



STEP Inc. Newsletter

Community Based Environmental Conservation Since 1978. No. 102 August 2000

COMING EVENTS

The Role of Bats in the Bushland Ecology -- A talk on **Wednesday 16th August, 2000, at 8.00 pm**, at the St. Andrews Uniting Church Hall, corner Vernon St. & Chisholm St., South Turramurra.

Nancy Pallin, well-known bush regenerator, longtime STEP member, foundation member of the Ku-ring-gai Bat Conservation Society Inc., will talk about the role played by bats in our natural environment as pollinators, and dispersers of seeds in the temperate rainforests of south-eastern Australia. The Grey-headed Flying Fox population has been identified as a single genetic population, which moves in response to the availability of food resources. Her talk is very topical, since Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne, were planning to eradicate bats from their precincts and a decrease in their numbers anywhere within their range could affect their ecological function to the detriment of our forests.

Nancy will also have one of these lovable animals with her for a first hand familiarisation.

STEP Spring Walk -- We will tackle the 'Slippery Dip' Walk in Garigal National Park on **Sunday, 10th September, 2000**. Assemble at **12.45 pm** for a 1.00 pm start. The meeting place will be **off Morgan Rd., Belrose**. After 1.2 km along Morgan Rd. (from Forest Way) turn left into sideroad, which immediately divides. Take the right fork at the sign "Aberlene Stud" and drive a short distance to the locked gate.

The track leads through sandstone landscape with excellent display of wildflowers (usually) and goes on to Narrabeen Trig, which we will reach if we don't dawdle too much. It overlooks Narrabeen Lagoon. Bring your binoculars since there will be plentiful birdlife.

The walk is easy, except for a short climb at the Trig end. We will return the same way. Bring water, walking shoes, hat and sunscreen lotion.

Ku-ring-gai Festival of Wildflowers -- On **Saturday 26th and Sunday 27th August**, the annual festival of wildflowers will be held at the Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Gardens, off Mona Vale Rd., St. Ives. The wildflowers in the Gardens should be terrific this year, so don't miss it. STEP will have its stand there as usual, and we would love to see you with your friends, to give you a pre-view of our new map which will be published later in the year.

Ku-ring-gai Draft Residential Strategy

An edited version of STEP's submission to Council's Draft Residential Strategy is reproduced here, somewhat belatedly due to the non-appearance of the June issue of the Newsletter, for which the editor apologises.

Step Inc.has been involved in the development of the Residential Strategy since its inception. In general, we support the Draft Residential Strategy, in particular its recognition of the importance of the preservation of the natural resources of Ku-ring-gai. We believe that the natural bushland and the treed landscape of Ku-ring-gai are

its greatest assets. We believe that the strategy offers an



opportunity to recognise these assets and to endeavour to enhance them, by protection of all urban bushland and encouragement of retention and planting of native plant species of the region wherever possible. It is important to

note that all native vegetation is important to protect and enhance, not simply the tree species.

(We make).... specific comments in relation to traffic and transport, suitability of areas for medium density housing, and water and energy use efficiency that we believe require amendment before the Residential Strategy is finalised.

Traffic and Transport

We have previously commented on the Gutteridge Haskins & Davey baseline study suggestion that an M2-F3 link would improve the amenity of Ku-ring-gai by

reducing traffic on the Pacific Highway (letter dated 12th April 2000 to the General Manager). We strongly disagree with this proposition as outlined in the previous submission.



We strongly support improvements in public transport. This could be achieved via smaller more frequent buses. Bus routes should not cross the Pacific Highway, which can result in extensive delays, but should ferry passengers from the east or western sides of the Highway to the rail stations. Pedestrian footbridges or tunnels would allow easy access to the rail stations.

