track, Blackheath.** Easy level walk with magnificent wildflowers on both sides of track. Waratahs should be blooming. Car pool Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 9.45am. Leader Barrie 47829235. Grade 1
- Nov 1 **Bus trip to Oberon, walk to Hazelgrove.** Fare \$12. Lunch at Tarana Pub or bring your own. Meet Katoomba Council Depot South St, North Katoomba, 8.30am. Leader Barrie 47829235. Grade 2.
- Nov 8 **Copelands Lookout, Katoomba.** Car pool. Meet Katoomba Station Car Park 9.30am. Leader Beverley 47572076. Grade 2.
- Nov 15 **Walls Cave, Blackheath.** Visit the Heritage Centre before doing walk. Bring a plate to share for lunch. Car pool. Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 9.45am. Leader Narelle 47512467. Grade 2.

### Springtime in the Mountains (continued from page 7)

I first went to October Creek in 1990 with Jim Smith and Wilf Hilder and fellow TAFE "Outdoor Guides" students. At Mount Wilson we met 77 year old Tom Kirk who was a third generation Mount Wilson resident and had been a world champion axe-man, undefeated for 20 years. Tom's family came to settle in Mount Wilson in 1870 to cut sleepers for the railway being built to the west. His grandfather built the road into Mount Wilson. Tom told us about some of the walks. When we asked about the name, October Creek, he said "because it is pretty in October". And it is.

We discovered Wongarra Ridge in spring last year on a rainy day. We got very wet and the wildflowers were spectacular. Walkers insisted we put it on the program again this year (and possibly every year). It's a fairly flat walk off the Bells Line of Road, leading to a magnificent view of the Grose Valley.

### The Gardens of Stone Visitors Map

\$7.50 plus \$1.50 postage. Buy the map online ([www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au)), write to BMCS, PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782 with your cheque or money order, or ask for a copy at our monthly meeting.