

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



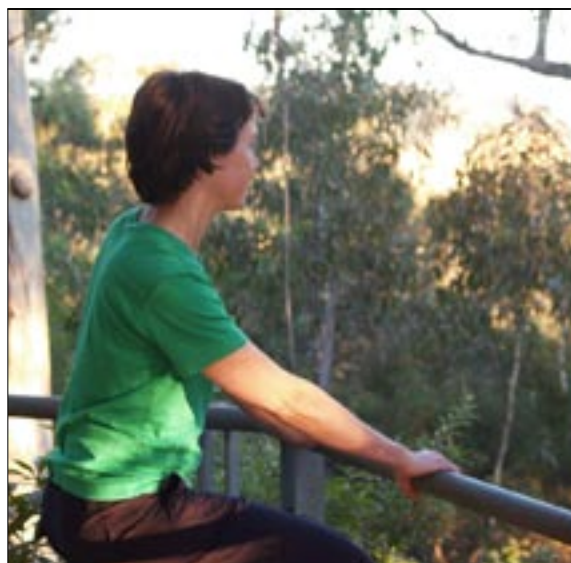
From the President ...

As I wander through the bush, I am constantly amazed by the diverse shades of yellow produced by wattles. Reflecting upon their beauty, I feel lucky to live on the edge of a National Park. It is therefore not surprising that I see the primary purpose of National Parks as places for nature to be protected; while also being places for people to feel uplifted. They are not simply recreational venues!

This *Hut News* contains a lot of information about the NSW Government's examination of tourism and National Parks. This follows the 'National Parks are not for Sale' flyer sent out in the last *Hut News*, and the July Monthly Meeting on the topic.

We believe that encouraging sustainable visitation to our Parks is a good thing which benefits the economy of towns such as Katoomba. However, we are concerned that certain types of tourism proposals, such as eco-resorts inside National Parks, will be detrimental to nature conservation and to local towns.

Thanks to everyone who has already made a submission to the *Taskforce on Tourism and National Parks*. There is still time for you to do so, as the



submission date has been extended to 29 August. All NSW major environment groups, Nature Conservation Council, The Wilderness Society, Colong Foundation for Wilderness, Total Environment Centre, National Parks Association and ourselves are working on a very detailed submission to the Taskforce. The Taskforce will report back towards the end of the year. This looks like being a long-running campaign which will involve us for at least six months.

Now we also need people to support the motion passed at our July Members' Meeting. The wording is clearly set out for you on page 3 of this edition.

And please, you must plan to attend the *Meeting the Decision Makers* Public Meeting on 22 August advertised below. This is our opportunity to have our say on what should, and should not, happen in National Parks and Wilderness Areas. Sally Barnes, the Head of the NSW Parks Service, will speak and we have also invited Phil Koperberg, our local member.

It would be wonderful if you could take a moment to think about what visiting a National Park should be like in a hundred years from now... and come and join in the conversation.

Tara Cameron

Meeting the Decision Makers

in our fight against

Tourism and Development in National Parks and Wilderness

SPEAKER: Sally Barnes, Head of NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

OTHER SPEAKERS:

Ian Brown of the National Parks Association
Keith Muir, Executive Director, Colong Foundation

ALSO INVITED:

Phil Koperberg, State Member for the Blue Mountains

Come along. Be involved in deciding the future of our National Parks and Wilderness Areas.

**PUBLIC MEETING 7.30pm
FRIDAY 22 August, 2008**

Conservation Hut, Fletcher Street
(far west end) Wentworth Falls

Note that this is NOT our regular Monthly Meeting. That will take place as usual on the last Friday of the month, 29 August.

See page 5 for details

CLARIFICATION: The advertised Monthly Meeting, Promoting the Blue Mountains, set down for Friday 25 July 2008 and featuring the Executive Officer of Blue Mountains Tourism, Kerry Fryer, had to be deferred to a future date due to the indisposition of the speaker. In lieu, the Committee conducted a public forum on the vital issue of SAVING OUR NATIONAL PARKS, and this is reviewed on Page 5 of this edition of *Hut News*.

HUT NEWS

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Letter of the Month – August 2008

Our regular request to members
for campaign action by letter writing

by Robin Mosman & Rosemary Lathouris

LET'S GET GOING WITH GARNAUT!

The Australian Government's Green Paper response to Professor Ross Garnaut's "courageous" report on climate change is the first sign of real commitment to positive action since Australia ratified the Kyoto in 2007.

Over the next six months, the Government will formulate the details of its response in a White Paper.

Australian citizens can help shape this debate, and balance the pressure from the Opposition and powerful vested interests to water down and delay action.

Politicians need to hear the voices of ordinary people on this issue.

Social researcher Hugh Mackay said recently, *The thing that caused people to get re-engaged with politics in Australia was the issue of climate change ... (the Government) don't seem to have realised just how ready the community has been to accept that there's a crisis which is going to need serious action.*

ABC 7.30 Report July 08

The Treasurer Wayne Swan has said, *We want to have a very mature conversation with the Australian people about this because big economic reforms like this are not cost-free.*

The Sydney Morning Herald, 21 July 08

The Government will be looking closely at the level of community support or opposition to these broad policy directions. Politically they are in a very difficult situation as a result of the Coalition's total inaction over the past eleven years, with drastic economic action now needed, and an election scheduled to occur at the same time as the scheme will be implemented.

Let us give them the courage to make the hard decisions necessary.

Send a message to Senator The Hon. Penny Wong, Minister for Climate Change and Water, and to the Prime Minister making some or all of these points:

- Start by saying a little about how climate change will affect you in your local area – eg. heat waves, bushfires, drought, more frequent and severe storms.
- Congratulate the Australian Government for adopting the recommendation of the Garnaut Report for a carbon pollution reduction scheme to start in 2010.
- Urge that strong interim targets for reducing greenhouse pollution also be adopted.
- Express disappointment that Professor Garnaut's recommendation not to compensate coal-fired power generators has been ignored.
- Say that investment in large-scale renewable energy should be a priority, with a strong Mandatory Renewable Energy Target for 2010.
- Suggest that money raised from the scheme should be used to assist low-income Australians to invest in energy efficiency, rather than tax cuts and increased benefits.

