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## STEP AGM – Tuesday 9 October 2012 - Call for Committee Nominations

The STEP Inc Annual General Meeting will be held at 7.45pm and will be followed by a schools debate (see details on page 14). Nominations for Office Bearer or Committee Member should be made in writing and received by the Secretary at least 7 days prior to the meeting. Nomination forms are available from the Secretary (email: [secretary@step.org.au](mailto:secretary@step.org.au))

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## Report on 1 July Rally on Hunting in NSW National Parks. What Happens Next?

As recently as 24 April 2012 the NSW Environment Minister, Robyn Parker, confirmed that hunting would not be allowed in national parks. Yet in return for support from the Shooters and Fishers Party (SFP) for privatisation of the electricity generators the NSW State Government agreed to support legislation presented to the NSW parliament by the SFP to allow hunting in national parks. The amendment to the Game and Feral Animal Control Act was passed in June and comes into

effect in six months time. Details on the legislation and the reasons for STEP's opposition to this initiative were in STEP Matters number 166.

STEP assisted the National Parks Association (NPA) of NSW and the Nature Conservation Council (NCC) of NSW to organise a rally in the Premier's electorate to inform the public about the issue and demonstrate the level of ground level community opposition to the proposal.



Community members at the rally

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## STEP Inc

The rally, held in Wahroonga Park on Sunday 1 July, was a resounding success. The crowd was at estimated at between 350 to 400 people, which made it one of the largest community rallies held for some years in the Ku-ring-gai area. Rally attendees were drawn from many local families, bushwalkers from all over Sydney, mountain bikers, local councillors and representatives of many North Shore conservation groups.

Speakers at the rally included Pepe Clarke, CEO of the NCC, plus representatives of national park managers and rangers, WIRES, the Greens and STEP Inc. They highlighted the moral issue of allowing hunting in areas that have been set aside for the conservation of wildlife, people safety issues posed by allowing amateur recreational hunters into parks that are visited by millions of people each year and the likelihood of cruelty to feral and native animals. Research by the Invasive Species Council has demonstrated that professionally managed programmes are needed to control feral animal populations, while the efforts of recreational hunters generally result in poor outcomes, or even worsen the situation.

The crowd strongly supported the speakers and called upon the NSW Government not to implement the legislation when it is due to commence on 27 December 2012.



NPWS ranger Arthur Willis urges the public to maintain resistance to the new hunting law.



Leanne Taylor, General Manager of WIRES addresses the rally.

## What Happens Next?

The legislation is intended to operate in a similar fashion to that currently applying to hunting on public land such as state forests. The Minister for the Environment will declare the national park areas that will be opened up for hunting. These declarations will be effective for a set period, likely to be in the order of 5 years. The national parks that may be subject to a declaration do not include parks in metropolitan areas or World Heritage or wilderness areas as defined in the Wilderness Act, but this still leaves over 700 national parks with the potential to be declared available for hunting.

The administrator of the hunting process, the Game Council, presumably in conjunction with local NPWS management, will determine how many hunters may hunt in a park area at any one time. Once these parameters are in place licensed hunters will use the Game Council's online system to obtain written permission to hunt over specified dates in a particular park.

Contrary to some press reports there is little likelihood of close supervision by NPWS rangers. NPWS resources on the ground are already stretched and recent cuts in funding will mean further reductions in the resources available to complete such new responsibilities. It is an unacceptable imposition on park rangers to be expected to manage and monitor the hunting activities of amateurs who can choose when and where to carry out their hunting expeditions.

We need to maintain pressure on the Government to limit (or ideally stop) the declaration of national areas for hunting. STEP hopes that awareness of the high level of community opposition to the entry of hunters into national parks will restrict the application of the legislation. No-one wants to see the current high level of local and overseas visitors to our NSW national parks (35 million per annum according the State Government) being frightened from entering the parks because of the presence of a small number of recreational hunters. Delicate natural environments have also been damaged by the activities of a minority of unthinking hunters. .

**So please contact email or phone your local member to express your opposition to the implementation of the hunting legislation. A suggestion for the letter content can be found at the website <http://nohunting.wildwalks.com/>.**

## For your diary: forthcoming events from STEP and others

### Walk: Royal National Park, Palm Jungle, Cliff Track – Sunday 12 August 2012

This year's feature day walk has been rescheduled to August and is regarded as one of the great walks of Sydney. It includes beautiful tall forest and extensive coastal views from the Cliff Track and the rare littoral rainforest of Palm Jungle. With nearly 50 rainforest tree species this is one of the finest examples of littoral rainforest in the Sydney bioregion.

**Start:** 9.45 am for 10 am start.  
**Finish:** 4.00pm  
**Meet:** Car park, adjoining Otford Lookout  
**Difficulty:** Medium  
**Book:** Bookings essential. Limited to 15 walkers. Contact Andrew Little, 9924 7212 (after 7.30pm), or email: [aalittle@optusnet.com.au](mailto:aalittle@optusnet.com.au). Please indicate if a lift is required.

### Walk: Sydney Institute of Marine Science Harbour Hike – Fathers' Day 2 Sept

Walkers elect to start between 8 am and 12 am in Bradfield Park at Milson's Point. Walk is along the Harbour foreshore for a distance of 11 km finishing at Chowder Bay in Mosman. A free ferry service is provided back to Milson's Point.

Food stalls, live entertainment and children's activities along with displays and information about Sydney Harbour await hikers at the finish line at the Chowder Bay marine-themed festival. Funds raised go to the Sydney Institute of Marine Science. For more details see [www.harbourhike.com](http://www.harbourhike.com).

