



"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

Pie in the Sky Airport Approval

In a recent press release, Keith Muir of Colong Foundation said that Minister Josh Frydenberg's announced conditions for Badgerys Creek Airport are weak. If adopted, the proposed conditions create a 'plan for an airport plan' that will be developed by the 'seat of the pants' method.

For example, the proposed conditions state 'Airspace and flight path design must explicitly *consider whether arrangements are required* for managing Aircraft Overflight Noise at night'. The airport developer is not obliged to meet a night time aircraft noise standard. Instead this proposed condition is an open invitation for the airport developer to put up a case *against* managing aircraft overflight noise at night.

The proposed consent conditions do not establish standards that protect the World Heritage Area or residents. They are as bad as the worst Part 3A concept plan ever developed in NSW, where outcomes and design flip-flopped all over the place creating anger and confusion in the community.

Public inquiry needed: The proposed Badgerys Creek Airport needs a public inquiry process to get certainty into protection measures for the World Heritage Area and the community. The community should mistrust the proposed deferral of the key issues of airspace design, noise and air quality considerations till later, as the proposed conditions do not create a framework of environmental performance measures.

Read comment by Ross Coster: Western Sydney Airport – Final Environmental Impact Statement offers no protection for Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, on page 3 of this newsletter.

Protecting Popes Glen Reserve

Blue Mountains Conservation Society Bushcare Officer and deputy coordinator of Popes Glen Bushcare Group, Paul Vale, spoke to the Blue Mountains Gazette (BMG 30/11/16) about concerns that a change in zoning could pave the way for large scale development at the Council-owned Blackheath Caravan Park and disturbance to Popes Glen Reserve, which borders the caravan park.

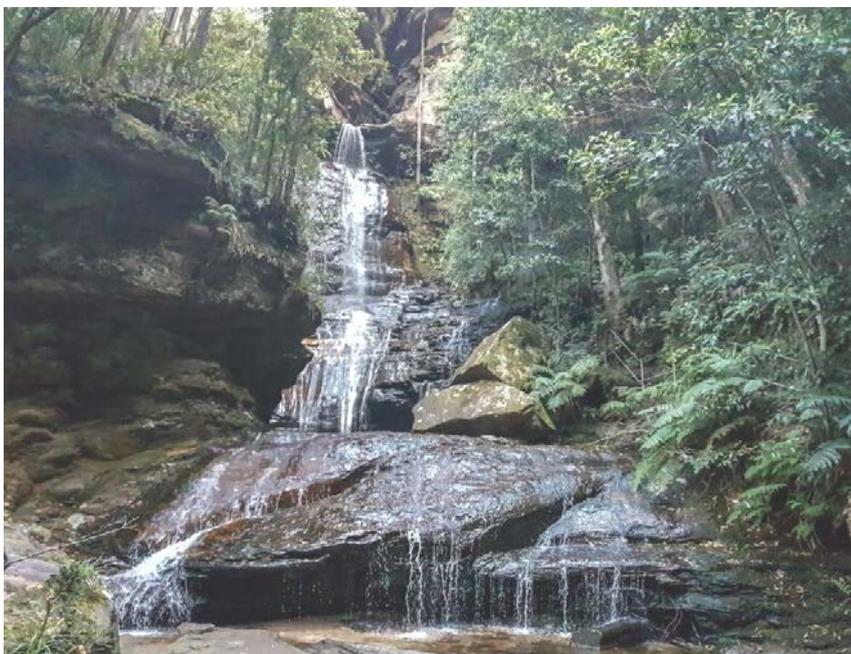
Popes Glen Reserve is a Blue Mountains swamp, an endangered ecological community. Over 27 years, dedicated local residents have worked as bushcare volunteers and removed masses of weeds and returned the reserve to a rich ecological community where threatened plant species thrive and birdlife abounds. This is the headwaters of Popes Glen Creek which flows into World Heritage National Park and over the Horseshoe Falls into the Grose Valley.

The intricacies of adequately protecting the environment around this site are complex and there is a need for further campaigning and negotiation over this issue.

BMCS NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

Our Nursery Manager Sue Nicol will not be continuing in that position beyond the March 2017 Annual General Meeting.

If you are interested in taking a management or advisory role for the nursery, to liaise with our team of volunteers, please contact Don Morison, President, 8230 2116, president@bluemountains.org.au



Empress Falls

Descending from the Conservation Hut you can follow a vast network of walking tracks, most of them constructed by volunteers of the Wentworth Falls Reserve Trust over 100 years ago.

Empress Falls is at the head of the beautiful Valley of the Waters. (The "Empress" would be Victoria, Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland who adopted the additional title of Empress of India in 1876. - Nearby is Queen Victoria Lookout, and Queen's Cascade is above the Wentworth Falls).

The photo was taken by Emanuel Conomos, a member of the Society's Saturday bushwalking group.

"Hut News", the newsletter of
 Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.
 P.O. Box 29, Wentworth Falls, 2782
 Phone 4757 1872 (leave message)
 Email: bmcs@bluemountains.org.au
 Web page: www.bluemountains.org.au
 Facebook: Blue Mountains Conservation
 Society Twitter: [bmcsnsw](https://twitter.com/bmcsnsw)
President: Don Morison 8230 2116
president@bluemountains.org.au
Senior Vice President: Tara Cameron
 04198 24974 taracameron4@gmail.com
Second Vice President: Vacant
Treasurer: Bart Beech 4739 9947
bart.beech@schneider-electric.com
Administration Officer: Jeanette Robertson
sao@bluemountains.org.au
Bushcare Officer: Paul Vale
 4787 8080 04290 14454
bushcare@bluemountains.org.au
Environmental Education Officer:
Beth Rohrlach: 04247 32287
BethRohrlach@yahoo.com.au
General Meetings Convenor: Vacant
Landuse Officer: Angela Langdon
 0417 004 722
landuse@bluemountains.org.au
Meetings Secretary: Heather Hull
 4739 1493 hhull001@bigpond.net.au
Membership Secretary: Ross Coster
 4739 2987 04184 62576
membership@bluemountains.org.au
National Parks/World Heritage Officer:
Brian Marshall 4784.1148
briannamar@bigpond.com
Newsletter Editor: Christine Davies
 4787 7246
hutnews@bluemountains.org.au
Plant Nursery Manager: Sue Nicol
 4787.8887 nursery@bluemountains.org.au
Publicity Officer:
**Sustainable Population and Climate
 Change Officer:** VACANT
Threatened Species Officer: Nakia Belmer
 04143 44741 bayern11@tpg.com.au
Website Manager: Valda Low
webmaster@bluemountains.org.au
Walks Convenor: Maurice Kerkham
 4739 4942
mauricekerkham@hotmail.com
Project Officer-Events: Rob Baigent
 4759 3104 rob.baigent@bigpond.com
Project Officer-Gardens of Stone:
Madi Maclean
mlhmaclean@bigpond.com
Bushfire Representative: Hugh Paterson
 4751.2303, mob 04275 12303
fmatter@bigpond.net.au

NURSERY NEWS

Spring is a great time in the garden, in the bush and in the nursery. The newly potted seedlings really take off with the warmer weather in November and some seem to shoot up before your eyes. It is a very rewarding time for the volunteers as they can see the results of their work and it is very satisfying for the nursery manager and part of what makes the job so worthwhile. Another part is interacting with our customers at the markets: providing plants and advice and receiving feedback, suggestions and sometimes compliments!

