

HUT NEWS

Issue No. 315
June 2014



"Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow"

COME AND VISIT US AT WINTER MAGIC

in Katoomba on Saturday 21st June 2014

Our stall will be in Main Street (opposite the station),
between Katoomba Street and Parke Street.

The Parade starts at 11.30, comes up Katoomba Street and
along Main Street (past our stall) to Parke Street

The Society will also manage a "Rubbish Room" (at the same
location) to help attendees with the correct allocation of waste.

When this initiative started last year, the event generated
around 2 tonnes less waste than the previous year's festival.

Volunteers are welcome!

Please contact Peter Green 4751 9474 peter@pwgreen.id.au if
you can help for any length of time during the day.



Got a birdbath?

National Parks Association of NSW, in partnership with Birds in
Backyards and the University of Sydney, is seeking participants for
an exciting new citizen science initiative: **Bathing Birds**. In this
initiative we will be exploring which birds are using bird baths and
how our gardening habitats are influencing which birds are
present.

The project will run from Friday June 27 until Sunday July 27. It
will be repeated in January to compare differences in birds using
the bath. To take part all you need is
a birdbath that you can monitor for 20
minutes up to 3 times a week

If you are already registered as a
citizen scientist from the Koala Count
please contact Dr. Gráinne Cleary at
grainnec@npansw.org.au or go to
www.bathingbirds.org.au to sign up!

*Photos: White-browed Scrubwrens,
by Christine Davies.*



World Heritage Forever

Global Voices for World Heritage is an online
campaign launched by The Bob Brown
Foundation. Actors, musicians, authors and
environmentalists are joining the campaign to
speak out against Australian Government plans
to delist and destroy 74,000 ha of Tasmania's
World Heritage Area.

*"These magnificent World Heritage forests are
not yet safe, despite both the World Heritage
Committee draft report and the Australian Senate
recommending that the proposal be rejected.
Until the proposal is withdrawn by the Australian
Government, or is voted down at the World
Heritage Committee meeting in June, a global
campaign in support of UNESCO, and keeping
the forests World Heritage listed, is vital,"*
Campaign Manager Jenny Weber said.

By writing to the Chairperson of the World
Heritage Committee, you will be speaking up for
Tasmania's forests and ensuring that World
Heritage is forever, everywhere.

This is a crucial moment for World Heritage
Areas globally. If the Australian Government is
successful in removing World Heritage listing to
allow for industrial exploitation, it sets a chilling
international precedent.

Tasmania has the tallest flowering trees on
Earth. In 2013, after decades of community
campaigning, large tracts of forest were added to
the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.
Now, less than a year later, they are in danger of
being destroyed by logging and firebombing.

ADD YOUR VOICE: Go to

www.globalvoicesforworldheritage.org

**Ask the World Heritage Committee to keep
World Heritage Forever.**

BEAT THE TAX MAN

June—time to beat the tax man
and make your tax-deductible
donation to Blue Mountains
Conservation Society Inc.

Cheques please to The
Treasurer, PO Box 29, Wentworth
Falls 2782 or go to

[www.bluemountains.org.au/
donations.shtml](http://www.bluemountains.org.au/donations.shtml)

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Historic track reopened: Guided tour with Jim Smith Sunday, 22 June, 10 am.

60 people recently attended the reopening of a historic walking track at Wentworth Falls. The track on Kings Tableland was constructed in 1899 by the Ranger of the Wentworth Falls Reserve, the Irish immigrant Peter Mulheran. The track fell into disuse after World War II and was re-cleared by Jim Smith and a group of friends in 1981, when the area was controlled by Blue Mountains City Council. The National Parks and Wildlife Service took over the area in 1987 and made the decision not to maintain or signpost the track. As it had become quite overgrown again, a group of local people recently restored it.

Jim Smith claims it is one of the five best walks in the Blue Mountains, with outstanding views and fascinating rock formations and vegetation. He arranged the recent commemorative walk to honour the work of Peter Mulheran. A ribbon was cut at the start of the 115 year old Kings Tableland track, near Rocket Point Lookout, by Wentworth Falls resident Kelly Hunter to mark the occasion of the track's most recent restoration.