### Talk: Robin Buchanan and Nancy Pallin – Tuesday 18 September 2012

8.00 pm – St Andrews Church Hall, corner Chisholm and Vernon Streets, Turramurra  
Note that the rebuilding has been completed

**Topic:** *Bush Regeneration and Resilience - local experience of successes and problems*

The Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby areas contain significant remnants of the forests that originally covered the Sydney region. These remnant forests are under threat from urbanisation and weed invasion. Some forests are now classified as critically endangered as, for example, less 5% of the original Blue Gum High Forest remains. Bush regeneration programs are vital for the survival of these forests.



Robin Buchanan teaches bushland regeneration at TAFE and is the author of the classic texts 'Bush Regeneration' and "Restoring natural areas in Australia". Nancy Pallin is a founding member and currently Chairperson of the Ku-ring-gai Bat Conservation Society Inc. and a member of the Australasian Bat Society. As a volunteer, she has coordinated the habitat restoration project in Ku-ring-gai Flying-fox Reserve since 1987. She has been active in bush regeneration in Lindfield, Lane Cove National Park, on Lord Howe Island and Jamberoo Mountain. Nancy chaired the Blue Gum High Forest Group which led the successful community campaign to protect the St Ives Blue Gum High Forest from more development.



See page 14 for more walks and talks

## Local News and Updates

### ***Stringybark Ridge – the State Government Responds to STEP***

STEP members will recall that the June 2012 edition of STEP Matters (number 165, available on our website at: [www.step.org.au](http://www.step.org.au)) carried an article on the curious happenings at Stringybark Ridge, where a number of our local MP's were sent a proposal from the Mayor of Hornsby Council, asking to use protected conservation land in the Berowra Valley National Park for additional team sport grounds for a wide range of sports. STEP accordingly sought clarification from the Premier as to what the State Government's intentions were with regard to Stringybark Ridge.

That edition of the newsletter also included a copy of a STEP submission to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, the Hon Robyn Parker, asking that the NSW State Government work with local councils to upgrade local state high school sports facilities for the use and benefit of the whole community, rather than consider the further destruction of already protected natural bushland (which would have been the result of the above mentioned Stringybark Ridge proposal).

Responses to both have now been received. Robyn Parker replied, via the Premier, confirming that the Stringybark Ridge area will in fact be included in the new Berowra Valley National Park. Unfortunately she added that the site will nevertheless still be considered for recreational activities including sport. The use of national park land for organised team sports is of course generally illegal, but the Minister also signalled a way around that hindrance, via a new plan of management (PoM) for the National Park. This PoM process, the Minister added will of course include the usual "extensive consultation with the community, Council and other stakeholders". The Minister went on to emphasise that the PoM process will also specifically include "the full examination of appropriate uses for the Stringybark Ridge, including options for recreational and sporting facilities"

The "extensive community consultation" statement has STEP a bit worried, as it is sometimes cynically seen as being political code to signal that a process giving the appearance of local community involvement needs gone through, but the end result will be the same. STEP's involvement with the early "community consultation" phase of the NPWS mountain bike investigation would seem to lend credibility to this viewpoint.

However, we have also received a response directly from the Premier himself regarding the STEP proposal to develop and upgrade local high school sports facilities, so as to further improve the sporting facilities available for both the schools and the broader local sporting community. The Premier states that there is now in place a Department of Education and Communities *Facilities Policy* that promotes and "encourages schools to make their facilities available for use by the community outside of schools hours", although it is not clear how much progress has been made in this regard or whether local councils have been financially supporting such development.

STEP sees this as welcome news and will be actively promoting this approach, hopefully now also with strong State Government support. We see this as a more cost effective and better way to both improve and deal with any genuine shortage of community sports facilities in our local community, rather than using areas such as Stringybark Ridge, set aside many years ago for bushland protection and passive community use.

**Your view?** STEP invites its members to express your views on this matter. Email: [secretary@step.org.au](mailto:secretary@step.org.au)

### **Ku-ring-gai**

#### ***South Turramurra Former B2 Corridor Development***

Ku-ring-gai Council is currently finalising proposals for the development of land that was previously part of the planned B2 road corridor to link the F3 and M2 motorways that was abandoned in 1996. This area which is between Chisholm Street and Barwon Avenue is to be developed as a low density residential subdivision.

Local residents have been actively involved in reviewing the Development Control Plan that defines the specific controls applicable to the site. They have highlighted their concerns that there should be adequate community access to and management of the riparian zone that runs through the site and conservation of native flora and fauna.

STEP representatives attended a meeting with Council planners. The current ideas for restoration of the riparian zone that leads into Lane Cove National Park were explained in detail. We await release of the Development Application later this year to see the details of the plans.

### **Climate Wise Communities project**

Ku-ring-gai Council has set up a Climate Wise Communities project which aims to introduce and test the effectiveness of a strategy to improve community, environmental and financial resilience to bushfire, storm, heat stress and drought.

The key strategies undertaken through the project will be to:

- Develop tools to promote shared responsibility for climate change adaptation
- Develop communication networks to build neighbourhood capacity to prepare and recover from extreme weather events

The pilot phase of this project will run workshops to determine community feedback

on the:

- The attitudes towards the principle of shared responsibility
- effectiveness of a Bushfire Resilience Rating Tool
- effectiveness of tools for residents to assess their personal vulnerability
- best ways of supporting and developing local neighbourhood communication networks

Ku-ring-gai Council is running workshops in late August/early September where interested residents can provide feedback on the project. If you would like to receive further details or to participate in a workshop please email [secretary@step.org.au](mailto:secretary@step.org.au)

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## **First Year Report Card on the NSW Government's Environmental Performance**

*The Liberal National coalition won power in NSW in March 2011. After a year of settling in the people of NSW are now starting to see some action. On the environment front there have been some decisions that are welcomed by environment groups but there are many that are cause for much concern.*

### **Welcome Decisions**

#### *New National Parks*

One of the Government's first decisions was to declare the Dharawal National Park, following a campaign running over 30 years by local conservationists. The area of 6,500 hectares includes endangered plants and animals, significant Aboriginal cultural sites and upland swamps that feed the Georges River.

