

As I prepare for my HSC exams and hand over the reins of Strobus to Jackson & Stacey, I'm proud we have reached this milestone & hope it continues as an important source of stories about our beautiful Blue Mts. Shane

DO ORGANIC EGGS STACK UP?

With Food Month starting on the 13th October, we decided to investigate environmental and organic claims about food and if being vegetarian is good for the environment. Recently I visited the organic food expo in Sydney with my dad. Most of the exhibitors there were able to explain how their produce was certified, but are all companies like that? When we see something advertised as good for the environment, we might think it really is. Such claims are often used by



companies keen to take advantage of peoples' growing awareness about the environment. But are we ripped off? We discovered there is a growing number of logos in supermarkets which are misleading. It is against the law to claim a product is environmentally friendly when it isn't.

OR IS IT GREENWASH?

Even the V8 supercar race this month claimed to be carbon neutral because they planted trees but were later told to drop the claim! If you read the interview with singer Deni Hines in the Herald on the 17th September this month working for Landcare, you would have seen a photo of her with a bottle of a well known brand of bottled water. Despite our Drink Tap water campaign, even Landcare appear to be sponsored by companies, intent on draining groundwater at Peats Ridge on the Central Coast.



Organic labels are popular too but Marg Will, at The Organic Food Chain (www.organicfoodchain.com.au), reckons "consumers are being ripped off because there are no national standards". We found a "guide" called Green Marketing and the Trade Practices Act useful (www.accc.gov.au), but the number of logos we saw in Coles, Katoomba means customers have no chance of working out what they all mean. It seems for years the Government has refused to do much about this, there are still heaps of companies making claims that aren't true.

Our education officer said when he was researching paper products that "Our environmental certification laws are years

behind other countries. Recently a company was found out for claiming their tissues were from sustainable pulp when in fact they were made from rainforest timber". With food, also for example, there is no standard for 'free range.' We found great advice at Good Environmental Choice Australia (www.aela.org.au). Alastair

VEGETARIAN GOOD FOR ENVIRONMENT

Like the author of the new book "Ethical Eating", at 16, I chose to stop eating meat. Written by Angela Crocombe, the book looks at the environmental cost of how food is produced, packaged and sold. The book is not just a personal view but refers to many scientific and government reports. I learnt that we can all have a local and global impact by changing the way we eat. "Think a little more about what you put in your mouth and the journey it has been on to get there, rather than mindlessly stuffing your faces with whatever you find," she says. A new scientific study shows that becoming a vegetarian could save more greenhouse gas emissions a year than switching to a hybrid car. Another study of food miles by environmental organisation CERES, found an average basket of fruit and vegetables travels 8730 kilometres from where it is produced to the shop. I also learnt at school that it can take up to ten times as much water and energy to produce meat compared to vegies, fruit & grain.



Making the switch could mean improving your health and wallet. The higher cost of organic produce is more than offset by the savings made from spending less on meat and processed food. A good place to start might be our Food Co-op in Katoomba or the many organic veggie shops up here. Better still grow your own. Check out the many networks around the mountains and don't forget, the Blue Mts is now a Cittaslow city. Fiona

CLIMATE TORCH



With just two weeks to go until the Climate Torch Relay ends in Canberra, some local school students were proud to be included on the Blue Mountains leg, pictured at Echo Point.

Sustainable House Day

Sustainable House Day took place over the weekend of the 13th and 14th September. Organised by the Australia New Zealand Solar Energy Society (ANZSES), volunteers open their homes for inspection. As a supporter of the Society, it is likely you have visited the Conservation Hut, one of our many local eco buildings. This one in Medlow Bath uses a passive solar design to take best advantage of the sun, shade and breezes. It has two 13,000 L rainwater tanks and walls constructed from special thermal blocks. Windows are UPVC double glazed with motor shutters, for insulation and bushfire protection with floor length curtains. Heating and hot water is supplied by a solar hot air system with gas fired backup. A grey water system and low water use lawn technology is being installed. The roof has a steep pitch for the solar giving a habitable insulated loft Stacey



TAP WATER ROAD SHOW

Our Drink tap water campaign, this month hit the road. Stacey, Marc and I went to Black heath Wentworth falls and Katoomba Primary Schools, to speak to their student representative bodies, answer questions and hand out stickers We like the fact that Katoomba's is a parliament with ministers and opposition. The students learnt that "spring" water is taken from hanging swamps & wetlands where it is needed to sustain a balanced eco-system.



This is the sticker which we handed out to be used on water bottles and fridges to remind them to refill their bottles rather than buying new ones. There were lots of questions about filtered water. It is better than bottled and makes a difference to water quality. Jackson

ELLISON ECO CENTRE

Ellison School now has a new Environmental Centre. Unveiled by Mr Koperberg and named Wingara it has programs for adults and children of the local community. The name is Aboriginal for "place of learning". Isobel



FERAL CATS GETTING BIGGER

Recent sightings of the **Blue Mountains panther**, a legendary big cat that has been reported by residents of the Blue Mountains area, for over a century, started us thinking about feral cats in our area. It is speculated that the creature (or maybe, creatures), if it exists, could be the offspring of animals that escaped from traveling circuses about a hundred years ago. Many cats are abandoned every year. Blue Mountains. R.S.P.C.A says "Each year over 3000 are euthanised." Feral cats kill our beautiful, native fauna. Over 1000 possums, birds, lizards and small mammals are estimated to be killed yearly because of these vicious animals. It also causes concern for locals as other pets and small children may be attacked. To stop this problem we need to de sex and keep our cats inside as much as possible. At the very least put a bell around kitty's neck. The main reason why cats become feral is because owners let them out at night, where their natural predatory instincts take over. Also many owners don't get them de sexed, causing cats to breed., Tegan & Isobel



WALK TO WORK DAY

Just as a reminder Friday October 6 is Walk to Work Day. The Commonwealth Government the event through funding to the Pedestrian Council of Australia of \$1.5 million over 3 years. Walk to Work Day is an annual event that encourages Australians to develop regular walking habits and aims for better health, cleaner air, less traffic & increased use of public transport. Marc



SOLAR BOAT CHALLENGE

Several teams of aspiring sailors from Mountain High Schools weighed anchor and unveiled their solar vessels at Penrith Regatta Centre on the 13th of September to compete in the annual State Solar Boat Challenge. I spoke to Doug, Will, Jacob, Miles and Rowan from KHS that day who encountered technical difficulties. But it didn't stop them from having fun and in fact their rivals, old seadogs Gabby, Molly and Belle from Winmalee, offered assistance. Congratulations to them for making the National Finals in November and to Springwood (let us know how you went) .



Ryan