

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"



Sustainability workshops a great success

In January and February the society ran highly successful Sustainability workshops. The workshops were focused on how households in normal residential settings can dramatically lower their environmental footprint and hence build a more sustainable Blue Mountains. A wide range of topics were covered including: calculating environmental footprints, using less energy, retrofitting the home, designing a more sustainable garden, and building a more sustainable neighbourhood. Everyone departed with a wealth of references to follow up and more importantly a personalised list of things to actually do!

The two days of workshop were fully booked weeks ahead and were attended by more than 100 people, with a good mix of existing society members and the general public. Feedback was very positive and the workshop team was delighted to receive spontaneous emails in the days following such as: *"Thank you so much for a wonderful day on Saturday, it was great"*, *"It was fantastic!"*, and *"I really enjoyed hearing the variety of speakers"*.

In addition to the obvious benefits of workshop participants moving their own households towards greater sustainability, there is also a very positive community outcome, namely the society will use \$1000 of the profits to purchase books on sustainable living for the libraries in the greater Blue Mountains area. In this regard, a very big thanks to Megalong Books of Leura for supporting the book table at the workshops.

With the workshops now over, it is the workshop team's intention to make some of the material available in stand-alone written and graphic form over the coming year. So around mid year keep your eye out in Hut News for information about new publications.

To conclude, the Society would like to express its special thanks to the presenters Nigel Bell, Rowe Morrow, Sue Bell, Clare Donovan, and Craig Linn for giving their time and expertise so freely. And of course workshops don't just happen by themselves and a large number of people (all society members) contributed their time and energy: Rosemary Lathouris, Elizabeth van Reyswood, John Haydon, Ron Withington, Bart Beech, Heather Hull, and Brian Marshal. But, most importantly, the Society would like to thank all those good folk who came along as workshop participants and who are no doubt even now making a real difference for the environment.

Annual general meeting ...

Our Annual General Meeting will be held at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls, on Friday 31 March, starting at 7.30 pm. At the meeting members will elect a management committee to represent the Society for the next 12 months. All positions will fall vacant. Enclosed with this newsletter is a list of executive positions with details of what is required of office bearers. Contact one of this year's office bearers if you want to find out more about any of the positions or how to be nominated (contact details are on page 2).

Other normal business at the AGM will be to receive reports from office bearers, receive the annual accounts, and appoint an auditor.

Members are urged to come along to have their say on how the Society will be run for the next 12 months. We need people to nominate and some of the reasons why are set out elsewhere in this newsletter. But it is safe to come along if you do not wish to nominate for a position – it is guaranteed that nobody will be dragged unwillingly from the floor!

... followed by our regular monthly meeting at 8pm

At 8pm guest speaker Ian Brown will take us on a photographic journey to wild and remote parts of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and explain some of the diversity and richness of the 10,000 sq. km. Ian Brown is a nature photographer, writer and conservationist who has walked the Blue Mountains for more than three decades. His images and writing have appeared in numerous books, magazines, diaries, calendars and exhibitions. He has written three books: *Paddy Pallin's Bushwalking and Camping*; *Extreme South*, his account of the first Australian expedition to walk to the South Pole; and *Wild Blue*, World heritage splendour of the Greater Blue Mountains. Following Ian's slide presentation there will be time for discussion and questions before supper and a chance to meet and talk to management committee and other members of the society.

Visitors are very welcome. (Photo: Kanangra Gorge, Ian Brown.)

Coming events:

Free Workshop: 'Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act' explained. 6-9pm Wednesday 29th March 2006, Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute, 23 Gates Ave, Katoomba. (see page 5)

Annual General Meeting at the Conservation Hut, end of Fletcher Street, Wentworth Falls, Friday 31 March, 7.30 pm. **Monthly meeting** follows AGM, Friday 31 March, 8 pm. Slide presentation by Ian Brown. (see page 1)

BMCS Native Nursery AUTUMN PLANT SALE: Conservation Hut, end of Fletcher Street, Wentworth Falls, Sat 8 April, 9am-12noon. Lots of good native plants. (see pages 2/3)

Celebration of life of Mike Eades and official opening of Michael Eades Reserve Saturday 8th April 2006 between 2pm – 4pm. (see page 8)

"Hut News", the newsletter of
Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.
 P.O. Box 29, Wentworth Falls, 2782
 Phone 4757 1872 Fax 4757 1753
 Email: bmcs@bluemountains.org.au
 Web page: www.bluemountains.org.au
President: Brian Marshall 4784.1148,
 Brian.Marshall@uts.edu.au
Senior Vice President: Heather Hull
 4739.1493, hhull001@bigpond.net.au
Second Vice President: Elizabeth van
 Reyswoud 4757.2694, 0418206899
 mcreysw@bigpond.net.au
Treasurer: Bart Beech
 4739.9947, bbeech@invensys.com.au
Administration Officer: Alan Harris
 (ph) 4757 4545 (fax) 4757 4544
 alanghar@bigpond.net.au
Membership Secretary: Elizabeth van
 Reyswoud 4757.2694, 0418206899
 mcreysw@bigpond.net.au
Meetings Secretary: Rosemary Lathouris
 4757.2511, lathouris@bigpond.com
Meetings Convenor: Jim Wallace
 4784.3305, ozblu@optusnet.com.au
Plant Nursery Manager: Kevin Bell
 4787.6436 (ph/fx), khbell@pnc.com.au
Environmental Education Officer:
 Craig Linn 4751 4934,
 craiginbm@optusnet.com.au
Land Use Officer: Lyndal Sullivan
 4782.1635 (ah), lsullivan@efel.net.au
National Parks Officer: Brian Marshall
 4784.1148, Brian.Marshall@uts.edu.au
Threatened Species/Bushcare Officer:
 Clive Heywood-Barker 4782.3345,
 ozbundu@hotmail.com
World Heritage Officer: John Haydon
 0421.479.146,
 jhaydonmc@optusnet.com.au
Bushfire Officer: Hugh Paterson
 4751.2303, goodbush@pnc.com.au
Walks Convenor: Bob van Reyswoud
 4757.2694 (ph/fax)
 mcreysw@bigpond.net.au
Publications Officer: Ron Withington
 4757.3984, ronwit@ozemail.com.au
Web Site Manager: Margaret Sleath
 4759.3350, msleath@ozemail.com.au
Technical Officer: David Bowskill
 4757 3416, davidbow@tpg.com.au
Newsletter Editor: Christine Davies
 4787.7246, hutnews@bluemountains.org.au