The second national park declaration was that of the Berowra Valley Regional Park. However the intended protection of all areas of the park is under a cloud with uncertainty about the status of the Stringybark Ridge area of the park. See STEP Matters Issue number 165 for details. We await the Plan of Management for clarification. (See article on page 4)

#### *Pollution protection*

Following serious pollution incidents at the ICI plant in Newcastle and the BHP Billiton coalmine near the Georges River the Environment Protection Authority's powers have been strengthened and funding increased.

### **Adverse Decisions**

- *Hunting in national parks* We have already written in detail about the overturning of the promise to maintain the ban on hunting in

national parks.

- *Funding for Environmental Education* The Government has severely curtailed the ability of the Education Department to implement the curriculum requirements for sustainability education. See details in the article on page ?
- *Uranium exploration.* The Government has lifted the 26 year old ban on uranium exploration despite bringing no policy on this contentious issue to the March Election
- *Marine park sanctuaries.* A moratorium was placed on the creation of new marine sanctuaries pending the results of a scientific audit of their effectiveness. The report released in February 2012 endorsed the current system. The Government has not responded to the report pending the review of submissions from interested parties.

### **Areas of Concern**

#### *Strategic Land Management*

Prior to the election the government promised to protect important farmland and sensitive environmental areas from mining. Recent tree deaths in the Pilliga Forest near coal seam gas operations have highlighted the risks posed by mining operations and the difficulties of

establishing adequate regulation. However recently released draft Strategic Regional Land Use Plans fall far short of establishing adequate protection in the following ways:

- Strategic agricultural land is not well mapped
- Strategic agricultural land that is mapped is still available for mining
- State significant coal and gas developments are exempt from the requirement to obtain an Aquifer Interference Approval from the Water Minister.

#### *Native Vegetation*

The NSW Native Vegetation Act (2003) was introduced to urgently address NSW's appalling record of land clearing and operates effectively to prevent broad scale clearing on private land with high conservation value vegetation. Native vegetation provides essential environmental, social and economic benefits, including protecting water quality, maintaining soil health and providing wildlife habitat.

Following pressure from some farmers' groups the NSW government is reviewing the Native Vegetation Regulations and has proposed several changes that will weaken environmental protections. The Government must stand firm and commit to the ongoing protection of native vegetation in NSW.

#### *Review of public land management*

An inquiry is currently being conducted into the management of public land in NSW, including state forests and the national park estate. The inquiry will focus on the conversion of Crown land, state forests and agricultural land into the national park estate or other types of conservation areas, including the process of conversion, social, economic, and environmental impacts after conversion, and management practices. The State Government is sending mixed messages to the community about their commitment to existing and future protection of our national parks. Submissions are due by 31 August 2012. STEP's submission is on our website.

#### *New activities in national parks*

Public consultation has been invited on a draft strategic direction on horse riding in national parks that suggests that horse riding could be approved on trails and management roads where there is no express prohibition under the current plan of management. This initiative is another indication of the governments' (both Coalition and Labor) view that national parks should be a source of profit rather than places for the preservation and enjoyment of nature. The plans for development of mountain biking trails are another example of this attitude. These plans are claimed to provide for "sustainable" recreation.

#### *Funding for management of national parks and the environment in general*

Previous issues of STEP Matters have highlighted the cuts that have been made to funding of the essential work in national parks of pest and weed control and bush regeneration. Recent announcements mean that more than 350 NSW environment jobs are to be cut including a reduction in senior area manager positions from 66 to 50. The latest round of cuts comes after about 80 jobs were culled from environment and heritage in 2011-12.

While STEP acknowledges that budgetary constraints have been applied across all areas of government these cuts are disproportionate. They are also unevenly applied, for example the NSW State Government has recently "found" over \$86m of new money to fund the refurbishment of the Sydney Cricket Ground. The demands on national parks staff have increased steadily over the years without a commensurate increase in staff and funding. Examples of the additional demands relate to the control of:

- Illegal logging
- Management of feral animals and weeds
- Fire prevention or mitigation
- Provision of ecological data and local flora and fauna knowledge needed to provide a strategic background to planning for future agricultural, water and housing needs as envisaged in the new planning system proposals

#### *Climate Change Action*

The Government has failed to implement a comprehensive strategy for reducing the state's carbon pollution and drive investment in the clean energy industry. Instead, the State Government has slashed funding for proven power saving programs, delayed the release of its renewable energy action plan and called for the national renewable energy target to be abandoned.

The NSW Government is also pushing ahead with a state funded mine to deliver half price coal to polluting power stations, and is working with the federal government to accelerate approvals for export coal mines and gas fields.

In summary, a very mixed score card but showing worrying signs of politically expedient short term decisions driving out sound longer term policy decision making.

## End of Sustainability Education in NSW?

*STEP member Janine Kitson, has contributed this article from the Teachers Federation journal "Education", 25 June 2012. Syd Smith's gave a history of sustainability education in NSW in his STEP Talk on 26 June 2012. A review of the book he co wrote on teaching sustainability is on page 12.*

The O'Farrell Government's cuts to NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC) State Office threatens the delivery of sustainability education for NSW public schools, teachers and students. The Premier must take urgent action to restore his government's credibility on environmental education.

