



# STEP INC.

## Community Based Environmental Conservation

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### NEWSLETTER

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#### THE THREAT CONTINUES

Just when you think you're winning, that rationality has prevailed and that community attitudes are changing it seems that there is always something to bring you back to earth.

We have laws and SEPPs and Plans of Management and committees but greed, ignorance and indifference continue to act to threaten the urban environment of Kuring-gai. We have more people than ever belonging to groups such as STEP and KUBES, we have a Council Parks Department which is so keen that it is now publishing a newspaper, we have national cleanup days and a growing legion of professional and volunteer bush regenerators, we have a newly environmentally conscious Water Board but we also have entrenched vested and social interests which are hell bent on destroying the best of our natural and built environment.

#### Compromise

The catchcry is "compromise" and we are constantly told that those of us who think that all the compromising which ought to be done has been done are accused of being anti-progress, NIMBYs and more. The trouble is, of course, that compromise with regard to bushland is a one way process - it can be

destroyed but never created. So urban bushland in Kuring-gai is retreating every year at the hands of those who profess to love it (look at the election brochures of our present Aldermen). All involved will tell you that life is a compromise, that progress and development cannot be stopped and how much they love the bush. And while they talk the bush retreats under the tyranny of small decisions - a road widening, a school extension, an access road, a medium density development and so on.

We have slowed the rate of alienation over the past ten years but there is still a way to go.

#### MORRISON FOR NRMA

STEP member Caron Morrison is standing for election to the NRMA Council in October. Caron is an Elected Councillor of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW, the Convenor of The Coalition for Urban Transport Sanity, and a member of the F-2 West Castlereagh Community Consultative Committee. **Her goal is to put the environment onto the NRMA agenda.**

We believe that it is about time that the environment was considered from within the NRMA and we hope that all STEP members will

spread the word amongst their friends.

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#### ACCESS ROAD FOR UTS ( Kuring-gai College)

We reported on this in the last newsletter pointing out that the proposed road from the College to Lady Game Drive would damage Council and Lane Cove State Recreation Area (SRA) bushland.

The Development Application (DA) was eventually frustrated because the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) had not bothered to get approval from National Parks to put the road through the SRA. We understand that the UTS will have to resubmit the DA if and when it gets approval.

We have reviewed the Council report on the DA submission and are amazed by the contents. It is clear that the proposed road will not solve any problems for the residents in the medium term because its main purpose is to allow expansion of the campus and student numbers. All students and staff except those approaching from Lady Game Drive will still prefer to use the existing entrance roads and, with student numbers increasing, the local residents will be as badly or worse off than they are now.

The campus is to house the schools of Teacher Education, Financial Studies, Library and Information Studies, Nursing, Leisure, Tourism and Community Studies. Students are to travel from all over the metropolitan area and beyond.

### A Better Plan

So what is the answer? We believe that it lies in recognition that the campus should never have been located on this site because of its remoteness from public transport, its location in a previously secluded residential area and its environmental sensitivity. The only place for such a facility is adjacent to public transport and where road access is adequate.

We shall recommend therefore that the Master Plan now being prepared by the UTS recognise this and provides for a role for this campus which reduces student levels from those now existing and which transfers all existing bushland on the campus to the State Recreation Area. In addition, consideration should be given to relieving the plight of residents by installing a short tunnel access from Grosvenor Rd and the elimination of campus traffic from Austral and Eton Rds except for emergencies.

To proceed with the current plans will be to create a large campus in an inappropriate location which will continue to degrade the local natural and built environment as well as force students and staff into expensive car travel from all over Sydney.

We welcome any comments

on this proposal.

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### LONDONDERRY LESSON

The power of local protest (especially just before an election) has been well illustrated with the State Governments decision to abandon the Londonderry tip project. The simple fact is that we cannot go on producing waste at current rates without causing vast environmental problems. Ku-ring-gai has made good progress with recycling but will never make dramatic reductions in garbage volume until we all are asked to pay the real cost. STEP believes that domestic garbage disposal should be paid for by volume or weight. The sophisticated data processing methods now available should allow each bin to be automatically weighed as it is emptied, or alternatively, households which move to smaller bins could be charged less.

So long as information on garbage minimisation was freely available and recycling was made easy such a user pays policy would produce a dramatic reduction in garbage. This, in turn, would mean that areas such as Londonderry would not be threatened.

As Sydney heads for a doubling of its population over the next 60 years or so our per capita volume of garbage will of course become even more important.

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### WATER CONSERVATION

There are hoards of engineers out there who can hardly wait to get the chance to duplicate the Warragamba

Dam experience. Be assured that at the first opportunity there will be renewals of proposals for a massive dam on the Shoalhaven and another great river will be turned into a lake.

While the existing exponential population growth will make more dams inevitable there is plenty that can be done in the short term to delay this in the hope that our population will be stabilised soon. The tremendous saving in water consumption in the Newcastle region when charges were increased for excess use could be duplicated in Sydney. There is no question that people will modify their behaviour to save money.

