



# STEP Matters

Number 113, June 2002

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## STEP Committee

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### Project Officer

Kate Read

### Publicity

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### Committee Members

Neroli Lock  
John Martyn  
Chris Maxworthy  
Tony Morrison

## Diary Dates

1 July	Talk on fox control (see below)
25 Aug	Walk in Terrey Hills
29 Sept	Wild river walk
7 Oct	AGM and talk on birds in our backyards
15 Dec	Christmas barbecue

## Talk on Fox Control

Nicola Mason is presenting our next talk which is on the fox control program in Sydney's urban bushland.

Nicola is a senior ranger with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and is well qualified to tell us about the problems foxes cause, their effects on native wildlife such as bandicoots and about the way the control program works and its effectiveness.

As usual there will be time for questions and a chat over a cup of tea or coffee afterwards.

Please show your support for STEP by coming along and bringing your friends. It promises to be an interesting evening.

The talk will be held on Monday 1 July 2002 at 7.45 pm and is at our usual venue, St Andrews Church Hall, corner of Vernon Street and Chisholm Street, Turrumurra.

## Bicentennial Park — Draft Plan of Management

Following community feedback on the previously exhibited Draft Plan of Management, a number of amendments were made and Ku-ring-gai Council has now placed the Revised Plan on exhibition until 5 July 2002.

The revisions relate mainly to the management of the northern corner of the park (near the community centre, netball courts, kindergarten and grassed area beside the 'dogleg' in Lofberg Road). Also a five year action plan for managing this part of the park is included.

The amended Draft Plan is on exhibition at:

- Council Chambers, Level 4, 818 Pacific Highway, Gordon Mon to Fri, 8.30am to 5pm
- Ku-ring-gai Library 799 Pacific Highway, Gordon Mon to Thurs 10am to 9pm Fri 10am to 6pm Sat and Sun 10am to 5pm

Copies can also:

- be viewed at the branch libraries (Lindfield, Turrumurra and St Ives);
- be downloaded from Council's web site ([www.kmc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.kmc.nsw.gov.au));
- be obtained from Guy Paroissien (9424 0946, [guy@kmc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:guy@kmc.nsw.gov.au)).

Submissions on the Draft Plan will be received up to 5pm on 5 July 2002, and should be marked to the attention of the Manager, Environmental Policy.

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## Morona Avenue — Open Day

On Sunday 26 May an open day was held at the Fox Valley Storm Water Site to celebrate the completion of works funded through EPA's Stormwater Trust scheme. The open day was very successful — luckily the weather held good for the 40 or so attendees including representatives from NPWS and EPA, local state MP Barry O'Farrell and Ku-ring-gai councillor Elaine Malicki.

Short talks were given by:

- Peter Draper from NPWS who managed the project;
- Neroli Lock who recounted STEP's involvement as well as the bushcare work done;
- local resident Warren Sly who talked about the bush regeneration achieved; and
- Damian Gore from Macquarie University who outlined the stormwater and water quality issues in the catchment.

Everyone enjoyed a chat over morning tea and cakes with time to view the displays. As part of our promotion of local native plants in urban gardens many people took the opportunity to

swap a weed from their garden with a native tube stock. Then the intrepid had a guided tour of the constructed sediment basins and associated bush regeneration works.

We hope that this project will be a benchmark for stormwater works in small catchments. With proper maintenance of the basins and continued work by the local bushcare group, the site should significantly reduce the impact of stormwater runoff in the catchment and hopefully become a thriving native vegetation community.

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## The Health of the Lane Cove River

On Monday 6 May, our scheduled speaker, Fara Pelarek from the Australian Museum, cancelled at the last moment and Damian Gore from the Department of Physical Geography at Macquarie University, very generously stepped into the breach. He chose the health of the Lane Cove River as his topic.

