



Why are we bothering?

To avoid becoming an unpitied sacrifice in a contemptible struggle?

As your newsletter editor nears completion of this edition after considerable research and writing there is a nagging voice that keeps asking why. Is life too short, are we wasting our time, and who reads the bloody newsletter anyway?

OK, some of you do read it, we know because about three people a year give us feedback. But why don't more people get angry and do something? The thought that one could be taking a bushwalk, sharing a bottle of wine with friends or wandering around the south of France does sometimes occur. No that's wrong – it often occurs. When one looks for a reason for persisting there is a quote from Edmund Burke who said "*When bad men combine, the good must associate; else they will fall, one by one, an unpitied sacrifice in a contemptible struggle*".

So who are the 'bad' ones? They are those whose forward planning goes as far as the next election, those who care little about the environment so long as the money rolls in, those who seem wedded to some sort of biblical imperative to tame and use the world only for humans, those who believe that it will be good for Sydney to have 30 million people and for the world to have 10 billion and those who know that all of that is bad and do nought about it.

So now that almost everyone has been roped in and offended, you are invited to consider some of the issues in this newsletter.

The politicians, from council and up, all say soothing things and some vote responsibly but under their careless management Sydney is doomed to become a nasty megalopolis. We are running out of playing fields and yet we cram more people in, we are losing urban bushland every year and yet the Adventists and UTS and others can set out to destroy it as if it is of no value. There is only three percent or so of the original Blue Gum High Forest left and yet Ku-ring-gai Council dances to the developer's tune on the Beechworth Road to Warragal Road site. The NSW Government introduces Part 3A of the Planning and Environment Act to strip the community of the right to meaningful input on larger developments and the opposition votes with them and then says 'tut-tut we didn't really mean to!'

And worst of all, our main environmental groups can find it in their hearts to lecture us on our individual carbon output when our population increase grinds inexorably on and China is commissioning a coal fired power station once a week. It is surely for them that the term 'fiddling while Rome burns' was invented.

Shark Talk 14 August, Gordon Library

8 pm

Dr Adam Stow talks to STEP

The Grey Nurse Shark Genetics Program is a new Macquarie initiative that's uniting conservation geneticists Dr Adam Stow, Dr Michael Gillings and Dr David Briscoe with shark researchers Dr Rob Harcourt and Dr Vic Peddemors. Using state of the art DNA forensic tools, the team will establish whether grey nurse sharks migrate between South Africa, Western Australia and eastern Australia, and whether breeding between these groups could possibly save the critically endangered shark population off NSW and Queensland. Because grey nurse sharks rarely surface, they are almost impossible to track using satellite tagging technology.

Come and hear about this fascinating subject at the Gordon Library Meeting Room. There is plenty of free parking in the adjacent Wade Lane car park and of course it's right next to the railway station.

We are trialing this new venue after comment that the usual St Andrews Hall is a little remote.

Tea and coffee will be served as usual after the talk.

Put this one in your diary now!

Patonga walk, 5 August, 10.45 am

Warrah Trig and Patonga – don't miss it!

Features: Spectacular views, birds and wildflowers.
Location: Van Dahls trackhead, Brisbane Waters National Park. Travel via F3 freeway to the Gosford turnoff and follow signs to Woy Woy. Cross the Railway line and turn right at the next roundabout into Ocean Beach Road. After about 3 km, turn right at the Umina roundabout. Travel 5.5 km on the road to Patonga.

Meet: Parking area for Van Dahls Track, on the Western Side of Patonga Drive at 10.45 for 11am start.

Parking: Car park to Van Dahls Track on the Western side of Patonga Drive. (If you pass the sign indicating Warrah Trig you have gone too far.)

Grade: easy to moderate **Cost:** Free.

Duration: about 5-6 hours. Wear good walking shoes, hat, and sunscreen and bring binoculars, water. Bring lunch, which will be at the cars at Patonga. (A Fish and Chip shop is located at Patonga, but it is popular and often there is a long wait.) After lunch we will walk in the Warrah Trig area

Contact: Bill Jones 9498 6052, billojns@accsoft.com.au

This is a great walk!