People who were unable to attend the recent walk along Mulheran's track will have another opportunity on Sunday, 22 June, the 78th anniversary of the death of Peter Mulheran, when Jim Smith will lead another walk along the track. To join this free guided tour meet at the eastern lookout (Valley View Lookout) on Circular Drive, at the Wentworth Falls picnic area at 10 AM. The walk will take about 2 ½ hours return and free maps and brochures will be provided to participants.

Garage sale was a great success!

Our Lawson Nursery ran a successful (inaugural?) Monster Garage Sale on 10 May to raise funds for the important work of Blue Mountains Conservation Society. A huge thank you to the generous people who donated items ranging from books, CD's, bric-a-brac, garden equipment, camping gear and handy building tools just to name some of the main genres.

Of course plants from our native nursery also featured. And there were Staghorn Ferns, re-potted from a volunteer's garden, along with home-grown salad seedlings and lemon trees!!

Volunteers were most generous with their time in the planning, preparation, advertising, setting-up and transporting of goods. Copies of Hut News were available on the day to shoppers and it is hoped this has sparked interest in membership. Overall the garage sale made over \$2000. This money will assist the funding of vital and ongoing BMCS campaigns.

Our nurseries are closed in June and July but will reopen the first week of August, 2014. New volunteers are always welcome. It is a fun and worthwhile area to make new friends as well as learn a lot about native plants of the Blue Mountains.

On behalf of the volunteers a hearty big thank you goes to our trusty Nursery Manager Sue Nicol for her hard work in coordinating this brand new venture. Jo Newman, Lawson Nursery Volunteer.

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF HUT NEWS IS 21 JUNE 2014

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PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES Ross Coster

02 4739 2987 0418 462 576
membership@bluemountains.org.au
or write to
PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls 2782

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

The Gardens of Stone—a photographic journey with Hugh Speirs
(Emanuel on pagoda in Carne Creek area—photo by Hugh Speirs)



The budget has it backwards on climate

John Connor ABC Environment 14 May 2014

If there was any doubt that the election of the Abbott Government might slam the brakes on Australia's climate and clean energy progress, it's now over. With the Government's first budget, it's reversing at full speed.

This is the Backwards Budget - a budget that shifts the burden for pollution reduction from polluters to taxpayers. A budget that slashes renewable energy agencies and funding programs that are helping create the jobs and industries of the 21st century. A budget that rips hundreds of millions of dollars away from climate science, international climate finance and clean technology research programs.

We are back to the dark years of the Howard Government where climate and renewable energy are absent from the Treasurer's speech.

What's most tragic is that Australia was just starting to get on track. Our greenhouse gas emissions, which had been growing steadily for decades, have begun to decline. Emissions from electricity, the single most polluting sector, fell an impressive 8.7 per cent since 2012. Solar and wind energy tripled in the last five years, while solar and wind jobs nearly quadrupled.

We have laws that price and limit carbon emissions from 60 per cent of the economy; laws that require companies to take responsibility for their pollution. We have independent, non-partisan institutions investing in research and development for the next wave of clean energy technologies. All these steps are necessary to

ensure low-carbon competitiveness and sustainable economic prosperity. Ironically, on the same day as the budget, all these forward steps were included in the conservative International Energy Agency's recommended [toolkit](#) for energy policies to help avoid two degrees of global warming. Now all these achievements are on the verge of being wound back.

The Government is also trying to take down the independent agencies set up expressly to take the short-term partisan politicking out of climate and clean energy decisions. The Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) now joins the chopping block along with the Climate Change Authority, the nation's climate policy watchdog, and the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, which breaks down the barriers to clean energy investment.

A glimmer of hope remains: while the Government has slated these three agencies for demolition, the Senate may not be minded to agree. This will be seen in July.

Government and business figures have often opposed climate and energy initiatives on the basis that Australia shouldn't "go it alone". This budget shows that if there's anywhere we're at risk of going alone, it's backwards.