The Lane Cove River is a contaminated urban stream, characterised by upstream

erosion and midstream sand deposits. The water quality issues in the river relate primarily to nutrients and sewage-derived pathogens, although heavy metals are also elevated above background levels.

Urbanisation of the catchment has caused changes to the hydrology. 90% of the catchment is deforested and approximately 42% is presently urban surfaces, the latter being likely to rise to 50% with ongoing urban consolidation. These surfaces have low permeabilities, causing stormwater runoff to travel to the trunk stream very rapidly, thus creating the erosion observed in the upstream reaches.

It is likely that the stream has not yet adjusted fully to these new hydrologic conditions, and the only way to prevent further degradation of the stream is through the widespread adoption of water sensitive urban design, which includes rainwater tanks, detention pits and permeable surfaces.

Many thanks to Damian for coming to the rescue, and for the clear message contained in his talk.

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Arthur Willis (NPWS) and Barry O'Farrell at the Morona Avenue Open Day

### **The F3/M2 Link Study**

STEP's basic position paper regarding the link between the F3 Freeway and the M2 Tollway has now been submitted to the consultants, Sinclair Knight Merz, following the first community focus group meeting held on 11 June 2002.

### **Our Position**

Our position covers issues such as urban planning, sustainable transport and air pollution, and voices our concern that a link road is being proposed in the absence of an integrated plan for sustainable transport in our region.

In addition to our submission to Sinclair Knight Merz a further forty copies have been sent to local parliamentarians, councillors, media and resident groups to ensure that our position is as widely understood as possible.

The recommendations contained in the position paper include:

- Travel demand is a transport issue, not merely a roads issue, therefore the study needs to be undertaken as a transport study, not as a roads study.
- The study must explicitly note the substantial rises in vehicle use in the region overall that will occur as a consequence of a new road. The expansion of the M4 and the opening of the Harbour Tunnel both saw steep jumps in vehicle use and people being wooed off public transport, thereby exacerbating congestion overall. Unless this issue of induced traffic is made clear to the community, the public would be responding without a true picture of the wider impacts of road building.
- This link road cannot be built as a solution to the freight transport growth along Pennant Hills Road unless and until NSW has a proper freight transport strategy (we have been promised a freight transport strategy for a decade now). With freight projected to

double by 2020 we should be looking at getting heavy trucks off the road and on to rail.

### **Community Focus Group Meetings**

A further two community focus group meetings will be held by the consultants before the planned completion of the study.

STEP's Project Officer, Kate Read, was among approximately thirty representatives who attended the first focus group meeting.

Many of STEP's concerns about the limitations of the study brief were reflected in the concerns voiced by other representatives at that meeting, such as the proposal for a road link in the absence of any integrated transport planning for the region.

Community members were also adamant that urban bushland and national parks must not be threatened by any attempts at a surface road solution. There was also strong consensus about the need to shift to rail transport both for commuter and for freight transport.

### **Your Comments Please**

The Committee would welcome any comments on the position we have adopted so far, and we expect that some aspects will be expanded during the course of the debate and consultation process.

### **[www.step.org.au](http://www.step.org.au)**

Check out our web site as it contains further information about the proposed link and the transport issues which we believe are not being addressed by the current study.

### **How to Get a Copy of our Position Paper**

Download a copy of our position paper from our web site.

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### **Bushcare Sites**

There has been a renewed interest in Ku-ring-gai Council's Bushcare Program since the January bushfires.

For example STEP was recently contacted by enthusiastic residents from Ryde who were eager to tackle the emerging weeds on the STEP Track. They have now joined Kingsford Avenue Bushcare.

As well, local residents in Alfred Place and Vernon Street have started up a new site.

Bushcare are always looking for new volunteers. Maybe you'd like to give it a try! If so contact Peter Clarke who is the Bushcare Supervisor at Ku-ring-gai Council ([peter\\_clarke@kmc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:peter_clarke@kmc.nsw.gov.au)). Alternatively register via Bushcare's web site [www.bushcare.org.au](http://www.bushcare.org.au).