Contact Details: Post to Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600, or email:

Senator The Hon Penny Wong:

www.aph.gov.au/Senate/senators/homepages/contact.asp?id=00AOU

The Prime Minister, The Hon Kevin Rudd:

www.pm.gov.au/contact/index.cfm?p=3

(This is the only way you can send emails to them)

You can make a submission on the Green Paper from
<http://www.climatechange.gov.au/greenpaper/consultation/index.html>

Submissions are due on or by 10 September 2008.

Submissions can be simply forwarded to:

Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme Green Paper Submission

Department of Climate Change

GPO Box 854, Canberra ACT 2601

Or email: emissionstrading@climatechange.gov.au

Another good way to help our Government to understand the importance of this issue, is by writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Politicians closely monitor newspapers and online blogs.



SAVING OUR NATIONAL PARKS

ACT NOW – Help us Protect our National Parks and Wilderness Areas

Please write, ring or email the people listed below and write a letter or simply state that you **ENDORSE** the following motion passed unanimously at our July Monthly Meeting:

“Noting the serious threat posed by proposed amendments to the Wilderness Act and the National Parks and Wildlife Act by sections of the tourism industry and Government, this meeting calls on the Minister for the Environment Verity Firth not to deviate from the following principles:

- Nature conservation will remain the primary function of National Parks and Wilderness Areas;
- The cost of visiting these precious areas will be kept small, so that parks remain accessible to everyone as the most democratic spaces we have, free of elite commercial precincts;
- No new buildings for accommodation shall be constructed in national parks, and the NPWS will continue to protect our parks from development, except for appropriately located walking tracks, car parks, toilets and basic camping facilities, and for some suitable parks, a visitor centre;
- Plans of management continue to regulate the ecologically appropriate use of national parks through open and transparent community participation processes, with no fast track or other special park laws for the tourism industry;
- Wilderness areas remain undisturbed and free of all infrastructure, commercial uses and large numbers of people, where natural processes can thrive and visitors can renew their spirit.”

Mr Phil Koperberg, Shop 3,107-109 Macquarie Road, SPRINGWOOD NSW 2777
bluemountains@parliament.nsw.gov.au 4751 3298

Ms Verity Firth,
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office@firth.minister.nsw.gov.au 9228 4130

The Premier Morris Iemma,
Level 40 Governor Macquarie Tower, 1 Farrer Place, SYDNEY NSW 2000
thepremier@www.nsw.gov.au, 9228 5239

Mr Bob Debus, PO Box 376 Springwood NSW 2777,
Bob.Debus.MP@aph.gov.au, 4751 6344



And please come to the *Meeting the Decision Makers* event on 22 August



The Gentrification of National Parks?

Are our national parks in need of a face-lift to attract the tourist dollar? Should our wild places be better at catering for those wanting some luxury and pampering?

If you talk to some in the tourist industry, they would strongly agree. And the NSW Government right now is blithely playing along with this.

Brand 'National Park' is the ultimate advertisement for the modern-day resort owner. What better edge on the competitors to claim your five-star lodge is in the heart of Wollemi National Park and its mysterious wilderness?

We don't need to pawn off our crown jewels. Brand National Park belongs to all of us, not those who can afford it, or have the right political connections to lever their snug cabins with soft downy pillows and beds deep inside the park boundaries.

The NSW Government says it wants to see more people visiting our national parks and other public parks and reserves. They are aiming for a 20% increase over the next ten years in fact. That is an admirable goal, and it is highly achievable.

Yet the tourism industry is not interested in plain numbers. Not mum and dad and the family having a fun walk or a picnic in a national park. No, they are interested in development prospects.

Strangely the NSW Government has started to adopt many of the industry positions.

On the table are a number of ideas to white ant the very laws that have to date largely kept the national parks unspoilt by crass development.

There is a plan to write 'tourism' into national park legislation. At present 'visitation' is there in the legislation as a legitimate purpose. But that isn't enough. It doesn't allow enough of the trappings of tourism – the hotels and chalets, the bars, the trinket shops, spas and saunas, the golf courses and swimming pools and cinemas – to get past first base. Of course the Kosciuszko ski resorts are the exception, where this has already come to pass. Let's hope that this park remains the only exception.

Tourism does not belong in national parks. National parks are only part of the tourism experience. When you visit a park, when you absorb yourself in nature, when you learn something about the complex ecology you are passing through, or get the thrill from climbing a peak, you experience national parks at their best. National parks offer a special tourist experience – but not the full range of tourist experiences. The extra bits of a tourist's time in an area – the accommodation, the fun parks, evening entertainment, restaurants and take-away joints – they all belong in the neighbouring towns.

This is where they will generate the most jobs, have the lowest environmental impacts, and best spread the benefits.

Strangely, using national parks to generate jobs in regional towns has dropped off the Government agenda. The Transport and Tourism Forum, the industry lobby group leading the assault on parks, is interested in accommodation in parks, not outside them. It's the niche tourism of luxury resorts and cabins in national parks that seems to be their priority.

Then there is the plan to fast-track new developments in national parks. We need to give developers certainty! We need to

attract investors and give them the red carpet treatment! Until now national parks legislation acts as a foil to the notorious 'Part 3A' fast-track assessment process in NSW. A development cannot be permitted unless it is allowed for in a plan of management, and to add it would require at least three months public consultation, as well as a test of suitability. These safeguards in the national parks legislation that are now under threat are there for good reason. They place limits on the developments in parks and allow the public time to consider the new plans. This is proper and just.

The experience local conservationists had with a new luxury resort near Lithgow on the edge of Wollemi National Park was a sobering demonstration of effective park laws in action. The proposal was the sort of development that works well outside national parks. It was sited in a farmland valley, hemmed in on three sides by the stunning cliffs and bushland of the national park.

The developer, Emirates, chose to work with local conservationists. It began well. However, as the development moved rapidly through the Part 3A development process, the resort was moved just inside the national park. Details were scarce as a 'concept plan' was all that was on the table and trust with the community began to plummet. Clearly the resort was incompatible with the park. Plans for a feral-proof fence to create a wildlife sanctuary to reintroduce endangered marsupials in the valley and the national park had not been subject to proper scrutiny. It was only when the limits imposed by the national parks legislation kicked in that Emirates saw the need to work with the community.

The Emirates opened up to the community the normally secretive lease negotiation process taking place with Government. A number of commitments were made to improve the effectiveness of the wildlife sanctuary, improve public consultation and guarantee access to some of the park's attractions that may have been blocked. Until this point, the Government had dismissed these issues in the rush to offer approval.

