

S T E P I N C.

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT.

TENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 1988.

It is ten years since STEP was formed by a small band of residents trying to stop the needless destruction of a beautiful ridge top heathland. That battle was lost and a unique piece of our natural heritage disappeared under the bulldozers.

However, the dedicated group survived and grew into the organisation we now have with the same objects and ideals of protection of urban bushland as a valuable natural resource.

There have been significant advances in environmental legislation and in Council practices over the years, but it is essential that STEP continues its role monitoring activities which affect bushland. The following are some of the ways we have achieved this aim.

\* STEP is represented on Ku-ring-gai Council's Bushland Management Working Party, formed in 1981 and consisting of Council staff, Aldermen, and members of the public with expertise in aspects of bushland management. Matters of concern affecting bushland, including recent major sewer breaks during flooding of the Lane Cove River, erosion, impact of Council activities, and resident education, are dealt with and appropriate action suggested.

\* During the year STEP representatives met with Council Staff and the Consultants preparing the new Plan of Management for Ku-ring-gai's Bushland Areas. The draft Issue Statements were commented on by STEP members and we eagerly await the release of this important document. The plan will provide guidelines for the proper management of bushland in the Municipality.

\* Despite pre-election assurances by Nick Greiner, the future of our bushland affected by the proposed F3 Freeway is uncertain. STEP's sub-committee met in November, 1987 and resolved to press for release of the corridor. We have support from the Coalition for Urban Transport Sanity (CUTS) of which STEP is a member. That body is seeking a halt on all freeways until they are reviewed, together with a proper enquiry into an integrated transport system for Sydney.

\* STEP is represented on the Union of Lane Cove Valley Conservationists, a body consisting of many environment groups associated with the Valley. We are kept up-to-date with any developments which affect the bushland. Submissions and representations were made by STEP and other groups to the enquiry into the proposed development near Byles Creek, a tributary of the Upper Lane Cove River. The outcome of this enquiry was the Commissioners recommended that ideally the land should be purchased by Hornsby Council and incorporated into Pennant Hills Park. However, the cost of doing this would probably be beyond the resources of Council and a second recommendation was for limited development for housing with minimum disturbance to the creek catchment.

\* Much of STEP's Committee work involves processing an

enormous amount of correspondence and of course it is our most effective way of getting our point of view across to relevant Government Departments, local Council and members of parliament.

\* STEP supported Environment Candidates for the Upper House and helped in letterboxing material and manning polling booths. At a well-supported meeting held jointly with Ku-ring-gai Bushland and Environmental Society (Ku.B.E.S.) candidates for both Houses were invited to speak and their views were noted with interest.

\* STEP delegates attended and submitted motions to the Annual Conference of the Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales held in October 1987. The N.C.C. is made up of local community conservation groups from all over New South Wales. It is an active and vocal organisation providing support for members' issues.

On the wider scene, the Wilderness Act was passed in November 1987. Although specific areas were not designated it is hoped the 30 areas proposed by the Wilderness Society will all eventually be gazetted.

An historic decision was made at a General Meeting of STEP members held on 10th December, 1987 to change the name of our group from South Turrumurra Environment Protection Inc. to STEP INC. because our membership and area of concern now extend beyond South Turrumurra to the whole of the Comenarra ward and beyond.

Membership has been sustained at 130 members. Life memberships were introduced during the year and a dozen families have taken up this option.

After months of walking and checking the draft of our Walking Track Map is now with the cartographer for drawing up in its final form. It is hoped that it will be available soon.

Our small band of Bush Regenerators have worked regularly throughout the year in Cooper Crescent Creek. Teaching sessions were added to our program using the Bradley Method of Bush Regeneration. Heavy rains early this year caused some damage to plantings and depositing of many weed propagules in already cleared areas. With the help of concerned residents and young people from Venturer Scout Groups the area has responded well with regeneration of native species. STEP members planted over 50 indigenous trees and shrubs at a degraded site in West Pymble bushland formerly used by the Water Board. At the same time infestations of pampas were treated with herbicide.

Some highlights of STEP's program for the year were as follows:-

- \* Meet the Candidates--Local Council Elections: held jointly with Kissing Point Progress Association, September, 1987.
- \* Spring Bushwalk, September, 1987.
- \* Participation in Society for Growing Australian Plants Wildflower Festival at Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden, September, 1987, 1988.

- \* Camping Weekend--Myall Lakes, November, 1987.
- \* Breakfast in the Fox Valley Bush, March, 1988.
- \* Heritage Week walk to Bungaroo in April, 1988 on the new Bicentennial Track.
- \* Spotlighting Walk in South Turrumurra Bushland in May, 1988.
- \* Bushwalk with St. Andrew's group in May, 1988.
- \* Bicentennial Spring Bushwalk, using STEP track, August, 1988.

Four Newsletters were produced and distributed during the year to keep members and other groups informed of our activities.

The Committee has met monthly and it has been my privilege to work with such a dedicated and willing group of people. Every member has contributed to the efficient running of your organisation: Planning the year's program, leading walks, co-ordinating activities, taking minutes, writing the many letters, managing finances, mapping, gathering information and writing reports, representing STEP on various committees, attending conferences and seminars, talking to other community groups, bush regeneration, letterboxing, catering and much, much more. My personal thanks to all the Committee for their help, advice and support.

In conclusion, my three years as President have been a rewarding experience. It has heightened my dedication to and appreciation of the world of nature, a world which has taken centuries to create and which can be destroyed in seconds by mankind. There are threats to our global environment--at least 125 species of plants and animals a day are becoming extinct--roads going into wilderness, clearing of rainforests, greenhouse effect, pollution, erosion. Some of these things are happening on a small scale locally. Clearly STEP's role is to alert the community to threats and problems locally and by fostering knowledge and appreciation of our natural environment, ensure its long-term conservation.

I am sure the task begun by our founding members will be consolidated and built upon by the new President and Committee.

Yvonne Langshaw.  
President.  
September, 1988.