

# STEP Inc. Newsletter

Community Based Environmental Conservation Since 1978. No. 101 April 2000

## COMING EVENTS

### COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

In the March 2000 Newsletter we referred to the Lions Club of Ku-ring-gai Service Award Dinner as being held on 27th April, 2000. This was subsequently postponed and will now be held on **Wednesday 17th May, 2000, at 7.00 pm**, at the Lindfield Bowling Club, Carlyle St., East Lindfield.

The Lions Club Community Service Award for Services to the Environment will be presented to **Janet Fairlie-Cunninghame** at that dinner by **Brendan Nelson, MP**, Federal Member for Bradfield (see citation below)

The dinner cost is \$20 per head and reservations can be made by calling Bruce Hutcherson on 9487 7934 or Fax 9487 7935.

Reservations (with cheque) will be accepted no later than 10th May, 2000.

Cheques should be made payable to Lions Club of Ku-ring-gai, and mailed to P.O. Box 23, Pymble, NSW, 2073.

We encourage STEP members to attend and support Janet with their presence.

### BACKYARD AND BEYOND

Please set aside **Wednesday, 24th May, 2000, 8.00 pm**, for our next talk. The venue will be the St. Andrews Uniting Church Hall, corner of Vernon and Chisholm St., South Turramurra. The speaker will be **Valerie Close**, who is a naturalist with many years experience and a wealth of knowledge about the fauna and flora of the backyard. She has an interesting way of presenting her subject matter with the help of slides and a great deal of enthusiasm.

**Don't miss it**, here is your chance to ask questions and find out what hides in your backyard.

#### Janet Fairlie-Cunninghame

STEP is proud to have nominated Janet for the Lions Club award with the following citation:

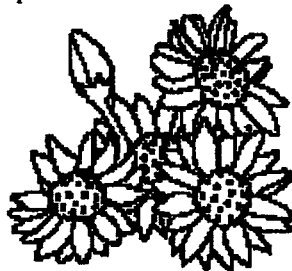
"Janet and her late husband were keen bushwalkers and strong supporters of the National Parks Association from its inception. Their bushwalking gave them experience of many types of bushland so they were aware of the degradation occurring especially in urban bushland.

Janet completed the National Trust Bush Regeneration course in the early 1980's and was one of the first students to complete the TAFE Bush Regeneration Certificate. She was employed in one of the early Bush Regeneration contract teams led by Robin Buchanan, author of Bush Regeneration: Recovering Australian Landscapes, and head teacher of the Bush Management School at Ryde TAFE. This project was to regenerate bushland at the Australian Analytical Laboratories, Suakin Pl.,

Pymble.

In recent years she has taught Bush Regeneration at TAFE and has been involved in several Bush Regeneration Projects at the Lane Cove National Park.

Janet was aware that Ku-ring-gai Council was responsible for the management of 1100 hectares of bushland but was not utilising effective methods of weed management. As a consequence, in 1980, Janet arranged a letterbox drop across Ku-ring-gai inviting residents to a public meeting. From this meeting the Ku-ring-gai Bushland and Environmental Society was formed, Janet being the inaugural chairperson.



One of the aims was to lobby for suitably qualified staff to be employed by Ku-ring-gai Council to manage its bushland.

Janet was a founding member of Ku-ring-gai Council's Bushland Management Working Party, which provided expertise and advice to Council's staff on bushland matters. The Working Party wrote the first modern Plan of Management for bushland and led Australia in developing practical applications of the ongoing science of the management and restoration of Australian ecosystems. Janet represented KUBES on the Union of Lane Cove Valley Conservationists, an umbrella group working for regeneration of bushland, improvements in water quality and other environmental issues such as effective control of developments to avoid degradation of the natural qualities of the Lane Cove River Valley.

