

HUT NEWS

"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow's People"



Local Environment Plan 1997

LEP 1997 is now on public exhibition. This not only affects existing built up areas, but will protect the natural environment for maybe the next 20 years. **It is very important that large numbers of residents support the improvements to environmental management proposed and voice their concerns about any inadequacies.**

The Conservation Society's Land Use Committee propose to strongly support the following:

Ⓒ the Environmental Protection and EP/Acquisition Area zones throughout the documents because they will protect: *steep slopes, *significant flora and fauna, *watercourses/drainage lines, and prohibit development in areas of *high bushfire threat, or *inadequate sewer services.

Ⓔ the provision of buffers around areas of natural ecological significance contained in EP and REC-EP zones.

Ⓕ the application of split zonings to private land to enable the application of EP

Ⓖ village and tourist zones as concepts in order to concentrate commercial development around existing services and public transport nodes.

Our concerns are:

Ⓒ lack of protection of land which is too sensitive to be developed but might not have been identified as such at this stage. We want Council to cover this by adding a

definition of "constrained land". This definition would include land which has any one of the following features: *a slope steeper than 20%, *contains significant flora and fauna communities + its protective buffer, *a watercourse/drainage line or a buffers of a watercourse, *a high bushfire threat. This could be applied to prevent development or at least restrict what is allowable on such constrained land.

Ⓔ the location, extent and allowable activities of the Employment Zone (e.g. "offensive establishment")

Ⓕ the absence of any Schedule identifying sensitive vegetation units (as is in LEP 1991). We believe that all sensitive vegetation communities in LEP 91 should be included and added to.

These issues and concerns will be discussed at the public forum being organised by BMCS on Thursday 11 December at 7.30 at the Mid Mountains Community Centre, Lawson. We urge you to attend and also to write your own letter to Council about the above issues (and more). The BMCS submission will carry much more weight if members just write about a couple of issues of concern. The closing date for submissions to Council is 31 December. If you want any help don't hesitate to call any members of the Landuse Committee, Don (59.2471), Linda (82.1291), or Lyndal (82.1635).



**Amendment 25 to LEP91
Support the amendment!
Meeting at Lawson, Tuesday,
2 December 1997 at 7.30 pm.
BE THERE (See enclosed flyer)**

will probably be made at Ministerial level. There is much to be done before 1 July 1998, but it would appear that a viable nomination can be prepared. The nomination is far from completed — but, we have just seen the first glimmer of light for some time.

Living Near the Bush

Many people who live in the Blue Mountains don't know what impact they are having on the bushland which they love. Wouldn't it be lovely if there was a book available to all residents telling them all about it? This has been a long thought of project with many people — and now it is about to happen!

For the past twelve months, Blue Mountains Conservation Society and others have been preparing "A Voluntary Code of Practice for Living Near the Bush". And now we have got funding from the Federal Government's Natural Heritage Trust to pay someone to finish the job.

Members are invited to apply, in the manner described in the advertisement, for the position advertised on page 2.

Grounds for Optimism

The nomination of the Blue Mountains as a World Heritage area has been an issue for the best part of ten years.

Supporters of the nomination see environmental and economic benefits flowing from the activity. Additional funding would be expected to result in improved planning and management of the area. Environmentally damaging activity could be kept out, using Commonwealth legislation which exists to prevent State Governments allowing undesirable and/or incompatible activities in a World Heritage Area. Additional tourists could be expected to boost the local economy. Nomination detractors see this additional traffic as having possible "over-use" implications, including more pressure for eco-tourism developments inside National Parks.

Earlier this year, State and Federal Environment Ministers Pam Allan and Robert Hill reaffirmed their respective government's commitment to the preparation of a nomination, with a target completion date for the nomination of June 1998. Evaluation of the nomination by the

International World Heritage Committee would take a further eighteen months.

Also announced in early 1997 was the formation of a Reference Committee, which comprises well known environmentalist Geoff Mosley, representatives from community environment groups, including the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, NSW Minerals Council, tourism groups, Aboriginal interests and local Government.

At the latest meeting of the Reference Committee, State and Federal representatives announced that joint funding was now available for the preparation of the nomination, that a consultant was to be engaged to prepare the nomination document, and that the terms of reference for the consultancy would be circulated without delay. Commitment to 1 July 1998 submission date was reiterated. Still to be determined is the area to be covered by the nomination — The Greater Blue Mountains area, as initially proposed by Geoff Mosley and the Colong Foundation, or an enlarged area — or something in between. The decision

"Hut News", the newsletter of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.
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Deadline for next issue is Dec.12

LAND USE

Calming the Debate

Although the next Council election is not until September 1999, recent debates about Mountains developments have been rather savage. No doubt this is partly because the exhibition of the proposed planning instrument, Local Environment Plan 97, closes at the end of December. I recently had a conversation with Blue Mountains Alliance founder and Katoomba Real Estate Agent, Bob Yates. Bob expressed concern that LEP 97 in its exhibited form is 'so confusing as to prevent a large number of property owners from understanding what they would or would not be allowed to do with their properties'.

