



STEP Matters

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Ku-ring-gai Bicentennial Park — Draft Plan of Management

Bill Jones reports on the Plan of Management for Ku-ring-gai Bicentennial Park (KBP), originally adopted in 1996, now proposed to be amended to bring it into line with changes to the Local Government Act.

One of the proposed changes was to re-categorise the area adjacent to the community hall from Park to Natural Area (Bushland).

Some of the issues raised after the exhibition of the Plan related to the use of playing fields, maintenance, the access impacts on erosion, and the bushland on site and endangered plant community.

Council's report states that:

The bushland areas in KBP are valuable remnants of Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest (STIF), a vegetation community which has been listed in the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 as an endangered ecological community. The area of bushland running through KBP from Lofberg Road to the north of Norman Griffith Oval to the swimming pool car park and the amphitheatre area is Tall Open Forest with dominant canopy trees of Ironbark, Turpentine, Blackbutt and Mahogany. The other areas of bushland to the south of Norman Griffith Oval are Open Forest with dominant canopy trees of Blackbutt, Sydney Red Gum, Turpentine and Red Bloodwood.

In the area to be re-categorised Council was considering the creation of islands around the indigenous trees. Barriers, e.g. logs, would be used to create these islands in which natural regeneration would take place. This regeneration would hopefully include trees and other native shrubs and grasses. The

extent of the proposed areas was of some concern to ensure lines of sight for traffic, the retention of tracks and safety for sports people, especially the netball players. The retention of the playground was another issue. The presently proposed area does seem to be acceptable to most people.

A suggestion put to Council was that mowing between trees in these areas was a problem. One option was to increase the height of the cut, but more desirable was to abandon mowing altogether. Examples were given where mowing was stopped in other parts of Sydney, and where regrowth of native vegetation, particularly native grasses, occurred.

The importance of including the two remnant Ironbarks in the area to be re-categorised was emphasised. The presence of Ironbarks is important in classifying the area as STIF.

Council was sympathetic to the suggestions and we are optimistic that this area of STIF, the endangered ecological community in KBP, will be protected as bushland.

STEP Project Officer

As we have previously foreshadowed, a project officer has recently been engaged to formulate strategies and publicity on transport and environmental issues in relation to the study of a link between the F3 Freeway and the M2 Tollway.

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Although the corridor for a Lane Cove Valley motorway was abandoned by the NSW Government in 1996, the community is still waiting for the rezoning of the corridor, and therefore STEP remains concerned about the fate of bushland that so many fought to protect.

The project officer is Kate Read, who comes to us after two years working with Conservation Volunteers Australia, where she was involved in recruitment coordination and project management for the Green Corps and volunteer program. She is currently undertaking a Masters Degree in Sustainable Development at UNSW.

Kate is based at the NSW Nature Conservation Council, but reports to a steering committee made up of STEP members.

Initial tasks of the part-time role include preparation of a position paper defining STEP's stance in relation to metropolitan transport and its impact on our environment. The intention is to use the paper to make submissions to the consultants conducting the study, as well as to inform the community and its elected councillors, parliamentarians and bureaucrats.

Kate will also provide updates and information on our web site which will suggest ways in which members and other residents can become involved to ensure that Ku-ring-gai's views are heard by the authorities.

In this respect we note that the consultants, Sinclair Knight Merz, have a feedback section on their web site for community input (<http://commcons.skm.com.au>).

Update on B2/B3 Rezoning

Kate Read recently attended, on STEP's behalf, a meeting with the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, Ku-ring-gai Council and residents regarding

the rezoning of the corridor. She reports as follows.

DUAP has now committed itself to a timetable to progress the rezoning of the section between the Comenarra Parkway and Kissing Point Road. The consultants for DUAP are now in the process of coordinating inputs from Ku-ring-gai Council, which is considering its own position in relation to various parcels of that section.

It is understood that a further meeting will be held in the near future to review the matter in some detail.