See the back page for details of the next walk.

STEP Inc

Community-based Environmental Conservation since 1978
PO Box 697, Turrumurra, NSW 2074

Neroli Lock honoured



Neroli Lock has been awarded the Lions Club of Ku-ring-gai award for services to the environment for 2007 in recognition of the work she has done in the preservation of Blue Gum High Forest and, more specifically, the largest remaining stand between Mona Vale Road at St Ives and Rosedale Road, Gordon. She is a persistent and effective lobbyist.

Neroli has been a STEP committee member for over 15 years and has worked tirelessly in many areas. Neroli's effectiveness has come from a talent for research combined with practical hands-on work. She has led a team of enthusiastic regenerators in the Blue Gum Forest as well as also being involved in other regeneration projects such as the successful project at Morona Avenue, Wahroonga. Neroli has led countless bushwalks and has shown her presentation of the Blue Gum High Forest countless times. She represented STEP on Ku-ring-gai's Bushland Catchments and Natural Areas Advisory Committee, judged the Intel Young Scientist STEP Environment Award and carried out many other committee functions over the years.

Neroli was supported on the Lions awards night dinner by two raucous tables of STEP and Blue Gum supporters. Speeches from Nick Ebbeck, Jonathon O'Dea, Barry O'Farrell and Brendan Nelson all recognised Neroli and the other winners in different areas of community activity. There was general agreement amongst those dignitaries that the money would be found to buy the last block of land on Rosedale Road. That would be a fitting finale to Neroli's Blue Gum campaign.

She is most deserving of the recognition. We are very proud of her!

Is Australia Beautiful?

STEP committee member Jim Wells reports on success and failure in the war on roadside ugliness

In May 1970 'Walkabout' published an article by architect Graham Whitford entitled 'Is Your Australia Beautiful?' Walkabout was a high-class journal published from the office of the Australian National Travel Association. It is no longer published.

The article started off with a reference to an organisation that existed then but does no longer. This was the Keep Australia Beautiful Council. The problem for the author was that Australia was not beautiful and the organisation was misnamed – it should have been the Make Australia Beautiful Council.

There were many points made by the article; we can here only touch on some of them and see how pertinent they are today.

'Pride of place goes to the outstanding element in our streetscape – the telegraph pole'. Let me quote some more as it's very well expressed. 'A host of wires are draped over its crossbars to connect it visually with adjacent poles and nearby houses, creating a unity which is not seen anywhere else in the world. This tangle of wires is so precious that any tree in the vicinity is immediately delimbed, creating stunted monsters ...'

We have made progress since 1970. All new housing estates have wires underground and some progress has been made in eliminating wires elsewhere. In Ku-ring-gai

there are no longer wires in business centres along the Pacific Highway.

A tremendous pity is that when the heavy black coaxial cable was installed for pay TV about ten years ago, the problem was made much worse. What a pity undergrounding wasn't done then. The stunted monstrosity of trees is now far worse – almost all substantial street trees that interfere

with the wires have been formed into U shapes.

Whitford then goes on to talk about poor road patching (some caused by the undergrounding), excessive road signage, and bus stop shelters. Progress here has probably been limited but one does wonder why each street off the Pacific Highway has to have a 50km sign (sometimes more than 2 when it is now widely understood that that is ... nit on ordinary suburban roads.

One development since 1970 is the practice of some councils, but not for instance Ku-ring-gai, having quite large advertisements placed on the top of street signs. These are even lit at night.

Whitford was not as concerned about outdoor advertising as he could have been. This is an area where there has been progress. In the 1970's South Australia and Victoria legislated against billboards in the country. Other states have thankfully followed. In the early 1980's the highway from Surfers Paradise to Brisbane had a large billboard advertising alcohol or tobacco on almost every hillside. They've now gone.

One of the ugliest aspects of Australia is the light commercial district with stores for whitegoods, furniture, etc and car yards. Invariably the signage on buildings is excessive and there are many free standing signs creating a cluttered visual nightmare. Erina on the Central Coast is a classic example as is the Hawkesbury Council area.

Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby Councils have a good record of control of outdoor advertising. Indeed, it is understood that most of the problems have been on railway land or structures such as the bridge over Mona Vale Road at Pymble where Council has no direct control. The enormous billboards at Sydney airport are on railway land.

It is to be regretted that the Roads and Traffic Authority is going to allow more advertising along freeways. The justification proffered is that the money is needed to promote safety. But can we justify robbery just because the robber needs money to feed his children? Overhead wires and signage along streets bordering bushland are subject to bushfire damage and detract from the natural vista that such settings provide.



A damaged eucalypt

UTS Lindfield

The final chapter in the saga?

For almost 20 years STEP has been involved with the future of the UTS campus at Lindfield. Here we give a brief outline of what has been going on.

Some history¹

The land on which the Ku-ring-gai campus is situated had been privately owned until 1915 when the Commonwealth Government acquired it during the First World War for the Army's use as a rifle range. It was acquired by NSW in 1961 "for and on behalf of Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Elizabeth II for the purposes of the Public Instruction Act of 1880".

The site was developed as William Balmain Teachers College and opened in 1971. Construction had been delayed by protests by local residents about destruction of bushland on the site and later, with the backing of Ku-ring-gai Council, by protests about the problems of traffic in the narrow streets.

The architect, David Turner, stated that his main design aim was to keep the college as compact as possible, "because the landscape was so wonderful it should not have been built on. When it was going ahead anyway, I thought I'd protect the environment all I could".

In 1974, along with the other Teachers Colleges, William Balmain Teachers College officially went out of existence. It then became Ku-ring-gai College of Advanced Education, a corporate body with its own Council. It was no longer tied to the Education Department. However it did not own the campus land which remained vested in the Crown.

After changes in the education system in Australia the campus became, on 1 January 1990, part of UTS. The new UTS campus land remained Crown land until they and the other universities involved finally acquired the titles which were issued on 1 December 1994 for a fee of \$1. From FOI papers obtained it appears that title was only granted to UTS and the other universities on the condition that the "site continues to be used for the same academic purposes".

The access road and railway station imbroglio

In 1990 UTS wanted to build an access road to Lady Game Drive through the environmentally sensitive College Creek area. A committee was formed and STEP's representative, who had a civil engineering background, was able to propose a different route for the road through a less sensitive area. There was still to be some bushland loss but the quid pro quo was to be the implementation of a permanent Conservation Agreement over the remaining bushland on the site. The boundaries were negotiated and the Agreement drafted but then the university changed its mind. The cause was the Parramatta to Chatswood railway for which a station at UTS Lindfield was proposed. The station, however, was not considered economically viable even with the UTS projection of 6,600 students by 2006. Further reasons for rejecting the station were: "The UTS site is also located at the tip of a peninsula, with only one access point through surrounding residential streets, in a bush fire prone area. Some of the environmental planning issues associated with expansion of the campus on this site are able to be resolved, however the major concern of traffic and transport impacts on the adjacent

area still needs to be addressed. The strong concerns and opposition of local councils and local residents over any proposed campus expansion is also a critical issue that needs to be noted."

The Community Reference Group

In 2003 STEP joined yet another committee, the Community Reference Group. This committee was told about the plans to build residential buildings on the site and to apply to council for appropriate rezoning. Consultants made presentations on various aspects of the plans. The committee expressed very serious concerns on numerous grounds. You can access STEP's paper to the committee here - <http://www.step.org.au/uts.pdf>. While the consultants did amend some of their proposals there was no lessening of the university's determination to be rid of the site.

In response to a thank you form letter from UTS STEP replied to set the record straight. Issues included that we were shown countless slides and drawings but were unable to have more than a glimpse on the screen or a brief look at drawings and that they refused to engage with the committee on the concerns of the community and simply adhered to their agenda: Claytons consultation! We said "...we hope that it is not your intention to imply that the CRG has approved of the information that you have presented to it....you presented an evolving design for residential development which the CRG opposed."

