

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"



Coughlan Road Subdivision — IT SHOULD BE REJECTED!

The proposal to subdivide more land at Coughlan Road, Blaxland, has occupied a deal of space in the Blue Mountains Gazette in recent weeks. The proposed subdivision is of considerable importance to environmentalists because it is located on sloping land, is in an area that gets Council's highest bushfire hazard rating, and is largely surrounded by National Park.

The Society engaged the services of an environmental planner and solicitors from the Environmental Defender's Office to prepare reports on the subdivision, and assist in preparation of letters and submissions to Council.

The matters that we raised with Council included: (1) there were too many lots in the proposal; (2) there was insufficient (**nil?**) protection for the rocky outcrop that runs across the site; (3) there was insufficient allowance for the steepness of the land (there are ten lots located on sloping land, of which six have significant areas with a slope greater than one in five); (4) the flora and fauna impact report lodged with the application was out of date (more than two years old), and inadequate; (5) steps necessary to provide adequate bushfire protection would require excessive land clearing, resulting in soil erosion, sedimentation of the creek and destruction of habitat, (6) the proposed development is contrary to the objectives for this zone, as specified in the Local Environment Plan.

The matter came before Council on 26

August 1997, and the subdivision was approved 6-5, with Councillors Harris, Angel, Neall, Derum, Egan and Kime in favour, and Councillors Hamilton, Gaul, Berriman, Henson and Clarke opposed. Two weeks later, a revision motion was carried 6-5, with Councillors Hamilton, Gaul, Derum, Berriman, Henson and Clarke in favour, and Councillors Harris, Angel, Neall, Egan and Kime opposed. A subsequent motion to formally reject the subdivision was lost, so the position that then existed was that Council staff were to prepare another report, for consideration by Councillors at a future time.

The matter has now been taken to court by the developer Councillor Ralph Williams. This step is not unexpected, as earlier subdivision proposals, after being rejected by Council, invariably went to court. Often the result was that Council's rejection was reversed by the court. This was the case with the first stage of the subdivision at Coughlan Road in 1995.

During the debate in Council over the latest Coughlan Road proposal, some Councillors made comments along the lines "If we reject this proposal it will only go to court, and our rejection will be overturned. Why waste taxpayers' money on legal fees!" Will these forecasts prove valid for Coughlan Road, stage 2?

Our Management Committee believes that this proposal exceeds anything that is reasonable, and that **it should be rejected**. We will continue to lobby Council to share this view, and to have Council vigorously oppose this subdivision in court.

With this Newsletter...

Global Warming: Tell John Howard that he is wrong! Fill in the details on the enclosed postcard and post it today. (Story on page 2).

Say No to Badgery's Creek Airport!

A sample letter is enclosed. If you haven't already written to Federal MPs and Ministers, please do so now — and feel free to make copies to pass on to other people.

Exploiting National Parks

Four-wheel drivers, commercial tour operators and other high impact users are demanding more trails, roads and privileged access within our parks — *and the Government is listening to them!*

NPWS has produced a Draft Access Strategy which considers commercialising the parks and giving many concessions to the 4WD vehicle and tourism lobby groups.

If this goes ahead our parks will no longer be primarily for conservation and quiet enjoyment of the beauty of nature.

It is vital the Government does not cave in to the demands of these lobby groups. **The Carr Government needs to hear from you urgently!** The address for submissions is NPWS Public Access Strategy, PO Box 1967, Hurstville 2220.

More information from Colong Foundation (02 9241 2702), National Parks Association (02) 9233 4660.

Bob Debus at The Hut

State Member for the Blue Mountains, Bob Debus, will be guest speaker at the Society's general meeting on Friday 31 October. Mr Debus, who had a key role in the acquisition by the Blue Mountains of the \$15 million Urban Run-off Program, will talk about that program.

Urban runoff is a big environmental issue in the Blue Mountains. Because we are at the top of the escarpment, everything we do impacts on the National Park.

Runoff from houses and council land carries pollutants, silt from erosion, weed seeds and rubbish into the National Park.

