



# STEP Inc. Newsletter

Community Based Environmental Conservation Since 1978. No. 95 April 1999

## COMING EVENTS

**Autumn Bushwalk --On Sunday May 2nd** Bill Jones will lead our autumn bushwalk through the **Sugarloaf Reserve**, which was recently added to the Lane Cove National Park. We will **meet at the Field of Mars Reserve car park**, under the aqueduct, Pittwater Rd., between East Ryde and Gladesville and opposite Buffalo Creek Reserve, which in turn is adjacent to the new Sugarloaf Reserve.

To make a 1.30 pm start possible we would like everybody to **meet at 1.15 pm**. The walk will take about two and a half hours, and at the end we will provide tea and biscuits.

The area known as Sugarloaf and some adjoining land are on the Great North Walk route and consequently had some boardwalks constructed as part of the GNW.

The walk will take us along the Great North Walk on the boardwalks through the mangroves at the mouths of Buffalo Creek and Kitty's Creek.

Bill will be pointing out the features of the area, which make this reserve worthy of its new status as part of the Lane Cove National Park.

## PARRAMATTA RAIL LINK

The proposed Parramatta Rail Link is a step in the right direction for transport sanity for the Sydney metropolitan region.

STEP strongly supports the development of public transport and hence supports the general principle of a rail link connecting Parramatta to the North Shore rail line.

However, STEP's concern is to ensure that National Park or urban bushland are not degraded by the construction and operation of such a link.

The area of major concern is the crossing of the Lane Cove Valley. The river corridor provides an important area of natural bushland and aquatic habitat and deserves protection.

Consequently two of the options being offered for discussion are not acceptable solutions. They are the proposals of either a bridge or a cut and cover tunnel across the river. A bridge would cause an unacceptable loss of recreational and visual amenity to the National Park and would also cause unacceptable damage to urban bushland or to important mangrove habitat or both. A cut and cover tunnel would cause completely unacceptable damage to the aquatic habitat of the river



during construction and would compromise much of the work carried out over the last few years by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the volunteers and negate the efforts of the Lane Cove River Catchment Management Committee.

It is therefore STEP's position that any crossing of the Lane Cove River must use either underground shield tunnelling or deep rock tunnelling to leave the river bed and the adjacent National Park bushland untouched.

STEP's preferred route is that proposed by the West Roseville/Lindfield Community Group as its second alternative, with a station at Delhi Rd., crossing the river below Fullers Bridge and proceeding under Lane Cove to the Artarmon Industrial area and joining the North Shore line at St. Leonards.

This would provide stations at the Lane Cove and Artarmon Industrial areas as well as at the Delhi Rd. Corporate Park, and thus offering rail transport to those locations, which are currently served only by road.

It would leave the National Park unaffected, while making it relatively simple for bus service to the National Park as well as to the UTS campus from the west.

It would also allow buses travelling on the M2 tollway to connect to the rail system at Delhi Rd. or Lane Cove stations and thus reduce the road traffic demand and congestion through Lane Cove.

STEP's second preference is for a route which provides a station at Delhi Rd., North Ryde, then underground to join the North Shore line at Chatswood, also leaving the National Park and river unaffected. It has the advantage of joining at Chatswood, but the disadvantage of not serving the Lane Cove and Artarmon Industrial areas.

Whichever route is chosen, it is essential that it is shield or rock tunnelled under the river and generally under the National Park so that these are not adversely affected, either during construction or during operation. It is also essential that access shafts are located away from

the National Park bushland or from residential areas. Ideal locations would be at the proposed stations. In this context STEP also opposes further development on the northern side of Delhi Rd., because of its likely adverse effects on the National Park adjacent, any development connected with the Delhi Rd. station should be confined to the south of Delhi Rd.



## SUSTAINABILITY

A few years ago the word sustainability was still being used only in economic terms, e.g. "if we build this road, can we maintain it to the required standard?"

Today that statement seems quite ludicrous, but it was actually made during the M2 Tollway Inquiry. Today's debate now firmly places the word in the context of resource use and waste creation, as in ecologically sustainable development. That's definitely progress, but the public perception now includes a view that the change in thinking has occurred and everything is OK. So we now have three positions:

the **first** that strongly advocates change to our consumption habits and resource use,  
 the **second** which says the necessary change has happened, and  
 the **third** which holds that change is happening and we should concentrate on showing how change can be facilitated. This last view is promoted by futurist Robert Theobald, who recently visited Australia.

The **second** view appears to be a rearguard action on the part of those

who have vested interests to protect and therefore would prefer business as usual.

The green movement generally holds the **first** view, but is often accused of never being satisfied and always calling for more, e.g. the forestry industry's complaint that if one area is reserved the "greenies" will immediately demand the next one to be reserved.

Fair enough, you might say, if you are trying to change a destructive mindset you have to keep at it.

There is plenty of evidence that the destructive mindset has not disappeared and that there is still need for a change of attitude.