The Draft Residential Strategy suggests limits on car parking at rail stations and suggests that commuters be encouraged to walk or cycle. We believe that it is far better to encourage rail use as much as possible by providing good bus transport (as in Point 2) and sufficient commuter parking. In order to avoid residents from other areas driving to Ku-ring-gai to access the rail network (e.g. Central Coast residents), commuter parking at rail stations should be free for Ku-ring-gai residents and expensive (say \$25 per day) for non-residents.

Medium Density Housing

We agree that the Pacific Highway corridor is the most suitable area in the

municipality for future medium density housing. However there are some areas which should be excluded from medium density zoning along the corridor. An example of this is the Finlay Road and Duff Street area in Turramurra. This is outlined as follows:

Finlay Rd & Duff St Zoning This has been identified as Special Area 7, which nominates its status as Blue Gum High Forest. Despite this, the proposed rezoning is Types 3A & 5, which are the highest density categories of multi unit development. Any such development would clearly be incompatible with the conservation values of Blue Gum High Forest, which is listed as a threatened ecological community. Even if development were to proceed adjacent to this area, without clearing of vegetation, the forest would be severely negatively impacted via run-off and erosion. The Sinclair Knight Merz report has highlighted this particular area as a high impact zone for stormwater and sewerage problems.



Any additional housing in this area would also cause severe traffic problems. The area is already congested. On the highway heading north between Duff Street and Finlay Road, the Pacific Highway merges from three lanes to two, which causes a

serious hazard for those turning left off the highway.

The top of Finlay Rd adjacent to Warrawee Public School is used to drop off and pick up children and is always congested at the start and end of school. Duff Street is reduced to one way traffic by commuter parking during the week. Finally, there is no pedestrian footpath on the southern side of Finlay Road. We believe that this area should be removed from the medium density zoned area due to its environmental sensitivity and traffic problems.



In the future, medium density housing around the neighbourhood shopping centres will be considered. However we wish to point out that the baseline studies for the Residential Strategy failed to note that South Turramurra and Fox Valley are limited to single road access from Kissing Point and Fox Valley Roads respectively. This severely limits their capacity to increase the residential population.

Water Use

Section 3.4 of the Residential Strategy states the following: 'Rainwater tanks - over installation may lead to reduced creek flow particularly in drier times when flows are most needed.' We do not believe this is true. Water from roofs currently runs directly to

stormwater drains. In contrast, water tanks may add to spring seepage as people trickle water onto their gardens from their tanks during dry weather. STEP strongly believes that water conservation via water tanks should be encouraged.



Energy Efficient Housing Policy

In order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and thereby minimise the impact of development, STEP would like Ku-ring-gai Council to actively encourage energy efficient housing principles in the Draft Residential Strategy. We support Council's recommendation that in order to meet current best practice with respect to.. energy efficient housing policy you replace the Selecta policy with the NatHERS rating of the Sustainable Energy Development Authority (SEDA) (section 2.1, pages 33&34).

We note that although Ku-ring-gai Council agreed to join SEDA's Energy Smart Homes Program, you have not yet implemented the program. We encourage you to do so. Council's commitment to energy efficient housing should be strengthened and this commitment should be reflected in the Draft Residential Strategy. For example you could make the following amendments:
Page 5 Amend line 8 to read:

be energy efficient and of high quality design

Page 21 The paragraph on regional environmental issues should include a reference to energy efficient housing, e.g. .. demand that metropolitan planning policies should be based on energy efficient principles, make better use of existing ...

(Pages 101&118)
The housing design section (section 4) does not show any examples of good (or bad!) energy efficient developments. It is important that at least one example be given. If a good example can't be found within Ku-ring-gai, one could be used from Newington Olympic Village (the example for issue 22 on permeable paving is from the Olympic site).

Page 148 Amend the bullet point to read:
Streetscape and urban design: housing type, architectural design, energy efficient principles, landscape design, front setbacks, quality design review system.



Page 149 Include reference to energy efficient principles in the LEP and DCP examples of prescriptive standards in the Architectural and Landscape Design section.

Page 152 In the Environment section, under LEP insert a new bullet point: requirement for energy efficiency rating for all developments.