Pam Morse Bequest Fund

Each year STEP offers research or educational grants through the Pam Morse Bequest Fund for project relating to managing and conserving urban bushland. This year we are pleased to announce that we will be offering up to \$300 to local schools undertaking environmental education projects.

Last year Turramurra and Warrawee Primary Schools received grants through the Pam Morse bequest.

The education grants will be available to schools for projects that promote awareness of the value of urban bushland, educate students or the community on how to minimise their impact on urban bushland, or restore natural habitat.

Applications should consist of no more than two A4 pages, and should outline the project (objectives, project design, expected outcomes) and how the money would be used to aid the project.

The closing date for applications is 1 June 2002.

Applications should be addressed to:
The Pam Morse Fund
STEP Inc
PO Box 697, Turramurra, 2074

Select Joint Committee on Bushfires

STEP has made a submission to the Select Joint Committee on Bushfires enquiring into the January bushfires, including the following points:

- We believe that residents whose property adjoins bushland must accept the responsibility that this entails. Where residents have bushland on their own property, they should undertake hazard reduction by hand clearing of fuel load on ground. STEP's publication *Bushfire Hazard Reduction: The STEP Method of Selective Hand Clearing* gives information on this proven method. It keeps fuel loads continually at a reduced level while preserving native biodiversity and bushland values.
- Local councils should also encourage residents who adjoin bushland to undertake hazard reduction by hand clearing along the residential/bushland interface of Council bushland reserves under the guidance and supervision of trained bush regenerators. This could be done in the same way as Bushcare involving local volunteers with expert guidance from Council bush management staff.
- In order to assist residents who have bushland on their property and wish to undertake hazard reduction by hand clearing, local Councils should provide a large mulcher which could be used to mulch vegetation removed. This should be provided at minimal cost to residents. In addition, rebates for private purchase of a mulcher should be adopted. This would also serve to reduce the green waste produced and is consistent with State Government policy to reduce landfill.

- The identification of houses with pools by display of an SWS sticker at the street boundary should be universally adopted for all houses adjoining bushland. SWS stickers should be distributed by local councils in a coordinated manner.
- All residents who live adjacent to bushland and have a swimming pool should be encouraged to purchase a high-pressure pump. A rebate for purchase of such a pump should be offered by state or local government, perhaps in association with the insurance industry.
- STEP fully supports Community Fire Units. These should be adequately resourced with equipment and training consistent across all CFUs. Members of CFUs should be allowed to stay with their properties at all times during a fire.

Hazard reduction, by control burns or brushcutting and pile burns that is undertaken by Council is performed in a coordinated and well-planned way. However there is a consistent backlog of hazard reduction to be done, which can only be addressed by increased resources. State Government should recognise the enormous financial burden of proper bushland management faced by some councils such as Ku-ring-gai, and allow Councils to increase the revenue available through an environmental levy or through assistance from the Insurance industry.

Bushfire Management in Ku-ring-gai

After the January bushfires it is worthwhile to assess the successes and failures of Ku-ring-gai's bushfire management policies and the opportunities that have arisen from the fire in the Lane Cove Valley.

A vocal minority claims that Council hazard reduction and other fire prevention measures are insufficient.

It is worth pointing out that in the last financial year Ku-ring-gai Council spent more than \$800,000 on fire prevention, maintaining access to fire trails and walking tracks, maintenance of Council's own brigade, and contribution to the State Emergency Services organisation.

Works include maintaining a 10 m wide firebreak along 14 km of residential boundaries on a rotating cycle in high fire risk areas, hazard reduction burns, pre- and post-fire vegetation replacement, and maintenance of 42 km of fire trails and 24 km of walking tracks.

For people advocating more hazard reduction burns it is important to understand what processes are required for each burn to take place within the Fire Management Program. These processes include planning which areas to burn by considering fire risk, fire history, residents' requests, preparation of a Review of Environmental Factors (REF); development of the program for the burn including organising which agency will do what; pre- and post-fire vegetation management (for 3 years) to minimise weed invasion and soil erosion, and getting the burn done.