The Emirates example, if approved without the involvement of the community, offered a chance to see the types of developments we could come to expect deep within the boundaries of our national parks. Take away the laws that protect national parks, and those with more money and mates will get their way. The public will be excluded. We will have handed over our national parks to the dollar.

By all means, let's encourage more people to visit our national parks. Not only is it good for our health, our sanity and our understanding of our place in the natural world, it will help the parks. How can the next generation of people understand what is worth protecting if they have not seen it?

If our children go into a national park and see less of nature and more of the trappings of our urban life, we will have lost something that is priceless.

Let's not allow our national parks to become gentrified. For then they will no longer be national parks.



A further defence of National Parks.

This is a reprint, by permission, of an article by Andrew Cox, Executive Director of the National Parks Association of NSW, this year celebrating its 50th Anniversary. From www.realdirt.com.au

SAVING OUR NATIONAL PARKS the prelude to our vital campaign

Keeping commercial tourist facilities out of National Parks and in National Parks Service Towns might seem to be a 'greenie' issue of interest only to wilderness romantics until we consider how vulnerable the National Parks eco-systems are and how vital to the everyday well-being of agriculture, gardens and waterways they are. That was the consensus of the meeting on **Saving our National Parks** in a packed Conservation Hut.

The Meeting took the shape of a forum, moderated by **David Brazil**, with a panel of three guest speakers joined by **President Tara Cameron** and National Parks Officer, **Brian Marshall**.

"Does nature have intrinsic value?" **Dr Haydn Washington, of the Colo Committee**, one of the speakers asked. "Or is it to be considered just a resource?"

Dr Washington believes that nature should be seen as self willed and not there just for humans. If humans are to survive, it must remain so.

"I don't believe in the idea of Eco-Tourism," said Dr Washington. "It involves selling nature, obliging nature to pay for itself."

Ian Brown of the National Parks Association told of the history of National Parks, beginning in the United States with Yellowstone and followed soon after by the Royal in New South Wales. For many years, the Royal was regarded only as a beauty spot until Miles Dunphy, an historian, began a great chapter in Australian History by leading a movement that led to legislation in 1967 that established National Parks in the Blue Mountains and throughout NSW. National Parks now comprise 5.96 million hectares in NSW, some 8.3% of the land area of the State.

"The NSW National Parks are a great achievement of the NSW Community," said Ian. "They came from the efforts of community activists and have been sustained by them."

Ian then highlighted, with concern, the change in administration priorities inside the National Parks Office. "Conservation has had primacy," said Ian. "The wilderness was to be preserved

to provide opportunities for people to enjoy solitude, relaxed recreation and spiritual renewal. Now, tourist promotion is one of four branches inside the National Parks Office but there is no wilderness unit. Only one person works on wilderness matters for the National Parks Office."



Keith Muir, Executive Officer of the Colong Foundation followed on to report on the activities and influence of the Tourism and Transport Forum, a lobby group that seems to be getting its way for the moment, with commercial tourism becoming the means by which National Parks pay for their right to exist.

"The Blue Mountains National Park had three million visits in 2005," said Keith. "The National Parks across NSW attracted 22 million visits. They are already very successful as they stand. We can all support the NSW Government's objective to increase visits by 20% by 2016 but not by allowing commercial tourist facilities inside National Parks. The golden goose will be killed by commercial business planning and profit requirements." **David Hall**

Tara, Ian Brown, Haydn Washington, Brian, and Keith Muir

Monitoring changes in Upland Swamps: The roles of fire and rain

A presentation by **DAVID KEITH** together with the
Blue Mountains City Council's Environmental Trust 'Save our Swamps' Project

David Keith is a Senior Principal Research Scientist with the Department of the Environment and Climate Change and the award-winning author of *Ocean Shores to Desert Dunes*.

His research over 20 years has addressed a wide range of ecological issues relevant to the conservation of biodiversity, studies of patterns and processes that influence rainforests, eucalypt forests and woodlands, heathlands, wetlands and deserts.

David has also been studying upland swamp vegetation in the Sydney Basin. His research has revealed a unique perspective on how upland swamps and their component species change over time in response to fires and climatic variation and the implications for the sustainable management of Blue Mountains Swamp Systems.

BMCS MONTHLY MEETING 7.30pm FRIDAY 29 August, 2008

Conservation Hut, Fletcher Street (far west end) Wentworth Falls

WATER VIEWS from Brian Marshall The Claytons approach to voter contentment

The Murray Basin, through the over-allocation of surface water and groundwater for irrigation at a time of protracted drought (perhaps expressing climate change), remains a totally unresolved basket case; but let's not talk about that!

East of the Divide, Sydney's water supply, with total available storage in the dams at about 66%, has been granted some breathing space. So our ever-caring Government has relaxed water restrictions for the Sydney metropolitan region. Yes, you may now wash your car using a trigger hose, although (thankfully!) the rest of the Level 3 restrictions remain.

Concurrently, the portion of the Sydney Metropolitan Water Plan that entailed exploitation of groundwater through bore fields at Kangaloon, Leonay and Wallacia has been placed on hold. (See *July Hut News page 5*). Nevertheless, aspects of the Kangaloon and Leonay developments will continue, thereby increasing the waste of public money.

What is behind these changes? The answer surely lies in the construction and operating costs of desalination and the concomitantly increasing costs of water. Even the Iemma Government realises that voters need a mild palliative to stomach the rapidly increasing water costs accompanying commitments to desalination. **So toss the voters a couple of bones.**

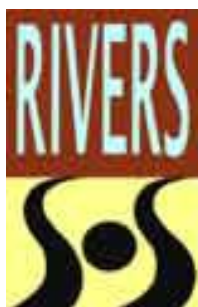
1. Ease water restrictions because households have responded handsomely over the past five years – yet the concession is negligible, verges on being an insult to the intelligence, and most certainly disregards the psychological impact that inevitably stems from any easing of restrictions. BMCS strongly believes that the original Level 3 restrictions should have become permanent. Climate change and the accompanying uncertainty of rainfall patterns demand a conservative approach to water usage. Any erosion of the available storage cushion through easing restrictions and undermining householders' hard-won lessons negates the precautionary principle.



2. Place the development of bore fields on hold because, as a component of the Sydney Metropolitan Water Plan, they are rendered redundant by available storage at its current level, various recycling projects, and the size of the commissioned desalination plant. Furthermore, the Government was increasingly embarrassed by the strong and sustained opposition to the Kangaloon bore field and would certainly be aware that similar campaigns would be mounted against the Leonay and Wallacia bore fields. BMCS has strongly opposed the exploitation of groundwater in these three regions on environmental grounds. Having placed the bore fields on hold, the Government would be well advised to quietly forget them!