The aim of the Urban Runoff Program is to reduce this impact, with roads being sealed and bush regeneration projects to prevent siltation and restore degraded areas around creeks. Works have already started and will carry on over three years.

The meeting at The Hut starts at 7.30. Visitors are welcome.

Kids/Youth Club

It's happening!!!! During the coming school holidays there will be an activity for school-age members of the Society, and another activity in November.

Papermaking (Thursday 9 October, 10am - 1pm) is easy and fun. We will use leaves, flowers, grass, whatever we can think of and find, to decorate our paper.

Numbers will be limited so please phone early to book a place.

"Bilbies and Bushrangers" (Sunday 16 November, 10.30 am to 1 pm) was thought up by Don Morison, our Land Use Officer, and is educational and lots of fun. It is a bushwalk in North Lawson. Everyone will have a map and we will discover special things along the way, using the map, our eyes and even our voices.

Adults helpers are welcome. And if anyone has ideas for future activities please let me know.

— Jessica (57.2783)

"Hut News", the newsletter of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.

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Deadline for next issue is Oct.23

LAND USE

BADGERY'S THREAT CIRCLING OVERHEAD

Some cynics believe that the Federal Government's behaviour following the release of the Rust PPK report is code for "We're expanding Mascot and doing nothing else". If this is true, residents and friends of Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains are being distressed unnecessarily.

Federal Transport Minister John Sharp and his underlings have been 'spin doctoring' the Draft Environmental Impact Statement to make it appear that it endorses Badgery's Creek Airport site. A careful reading of the document shows that such a view is entirely unjustified, but perceptions are very important.

It is crucial that Mountain residents keep sending letters to Kerry Bartlett, Jackie Kelly and Federal Ministers opposing the Badgery's Airport option. The document 'Airport solutions for Sydney' recently released by Alliance for Airport Location Outside Sydney shows that all reasonable alternatives have not been properly investigated.

If ever there was a time for Kerry Bartlett and Jackie Kelly to organize a back-bench revolt, it is now.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL COST OF DIRT ROADS

Hut News recently carried an item about the problems created by road-sealing. The environmental threats posed by unsealed roads are manifold, whether they are maintained as they are or sealed.

I recently received a letter from BMCC stating that 200 tonnes of aggregate material had been used in the past two years to maintain Railway Parade between Bullaburra and Wentworth Falls — only a few kilometres of road.

This section is graded at least once every 90 days, meaning that the vast majority of this material has now blown or washed away, mostly into Polger's Glen in the catchment of Blue Mountain creek.

There can be valid reasons to leave lightly-trafficked roads unsealed, as residents of some areas of Blackheath have pointed out to BMCC. Nevertheless, it is clear that some of the more heavily-trafficked unsealed roads are causing serious difficulties. Many such roads are not within the current sealing plans of BMCC and the State Government.

—Don Morison.

Glenbrook Fair

The Society is having a stall at Glenbrook Fair on Saturday 8 November.

- ☺ WANTED: Somebody with a trailer to help transport the Society's stand to and/or from the Fair, and
- ☺ Members to help on the stall, to give out information about the Society and ask people to write letters about Badgery's Creek.

(Contact Jessica on 57 2783)



Global Warming

TURN IT DOWN, AUSTRALIA

In December this year, some 160 countries will meet in Kyoto Japan to agree on new international action to address global warming. Negotiations to that end have recently been described in the New Scientist magazine as arguably '**the most momentous discussions ever about the future of the planet**'.

However, Australia's Federal Government opposes binding and uniform emission reduction targets. Instead, it is proposing a concept known as 'differentiation', with each country determining its own emission targets according to a set of criteria that take into account their 'individual circumstances'. **The Federal Government argues that we're a special case, that our pollution should be allowed to continue.**

Australia is the 15th largest emitter of greenhouse gases. **About 32 tonnes of greenhouse gases are released for every Australian annually which is close to the highest per capita rate in the world.**

Implementation of emission reduction programs in Australia has been extremely poor, and recent budget cuts to National Energy Efficiency Program and to Australia's major energy research body add to the perception that the Government is not serious about tackling greenhouse gas emissions.