THE SONGLINES CONVERSATIONS

Carrington Hotel, Katoomba SPECIAL DISCOUNT OFFER

The Songlines Conversations Series 2 is fast approaching and BMCS members are again offered a \$2 discount on ticket prices for four of the guest speakers:

Diane Bell, Mon 10 Apr. 7.30pm - \$13
Linda Rive, Tue 11 Apr. 11am - \$10
Dawn Casey, Mon 24 Apr. 7.30pm \$13
John (Charlie) Veron - Tue 25 April,
 11 am—\$10

To receive the discount you will need to book direct with **Yvonne Hellmers - 4782-6370**.

For information on all of the guest speakers and the series see enclosed leaflet.

Take an active role in the management of BMCS ...

Would you like to take an active role in the management of Blue Mountains Conservation Society or would like to help in any other way. There is plenty of work for all. At our Annual General Meeting on Friday 31 March 2006 members will elect a new Management Committee for the year to 31 March 2007. Members are also needed to help in our sub-committees which play a crucial role in supporting the work of the management committee. Serving on the management committee and in sub-committees can be immensely rewarding, and no experience is necessary.

Blue Mountains Conservation Society is one of the oldest and largest regional environmental groups in Australia and enjoys respect from the community and from the agencies with which it deals. The Management Committee tries to spend minimal time on administrative matters. Meeting agendas are structured so that highest priority is given to conservation issues. The Society is in a strong financial position so the committee does not have to be involved in fund-raising. Your time on the committee will be very focused on helping the environment.

There is an insert in this issue of Hut News with details of all Management Committee positions. You can obtain more information from members of this year's committee (see panel on page 2), or you can come along as an observer to the committee meeting on Saturday 25 March at the Mid-Mountains Community Centre, Lawson. Please give consideration to nominating for a position. Whilst our constitution allows for nominations to be received on the night of the AGM, we really need to be organised before-hand to ensure that there will be at least one nomination for each position.

There is plenty of choice, including the 'transitional' positions of Project Officer where one can experience Management Committee without initially having a clearly defined roll. Some of our present committee members will not be renominating. Positions of particular concern are Land-use Officer, Meetings Secretary, Newsletter Editor, Publicity/Publications Officer.

All positions will fall vacant so don't be shy! This is a perfect time for those with appropriate skills to become more active in the Society's fight to conserve the Blue Mountains' environment, and to minimise the ongoing State and Federal assaults on the broader environment.

LETTER OF THE MONTH: Water for Sydney's future

Congratulations on the Iemma Government's decision to shelve the construction of a desalination plant in Sydney. However, planning permission is still being sought for a 125 megalitre-a-day plant and the threat of the plant being constructed is still hanging over our heads, if dam levels fall below 30%. A further \$120 million has been allocated to keeping this option open.

Premier Iemma's recent announcement that water could be obtained from various aquifers in the Sydney Basin is not backed by scientific opinion. "Our plans mean that Sydney is drought-proof for the first time", he says (SMH Thursday 9.2.06) but independent experts say this is a premature declaration and misleading to the public. There is a potential to extract 30 billion litres per year, but this is merely 5% of Sydney's annual usage. Groundwater recharge is slow and pumping water out may mean it is not available to rivers and the environment according to Professor Ian Acworth of University of NSW.

"The CSIRO has predicted temperature increases of up to 2 degrees by 2030 and a whopping 6 degrees by 2070. Associated with these stunning predictions are slashing cuts to rainfall...Now is no time to gamble that the boffins are wrong in order to ease the prospects of re-election" (James Woodford: 'The myth of Sydney being drought-proof' SMH Thursday 9.2.06).

There should be no talk of lifting water restrictions on users of Sydney water. Easing restrictions could send a false signal that the water crisis has been solved. Householders have responded very favourably to the challenge of the present drought and 185 billion litres have been saved since restrictions began in 2003. Gardens can be kept green and households function well with a lot less water than we thought possible. "Restrictions are still the most cost effective way of conserving water." Says Greens MP Ian Cohen. What is also needed are policies and incentives to get industry to use water more wisely e.g. installing their own water recycling plant, treating grey water or storm water for their own use. Farming also uses huge volumes of water - of the 25 million giga litres used in Australia in 2000, 17 million of these were used in farming. Agricultural crops like cotton and rice should be grown sustainably and not at the expense of river flows.

Points to make: * Desalination is not an option * Water restrictions should stay * Taking water from aquifers has unknown consequences * Recycling water should be embraced for household, industry and agriculture.

Send your letter to: The Premier of NSW Morris Iemma, Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney 2000.

**Blue Mountains Conservation Society Native Plant Nursery's
 AUTUMN PLANT SALE** will be held at the **CONSERVATION HUT**
 end of Fletcher St., Wentworth falls on **Saturday 8th April, 9 am to noon.**
**Hundreds of lovely, hardy, native plants. Tube stock from \$2.50 each
 and many specials to tempt you.**

Court decision may threaten bushland and waterways

by Virginia King (on behalf of BRAID)

Large unsewered blocks on the fringes of urban areas may threaten pristine bushland and waterways after a decision made by Justice Pain in the Land and Environment Court in August 2005. Justice Pain ruled that Clause 10.8(e) of Blue Mountains Council's Local Environment Plan (LEP) 1991 was a *development standard* and not a *prohibition*.

Clause 10.8(e) requires land zoned Residential Bushland Conservation (RBC) to be connected to a "reticulated sewerage system" before it can be subdivided. The clause intends to require connection to the Sydney Water sewer before subdivision can occur, but if the clause is a *development standard* rather than a *prohibition*, developers can seek to vary the standard by installing an on-site sewage treatment plant (STP).

