



# STEP INC.

Community Based Environmental Conservation

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Twelfth Annual General Meeting

September 13, 1990

I have pleasure in presenting the Annual Report of STEP Inc on behalf of the committee.

We have had another busy year in attempting to protect urban bushland, and we have noted some successes. However, new problems arise continually, and, it seems, always will while ever it is the minority of citizens that values urban bushland and it is the majority that sees it as a resource to be capitalised for freeways, housing, playing fields and so on. A group such as STEP therefore has to be ever vigilant and active, while at the same time adopting an educative function, so that more & more people can learn to know, understand, and value urban bushland for its own sake. There is a discernible swing of public opinion towards the "greening of Australia" by conserving trees, forests and parklands, and planting trees. This has come from a relatively recent understanding of the Greenhouse Effect which follows from a depletion of the ozone layer in the atmosphere. But with our all-too-human capacity to double-think, we still allow governments to sell off irreplaceable old-growth forests and plan freeways through urban bushland.

### Freeways

The Commissioner's condemnatory report on the F2 Castlereagh Tollway, recently released, gave pleasure to all who have been working hard against this and other freeways, though the issue is by no means dead. STEP has continued to send representatives to our local Coalition Against Lane Cove Valley Freeways, and helped support their splendid pamphlet on proposed local freeways.

Earlier, the Roads & Traffic Authority had released its report on the North West Sector Road Needs Study, opting for the B3 route for a link road between the Castlereagh Tollway and the existing F3 Newcastle Freeway. The B3 would pass through prime bushland in the Lane Cove Valley. To the outraged freeway protesters, the Premier, Nick Greiner, gave an assurance that the B3 would not be constructed during the term of his government, so the matter is shelved for the time being. We were very dissatisfied with the RTA's performance in the Road Needs Study and duly complained.

The Coalition against Lane Cove Valley Freeways is maintaining a watch on the situation.

With the nomination of the B3 option, it became possible to press for the release of some of the land reserved for the former Lane Cove Valley freeway, (now the unwanted B1 option). STEP made a detailed and well-researched submission to Ku-ring-gai Council on this matter, and the outcome was highly satisfactory. Most of the land was added to adjacent bushland reserves; a small amount was, as appropriate, allocated to housing.

### Bushland Management in Ku-ring-gai

Council has made some progress in implementing its Plan of Management for bushland. Mr Robin Grimwade, Council's Manager, Parks and Landscapes Division, met with the STEP Committee during the year and outlined progress and plans. You will probably have seen some results in reserves near you. The new policies are directed towards total catchment management using run-off controls as well as bush regeneration. The committee has also met Stephen Ilek, Council's Fire Management Officer, to discuss their work and their plans. STEP continues to have strong representation on Council's Bushland Management Working Party. This provides direct access to issues and policy making in respect of bushland management. Just recently we met with Jonathon Howard, Council's newly appointed Interpretive Officer. We have already had a useful outcome from that meeting.

### The STEP Map

Our long awaited map went on sale in May. Sales to date total about 550 maps. In August we used

the occasion of our Annual Spring Bushwalk to launch the map. Mr Tim Moore, State Member for Gordon and Minister for the Environment, kindly attended with two daughters and gave the launching address to about 100 walkers. It was a delightful occasion: we duly walked the STEP track, no one got lost, and 100 afternoon teas were enjoyed at the conclusion of the walk. On behalf of everyone I again thank Margaret Booth for having the brilliant idea of mapping the walking tracks of the Upper Lane Cove Valley and persisting with the project over many long years. Dr Graeme Aplin helped with technical advice, the Paddy Pallin Foundation helped with finance, and STEP committee members walked & walked & walked the tracks on the draft map.

### Bush Regeneration

STEP has conducted regular bush regeneration sessions at various sites in Ku-ring-gai for the last 10 years. During this time, and especially in the last couple of years, we have noted the steady growth of volunteer bush regeneration work in Ku-ring-gai. Council has actively fostered this work, and now provides solid support and back up to local regeneration volunteers. You have probably noticed site-signs appearing in bushland near you. The Committee of STEP has now decided that after the end of this year, it will cease to organise a specific STEP regeneration team, but will put its efforts into advice, support and teaching for groups and individuals. This is a satisfactory development and a better use of the Committee's expertise and time.

### The Ku-ring-gai Bat Colony

In May STEP organised a fundraising evening for the Bat Colony. This was attended by an enthusiastic audience of about 50 adults and 50 children. We were fascinated by the slide presentation and the two young "public relations" bats who attended and circulated among us. A donation of \$137 was sent to the Bat Colony Committee.