Our last markets for the year are at Blackheath on the 4th December and Lawson Magpie Markets on the 18th December. There are no markets in January and our first market for 2017 is 5th February at Blackheath.

I have really enjoyed my time as manager of the nursery but I have always said I would only take on the role for three years. I will not be standing for re-election at the next AGM in March 2017. We need to find a new manager by then- someone who knows and loves native plants and would enjoy working with an enthusiastic and experienced team of volunteers.

The nursery has been going for 25 years at Blackheath. We have not as yet found a suitable alternative site for a second nursery to replace the old Lawson Nursery and work is continuing at Blackheath nursery for the moment. The future is dependent on new initiatives for next year.

Sue Nicol, Nursery Manager.

BMCS NURSERY PLANT SALES

We offer the home gardener, landscaper or contractor a big variety of quality local native plants at economical prices.

Plants can be purchased at:

Blackheath Community Market, 1st Sunday of the month at Blackheath Public School, 9am to 1pm (not January)

Magpie Market, 3rd Sunday of month at Lawson Public School, 9am to 2pm (not January)

Tube stock \$3. Discounts for bulk orders.

Enquiries Sue Nicol 4787 8887 nursery@bluemountains.org.au

Aerotropolis—a horribly bastardised word and an even worse idea

The Draft West Sydney Region Plan envisages an "aerotropolis", a string of major development in "strategic centres" around a Badgerys Creek international airport. <http://www.greatersydneycommission.nsw.gov.au/west-district>

A lesson learned in a failed aerotropolis in St Louis (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aerotropolis>) that "not all airports and airport areas can develop into successful aerotropolises" should be a powerful deterrent to the cheer-squad-like behaviour of Badgerys Creek airport supporters.

The largest areas of growth in real long-term jobs in Australia are likely to be in financial services, health and education. Airport or none, it will be multiple decades before Greater Western Sydney's share of these jobs significantly increases. Sensing the extreme future embarrassment of politicians who support Badgerys Creek when they fail to attract any more than short-term, underpaid jobs to the region, shonky developers will demand the right to put up environment-damaging, low standard dormitory suburbs or even less desirable subdivisions.

Any urban growth around the Badgerys Creek site is certain to be a shambolic disgrace.

The **DEADLINE** for the next issue of HUT NEWS is

21 JANUARY 2017

Christine Davies, 4787 7246
hutnews@bluemountains.org.au
 PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES

Ross Coster
 02 4739 2987 0418 462 576
membership@bluemountains.org.au
 PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

Western Sydney Airport – Final Environmental Impact Statement offers no protection for Blue Mountains World Heritage Area

In September the Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure finished the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Western Sydney Airport. In response to this 5,531 page set of documents, we *could* have mobilised a team, taken the documents apart, written a comprehensive submission, just like we did for the Draft EIS last year. We didn't do this, because the document is *Final* and not for public comment!

The Final EIS was presented to the Department of Environment, they studied it, and they approved it with, to quote Minister Josh Frydenberg, a 'comprehensive set of more than 40 conditions' that will 'protect the environment'.

I have read the conditions document, there are 41 conditions, and most of them are complete fluff.

QUOTE: 'The Site Occupier will prepare a Construction/Operational Environment Management Plan (CEMP or OEMP) for item XXX in accordance with Table 28-YY of the EIS and submit it for approval'.

TRANSLATION: The Site Operator will develop plans for construction, human remains removal, electricity grid relocation, Aboriginal artefact salvage, noise and vibration, biodiversity management, soil and water, traffic and access, air quality, European heritage, waste and resource, visual and landscape, community and stakeholder engagement, airspace design, aviation fuel supply, sustainability, supply of native seed, threatened flora propagation, reporting and auditing, all complying with chapter 28 of the EIS.

So after reading 5,500+ pages, the DoE just agreed with the EIS, told the 'Site Occupier' to develop a batch of plans, and off we go building an airport.

There is no mention of World Heritage other than 'airspace and flight path design must minimise to the extent practicable the impact of Aircraft Overflight Noise on ... the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area, particularly areas of scenic or tourism value, and Wilderness Areas'.

Critical matters like where will the planes fly, how will

fuel be supplied, what will ground transport look like, what homes will be acquired, what noise treatments will be applied to which buildings, what flight altitude is acceptable over Wilderness, none of these have been addressed, just pushed off into a future set of plans. No night-time curfew was imposed by the Minister, despite nearly *everybody* calling for one.

The only 'comprehensive' area of the Conditions document is around Biodiversity Offsets. The principle here is that, since threatened species (*Marsdenia viridiflora* and *Pultenaea parviflora*), and threatened ecological communities (*Cumberland Plain Shale Woodlands* and *Shale-Gravel Transition Forest*) will be *destroyed* by this development, Greening Australia and Mount Annan Botanic Garden will be given millions of dollars to go onto the site, gather seeds, propagate plants *if possible*, and plant them somewhere else (again, if possible) for a net gain.

There is a statement in the associated media release that galls me somewhat: 'The conditions have been informed by meetings with key local leaders to hear first hand the issues important to the community'. I was at this meeting, it lasted one hour, it was in Canberra (not in a quiet Blue Mountains back yard), I got to speak for three minutes, and everything I raised was ignored. This is the state of 'Extensive Consultation' in modern Australia.

So now we have to wait for each of the CEMPs and OEMPs to be written and released, study them all, write submissions, be ignored again, all in the hope of reducing the impact of this project.

A 1,000 page contract, which we don't get to see as it is 'commercial in confidence', now goes to Sydney Airport Corporation to see if they are interested in building WSA, a project that their former Chairman describes as a 'waste of money'.

The campaign goes on. No Airport!