Environmentally-sustainable on-site STPs require a sophisticated water balance, evaluating soil, evaporation, rainfall, slope, volume of effluent, plant take-up rates etc. The water balance can often show the need to reduce the size of a development to ensure that effluent does not leave the site and contaminate neighbouring bushland and waterways. But instead of reducing the development, developers may use a combination of exaggerated figures in their water balance (such as under-estimated sewage generation rates and over-estimated effluent dispersal rates) to convince the Land and Environment Court that the size of the development is sustainable.

The Parklands' judgement was handed down by the Land and Environment Court on February 10. It allows 78 dwellings on the 11 hectare site, which slopes down to Pope's Glen Creek (a tributary of the Gross River). The development depends on an on-site STP that BRAID (Blackheath Residents Against Improper Development, a subcommittee of RAID Inc) believes is not environmentally sustainable. BRAID's sewage experts were never satisfied that the water balance was correctly calculated, using realistic figures.

Justice Pain's interpretation of Clause 10.8(e) has ramifications beyond the Parklands development in Blackheath. It affects all land across the Blue Mountains zoned RBC under LEP 91 that could be subdivided for housing.

BRAID has just filed an Appeal to challenge Justice Pain's decision in the Supreme Court of NSW. BRAID's argument is that Clause 10.8(e) is a prohibition, which means that connection to the Sydney Water sewer is mandatory before subdivision of RBC sites can occur. BRAID is also asking Council to join their Appeal, since the clause is in Council's own LEP. The decision to join BRAID's appeal will be made by Councillors on March 21.

BRAID is asking ConSoc members to lobby Councillors by mail, email and phone before March 21. Express your concern about the implications of Clause 10.8(e) allowing on-site STPs on large yet-unsubdivided sites. You need not be against development *per se*, but against the risk of unsustainable development in the RBC zoning, with its possible adverse impacts on bushland and waterways. Ask them to:

- join BRAID in their action to Appeal Clause 10.8(e)
- assist BRAID financially in meeting their legal costs

Councillors' contact details from the Council website (www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au) have been copied onto the back of the Management Committee positions insert.

BRAID also needs donations (large or small!) to fund its legal action. Make cheques payable to RAID Inc, PO Box 354 Blackheath 2785. Contact BRAID: braid2785@yahoo.com.au

Broad-scale land clearing in NSW

Reece Turner, the Land Clearing Campaigner for the Wilderness Society, made a strong case for individuals and the Society to contact relevant ministers (reported in the February Hut News, No 222, p3). He was assured at the Monthly Meeting that the Society would act.

The gist of a letter to Minister MacDonald (Natural resources) regarding the Wilderness Society's campaign and an article by Wendy Frew in the Weekend Edition (4-5 February) of the Sydney Morning Herald stated:

"Although you may quibble over the specific number of hectares that have been cleared without consent, you do not apparently dispute your department's abysmally poor prosecution record under the Native Vegetation Conservation act

(1998). Eighteen successful prosecutions out of 753 alleged breaches is not a record to be proud of.

The Society notes the attempt (as reported in the SMH) to ascribe some of the loss of vegetation to drought conditions. This is truly clutching at straws. It might easily be suggested that you are more concerned with obfuscation than stopping the shameful rate of land clearing. Anyone familiar with satellite imagery can easily distinguish the effects of drought from those of systematic clearance.

It is interesting that you contend prosecution is not the only gauge of success. This is of course true! If land clearing had slowed right down, or effectively stopped, this would be a far better measure of your department's success. But it would seem that illegal land clearing is unabated and, as reported

in the SMH and by the Wilderness Society, that current attempts at enforcement cause little concern amongst landholders.

As you will be aware, when benefits to be gained from clearing substantially exceed losses due to fines (even if imposed!), the landholder just builds it into the risk-return analysis. When a system isn't working, for whatever reasons, changes must be made.

The Society looks forward to hearing about the changes that will be implemented to ensure that the scandalous level of illegal land clearing will be stopped. The alternative, that it will continue and become a monument to inept government, is not one that the community or even the State Government would welcome."

Please continue to write to Ministers MacDonald and Debus at Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW 2000 (email: macdonald.office@macdonald.minister.nsw.gov.au, bob.debus@debus.minister.nsw.gov.au). Express dismay at the shameful rate of land clearing, the abysmal prosecution record and the Government's lack of action. **Brian Marshall.**

Nursery news

Our national flower is a wattle, *Acacia pycnantha*, and is just one of over 700 of this genus in Australia out of a world total of around 1100 species, the rest mostly occurring in Africa. Wattles are found in all states of Australia in a great variety of conditions, ranging from coastal to sub-alpine, and in areas of high rainfall to the arid interior. At our Blackheath (Tuesday mornings) and Lawson (Wednesday mornings) nurseries we have 18 suitable Mountains wattles ready for sale now and hope to increase this number to around 25 by mid-year. By planting a number of selected species, you will have flowers for most of the year. Many attract insects, including butterflies, and hence insect eating birds, while Rosellas love the seeds.

As well as wattles, we have over 75 different species of plants for all situations in your garden. Our tubestock sells for just \$2.50 each with many specials as low as \$1 and any purchase over \$10 receives a free Grasstree (*Xanthorrhoea* species).

We will be returning to the Magpie Markets at Lawson Public School with a good selection of plants on Sunday 19th March and thereafter every third Sunday of the month. Further, we will have a stall at the Springwood Foundation Day on Saturday 1 April where we will have special deals on wattles together with our publication *Springwood's Wattles*.

And make a note in your diary now! We will be having our BIG AUTUMN PLANT SALE on Saturday 8 April at the Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls, 9am to 12 noon.

Enquiries to Kevin Bell, Ph/FAX 4787 6436, kbell@pnc.com.au



Make a real difference – switch to Green Power

What's it all about? We all use electricity everyday, but often forget to think about where it comes from. For most Australians this electricity comes mainly from coal-fired power stations, and these are one of the major sources of green-house gases and hence very real culprits in global warming. The average household uses about 18 kWh of electricity everyday and if this comes from coal it equates to around 7 tonnes of greenhouse gases each year.