Scientists Predict Climate Change

There is broad scientific agreement on human-caused global warming. In 1996, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), representing 2,500 scientists, released a major assessment on climate change. The 3600 page report reduces many uncertainties surrounding the issue. Scientists are now more confident than ever that the emission of greenhouse gases through human activities is contributing to global warming.

The greenhouse effect is a natural phenomenon — if it weren't for the natural greenhouse effect the Earth would be some 33°C cooler than it is at present. The planet is warm enough for complex life because naturally occurring gases (including carbon dioxide and water vapour) trap heat which would otherwise escape into space.

The problem is that human activity — including combustion of fossil fuels and land clearing — is adding to these gases faster than oceans, plants and soil can absorb them. This is unnaturally 'enhancing' the greenhouse effect.

Since the industrial revolution, the concentration of carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas, has increased by 30 per cent. Long-substantiated laws of physics tell us that, given we are altering the energy balance of the atmosphere, this will impact on the world's temperature and climate.

Global warming will lead to climate change next century, with potentially disastrous impacts on biodiversity, coasts, agriculture, water and health.

The IPCC has estimated that to stabilise the atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere will eventually require cutting greenhouse gas emissions by between 60 and 80 per cent below current levels. The longer we delay, the greater and more rapid are the cuts that will be needed in the future.

Reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions will not cost us the Earth

Studies have estimated that Australia's emissions can cost-effectively be reduced by 45 to 120 million tonnes, principally through energy efficiency. The electricity and fuel we waste is a 'resource'.

Renewable energy, including solar, wind and sustainably harvested biomass, provides the key to the world's future energy needs.

Reform electricity markets so that there is no discrimination against sustainable energy, set greenhouse performance targets and strategies, (and don't privatise to achieve 'competitive markets' at the expense of the environment.) Improve transport and urban planning and control land clearing.

A national greenhouse commitment needs to be implemented by all Australian governments, with community involvement and backed by federal legislation.

Australia, the land of flood, drought and bushfire, should be more sensitive than most that climate variability plays havoc with people's lives. Australia, the land of fragile and unique biodiversity, should be more understanding than most of the vulnerability of ecosystems.

TURN IT DOWN, AUSTRALIA

Please fill in and post the card which is enclosed with this newsletter.

Noxious Weeds For Sale

A large variety store in Katoomba has withdrawn the Montbretia bulbs which were for sale in the store. Montbretia is a noxious weed under category W4c. This means that it may not be sold, propagated or knowingly distributed. We would hope that the store's suppliers, who should know better, have been notified!



Welcome to New Members:

Erika Semier, Wentworth Falls

Colin Skinner, Katoomba

Phil Horan, Katoomba

Christine Bourne, Glebe

Anthony and Norma Dippel, Blaxland
Warwick and Margaret Tafe, Mt Riverview

Karen Lawson, Springwood

Andrew Valja, Springwood

Christine Hill, Blackheath

Joel and Lynette Russell, Woodford

Gregory and Christine Polson, Mt Riverview

Robert and Emma Hanly, Valley Heights

Neddy and Chris McDonald, Blaxland

Ronald McKechnie, Hazelbrook

Craig and Amanda Linn, Faulconbridge

Willie Wahlin, Lewisham

Heather Hull, Mt Riverview

Cantwell Family, Springwood

Les, Pauline and Elizabeth Edwards,
Wentworth Falls

Membership Enquiries: The Society is keen to have new members who are concerned about the welfare of the Blue Mountains natural environment. Contact membership secretary, Ross Coster: Work (047)59.1247, Home 59.1837 FAX 59.1095, or write to P.O. Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782.

September in Blackheath was a month of change, with Waratahs coming into bud, and the Sunshine Wattle fading, to be replaced by the bright yellow blooms of Sydney Golden Wattle (*Acacia longifolia*). Blackheath's "street of the month" was Dell Street, beside Pope's Glen, with masses of Golden Wattle. (The Pope's Glen Bushcare Group must be delighted with the results of their labours.)