Non-school based teachers are the first to come face to face with the cost cutting agenda of Local Schools, Local Decisions [LSLD]. State Office of Schools Portfolio has announced that jobs and programs will be axed. Two hundred staff at head office will go, as reported in the Sydney Morning Herald 2-3 June, 2012.

As with every aspect of LSLD, the cutting of hundred of teacher support positions will have a negative impact on curriculum support, professional learning, equity and student learning in schools.

The decision to cut sustainability education programs at State Office has been overwhelmingly rejected by the Australian Association for Environmental Education NSW Chapter [AAEE]. The AAEE is the peak body for sustainability and environmental educators in NSW. The Office of Environment and Heritage [OEH] appear to be silent on these cuts to sustainability education in NSW.

Federation members at the Stop work meeting on 18 May 2012 overwhelmingly understood that if the NSW Government continues to impose its radical agenda it will threaten the delivery of quality education for public students of NSW. If it ignores the profession's call for a Review, Federation Council will authorise an intensification of their campaign against LSLD before the end of term Two.

The cuts to curriculum officers in sustainability come at a time when NSW is preparing to implement the Australian Curriculum in NSW with Sustainability one of three cross curriculum priorities. Teachers in schools will be less supported in delivering quality sustainability education to their students unless the sustainability curriculum support is re-instated.

Curriculum expertise in sustainability is vital for professional support to teachers when few teachers have any formal pre-service teacher

training in sustainability. The NSW DET has been a leader in writing learning materials for sustainability education based on world leading practice. The Australian Government even contracted DET to develop the Sustainability Curriculum Framework for all Australian schools.

The cuts will mean that NSW will not be able to give co-ordinated support to public schools, or meet NSW 2021 Plan targets relating to sustainability and other DEC commitments

Without a clear direction for Sustainability Education in NSW it shows a clear lack of educational leadership from the Minister of Education. It shows a total lack of understanding of the future where there is an urgency to create local sustainable communities.

Mr Syd Smith, 2009 NSW Environmental Educator of the Year, said, "While in Education Minister Piccoli is cutting positions, the Environment Minister Parker is sitting on her hands by not establishing sustainability and education planning and advisory functions required under NSW legislation. While this is obviously an attempt to be a cost cutting exercise in reality it is a short sighted costly disaster. If we continue to deprive students and future generations of what sustainability is and how we can achieve it for a better futures then we are cutting of the gains we have made over the last 30 years."

The NSW public education system has worked hard in its efforts to promote sustainability at school and TAFE. All this good work is about to now being jeopardized if curriculum support is axed.

Teachers, schools and the broader school community are entering the 'Critical Decade' where they will be faced with climate disasters and resource depletion. Sustainable education must be a core educational value, if we are to understand the need for sustainable behaviour and action. Any reduction in sustainability education will diminish our student's capacity to act and care for the environment.

Information on the Save Sustainability Education Campaign by AAEE NSW and its online petition can be found on website [www.aaeenw.org.au](http://www.aaeenw.org.au)

## Powerful Owl Survey



STEP member Janet Harwood has drawn our attention to a survey that is being undertaken by Birdlife Australia. They want to locate all the breeding pairs of Powerful Owls in the greater Sydney region, from Newcastle in the north to Kiama in the south and west to the Blue Mountains. They will be identifying where their nest locations are and recording the outcome of each nesting attempt at the end of the breeding season.

This information will identify the critical roosting and breeding requirements of the owls and the locations of important areas requiring protection. In addition, the project will also focus on the development of education materials with partners such as Taronga Zoo and engage various land managers to workshop management measures to help in the conservation of Powerful Owls and their habitat.

Details can be found on the Birds Australia website.  
<http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/surveys/Powerful-Owl-Project>

### About Powerful Owls in Sydney

The Powerful Owl is found throughout the outer suburbs of the greater Sydney metropolitan area, particularly where these suburbs adjoin substantial areas of bushland and reserves. Over the past 10 years or so, there have been a number of sightings much closer to the city, even in the Royal Botanic Gardens. Powerful Owls nest inside large hollows of big old trees

and they usually roost during the day among the dense leafy foliage of tall understorey trees and shrubs. Powerful Owls feed almost exclusively on large tree-dwelling mammals, especially the Common Ringtail Possum, but they also take a few large birds. The Grey-headed Flying Fox is a favourite food item for the owls, especially when there is a Flying Fox colony nearby.

Powerful Owls share a strong pair-bond for life and the male and female are usually seen roosting together, sometimes in adjacent trees. They live year-round in large home-ranges that are often more than 1000 ha in size. While these areas are centred on large patches of bushland, the owls are sometimes seen hunting at night near houses, especially in the leafy suburbs where there are lots of possums to be found. Powerful Owls need to eat at least one possum (or flying fox) per night. This food requirement increases during their winter breeding season, and it continues into the following spring and summer as the one or two dependent baby owlets become ever more demanding.

Finding the owls is not all that easy. The easiest way to be sure that the owls are in your area is to listen for their distinctive calls. Powerful Owls have a slow, double-note "whoo-hoo" call that is soft, but very strong and resonant, and which can be heard more than 1 km away. To hear a Powerful Owl call go to <http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/species/Ninox-streua>

They also have the habit of regurgitating the indigestible remains of their prey, so that bundles of hair, animal jaws and other bones can often be found on the ground below their favourite roosting places.