Another complaint I have heard lately is that some people in the Mountains are 'always against things and never for things' although the complainants have not made clear what 'things' they are talking about.

From my discussions with many BMCS members, I can say this — there is a clear commitment from Blue Mountains conservationists to keep the Planning debate focussed on the issues. This is also true of BMCC Council staff and councillors such as Berriman, Clarke, Gaul, Hamilton and Henson who have put great effort into ensuring that Council and community group representatives understand and respect each other's views on Planning matters. There is a widespread desire for the final form of LEP 97 to be in plain English — capable of straightforward interpretation by both lawyers and ordinary mortals.

BMCS often receives requests to oppose developments, which it has to turn down because there are no sound environmental objections.

I urge members to attend our Public Meeting about LEP 97 at Lawson on 11 December. I believe at that meeting and beyond, BMCS will prove we are FOR responsible and environmentally sustainable developments and only AGAINST developments that are irredeemably dangerous to the environment.

Closed Doors — Far and Near

Accusations of lack of openness in Council decision-making are not confined to our own region. Byron Shire, on the far North Coast, has environmental disputes to rival the Blue Mountains, including its own McDonalds and Club Med sagas.

Not long ago, the Shire's Council appointed some community representatives to a committee to recommend a new General Manager. The committee recommended Robert Tickner, a former Federal Minister and one-time manager of the Nature Conservation Council's Environment Centre in Sydney. Byron Council then held a meeting behind closed doors, overturning the committee's proposal and appointing a career public servant to the job. Why do some councillors even bother pretending that they care about community opinion?

—Don Morison.



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

Uphold Native Title

Aboriginal people have legitimate Native Title rights at common law. The Federal Government's Native Title Amendment Bill ignores the principles of coexistence as upheld by the High Court.

It also poses a serious threat to Australia's environment!

Native Title can be a tool for conservation because it is the coexisting property rights of Aboriginal people on pastoral leases that hold the land in trust for all Australians. Under coexistence Aboriginal people, local governments, pastoralists, miners and other stakeholders negotiate their own (local or regional) agreements about land use. Negotiated agreements can protect everybody's rights and the environment.

Land under pastoral lease covers 42% of Australia. Under the proposed law State governments will be able to upgrade pastoral leases and extend lease activities.

A 1995 report by C.S.I.R.O. shows that national clearing rates on freehold land are twice as high as on leasehold land. Leases enable governments to apply specific management requirements. Removing Government controls and upgrading pastoral leases will have severe consequences for the environment.

Unsustainable land use will be facilitated including broad-scale land clearing, intensive irrigated agriculture, native-forest logging, and unregulated tourism on some of Australia's most vulnerable and degraded ecosystems.

What you can do.

① Write to the Prime Minister. Tell him that the amendments to the Native Title Act must confirm Aboriginal rights to Native Title. Upgrading pastoral leases puts Australia's fragile environment at too great a risk.

② Sign the Australian Citizens' Statement for Native Title. Contact: Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (02) 9810 3922.

Helium Balloons

During this year's Blackheath Rhododendron Festival several balloons given out by the Commonwealth Bank were seen floating towards the National Park.

Where do balloons go when they are released? The ORRCA Newsletter, Autumn 1993, tells the story of a young sperm whale washed

ashore.

The main diet of sperm whales is squid. For some reason squid congregate around pieces of plastic floating in the ocean. Within the school of squid that this whale ate was a heart-shaped balloon. Days later the young whale was weak and the pain in his stomach was so severe that he no longer wanted food. Food eaten since could not get past the balloon which was stuck between his large and small intestines. The balloon couldn't be evacuated from his body - the digested food was poisoning him.

Attempts to rescue the whale and to move him to deeper water failed. He broke free of the harness and swam into the maze of pilings under an amusement pier where the waves dashed him into the pilings time and time again.

A necropsy was carried out to find out what could have been wrong internally to cause him to beach in the first place, and the balloon was found. It was still intact except for the silver colouring and it even had a purple ribbon attached.

Plastic is a huge problem in our ocean. Dolphins, whales, seals, sea turtles, countless sea birds, fish and other marine life continually suffer and die from plastic through either ingestion or entanglement.