Having considered and digested the bones, one can't help wondering whether our 'insightful' Government would prefer dam levels to fall and householders to be more profligate in order to justify the ongoing costs of an expensive desalination plant and its energy-intensive high-cost product.

**Ah NSW! The State of Incompetence!
Hopeless one day; worse the next.**



Georges River now cracked by Longwall Mining

The Society has provided extensive coverage of the Rivers SOS Campaign to stop longwall mining encroaching nearer than 1km to our streams and rivers. Clearly there is still a long way to go as this first-hand report from Caroline shows:

“On 25 June, Denis Wilson of the *Save Water Alliance* and I inspected the Upper Georges River near Appin for damage caused by BHP Billiton's latest longwall mines, which were allowed to go right up to the river bank.

“The photo illustrates the cracking which we discovered. Mining is continuing along the river.

“We want to alert the people of NSW to the ongoing and irreparable damage being done to our rivers, creeks, wetlands and aquifers by mining, largely thanks to approvals handed to the mining companies by the Iemma Government.”

Consoc members who have not yet seen the *Rivers of Shame 2* video are encouraged to contact the Editor of *Hut News* for a copy for home viewing. **RW**



The appalling outcome of longwall mining adjacent to the river

*Denis Wilson, Save Water Alliance 4885 2725
Caroline Graham, Public Liaison Officer, Rivers SOS 4630 9421*

Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa

Emirates have issued the winter edition of their *Conservation Matters* newsletter. The only comment on construction progress by Hansen Yuncken is that after nine months it is going well. Much of the issue is simply devoted to wildlife sightings and photos of the same. They report action taken to target wild dogs, European Foxes and feral cats. Reference is made to the planting of “many thousands of trees along our planned wildlife corridors to link the Wollemi Wilderness area on our southern boundary to the Gardens of Stone National Park on our northern boundary and allow wildlife to safely cross the valley floor which was cleared many years ago for farming & grazing.” David Noble is assisting in the establishment of an “insurance” grove of some 150 Wollemi pines on the property, the first 18 being planted on 18 July. Australian Ecosystems Foundation volunteers have been rehabilitating the western end of the property and the riparian zone along the Wolgan River.

Phulbari Follow-up

In a follow-up to its support of the Aid-watch Campaign against the Phulbari Coal Mine in Bangladesh (fully reported in June *Hut News*) Consoc has endorsed an Aid-Watch open letter to investors, potential investors and bankers for the management group, Global Coal Management Resources, warning in specifics that they may be associated with numerous human rights violations and the risk of future abuses if project development continues.

Making Ourselves Heard

Committee-man **David Brazil** is not only an unobtrusive and knowledgeable moderator at a variety of our Monthly Members Meetings, he is also the technocrat behind the electronic presentation equipment we use. For some time David has been dutifully supplying hardware from his own business. But that is about to change – Consoc has purchased new sound equipment to David’s recommendation. Come along to the next meeting: David promises that our conservation message will become even louder and clearer!

Making Ourselves Seen

Our Webmaster, **David Bowskill**, has built a most attractive BMCS website. The home page is very accessible, not frustratingly secretive like some, and the navigation is most direct. Importantly David seeks to keep it up to date – very often he manages to scoop *Hut News* with breaking

Letters to the Editor (Short)
Always Welcome

stories! You can of course view a colour screen version of this *Hut News* with the photos and some graphics **in colour**: and with a bit of a dance with Adobe Acrobat, pull out a photo of your choice! *Strobos* is also there...

So go surf: www.bluemountains.org.au

A win in Penrith

The 181-hectare former Air Services Australia site at Cranebrook, near Penrith, is home to several endangered species of flora and fauna and areas of Aboriginal significance, but the Federal Government sold the site to the property developer IFC Capital in 2004. Western Sydney Conservation Alliance and locals from Cranebrook have opposed development and sought assistance by way of advocacy from Consoc members. Local, Geoff Brown, reports that on 4 August last Penrith Council did the right thing and resolved not to allow development. They intend to rezone the entire site to E2 Environmental Conservation, pursue the NSW Government to acquire the site for nature conservation, approach the NSW Scientific Committee to explore stronger classifications of some of the site’s rare species and pursue the developer to better manage the site until it decides to sell. Geoff says it is now up to the NSW Government to deliver a new national park for Western Sydney!



Geoff Brown now not so downcast!

CCS Setting the To(t)nes

Helen Deane, our Climate Change and Sustainability Officer, reports that a steering committee meeting in Katoomba plans to create the first Blue Mountains Transition town encompassing Wentworth Falls, Leura and Katoomba using the Totnes Transition Initiative model in the UK. **Transition Town Totnes (TTT)** is the UK’s first Transition Initiative, that is, a community in a process of imagining and creating a future that addresses the twin challenges of diminishing oil and gas supplies and climate change, and creates the kind of community that we would all want

to be part of. Totnes believes that only by involving all of us – residents, businesses, public bodies, community organisations and schools – will we come up with the most innovative, effective and practical ideas, and have the energy and skills to carry them out. Our future has the potential to be more rewarding, abundant and enjoyable than today, and by working together we can unleash the collective enthusiasm and genius of our community to make this transition. Find more details at

<http://totnes.transitionnetwork.org/>

Victoria Pass & River Lett Hill

See Brian Marshal’s article on page 6.

Meeting with the BMCC

Members of the Groundwater, Land Use and Education sub-committees met with the General Manager, Phil Pinyon, and other staff of BMCC on 24 July. Issues discussed related to enforcement and compliance, the *Living near the Bush* booklet and the LEP 1991 Review.

BMCC has to ‘fit’ LEP 2005, LEP 4 and LEP 1991 into one citywide LEP by 2011 (this is the Standard template introduced by the State Government). **Tara would particularly like to hear from anyone who knows of high conservation land covered by LEP 1991 that should be zoned Environmental Protection under the new LEP. This may be land currently categorised as ‘environmental constraint area’ but not EP.** Please contact Tara on 4751 1130.

Gardens of Stone Stage 2

Ian Brown has agreed to do a report on the GoS2 area in respect to tourism benefits. He has been asked to:

1. Investigate the potential for appropriate recreational use of GoS2.
2. Develop a draft recreation plan.
3. Assess the potential economic benefits of the draft recreation plan for GoS2.