Janet contributed her experience in bushland management in

contributing to the drafting of State Environmental Planning Policy No. 19 -- Urban Bushland. This legislation is binding on Local Government and has been vital in protecting Sydney bushland. In September 1991 Janet was elected Councillor for St Ives Ward of Kuring-gai. For four years she spoke and voted strongly for environmentally sensitive development control and effectively represented her constituents in lobbying for a caring and sustaining environment. Janet was also appointed a member of the Lane Cove River Catchment Management Committee. Janet's stance in all her environmental work is one of uncompromising activism. Her energetic and proactive approach combined with genuine anger at ongoing degradation of the Australian natural landscape has ensured her success at bringing about change."



### **Parramatta Rail Link**

STEP's original and subsequent submissions to the EIS were set out in detail in the March 2000 Newsletter.

Action for Public Transport members have argued strongly for the link to connect to the North Shore line at Chatswood as proposed by the EIS, on operational grounds. The connection to Chatswood is seen as essential because of the extensive retail, commercial and residential precincts and the forecast growth, especially in the residential. It is also presented as the only viable connection to the future rail extension to the Northern Beaches.

On the other hand we have had a strong reaction to our position from one of our members in the Lindfield/Killara area with a well-reasoned alternative proposal. The proposal is also based on operational information and also sounds persuasive. Since this is a very controversial matter we have decided to revisit the issue by presenting a precis of the West Lindfield/Killara alternative and restating the STEP position.

**The STEP Committee believes that the position expounded in its submissions to the EIS is valid and is the most environmentally responsible position it could take on the matter, especially the conditions which should be applied if a bridge solution were to be adopted.** The Committee is not in a position to assess operational matters in detail, however does share the suspicion that a station at UTS is part of a hidden agenda to **drive commercial development in that area. STEP would find such development a deplorable outcome.**

The following precis of the alternative solution was derived from a position paper prepared by the West Lindfield/Killara Residents Group:

1. *The proposal envisages an alignment with the Epping Rd. route with stations at Lane Cove and the Artarmon industrial area.*
2. *A Y-link is proposed to connect to Artarmon and to St. Leonards to cater for CBD bound and Chatswood bound traffic.*

*The advantages claimed for this arrangement are summarised as follows:*

*\* (If) growth in the Chatswood area (is) predominantly residential, then the Y-link would adequately serve travel from Chatswood to employ-*

*ment centres in the West, and the demand in the other direction (being) bound for the CBD would be better served by connection to St. Leonards (by the Y-link).*

*\* It would connect to the planned bus interchange at Lane Cove for better service in the Lane Cove to Crows Nest area.*

*\* The projections for the UTS station show an ongoing loss if it continues as an educational precinct.*

*\* Travel time savings to the CBD would be increased if the connection is to St. Leonards rather than Chatswood.*

*\* It would provide a better access link to the educational, medical and hospital precinct at St. Leonards.*

*\* It would serve better to promote economic growth, since the Lane Cove, Artarmon and St. Leonards areas represent a better opportunity for development within the NSW Government's policy of mixed working and living town centres.*

*\* (the contention is that) St. Leonards is a higher trip generator than Chatswood.*

(This precis is intended to convey the major points of the position paper)

For the complete paper call Helen Ferns at the West Lindfield/Killara group.

To obtain information on the countervailing operational view contact Jim Donovan of Action for Public Transport.

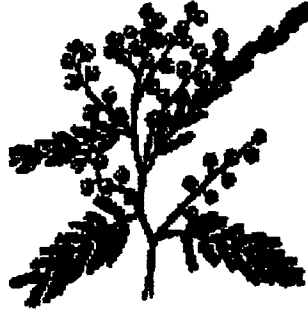
While the EIS process grinds on there will no doubt be further opportunity to influence the final outcome during the following concept development stage.