All owls in Australia are nocturnal (currently, eight species are recognized). The Powerful Owl is a good "flagship" species to help us learn more about the conservation requirements of this species and those of other owls, as well as the needs of many other forest-dwelling species. Because Powerful Owls are difficult to find and occur at such low population densities, we do not know how many of them there are in the Sydney region. As a first step towards effective conservation of the Powerful Owl, we need to be aware of the habitat used by this owl and whether its numbers are increasing or decreasing.



## The M2 debacle continues – John Goldberg tells it like it is.

*John Burke provides a perspective on the M2 development to remind us of the problems of Public Private Partnerships*

When the M2 was proposed some 20 years ago, on part of the old North West Freeway corridor, the Woodward Commission recommended that it not be constructed. STEP, while recognising that the road would improve accessibility out of peak periods, opposed construction because it was to be, and now is, a radial route towards the CBD and such roads don't lessen peak congestion. The money would have been better spent on public transport. We predicted that induced traffic would soon use up and congest the new capacity during busy periods but the Government disagreed. This, they said, was to be the solution to congestion in the area. The fact that this view was disastrously wrong would of course been apparent to them but there were other factors at play. If one wants seemingly inexplicable behaviour explained it's always helpful to look at the commercial arrangements, to follow the money trail. And so it was in this case.

Now they are at it again. Widening a section of the road because it has become hopelessly congested. Of course they know that the expansion won't help peak hour traffic for long but they also know that it will deliver more cars to the tollgates. And there's that pesky commercial issue trumping traffic engineering once again. The money trail leads straight to the bank account of the road owner, Transurban.

Dr John Goldberg was very active in lobbying against the M2 twenty years ago and has maintained an interest in road infrastructure, including its financing, traffic modelling and freeway noise. You can read some of Dr Goldberg's papers at <http://wwwfaculty.arch.usyd.edu.au/web/staff/hompages/johngoldberg.html>.

He has written an article published in the Hornsby district *Monthly Chronicle* where he takes aim at the processes used to justify the current widening of the M2. Dr Goldberg calls the EIS prepared by Transurban a 'sham' because the project proceeded under Part 3A of the planning legislation so as to prevent any 'legal action against it'. He goes on to give a demonstration on how not to mince words:

*'It is significant that when I raised issues about the M2 Upgrade in the context of a submission to the independent NSW Planning System Review my submission was rejected. I suggest*

*that this rejection meant that the Review did not want to accept the extent to which the Department of Planning had been compromised by Transurban. In separate correspondence with the Governance Director of Planning, I was assured that no corruption of process had occurred. But, as pointed out by Ian Temby QC, the first Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), corruption is covert. In the case of this project, the full extent of what happened has been hidden from public scrutiny.*

*'One needs to remember that this M2 Upgrade is a pernicious by-product of the Greiner-inspired privatisation of roads commonly known as Public Private Partnerships (PPPs). Last November I testified under oath before the Parliamentary Committee on Rail Costings that the cost benefit analyses used to justify the original M2 (initiated by Bruce Baird as Minister for Roads contrary to the findings of the Woodward Commission of Inquiry) and the M2 Upgrade were both fraudulent.*

*'The first analysis had been used to ensure that the road would have to be chosen rather than rail in the M2 corridor. The second analysis, an incompetent and dishonest Transurban product, was used to convince financial institutions that their financial risk assessment of the project was satisfactory.*

*'All these findings suggest a terminal disregard for integrity and honesty in government. The failure to implement a timely and realistic rail solution in the NW sector has caused serious implications for productivity loss in the Sydney region for which Greiner and his privatisation supporters must bear responsibility. The privatisation ideology which resulted in failed outcomes for major road projects must not be allowed to influence financing for critical rail projects such as the North West Rail Link (NWRL).'*

It certainly seems strange that over half a billion dollars is being spend on this congestion producing venture when money is so short for the various rail projects waiting in the queue.

You can see the entire Goldberg article at [http://www.monthlychronicle.com/files\\_fordl/MC\\_april2012.pdf](http://www.monthlychronicle.com/files_fordl/MC_april2012.pdf)

## Beverage Container Deposit Legislation

*South Australia and many countries, particularly in Europe, have been operating beverage container deposit schemes for many years: so why not in the rest of Australia?*

Australians consume drinks in almost 13 billion disposable containers a year. Only about 40% of these are recycled, mostly via local council kerbside collection services. In NSW less than 42% of bottles and cans sold are recycled. The rest ends up in landfill or litter.

One solution to the problem is a container deposit scheme (CDS). A national CDS is strongly supported by local councils and the general public. A national Newspoll taken in 2007 revealed that 82% of respondents were in favour of a CDS. The environment lobby group that is promoting the introduction of a scheme is the Boomerang Alliance (<http://www.boomerangalliance.org.au/>)

South Australia has had beverage container deposit legislation in operation since 1977. The Northern Territory introduced similar legislation this year. There is hope that a national CDS or at least a NSW scheme will be introduced in the foreseeable future.

The NSW Green's representative Cate Faehrmann presented a bill to the NSW Upper House in May this year for the introduction of a scheme in NSW. Independent MP Clover Moore will support the legislation in the lower house later this year.

State and federal environment ministers are due to consider a preferred option for a national scheme at a Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Standing Council on Environment and Water meeting on 24 August 2012.

### Proposed NSW CDS Operation

The scheme proposed by the NSW Greens would apply to all beverage containers (bottles and cans) including for alcohol, milk, juice, soft drinks and water. The label on the container would advise consumers that a 10 cents refund will be paid on the return of the container to a collection depot or reverse vending machine.

Collection depots would be established at shopping centres, car parks, service stations, schools, community centres and drive-through recycling centres. Reverse vending machines would be set up where containers are inserted and money is paid out. Councils would be able to redeem deposits on containers that they receive through kerbside collection systems.