The dilapidation of the campus

The university had begun to promote the line that the Lindfield campus was suffering because staff and students no longer wanted to go there. In June 2005 Fay Pettit was able to write: 'There have been a great many indications that for some time the Ku-ring-gai campus is being deliberately run down and its education function undermined.' She went on to give nine examples including the exclusion of Lindfield from UTS Annual Reports, the withdrawal of lecturers, the closing down of the popular evening courses, the neglect of maintenance and so on. The campus is now in a sad state of dilapidation: a state that one may conclude arose from the university wanting it that way.

The trouble with Part 3A

A couple of years ago the state government amended the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act with the introduction of Part 3A. The law firm EDO has published a paper on Part 3A which says: 'In effect, Part 3A of the Act dramatically reduces the involvement of the community in the original decision-making process and seeks to reduce any risk of concerned individuals or groups delaying or preventing significant development by limiting the grounds on which, or the circumstances in which, they can seek merits or judicial review. Instead, the Minister for Planning and the Director General, Department of Planning (DoP), maintain the power to make all key decisions regarding significant development, with advice from 'expert panels', limited input from other key agencies and little opportunity for effective criticism where the bureaucracy 'gets it wrong'.' Read the full EDO paper on the STEP web site at www.step.org.au. In March this year UTS consultant, CRI, wrote to Frank Sartor, the Minister for Planning asking that he call in the project using his powers under Part 3A.

(Cont next page)

¹ The early history draws heavily, with permission, on an undated paper by Fay Pettit. Read it in full at www.step.org.au

(Cont from page 3)

This was tacit admission that the local community and Ku-ring-gai Council had all rejected the proposal and that they needed to be sidelined so that the UTS could get on with selling this community asset to provide funds for its expansion elsewhere.

So what's the problem?

STEP became interested in the site initially because of the bushland it contains. This is still our prime concern but there are others. The many hectares of bushland on the UTS site are contiguous with adjoining bush and adjacent to the Lane Cove National Park and is an important and substantial natural area. The College Creek area is especially valuable. The bushland is threatened by clearing for development, by increased water runoff, by nutrients in runoff and by clearing for bushfire hazard reduction. Soothing words about retaining the bush will be worthless unless all of those problems are neutralised. High-density housing so far from the railway line is inappropriate, especially in view of the government mandated additional high density developments being built along the railway corridor. Traffic will be a problem as there is restricted access out of the site and building more houses above bushfire prone natural areas is crazy. Unless of course you get rid of the bush!

In addition there is the need for universities. As the population of Ku-ring-gai will increase by over 20% over the next 20 years and similar increases will take place throughout the northern and coastal suburbs there will be a need for tertiary education facilities. This is a time to look to the future and preserve our university options rather than flog them off for housing that we don't need.

The current proposal

In a letter to the Minister, UTS consultant CRI summarised that the 'preferred scheme' would have a mix of residential and dwelling types, retain 'the bulk of the natural vegetation and bushland, would be 'primarily constructed' on the already developed areas, have the higher density concentrated centrally and have the 'potential for continuing educational use or adaptive commercial use' if the existing buildings were retained. There are a lot of escape clauses in their wording! The notes accompanying the letter refer to the previous community consultation through the Community Reference Group but leave unsaid that the CRG opposed the proposal.

Ku-ring-gai Council has, on June 29 2007, written a well thought out 12 page submission to the Department of Planning setting out what issues should be addressed.

Dealing With Part 3A

STEP has now been invited onto another committee, this one set up by the DoP. It is another CRG and it is to meet thrice. In all likelihood this will be a large committee with very little opportunity to have any real impact on the type of outcome. If UTS and the government want housing then housing we shall have. We may well, however, have an opportunity to ensure that the bushland issues mentioned earlier are dealt with properly. Part 3A is relatively new and the community probably has not yet seen it working in a great variety of cases. We can only work towards obtaining the best possible outcome. There is going to be change on the site, the task is to manage it. The arguments that the community and Council have are persuasive. Let's hope that the Minister and his advisers are listening.

Sydney's Natural World

Christmas presents for all

STEP has always published and over the years this has included everything from modest position papers to a plan of management, walking maps of Sydney bushland and the Field Guide to the Lane Cove Valley Bushland.

