Lower Blue Mountains Conservation Society

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NEWSLETTER - SEPTEMBER, 1986

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First let me apologise for the late appearance of the newsletter. It should have been ready early in September but we have been a bit snowed under with various recent environmental items which insisted on set deadlines - more on these below.

COMING EVENTS

Friday, 10 October - Annual General Meeting for LBMCS.
Also a selection of Wilderness Society slides in support of the coming Wilderness Act.

Friday, 17 October - Meeting of the Blue Mountains Environment Council (BMEC) All are invited.
Alex Colley from the Colong Foundation will be present to outline new joint efforts by BMEC and Colong to gain World Heritage listing for the Blue Mountains.
A report is also expected from the 10/10 public meeting at Katoomba.

Saturday, Sunday
26, 26 October - Nature Conservation Council Annual Conference.

Friday, 14 November Graham Alcorn will give a talk on birds and birds nests (highly recommended).

Friday, 12 December A super celebration to muse on our few successes and many defeats during the year. Not really ....
Bring along a couple of goodies and some of your very best slides for public view.

ALL MEETINGS WILL BE AT SPRINGWOOD PRE-SCHOOL.

Recent Society Activities

The following is certainly not a comprehensive list of our activities.

Regional Open Space, Blue Mountains.

Our completed set of three maps and accompanying booklet covers the lower mountains from Linden down. Particular thanks to Margaret and Bessie for the Faulconbridge areas. Mike Eades and John Ross from BMCC Town Planning also suggested various additions. Areas suggested at our September meeting were also included in the final document. Thirty eight areas were delineated overall and we have some confidence that many of these will be closely considered in this first stage. We noted a number of areas on the escarpment in Hawkesbury Shire and Penrith City Council.

Faulconbridge Mallee & Florabella

We have been assured that checks by NPWS on both areas are starting. However while we should not expect an early result on the Florabella Pass area, the mallee proposal is creating some stirs of interest.

Fairlight Gorge

Oddly enough, much of the running on this issue has come from someone not in LBMCS i.e. Ted Foster.

The latest information is that the Water Safety Council has considered our submission (i.e. Ted's) at its September meeting and will consider the opposite case at its next monthly meeting. A recommendation will then be sent back to the Maritime Services Board which will make a final decision. Ted and George also met with the MSB Deputy Chairman in August and presented our case.

Blue Mountains Sewerage Strategy

The long awaited plan is a long time coming but we have been assured that public comments, fights etc. will ensue. The plan is now not expected to be made public until early in the New Year.

NCC Annual Conference Motions

The annual conference is one of our best avenues for bringing all sorts of issues to the notice of not only the other greens around the State but of prosecuting the issues through the Council to politicians and government officials. We have certainly not used the system effectively enough in the past. It is also a bridge between our greens on the mountains and the city based ones. We may have some clues about the mountain environment but little expertise in the city where many of the decisions affecting us are made.

The abdve three issues have conference motions.

A quick look through the conference motions shows that LBMCS has the most items listed - may this process continue in future years.

Our other motions concern purchases of crown lands and alienation of public lands a la Glenbrook Bowling Club wanting to swallow just a little more of Whitton Park (until the next time).

We are also associated with the Bushrock motion.

F4 Freeway

Just when we thought that either or both Penrith CC & BMCC had concluded a final arrangement on this construction that we are as yet unaware, Laurie Brereton announced at the opening of the Nepean Bridge that an EIS will be done.

When ? What are the terms of reference ?

While we could be cynical and state that it will simply be a justification for all works planned, if it honestly addresses all environmental consequences and acts on the EIS submissions, some good may come from it.

The issue was discussed at the last Works Meeting (a busy but fruitful evening aided greatly by Eunice's five star supper) and our policy will be that if the present road over Knapsack Bridge is retained, it should be a bicycle route only (bicycles are not permitted on the freeway) with portable barriers blocking other vehicles at each end. However, in times of emergency e.g. bushfires or accidents blocking the freeway, these barriers will be removed to permit other vehicle use.

Blue Mountains Environment Council

This has moved one step closer to fulfilment as a final constitution has beem agreed upon. We hope to have society representatives elected to the Council before the end of the year. The Council has been working in a number of areas already -

Funding : Our application for office equipment etc. via WSSAS was voted third last out of about seventy items by BMCC aldermen. No worry - last year we were last. This is partly our fault as we have not effectively lobbied this group individually or as a whole.

Sewerage : We expect to have a further successful public meeting when the details of the strategy are revealed.

Recycling : A public meeting on this issue was held in the depths of winter at Warrimoo. We have no hope of stopping or delaying the introduction of the big bins (refusing to buy or use one could throw a spanner into the compacter) and have concentrated BMEC's efforts on convincing our BMCC representatives of the need to have recycling programs in place and working before bins are introduced. This can certainly be done in the upper mountains - the bins will be introduced over two years. If you had illusions about the attitudes of plenty of our mountain folk to recycling read the delightful letter in last week's Gazette where the author waits for the bins with glee as all unwanted junk can be thrown into them and forgotten about.