Beverage producers would be required to establish a Scheme Coordinator that collects the deposits paid by consumers and develop

efficient facilities for the return of containers and payment of refunds. Producers would decide how much of the cost of paying refunds and administration they will pass on to purchasers of their beverages.

### Benefits of the Scheme

There are several benefits to be gained from a CDS:

- It is expected that a national scheme will increase the level of recycling from 40% to 80%.
- Increased recycling will reduce the use of raw materials, water and energy required in making new containers.
- Containers returned via a CDS are sorted at the collection point and are therefore less contaminated than containers from kerbside collection that are mixed with other containers and, in some collection systems, paper and cardboard.
- The Commonwealth led Regulatory Impact Statement into used packaging<sup>1</sup> modelled the impacts on existing recycling and shows significant savings in the areas of collection, transportation and sorting costs. Based on those estimates the Boomerang Alliance says local government in NSW will save an estimated \$66 million per annum (\$35.2m pa in collection & transport and \$31.4m pa in sorting fees) over the next 20 years if the state adopts a container scheme.
- Keep Australia Beautiful data indicates that 32% of the volume of litter comprises beverage containers. However in South Australia containers made up only 4 per cent of all litter. Therefore a CDS is likely to significantly reduce visual pollution and danger to wild life from litter. (See <http://www.kabc.wa.gov.au/litter-information/national-litter-index.html>)
- Charities and schools can raise money by offering collection services. In South Australia the Scouts earn over \$14 million per annum from participation in the CDS.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.scew.gov.au/strategic-priorities/publications.html#cris>

- Collection Centres can also collect other recyclable products and commonly discarded products that cause contamination in landfill sites such as batteries and e-waste.
- A 2001 study by the Institute for Sustainable Futures and UTS found that the estimated environmental cost of disposing of a container to landfill compared to recycling is 8-9 cents. The cost of recovering that container through recycling or a CDS is approximately 2-3 cents.

### Arguments against

Many beverage producers and the Food and Grocery Council claim that the cost of container deposit schemes is too great and this will have to be passed onto consumers. They point to the inconvenience of having to return the containers to the recycling centres.

They are promoting alternative schemes such as increased regulation or an advance disposal fee. Under this system Government excise is

imposed on industry to fund initiatives aimed at increasing packaging recovery and recycling, and reducing packaging litter.

The Australian Food and Grocery Council's (AFGC) Packaging Stewardship Forum, which includes the Australian Beverages Council, Australian National Retailers Association and the Packaging Council of Australia, has written an open letter to the Australian Government rejecting national container deposit scheme proposal.

A Regulatory Impact Statement prepared by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) found that the net cost of a national container deposit system would be between AU\$1.4 – AU\$1.76 billion over 25 years. This equates to less than one cent per beverage container used over this period.

### Boomerang Alliance Online Letter

If you would like to express your views on this important issue there is a link on the Boomerang Alliance website to an online letter to the Premier.

<http://www.boomerangalliance.org.au/component/content/article/38.html>

## Some Updates on the World's Climate with a Northern Hemisphere Focus

*STEP Committee Member Dr John Martyn provides a summary of a recent article in the New Scientist magazine about the weather extreme being experienced in the northern hemisphere this year. Next there is a piece from the Earth Policy Institute's Lester Brown explaining the critical consequences of this extreme weather for food supply. Finally there is data from the US National Snow and Ice Centre demonstrating the continuing effects of warming on Arctic sea ice. levels.*

### Driven to Extremes: is global warming driving our weather wild?

*New Scientist July 7<sup>th</sup> – summary by Dr John Martyn*

New Scientist could sometimes be accused of sensationalist headlines on its covers, but the enormous range of science-related topics inside invariably induces one to buy a copy. This week's cover was particularly catchy, featuring a cactus standing in a hot-looking red-sand desert, but plastered with snow.

Climate change is a frequent topic, and the article on p32 of the July 7th edition is timely given the recent weather extremes in parts of the Northern Hemisphere. Britain has experienced its wettest April on record, and the wettest June for more than 100 years. Across the Atlantic, record heatwave conditions persist, and may yet trigger another band of destructive thunderstorms like the recent ones that knocked the power out of millions of homes, and of course more forest fires.

Whether these and other extreme events are the result of climate change is a much

discussed topic, and is the main theme of the *New Scientist* article. When such effects have been predicted by climate scientists it has usually been for later on this century, however rapid warming in the Arctic region has had the effect of lessening the temperature contrasts between the tropics and North Polar regions. You might think that this would result in less violent weather; however it is this temperature contrast that ultimately drives the polar jet stream, the band of extremely strong high-altitude winds that flow along the boundary between polar and subtropical air masses. This has apparently been weakened, and also its tendency to form large, stagnant meanders and loops has increased.

The effect of stagnant jet stream loops has been to block the Northern Hemisphere weather systems from flowing eastwards. So whatever the current conditions might be, whether of intense cold or heat or excessive rain or drought, they are more likely than

previously to linger and persist; and while a few hot or wet days in a row are acceptable and normal, when the weather locks in for weeks at a time the results can be disastrous for human and animal health, and for farming, infrastructure and the environment.

How does this affect us down here? Well in Australia we are influenced by two jet streams: the polar front and the subtropical jet streams; however any regional temperature contrasts that might influence their activities will not have changed as much as in the Northern Hemisphere because the Antarctic has not

experienced the same degree of warming as the North Pole. And then there is the cushioning effect of the vast body of ocean to the south.

Yet we still have had our share of extreme weather in recent years, and while this has been linked to El Niño, La Niña and the Southern Oscillation, there are obvious grounds for discussion as to whether such extremes have been worsened by climate change. But it may still be decades before we really know for sure.