Now however we are about to realise the most ambitious project of all. STEP committee member John Martyn has been far and wide in the Sydney Basin and the result is a beautiful photo essay entitled *Sydney's Natural World*. It is now being printed and your committee is setting about organising a launch and marketing and distribution details.

This is a beautiful and sophisticated full colour book of over 200 pages dealing with our natural world by theme with a supportive text throughout. The themes are Water, Light, Life, Form and Colour. We think it is important that people have a chance to appreciate just what a wonderful world we have at our doorsteps and how wasteful it really would be to lose it. This supports STEP's core values in a less adversarial manner than we are often forced to adopt.

While details of pricing are not yet finalised the book will be available for less than comparable books in the shops and of course there will be a discount for STEP members.

Before long we shall let you know about the launch and how you can purchase the book. We hope that you will keep one yourself and buy more for presents!

Understanding business

We have to take business along with us

There is still a lot of talk around the environmental movement on the evil of business. It has to stop! Business values represent no more than the values of the society and of course these values range widely.

While we won't be recommending Gunns Ltd for a greenie award anytime soon there are plenty of businesses that should be appreciated and supported. While law breakers in business should be treated the same as law breakers from every field, most businesses work within the law. The difficulty in getting them to adopt environmentally friendly ways is that they are in a competitive environment and can only adopt expensive technologies or methods if their competitors also do so.

It is the role of government to set standards and to make laws to support them. When environmental laws on pollution were introduced over the past 30 years businesses had no problem adopting them because their competitors had to do the same. Thus the playing field was kept level.

There are many environmentally conscious people working in businesses but they are often helpless to bring about change on their own. They need the community in the form of the government to set the rules.

Demonising all business is therefore a mugs game. We need to engage with business more on the one hand and promote the creation of appropriate laws on the other. Part of that is breaking down the barriers that we have so often been complicit in setting up.

The Adventist Hospital site

Bulldozing towards a Part 3A resolution?

In the last 2 newsletters we told you about the proposals for development on the San site. Before telling you more we should make it perfectly clear that STEP has no problem with development there. Many people have some affection for the San and there is plenty of land on which to build without controversy.

There are limits to every site, however, and the Adventists and their advisers seem intent on testing them all in the current application. To recapitulate; the proposal includes over 1,400 additional dwellings, the relocation of the primary school and the addition of a high school, an additional 94,000 square metres of hospital (that's 9.4 hectares or 23 acres!), and 13,000 square metres of commercial. In addition there are nurses' quarters and other buildings.

This is therefore a gigantic project and one that has many implications. The questions that the community may want to see addressed include;

- Is this the right place for such a large hospital expansion or would another hospital elsewhere be a better idea?
- What are the implications for increased pollution of the Lane Cove River?
- What loss of bushland is acceptable?
- What are the traffic implications?
- How does this proposal relate to the Metropolitan Strategy and Town Centre planning?
- How will the bushfire risk be managed?
- How does this proposal satisfy the conditions laid down by the Land and Environment Court when the 2001 case at Mount Pleasant Ave was decided?

It is pertinent that although the whole site is in Ku-ring-gai, it adjoins Hornsby at Mount Pleasant Avenue and therefore both Councils are involved.

The Department of Planning (DoP) did the right thing in declining to call in the project under Part 3A. The Director General wrote to the Adventist's developer Johnson Property Group (JPG) in March telling them to talk to the two Councils about it and that '...prior to my Department

considering your request and reporting to the Minister on the matter, all strategic and environmental issues and impacts need to be satisfied, and preferably agreed, as far as possible with both Councils.' And further '...this includes such matters as traffic outcomes; the range, mix and intensity of land uses; as well as visual impacts; riparian and ecological protection; Aboriginal heritage; and bushfire risk measures.' Well done DoP!

So what has happened since that? Ku-ring-gai prepared an 'Issues for Consideration' paper and met with JPG in April. Another meeting was held with JPG on 2 July. Both Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai were present. At that meeting it was apparent that JPG had done practically none of the things requested by the DoP or by the Councils. STEP understands that they simply reiterated their demands that the whole site should be considered under Part 3A. JPG had not responded to the issues raised by Council and it was made clear to them that to achieve the outcome requested by the DoP they must respond.