## STEP BUSHWALK

On Sunday 2nd April, a small number of intrepid STEP members braved the wet conditions and enjoyed a walk in the Lane Cove National Park along the route from Fiddens Wharf to Fullers Bridge. The walk looked at some of the historically significant features of the area. It was named after Joseph Fiddens, a convict who was granted land here in 1813. Fiddens Wharf Rd. follows the route of the track used to transport timber from the forest down through his farm to the wharf area. The old Government Sawing Establishment was located on the site of the present day oval. Fiddens constructed the wharf, from which he then took the sawn timber by barge to Sydney town, bringing back supplies on the return trip. Fifty years ago some sandstone steps were constructed, which now take the walker down to the oval, where some excellent interpretive signs have been erected under a recent grant, together with some ongoing bush regeneration. Unfortunately some of the signs have been vandalised, but are to be restored under a further plan of action. The Friends of the Lane Cove National Park and NPWS have now received a Federation Grant to upgrade the track through to Fullers Bridge and to commemorate some of the heritage features of this part of the Park. New interpretive signs will describe natural bushland and heritage features. As you step down from the oval to the river you see the contrast between the vegetation on each side of the river. Across the river the weedy climbers practically obscure the native vegetation, whereas on the oval side the results of regeneration activities are clearly evident. The route then follows the Great North Walk, and features some outstanding views of the Lane Cove River and includes some brilliant Sydney Sandstone bushland. Besides the banksias currently in

flower, a couple of wattle species are in full bloom. These include Flax Wattle (*Acacia linifolia*) and Sunshine Wattle (*A. terminalis*). Mountain Devil (*Lambertia formosa*) and the Narrow Leaf Platysace (*Platysacea linearifolia*) are in flower and the first flowers of Woollisia (*Woollisia pungens*) are starting to give the bush its distinctive fragrance.



Further along, the track meets one of the old roads with the associated weed invasion, which will be part of the regeneration work to be carried out. The picnic areas along the river then show impressive impact by the regeneration work carried out by NPWS, its contractors, volunteers and the students from the Ryde TAFE Bush Regeneration course. On arrival at the weir, the group inspected the fish ladder which was installed to enable those fish species which normally breed upsatream to bypass the weir. Finally the site of the proposed Parramatta Rail Link bridge was identified near the Fullers Bridge entrance to the National Park. It is clear that if the bridge goes ahead there will be severe damage to the Kobada rock face on the Ryde side of the river. It is also clear that some of the natural bushland near the picnic areas will be destroyed during construction. The return track followed the Great North Walk all the way to Fiddens Wharf. The opportunity was taken by members of the *new map team* on the walk to check out some of the tracks in that area for the new map to be published later this year. Everyone on the walk agreed that

the Lane Cove National Park contains much natural bushland of high conservation value and is not mainly a degraded area of old orchards etc, as claimed by some uninformed critics of the value of this Park. Also evident was the degree of care maintained by the local community for this Park through the participation in the voluntary bush regeneration work.

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## New Map Update

Mid-October 2000 has been set as the target date to launch the new map.

This leaves till the end of May to complete the information on the South sheet and to end of June for the North sheet.

A Sub-Committee has been set up under the leadership of Chris Maxworthy to organise the promotion, marketing and launch arrangements.

A recent article about the map in the Ku-ring-gai Observer has drawn a number of offers of information. Longtime member John Posener who has been running in the valley for years has passed on valuable observations, and in following these up John Martyn has been able to make further useful discoveries of tracks leading from fire break trails to the Great North Walk track. A walking group in Lindfield has offered to provide comment and information on tracks in their area of the South sheet.

The Team is intensifying its activities to make sure it meets the target dates.



### **The Possum Who Dares To Be Different**

Maybe "Don't fence me in!" is the theme song of a ringtail possum observed in South Turrumurra. 'Ringies' sometimes live in tree hollows, but more commonly build 'dreys' in bushy vegetation under the canopy of tall eucalypts, usually 4 to 6 metres above ground level and a safe distance below the top of the bush.

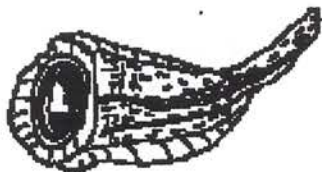
For three or four years Jennifer Schwarz has had a ringtail drey in a *Callistemon citrinus* in her backyard. A female ringtail has inhabited it, rearing at least four youngsters in that time.

