



STEP Inc. Newsletter

Community Based Environmental Conservation Since 1978. No. 62 June 1993

FUNGI OF THE SYDNEY REGION

Most people seem to regard Sydney bushland as trees, the more enlightened recognise the diverse flora and fauna as part of it, but those who are more involved realise that what we really have is an ecosystem of myriad interdependent components. One of the more interesting visible such components is the fungi which come in many sizes and colours. Almost no-one has a clue what fungi do, how many there are, whether they are native or exotic or which ones shelter elves.

On Thursday 1st July Harold Spies will talk about fungi. Harold is a microbiologist with extensive work and teaching experience, he is the President of the Castlecrag Conservation Society and actively involved in urban bushland management. He is renowned as a fascinating speaker on fungi of the Sydney region.

Who should come?

- * Anyone who has some interest in our bushland and would like a whole new window into it
- * Anyone doing or learning bush regeneration
- * Bushwalkers
- * Gardeners
- * Aspiring botanists
- * and YOU



See you there!! St Andrews Hall, Corner of Vernon and Chisholm Streets, Turramurra, 7.45 pm Thursday 1st July

F-2 FOOLISHNESS

The proposed road which was the Castlereagh Freeway & then the F-2 is now the North West Transport Link & announcements have been made by the State Government that, following the determination of the 1992 EIS, the freeway from Old Windsor Rd at Baulkham Hills to Epping Rd at North Ryde will proceed. The decision is one of the utmost cynicism as the RTA and Government ignore the Woodward Inquiry recommendation, that the project not proceed and as they set about creating mechanisms which will destroy Sydney's urban amenity.

It must be clearly understood that the purpose of the road is not to make life easier for those of us who now battle congestion. It is not to ease traffic on the local streets in the suburbs through which it passes. It is not to reduce fuel consumption or greenhouse gases. This road is being built to allow unrestrained urban development. It is being built to satisfy the egos of short sighted politicians for whom more is always better & for whom "development" always equates with progress. And it is being built to satisfy the RTA whose brief is to build roads.

The proposed toll will ensure that the local alternative routes are kept congested. The initial improvement in travel times will ensure that people populate the areas along, and at the end of, the road and soon fill it up. And the fact that Epping Road is already operating at close to capacity in both directions in peak hours will ensure that a new bottleneck is produced and that the politicians can

then set about building even bigger roads to divide, pollute and degrade our suburbs.

The Government is expecting construction to commence in late 1994. The low internal rate of return associated with the project, however, may mean that private operators will be reluctant to participate. A proposed Parliamentary Select Inquiry into the road and the demand from Lane Cove Council that an EIS be produced to address the effect of the road on Lane Cove may both have an effect on the outcome.

So here we are again criticising progress, knocking those who want to make Sydney a bigger & better city of 7,000,000 within 70 years! When we remember, however, that these are the same people who want us to put a dual occupancy or two in every backyard, who want to put another expressway through the Lane Cove Valley, who cannot manage overflowing sewers & who are proud of spending \$70,000,000 or so on the mindlessness which is Eastern Creek then perhaps the odds are really on us being right and them very wrong.

We would be very pleased to hear from any members with a view on this matter. If you want more information on the F-2 the RTA has published a "Community Newsletter" which is free and the EIS Assessment and its Appendices each of which cost \$20. Ring 831- 0938 to arrange to get them.

THE F-3 RAMPS

We are amazed by how often traffic and roads intrude into environmental considerations. STEP is of course concerned with the built environment as well as with natural areas - the latter get more attention because changes there are generally irreversible. It is instructive to follow the arguments relating to a road issue which does not directly affect bushland to see why there should nevertheless be concern.

During 1991 there was a furious debate over the question of whether or not to install exit ramps off the F-3 Freeway feeding into Junction Rd at Wahroonga. Junction Rd would then be widened as part of Secondary Road 2043 and connected through an existing corridor to Killeaton St and the rest of 2043 which leads to Roseville via the Arterial Rd.

The demand for the ramps came from a variety of people but most vocal were the shopkeepers of Wahroonga and residents of Burns and other nearby roads. These people reasoned that if the ramps were built the traffic would be attracted away from their streets. This is a very NIMBY approach but of course if you don't look after your own backyard who else will?

A large part of the shopkeepers' problem was fixed by banning the right turn from Coonanbarra Rd to the Pacific Highway in peak hour. In addition to this an enormous public reaction against the ramps

proposal and the defeat of the pro-rampers at the last Council elections led to the heat going out of the issue. It continues to be raised, however, and probably will continue to be until the protagonists are able to see the bigger picture.