Springwood Town Centre

Tara spoke at the **Save our Springwood** community meeting on Monday June 30. The SOS committee have since requested a meeting with her to answer questions about the environmental impact.

Canyon Colliery

Further action has involved correspondence with political figures Peter Garrett, Verity Firth and Ian Macdonald regarding the cleaning up of the surface of Canyon Colliery and an approach to solving or reducing the Zinc contamination in the Grose River.

Drink Tap Water Campaign

See the article on page 9.

Consoc Meetings with some Key Political Figures

Tara Cameron, President, John Haydon, Vice-President and David Hall, Publicity Officer, met with State Opposition Leader, **Barry O'Farrell**, in his office in NSW Parliament House on 30 July to discuss the Planning Legislation, the North West Subregional Strategy, the Rivers SOS Alliance, Public Lands Rationalisation, Tourism in National Parks and the Gardens of Stone Stage 2 proposal.

Mr O'Farrell confirmed that the Coalition opposes the centralising of development approval powers in Macquarie St. He referred to the Planning Minister's current arbitrary powers being like the 'Finger of God' nominating projects at will to be major projects and beyond Local Government review. He agreed that one size does not fit all: Local Environment Plans should be the guide and all planning decisions governed by objective criteria. He also made a particular point of declaring that unfunded mandates would not happen under a NSW Coalition Government.

Tara had called by the Colong Foundation Offices before the meeting to get a copy of the Gardens of Stone Stage 2 Proposal and Mr O'Farrell seemed to very interested to receive it. He was very well informed on environmental matters and on the condition of the National Park near his electorate. Pru Goward will be Environment Minister and Brad Hazzard, Planning Minister if the Coalition wins government. BMCS will be seeking meetings with both.

The same list of matters was discussed with Greens leader, **Lee Rhiannon**, in her office in NSW Parliament House. She was very supportive of the BMCS positions on these issues and went on to report on the Greens talks with the NSW Farmers Association and the emerging alliance with rural activists. These rural activists have particular concerns with gold mining on a number of levels, one being that gold mining gets access to water before farmers do. The Greens are also concerned with the coal exploration rights awarded to BHP Billiton and Chinese Corporate interests in western NSW.



Lee suggested we contact Sylvia Hale MLC to talk about Local Government issues and Ian Cohen MLC about anything to do with National Parks. BMCS will be seeking meetings with both.

Lee also advised that the Estimates Hearings in October provide an opportunity for Members of Parliament to question Ministers in Committee. She would be interested to receive proposals to form the basis for questions at the Hearings.

BMCS Members are invited to submit researched and credible matters to the Management Committee to be put to Ministers during those Hearings.

David Hall



A meeting with Bob Debus

A Management Committee delegation of Tara, John Haydon and Brian Marshall met with the Minister on 7 July. Tara advises that the following matters were discussed:

1. Commitments of the Federal Government for funding the GBMWA – particularly in-holdings and weed and feral fauna eradication.

2. National Ban needed on the Sale of all Weeds which are listed as 'Weeds of National Significance' or listed as a 'key threatening process' for any listed threatened species.

3. Bells Line of Road Expressway proposal, Mt Vic by-pass, and Federal funding; also the implications of the Federal infrastructure studies for major rail/highway corridors from Melbourne through Dubbo to Brisbane, and Sydney to Dubbo.

4. Federal policy on thin plastic bags and deposits on PET bottles.

5. Concessions that favour 4wd vehicles; the taxation treatment of company vehicles and leasing; the funding

of infrastructure that encourages trucking transport; the disproportionate cost of diesel fuel and the need to have a system whereby registration and insurance costs are exponentially progressive and reflect a combination of weight/size/fuel consumption.

6. Federal policy on Global Greenhouse Emissions – the need to implement Garnaut's findings and not succumb to short-term politics – e.g. easing the price of petrol by reducing excise, over-funding clean coal at the expense of comparable funding for renewables. This is the time for the Government to hold true to its stated concerns about GGE and climate change.

7. The role of commercial exploitation of National Parks and the WHA in particular.

8. Population: At Bob's request, Brian later provided him with a paper focusing on the 'carrying capacity' of Australia and incentives which now encourage population growth. The Society appreciates that pursuing many of the matters influencing population is fraught with political pitfalls. Nevertheless, the most pressing need of the present time is to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions, with Australia setting an unselfish example and reducing its own emissions. An important component of this involves acknowledging the limitations of Australia's carrying capacity and removing strategies that actively encourage population growth.

Eau, Eau, Eau, What a Lovely War!

On a recent visit to France I was struck by the fact that the bad boy *Badoit* and panting *Perrier* bottled water, either gaz or non, was less in evidence in restaurant tables or on my daughter's dining table.

For the world's bottled water capital this was surprising. And then I read (in *The Guardian*, I have to say) that France is turning its back on *eau minérale* in favour of tap water, and for the first time I was offered some. Two thirds of French people now regularly drink tap water, compared with 59% five years ago, and the big brand bottlers are gasping for breath with sales down 6.7% last year. The causes relate no doubt to increases in cost and to green awareness, but could the answer lie in the fact that folk have suddenly found that they just can't taste the difference?

Such an hypothesis is one of the bases of the successful *Consoc Drink Tap Water Campaign*, and in an experiment to test it, **Ian Ernst**, with his wife, **Sue**, arrived on 21 June among the throng at Winter Magic Festival, Katoomba 2008. **Here is his report:**

In a double-blind experiment, neither the individuals nor the researchers know who belongs to the control group and the experimental group. Only after all the data has been recorded (and in some cases, analyzed) do the researchers learn which individuals are which. Performing an experiment in double-blind fashion is a way to lessen the influence of the prejudices and unintentional physical cues on the results.

A double-blind test was conducted at the BMCS stall at Winter Magic. Volunteers were asked to taste two water samples, M & Q. They were told one was tap water and the other bottled spring water. They were then asked to indicate if they preferred the taste of M or Q, or couldn't taste a difference. If they expressed a preference, they were asked how much more they preferred that sample to the other.

RESULTS

154 people took the taste test. The raw results were:

Prefer Sample M (tap water)	40	
Can't taste difference	42	
	82	53.24%
Prefer Sample Q (spring water)	72	46.75%

Although the sample was small the results are generally in agreement with surveys conducted by *Choice* magazine among others.