JPG said that they had started a traffic plan which was indicating that traffic could actually be improved under the proposal but that it was not yet complete. The meeting ended with JPG agreeing to produce an amended concept plan.

It is quite possible that JPG are simply attempting to frustrate the process with Council so that they can tell the DoP that the project is bogged down and that they need relief through Part 3A. Perhaps they are hoping that being a major donor to the Labor Party will help them in the end. (See <http://www.democracy4sale.org/> for details of that.) No doubt, however, those strategies, if they exist, won't work. The DoP has laid down some pretty sensible rules and we cannot see why they would back away from them. An additional point is that the San can get automatic Part 3A application should it submit an application for only hospital works which have a value of over \$15 million.

This is going to be a test of wills!! JPG vs DoP.

Some action from National Parks and Wildlife

Innovative bushland management

Those who travel along Lady Game Drive near Ryde Road will know that while the high side of the road is quite weed free, the lower side is infested with every weed possible. This is because of the high nutrient fill pushed over the side during construction and because of further pollution from runoff from the road over its life. This sort of bushland degradation is very hard to rectify by normal regeneration methods. In this case workers have cleared weeds and capped the area with low nutrient crushed sandstone and planted appropriate natives. One risk with this sort of project comes from slipping of the capping before the planting is established but the work survived the torrential rain in June with minimal erosion and so we can be optimistic.

Something similar but on a bigger scale is happening off the Comenarra Parkway behind the sandstone cutting between Fox Valley Road and Pennant Hills Road. This is a very steep and extremely degraded area right on top of the Lane Cove River. In 1983 Hornsby Council was using it as a tip for road waste until stopped by community action. Once again, sandstone capping and replanting is being carried out after more conventional methods failed. Sections planted some years ago have stabilised very well.

The Parks and Wildlife Division of the Dept of Environment and Climate Change is to be commended for taking an adventurous and imaginative approach to a previously intractable problem.

In case you missed it

The UK Labour Government has announced it will set targets for Britain to cut its carbon emissions by 30% by 2020, and 60% by the year 2050, and it says those targets will be legally binding. Crikey.com

Britain in bloom: how spring is the new summer: Since the Middle Ages, it's been known as May blossom. But should its name now be changed to April? The flowering of the hawthorn bush has for centuries been an infallible sign in England that the month of May has arrived. But, this year, in our warm spring, its scented creamy-white flowers are appearing in many places a good three weeks earlier than normal. Crikey.com

Richard Flanagan
Wednesday April 21, 2004
[The Guardian](#)

I am writing this in our autumn, once Tasmania's most beautiful season. But the china-blue skies are now nicotine scummed, as smoke from the burning of old-growth forest floats over Hobart, an inescapable reminder that the destruction of ancient woodland - like no other in the world - is accelerating.

In Tasmania, an island the size of Ireland whose primeval forests astonished 19th-century Europeans, an incomprehensible ecological tragedy is being played out.

Recent calls from Britain to boycott Tasmanian goods and tourism are not going to end logging. But in an Australian election year, with the forests emerging as a major issue, they form part of a chorus of international condemnation that shows Australians that the forests are not just a natural resource, but are globally significant wild lands.

Rainforest is being clearfelled and then burnt with napalm. The world's tallest hardwood trees, eucalyptus regnans, are being reduced to mud and ash. And the monocultural plantations that replace the old growths soak up so much groundwater that rivers are drying up. Compound 1080, a lethal poison, is laid to kill off native animals that might graze plantation seedlings. In the resulting slaughter, wallabies, kangaroos, possums, and protected species such as wombats, bettongs and potoroos, die in slow agony.

The survival of extraordinary

creatures such as the giant Tasmanian freshwater crayfish - the largest in the world - is in doubt because of logging. Scientists warn that numerous insect species still unrecorded are disappearing in the conflagration. Local people are finding their water contaminated with atrazine, a potent weedkiller.