The Real Problem

We agree that the 1991 situation was completely unacceptable. In our view, however, this problem was a symptom of a far more complex one which has to do with the lack of a total transport and demographic plan for Sydney and a lack of any appreciation by the Government and its advisers of the effect that roads, and expressways in particular, have on the demographics of the metropolitan area. In this case the government failed to appreciate the enormous increase in traffic the F-3 would create and so failed to cope with that increase. When one considers that ample evidence is available to predict this situation one can only conclude that incompetence or deception is to blame.

The problem therefore is a failure by our community to understand the forces at work. Those who do understand are not listened to and people directly affected are forced to play a reactive role.

Planning

We believe that it is wrong to argue that just because a road has been planned for 40 years it should

proceed. Traffic engineering, like medicine and many other disciplines, has advanced greatly over the last 40 years and therefore old planning may not be good planning.

Engineers and Experts

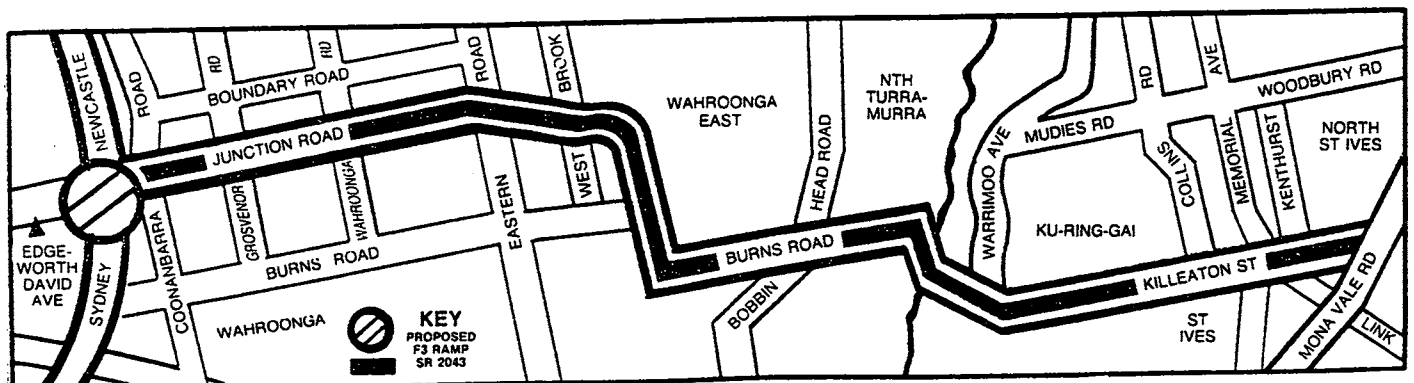
The pro ramps people relied on the opinions of traffic engineers, Local Traffic Management Committees, traffic studies etc. Traffic experts have, in our view, a worse track record than economists in predicting outcomes. There is absolutely no substitute for your own research leading to your own conclusions.

The Flexible Bottleneck

It has been argued, successfully in our view, that in a situation such as this the roads will always fill to capacity and act as a bottleneck. The only decision to be made therefore is where and how big the governing bottleneck will be. Professor W R Blunden said recently ".....in the urban context, a major bottleneck cannot be removed merely by providing more road traffic capacity - the existing bottleneck is simply enlarged." Thus, by adding the ramps, we run the risk of simply making a bigger bottleneck on the F-3 which in turn will bring demands for more roads.

The Time Parameter

Because we have no demographic strategy for Sydney the



consequences of our policy of population growth have not been addressed. At the present rate of growth of about 1% per year we will double our population to seven million over the next seventy years. Part of the Government's reaction to this has been to force medium density housing upon us - a policy which will eventually turn Ku-ring-gai into a high density high rise area.

The current traffic problems in Wahroonga must therefore be seen as one component of an ongoing build up of congestion which needs long term solutions as well as short term palliatives.

The Solution

We believe that the completion of 2043 will, like the F-3, bring no more than temporary relief. It will lead to demographic changes such as demands to add population to

the Northern Beaches and that any such changes will themselves generate more traffic until 2043 is so congested that the traffic engineers tell us that Burns Rd should also be a through road or that a freeway must be built through the National Park to the beaches. Less spectacular effects of road improvements are the sorts of things that Commissioner Kirby stated in his 1983 Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Warringah Transport Corridor. He pointed out that road improvements lead people to live further from their work, to desert public transport and to sleep in more until congestion builds up so that they begin to make the opposite decisions.