Sue and Ian Ernst (top right) conducting the experiment. While it is tempting to say that this massive crowd was gathered at the water test booth, we have to confess that most were leaving after the parade.

Of the 154 tested, 12 people (7.8% of those tested) expressed a preference for their choice 'greater than 500 times better' than the other.

For these 12 the raw results were:

Prefer sample M (tap) >500	7	(58.33%)
Prefer sample Q (spring) >500	5	(41.66%)

The difference is not statistically significant, but it would seem that of those expressing strong taste preferences, about as many preferred tap water as preferred spring water.

A further 16 people (10.38% of those tested) expressed a preference 'greater than 100 times better but less than 500 times better' for their choice.

The raw results were:

Prefer sample M (tap) >100, <500	5	(31.25%)
Prefer sample Q (spring) >100, < 500	11	(68.75%)

However, since tap water costs 0.128 cents per litre and bottled water typically costs \$1.00 to \$2.50 per litre i.e. bottled water is from 780 times to 1900 times more expensive than tap water, is it rational to buy spring water if one thinks it only tastes 100 times better, or even if one thinks it tastes 500 times better?

And that is without taking into account the impact of greenhouse gas emissions from bottle manufacture, from bottle distribution, or the environmental costs associated with bottle disposal. Nor does it take into account the depletion of groundwater, and in some cases the threat to endangered species dependant on groundwater."

Thanks, Ian. Drink Tap Water Campaign – continue la Guerre!

Ron Withington and Ian Ernst

A Mini-Editorial

The Management Committee is aware that in this somewhat enlarged edition of *Hut News*, you, the Consoc Member, has been urged to communicate, either by email or letter, with a swag of political decision makers (or decision breakers!)

We have reminded you, if you have not done so, that there is time to make that submission to the *Taskforce on Tourism and National Parks* (p.1). We have asked you to write to two people in support of Garnaut (p.2), to write to four individuals in support of the Members Motion on protecting National Parks (p3), and we have asked you to let the RTA know that we want Newnes Plateau protected (p.10). And as well as that we have effectively asked that you gossip our tap water findings (p.9) and keep an eye on our rivers for signs of mining destruction (p6).

Some members may think we are over the top! But Committee can make no apology for seeking to impose this workload. The Committee is charged by you with creating awareness of issues and supplying some ammunition to tackle them. But our final effectiveness as a Society truly depends on the sheer volume of static you can collectively create among government institutions by way of informed and persistent letters and emails.

OK, choose your targets please and get firing!

Ron Withington

THE MT VIC – R2. LETT HILL BYPASS DEBATE

— *The ongoing fight to save Newnes Plateau & keep GoS2 alive* —

The last *Hut News* (p5) noted the community consultation process for the bypass. At various meetings in Mt Victoria, Hartley, Hartley Vale and Lithgow, the RTA emphasised that no specific route had been chosen, but the meetings naturally caused concerned speculation by those likely to be affected. At most of the meetings there was an orchestrated view that the RTA study area, which followed the Darling Causeway but stopped short of Bell, should be extended to include Newnes Plateau. The objective of this was to remove any threat to the consulted communities, even though the route from Bell to Marrangaroo (Fig.1) inevitably affected the hitherto unconsulted communities of Dargan, Newnes Junction and Clarence.

The Hartley Action Group, apparently representing some of the interests of the Mt Victoria, Hartley, Hartley Vale and South Lithgow communities, prevailed upon the RTA to extend the area to include the Newnes Plateau 'alternative corridor' (Fig. 1). This route, which bypasses Hartley and Lithgow, has great appeal to those in the Central West because, from Marrangaroo to Bell, it would form the western end of the Bells Line Expressway (BLE).

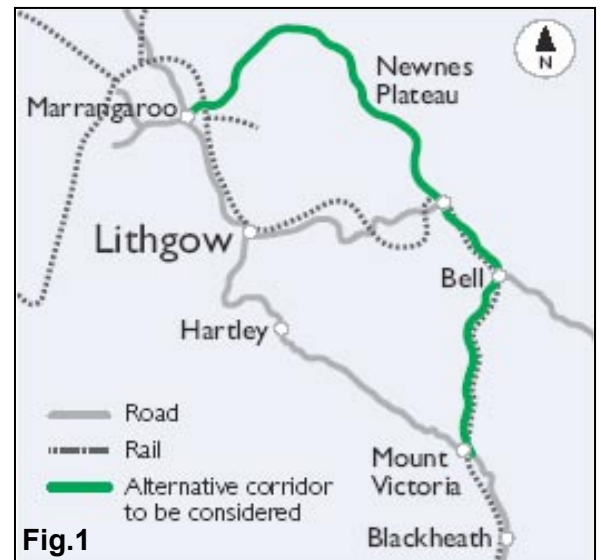
BMCS acknowledges the concerns of the consulted communities, although in terms of practicable routes there is little likelihood of direct impacts on Mt Victoria, Hartley, south Lithgow and the localised heritage values of Hartley Vale. Conversely, as a group committed to preserving the natural environment of the Blue Mountains, BMCS is fearful of the threat posed to Newnes Plateau and the implications of the Newnes corridor for furthering construction of the BLE, thereby damaging the World Heritage Area (WHA).

As many members will be aware, **Newnes Plateau is part of the Gardens of Stone Stage 2 Proposal** (by BMCS, the Colong Foundation and the Colo Committee) for reservation within the parks system. Reasons for reservation are many: Newnes is the highest sandstone plateau in the Blue Mountains and contains a level of biodiversity not found in the Blue Mountains national parks; its swamp habitats are protected by Federal and State law; its geodiversity (geology and geomorphology) is outstanding; there is an abundance of indigenous and non-indigenous cultural heritage; and it comprises a region for low-impact recreation.

Incising a corridor through Newnes Plateau will impact on the established values by: fragmentation of habitats; increasing susceptibility to off-road 4wd and trailbike impacts (numerous eroded tracks, destruction of habitat and damage to pagodas, disregard of indigenous heritage); exposing more of the Plateau to sand mining (distance from road and rail is an economic negative); exacerbating noise and dust pollution; and facilitating illegal hunting. Furthermore, as the principal trucking route to and from Sydney, it would compromise the amenity of the Dargan-Clarence communities and could impact on rail heritage in the Dargan Lakes area.

Selecting the Newnes corridor will undoubtedly give life to those advocating the BLE. Should this ever be constructed in the face of past feasibility studies that resulted in its rejection by both Federal and State Ministers for Transport, it would be an economic, environmental and social disaster. In the hope that sanity will prevail, the detailed implications for the WHA and communities along the route will not be considered further.