Although she has the drey at her disposal, unchallenged, she has unusual habits for a ringtail. She spends her time during the day (normal sleeping time) in the fork of a tree, or lying in a gutter, or exploring the roof space, or with her head in a tree hollow (ie. if I can't see you, you can't see me).

She obviously makes her own rules, so far without falling prey to the local cats or the Powerful Owl which roams in this area.

On the days that she does spend in the drey, as a good possum should, she often crawls out in the afternoon, stretches and preens, with her baby on her back or in her pouch, regally ignoring the cacophony of enraged squawks from the noisy miners.

Jennifer has given up trying to encourage her to act like a ringtail should, coming to the conclusion that there are eccentrics even among possums.



### **Residential Strategy**

The Residential Strategy document is now on exhibition and Ku-ring-gai Council is informing all residents through a newsletter.

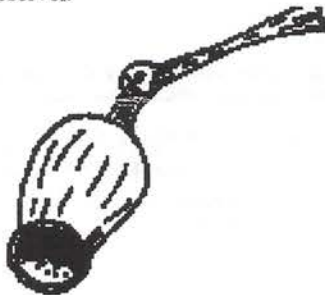
**The formal public exhibition period will end on 22nd May, 2000.**

The council's newsletter lists all locations at which it can be seen and lists the Public Access Forums to be held at Council Chambers for various suburbs.

Council is also running an Infoline on 1800 652 295 between 8.30 am and 5.00 pm Mondays to Fridays.

We encourage everybody to take a proprietary interest in it and contribute comments about any concerns or suggested changes.

The STEP Committee has not yet perused all the Base Studies, except Transport, and has made comment about that to Council and aired it in STEP's column in the Ku-ring-gai Observer.



### **MISCELLANY**

#### **Public Transport Week 2000**

Smogbusters/NCC are organising Public Transport Week 2000 to run from Sunday 21st May to Sunday 28th May, in cooperation with Environment Australia and transport providers.

Major events are:

- \* The grand opening of the Airport Link on Sunday 21st May.
- \* The Future of Public Transport Exhibition during the week at the Australian Technology Park, Eveleigh.
- \* Public Transport on The Web Competition, which is targeted at Primary and Secondary students, with the prize being a PC for the winner and one for the school.
- \* Regional exhibitions,

competitions, promotions, giveaways and opportunities to travel at discounted rates.

#### **Bicentennial Park, Homebush**

The Bicentennial Park Trust runs a calendar of events through the year, including Family Fun days.

The program aims to enlighten visitors about the recreational, environmental and educational values of the Park, and generally attracts up to 5000 visitors on a fine Sunday.

Typical events are:

\* 28th May --Many Cultures, One Community

\* 25th June -Our World, Our Future.

\* Nature tours through the wetlands.

More information from Rosemary Hadaway or Fiona Ridley (Tours Coordinator) at the Bicentennial Park Trust 9763 1844.

#### **St. Andrews Uniting Church Neighbourhood Program**

Among other events the following would be of particular interest to STEP members:

\* Monday 25th June, 8.00 pm -

Dr. Keith Bowling talks about "Energy for our Home Planet"

\* Monday 28th August --

Dr. Peter Myerscough talks about "Plants - The Basis of Life: The Importance of Biodiversity".

More information from Val Weakley on 9144 7324.

#### **Resetting the Compass**

CSIRO Publishing has published a new book by David Yencken and Debra Wilkinson entitled "Resetting the Compass -- Australia's Journey towards Sustainability".

The questions examined in the book are:

What are Australia's main environmental problems?

How serious are they?

What do we need to do to fix them?

How can that be done in a socially responsible way?

There is a special introductory offer of \$30 plus \$6 handling, if ordered before 31st May 2000.

Information from (03) 9662 7666.