The success of the whole process depends on the season, the fuel load and the weather on the day.

Ku-ring-gai Council deserves to be commended on being one of the few Sydney councils to have an active Fire Management Program.

Those advocating that Council should do more need to consider that no lives were lost or property badly damaged in the January fires, that the Community Fire Units worked well with the Rural Fire Service and the Metropolitan

Fire Brigade, and that any additional management by Council would have significant financial implications.

The fires have created opportunities for bush regeneration in many areas also with a large amount of weed material removed. However the weeds will come back bigger and better than ever unless actively tackled, so now is a great opportunity for new and existing Bushcare groups to access previously difficult sites for post-fire weed management.

Good luck to all those hard working Bushcare groups.

In the meantime, take the opportunity to walk in the bush some time and observe the landforms that are normally obscured by dense vegetation.

You are sure to see something that you never knew was there.

Green Power

Since January 2002, electricity markets have been opened for competitive business.

This has some negative effects, but also carries the positive potential benefit that you can now choose from which supplier you buy your electricity, and this means you can select the supplier who offers the most sustainable available green electricity scheme. It may be the retailer from which you get your supply now.

All electricity retailers offer products which allow consumers to purchase their power from renewable energy sources, such as wind, solar, hydro and biomass.

When a consumer signs up for a green energy product the retailer is obliged to purchase that amount of energy from renewable energy projects. So signing up for green energy increases demand and therefore investment in these technologies.

Most companies comply with the minimum green power accreditation standards, set by the Government, but some companies exceed compliance and link their product with active promotion of energy saving by demand management.

Demand management is a major factor in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and is cheaper and very effective at the individual consumer level. It is as simple as turning a switch off to save yourself some money and the world some greenhouse gas.

More information about green energy can be obtained from Green Electricity Watch, an organisation initiated by ACF, NCC, TEC, Wilderness Society, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, Climate Action Network, Alternative Technology Association and Environment Victoria.

It has recently issued a survey, which ranks the electricity retailers on the basis of responses to questions such as:

- Whether environmental sustainability guidelines are applied to the sources of their energy.
- Whether they encourage significant energy conservation.
- Whether they use genuinely renewable energy.
- Whether they use native forest material for electricity generation.
- How they will promote their products to ensure the growth of renewable energy production.

Green Electricity Watch will continue to monitor and update information to the public.

Contact GEW at the NSW Nature Conservation Council, phone (02) 9279 2466 or e-mail greenelectricity@nccnsw.org.au

Morona Avenue — Update

What a difference a fire can make.

The New Year's Day fire and the associated back burning have resulted in a much easier job in terms of blackberry eradication. The fires have delayed the work schedule for the bush regeneration team, but it is now possible to target weeds with much more ease. It is also most fortunate that a bush regeneration program was in progress, as the weed growth resulting from the fire has been phenomenal. But the wonderful transformation taking place in the proliferation of native species germination is a joy to behold.

Blackberry is a most persistent species and is continuing to resprout but regular follow-up is having the desired effect of reducing blackberry growth. Other exotics which have germinated or resprouted after the fire are Ginger, Elephant Ears, Dolichos Pea, Balloon Vine, Turkey Rhubarb, Privet, Seaside Daisy, Impatiens, Spider plant and Paddy Lucerne. Garden escapees are a problem along the residential interface, but the work of the volunteer Bushcare group will hopefully overcome this problem.

A planting program has been undertaken in a small section which had been denuded of native species by the change in soil nutrients and moisture levels due to the effects of stormwater activity. Plant species tolerant of the changed conditions were chosen to revegetate the area.

There is plenty of fauna activity and a swamp wallaby was found foraging in one of the adjacent gardens recently. Water dragons and red-bellied black snakes have also been sighted.

Why not take a stroll to see the results of the fire and the bush regeneration for yourself.