With the impending Olympics we could see huge numbers of balloons released at the Opening and Closing Ceremonies — or will we be able to look back on them as the Environmentally Friendly Games?

And what happens to the balloons which float into our National Park??? It is all litter and we don't need them.

Welcome to New Members

Ben Scheuler, Glenbrook
Kate Shanahan, Faulconbridge
Jennie Whyte, Mount Victoria
Kathy Hale & Murray Wilson, Katoomba

PART-TIME POSITION VACANT ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT OFFICER/ JOURNALIST

Needed to prepare text and select graphics for Community Environmental Education Booklet

EMPLOYER:

Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc.

TIME-SCALE:

To commence February 1998. 16 weeks x 15 hrs/week with extension possible.

ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS:

- Excellent communication and word processing (Word 97) skills;
- Broad understanding of environmental issues;
- Demonstrable research and reporting skills;
- Excellent team participant;
- Able to work alone and meet deadlines.

DESIRABLE:

- Knowledge of local environment and degrading processes;
- Completion or good progress in a relevant course;
- Experience interacting with community groups and agencies;
- Computer graphic skills.

For Information Package, ring 02 4759 247 between 6 am and 10 pm and leave your postal address, or send a SAE to the address below:

APPLICATIONS SHOULD BE FORWARDED TO:

Don Morison, B.M.C.S.

P O Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

To reach Wentworth Falls Post Office by 8 January 1998

The Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment

Our story continues... (Part 3)

After the flooding of the coastal estuaries, 10,000 years ago, the present catchment of the Hawkesbury-Nepean system stretched over a large area to the north, west and south of Sydney but did not include the land east of Prospect Hill. Instead its headwaters begin on the elevated cliffs overlooking the coast at Bulli where the Cateract River begins. Then comes the Cordeaux River flowing from Mt Kembla and the Avon, all of these joining the Nepean which begins near Robertson. The Wingecarribee, a tributary of the Wollondilly rises near Fitzroy Falls while the headwaters of the Wollondilly itself are near Goulburn. At its junction with the Cox's River, the two rivers become the Warragamba.

The Cox's River begins its journey to the north-west of Lithgow, collecting tributaries from the Hartley Valley and the Hampton Ridge before being joined by the Jenolan and Kowmung Rivers. The Wollondilly and Cox's Rivers both supply the water to the Warragamba Dam, making the purity of their catchments important for this purpose. The ridge on which the Blue Mountain towns are built thus drains into the Cox's River to the south and the Grose to the north. The whole of this catchment feeds the Nepean River, the Colo and Macdonald Rivers being tributaries of the Hawkesbury. Their catchments reach across the Wollemi National Park almost to Rylstone, then it swings eastward through Howes Valley and south-east to reach the Hawkesbury River at Broken Bay.

In the centre of this elongated basin,

between Penrith and Richmond lie large deposits of gravel which were laid down in the lowest part of the basin before the river was able to find its way to the sea through the lower Hawkesbury gorges. Pebbles which were left behind as the ridge forced the river eastwards are to be found even today on Lapstone Hill, named for the shape of these ancient stones.

The whole of this interesting catchment of the Hawkesbury-Nepean System fortunately includes a number of National Parks which cause less pollution than people and industry. However, we must constantly remind ourselves that any waste, any litter, as well as erosion from building and weeds from gardens will eventually reach into some part of this important river system. If this pollution is not strictly controlled and minimised the river will be spoiled for future generations..

—M.J. Brister.

Kids' Club

Did you know flannel flowers have green-tipped petals, that the sword grass butterfly only lays its eggs on sword grass (Gahnia), or that the scribbly gum grub always makes a loop at the end of its

scribble when its turn around?

These are some of the things we all discovered on our walk at North Lawson, thanks to the shared knowledge of six adults and seven kids.

During the tea break we thought up some more activities for 1998, such as collecting creek bugs and orienteering. If you, as a kid, teenager or adult, would like to be involved please call Jessica on 4757.2783. (P.S. Don't forget — there will be kids' activities at the Christmas Picnic on Saturday 13 December.)

Blue Mountains Christmas

At this time of year our bushland is providing a blaze of colour, an array of perfumes, and a smorgasbord of food for native butterflies, birds, insects and small native creatures — and it is humming with life and movement!

Give yourself and our native creatures a Christmas/New Year present this year — plant a native garden and bring the bushland to your home.

(Our native plant nursery is open for sales on Tuesday mornings, 9 am to 12 noon. Enquiries to David Coleby, 4784.1395.)

Bush Walk

All about me the earth speaks, a leaf falls and I listen;
An insect sings and I watch its wings caught by the sun, glisten.
Here in the bush my senses know new meaning.
The trees cast their shade and I feel it;
I touch the cool earth with my feet;
A bird calls, and for a moment I know its freedom.