Ross Coster nwsa@bluemountains.org.au

(Photo by Heather Coster)





New threat in Ben Bullen State Forest

The Gardens of Stone conservation proposal area is facing a new threat from open-cut coal mining. As mentioned briefly in last month's Hut News, Castlereagh Coal (Manildra Group) has applied to open-cut 50 hectares of woodlands adjoining its Invincible Mine in Ben Bullen State Forest north of Lithgow. The independent Planning Assessment Commission (PAC) twice rejected open cut coal mining in the same woodlands when Coalpac was the mine owner.

Ben Bullen State Forest is home to the unique pagoda landscape in the unprotected Gardens of Stone area. It stretches from above Lithgow to Capertee and is a buffer zone protecting the Greater Blue Mountains World heritage national parks. See the Society's website for more information on the Gardens of Stone conservation proposal: <http://bluemountains.org.au/gos2.shtml>

In 2012 and again in 2014 the PAC recognised that the area Castlereagh Coal want to open-cut was part of the unique pagoda land system comprising the pagodas and cliffs, steep slopes and woodlands.

In 2012 the PAC recognised

- "the significance and sensitivity of the pagodas and the pagoda landform environment" of this area.¹
- "The pagodas are considered to be internationally significant geological features some 250 million years old and worthy of total protection".²

In 2014 the PAC found that

- "The Commission accepts the finding of the 2012 PAC Review, the Office of Environment and Heritage and the Department of Planning's 2013 Assessment Report, that the pagoda landform complex is a natural feature of special significance and that the features warrant the highest level of protection, i.e. they should be fully protected from risks of mine induced impacts."³
- "... the highest and best use for the land is conservation purposes." "this proposed mining is incompatible with the significant conservation values of the site."⁴
- "...the area containing pagoda landforms has high conservation value, both in terms of the unique

landforms present and the key habitat features for threatened species"

Open-cut mining is totally destructive.

Open cut mining will completely destroy the woodlands and the soils on which they grow. The proposed mining area is part of the woodlands adjoining the pagodas and is an integral part of the pagoda land system. This land system together supports the plants and animals which live in the pagoda landscape. Once mined, the plants and animals will be gone. The land cannot be restored to its former natural values. As the PAC said in 2012, open cut mining has never been successfully rehabilitated in NSW.

Weak economic arguments for destroying this woodland

There is no need for these woodlands to be destroyed. The application to mine acknowledges that there are other sources of the special "nut coal" fuel needed for Manildra's Shoalhaven factory. Mount Piper Power station, where the rest of the coal would go, currently uses coal from other mines.

What happens next to this application?

Submissions on the proposed Invincible Mine extension have now closed. Thank you to all who put in a submission. It is very important for us to defend the Gardens of Stone area.

The applicant company prepares a response to the submissions and then Department of Planning prepares an initial assessment report and recommendation about whether the application should be approved. After that we expect there will be a review undertaken by the PAC in the new year. At that stage there should be the opportunity for more public comment.

The society will keep you informed about this latest threat to the Gardens of Stone area. You can read the society's submission on our website.

Madi Maclean

¹ 2012 PAC Report p.163

² 2012 PAC Review Report

³ 2014 PAC Determination Report 17 October 2014 (2014 PAC Report), p.10

⁴ 2014 PAC Report p.16



Invincible Mine adjacent to the proposed mining extension

The Sustainable Home, by Gary McCue and Alex Bergmann

NSW Solar Bonus Scheme Ending 31st December: To Smart Meter or Not to Smart Meter?

Do you have solar (PV) panels and receive 60 cents (or 20 cents)/kWh from the NSW Solar Bonus Scheme for electricity sold to the grid? If yes, a letter was recently sent to you announcing the Solar Bonus Scheme closure on 31st December, 2016. Nearly 150,000 homes with solar panels receiving this bonus in NSW (including many BMCS members) must now replace their existing gross feed-in electricity meter with either a net feed-in meter or a digital “smart” meter, or forfeit any solar electricity payments after 31st December. To avoid delays, homeowners should act quickly or risk waiting until after the New Year for a new meter. Both meters have pros and cons, and because each home’s situation is unique, you need to consider your options before deciding.

Your first step is to contact your energy retailer. Powershop, Diamond, Red Energy, AGL, Origin and others are offering free smart meters with installation and solar buyback rates ranging from 6 cents to 12 cents/kWh. With a smart meter you can keep your existing single tariff, or switch to a time-of-use (TOU) tariff where prices vary with time of day: highest “peak” prices are 1-8 pm weekdays; lowest “off-peak” rates are 11pm-7am; while other times incur “shoulder” tariffs. However prices vary considerably with each provider, especially “peak” usage tariffs and daily meter charges, and households with families or anyone working 9-5 often have difficulty “load shifting” electricity usage from high peak tariff times. Therefore remaining on a single tariff may be your cheapest option.

Another choice is having a Level 2 electrician install a net meter; with installation it’s about \$600. High electricity-using households or businesses will have the advantage of delaying any future decisions in NSW to require TOU tariffs, which is occurring in Victoria. If a free smart meter is offered by your energy supplier, lower energy users may find the expense and long payback period with a net meter isn’t justified versus receiving a free meter.

Regardless of your meter choice, start “load shifting” electricity consumption to 10-3pm to utilise peak solar hours; the grid is eager to purchase your unused solar-generated electricity at low buyback rates! And shop around. Solar buyback deals offered by energy retailers may include higher electricity tariffs, higher daily meter rates, and lower discounts compared to non-solar customers. For useful tips see

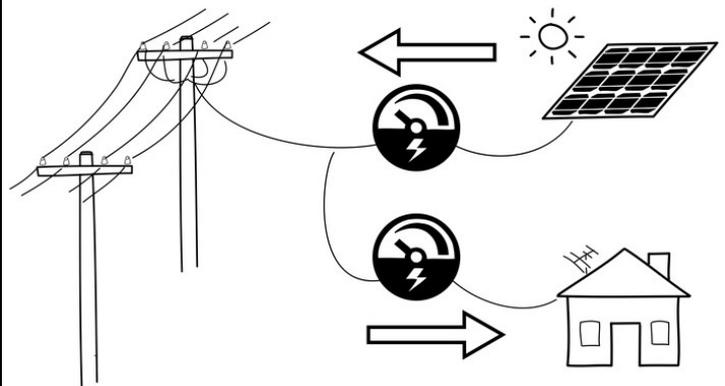
www.solarcitizens.org.au/smart-meter-offerings-for-nsw-solar-bonus-scheme-customers

This new column is by local solar experts Gary McCue, with the Sustainability Guys in Blackheath, and Alex Bergmann with Energywise Living in Katoomba. Future columns will address maximising use of solar-generated electricity, adding battery storage to your solar panels, solar hot water choices and other sustainable home topics.