Page 155 Add a third Current Best Practice Measure (Hornsby Council does this): Rewarding energy efficient design excellence.

This submission was made in May, 2000, following earlier comments and input by STEP.

NPWS Sydney-north Region Fox Baiting

Predation by the European Red Fox has been listed as a Key Threatening Process under the Threatened Species Protection Act, 1995, and even the relatively common Ring-tailed Possum is becoming locally extinct due this process.

NPWS obtained a Permit for Control of Foxes effective for 12 months from 10 February 2000, and undertook a baiting program from 8th May to 16th June, 2000, in conjunction with 5 Councils and with support from local communities.

Research has shown that baiting with 1080 is currently the most effective method of controlling foxes. The baiting is strictly controlled and non-poisonous baits are laid first to determine if any non-target species are visiting the site.



The baits are buried 10 cm underground, signposting prohibits dogs from entering the baited areas and dogs must be on a lead in Council Reserves. Native animals and cats are not interested in digging up buried bait.

Ku-ring-gai Council has important bushland reserves, adjoining the National Park, with regionally significant and threatened native fauna such as the Southern Brown Bandicoot and community field work has been done in Council's reserves in preparation for the baiting program. However a last minute KMC decision not to participate has jeopardised the effectiveness of the program.

We hope that Council can be persuaded to take part in the next program in October as part of its management responsibility to provide a habitat for our diminishing native wildlife.



WILDERNESS

The Colong Foundation
(It's older than STEP, and its objectives extend nationwide)
(The reason for this free publicity for the Colong Foundation is that it is currently deeply involved in working for the protection of threatened wilderness in the Wilderness 2000 program. Ed.)

The Colong Foundation is the longest-serving community advocate for wilderness in Australia. It has initiated or been part of campaigns that have secured a million hectares of national parkland, most of which is wilderness. But a further million hectares of wilderness in eastern NSW is still not reserved under the Wilderness Act, although

much of the area is now in national parks. Now more than ever the Colong Foundation needs your support. Well-financed anti-conservation lobbies, representing resource development, 4WD enthusiasts, equestrian and commercial tourism interests, have greatly increased development pressures on wild places.



The Foundation originated as the Colong Committee which was appointed in 1968 by a meeting of conservation societies to prevent quarrying of Colong Caves. Shortly afterwards the committee extended its objectives to cover the saving of the Boyd Plateau from becoming the site of a 15,000 acre pine plantation. Both objectives had been achieved by 1975 when three new objectives were adopted. The first of these was the creation of a Border Ranges National Park, an objective which escalated to become the rainforest campaign.

The other objectives were the creation of a Greater Blue Mountains National Park and a Kakadu National Park.

The rainforest parts and Kakadu are now World Heritage Areas.

The Greater Blue Mountains National Park exists in fact, though not in name. Recent campaigns for the Gardens of Stone and Nattai

National Park have been successful. The Foundation's proposal for a Wilderness Act was accepted in 1987. It has been supplemented by the Red Index of Wilderness now being up-dated and extended to other States. It has successfully campaigned for the nomination of the Blue Mountains for Heritage listing. It is at present working for the protection of threatened wilderness in NSW, for the preservation of national parks from commercial development and damaging use, and for the preservation of old growth forests.

(For further information contact Alex Colley, Hon. Secretary, The Colong Foundation for Wilderness, Level 2, 362 Kent St., Sydney, 2000, phone (02) 9299 7341.)



DIARY NOTES

Monday 28th August, 2000, at 8.00pm Dr. Peter Myerscough will give a talk on "Plants -- The Basis of Life" at St. Andrews Uniting Church Hall, cnr Vernon and Chisholm St., South Turramurra.

This is sponsored by St. Andrews Neighbourhood program and is open to the public. *(Not to be missed. Ed.)*

CLEAN UP DAY

A pre-Olympic clean up has been arranged for **Sunday 13th August, 2000**. Please lend a hand as usual.