John Connor is chief executive of the [Climate Institute](#).

This is an extract. Read the full article at www.abc.net.au/environment/articles/2014/05/14/4004085.htm

Nursery News

Over the past month our Blackheath Nursery has been delighted to welcome four new volunteers, and we still need more.

As well as new volunteers, this past month has seen the Native Plant Nursery take on two new initiatives under our new Manager, Sue Nicol. Both initiatives are in Blackheath, and involve plant stalls designed to promote Blue Mountains Conservation Society and Blue Mountains flora, while at the same time raising funds for the society.

The first of these began from an invitation from NPWS and is a plant stall run every Tuesday morning outside the NPWS Heritage Centre in Govett's Leap Road. This stall is ably manned by volunteer Joan Gahl (see photo), who not only sells plants, but also shares her considerable knowledge of native plants with visitors to the Centre.

The second initiative is a plant stand at the new, up market Craft Centre called The Hub, also located in Govett's Leap Road (near the Blackheath Shops). Needing to work to a tight budget (\$0) and meet the display conditions of The Hub's managers proved a challenge for our volunteers. The plant stand is a remodelled BBQ trolley, spotted as a throw out item by Nursery Manager Sue, picked up from the street by two volunteers (it was heavy), and then repaired and modified by volunteer Warwick Mosman to hold two trays of tube plants together with BMCS flyers and brochures. The result was such an engaging plant stand that 2 minutes after it had been installed at The Hub, a woman from Medlow Bath bought 4 plants.

If you have a love of, or an interest in native plants, are concerned for the environment, and have a spare morning once a week, please give some thought to becoming a Nursery volunteer - especially if you live in the Upper Mountains. Tasks are varied, and conversation diverse.

The Nursery at Blackheath operates from 9-12 on Tuesdays, and work is always full on - but we do stop for morning tea, with cake on occasion, as recently when we celebrated the birthdays of 4 volunteers on the one day, and the next week National Volunteers Week.

Chris Perrers, Volunteer, Blackheath Nursery.



Photos: Volunteers work in the greenhouse at the Blackheath nursery; Joan Gahl at our stall outside the NPWS Heritage Centre. Joan is the longest-serving nursery volunteer and has been working at the Blackheath nursery for over 20 years.

Native Plant Nurseries closed for winter

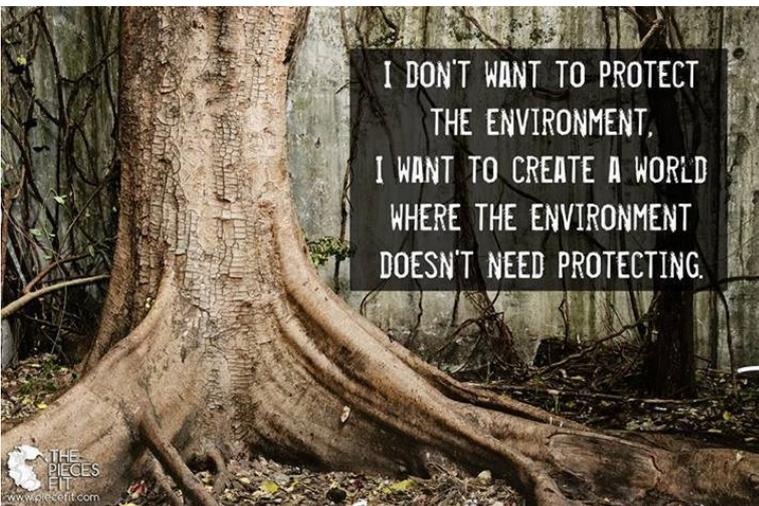
Our volunteers will be taking a well earned rest in June and July and the nurseries will have minimum supervision. We will reopen for sales in August.

Return to Sublime Point by Brendan Doyle

I was impatient to be back here where mist weaves about still-life eucalypts. From the lookout, dawn-soaked cloud creeps along the valley.