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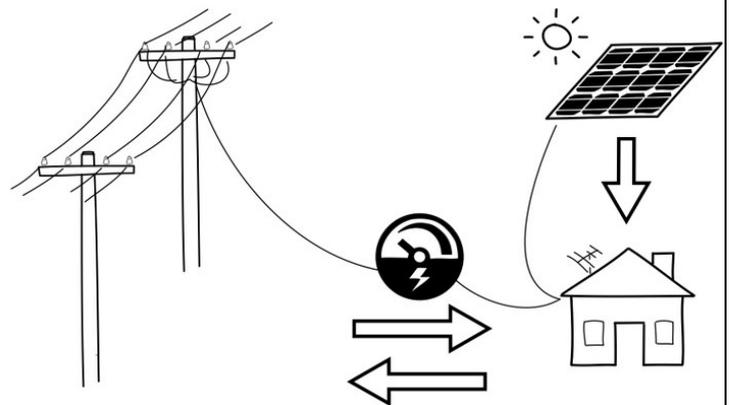
What is Gross metering?

Gross metering for a solar household utilises two electricity meters. One meter measures electricity imported from the grid and consumed by the house. The other meter measures how much electricity has been produced by the solar panels.



What is Net metering?

Net metering (including smart meters) utilises a “bi-directional” or “import/export” meter, measuring both the excess solar electricity that isn’t consumed by the household as well as electricity imported from the grid.



Diagrams courtesy of Solar Citizens website <http://www.solarcitizens.org.au/life> after fits find out more

Christmas cobblers

The Liberal-National Party’s Minister, Senator Matt Canavan, told the Senate that, when you leave your house lights on all night on December 24 to help Santa find you, 53% of the power will come from coal. It is refreshing that coal disciples need no fables or fairy-tales to justify themselves.

WE know about Santa’s eco-friendliness. You may tell the children that, if everybody turns the lights out and goes to bed early, the reindeer will make sure that Santa finds your house.

Post-truth politics

Sometimes it helps one’s understanding, especially if we as individuals are powerless, to put a name to a phenomena, and this one is increasingly dominating the socio-political culture of the west. An excellent article ... https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-truth_politics

“Everything is true and nothing is true” (Barack Obama)

Land-clearing, horses in wilderness, and consummate stupidity!¹

By Dr Brian Marshall

With Christmas approaching, it would be nice to feel that the NSW government, having inflicted near-unrelenting environmental damage during the year, might ease its crusade. Unfortunately, Premier Baird and his two principal acolytes, Ministers Stokes and Speakman, continue merrily on their proselytising way, regardless of the spin. Few now doubt that government is about facilitating rampant development in the Greater Sydney region, enhancing agribusiness through easing land-clearing restrictions, and making national parks and other public lands commercially viable; all involve the exploitation of assets to the detriment of historical, social, heritage and environmental values. Perhaps the dollar sign should replace the waratah as a NSW symbol!

Land-clearing: the *Biodiversity Conservation Bill 2016 (BCB)* and the cognate *Local Land Services Amendment Bill 2016 (LLSAB)* passed unamended through the NSW Parliament on November 17. The *BCB* repeals the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*, the *Nature Conservation Trust Act 2001* and provisions relating to animals and plants in the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, while the *LLSAB* repeals the *Native Vegetation Act 2003*. The changes have supposedly been made in the interests of efficiency and reducing confusion. Yet envirogroups could understand and work with the various pieces of legislation, whereas those most ardently seeking change were developers and farmers.

Those seeking simplification and ease of comprehension could well be disappointed. The Bills need many hours of analysis to even gain a rudimentary understanding. Also, there is much more to come in terms of enabling regulations, tools and products to support the legislation. These will progressively be developed during 2017. It is like buying a house before it is completed – just trust the builder!

The *BCB* says its purpose is “to maintain a healthy, productive and resilient environment for the greatest well-being of the community, now and into the future, consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development.” Such words are cheap! One could read ‘productive’ in economic terms, and ‘resilient’ as expressing the environment’s capacity to withstand adverse impacts from, for example: low-level overflights, ‘enthusiastic’ land-clearance, ill-conceived horse-riding assaults on declared wilderness, and hydrologic disruption from longwall mining. But the real problem with the *BCB*, is that, despite being revised in response to submissions², many concerns remain:

- The Acts in paragraph 2 (above) evolved over the past 15-40 years – their repeal means that the experiential learning of decision-makers, proponents, and opponents has been cast aside, thereby generating economic and environmental costs while users gain understanding of the new legislation.
- The Biodiversity Offsets scheme and its methodology have been enormously expanded, but far from clarified. There will be many teething problems before the full implications (positive and negative) of the system are identified and accordingly rectified.

- Irrespective of the complexity and size of the Bill, my ‘guesstimate’ is that about 30% relates to biodiversity conservation, and the remaining 70% deals with the various ways which enable the proposal to be offset and approved. The saying ‘where there’s a will, there’s a way’ could be amended to ‘where there’s a Bill, there are multiple ways’.

The *LLSAB* also claims to have been modified in response to submissions, but the changes are minimal and far outweighed by the volume of things which cause concern³:

- Local Land Services (*LLS*) will have responsibility for native vegetation land management in rural areas, despite the potential created for corrupt practices – the fox in charge of the hen house comes to mind!
- Exempt and regulated categories of lands, although slightly modified in the Bill, will still be the basis on which land-clearing is administered – the maps are as yet unavailable, but they could, depending on the scale of mapping, foment ‘misunderstandings’ which prove highly detrimental to the environment.
- Clearing of native vegetation is code-based – parts of such clearing are still self-regulated and inevitably open to manipulation, irrespective of the role of the *LLS*.
- There are numerous circumstances under which category 2-regulated land (including category 2-vulnerable regulated land) can be cleared either ‘legally’ or ‘inadvertently’ – it seems that, whilst trying to cover every eventuality, the regulations are designed for a high level of comprehension, but they will be managed via a system geared to a much lower (more forgiving) level of compliance.

The Stand Up For Nature alliance believes that its campaign and negotiations achieved some gains in relation to the *BLB* and *LLSAB*, but that much which should have been changed remains and must be very closely monitored. Envirogroups are reduced to watching for scars on the landscape in order to shame the Government – in the meantime, environmental protection goes backwards.

Horse-riding in wilderness: protection of declared wilderness as pristine cores of true conservation within national parks should be a no-brainer. Yet NPWS (National Parks and Wildlife Service) has conducted two-year trials to assess damage from horse-riding on selected tracks in wilderness. The trials commenced in 2014. In August 2015, envirogroups were advised of the findings ‘to that date’. It was obvious that the trials were both poorly designed and monitored, the level of ‘horse-riding’ participation was woefully inadequate, and any statistical interpretations would be meaningless. The envirogroups proposed that the trials should be terminated because scientific studies show horse-riding is incompatible with conservation of wilderness⁴. NPWS opted to continue the trial, although suggesting that the final report was likely to oppose opening wilderness to horse-riding.