Logging is an industry driven solely by greed. It prospers with government support and subsidies, and it is accelerating its rate of destruction, so that Tasmania is now the largest hardwood chip exporter in the world. And Gunns, the largest logging company in Australia with a monopoly in Tasmania, is making record profits selling these forests as woodchips, which are in turn made into paper and cardboard.

But the woodchippers are destroying not only Tasmania's natural heritage, but also its parliament, its polity, its media and its society. The close relationship which leading Tasmanian politicians enjoy with Gunns, goes beyond sizeable donations to both major parties; it has given rise to a political culture of bullying, cronyism and threats, a culture that allowed the state's electoral system, under a 1997 Liberal-Labour deal, to be altered to minimise Green representation.

Because of the forest battle, a subtle fear has entered Tasmanian public life; it stifles dissent and is conducive to the abuse of power. To question or to comment is to invite the possibility of ostracism and unemployment.

The reality, relentlessly denied with lies, is that logging old growth brings neither wealth nor jobs to impoverished rural communities. Most wealth made out of woodchips flows out of the state; less than 15% of Gunns' profits stay in Tasmania, which remains the poorest Australian state. Contrary to the government's claim that 10,000 jobs depend on old-growth logging, John Gay, Gunns' managing director, recently admitted that only 480 jobs were at stake.

However, the giving away of such an extraordinary resource does threaten Tasmania's broader economic prospects. Key industries in which job growth is concentrated, such as tourism and fine foods and wines, trade as much on the island's pristine image as they do on the products they sell, and there is growing concern at the damage being done to Tasmania's name by images

of smouldering forest.

Since woodchipping began 32 years ago, Tasmanians have watched as one extraordinary place after another has been sacrificed. Beautiful places, holy places, lost not only to them, but for ever. They overwhelmingly want the practice of old-growth logging ended - Wilderness Society polls show that 69% of Tasmanians are opposed to the practice.

But with both major political parties in Tasmania as one in their rigid support of Gunns and old-growth logging, Tasmanians cannot stop this coalition of greed and power from within their island. Change can only be brought about by the Australian government, and it will only act when the issue becomes one of inescapable national shame.

Of course it can be argued that the destruction of one more unique piece of our natural world, while regrettable, is small change next to the horror of Madrid, or the tragedy of Iraq. But in the lineaments of the struggle in a distant island, it is possible to see a larger battle, the same battle the world over - that between truth and power.

Günter Grass, writing of Tasmania's forests, has described their destruction as an aspect of the same attitude that led to Nazi book-burnings. Could it be that, when all our skies appear to be darkening, the great forests of Tasmania are a symbol of hope for us all?

Richard Flanagan's most recent novel is Gould's Book of Fish
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Western Australian company, Carnegie Corporation, is proposing to set up the world's first base-load wave-power electricity station and desalination plant by 2012 based on locally developed CETO technology. (Named after the sea goddess of Greek mythology). Wave movement is harnessed by underwater buoys connected to pumps on the sea floor and the power generated drives the desalination plant. Ecos 137 Jun 2007

Hornsby Council frequently runs free guided bushwalks. Pick up a brochure or contact them at bushland@hornsby.nsw.gov.au to get on their email list or check the website www.bushland.hornsby.nsw.gov.au

Native Plants ID course

The North Shore Group of the Australian Plants Society announces that the *Plants Identification Course* is to be presented again later this year - a repeat of this event in the popular Saturday morning format.

Dates: Over four Saturdays Sat 8/15/22/29 Sept 2007 - each session 9am to 1pm

Venue: Visitor Centre, Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden, St Ives

Presenter: Dr Joan Webb

The course will last a total of 16 hours - each session will have 3 hours of lecture and practical work, including microscope investigation of plants, followed by an hour of plant ID in the Gardens. The presenter, Joan Webb, has an enviable reputation as an engaging and enthusiastic, skilled educator with a vast wealth of plant knowledge - see profile on the Group web site.

Course content and outcome: Will cover plant and flower structure and botanical nomenclature in general, leading into the use of eye, hand lens and microscope inspection of any specific species, together with keys, for identification. The major families and their species specific to the area will be covered. The course outcome is the ability to positively identify common flowering plants either readily or by educated reference to a field guide, with added pleasure of knowing your flora more intimately.