To touch each day this wildness as one touches a lover or a tiny wildflower, to hear torrents of skywater somewhere thundering, invisible.

Now rain fades, roof creaks in the sun. Cicadas drone their summer welcome and I am home.



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/piecesfit>

We're Signing Up for Active Duty Robin Mosman

Just after Anzac Day I saw a film clip from the Bentley Blockade near Lismore, where 2000 people had gathered to block access to coal seam gas mining company Metgasco. In a misty dawn they had held their own Anzac memorial service. After 'Lest we forget', the camera panned to an older country woman. She said "We're fighting a cause as important as what our ancestors did".

Then a Vietnam veteran, wearing the medals he hadn't worn since that war ended, said "What we see happening here is not what they fought for".

Another older woman said "Because we have a crisis of democracy it actually creates what's happening here. It's beyond just voting as a citizen. We have to stand up for what we believe in. We have a huge responsibility to uphold the freedom that they died for".

And I started to make a connection that I hadn't really seen before.

Australia is now really at war. Our country is being invaded and occupied by armies of largely foreign mining companies, aided and abetted by our own political leaders, intent on turning Australia into a giant quarry for their own gain.

This is a war, and ordinary Australians standing against the mining companies are the Anzacs of today, as much as any of our forces fighting on foreign soil. At the Bentley blockade two thousand of them rallied, bracing themselves to stand against another army, this one of 800 police, threatened to be sent by their own government to break up the blockade. The strength of their courage and commitment caused the government to back off, suspend Metgasco's licence and refer the matter to the ICAC.

A few days after the Bentley success, came the appalling news that the NSW Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) had changed the management plan for Leard State Forest to allow Whitehaven Coal to continue clearing for open cut mining at their Maules

Creek mine in winter, when animals are seeking to hibernate and are more vulnerable.

Leard is an 8000 hectare state forest near Narrabri, home to 396 species of plants and animals including 34 threatened species and threatened box-gum woodland. Whitehaven Coal, totally foreign-owned, has plans to clear over half of it, 5000 hectares, for 3 open-cut mines.

The miners were granted an extension earlier this year to submit a regional biodiversity strategy, but haven't yet produced it. The Leard Forest Alliance have said that mining operations should be halted until the miners make clear what their plans for offsetting the forest's destruction are. "If the miners don't have to submit a strategy until they've done all their clearing, then what's the point?". In the last four months over 150 people have been arrested trying to stop clearing for the mine.

Blockade numbers at Maules Creek are swelling and clearing interrupted in outraged response to the DPE's action, and the Government's failure to respond to calls for the clearing to cease..

I thought "That's it! I've had it with writing submissions and phoning politicians' offices! We're going to do something the politicians can't ignore. We're going to stand up for what we believe in".

My husband and I have joined the army. We're off to the Maules Creek Blockade. Robin Mosman.



Join the #LeardBlockade **Anytime, for as long as you like!** Be a protector of farms, forests, culture, community and the climate against coal mining in the Leard State Forest and Maules Creek. <http://frontlineaction.org/leard-red-alert/>

(SMH reports on clandestine campaign to infiltrate protesters. See Page 7.)

Planet Ark's National Tree Day Sunday 27th July and Schools Tree Day Friday 25th July 2014



Planet Ark works with councils, schools and community groups to help hundreds of thousands of Australians plant over 1 million native trees, shrubs and

grasses at more than 4000 Tree Day events.

National Tree Day occurs on the last weekend of July every year - this is the optimal planting time for the majority of Australians towns. But if this date doesn't suit for your area, as Planet Ark believes, "every day is Tree Day". <http://treeday.planetark.org/>

At Clissold Reserve, Emu Heights, the combined efforts of a school, council and bushcare group have led to encouraging steps towards the renewal of the endangered Shale/Sandstone Forest. This long-term

project has helped educate the community about the importance of protecting the environment in an ongoing commitment that extends beyond National Tree Day.