Honeyeaters have been migrating south. Magpies have been chasing off magpies and other species (especially Kookaburras) as they establish their breeding territories and build their nests. Eastern Spinebills in the garden have been very active and singing loud and long. At the duck pond, a flock of Black Cormorants has taken up residence, joining the solitary Pied Cormorant who is often there. I counted eleven of them one day. Between them they should make a dent in the goldfish population.

A high spot of the month was a walk to Old Point Pilcher and the Grand Canyon. Here the Sunshine Wattle flowers had all but gone to be replaced by new orange tips as the seed pods start to form. Another was giving a NPWS talk to 100 seven-year-old Blackheath school children at Govett's Leap. They are a remarkable group of nice children — so well behaved, attentive, and the questions they asked were well thought out and very intelligent. We spotted a pair of baby Tawny Frogmouths in a tree.

— Christine Davies.

The Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment

(Part 1 of a 3-part series)

As many of our thoughts today are centred on the Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment and its importance to the Sydney water supply as well as to the health of the river, I would like to share my thoughts with you about the nature of this important catchment.

Like so many Australian landforms its origins began long ago when the coastline was to the west of where it lies today. Unlike many countries there has been no recent mountain building to produce rivers which meander normally from the mountains to the sea, creating fertile floodplains as they go.

Imagine the confusion in the minds of the early settlers around Sydney. They had settled on the rocky shore of a Harbour into which only the small stream of the Parramatta River flowed. This River led them westwards towards Prospect Hill from which the Georges River flowed south-eastwards into Botany Bay. This area was only the fringe of the vast continent which lay beyond the Blue Mountains which barred the way to the inland.

On exploring further west towards the mountain barrier however, they were to find a much larger river which flowed, not eastwards to the sea as was to be expected, but to the north. Further south at Camden this river was found to flow to the north-west before changing its direction to the north at Emu Plains and it was called the Nepean. To the north of Sydney small boats had found their way up the inhospitable shores of an eastwards flowing tidal river until they reached the flood plains of the Macdonald River where agriculture was possible and then, carried by the tide they made their way as far as Richmond and Windsor, naming the river

the Hawkesbury and starting up farms along its banks. Like Sydney Harbour however, there were no coastal plains on which to graze their animals and grow their crops.

Because of the lack of grazing lands it became necessary to look for better land beyond the mountains and efforts to cross the mountain barrier were made by following any rivers which flowed into the Nepean from the west. Attempts were made to travel up the Grose River and the Warragamba but conditions became too rugged for the passage of parties of men on horseback. They had to traverse rocky stream beds and as they proceeded increasingly high cliffs surrounded them.

When finally the mountains were crossed by following the ridge tops and a descent made to the Hartley valley the main river was named after Cox and it was found to flow southwards before cutting its way through the mountains to join the Warragamba River. The explorers had to travel further west on to the Hampton Ridge before finding a river to take them to the west.

The 'mountains' were not really such, but were a plateau raised across the path of a more ancient river system which had its origins in the dividing range which runs in a direction slightly west of north through Jenolan and Mt Lambie. Once across this high land the streams flowed westwards into the unknown, later found to be the Murray-Darling system.

How the river systems came to be so strange in their behaviour requires a journey into the long distant past, nearly 400 million years ago, long before the age of the Dinosaurs, when plants were just beginning to move on to the land and the atmosphere still contained a large percentage of carbon dioxide. That story will be in the next newsletter. — M.J.B.

In the Bush

Bunyip has again grasped an opportunity to splash in distant water holes. However the water holes were somewhat small and in many cases, long dry though each was graced with a well number. I write of the Canning Stock Route.

To meet the need of Kimberley pastoralists for a route to market their cattle in Perth and the southern goldfields a line of fifty-one wells was established from Wiluna in the south to Halls Creek in the north. Alfred Canning, a public servant in the employ of the Dept of Lands in W.A., was chosen to oversee the project. The trials and tribulations endured by the men selected could create a saga which would need many issues of *Hut News*.