What can you do? Well, there is something positive you can do, you can obtain your electricity from a supplier who purchases power from renewable sources such as wind, low impact hydro, or solar; these do not add to global warming. This is a result of the freeing up of the energy supply market so you are now able to choose from whom you purchase your power; that is you are no longer limited to just the local supplier in your area.

How should I go about it? To make sure that you are really helping the environment only purchase electricity that is Green Power accredited. Green Power is a government body set up to monitor renewable energy suppliers. The Green Power accreditation tick is your guarantee that the source is renewable (not fossil fuel), ensures that the supplier is audited annually, and that your purchase results in the construction of NEW renewable infrastructure (not just the use old hydro such as the Snowy). To learn more visit <http://www.greenpower.gov.au/>. Not only does this site tell you about the Green Power initiative it also provides a list of accredited suppliers. There is also a Green Electricity Watch group which examines the environmental credentials of various suppliers. The most recent published report (2003) is still worth a look, and a copy can be found at <http://wwf.org.au/publications/retailscorecard/>.

What are my options? Most suppliers offer a range of products and hence a range of prices, so have a good look around. To have a look at typical Green Power products, the Origin Energy web site <http://www.originenergy.com.au/> is worth looking at. Using the menu on the left follow "Environment" then "Energy Choices" It shows the types of products available (Hydro/Wind mix, Pure Wind, Pure Solar), and has a good Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) page.

Buyer beware! And remember whatever supplier you consider, always check for the Green Power accreditation tick. There are some suppliers that are marketing "renewable" products (often at the same price as coal-fired power)

but these are not necessarily Green Power accredited, and do not necessarily add to the renewable infrastructure of Australia. Fully accredited Green Power that is really helping to build NEW infrastructure will cost a few cents extra per day, but in all things "you get what you pay for".

Council action against environmental damage

Blue Mountains City Council's Draft Enforcement Policy will be available soon and comments invited over a six week period—watch the Gazette for details.

Have ever been frustrated by Council's failure to respond quickly to stop a tree being cut down or some bushland being bulldozed? This is your chance to have a say about how council's "enforcement policy" could be improved. Don't wait till you see sediment spewing over the top of another badly erected sediment fence! Have a think about what would improve environmental performance in the Blue Mountains. Which incidents should be considered **URGENT** and responded to immediately? Which can wait?

If you have had an experience of making a complaint and were annoyed by an ineffective response, it may not have been the fault of the individual council officer. It may have been that the Policy was not strong enough to allow effective action. Whilst good policy alone is not sufficient, there also needs to be adequate and trained staff to implement it, and support from the General Manager and councillors (with protection from interference). **Good policy is the first step.**

Members have worked hard for over 10 years to get good planning rules in the LEP 2005. Unless Council rigorously enforces it, this effort will be wasted. Two recent examples of environmental degradation which are not permitted under the LEP 2005 (and also LEP 91) which need a good enforcement policy are goats grazing on sensitive lands and a resident mowing into swamp on his land.

The Council needs to know that lots of us care about these matters and want it to act on our behalf. If you have an experience or other information that will help the Society in compiling a submission please contact Lyndal Sullivan (4782 1635 or lsullivan@eftel.net.au).

NSW Government set to shift costs to public sector

A major review is underway into "the burden" of NSW government and local council regulations. The rationale is that the business sector is suffering from the burden of regulation. Interestingly enough the regulations are apparently rarely pursued by government agencies even during blatant contravention by the business sector.

The Society has made a detailed submission on the **burden on the community and ultimately on the environment of the FAILURE of governments to enforce regulations.**

One recent example of the failure of government agencies themselves to comply with regulations was that of the unauthorised bulldozing of a section of the Six Foot Track and the surrounding area. This occurred in July 2005 and remediation has still not occurred despite encouraging site visits, the drawing up of specifications and assurances that it was an obvious priority. Damage to the creek-line and loss of vegetation cannot be costed yet (if ever). However, we can count some of the costs to the "whistle blower" (read "responsible member of our community"); just to get some response was 160 hours and over \$280 in the first five weeks (and this is still continues all this time later).

A clear example of the **private profits and public costs** is a Stormwater levy being proposed by Lithgow City Council. Flood mitigation works are needed because of the poor mining practices and rehabilitation standards at old coal mines in the Lithgow valley, including the old Hermitage Colliery, old Cobar Park Colliery, old State Mine, old Lithgow Valley Colliery, old Oakey Park mine, old Gender's Mine, and old Coalex Colliery.

Similarly, some of the new Environmental Levy imposed by Blue Mountains City Council is needed to stabilise creek banks which have been eroded because of inadequate stormwater controls on past developments.

We are all familiar with the upgrades occurring along the Great Western Highway through the Blue Mountains. These massive works by their very nature require vast amounts of environmental damage and as such a lot of mitigation works.

Many calls to the EPA by North Leura residents appear to have been useless, with sediment continuing to pour into Govett's Creek during and after each of our typical storms. The RTA and its contractors will simply move on to the next job and leave the public (via volunteers, environmental levy, etc.) to pick up the pieces.

The pieces in this case include deteriorating waterway via massive sedimentation within the council area and on into the Grose Wilderness Area, associated spread and increase of weed species due to the conditions that result from such sedimentation and the introduction of new species of weeds via landscape plantings.

If you have more examples of the burden of governments' failure to enforce regulations, there may still be an opportunity to contribute. Please contact Lyndal Sullivan 4782 1635 or lsullivan@eftel.net.au for details.

ARE NATIONAL PARKS PROPERLY FUNDED?

The terms of reference of the Senate Enquiry into Australia's protected areas were highlighted in the February Hut News (No 222, p2). The Society's particular concern is for the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWA) and other protected areas of the Blue Mountains.

Resource deficiency or 'Claytons' funding!

The Federal Government's funding of the GBMWA has neglected the purchase and management of private 'inholdings'. The extent of this under-funding could now be at least \$15 million, whilst pest-species management throughout the GBMWA needs an annual budget of around \$1 million to bring infestations under control. Despite accepting the financial benefits of World Heritage recognition, the Federal Government apparently lacks ongoing commitment to pest control.