In 2005, Penrith City Council and the Emu Heights Bushcare Group held their first National Tree Day event at the Reserve with great success. In the following year, Emu Heights Public School students, whose school lies adjacent to the reserve, were invited to assist in the planting and have continued their contributions each year since then on Schools Tree Day. The students show a deep enthusiasm for their efforts, visiting their trees often and photographing their growth and development.

The grounds used to be bare, covered in dry ground cover and bark. Shrubs, trees and wildlife have returned to this part of the forest with volunteers helping water and maintain the land throughout the year.

Educating students about the vital role they have in serving the environment has led to more volunteering from older siblings and parents.

BMCS analysis of DLEP 2013 submissions so far Carolyn Williams and Paul Vale

Since mid-April, Land Use committee members have been busy downloading the nearly 600 publicly available submissions to the DLEP from Council's website and entering information about them into Excel spreadsheets. We want to know what 'stakeholder groups' the submissions came from, where they came from (what townships etc), the form of the submission (report, letter, email, or on-line submission) and whether the submission recommended support for the DLEP (as is or with amendments), had objections to it or rejected it entirely. Most importantly, we want to gauge community support for the Society's position and recommendations on DLEP 2013 through identifying the submissions made on BMCS form letters or via our prepared email, or that drew on the Society's information sheets and submission-writing guides.

In future editions of Hut News we will report in more detail on aspects of the submissions and provide 'snapshots' of township-related submissions. Here, we'll just give a general overview. Submissions were received from a variety of stakeholder groups: individual residents and landholders, public agencies (e.g. Sydney Catchment Authority), township-based environment groups (Bushcare, Landcare etc), mountain-wide environment groups such as the Society and Stop Coal Seam Gas Blue Mountains, large conservation/environment groups (e.g. Nature Conservation Council), community groups, heritage and historical societies, large developer organisations such as the Urban Taskforce, owners of hotels and guesthouses, property developers, township-based businesses, Chambers of Commerce and so on. By far the largest stakeholder group was individual residents and property owners.

If we exclude submissions from public agencies and those submissions received by Council but withheld from public view, there are 573 submissions that we can analyse. Of those 573 submissions, 66% supported the DLEP as is or supported it with amendments (mostly the BMCS's recommendations). 32% of the submissions either objected to the DLEP (and sought particular amendments - mainly landowners wanting a rezoning of their block) or rejected it entirely. The remaining submissions made general comments and/or didn't indicate support or objection.

Around 53% of all 573 submissions supported the Blue Mountains Conservation Society's position on the DLEP

and our recommended amendments. Of those submissions, about 5% were lodged on the BMCS's blank (make-your-own-comments) letter, 36% on the BMCS resident's form letter, 2% on the BMCS visitor's form letter and 31% on the BMCS prepared email. Another 26% of those submissions in support of the Society's position and recommended amendments comprised individual (and some group) submissions which drew in part or almost wholly on the Society's form letters, information sheets and submission-writing guides. This level of community support for the Society's position and recommended amendments is gratifying and makes the Society's considerable investment of time, money and effort in engaging the community during the exhibition period seem all worthwhile. Our thanks go to members who helped out in the campaign and who lodged submissions.

Matters concerning DLEP 2013 which were scheduled to come before an Extraordinary meeting of Council on 15th May were deferred to the Ordinary Council meeting of 27th May. The Business Papers for that meeting provide a preliminary overview of key issues emerging from the submissions. The most common matters supported in the submissions included Schedule 6 Significant Vegetation Communities, high level stormwater management and the proposed new R6 Residential Character Conservation zone. Community support for these provisions is critically important because their inclusion in the exhibited DLEP was the result of prolonged and difficult negotiations between Council and the Department of Planning and Infrastructure. These are still at risk of being disallowed once the DLEP goes back to the Department and Minister for finalisation, which the Council anticipates will now be in October.