It is sufficient to state that the first mobs of cattle were driven over in 1911. 1958 saw the last use of the route. The wells were shafts 6' x 4' sunk to depths varying to the water table levels. The shallowest was 1.4m and the deepest 31.8m. The shaft

walls were lined with timber cut and shaped from desert oak which has hard termite-resistant qualities. A windlass with a heavy bucket attached was used to raise the water which was then poured into troughing. For deeper holes a 'whip' pole was used which allowed the bucket to be raised and lowered by camel or horse power. Fifty-one wells were sunk but only a few are still functional.

The Canning crosses four deserts, the Little Sandy and Gibson in the south and the Greater Sandy and Tanami in the north. They receive less than 250mm on average and thus are labelled deserts. Don't visualise the dunes as rolling flows of bare sand like the Sahara at its worst. Millenia of years ago such may have been the case but a rise in rainfall enabled plant life to grow sufficiently to stabilise the dunes. So recent has been this change that I read no species evolved as special desert plants. The recapturing was done by plants already in existence. However every trick of biology to combat aridity may be seen. An ability to germinate rapidly after rain and

broadcast seed, small leaf pores, inturned leaf margins, tiny leaves, hairy leaves, modified and rotating leaves, fast descending root systems and others past my knowledge.

I have never experienced such feelings of remoteness, timelessness and vastness that this journey engendered. To roar up the crest of a dune and gaze at a plain of silvery coloured spinafex stretching to infinite in the valley between the dunes was somewhat akin to being on a small ship breasting a Pacific roller. One systematic lady recorded 815 dunes and we readily believed her for we rarely exceeded 150k a day and our speeds were down to 20-30 k.p.h. (More on the Canning next issue.)

— *The Bunyip*.

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY NATIVE PLANT NURSERY
OPEN TUESDAY MORNINGS 9 am to 12 noon
PLANT SALES VOLUNTEERS ARE WELCOME TO HELP
CONTACT DAVID COLEBY 84.1395

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

OCTOBER

- 05 (Sun) **Bushwalk: Fortress Ridge — “Where the Wedgetail Eagle Lives”.** A beautiful wildflower walk with superb views. Meet corner of Great Western Hwy/Mount Hay Road, opposite Leura Primary School, at 9.30 am. Contact June Baxter 47 877 312. Grade Medium.
- 09 (Tue) **Kids/Youth Club. School Holiday Activity — Papermaking,** (10 am to 1 pm). Easy and fun. We will use leaves, flowers, grass, whatever we can think of and find, to decorate our paper. Numbers will be limited so please phone early to book a place. Contact Jessica 47 57 2783. (Adult helpers are welcome.)
- 12 (Sun) **Excursion — Mount Annan Botanic Gardens.** Guided walk through the Terrace Garden and a talk about the Wollemi Pine. Contact Christine Davies 47 877 246 (before 5 October) so that I can make a booking for the Wollemi Pine lecture (\$3 per person), guided walk (free), and arrange for car pool.
- 13 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Braeside Track.** Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre at 9.30 am. Contact Lee Tredinnick 4757.4030.
- 20 (Mon) **Nature Track Bushcare Group, 9-12.** Meet at The Hut at 9 am. Contact Jessica Yuille 4757.2783.
- 20 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — October Creek.** Meet Mount Victoria Station at 9.30 am. Contact Norah Gaynor 87.6071.
- 23 (Thu) **Committee Meeting .** 7 pm at Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson.
- 27 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Rachel’s Track, Clifftop Walk, Evans Lookout.** Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre at 9.30 am. Contact John Gaynor 4787.6071.
- 31 (Fri) **General Meeting at The Hut, 7.30 pm.** Guest speaker State Member for the Blue Mountains Bob Debus, “The Urban Runoff Program”. Visitors are welcome. Enquiries David Coleby 84.1395.

NOVEMBER (NOTE THAT DURING SUMMER MONDAY LEISURE WALKS WILL START AT 8.30 A.M.)