In Sydney a lot of water is sprinkled onto lawns and gardens and carries nutrient laden water into bushland and creeks and rivers. There is great opportunity to reduce this and to save water by planting native gardens which don't need watering after establishment.

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### F-3 CONSEQUENCES

There has been an enormous fuss about the impact of traffic headed to and from the F-3 causing congestion in Wahroonga residential and shopping areas. One newspaper report said that there are "8,000 extra cars going through Wahroonga shopping centre each day compared with the number before the freeway was opened." (Northern Herald 21/2/91).

STEP and others who have studied traffic behaviour have of course been predicting this sort of consequence from road improvements. The very presence of an

improved road leads additional traffic onto the roads until congestion builds up to the point where people prefer to stay at home or make other arrangements. We hear that the RTA's predictions for F-3 traffic volume have already been far exceeded and of course we can expect it to get worse.

Doubtless the various plans put forward for Wahroonga will assist in reducing local congestion but the problem will simply be transferred elsewhere.

The trap we must not fall into is thinking that more roads are the solution. If this argument is allowed to prevail we shall end up with roads through every bit of urban bushland and through many residential areas but with ever increasing traffic congestion.

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### THE BUSH SCHOOL

It seems to be a fact of life that we name our streets and other landmarks after what we have destroyed or are about to destroy. Try finding a waratah in Waratah Rd Palm Beach or a Kangaroo at Kangaroo Point!

We were asked by concerned STEP members to advise on the effect on the bush regeneration area at Wahroonga Primary on Burns Rd (The Bush School) of a proposed school hall. Everyone evidently wants a hall but there is debate as to its size and location. Many good people have worked very hard to come up with the design and funding proposals but the structure was proposed to be immediately upslope of the regeneration area fronting Burns Rd. Construction here

would have an adverse effect on the bush as well as presenting a nine metre high, metal clad building of doubtful architectural merit on the Burns Rd frontage.

The bush on the site and in the adjacent Turiban Reserve is a tiny remnant of the great shale forest which covered the ridgetops in the area 200 years ago. It is a great teaching resource and community asset.

STEP has recommended that opinion be sought from environmental experts and that, in any event, consideration be given to locating the hall elsewhere on the site.

The disappointing aspect of the whole matter was that establishing the impact on the natural environment was an afterthought rather than a primary consideration and that, once again, we heard of the necessity for compromise. Thus the bush is asked to yield a little because there is "plenty" of bush elsewhere on the site. And so continues the process by which we have lost some 500 hectares of bushland in the municipality over the last 30 years.

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### MONA VALE ROAD

The Government has not yet announced a determination of the Land Assessment and Master Plan for Mona Vale Rd but we believe that it will recommend that the Crown Land bushland areas be retained as bush and that the degraded areas (the tree lopping tip, the Police Driver Training Centre etc.) be used for development.

In a Mayoral Minute dated 19th March the Mayor has

proposed that Council support the use of the Police Driver Centre for a bus depot, a private driver education school and "sand, soil and gravel distribution". It is the first time we have seen the last proposal but perhaps it has to do with the bus company also being in the sand and gravel business.

Now there is nothing wrong with any of these activities but they simply do not belong on Crown Land on a ridgetop site above the natural bushland of the Davidson State Recreation Area. They will produce noise and runoff which will continue the degradation of the downslope bushland.

Like any other private business the driving school and bus/gravel depot should find their own location in an appropriate industrial area.

Council is preparing a Draft Local Environmental Plan which will go on exhibition for 4 weeks. We urge you to watch out for notification in the local press and to comment upon it.

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### BUSH REGENERATION

The Parks and Landscapes section of Ku-ring-gai Council, in its draft Five Year Plan For Bush Regeneration, has proposed a new approach to regeneration work carried out by Council. This is designed to allow them to make better use of the scarce financial resources available.

Essentially the proposal involves working on the largest areas of highest conservation value on a whole catchment or sub-catchment basis. This priority

system will mean that less attention will be paid to the more visible urban interface degradation where regeneration work is time consuming and often not very rewarding. All existing regeneration areas are to be maintained by appropriate follow up work.

The existing volunteer regeneration programme will be given new impetus if the recommendation to establish the staff position of Bush

Regeneration Volunteer Co-ordinator is accepted by Council.

STEP supports this concept and we shall report in future newsletters the areas which have been given priority.

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**COWAN CREEK P.O.M.**

Council has prepared a draft plan of management "Issues Paper" preparatory to preparing a plan of management

for Branch of Cowan Creek bushland (about 80 hectares). This is the creek which rises at Bannockburn Oval, flows through the Pymble Golf Course and across Burns Rd and then between St Ives Chase and North Turramurra and on into the National Park. It is a long and difficult bush area to manage and anyone wanting input into the plan should contact the Parks and Landscape Department at Council.

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