(Continued on page 7)

Land-clearing, horses in wilderness, and consummate stupidity! (Continued from page 6)

The trials, again marked by low horse-riding usage, finished in April 2016, but full evaluation will take until December 31, 2017. NPWS currently suggests that low usage equates with low environmental risks which can readily be managed, and by implication, that horse-riding in wilderness is acceptable. This is nonsensical: it disregards the inadequacy of the trials; it ignores the existing science; it incorrectly assumes rectilinear relationships between horse-riding numbers, environmental risk and management of impacts; and it effectively denies the obvious, that **no horse-riding (the desirable outcome for wilderness) will incur no risk.** Despite this, NPWS proposes to amend the plans of management to allow continuation of horse-riding in wilderness in the trial-locations until 31 December 2017. The Monty Pythonesque logic of this action in advance of the trials' full evaluation beggars belief; unless of course the data are little more than window dressing, the outcome is pre-determined and the real aim is the politically desirable provision of 'sustainable' horse-riding in wilderness⁵.

Consummate stupidity: there are two aspects to this. The first is the role of government: it has taken long-established well-understood Acts and attempted to incorporate them in two Bills which, under the guise of being more efficient, have made approval-outcomes for miners, developers and farmers a near-certainty; also, in its voracious pursuit of 'underperforming' assets, it would seem to be opening wilderness to horse-riding, whilst totally failing to appreciate the near-priceless environmental values of declared wilderness. The second, I have been told, is the role of the environmental movement in exhausting its resources by attempting to deal with government in a rational way; to this I answer that a dictatorial government must be held accountable and its destructive processes slowed, because there will still be much to save when the pendulum swings and sanity prevails.

¹ The fully referenced article is available from the Editor or Author.

² See http://www.bluemountains.org.au/documents/submissions/BiodiversityConsLaws_BMCSSubmission_160626.pdf for BMCS's original submission.

³ See endnote 2.

⁴ Krogh, M. et al. (2007), Effects of recreational activities on source water protection areas – literature review, Water Futures Pty Ltd, Sydney, for Water Corporation of Western Australia.

Newsome, D., Smith, A. and Moore, S.A. (2008) Horse Riding in Protected Areas: A Critical Review and Implications for Research and Management. *Current Issues in Tourism* 11 (2):144-166;

Ansong, M. and Pickering, C. (2013) A global review of weeds that can germinate from horse dung. *Ecological Management and Restoration* 14(3):216-223

⁵ The Society's full submission opposing changes to the plans of management and horse-riding in wilderness is accessible at http://www.bluemountains.org.au/documents/submissions/HorsesInWildernessPoMChanges_BMCSSubmission_161026.pdf

Metropolis of three cities?

Draft District Plans have been released by the Greater Sydney Commission (GSC). This includes the draft West District Plan which includes Penrith, Hawkesbury and Blue Mountains local government areas.

A few quick highlights:

- The plan is underpinned by the assumption the Western Sydney Airport (WSA) will be built.
- Increasing tourism is the major push in terms of new jobs in the Blue Mountains.
- The greatest impacts and the greatest focus of the West District Plan - in terms of new development, new housing and new jobs - is Penrith.
- The Eastern Escarpment is identified in terms of new recreational and tourism opportunities.
- Climate change impacts have been identified as a major issue for Western Sydney.

Setting new housing supply targets which Councils are expected to meet are a significant part of the draft Plan. Blue Mountains has a five-year new housing target of 650 of a total of 8400 for all the West District (Hawkesbury, Blue Mountains and Penrith). The twenty year target (i.e. up to 2036) for the West District is 41,500. This total is not broken down into local government areas.

The draft is open for comment until March 2017. You can read the draft at the Greater Sydney Commission website www.greatersydneycommission.nsw.gov.au/west-district

The Society will be making a detailed submission to the plan and will be encouraging submissions from the Blue Mountains community.

Land Use Subcommittee lus@bluemountains.org.au

Poets' Corner

Disturbed

He stays
with a stillness
that is absolute
not coiled but warm
and loosely arabesqued
poised for flight
his lidless eyes are fixed
as I approach.

I have disturbed his work
the tongue-flick hunt
for mouse and frog
on circuits round the house
regret I do not see him
cross my path again
while he in perfect stillness
observes.

Michele Fermanis-Winward

Readers of Hut News are invited to send a poem inspired by the Blue Mountains, maximum of 20 lines. Poems can be emailed to Brendan Doyle brendan049@gmail.com or posted to Poets' Corner at 5 Lurline Street, Wentworth Falls 2782.

DEEP IN IT WITH HALF A PADDLE

"Flying into Western Sydney Airport sometime after 2026 (NSW Planning Minister Rob Stokes) says he'd like to see something a bit different." (SMH 22/11/16)

.....

We take up the story in the depth of winter 2027. Mr Stokes has been living in one of the few parts of Sydney where the majority of people are not banned from air travel through pollution-induced respiratory illness, so he has been able to organise a media flight with an international tourist as a guest to land on the partly constructed taxiway which is all that so far exists of Badgerys Creek Airport. Sadly, the Australian Government has outsourced air safety to the NSW Government and the flight crashes near the western shore of Lake Burragorang. Only Mr Stokes and the tourist survive.

Two 90 year old rural fire service volunteers are supervising a hazard reduction nearby and rush to assist. All younger potential volunteers are sleeping on park benches or dining out on entrepreneurial start-up grants. It is years since the NSW Government abolished its paid fire brigades and National Parks and Wildlife Service. But the 90 year olds competently extract the victims and sell the thirsty Mr Stokes 125 ml of drinking water, using an app on his smartphone, after warning that Lake Burragorang is falling behind in the control of cryptosporidium and giardia.

The victims are propped up in a slurry of manure, caused by the horses that the NSW Government has encouraged to proliferate in the Wilderness upslope. A couple of crocodiles and a cloned sabre-toothed tiger, escaped from failed animal parks the NSW Government has launched, wander by.

After splinting most of Mr Stokes fractures, the firies notice that the hazard reduction has escaped and is threatening an ember shower on the burgeoning satellite city of Nattai. Hastening apologetically, they bundle Mr Stokes onto a surf ski on the lake and give him half a paddle. They explain that he should paddle through the smog until he sees the tower blocks of Silverdale casino and rooftop greyhound circuit to use as a navigation guide. He is warned that the security guards at Warragamba waterfront gated community will open fire on him with machine guns. Mr Stokes tries to skype for additional assistance on his smartphone but all he contacts is a call centre operator in India, where the Shooters Fishers and Farmers Party now have a majority in the national parliament. He gets no sympathy.