While the green movement is talking about change in attitude, approach and mindset, it is being accused of being opposed to progress, as in a recent outburst by the Australian Financial Review columnist Imre Salusinszky. He rails about the "green illiberalism" of "greenie mayors in places like Port Douglas" who are trying to limit development by restricting the growth of population (and thereby trying to get closer to an environmentally sustainable development situation). He calls it "telling people where they can live in their own country" among a general tirade against everything "environmental".

While such views persist among opinion shapers there is obviously much to be done.

That is not to say that the **third** position is not valid. It seems like a good idea to try to show how change could happen, especially since the change need not have negative economic effects.



Especially in Australia it is economically advantageous, and should therefore be relatively easy, to change from the extractive industry model towards creation of wealth through export of intellectual product (admittedly a much greater emphasis on education and R&D would be required). This would at least reduce the destructive effects of the resource industries. The big challenge remains: to reshape consumption habits towards lower resource use.

Although it is relatively easy to define what is necessary, it is much harder to devise solutions, which are persuasive to the consumer and able to induce change on the supply side of the market.

The task is made more difficult by the dominant drive, to the exclusion of all else, for economic "efficiency" in the current climate of economic rationalism.



## ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

### Definition

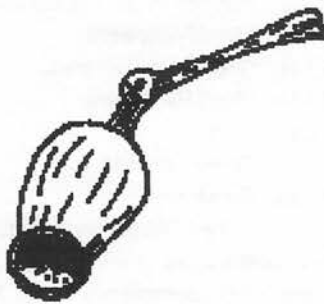
The Protection of the Environment (Administration) Act 1991 (as amended in 1997) gives the following definition:

*Section 6(2): For the purposes of subsection (1)(a), ecologically sustainable development requires the effective integration of economic and environmental considerations in decision-making processes.*

*Ecologically sustainable development can be achieved through the implementation of the following principles and programs:*  
 (a) *the precautionary principle namely, that if there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific*

certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation. In the application of the precautionary principle, public and private decisions should be guided by:

- (i) careful evaluation to avoid, wherever practicable, serious or irreversible damage to the environment, and
- (ii) an assessment of the risk-weighted consequences and various options,



(b) intergenerational equity namely, that the present generation should ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment are maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations,

(c) conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity namely, that conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity should be a fundamental consideration,

(d) improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms namely, that environmental factors should be included in the valuation of assets and services, such as:

- (i) polluter pays that is, those who generate pollution and waste should bear the cost of containment, avoidance or abatement,
- (ii) the users of goods and services should pay prices based on the full lifecycle costs of providing goods and services, including the use of natural resources and assets and the ultimate disposal of any waste,
- (iii) environmental goals, having been established, should be pursued in the most effective way, by

establishing incentive structures, including market mechanisms, that enable those best placed to maximise benefits or minimise costs to develop their own solutions and responses to environmental problems.

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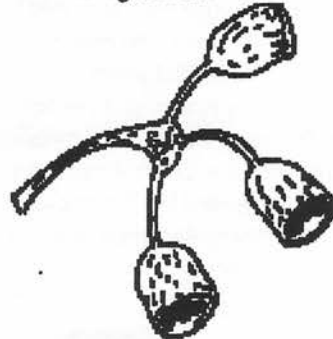
**ESD AND POLITICS**

The NSW State election is over, but it is worth mentioning some of the matters, which the NSW Nature Conservation Council raised pre-election as important matters for the next State Government. The Carr Government has been given a strong majority, and should therefore be in a position to move boldly on some of these matters, but they need to be reminded lest they rest on their perceived laurels.

**(i) ESD and the Land & Environment Court**

The L&E Court has been active in improving public interest legal principles without falling prey to vexatious or trivial cases, but it has applied the term 'precautionary principle' only in terms of common sense rather than as part of an ESD approach.

This has led the NCC to advocate:  
 \* legislation to require the L&E Court to incorporate ESD into the objects of its Act and  
 \* to include duties to be consistent with the principles of ESD across all natural resource and environment protection legislation.

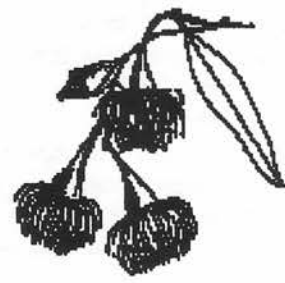


**(ii) Department of Urban Affairs and Planning (DUAP)**

The current planning and consent process has failed to protect biodiversity and is leading to loss of bushland, wetlands, water quality and urban amenity values.

The NCC is therefore demanding that:

- \* DUAP be reconstituted as a Statutory Authority with broad community links, transparent processes and an overriding responsibility to monitor compliance with ESD principles,
- \* require it to report annually on achievements towards ESD against performance indicators.



**(iii) Commission of Inquiry**

Recent changes to the planning laws have reduced community rights, while not setting any overarching ESD objectives for the Commissioners.