Myf Young.

In the Bush

Our final reference to Bunyip's last billabong, the Canning Stock route. Alice Springs was the start and finish of the epic journey. A spare day was available so the major part of it was spent at the Desert Park located a few miles out of that town. The money spent is mind boggling but the results are well worth it. Of course it is helped by the back-drop of the Macdonnell Ranges whose foothills are incorporated by the perimeter.

Unobtrusive paths lead the visit from one display site to another. Animals, reptiles and birds are housed in areas duplicating their natural habitat which may be seen by the public behind one-way glass. So well planned are the animal settings that it is amusing to see birds from the outside striving to enter for the food and company they provide.

A large nocturnal cage enables one to view very rare animals and those we would never see in normal travel. Among the tastefully designed buildings is a theatre with a huge screen on to which educational material is projected on set times daily.

\$1.8 million has been spent on making the park and already work is proceeding to enlarge it further. I felt it is the most worthwhile place to visit in Alice Springs.

Incidentally for those who, like me, wonder at the profligate use of water at Alice Springs, rest assured that there is

plenty though there will be ever mounting costs in pumping it up as the water table drops. Authoritative sources inform me that vast reserves lie under the city and even if it were exhausted a second large basin is under the Palm Valley area. Costs of course would be the problem.

And now to the mountain billabong. Who would wish to leave it at the moment! The sights, sounds and smells of the local bush are a delight. The Koel, to me, has a haunting cadence in its call, conjuring up images of the tropical islands to the north. I heard the first call of the season on 27 October, and strange to say the first call of the Channell Bill Cuckoo was heard on that self-same day.

And now day after day we hear the persistent trill of the Fan-tailed Cuckoo.

Despite the vagaries of rainfall and temperature, the heaths have lavish displays of massed colour. Fortress Ridge, Lockyers, Flat Top, the second half of Bruces Walk, are all well worth a visit. But for the best of them I nominate the areas passed as you approach Mount Banks parking area.

There is a haze of blue from the Dampiera, of mauve from the Mirbelia, dense patches of white from the Conospermum, the magenta of the Comosperma, stabs of yellow from the Isopogons, and of course the Boronia, the I could go on and on. To see all this variety in such a compact mass among the

wild crags of Mount Banks is worth a dozen trips to Sydney!

—The Bunyip.

The Botanist

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY DECEMBER 1997

NOTE: If you are coming to the Family Picnic on Saturday 13 December, please phone by 3 December so that we can cater — details below. (*Latecomers are welcome, but you will have to BYO*)

- 01 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Darwin's Walk to Rocket Point.** Meet 8.30 am, Park on corner GW Highway and Falls Road, Contact Kees Putting 47 59 1958.
- 07 (Sun) **Bushwalk — The Jungle.** A lovely walk among cool rainforest and creeks of the Grose Valley, with a **slow** ascent in the afternoon shade. (Steps down and up, otherwise medium grade). Meet at Blackheath Station Commuter Carpark at 10 am. Contact June Baxter 47 877 312.
- 08 (Mon) **Leisure Walkers' BBQ Christmas Party at Quota Picnic Area, Megalong Valley.** Meet **9.30 am** at Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre. There will be a short walk in Coachwood Glen before lunch. BBQ will be from 12 noon. Contact Kees Putting 47 59 1958.
- 11 (Thu) **Local Environment Plan 1997, Meeting at 7.30 pm, Mid Mountains Community Centre.** (See Page 1)
- 13 (Sat) **Family Picnic Day at the Megalong Valley Recreation Area (with Blue Mountains Bushcare Network).** Starts at 12 noon. RSVP Norm Harris 4784-1554 or Christine Davies 47 877 246.
- 13 (Sat) **Christmas Weed Sale, 8 am to 12 noon.** (See article below.)
- 15 (Mon) **Nature Track Bushcare Group, 9-12.** Meet at The Hut at 9 am. Contact Jessica Yuille 4757.2783.
- 15 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Clifftop Walk, Gordon Falls to Leura Cascades.** Meet 8.30 am, Gordon Falls Reserve. Contact Kees Putting 47 59 1958.
- 18 (Thu) **Committee Meeting.** Mid Mountains Community Centre, 7 pm.