The tourist has super-duper travel insurance so the firies give him three quarters of a paddle for his surf ski and a spare machine gun to shoot back at the security guards. As Mr Stokes struggles to keep up with the tourist through the smog-laden air, he recalls his 2016 comment that he'd like to see something a bit different when flying into Badgerys Creek.

Survey Techniques for Citizen Scientists

The perfect gift for a budding ecologist, citizen scientist or anyone interested in learning more about our natural world!

Written and produced by National Parks Association, this comprehensive wildlife survey guide covers everything from mammals, reptiles, bats and birds to insects, marine life and vegetation survey methods. A sample is available on the publications website..

Orders can be placed online (<http://www.npapunlications.org.au/survey-techniques-for-citizen-scientists.html>) or by calling the NPA office on (02) 9299 0000.

THE MUSHROOM TUNNEL Glenbrook, Blue Mountains

The highway roars itself senseless.
Beneath, gloved in circular brick
we find the old railway tunnel
which worms an S shape through the hill
like a grub through an apple.

When engines dragged the tourists up
from filthy Sydney, with fire and smoke
they pushed them through this dark hole,
and sometimes half-way through
wheels slipping on slick wet track
fire-box roaring, engine straining,
the driver would conk out for lack of air.

Across the tunnel's mouth
an arched door with a fan
flushes millions of spores at the day -
a corrugated iron cervix for a sandstone
womb
cultivating fungi.

It draws me in - the door clangs shut.
Inside it's damp and faintly mauve,
fluoro lights illuminate the curve
which glooms around a corner,
wet light dribbles along the floor,
the smell of libraries rotting away.
A slow arc of shelves line the outer wall
row upon row of bulging plastic bags
inside each, the secret web,
the mycellium hidden in compost,
earth within earth.

If I could plant your secrets here
moisten them with questions
would they also belly out
gasp for air
like the driver coming round
push on towards the light
fruit into an answer?

Diana Levy

WILD BLUE MOUNTAINS 2017 CALENDAR

Readers of Hut News have commented on the wonderful photographs by Ian Brown which have appeared in our newsletter from time to time.

Ian Brown's 2017 Wild Blue Mountains Calendar is now available from local retailers and direct from Windy Cliff Press (02 4787 1420 or ianbrown-photography.com.au). With 15 fine nature photographs from across the region, Ian Brown has captured magnificent scenes from the World Heritage national parks and Newnes Plateau, and beautiful places within the City of the Blue Mountains such as Glenbrook Lagoon and Springwood's Deanei Reserve.

Wild Life in Blackheath Christine Davies

A TOURIST CIRCUIT

We collected our English visitor from his accommodation and drove out past Hat Hill with random glimpses of cliffs and valleys. At the car park we were greeted by the songs of many different birds. This turned out to be from only one bird – a Superb Lyrebird. Even though the breeding season had finished, the male lyrebird was dancing and going through his extensive repertoire of calls, so close to the track we could hear him moving though we couldn't see him. We stopped and listened for some time.

I remember my sense of wonder the first time I turned a corner to be confronted by the spectacle of the Wind Eroded Cave, the honeycomb pattern in the rocks, the colours of the sandstone. Not a place to leave in a hurry, but eventually we made our way back to the car park and along the track to Anvil Rock. Beside the track and overlooking a magnificent view, there is a memorial seat for Joyce Brister. We stopped for a while to remember Joyce and to admire the view. At the Anvil Rock lookout, gazing into the depths of the Grose Valley, I could hear the leaves of the trees rustling in the breeze and a Currawong calling nearby when Martyn commented that it was "so quiet" which is very true - natural sounds don't disturb the peace.

The drive to Megalong is an experience in itself, along a narrow winding road through dry eucalypt forest, cool dark rainforest with lovely tree ferns and forests of magnificent Mountain Ash with ribbons of bark hanging from their trunks. Then the valley opens up, surrounded by cliffs of the main ridge, Elphinstone Plateau and Shipley Plateau, with cattle grazing in the paddocks.

After lunch at the tea room we drove to the Old Ford Reserve. The granite rocks in Megalong Creek are spectacular. The creek usually appears to be in good condition but on this day it had green algae growing in the water.

We heard a number of frogs, their calls like long murmurs. I had heard these frogs at Murdering Creek on the Six Foot Track, not that far away, and was told they were Poddlebonk Frogs. Another frog I more often hear is what I have called the "Banjo Frog". This frog has a simple call – sounds like "BONK!" When a whole lot of these frogs are calling together it sounds like plucking the strings of a banjo. Looking up Google (as one does) I am informed that the Poddlebonk Frog is a Banjo Frog and I am now confused. Can anyone help?

(Photo: Granite rocks in Megalong Creek)



BMCS Planning and Development Resource Kit

Do you want to take action on an environmental issue in your neighbourhood or the Blue Mountains more broadly?

Do you want information about the laws and procedures relating to development and environmental protection?

Find out what YOU can do! Go to the Planning and Development Resource Kit www.bluemountains.org.au/pdrk-welcome.shtml

You can become a member of Blue Mountains Conservation Society

- Post this Application Form with your cheque or money order to: Blue Mountains Conservation Society, PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls, NSW 2782, OR
- Join online at: www.bluemountains.org.au

(Use capitals please—even for email address)

Name(s) 1.
2.
3.

Address:
.....PC

Phone(s)

Email

I/We agree to support the aims and objectives of the Society as set out on reverse side of this membership application:

Please sign if named above.

Signature(s) 1.
2.
3.

MEMBERSHIP FEES (please circle one item)

Single \$35 Concession (Senior/Student) \$25

Household \$40 Household Concession \$30

Corporate (negotiable)

Membership (circled above) \$

Donation (tax deductible) \$

Bushwalkers: please add

\$20 per walker per annum. \$

TOTAL AMOUNT \$

Send my copy of Hut News by

Please tick box mail internet only

Would you like to be involved in any of the following activities or working groups? (Please underline):

Land use/development issues; Environmental Education; Threatened species issues; Website and social media; Plant nursery assistance; Bushcare; Publicity/photography; Water quality/sourcing studies; Administration;

ENQUIRIES: Phone 02 4757 1872

Email: membership@bluemountains.org.au

A BEQUEST: Please remember us in your Will.

The Law Society of NSW recommends the following wording: "I bequeath the sum of \$... to the Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc. for its general purposes and declare that the receipt of the treasurer for the time being of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society shall be complete discharge to my executors in respect of any sum paid to the Blue Mountains Conservation Society".