The State Government is little better. Despite funding increases for the expansion of existing programs in 2005-06, and projected increases through to 2008-09, anecdotal and visual evidence suggest that funding of parks is inadequate. Tracks, signage and infrastructure are deteriorating, and have been for many years. It is possible to point to work that has been done, or is in progress, but the rate of improvements is failing to match the rate of decay.

The Carr Government had a strong environmental record in terms of park creation, but funding has not matched the needs. The State's unhealthy financial position is likely to impact on funding of low-profile environmental matters that lack overt voter appeal.

Threats in abundance

Climate change

Debate exists regarding the relative impacts of greenhouse gases, particulate pollution, deforestation and 'natural variations on climate change, but few would disagree with the statement that climate change is accelerating. BMCS sees climate change as a (if not the!) major factor impacting on the GBMWA and national parks.

The Federal and State Governments are committed to a fossil-fuel economy as long as coal remains nationally and internationally viable. The recent meetings between the Federal Government, USA, China and Japan produced nothing substantive. Relying on business-driven technical innovation with nothing mandated is a recipe for disaster.

The Federal Government should think beyond short-term political advantage, unchecked growth and unmitigated self-interest. It should sign the Kyoto protocol and enact legislation that ensures greenhouse gas emissions are reduced by 70-80% over the next 50 years. This would not stop environmentally conscious business from self-regulating by using technical

innovation to shorten the time-frame.

Abuse of groundwater

The abuse of groundwater, particularly as now advocated by the State Government to 'solve' Sydney's water-supply problem and drop electorally damaging desalination, threatens the GBMWA and the Blue Mountains national parks. How sad it is that effectively abandoning desalination is followed by obscene extraction of groundwater. When will government truly embrace a sustainable water supply policy?

Fires and fire management

The interaction of fire with flora and fauna is complex, but regardless of whether fire is natural or part of a hazard-reduction program, the resulting habitat fragmentation, limits the viability of some flora and their dependent fauna.

Apart from loss of biodiversity, regular broad-area burning of national parks can cause excessive environmental damage through gaining and preserving ground-access, cutting containment lines and back burning. Whenever fire trails open-up a region, unauthorized access follows and further damage eventuates. Taken to the absurd, fire management would be greatly improved by clearing everything and covering the remains with concrete!

Peripheral effects

The principal threats come from high-impact recreational pursuits and the mining and extractive industries along the western side of the GBMWA and parks. This region is in the Gardens of Stone Stage two proposal (currently before State Government) that advocates protection within State Conservation Areas and National Park extensions.

Newnes Plateau abuts the National Parks and the GBMWA. The Department of Planning sees it as the principal sand resource for the western Sydney growth area. Protection is essential because more sand mining will compromise both the unparalleled values of Newnes Plateau, and the GBMWA and parks.

Underground coal mining also affects Newnes Plateau. Visual and noise impacts, and substantial modification of the natural hydrologic regime due to mine-water make, extend beyond lease boundaries and affect the GBMWA and parks immediately to the east. Tracks for surface investigations and infrastructure expose the region to trail biking, 4-wheel driving and other destructive activities. Expansion of the coal industry over the next 20-30 years will be an ongoing threat

Legislative threats

In 2004-6 some State legislation over-rode parts of pre-existing acts, extended the relevant minister's discretionary powers, and promoted commercial interests rather than environmental outcomes. The Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment Bill 2005 allowed the Minister to disregard local and

environmental concerns when siting the (now fated) desalination plant. Biobanking, a biodiversity offsets scheme scheduled for implementation in 2007, permits an organisation to 'offset' environmental damage by either 'rehabilitating' a previously damaged area or purchasing environmental 'credits'. This hands the environment to developers.

The Federal EPBC Act could be a way of counteracting damage to endangered species in parks and around their periphery, and perhaps redressing the extremes of State legislation. Unfortunately, attempts to use this strategy rarely meet with success. There would seem to be little Federal will to intervene and perhaps infringe state rights!

Government's record

Despite perceptions, substantial portions of the Blue Mountains remain unprotected, or inadequately managed. Some of these portions contain the scenic, heritage, geomorphological and geological values lauded in the Gardens of Stone Stage two proposal.

The job of governments to reserve and manage examples of the State's diverse scenery and ecosystems is not complete. Now is the time for government to accelerate the process and take the next step by adequately funding the establishment and proper management of the system.

A copy of the full submission may be obtained by contacting the Society by phone, fax or email. **Brian Marshall.**

Free workshop

'Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act'

Explained 6-9 pm Wed 29 March,
Blue Mountains World Heritage
Institute, 23 Gates Ave Katoomba.

The hanging swamps found in the Blue Mountains have been recognised as part of an endangered wetland community under the EPBC Act passed by the Federal Government in 1999. **But does this recognition mean anything in practice? Can the EPBC Act help us protect our wonderful environment and address inappropriate development?**

Come and find out more at a free workshop conducted by Lyndall Kennedy from WWF. "EPBC Act Explained" goes for 3 hours and provides an explanation of the referral, approval and assessment process, a locally based case study to work through that process, an explanation of the heritage provisions and a look at the main case law.

The more informed we are about tools that can help us the better!

RSVP Tara Cameron 4751 1130, email dontara@ozemail.com.au by Tuesday 28th March if possible.

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES

Elizabeth van Reyswoud

Phone 4757.2694

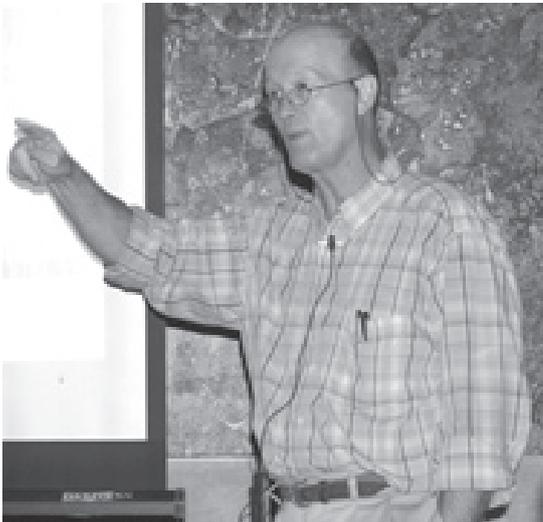
Email: mcreysw@bigpond.net.au

Post: PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

INSIGHTS INTO THE BLUE MOUNTAINS WORLD HERITAGE INSTITUTE

The first thing that struck me about **Dr John Merson, the Executive Director** of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute, was the strength of his vision — he is the first person I have seen at the Hut who had the optical strength and endurance to interpose himself between his Apple Powerbook PowerPoint projector and the screen and thus remain in welcome eye contact with his audience while operating his visual aids...