JANUARY 1998

- 12 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Water Nymph's Dell.** Meet 8.30 am, Wentworth Falls Station, Stockyard Carpark (nearest Highway). Contact Kees Putting 47 59 1958.
- 17 (Sat) **Mystery Walk.** Meet Mount Victoria Station at 9.30 am. Bring spare shoes. Contact Olive Noble 47 87.8342
- 19 (Mon) **Nature Track Bushcare Group, 9-12.** Meet at The Hut at 9 am. Contact Jessica Yuille 4757.2783.
- 19 (Mon) **Leisure Walk — Overcliff/Undercliff.** Meet 8.30 am Conservation Hut, Wentworth Falls. Contact Jan Cutler.
- 22 (Thu) **Committee Meeting.** Mid Mountains Community Centre, 7 pm.
- 30 (Fri) **General Meeting at The Hut.** 7.30 pm.

Saving the Bush From Us

Good Health in Bushland Ecosystems

For the next few issues I will be talking to you about ways we can act preventatively to keep the bushland near our homes in good health. I will talk about soil, water, air, plants and animals.

Firstly, in this and the next issue, I think we need some ideas about what constitutes 'good health' in ecosystems. Most of us recognise degraded bush yet it is only when we bring the reasons for it into our consciousness that we become effective in keeping what we love. A little bit of practice and quiet observation teaches us about the signs of bushland in fine mettle. So, as you go walking in the bush cast your eyes over the area around you and mentally check off the following:

Top Storey: Look at the top storey plants which are usually eucalyptus and check the canopy. If there is a lot of die-back, bare twiggy sticks around the drip line and overall then the protective canopy layer is not very well. If the young twigs are well-leafed and green or red, then the canopy is well. Check also for too much mistletoe and invasion of non-local species such as pines and honeysuckle. If there are more than about 30% invasive canopy plants or sick eucalyptus the bush is unhealthy. This is your first assessment.

Middle Storey: Is there a fair covering of plants about 1-4 metres tall — height depends on the ecosystem? These keep the rain and sun from damaging the soil. These usually represent a range of older plants such as older wattles, grevillea and teatree. And threaded through these are their youngsters coming up and ready to replace them. Scragginess in the middle storey is not much of a problem and acts as a visual attraction. Plants also grow quite

close to each other and appear to show friendship and preference for one another. Young eucalypts at different stages of growth must be evident in this layer. This is healthy bush. Unhealthy bush is invaded at this layer by weed species which dominate, change the soil, absorb the water, and shade out the local plants. They reproduce fast by many processes and invade. Again, you can make an assessment of the degree of dominance and invasion. When you do this you can then start thinking about ways to control or eradicate the invader and restore good health to the middle storey. This is your second assessment.

Ground Covers: This is the most fascinating and diverse layer. The earth covers itself with clump grasses, leaf litter, bark, orchids and small herbs so protecting the soil from the hot sun and heavy rain and holding the light soils and keeping water and coolness or warmth according to the season. A damaged layer means erosion of the soil and polluted waters as the clay nutrients and organic matter run away. Inappropriate burning also destroys some of the soil's seed bank as well as germinating others. Heavy grazing does the same thing so that the balance of the next generation of plant germination is upset. A healthy ground cover recycles nutrients quickly to the roots. It is also wonderfully pleasing to your eye. This is your third assessment.

— *Ro Morrow.*

Next Issue: Health in animals, soil and water and edges.

Global Warming — Join ACF

The Australian Conservation Foundation is seeking donations and new members to assist with the Global Warming Campaign. The Federal Government's do-

nothing attitude to global warming (in the lead up to December's Climate Summit in Kyoto) is generating a crisis.

People who care can make a real difference to this and other environmental campaigns by joining ACF. It costs: household \$59, concession \$34, individual \$49, family (two adults and one earthkid) \$66, (*includes six issues of the excellent Habitat magazine*). Earthkids \$10 (*includes Bilby Bulletin*). Write to ACF, 340 Gore Street, Fitzroy Vic 3065.

Christmas Weed Sale

There will be another sale this year of Christmas trees, on **Saturday 13 December, 8 am to 12 noon, in the Jewels carpark, Katoomba.**



Members of Bushcare groups and CORE will again join forces to weed out small radiata pines from reserves and roadsides in the Mountains and give them away for a donation.

This has been a worthwhile activity over the last five years in removing this weed as well as providing information to the community. Darwin's Walk is one example of a bushland area suffering from the invasion of *Pinus radiata*, which grows quickly to dominate and displace local native plants and alters wildlife habitats.

You can assist in this event by 'buying' a Christmas tree, or joining in with the cutting on Friday afternoon/evening, 12 December. You can also help by letting us know where they are in your local street or reserve (but only those less than 3m). Anyone with a ute or trailer able to collect a load would also be a great help. Please ring Ruth or Lyndal on 82 1635 if you want more information, or if you wish to join in the Christmas Weeding event.