Should I attend? The course will appeal to those who wish to start or improve their knowledge of plants and identification skills or want to refresh those skills. The course should be of interest to the layperson, to the professional engaged in bush care, bush regeneration, parks and garden management, etc, and to students training in such areas.

The course will have a limit of 24 attendees. The cost, including notes and plant identification keys, reference book and refreshments is \$125.

Registration

Contact Fred Langshaw 94491541 or email secretary@blandiflora.org.au or download the registration form from www.blandiflora.org.au

Be quick – the last course was over subscribed!

Membership, fees and all that

We have adopted a different way of reminding you that the annual fees are due and enclose a membership renewal form for all except life members. We are doing it this way because we believe that it may make life easier for us all. The chasing up of payment for members is a far bigger task than it should be for our secretary!

We have also introduced the option to pay by direct transfer into our bank account. If you choose this method be sure to also email us with details of what you have paid (or send back the form by mail).

While membership fees have not been increased we have given you options or renewing for 1 year or for 3 years with a discount. Our secretary will be very grateful to any who renew for three years or who take up the life membership option!

Every year we of course gain some members and lose some. There are a few people more than a year in arrears and a 'last chance' renewal form is included with their newsletters. Regrettably we shall have to drop off any who do not respond now by renewing. Please think about it – STEP gains a lot of credibility from its significant membership.

Direct line to the Councils

Members often ask us questions because they can't, for one reason or another, get answers out of councils. STEP can help with that. Committee member Michelle Leishman is our representative on Ku-ring-gai's Catchments and Natural Areas Reference Group and Barry Tomkinson is a member of Hornsby's bushland committee.

If you have a matter that you would like to refer to either of these committees then drop us an email at secretary@step.org.au or write to us at PO Box 697 Turramurra 2074.

One issue that has recently been raised is the prevalence of wildlife killed on our roads and the possibility of reducing that. There will be others.

See it in colour

See the photos in this newsletter in colour at www.step.org.au
Back issues of the newsletter are also stored there.

Tell us what you think

Send in your ideas for this newsletter in case the editor runs out of them. And, send in your email addresses to secretary@step.org.au as we want to ask your opinion from time to time and shall do that through on line surveys.

Make a difference
Get a friend to join STEP

STEP Committee

John Burke
Tim Gastineau-Hills
Graham Jones
Bruno Krockenberger
Michelle Leishman
Andrew Little
Neroli Lock
John Martyn
Barry Tomkinson
Jim Wells
Helen Wortham
Newsletter editor – John Burke

Grant to Warrawee Primary School

STEP offers grants to primary schools to support worthwhile environmental projects. This year \$2,500 has been given to Warrawee so that track and regeneration maintenance in the bush area behind the primary buildings can continue. The area is a Blue Gum High Forest remnant that parents, staff and contractors have been maintaining for over twenty-five years.

We have recently written to all primary schools in Kuring-gai and many in Hornsby Shire but have yet to receive an application. Strange! If you know a school with a good environmental project in need of funds get them to contact us.

Send us your email address so we can let you know of events, changes to events, urgent issues and ask your opinions. Email to secretary@step.org.au

West Head walk, 2 September, 10.45 am

Features: This will consist of a series of short walks to look at key features of local geology, landscape and vegetation. We will visit;

1. The tessellated pavements, Aboriginal engravings and swampy heath wildflowers of the Elvina Trail.
2. Hanging swamp vegetation, wildflowers and crystal clear water, plus waterfall and views on the America Bay Track.
3. Rainforest, ironbark and woodland on dolerite intrusions in the Resolute Picnic Ground area.

Location: The Elvina Trail. Enter the park from the lower entrance off McCarrs Creek Road and the Elvina Trail is on the right hand side of West Head Road a little more than a kilometre past the turnoff to Akuna Bay.

Bring: Lunch and the normal sensible walking gear.

Cost: Free but normal car park entry fees of \$11 will apply unless you have an annual car sticker.

Meet: In the Elvina Trail carpark on West Head Road.

Contact: John Martyn, 9449 7962

johnmartyn@optusnet.com.au



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