### **World in Serious Trouble on Food Front**

*This article is written by Lester R Brown, President of the Earth Policy Institute. [www.earth-policy.org](http://www.earth-policy.org)*

In the early spring of 2012, U.S. farmers were on their way to planting some 96 million acres in corn, the most in 75 years. A warm early spring got the crop off to a great start. Analysts were predicting the largest corn harvest on record.

The United States is the leading producer and exporter of corn, the world's feed grain. At home, corn accounts for four-fifths of the U.S. grain harvest. Internationally, the U.S. corn crop exceeds China's rice and wheat harvests combined. Among the big three grains - corn, wheat, and rice - corn is now the leader, with production well above that of wheat and nearly double that of rice.

The corn plant is as sensitive as it is productive. Thirsty and fast-growing, it is vulnerable to both extreme heat and drought. At elevated temperatures, the corn plant, which is normally so productive, goes into thermal shock.

As spring turned into summer, the thermometer began to rise across the Corn Belt. In St. Louis, Missouri, in the southern Corn Belt, the temperature in late June and early July climbed to 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher 10 days in a row. For the past several weeks, the Corn Belt has been blanketed with dehydrating heat. Weekly drought maps published by the University of Nebraska show the drought-stricken area spreading across more and more of the country until, by mid-July, it engulfed virtually the entire Corn Belt. Soil moisture readings in the Corn Belt are now among the lowest ever recorded.

While temperature, rainfall, and drought serve as indirect indicators of crop growing conditions, each week the U.S. Department of Agriculture releases a report on the actual state of the corn crop. This year the early reports were promising. On May 21st, 77 percent of the

U.S. corn crop was rated as good to excellent. The following week the share of the crop in this category dropped to 72 percent. Over the next eight weeks, it dropped to 26 percent, one of the lowest ratings on record. The other 74 percent is rated very poor to fair. And the crop is still deteriorating.

Over a span of weeks, we have seen how the more extreme weather events that come with climate change can affect food security. Since the beginning of June, corn prices have increased by nearly one half, reaching an all-time high on July 19th.

Although the world was hoping for a good U.S. harvest to replenish dangerously low grain stocks, this is no longer in the cards. World carryover stocks of grain will fall further at the end of this crop year, making the food situation even more precarious. Food prices, already elevated, will follow the price of corn upward, quite possibly to record highs.

Not only is the current food situation deteriorating, but so is the global food system itself. We saw early signs of the unravelling in 2008 following an abrupt doubling of world grain prices. As world food prices climbed, exporting countries began restricting grain exports to keep their domestic food prices down. In response, governments of importing countries panicked. Some of them turned to buying or leasing land in other countries on which to produce food for themselves. Welcome to the new geopolitics of food scarcity. As food supplies tighten, we are moving into a new food era, one in which it is every country for itself.

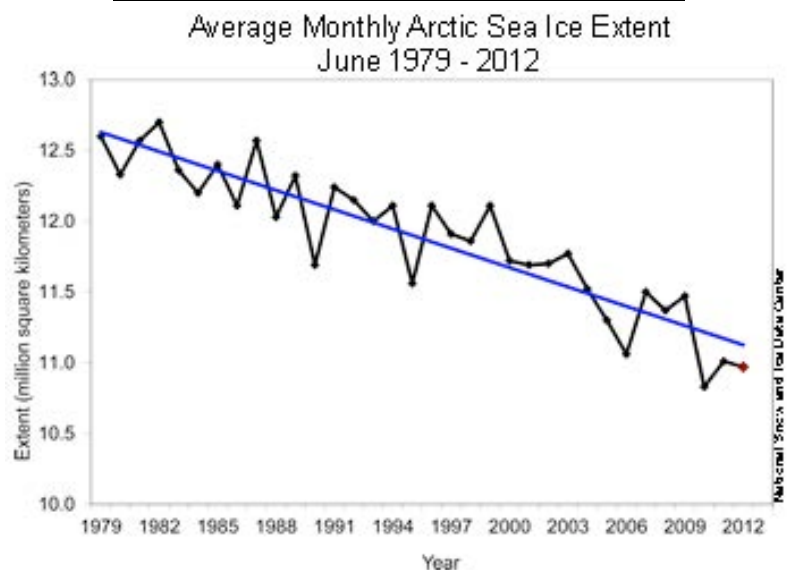
The world is in serious trouble on the food front. But there is little evidence that political leaders have yet grasped the magnitude of what is happening. The progress in reducing hunger in recent decades has been reversed. Unless we

move quickly to adopt new population, energy, and water policies, the goal of eradicating hunger will remain just that.

Time is running out. The world may be much closer to an unmanageable food shortage - replete with soaring food prices, spreading food unrest, and ultimately political instability - than most people realize.

## Changes in Arctic Sea Ice Extent

The National Snow and Ice Data Centre at the University of Colorado reports that the Arctic sea ice extent for June 2012 was well below the average for the month compared to the satellite record from 1979 to 2000. It was the second lowest in the satellite record, behind 2010. Through to 2012, the linear rate of decline for June Arctic ice extent over the satellite record is 3.7% per decade.



## Book Review – Teaching for Sustainability

By Jillian Cuppitt and Syd Smith published by Macmillan Teacher Resources

These days sustainability is one of the most abused words in the English language. It is often used to describe actions that will maintain the current level of resource use regardless of their long term impact on our society or environment. For example the federal government used the word “sustainable” to describe the population strategy that will continue growth in the long term regardless of the ability Australia’s ecosystems to support a higher population so long as there is planning for somewhere for all these people to live.