Below are details of when some of the Bushcare groups meet.

#### **Alfred Place/Vernon Street**

Third Sunday of every month from 9:30 am to noon.

#### **Granny Springs Bushland Reserve**

Second Saturday of every month from 9 to noon.

#### **Morona Avenue**

First Sunday of every month 9am to noon.

#### **The Broadway**

Second and fourth Sunday of every month from 9am to noon.

#### **Wallalong Crescent**

The Wallalong Weeders meet on the first and third Wednesday of each month from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm.

#### **Kingsford Avenue**

First Saturday of every month from 8:30 am.

#### **Alfred Place/Vernon Street**

Third Sunday of every month from 9:30 am to noon.

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## Membership Fees

The Committee has decided to foreshadow discussion of a fee increase at our next annual general meeting in October. Our membership fees have now been fixed for well over a decade. However inflationary pressures are catching up with us, in costs of printing and postage of newsletters, public liability insurance, web page maintenance and other recurrent costs.

Publication and promotions costs are being carried by the revenue flowing from sale of our publications, quite profitably so far, and this has made it possible to subsidise membership fees.

A recent analysis of the situation indicates that our membership costs are now double the income from membership fees. This has led the Committee to propose a membership fee increase in the interest of maintaining our ability to pursue the constitutional objectives of STEP, while continuing to provide newsletters, walks and talks.

The proposal is to raise our annual fees to:

- family \$20
- single \$16

Since this is a considerable increase the Committee is anxious to receive comment and discussion about it. (contact details on page 1).

The question will also be an agenda item at our annual general meeting where you will be able to cast your vote.

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## There Be Dragons

Jennifer Schwarz is full of whimsical stories, and here is one. It happens to be about dragons, Eastern Water Dragons in particular. She writes:

A friend of mine lives in Normanhurst. She has a steep terraced bushy backyard. Every year in late spring she recreates a small vegetable garden. Compost is added to well dug soil, seeds are sown and mulch spread. At harvest time her tomatoes, capsicums and strawberries must be protected from marauding birds.

Last summer, however, Jan found herself protecting a very different crop — lizards.

In early December she had prepared her garden as usual and was relaxing on the deck admiring her handiwork. A large Eastern Water Dragon watched from a sunny rock ledge, then walked over to the new garden, dug a hole, laid an egg and carefully covered it. She repeated this ten times. Finally she stood up on her hind legs, gave Jan a last look and sauntered off.

No vegies were planted after that for fear of disturbing the soft leathery eggs.

Almost three months later a lurking kookaburra caught Jan's attention. Suddenly, a small, perfectly formed water dragon emerged from the garden patch, looked around — and was promptly grabbed and eaten by the kookaburra.

Jan to the rescue, she quickly moved a trampoline and some chicken wire to cover the 'maternity ward'.

It was a tense, exciting day as more baby dragons broke ground and scampered off into the undergrowth or under rocks. The thwarted kookaburra could only watch his intended prey disappear, which he did impassively.

Eastern Water Dragons (*Physignathus lesseurii*) are the largest of the Australian dragons, growing up to 1 m in length, two-thirds of which is tail.

As the name implies, they are found near waterways along the eastern part of Australia. They are excellent swimmers and can remain submerged for 20 minutes or more. If disturbed they drop from overhanging branches into the water.

They are general feeders, eating insects, frogs and other aquatic organisms as well as fruit. They are commonly seen in the Lane Cove Valley.

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## Plant Identification Course

A plant identification course, conducted by Dr Joan Webb and organised by the North Shore District Group of the Australian Plants Society NSW, will be held for the fifth time this July and August at the Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden. The cost is \$87.50 per person fully inclusive of course materials, plant specimens, use of microscopes, entry into the gardens and tea and coffee. Contact Carol Nolder (9456 4042) for more details.

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Eastern Water Dragon