The most common matters raised in objection to DLEP 2013, according to the Council Business Papers, were related to restrictions on development (size of buildings, limitations on subdivision etc). The majority of business-based submissions also additionally objected to the R6 Residential Character Conservation zone which is seen as overly restrictive on subdivision and development of lots in the 'leafy green streets' of Leura, Blackheath, Glenbrook, Wentworth Falls and other villages. More intense residential development around the town centres is one of the major issues emerging from the submissions. (continued on page 7)

'Do you really not care about the future?'

One of the most eminent conservationists in the world has condemned Australia for its lack of response to climate change and said the country "needs a wake-up call".

Dame Jane Goodall is on a lecture tour raising awareness of her Roots & Shoots program encouraging the world's youth to take community action to help save the planet. She spoke at Taronga Zoo to 300 young people and addressed a sell-out audience at Sydney Town Hall.

She accused politicians of having more concern for their immediate political careers than for future generations. "I think my message to the politicians who have within their power the ability to make change is, 'Do you really, really not care about the future of your great-grandchildren? Because if we let the world continue to be destroyed the way we are now, what's the world going to be like for your great-grandchildren?'"

Roots & Shoots operates in 136 countries with 150,000 groups and encourages young people to get involved with projects that help animals, people and the environment. Find out more at janegoodall.org.au

Source: Sun-Herald, 1 June 2014.

DLEP 2013 analysis (continued from page 6)

Members may have noticed recent articles and advertisements in the *Gazette* expressing business and developer dissatisfaction with aspects of the DLEP. This dissatisfaction also seems to extend to constraints on subdividing large bush blocks, as well as other environmental protection provisions. The advertisements in the *Gazette* called on landholders to contact their Ward Councillors over any concerns they have about the DLEP.

We also urge BMCS members to contact their Ward Councillors and Mayor (<http://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/yourcouncil/councillors>)

and send them your submission if you lodged one. Tell them that you support Council's and the Society's position on protecting large bushland blocks on the edge of the townships from subdivision, and that you support the DLEP's environmental protection provisions and the Society's recommended amendments. You could also tell them that you support the Council's proposed new R6 zone (again with the Society's recommended amendments to the zone objectives). Also contact Roza Sage, Member for Blue Mountains (4751 3298, bluemountains@parliament.nsw.gov.au), and Stuart Ayres, Member for Penrith (4722 8660, penrith@parliament.nsw.gov.au), whose electorate covers some of the lower Blue Mountains towns. If you need some resources before speaking to your Ward Councillors and members of parliament, our information sheets and submission guides are still available on our 'Hands off our LEPs' campaign page (look under the 'campaign' menu on the home page).

Since the public exhibition of the DLEP we have had a change of minister. Pru Goward has replaced Brad Hazzard as Minister for Planning and Infrastructure and there is a new Director of the Department. It is unclear what impact this will have on the finalisation of the DLEP and the agreements secured by Council from the Department and previous Minister. The Society will be writing to Minister Goward and will seek a meeting with her at the appropriate time.

VALLEY OF THE WATERS BUSHCARE GROUP

The Valley of the Waters Bushcare Group meets on the second Saturday of each month, 9am till noon. Tools and gloves are available. Bring a drink, a snack and a sunhat. New members are welcome.
Phone Karen 4757 1929.

**The Greater Blue Mountains
World Heritage Experience**
www.worldheritage.org.au

Blackheath Autumn Christine Davies

In my garden, Banksias are flowering and some Red Wattlebirds are regular visitors, noisily defending "their" territory, and not accepting my excuses for being there and that "I planted the Banksias".

Driving up town one evening, I found a Brush-tailed Possum lying on Govett's Leap Road. I picked it up and brought it home in the boot of my car. A beautiful creature and no apparent mark on it, but it was dead. Inside its pouch I felt a little wriggly finger-sized creature, too young to survive.

We took the possum out the back to the edge of the bush. In the morning it was gone, the only sign left was a clump of fur on the track where it had been carried into the National Park.

The "caterpillar", photographed chewing away on a Callistemon leaf, is a Callistemon Sawfly larvae, different to the black ones we usually see clumped together on Eucalypts. These too usually clump together. This one was quite alone and seen feeding on the branch for a couple of days, visible to hungry birds but untouched.