In short order we were then left in no doubt of the vitality and enthusiasm of his vision for the BMWHI, a message that has been reinforced for me because I engaged in the somewhat sneaky practice of photographing (without a flash) his emerging slide presentation.



Executive Director, Dr John Merson in full flight

and Western Sydney, the Sydney Catchment Authority, the Blue Mountains City Council, the Australian Museum, NSW Parks and Wildlife and the Botanic Gardens Trust. Each has made a contribution to funding, which, John said, is currently around a modest \$1.6m, and of course more is needed.

There are seven Institute programs led by eminent academics, each program being involved in a number of projects. For example, Dr Rosalie Chapple's Ecosystems Research program has six projects, Dr Roger Attwater's Urban & Agri-Industrial Development program has three projects and Associate Professor Sandy Booth's Integrated Catchment Management program has four projects. Professor Paul Tacon, who made a striking presentation to Consoc in 2004 on Aboriginal Cultural Mapping of the World Heritage Area, leads the Cultural and Heritage Programs, and assisted by Shaun Cooper, has four projects in hand. Eco-tourism & Visitor Impacts, Public Programs and Community Cultural Development (CCD) are also being addressed.

Members were gratified to learn that research is being pursued into threats to ecosystems in the GBMWA, into climate change and fire risk in the GBMWA, into monitoring wildlife in the BMWA (eg the brush-tailed rock wallaby, the quoll and the fox) and into buffer zones, involving possible harvesting of native plants and animals.

Residents down east of Bodington Hill and others found comfort in the fact that the Institute is evaluating options for a more environmentally sustainable urban development strategy for the Lawson precinct, where highway relocation, commercial premises dislocation, landfill area closure, and the Golf Course redevelopment are a volatile mix.

John went on to introduce the other new group which acts in support of the Institute — **the BMWHI Association**. Bob Debus is the Patron. The Chairman is Joe Landsberg, ex-CSIRO Chief of Forestry and current resident of Mt Wilson. Joe, of course, assisted Consoc, the Colong Foundation and the Colo Committee in launching the Gardens of Stone Stage 2 Park Proposal at Hasans Walls last December. Members include John Alexander, Chairman of the Lawson Chamber of Commerce, Paul Heath of Bathurst Council, Joan Domicelj, Heritage Expert and Leura resident, Stephen Hill, ex-Director of UNESCO ASIA-Pacific, futurist and social commentator, Richard Neville, and arts and public events administrator, Mary Travers. Yvonne Hellmers is the media and communications independent consultant.

One could not help but be impressed by the firepower that has been assembled under the Institute banner, while

remaining a little anxious about its ability to attract generous supplementary grants and deliver telling research within reasonable time constraints with strong advocacy.

However John proceeded to elucidate clearly and in detail some of the focus the Institute has already pulled on global warming, drought, growing aridity and escalating fire risk as it applies to our region: and in particular the negative impact on fire-dependent species under the threat of repeated over-burning.

Rosalie then took over to introduce us to her GBMWA eco-systems research, and was quick to focus on the factor of human intervention with natural processes. Her prime example was also about 'burning', as unusual as it was instructive, yet gruesomely entertaining:

The Parsis, a religious community of India, practising Zoroastrianism and numbering about 75,000, are concentrated in Maharashtra and Gujarat states, especially in Mumbai. The Parsis reverence fire (and other elements) as manifestations of the divinity of Ahura Mazda. To avoid contaminating fire, earth, or water, the Parsis dispose of their dead by exposing the bodies in "towers of silence" (circular structures some six metres high surrounding a stone courtyard) where vultures devour them. A problem has arisen: the vultures are dying out. That is because they have been poisoned after eating cattle carcasses fattened by the Parsis on anti-inflammatory drugs. To compensate, the Parsis have erected solar panels to provide a supplementary 'cremation', thus contaminating the 'holy' element of fire! A natural process circumvented, and as Rosalie remarked, where lies the blame, and wherein is the solution? Stop the Parsis dying, some 'waggette' suggested!

These imponderables led immediately after supper to a lively Question & Answer session, which covered such topics as our conceivable intervention in the natural evolutionary process, sustainability of groundwater as a resource, regional population explosion and the destructive right to endless consumption which is at large in all of the world's richer communities.

Finally, Rosalie and John invited direct participation of members in the work of the Institute, as a researcher, a research assistant, a volunteer, or by simply pointing the Program Leaders to existing data and knowledge. Significantly, the Institute is located at 23 Gates Avenue, Katoomba on Dharug and Gundungurra land in 'the Gully', a declared 'Aboriginal Place'.

Contact is via www.bmwhi.org.au

Ron Withington



Exec. Officer, Dr Rosalie Chapple

**LONGWALL COAL
MINING POLLUTES
AND DRAINS
OUR RIVERS**

WHAT DO WE WANT?

**A ONE-KM BUFFER
ZONE!**

WHEN DO WE WANT IT?

YESTERDAY!

**IF WE ARE WRONG, THE
MINER LOSES SOME
COAL,
IF THE MINER IS WRONG
WE LOSE A RIVER!**

This 'chant' paraphrases the pleadings of the Rivers SOS Demonstration held in Martin Place on Tuesday 28 February, with the fervent support of the Greens, principally Lee Rhiannon MLC.