The NCC advocates that the Commission be changed to a Commission for ESD, rolling all other similar tribunals into it and establish clear principles and process for ESD framework and requiring each Inquiry to report comprehensively relative to ESD principles.

(STEP is a member of the NSW Nature Conservation Council and supports these initiatives)  
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**THE YAM DAISY (Microseris scapigera)**

The little native, yellow daisy was once found throughout the grasslands of Victoria and NSW. It is commonly known as murnong. It was a very important part of the Aboriginal diet.

The flower resembles that of the European dandelion and it grows a tuberous root that varies from looking like a small round radish to a tapered carrot. Records extending to the 1840s list its great abundance in the grasslands.

The roots, called tubers or yams, grow at a very shallow depth and are easily dug up and quite nutritious. In a single day an Aboriginal woman could gather up to 2000 yams (about 8 kg).

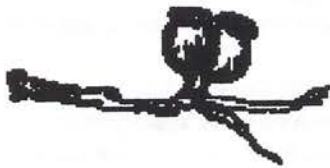
There is evidence that Aboriginal burning practices encouraged growth of the yam daisies.

European settlement brought hard-hooved animals, which ate plants right down to the ground and compacted the soil, thereby changing the conditions. It was reported that sheep had even learnt to dig for the tubers.

While native grasses managed to survive the grazing onslaught, yam daisies became scarce, having a serious impact on the Aboriginals' native food supplies.

The dramatic change from native food supply to a regime of flour and sugar probably contributed to a high mortality especially among Victorian Aboriginals at that time. Today the yam daisy is completely absent from the open plains, where it once thrived and can be found only in small isolated remnants where grazing does not occur, some roadsides and cemeteries.

*(The above is an extract from an information sheet on grasslands published by the Landscape Conservation Unit, ANCA, from whom more information can be obtained)*



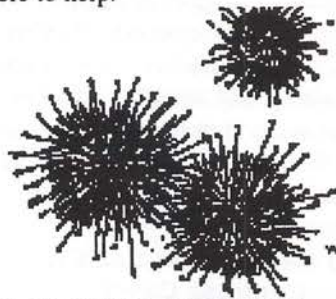
#### LOCAL EVENTS DIARY

\* A 10 km **ramble through Royal National Park** organised by Margaret Booth for Saturday **15th May, 1999**. Details from Margaret Booth on 9449 3746.

\* A talk about "**Ku-ring-gai Aboriginal Heritage**" by Allen Madden on **July 26th, 1999**. Val Weakley 9144 7324 for details.

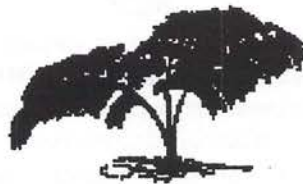
#### STEP DISPLAY

We endeavour to be present with our information display at every opportunity in the Ku-ring-gai community, and we are conscious that our display should be as interesting and effective as possible. This requires artistic input and some dedication. We are looking for a volunteer to help with organising, maintaining and manning the display. Please contact Michelle Leishman on 9489 8972 if you are able to help.



#### OLYMPIC LANDCARE

A joint venture between Landcare Australia, Greening Australia and SOCOG aims to extend Olympic benefits to areas outside Sydney by repairing 19 river valleys and planting over 2 million trees in 600 sites countrywide before the Games. The first project kicked off on 20th September, 1998, with about 1200 people (including about 500 locals and representatives from the Wiradjuri community) planting 17000 trees at Lake Lyell near Lithgow as part of the Cox's River catchment remediation. 700 people arrived on a free train provided by the Rail Access Corporation. A barbecue and salad lunch was provided by Rotary and free music by the band Mental As Anything. Lithgow City Council and local landcare groups have committed themselves to the area's ongoing maintenance.



#### KU-RING-GAI WILD- FLOWER GARDENS Talks and Walks

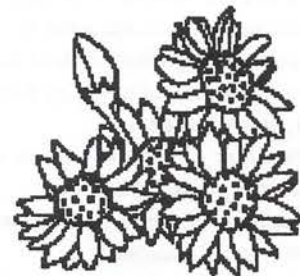
Organised by the Australian Plants Society (North Shore Group) the events start with a talk at 10.00 am at the Visitor Centre and are followed by an easy walk in the gardens to look at the subject plants. The walk concludes at 12.00 noon. There is a fee of \$2 to cover costs of information pamphlets but participants are admitted to the Wildflower Garden free of charge.

27 April Inflorescences  
4 May Parts of Plant 3 (Leaves)  
11 May Identifying trees  
18 May Geology of the area  
25 May Plant Evolution  
1 June Ferns  
8 June Gymnosperms  
15 June Rainforest  
22 June Longer Walk (bring lunch)  
There is a 4 week interval before the Spring Walks commence on 20 July  
The Spring Walks program will be published in the next Newsletter.

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#### STEP COMMITTEE

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#### TAIL ENDER

*Overheard:*

*"The art of green politics is to criticise the hell out of the best political offer going while making sure that it is not quite defeated".*