In the unusually warm weather, one of the Mint Bushes, which normally flowers in spring, has had flowers on it. But the lovely autumn leaves have dropped from the Blackheath street trees and winter is around the corner.



Clandestine campaign to infiltrate protesters

In an article entitled **Undercover: Spies hired to infiltrate anti-coal campaign**, Fairfax Media reports on an investigation that has uncovered a clandestine campaign using former soldiers and intelligence operatives to infiltrate anti-coal protesters attempting to stop the coalmines at Maules Creek and Boggabri.

"The IOs [intelligence operatives] task was to get information on [protest] actions, report on actions, gather information on the leadership," said one source. "Some were tasked to infiltrate. Others just do observation."

While the company thought to have direct operational responsibility for the espionage has been identified, who the ultimate client was remains a mystery. Several leading corporations and prominent Australians are also involved in the coal expansion in Northern NSW and the security operations that protect them.

Source: Article by Tom Allard, National Affairs Editor, Sydney Morning Herald, 2/6/14.

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/undercover-spies-hired-to-infiltrate-anticoal-campaign-20140601-39ci6.html#ixzz33QqkSDyU>

The latest revelations about pro coal interest strategies make one think that the petty objections to wind, solar and other renewables are much more sinister than just innocent stupidity.

Car obsession could rule out a sustainable economy for decades Don Morison

"Any man can be king in his own car" – Tony Abbott in the book "Battlelines".

"And we'll never be royals" – New Zealand singer Lorde in the Song of the Year, 2013 Grammy awards.

The think tank, the Grattan Institute, has warned that big infrastructure projects like the WestConnex motorway could weigh down the NSW budget for decades. Public transport, renewable energy, land conservation, air quality and water conservation could be among government responsibilities to suffer if too much is taken from the public purse for car promoting projects.

Grattan Institute chief executive John Daley said of the projects: "... they are brought on to the budget later (than the fiscal year in which the project is commenced) using a concept known as 'depreciation'. It happens bit by bit over the life of the asset, over the next 15, 20 or 25 years.

"Those payments are completely locked in. If we increase capital expenditure from here, or even if we simply maintain capital expenditure at the levels we've seen, the depreciation expense keeps piling up."

"What this says about new projects such as WestConnex is that they weigh down the budget for decades," Dr Daley said.

Thursday Interpretive bushwalking group, five day trip to the Australian Capital Territory and Yass NSW, May 2014. Christine Davies.

Some of us travelled from Blackheath via Oberon. There were at least a dozen road-killed wombats between Hartley Valley and the Abercrombie River. There is a steep, steep hill down into the Abercrombie River Valley, and we stopped beside the river at Bummaroo Ford Reserve in Abercrombie National Park. A wallaby was feeding in a Casuarina grove on the edge of the Abercrombie River. The Casuarinas are impressive.

A steep, steep climb out of the Abercrombie River Valley, a coffee stop at Taralga, to Goulburn and the Federal Highway to Canberra. We passed dry Lake George and were impressed by the numerous wind turbines in the distance on the far side of the lake.

We met others from our group at Tharwa for lunch beside the Murrumbidgee River, then drove to Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve which is funded by the ACT Government.

Tidbinbilla has a variety of Australian species fostered or imported into their electric fenced sanctuaries. In one enclosure we saw several juvenile koalas which had been imported from Cape Otway Victoria. The operators are considering commencing a breeding program.

In a separate large electric-fenced enclosure we saw platypus, brolgas, magpie geese and a number of endemic bird species. On a previous visit to Tidbinbilla, in a warmer month, we had seen numerous Cunningham skinks, a Red-bellied Black Snake, and imported reptiles such as Gippsland Water Dragons.

Outside the fences we saw many Eastern Grey Kangaroos and a pair of emus.

The main animal encounter areas of Tidbinbilla are arranged around a series of wetlands which were

"Even if they are funded by selling assets, the impact is much the same."ui

(Extract from the Grattan Institute's report, "Budget pressures on Australian governments", quoted by Peter Martin, Economics Editor, The Age, 4/5/14.)