- 02 (Sun) **Sunday Morning Bushwalk — Wall’s Cave.** Meet 9 am, Blackheath Station commuter carpark. Contact Christine Davies 47 877 246.
- 03 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Terrace Falls, Hazelbrook.** Meet 8.30 am, Lawson War Memorial, Honour Avenue. BBQ after (BYO). Contact Kees Putting 47 59 1958.
- 08 (Sat) **Glenbrook Fair — Help wanted.** ☺ Somebody with a trailer to help transport the Society’s stand to and/or from the Fair, and ☺ Members to help on the stall, to give out information about the Society and ask people to write letters about Badgery’s Creek. (Contact Jessica on 47 57 2783)
- 10 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Clifftop Walk Echo Point to Leura Cascades.** Meet 8.30 am Leura Cascades. Contact Marie McInnes 47 82 7110.
- 16 (Sun) **Kids/Youth Club — “Bilbies and Bushrangers”,** an exploration of North Lawson Park. 10.30 am to 1 pm. Educational and fun!! Contact Jessica 47 57 2783. (Adult helpers are welcome.)
- 17 (Mon) **Nature Track Bushcare Group, 9-12.** Meet at The Hut at 9 am. Contact Jessica Yuille 4757.2783.
- 17 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Walls Lookout.** Meet 8.30 am Mount Victoria Station. Contact Jan Cutler 47 84 3079.
- 20 (Thu) **Committee Meeting.** 7 pm at Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson.
- 24 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Dantes Glen.** Meet 8.30 am Lawson Swimming Pool. Contact Caroline O’Neill 47 57 3141.
- 28 (Fri) **General Meeting at The Hut, 7.30 pm.**

W.A.—Develop at Any Cost!

Thanks for letting us stay with you at the wonderful Blue Mountains and for being fantastic tour guides. We were impressed with **Hut News**, and with what people are doing in the Blue Mountains.

We too have chosen to live in a beautiful place, Sunset Beach at Geraldton, WA. There is a thriving fishing industry, a huge cray (rock lobster) industry which relies on unpolluted waters, great recreational fishing and a growing tourism industry, on a pristine coastline — **and you should see the sunsets!** It is a wonderful place to live or visit.

It is the craziest place in the world to build a heavy industrial site, steel plant and deepwater port (over 3000 hectares including 170 hectares of seabed being dug out), but that is what the WA Government wants to do — on the coast at Oakajee, just north of Geraldton!

This is a conservative state and the Court Government is very keen to develop WA at any cost. Unfortunately the WA media proprietors support the Government and share its “fifties progress and profit”

philosophy. They are vigorously supporting the development, despite the facts that impacts on the environment will be devastating, and costs to the taxpayer in setting up the infrastructure and subsidising the port will be enormous.

Opposing the development are environmentalists, the fishing industry, the rock lobster industry, and the Geraldton community generally, but it is very difficult for us to have our voices heard.

A thousand people (from a small community of people unused to protesting) marched against the proposed development — and we got no publicity at all in the WA media.

English botanist David Bellamy spoke at a meeting in August, saying that our region’s greatest assets were its pristine coastline and growing tourism industry.

Professor Bellamy said any destruction of seagrass would have a devastating effect on the rock lobster industry, questioned the State Government’s motivation for locating industry at Oakajee, and said that it should be a community decision — not a decision made by Government over the top

of the community. “I think the basic argument is that somebody owns that land and wants to make money out of it” he said. (*Sounds familiar??*)

We are asking people to write to the Premier, and supporting an “Industry Inland” campaign as pollution can be controlled better if it is away from the coast.

— Victor Bovis, Geraldton WA.

Thank You, Norah Gaynor

For the past year or so, Norah Gaynor has been organising the Monday leisure walks, finding walk leaders, distributing and collecting attendance forms, and handing over a monthly walk list for publication in **Hut News**.

Thanks to Norah, the leisure walks have been running very smoothly and are very popular. Now Norah is retiring, although she will still go on the leisure walks, and has handed over the job to Kees Putting.

Thanks Norah, for your great work, and thanks Kees for taking on the job.

This issue of **Hut News** has been printed on 100% Recycled Paper