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Blue Mountains Conservation Society is a community organisation working to achieve the preservation and regeneration of the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains.

The Society believes that World Heritage status provides an opportunity for local community members to become custodians of the unique biodiversity and scenery of the Blue Mountains.

The Mission of the Society is to help conserve the natural environment of the Blue Mountains.

The Aims and Objectives of the Society are to:

- Disseminate and foster an understanding of the ideals of Conservation.
- Promote the need for ecological sustainability.
- Protect the natural environment—flora, fauna, habitat, water, land and air.
- Actively oppose those human activities which degrade or destroy the natural environment.
- Repair the adverse effects of human activities upon the environment.
- Encourage the love of the natural environment by conducting a regular program of bushwalks.
- Increase the pool of expert knowledge about the natural environment, through meetings, excursions, research and other activities.
- Provide information to the public on matters of Conservation, especially through the Conservation Hut at the Valley of the Waters, Wentworth Falls.
- Maintain close and friendly relations with like-minded groups.

Welcome to new members

Steve Corbett
Helen Carlaw
Ian Dudley-Bestow
Ruth Thompson
Fiona Vaughan
Rita Riccio

VALLEY OF THE WATERS BUSHCARE

The Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group meets on the second Saturday of each month, 9am - noon.

Tools and gloves are available.

Bring a drink, a snack and a sunhat.

NEW MEMBERS ARE WELCOME.

Phone Karen 4757 1929.

Two New Books by Jim Smith

Jim has provided the following details.

South Pacific Pinnacle. The exploration of Balls Pyramid

"Balls Pyramid presents one of the most marvellous and beautiful sights imaginable". (Burns Philp catalogue 1911).

"One of the most remarkable islands ever discovered." (*The World's News*, 1923).

"What an awe-inspiring work of nature!" (Francis Chichester, 1933).

"Balls Pyramid...most dramatic of all the Pacific Islands." (Douglass Baglin, 1970).

"It is doubtful whether any more impressive stack exists anywhere in the world." (Geoff Mosley, 1988).

In 1969 I was a member of the second successful expedition to climb Balls Pyramid, an extraordinary spire of volcanic rock 22 km from Lord Howe Island. Only 54 people have ever reached the top of this peak, which is the tallest sea stack in the world.

You may have heard of the most famous inhabitant of Balls Pyramid, the Lord Howe Island Stick Insect or Giant Phasmid. I was the 'expedition zoologist' on the 1969 expedition and brought back the first collection of biological specimens from the Pyramid for the Australian Museum. This included the first physical evidence (exoskeletons) that the Phasmid, which had become extinct on Lord Howe Island, had survived on Balls Pyramid. These flightless insects coexist with thousands of seabirds, giant centipedes and two species of lizards, making the ecosystem of Balls Pyramid very unusual.

As well as a complete description of the wildlife, the history of climbing on Balls Pyramid (which was banned in 1986) is covered in detail. The exciting accounts of climbers, together with 217 illustrations, vividly portray the feelings of wonder evoked by one of the world's most remarkable places.

This 296 page hardcover book is not sold in shops and is only available direct from Jim Smith. To order see the website www.ballspyramidbook.com.

The Aboriginal People of the Burratorang Valley.

The beautiful Burratorang Valley, in the southern Blue Mountains, is now a 'lost world', even though it is only about 25 km from Katoomba and Penrith. Most people can only see part of it from a distance, such as at McMahon's Point lookout, south of Wentworth Falls, or the Burratorang lookout near Oakdale.

Ever since I saw stone tools in the Burratorang Valley in 1988, I have wondered about who the original inhabitants were, and what had happened to them. I developed a fascination with local Aboriginal life after finding so many artefacts, living places and artworks on bushwalks in the southern Blue Mountains. I located long-hidden archival records of local Aboriginal families and decided to write the book as a tribute to their resilience. It has taken me 28 years of research to put together this story of the Gundungurra people of the Valley and their struggles to stay on the country they loved while maintaining their culture. It is a very moving story, but not as bleak as the histories of other areas, as the black and white residents of the Valley learned to get along together quite well until they were all forced to leave after the construction of Warragamba Dam.

This book is one of the most detailed histories of an Aboriginal community ever written in Australia. There are 198 illustrations showing the Valley and its people.

This 332 page book can be purchased at bookshops and visitors' centres between Glenbrook and Blackheath.



Images (clockwise):

Bushwalkers near Hat Hill found this old chair which does not belong, but it seems to invite one to install oneself and survey this extensive Blue Mountains swamp against the backdrop of the peaks above Banks Wall on the far side of the Grose.

Drosera binata—look closely and you will find tiny insects which have been attracted and trapped on the sticky leaves.

Petalura gigantea, the Giant Dragonfly, at home in a Blue Mountains swamp.

Gahnia sieberiana, a frequently occurring Blue Mountains swamp plant, against a background of mist. (Giant Dragonfly photo by Ian Baird, others by Christine Davies)

31. THE SWAMPS WE SEE FROM THE ROAD, Hat Hill.

The acquisition by National Parks and Wildlife Service of private land at Hat Hill Road earlier this year was another small advancement in the sustained campaign by this Society and others to preserve Blue Mountains swamps and make the public more aware of how important they are.

A 2015 chronology on our Society's website by Lyndal Sullivan with excellent photographs by Dr Ian Baird outlines years of achievements (<http://bluemountains.org.au/swamps.shtml>) but we still need to take every opportunity to make their role better understood and correct misinformation.

Various kinds of swamps play a role in nearly every part of the Greater Blue Mountains. Hat Hill Road is one of the best places to see them and comprehend their role in our broader ecology. Swamps aid the flourishing of significant species including the endangered Giant Dragonfly and Blue Mountains Water Skink. As our climate becomes more subject to extremes, swamps are valuable storage reservoirs, particularly the hanging swamps found on many slopes above Blue Mountains cliff-lines.

Swamps regularise the flow of streams and waterfalls during cycles of drought and excessive rain. This safeguards tiny ecological systems such as the wet cliff-face plant communities, some of them containing very rare species like the Dwarf Pine which depend on a regular spraying from waterfalls. The temperate rainforest communities in our canyons and valleys also rely on stream-flow being sustained.

Some commentators confuse some of our swamps with monocultures of grassland or the products of long-term indigenous management of the Blue Mountains landscape by fire. The various roles of indigenous people and fire in the mountains has been the subject of a long discussion by writers such as Margaret Baker (Geographical Society of NSW, Conference Papers No 14, 1997), and Andy McQueen (*HERITAGE* Blue Mountains Assn of Cultural Heritage Organisations, 2013). Indigenous people increased their numbers in high altitudes about 5,000 years ago when their tool technology improved, allowing better use of small mammals including possums and koalas. "Fire stick farming", a much bandied-about example of indigenous land management, probably belongs to less rugged areas of Australia.