Echo Point : On behalf of BMEC our Society has written to Mr. Carr requesting that an Interim Conservation Order be placed over the entire precinct for twelve months until BMCC formulates a complete management plan for the area. The area has a particular environmental and scenic national importance. Upper mountains residents have good reason to fear that the relatively minor rezoning passed recently by BMCC will be the tip of a large iceberg.

A public meeting on the issue will be held on Friday, 10 October at Katoomba.

BMEC representatives will meet Bob Debus the same afternoon to express their concerns.

Bi-centennial Funds :

We finally sent in an application regarding funding for printing brochures on the integrated history and nature track system in urban bushland on the eastern escarpment.

Dark's Common Trust asked for funding to publish the booklet on the railway deviation workings.

530A Committee for the Eastern Escarpment Reserves : Bob Clarke recently asked on our behalf for progress on the formation of this group. Yes, keep interested - things are happening slowly.

DOINGS ELSEWHERE

A Wilderness Act for N.S.W.

This quite extraordinary legislation has a reasonable chance of passing the close scrutiny of various government departments e.g. mining, forestry, and coming into existence during 1987.

Some features of the proposed legislation are :

1. It will be administered by the Director of NPWS.
2. It will bind the Crown as public authorities are often involved in the destruction or degradation of wilderness.
3. It is to have paramount force over other legislation in regard to the protection of identified wilderness areas.

The Monorail.

Reaction to this ill-considered project continues as preparatory work begins. The accompanying map shows its route. For once, various environment groups generally agree with Sydney City Council on an issue. Some of the issues raised are :

1. The monorail route and alternatives.
2. Rapid transport alternatives e.g. light rail systems
3. Visual effects created by the monorail
4. Effects on the amenity of pedestrians
5. Safety e.g. fire-fighting access to nearby buildings
6. Load capacity of the system compared to other systems
7. Lack of public participation in the decision making process.

Reform of the Forestry Act

This will be a long overdue reform. The present commission strongly resists environmental improvements in forest management and generates major controversies and legal battles. It opposes new forested national parks, refuses formal public input into management plans etc and gives too much on-site discretion for local foresters to log steep slopes, buffer strips etc.

Kakadu continues to draw attention from around Australia. Earlier in the year, Ranger was permitted to discharge excess contaminated waters into Magela Creek which eventually joins the Alligator River system running through the park. This was supposedly necessary despite the original waste water plan which should have treated all wastes on-site.

Now, at least Gimbat and Goodpala have been added but with the condition that Stage III additions will be conditional on possible mineral exploitation.

As a final piece, Margaret has brought back from the Territory the following item on Harry Butler

Heated exchange at UDP may ruin Harry Butler's holiday

By IAN MANNIX

THE PLACID WATERS of tourist attraction UDP Falls exploded into a frenzy of pent-up aggression, when two groups of naturalists clashed about whether to use soap and detergent in the clear waters last week.

At one stage a cake of soap was thrown at an agitator, and challenges were issued thus: "I bet your four wheel drive is doing more damage to a greater part of Australia than all the soap we could put into waters anywhere?"

In a fantastic series of events, including heated verbal exchanges, naturalist Harry Butler lost most of his television gloss when he led his group of about 20 tourists into the waters for a swim, and a wash.

For these people soap and detergent was the order of the day, because they had not been able to wash for about 24 hours.

When Harry was challenged by a concerned group of travellers, he allegedly threw soap towards the people and claimed: "It is biodegradeable."

That answer was not good enough for another concerned tour operator.

Robert King was told of the incident by his own passengers so, on their behalf, he went to investigate.

Harry's coach-captain got in a lather over the embarrassing affair, and told Robert he could not see Harry because: "He was upset."

Next morning, however, the man who sits on the board of the Conservation Commission, and is respected as one of the most high profile naturalists in Australia, admitted in a bizarre interview that, perhaps, he had made an error judgement.

Robert King asked for a taped record of interview of the affair, which Harry took part in, probably throwing away all good principals of public relations.

Robert, who takes people on a four month "adventure" tour of wilderness Australia, in a specially designed two wheel drive coach, asked Harry if it was alright to use soap and detergent in UDP Falls.

"As long as you do it in the bottom end of the flow, and if there is enough flow and seepage, the soap will not harm the water," Harry said, with a background noise of singing birds and blowies!

But that was not good enough for Robert, who continually asked Harry if it was alright to do it at other places, and whether Harry had advised tourists in the party of the wilderness horrors which soap can commit?

"Just to prove what I am saying, that the waters are not all fouled by the soap, we stocked up our own personal drinking waters from the other end of the waterhole. Everyone drank it, and there was nothing wrong."

After this, though, Harry was told about a sign which read: "Please no soap or detergent in the pool."

His response: "I did not see the sign."

"I will have the Conservation Commission move the signs to another prominent location," he replied. "You have to remember that my group pays a lot of money for their tour," he threw in.

Later, in the relative calm of the The Times office, Robert "Bob" King made the suggestion that Harry was a leading naturalist who should be setting a better example than that.