### Membership of Other Groups

STEP is a member of the following organisations :- KMC Bushland Management Working Party, Coalition for Urban Transport Sanity, coalition Against Lane Cove Valley Freeways, Union of Lane Cove Valley Conservationists, Ku-ring-gai Bat Colony, KMC Wildflower Garden Committee, Nature Conservation Council, Australian Conservation Foundation, Water Board Lane Cove Valley Study Committee. Through these permanent memberships STEP is assisted in keeping in touch with current conservation issues. We also, from time to time, send a member to temporary committees concerned with such issues as freeways, urban run-off and Council accountability. Also, we exchange newsletters with like-minded groups in Ku-ring-gai: KuBES, the Ratepayers Association and the Bat Colony Committee, and beyond Ku-ring-gai with conservation groups in Thornleigh, Lane Cove and Castlecrag.

### The Water Board

We are glad to report that the Water Board has experienced a change of heart towards the rivers and bushland through which its sewer lines run. After years of neglect, the Board is now accepting responsibility for damage to bushland and waterways, and has begun a costly program of improvements. STEP has been represented on a committee looking at conservation measures in the Lane Cove River Valley, and has been consulted informally also.

### Membership

Membership numbers have increased again this year, to about 350. There has been a strong increase in life membership. Membership of STEP now comes from all over the municipality of Ku-ring-gai, and beyond. This solid support is very satisfactory. It seems certain that our membership numbers can increase still further if we continue to let residents know about us, chiefly by letterboxing.

Once again, this year, we have offered fewer activities for members than in our earlier days, believing that our main reason for existence is environmental protection, rather than organising functions. This was discussed in a newsletter, and we believe we have the tacit approval of members for the way we are proceeding. In fact, our 3 activities for this past year - the Annual General Meeting, the Bat Night, and the Spring Bushwalk with Map Launch were all well attended. Bush regeneration working parties were less well attended.

## The STEP Committee

The committee can report another year of hard work, attending to a range of issues large and small. We were pleased to welcome some new members on to the committee this year, for we recognise that our strength and effectiveness lies in a strong, hard-working and lateral thinking group of committee members. New ideas and new enthusiasms are always welcome.

## The Newsletter

This is our chief means of communication with STEP members. It is circulated five or six times a year, and often includes hand out material of possible interest to members. Its relatively low cost of production and circulation is due to the generosity of STEP benefactors.

## The Issues of 1989-90

Here is a list of the main issues.

Freeways, Release of B1 land South of Maxwell St, Soldiers Memorial Field, North Turrumurra playing fields, Mole Trig and the Mona Vale Rd corridor, Degradation of Bushland in Ku-ring-gai Rezoning of Sanitarium Land, Lady Davidson Hospital Land, Crown Lands Act, Voting at Council elections, SEPP19, Development applications, (DAs), Building applications, (BAs), Canoon Rd Netball Courts, State Labour Party's environmental policy, "Ku-ring-gai Conference" Document for Action, , Cowan Creek Plan of Management, Changes to Alignment of Kissing Pt Rd, STEP Constitution, Grant applications for catchment management - Three were made with much hard work, and in cooperation with other groups. We have not yet heard the outcome of these submissions.

## Correspondence

In the course of dealing with the issues listed above, and in conducting the general business of STEP, large quantities of correspondence are dealt with. During the past year the committee has handled the following : Inwards: 222 items, Outwards: 55 items.

The outward figures do not include multiple copies, such as when a similar letter is sent to each alderman on Council, or to a group of politicians.

In addition, we mailed or hand delivered well over 1000 copies of the newsletter, wrote to dozens of new members, and organised publicity for our activities.

As well as written correspondence, there is a large volume of telephone calls, which are received and made throughout the year.

## Thanks

I wish to thank all STEP members who have helped in so many ways - large and small- to achieve our aims: the bush regenerators, the newsletter mail-out team, the caterers, and those individuals who have rung or written with points of view, or pointers for action.

And finally, on behalf of STEP members I want to thank the committee of STEP for a year of hard work. Committee members have attended meetings and contributed their ideas, then followed up, between meetings, by letter-writing, phoning, sitting on committees, making posters, designing them, printing them, getting them on public display, distributing membership leaflets, assembling & delivering newsletters, writing submissions, researching for submissions, walking and mapping tracks, arranging publicity, welcoming new members, lobbying politicians, minute taking, word processing, arranging duplication & printing of materials. As I summarise it I realise what a formidable amount of work has been undertaken and successfully achieved.

My personal thanks to every member of the committee, too, for the way they continue to make the serious business of STEP efficient and enjoyable too.

Circumstances dictate that I leave the STEP committee after this meeting. I leave it in very good hands indeed, with the utmost confidence that it will continue to be an effective voice for members and effective in its work for the local bushland environment and beyond.

Jenny Simons