In the book “*Teaching for Sustainability*” sustainability is defined as “*making sure there is enough for all forever*”. Future decision makers need to know how to develop a genuinely sustainable world. Education is a vital part of the achievement of this goal.

The book has been written to support primary school teachers in the implementation of sustainability in the classroom as well as at the whole school level. The authors are Jillian Cuppitt, a sustainability educator who was awarded the Environmental Educator of the Year Award in 2006 by the Gould League. Syd Smith has 40 years experience as a teacher and led the team that developed the NSW

Environmental Education Policy for Schools and initiated the Sustainable Schools Program.

The book provides a general background on the concept of sustainability and then explores in detail the features and management of the major components of our environment; namely energy, water, waste and biodiversity.

The book is not just a science text. It provides a comprehensive description of the factors that need to be considered in managing the components from an environmental, economic and social point of view. It highlights the key areas of education that need to be employed in developing solutions such as communication, maths and geography.

Examples are provided of projects that the children can undertake to better understand the issues involved. An example is an audit of the waste generated by the school followed by a plan to minimise this waste.

The book is an invaluable guide for primary school teachers in such a broad subject that has opportunities for fascinating school projects.

## For Your Diary

### Walk: Excursion to Bar Island: 21 September 2012

Bar Island is an uninhabited island on the Hawkesbury River, rich in Aboriginal and European history. Access is by water ferry from Brooklyn.

The island is habitat for a diverse range of flora and fauna. The excursion will enter from the historical wharf site, observe the shell middens in the vicinity, walk to the remains of the St Johns Church site (built in 1876) and the cottage whose occupants were caretakers of the church and cemetery (over fifty of the area's workers and settlers lie buried on the island). Hornsby Council now manages the island and in 2008 received a Keep Australia Beautiful Award for heritage management for its work to conserve the natural, built and Aboriginal heritage of the island. At the conclusion of the trip lunch will be provided in Brooklyn. Cost: \$25 per person. Numbers are limited, please contact Barry Tomkinson at: [Barryt@bigpond.net.au](mailto:Barryt@bigpond.net.au) or on 9484 9934



### STEP Annual General Meeting – 9 October 2012 plus A debate between Epping Boys and Cheltenham Girls High Schools

**Proposed Topic:** “Hunting in National Parks: environmental vandalism or smart conservation”

7.45 pm – St Andrews Church Hall, corner Chisholm and Vernon Streets, Turramurra

### Second Annual STEP Lecture: 6 November 2012

8.00 pm – St Andrews Church Hall, corner Chisholm and Vernon Streets, Turramurra

STEP members are reminded that Prof Ian Lowe, President of the Australian Conservation Foundation, will present the second annual STEP Lecture in November 2012. Professor Ian Lowe AO has degrees in engineering and physics. He is currently emeritus professor of science, technology and society at Griffith University in Brisbane, an adjunct professor at Sunshine Coast University and Flinders University.



## STEP Membership and Order Form

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Membership (renewals are due on 1 July each year)	Unit price	Quantity	Cost
Single	1 year		\$20
	3 years (saving of \$8)		\$52
Family	1 year		\$25
	3 years (saving of \$13)		\$62
Life			\$250
<b>Publications</b>			
<b>Map of Walking Tracks of the Lane Cove Valley</b>			
STEP member	\$15		
Non-member	\$20		
<b>Map of Walking Tracks of Middle Harbour Valley and Northern Sydney Harbour Foreshore. Sheets 1 and 2 Bungaroo and Roseville Bridge</b>			
STEP member	\$15		
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<b>Map of Walking Tracks of Middle Harbour Valley and Northern Sydney Harbour Foreshore. Sheets 3 and 4 Northbridge and North Harbour</b>			
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<b>Sydney's Natural World (postage is \$10 per order - see below)</b>			
STEP member	\$35		
Non-member	\$45		
<b>Field Guide to the Bushland of the Lane Cove Valley (postage is \$10 per order - see below)</b>			
STEP member	\$35		
Non-member	\$45		
<b>Postage for Sydney's Natural World and Field Guide</b>	\$10		
<b>Donation</b> (donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible)			\$
<b>Total cost</b>			\$

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Cheque — send this completed form and a cheque payable to Step Inc to PO Box 5136, Turrumurra, NSW 2074; or

Electronic banking — transfer payment electronically into our Bendigo account (BSB: 633 000, account number 138687991) **and you must also email this completed form** to [secretary@step.org.au](mailto:secretary@step.org.au) or mail it to PO Box 5136, Turrumurra 2074 so that we know who has made payment and where to send the goods.

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## STEP Information

**Committee for 2012:** President: Jill Green. Vice President: Barry Tomkinson. Secretary: Helen Wortham. Treasurer: Stephen Procter. Committee: Anita Andrew, John Burke, Andrew Little, Tim Gastineau Hills, John Martyn, Robin Buchanan, Don Davidson.

**STEP Matters:** The editor of STEP Matters for this edition is Jill Green, who is responsible for all information and articles unless otherwise specifically credited. The STEP Committee may not necessarily agree with all opinions carried in this newsletter, but we do welcome feedback and comments from our readers, be they STEP members or not.

**Feedback:** Send complaints, praise, comments or letters to [secretary@step.org.au](mailto:secretary@step.org.au). Please feel free to share you copy of the newsletter with friends, neighbours and business colleagues.

**Note:** All editions of STEP Matters can be viewed on line, usually with full colour illustrations.

**New members:** New members are always welcome to join STEP and to make themselves available for the Committee should they wish to do so. The effectiveness of STEP is a factor of the numbers of members we have, so please encourage your like-minded friends and neighbours to join. See page



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