The swamps in the mountains contain diverse flora and fauna. Positive developments like the latest National Park addition must strengthen our resolve to promote their significance.



This "Blue Trail" is a collective description for sites in the western Blue Mountains that arouse natural or cultural interest or both. Most are only a short walk from roads or vehicular tracks. One day, a high quality walking path may link them.

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc: BUSHWALKING ACTIVITIES

Membership of the bushwalking group is open to Society members. The BMCS Bushwalking Guide which explains the numbered grades can be found on the Society's website www.bluemountains.org.au or can be posted on request. For more information call Maurice Kerkham 4739 4942, mobile 04024 02783, email mauricekerkham@hotmail.com or write to PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782. **Late changes to the program will be published on the website.**

SATURDAY WALKS: Usually a full day longer walk at a faster pace. Bring morning tea, lunch and adequate water. If you are a new walker to Saturday walks, before attending contact the designated contact person or the Group Co-ordinator Harold Thompson harold.thompson@bigpond.com 6355 1762 or mobile 0409 010 737

Saturday Walks driver reimbursement: *In an effort to ensure that car drivers are adequately compensated for the use of their vehicles a driver reimbursement policy applies* (Check www.bluemountains.org.au Saturday Walks page for details)

- Dec 10 **Mt Hay & beyond** to Boorang Crag. Great views over the Grose Valley. Leader Eddie. 47842691 Meet at Leura Primary School. 8.30am. 9km. Grade 3. Map Katoomba.
- Dec 17 **Transit of Venus & Paradise Pool.** Swimming opportunities. Leader Bob. 0408947325 or bob.reyswood@yahoo.com.au Meet Woodford Stn. south side 8.00am. 9km. Grade 2. Map Katoomba.
- Dec 22. **Saturday Walker's Christmas Party.** Venue Grand View Hotel, Wentworth Falls. Booking essential. Contact Bob. 0408947325 or email at bob.reyswood@yahoo.com.au
- Dec 24. – Feb 18 No walks scheduled.** Walkers can meet at Wentworth Falls Stockyard Carpark, at 8.00am, elect a leader and a walk, according to weather conditions. Remember to keep cool and hydrated.

MONDAY LEISURE WALKS: Short Day walks of 3-5 hours, suitable for walkers of an average fitness. Bring morning tea and lunch and adequate water. The Group Co-ordinator is Keith Dorrian, 4736 1010, 04111 62345, keithdor53@hotmail.com

- Dec 12 **Christmas Party Harbour Cruise.** 3.5 hrs. Morning tea, lunch, dessert, optional bingo etc. Cost \$45. Self purchase bar on board. Each person needs to phone 1300 551 804 and book/pay for themselves. Ask for Seniors and Retirees Big Day Out booked in the name of Judith Dyer. 30 seats available. Meet The Pier, opposite the Star Casino, at 10.45am. Judith Dyer 0419 780 640.
- Dec 19 **Wentworth Falls Lake Circuit.** Easy walk around lake with lunch in the Picnic Shelter. Bring a plate to share. Meet Wentworth Fall Station Car park 9-30am. Mary Read 4739 0786. Grade 1.
- Dec 26 **No walk**
- Jan 2 **South Lawson Waterfalls Start at Honour Ave Lawson** then onto Adelina, Junction, Federal and Cataract Falls, Lawson. Meet top of Honour Ave 8-35am. Keith 0411 162 345. Grade 2.
- Jan 9 **Mount Blackheath, Blackheath.** Easy walk on ridge top, with views. Meet Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre (BANC) 9.40. Maurice 0402 402 783. Grade 1.
- Jan 16 **Hat Hill and Bald Head plus Anvil Rock.** Easy walk with some off track. Meet BANC 8.40 am. Car pool. Chris Smith 4787 6979. Grade 2.
- Jan 23 **Victory Track to Sassafras Gully, Faulconbridge.** Shady forest walk, 5 km. Meet Faulconbridge Station car park (south side) 8.50 am. Ros King 0417 261 465. Grade 3.
- Jan 30 **Popes Glen, Braeside Circuit via Govetts Leap, Blackheath.** 7km track along creeks and mountain views. Meet BANC 8.40 am. Ros King 0417 621 465
- Feb 2 **Linden Creek from Faulconbridge Station.** Down and along Linden Creek. Small amount of off track. Meet Faulconbridge Station carpark (south side) 8.50 am. Wayne Read 4739 0786. Grade 3.
- Feb 13 **Leura WWI Memorial to Lyrebird Dell, Golf Links LO, Fairmont Resort, Lillians Bridge, Conservation Hut and then to Wentworth Falls village via Darwins Walk.** 10 km. Some worn steps and tracks. Meet Leura Station commuter car park (outside Baptist Church) 9.30 am. Bob Taylor 4784 1060. Grade 3.

THURSDAY PLEASURE WALKS: Walks 2-3 hours conducted at a leisurely pace to suit walkers on the day. Bring morning tea, adequate water and lunch if noted. Group Co-ordinator is Beverley Thompson, 4757 2076, denfenella12@bigpond.com

- Dec 15 **Walls Cave, Blackheath.** Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 10.00am Leader Tracy 0434 362 611. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 2
- Dec 22 and Dec 29 **No walk.**
- Jan 5 **Wentworth Falls to Inspiration Point and return.** Meet Stockyard Car Park 8.45am. Leader Beverley 4757 2076. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 2
- Jan 12 **Evan's Crown with lunch at Tarana Pub.** Meet Mount Victoria Station 8.45am. Leader Keith 0411 162 345. Car pool \$5. Grade 2
- Jan 19 **Ball's Head and Berry Island, Sydney.** Delightful bushland harbour walk. Meet top of escalators Central Station 9.30am. Leader Keith 0411 162 345. Take lunch. Grade 2
- Jan 26 **Public holiday. No walk.**
- Feb 2 **Govett's Leap to Pope's Glen, Blackheath.** Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 8.45am. Leader Tracy 0434 362 611. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 2
- Feb 9 **South Lawson Waterfalls, Lawson.** Meet Honour Avenue near shops 8.45am. Leader Beverley 4757 2076. Car pool. Take lunch. Grade 2

Read about our bushwalkers' exploits on Facebook with lots of wonderful photos.

<https://www.facebook.com/BmcsBushwalking> and
<https://www.facebook.com/bmcslongerbushwalks>

BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION SOCIETY www.bluemountains.org.au

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