The conservation values of Newnes Plateau and the implications of a BLE are not the only reasons for opposing the 'alternative corridor'. Compared with any route in the 'Hartley' study area, the 'corridor' would involve design, engineering and maintenance considerations that would necessitate: constructing at least twice the amount of new road and upgrading an additional amount of the Darling Causeway and the Chifley Road between Bell and Clarence; dealing with elevations above 1150m with substantial exposure to snow, ice and fogs; coping with long-term subsidence adjustments from 'old' underground mines; anticipating subsidence associated with the current and future operations of Springvale and Clarence Collieries; interacting with the exploration and surface management requirements of existing mining leases; minimising conflict with current and future sand



mining; accommodating State Forest harvesting operations; and conceivably affecting Lithgow's water supply. And this totally disregards the immediate and longer-term economic impacts of bypassing Lithgow and the Oberon-Jenolan turn-off.

The Society believes that arguments opposing the 'alternative corridor' outweigh any perceived advantages. This does not mean that the Society is disregarding the cultural heritage and other values of Mt Victoria, the Mt York region and Hartley Vale. Indeed, the Society will critically assess any route identified by the RTA to ensure that all conservation values are properly protected.

Should you wish to know more about the bypass route and community consultation go to the RTA website:

http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/constructionmaintenance/majorconstructionprojectsregional/mt_victoria_lithgow/communityinvolvement.html

and follow the links to the 'Initial area' and 'Newnes Plateau corridor', or contact the Project Manager. **Should you share Management Committee's concerns** about the future of Newnes Plateau, the Bells Line Expressway, and cultural heritage, please express your views to the **Project Manager, Dion Killiby, email: western_projects@rta.nsw.gov.au, phone: 1800 035 733 (toll free), post: PO Box 334, Parkes NSW 2870.**

Brian Marshall, National Parks Officer

Bushcare and You!

Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group, part of the Bushcare Network, meets on the second Saturday morning of each month, 9am till noon. Tools and gloves are provided, instruction on weed identification and treatment is given. You bring a hearty snack, a beverage and a wanton will for weed wasting!

Ring Karen Hising: 4757 1929

But if you can't make it to our site in Wentworth Falls, please consider finding a Group nearer to your home at website:

www.weedsbluemountains.org.au/bushcare_groups.asp or phone Lyndal Sullivan at:

BMCC Bushcare Group 4780 5528

Blue Mountains City Council is to be congratulated on a great effort at environmental sustainability this month as the Bush Regeneration Team embarked on a ‘Right The Aberrations (RTA)’ project. In the 1990s The Roads & Traffic Authority (also RTA) did a bit of road work along the Great Western Highway east from the Evan’s Lookout Road at Blackheath. To finish up their road works they planted some wattles, in this case swamp wattle (*Acacia elongata*) because a wattle is Australian after all so they could get away with adding an invasive exotic to the mix of native species that already existed at the site (including Sunshine Wattle (*Acacia terminalis aurea*), Sydney Golden Wattle (*Acacia longifolia longifolia*) and a heap of non-wattles).

As the years passed the *Acacia elongatas* grew and flowered and set seed (this is what wattles do!) year in year out... In 2003 came the *Blackheath Glen Fire*. This intensely hot wildfire started at Blackheath Glen campsite/picnic area in the Megalong Valley and due to persistent westerly winds swooped up and out of the valley to burn everything within its path between the towns of Blackheath and Medlow Bath, continuing onwards to the north of Wentworth Falls. We residents and our possessions were lucky – if not for the persistent westerly wind this fire would have been much more of a threat to life and property. But the wattles? Well like all wattles a damn hot fire’s gonna kill them and scarify the soil-stored seed around them, allowing it to germinate, and grow more wattles.

So following the *Blackheath Glen Fire* a whole heap of swamp wattles appeared on the scene, far more in fact than the RTA had originally planted, and what’s more they appeared out of order! No one had ever planted them in the Sydney Water Catchment Lands (over the fence from the road reserve). In one “fire-swoop”

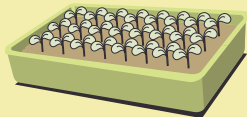


the swamp wattle had naturalised in the Blackheath area. That is to say that a feral invasive weed population (just like holly, blackberry, lantana and the like) had become established.

August 2008 BMCC Bush Regenerators are chopping it all down – doing their job – protecting the native ecosystems of the Blue Mountains from McDonaldisation – and what’s more using the felled shrubs to help stabilise another site with erosion potential. Sustainable Blue Mountains. Environmental Sustainability. Eliminating our weeds and using them!

Clive Barker – BMCS Bushcare Officer

NURSERY NOTES



Nursery Manager, Kevin Bell, is continuing to make a solid recovery from his illness and is well and truly back at the helm, assisted by his band of able and willing volunteers.

Kevin reports that:

“The Nurseries are both open again after our winter break. Good stocks of a variety of plants will welcome you if you visit our Blackheath (Tuesday mornings) or Lawson (Wednesday mornings) nurseries or come to the Magpie Markets at Lawson Public School on Sunday 17 August.”

Phone 4787 6436 kbell@eftel.net.au

LAND USE SUB-COMMITTEE



Thanks and welcome to SIDNEY RYRIE, the newest member of the Land Use Sub-Committee.

More members are welcome

Please contact Tara on 4751 1130

Sketching in the tracks of Ron and Lloyd

A wintry gale ensured that only nine set out on Jim Percy’s Lion Head walk in early August. Jim, as is his wont, had found an old track – perhaps the first – into Kedumba. So, at the given point, he and Lotte and Doug left us to go ‘down the chute’, thence down the talus to the old farm. The remaining six of us wimps went on to Lion’s Head Rock at which point we found a ‘visitor’s bottle’ with lists including the names of our veteran bushies, Ron Wheeler and Lloyd Jones! We added our nine.



On our way back one eagle-eyed walker (modesty prevents my naming him) spotted the intrepid three in the clearing 600m below and 2kms away by crow, and many of us took a vicarious interest in their activities as they prepared for their long and arduous 720m ascent via Kedumba Pass.

The Lion’s Head track is well-maintained and not a difficult 2.8 hours walk at medium pace, plus stops. Not bad views either – to Solitary, Gangerang, Colong, and the Blue Breaks.

Good one, Jim!