Rivers SOS was launched in October, 2005. Twenty environmental/community groups (including Consoc and the Lithgow Environment Group) are now united in support of the Rivers SOS campaign asking the NSW Government to mandate "a safety zone of at least one (1) km both sides of all rivers in NSW, to stop the on-going wrecking of rivers by mining operations which are permitted to go under, or too close to, rivers in this State."

Following the demonstration, which was closely monitored by ABC radio (including an interview with Consoc President, Brian Marshall, for the program *Bush Telegraph*) the demonstrators adjourned to the Waratah Room at Parliament House where Lee hosted a workshop (and a luncheon).

Rivers SOS member groups recapitulated information on the actual and threatened degradation to rivers and water courses around the State caused by subsidence resulting from longwall coal mining with its attendant cracking of the rock strata and inevitable leakage, as well as from the discharge of mine effluents and dewatering. It was indeed a tragic tale. For example:

Gloucester is the pristine 'base camp for the Barrington Tops WHA', which sources the Avon, Gloucester, Barrington and Little Manning Rivers. The Avon is affected by blasting, phosphorus and sulphur from the nearby Stratford mine. Exploration licences have been sought west of Bucketts Way, where three connected areas cover 110 sq km, approach the main street and extend under the Avon and Gloucester Rivers.

The Lower Cataract River was mined in the 90s and is completely wrecked, with a multitude of cracks and 50% water loss,



The Rivers of Shame demonstration, led by Lee Rhiannon (front) with representatives of the groups which comprise Rivers SOS, and supported by such organisations as the NCC, NPA, TEC, Colong Foundation, Minewatch NSW, Greenpeace and Waterkeepers Australia. Brian Marshall represented the BMCS. The organiser was Caroline Graham of the Upper Nepean Catchment/Southern Coalfield group. Curiously, a demonstration by fishermen now denied access to Sydney Harbour due to its polluted waters was taking place outside the Mint building in Macquarie St at the same time.

still unremediated seven years after mining ceased. Mining under the Georges River has caused cracking and pollution and the destruction of the local beauty spot and swimming hole, Marhymes Hole. The Bargo River was cracked by longwalls and the bed of the river was tilted through upsidence in one spot. The Upper Nepean is under threat from plans to longwall right beside it.

Closer to home, Chris Jonkers reported on subsidence and/or dewatering damage to Coxs River, Long Swamp, Farmer's Creek, River Lett and other watercourses of the Lithgow area.

Rivers SOS asserts that it is just impossible to remediate rivers that have been cracked, and the resultant pollution can scarcely be controlled. Often the leakage and pollution can contaminate aquifers. Grouting has been attempted, but the strata conditions are never stable, and self-healing is just a dream. Guniting of the river beds is an aesthetic nightmare and a physical impossibility, even if it would give new meaning to the late Denis Kevan's "Concrete"!

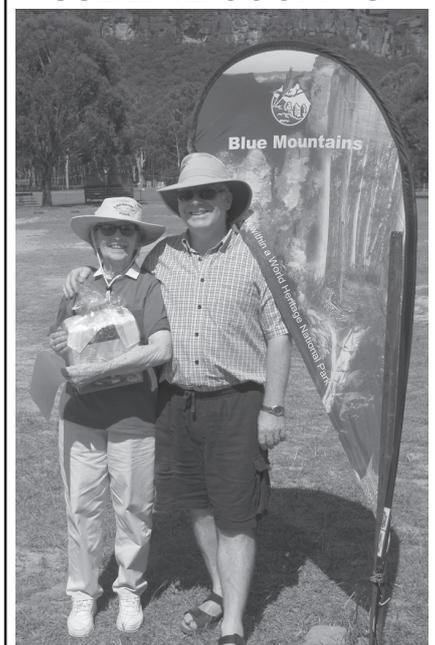
This leads Rivers SOS and a host of prominent environmentalists and scientists, including Jeff Angel, Tim Flannery, Robin Williams and Tom Uren to the inescapable conclusion that along with narrower longwalls and wider pillars, the only possible solution is to press to mandate through Statute a one-km buffer zone. As Keith Muir has said, "We know we can stop the damage with protection zones that have been established for cliff lines, railroads and freeways — so why not rivers?" The final decision is in the hands of the Minister for Primary Industries, Ian Macdonald.

Component groups of Rivers SOS are obtaining advice and assistance from Waterkeepers Australia. Rivers SOS itself has a further Sydney campaign event planned for March, and is seeking a Committee of Inquiry into Water Management. There

are no easy campaigns, but this one is particularly difficult, high extraction royalties forever tempting Government to give unto the mining companies almost precisely what they want. But as the famous Cree Indian saying goes:

**Only when the last tree has died
And the last fish been caught
And the last river poisoned
Will we realise we cannot eat money!**

SUBLIME COOKING!



Joan Gahl, seen here with Michael Willis, General Manager of the BMCC, won the **Bushcare Thank You BBQ Bake-Off** on 25 February with her tasty caramel slices. David Coleby won a Hard Yakka award for his stewardship of the Sublime Point Bushcare Group, of which Joan is also a member. Oh, yes, and Michael Willis out-hopped his staff to uncomfortably fall over the line as winner of the wheatsack race!

Michael Eades Reserve

A celebration of the life of Mike Eades and the official opening of Mike Eades Reserve, North Katoomba will be held on **Saturday 8th April 2006** between 2pm – 4pm.

Many BMCS members will have known Mike Eades and may have been part of the community effort to protect the Blue Mountains environment, particularly sensitive bushland and hanging swamps, that Mike passionately supported over the years.

Michael Eades joined Blue Mountains City Council in 1988, a pioneer of environmental management practices in local government. Mike made a major contribution to a heightened awareness and understanding of the special and fragile natural environment of the Blue Mountains. He was a champion of the need to protect the unique flora of the Mountains, achieving conservation of large areas of the natural environment through key planning instrument Local Environment Plan 1991 (LEP 1991).

Mike was a key player in establishing the Blue Mountains urban runoff Control Program (URCP), which received \$15 million from the State government.

Mike passed away in April 2002 at the age of 47. On December 19th 2003, following a submission by Council, the Geographical Names Board assigned "Michael Eades Reserve" as a geographical name for the reserve.