He said he, and others on his tour, had personally witnessed other tourists who, having seen Harry, dived into the pool and said quite openly: "If it is alright for Harry Butler, it's alright for us."

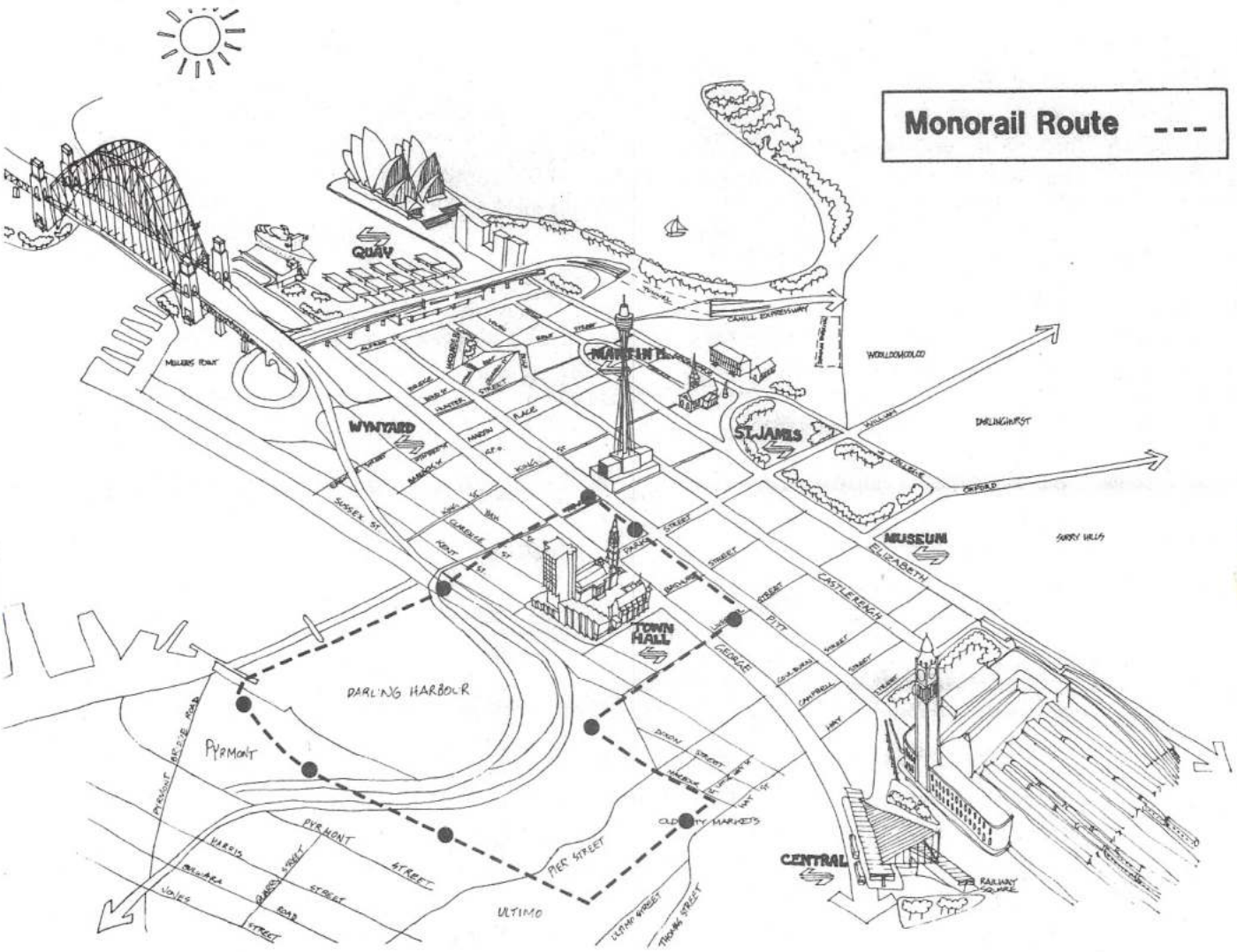
He also challenged whether there is enough flow in UDP at the moment, when water levels are very low, to wash the soap away.

But clearly there are dozens of campers in the Territory who were concerned about the incident. As Harry said, "I was very happy to see the number of people who were here who were willing to question our actions."

He may be more surprised that at least one person took photographs to the NT News, and another group came with a tape recorded interview to The Times, to register their protests.

He may now be wondering whether Board members of the Conservation Commission can get their wrist's slapped.

PROBLEM SIGN: Harry says he will have it shifted


Monorail Route ---
QUAY
WYNYARD
ST.JAMES
MUSEUM
TOWN HALL
CENTRAL
DARLING HARBOUR
PYRMONT
ULTIMO
PIER STREET
PYRMONT STREET
SUSSEX ST
GEORGE
PITT
CASTLEREAGH
ELIZABETH
DARLINGHURST
WOOLLOOMOOLOO
CAHILL EXPRESSWAY
OLD CITY MARKETS
RAILWAY SQUARE
HARRIS
BULWARA
VOYES
STREET
ROAD
PYRMONT BRIDGE ROAD
ULTIMO STREET
THOMAS STREET