Hugh Speirs

Liz van Reyswood has supplied these images – sketches by Lloyd Jones. Liz said that it was his habit on bushwalks to pull out pen and ink and capture the moment. More on Page 3!

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY BUSHWALKING ACTIVITIES

Membership of the bushwalking group is open to Society members. The *BMCS Bushwalkers' Guide*, which explains the numbered Grades, can be found on the Society's website www.bluemountains.org.au, or will be posted on request.

For further information please contact the Walks Convenor, Liz van Reyswood, on 4757 2694, email bushwalks@bluemountains.org.au, or by mail at PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.

Before attending a walk, please discuss the walk with the contact person or group co-ordinator (see below)

SATURDAY WALKS

Usually a full-day, longer walk at a faster pace. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water. Before attending ring the designated contact person or the Group Co-ordinator Jim Percy, 4758 6009 or email jp34@tpg.com.au

- Aug-23 North Head Sanctuary, (2) Ros 4733 3880 Map:** see website **Meet:** Central Station Esc. **9.31am**
5km. www.harbourtrust.gov.au. Follow links to North Head Sanctuary and download the map. Contact leader if trackwork.
- Aug-30 Newnes to Glen Davis (3) Meredith 4782 4823 Map:** Glen Alice **Meet:** Katoomba Bus Depot **8.00am**
18km. Steep, slippery ascent to great views of Wolgan Valley. Steady descent. Book bus with Meredith. Cost \$12.
- Sept-09 Crayfish Pool, Glenbrook (3) Liz 4754 4966 Map:** Penrith **Meet:** Glenbrook Station **8.30am**
10 km. Walk via Redhands Cave and return via Campfire Creek.
- Sept-13 Redledge Pass to Devils Hole (3) Ron W 4757 3984 Map:** Katoomba **Meet:** Gearins Hotel CP **8.15am**
8 km. Along Narrow Neck, down Redledge to Megalong. Up Devils Hole via Rennits Tunnel adit. Bring a torch. Car swap.
- Sept-20 Rites of Spring Picnic (2) Annemarie 4759 2172 Map:** Mt Wilson **Meet:** Blackheath Stn CP **9.35am**
6km. A Picnic at Hanging Rock! Bring picnic lunch. Short scramble down.

MONDAY LEISURE WALKS

'Short Day' walks of 3-5 hours, suitable for walkers of average fitness. Bring morning tea and lunch and adequate water. The Group Co-ordinator is Maurice Kerkham, 4758 6310, or email mauricekerkham@hotmail.com

- Aug-25 Colosseum, Medlow Bath (3) Phil 4787 5560 Meet:** Hydro Majestic, Medlow Bath **9.30am**
Great views over Megalong.
- Sept-01 Abseilers' Track, Glenbrook (3) Ros 4733 3880 Meet:** Glenbrook Commuter Carpark **9.30am**
Glenbrook Gorge
- Sept-08 Little Mountain, Bent's Basin (2) Heather 4739 1493 Meet:** Katoomba Bus Depot, South St, Katoomba **8.30am**
Bus trip. Book and pay Birgitta, 4784 3191.
- Sept-15 Terrace Falls, Hazelbrook (2) Judith 4758 6310 Meet:** Hazelbrook Station **9.00am**
Road walk, waterfalls, large ponds

THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS

The walks are of 2-3 hours length conducted at a leisurely pace to suit walkers on the day. Bring morning tea, adequate water and lunch if noted. The Group Co-ordinator is Simone Bowskill, 4757 3416, email simbow@tpg.com.au

- Aug-21 Hidden Valley (2) Phil 4787 5560 Meet:** Katoomba Bus Depot, South St, Katoomba **8.30am**
Bus trip to the Gardens of Stone National Park. Booking essential with Simone at 4757 3416. Cost \$12.
- Aug-28 Mt Airlie Historical Walk (2) Meredith 4782 4823 Meet:** Blackheath Station Car Park **9.00am**
Full day visit to explore ruins and cave dwellings.
- Sept-04 Cox's Cave, Ferris Cave (2) Phil 4787 5560 Meet:** Mt Vic Station **9.50am**
Mt Piddington. Car swap. Some scrambling on bush paths.
- Sept-11 Leura Cascades Round Walk (2) Joan 4782 5966 Meet:** Cnr Megalong St & Leura Mall **9.40am**
Easy cliff-top walk via lookouts. Some steps, great views.
- Sept-18 Lockley's Pylon (2) Maurice 0402 402 783 Meet:** Leura Public School, Mt Hay Road **9.45am**
Heathland. 8km return. Bring lunch and a good sun hat.
- Sept-25 Hargreaves Lookout (1) Simone 4747 3416 Meet:** Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre **9.45am**
Easy morning tea walk.

MEMBERS' MEMORANDA

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Douglas Familo	Mt Riverview
Jodie Familo	Mt Riverview
Ken Godbehere	Winmalee
Jenny Hall	Springwood
Claire Helm	Blackheath
Adrian Laing	Blackheath
Bev Plazier	W/Falls
Tom Plazier	W/Falls
Merle Hansard	Leura
John Tognolini	Katoomba
Terry Townsend	Blackheath
Ross Young	Katoomba

BMCS MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES:

Ilan Salbe 4759 2372

membership@bluemountains.org.au

IMPORTANT NOTES TO WALKERS

GRADES 4 & 5 WALKS: It is essential that if you wish to attend one of these more challenging Saturday walks you contact the leader of the walk beforehand, so that both you and the leader can be satisfied that the walk is within your capacity.

Please ring by midweek as the leader may cancel the walk if too few walkers register their interest in attending. If possible, an alternative easier option will be offered, but that may not always be the case.

For the safety of all, make no assumptions — Ring the Leader!

RISK WAIVERS: Many bushwalkers have not yet returned the Risk Waiver form which was included in July *Hut News*. This is a requirement for walking with the Society. If you have misplaced it please email me on mcreysw@bigpond.net.au or message my mobile on 0418 206 899 – and I will provide you with a new copy.

The deadline for return of the completed forms is mid-September.

SOCIAL ACTIVITY: We plan an *Annual Bushwalkers Picnic* on Sunday 9 November 2008, all day, at a venue to be decided, maybe at Sun Valley or Megalong Show Ground. Based around Gas BBQs, BYO meat and a plate of salad or dessert to share. Families welcome. Games for kids. Just for your Diary at this time please, details later. **Liz van Reyswood**