Members are invited to attend the naming ceremony of Mike Eades Reserve. Afternoon tea will be provided and a short guided walk conducted at the end of the celebration. Please RSVP your attendance to Adrienne Murphy, BMCC on 4780 5739 or amurphy@bmcc.nsw.gov.au by Wed 5th April.

Vox pop potluck by Diana Levy

I often have letters being written in my head and occasionally they make it to paper and thence to the audience. So when Robin Mosman wrote in these pages about the power of letter writing I decided to host an event which would give a social context for this. I thought that if people broke bread together, they would inspire each other to write great letters.

I called it a 'vox pop potluck' — vox pop means "the voice of the people". We can't be too bitter and twisted about democracy if we are expecting elected representatives to be mind readers. The potluck aspect means everyone brings a dish. This is fun too, because people bring their style of cooking to the table.

It wasn't specified what subject people would write about — I left that entirely up to their own sense of what matters to them. However I did provide envelopes, stamps and addresses. One person wrote very personally about the

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY BUSHWALKING GROUP

Our bushwalking group provides a range of activities. Membership of the bushwalking group is available to members of the Society. For further information contact the Activity Coordinator (listed) or Bushwalks Conveyor Bob van Reyswoud.. **Cost of insurance and affiliation fees is \$15 per member.**

Monday Leisure Walks: Usually 'Short Day' walks of 3-5 hours suitable for walkers of average fitness. Graded Medium, i.e. can include some short rock scrambles or some short section off track. Bring morning tea and lunch, plus carry at least 1 litre of WATER, 2 litres on warmer days.

Mar 13 Bennett's Lookout. Views over Grose Valley. Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 8.30. Ron 4757 1526.

Mar 20 Red Hands Cave. Aboriginal hand stencils. Meet Glenbrook Station commuter carpark 8.45. Heather 4739 1493.

Mar 27 Bus Trip to Jenolan Caves. Walk last section of Six Foot Track. Bus leaves Katoomba depot at 8.30. Cost \$10. Book with Norm 4784 1554.

Apr 3 Faulconbridge Point. Gentle undulating walk through open heath to look over Grose Valley. Meet Faulconbridge commuter carpark 9am. Allen 4751 7953.

Apr 10 Castle Head. Great views over Kedumba Valley, Mt Solitary. Meet outside Gearins Hotel, north side of Katoomba Station at 9.15. Norah 4757 4058.

Thursday Pleasure Walks: These easy to medium grade walks are conducted to suit the walkers on the day. Times given are approximate. Slower walkers are catered for and on longer walks there is an option of a slower group to complete a section of the walk. Phone the contact for any enquiries about the program.

Mar 23 Bus Trip to Sackville Ferry. Scenic route north of Hawkesbury River past areas of early European settlement. Morning tea at Streeton's Lookout and lunch at Sackville Ferry. Guide: Marie 4787 1257. Cost \$10. Bus leaves Katoomba depot at 8.30 am. Book with Simone 4757 3416.

Mar 30 Darwin's Walk. Car shuffle to start at Falls Road end. Gradual incline to Wilson Park. Meet Wentworth Falls carpark, near the clock 10 am. John 4757 1558.

Apr 6 Lockyers Line of Road to Hartley Vale. Historic track to Hartley Vale, approx 5 km. Car shuffle to return. Meet Mt Vic Station 10am. Marie 4787 1257.

Apr 13 Dargan Creek Dams, Clarence. Easy walk to dams and old pump house. Meet Mt Vic Station 10am. David 4757 3416. Phone by 8am to check if walk is on.

Apr 20 Lyrebird Dell. Some step descents and ascents on good tracks. Meet junction of Leura Mall and Megalong Street 10 am. Joan 4782 2218.

Weekend Bushwalks: Always discuss with the contact if the walk you would like to do is medium/hard or hard, before attending. If this is your first walk, or you are in any doubt, discuss with the contact or Bushwalks Convener Bob van Reyswoud, 4757 2694, email mcreysw@bigpond.net.au

Mar 25 Robert's Pass, Valley of the Waters, Conservation Hut. Meet Wentworth Falls Stockyard carpark 8.30am. Grade HARD. Mary 4787 6918.

Apr 1 Lockley's Pylon. Meet cnr GWH and Mt Hay Road, Leura 8.30 am. Grade MEDIUM. Annemarie 4759 2172.

Apr 8 Numantia Falls. Meet Faulconbridge station carpark 8.30 am. Grade MEDIUM. Andy 4758 6302

Apr 15 Baltzer's Lookout. Meet Blackheath Station carpark 8.30. Grade MEDIUM. Lawna 4751 1529.

subject of refugees, and she has already had a reply.

The feedback I got about the night was very positive, so I have decided to make it a regular event and see how it evolves over time. I found, on the first attempt, that it's important to have a silent atmosphere around the "letters" part of the evening.

You might like to try this in your area. Democracy — use it or lose it!

Fairies, fungi and trolls ... by Diana Levy

Last week the interpretive walkers revisited "Fairy Bower" at Mt. Victoria. To those of us from down the mountain, it was the first cold blast of autumn. The poplars at Mt Victoria are yellowing, ever so slightly.

We argued about the correct pronunciation of 'harbinger' then made our way into the shelter of the creek-line where there is an old drawing on a rock of a woman, called 'the white lady'. The hem of her long skirt would be a little bedraggled by the time she finished the

round trip of this beautiful walk.

The dampness has given rise to very different types of fungi, from a large brownish one with a tessellated look on top which one walker said was edible, to coral fungus. And also, not long after we'd gotten onto the subject of trolls,

Like fingernails
poking through the earth
bright red fungi

Surely a good spot for them, there in that dim rainforest under the mountain wall with its perpetual drip of mosses, and Cox's cave somewhere above our heads. There were two types of red fungi — some like stalks and some very tiny ones with a head on top of them. But no wonder the name of this walk suggests enchantment!

Bushcare

The Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group meets at 9 am on the 2nd Saturday of every month. Tools are provided. Bring morning tea, gloves and drinking water. Contact Karen 4757 1929 for meeting place and more information.