We believe that the solution is to recognise that our suburbs are under siege and that any intrusion of traffic in the volumes now threatened is unacceptable. This

means that 2043 as a through road is more undesirable than the current situation because not only will it create noise, pollution and danger but also it will attract additional traffic which will lead to its congestion and then inevitable spillovers into the suburbs through which it travels. Increased volume off the F-3 after ramps are built will lead to a situation where heavy traffic will again spill through Wahroonga shopping centre and adjacent areas.

We believe that the best course is to unite the whole of the North Shore in rejecting any more of this through traffic, to allow the Pacific Highway to be the governing bottleneck and to force the Government and its advisers to appreciate that we will not allow unrestricted growth to destroy out suburbs.

If STEP members have any opinions we would like to hear.

SEWER OVERFLOWS AND WATER QUALITY IN THE LANE COVE RIVER

You may have seen the 7.30 Report on 24 May about the water quality of the Lane Cove River. A number of ACF people (with good representation of STEP members) spent time on a recent weekend looking for dry weather sewer overflows in the Lane Cove Valley. Using nothing more sensitive than their noses they found three overflows. One or two of these had been flowing for a long time. They believe that the Water Board is placing undue blame on other sources of pollution and not maintaining their own infrastructure.

There is no doubt that a very telling point has been made but there is equally no doubt that the solution is not an easy one. In order to carry out 100% inspection of their lines the Board would of course need access and this would mean new track construction. Apart from blockages caused by

vandalism and illegal use, sewers block due to being choked by tree roots and this happens on a regular statistical basis.

In our view the Water Board must develop a strategy for dealing with overflows in inaccessible areas and subject this strategy to public comment before implementation. The Lane Cove Catchment Management Committee has discussed the matter and no doubt will continue to do so.

Monitoring has been carried out in the river and has shown that the levels of faecal coliforms in dry weather are too high for swimming in much of the river and tributaries and that these levels increase dramatically during wet weather.

No Swimming

After the degree of pollution of the river became known National

Parks had signs put up in the Lane Cove National Park warning people against swimming or boating. The Minister had these removed after the 7.30 Report article but there is now every chance that they will be replaced. Swimming is not recommended at any time and boating would generally be permissible in dry weather but not in wet.

CATCHMENT BROCHURE

The Lane Cove Catchment Management Committee has produced a brochure explaining the aims of Total Catchment Management and the work of the Committee. A copy is enclosed. You will soon start to see signs on creeks and rivers identifying the catchment and signs on roadside stormwater inlets.

We shall send you similar information on the Middle Harbour catchment when it is available.

CLIVE EVATT RESERVE

A valuable shale reserve is Clive Evatt on the corner of Eastern and Burns Rds at Wahroonga. It had become impoverished in native species diversity and weeds were prevalent. Because it had not seen a bushfire for at least 60 years the lack of fire was diagnosed as the problem and so the reserve was burnt. The results have been spectacular in that many plants not present before the fire have regenerated. The years to come

should give us a "glimpse in this tiny reserve of the beauty of the tall bluegum forests which covered the ridges of the North Shore from Roseville to Wahroonga". (Quote from Nancy Pallin).

FIELD GUIDE

Committee member John Martyn has now practically completed our Field Guide to the Upper Lane Cove Valley and quotations for printing are being sought. STEP has applied for an Environmental

Trust Grant to fund publication but if that is not successful then another method will be found. This book will be about 100 pages and will sell for about \$20.

MOUNTAIN BIKES

Ku-ring-gai's Bushland Management Working Party is to review the mountain bike proposals previously mentioned in this newsletter. The concerns expressed by STEP and others will be addressed. We shall keep you informed.

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DIARY REMINDER

Thursday 1st July

Fungi of the Sydney Region by Harold Spies, St Andrews Hall, Corner of Vernon and Chisholm Sts, Turramurra. 7.45 pm
(note that this was previously mentioned for 24th June)

Sunday 11th July

Population Impact Awareness Day, First Fleet Park, Circular Quay at 1.30 pm

Saturday 14th Aug

Kubes bushwalk - location to be determined - call 498 6052 for information

Thursday 19th Aug

Talk by well known botanist Joan Webb on Sydney Sandstone flora names. Organised by Kubes - for information 498 6052