Even though many environmentally sustainable activities attract private investment, government funding is vital to maintaining momentum, supporting research and providing ongoing stability and confidence. In an era when governments are so inclined to cry poor-mouth, the commitment of an amount that may exceed \$12 billion to the WestConnex motorway is ridiculous.

It does not now make sense, nor has it ever made sense, to spend all taxation revenue from motoring on roads. Greater Sydney prides itself on being Australia's most tech-savvy city. An ever increasing proportion of workers want to be able to use electronic devices while they commute. Many shorter distance travellers actually prefer cycling or walking. Yet the NSW Government's public transport spending is concentrated in sectors of the metropolis that are already relatively well served. Real improvements for pedestrians and cyclists have ground to a halt.



developed during the rehabilitation of the reserve from the 2003 Canberra bushfires. The sloping terrain which surrounds the Tidbinbilla valley has also recovered well. It has aesthetically impressive granite boundaries in their thousands as well as ecologically diverse native forest with Callitris and mistletoes prominent.

Our accommodation was at a hotel in Tuggeranong, on the outskirts of Canberra. On a mild day, the air conditioning in our room was turned up to an unbearable 28 degrees Centigrade! The Club next door where we had dinner was no cooler. But with the air conditioning turned off and an open window, our accommodation was very comfortable.

Our second day was spent mainly in Namadgi National Park. This area is rugged foothill country for the snowy mountains and well worth a visit. I'll tell you about it next month. Christine.

Photo: At Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, Helen (our keenest photographer) and Nicky.

Down the Wallaby Track: a backward glance, with John Low
OF MERMAIDS AND DUGONGS

At the end of 1794 Captain William Paterson of the NSW Corps, who had recently led an expedition into the Blue Mountains, found himself temporarily in charge of the colony of NSW. It was probably not a promotion that filled him with great enthusiasm. Administration was not his strength and I'm sure he would have been far happier out in the bush pursuing his passion for natural history.

It must have been with some excitement, therefore, that in March 1795 he was asked to identify the "head bones" of a strange marine animal found by an exploratory party recently returned from the country south of Botany Bay. Identified by Paterson as a manatee, the bones were almost certainly those of a dugong, a 'cousin' of the order *Sirenia* once frequenting a more southerly range. The dugong and the manatee are both credited with the origin of perhaps the tallest of all maritime tall tales and I wonder if whispers of mermaids (and mermen) spread through the streets of infant Sydney?

They certainly did, and much wider too, a hundred and a bit years later when just prior to World War I Mark Foy, owner of the Hydro Majestic Hotel and a connoisseur of 'curiosities', returned home from a motoring trip through north Africa, bringing with him "two preserved specimens of beings, anthropomorphic to just below the waste, and ichthyomorphic thereafter". With an eye for profit, Foy had acquired his 7 ft. mermaid and 8 ft. merman (still retaining "two dangerous-looking tusks") at an un-named town on the north-east coast of Africa and pickled them in preservative until he could get them into the hands of a taxidermist. With the makeover complete and trumpeting that his "monsters of the deep" (most likely dugongs) were confounding both scientists and medical men alike, he put them on public display - reclining on a pallet of straw - in a garage at Medlow Bath in August 1913 (one shilling admittance and "only for a little while before they are sent to the United States") and promoted them widely in the city and regional press.

The Medlow 'monsters', staged in romantic tableau in the straw-filled darkness of that Hydro garage, the soft brown of their skin hardened into a dark mahogany by the formalin preservative, must have presented a strange and melancholy scene. But, of course, Foy's exploitation of the mermaid myth was not new, merely the latest in a long 'sideshow' tradition that probably goes back to medieval times and while the most famous example of this was P. T. Barnum's grotesque 'Feejee Mermaid' (a monkey's head sewn on to the body of a fish), many an unfortunate dugong or manatee also found themselves satisfying the insatiable public appetite for weirdness and wonder.

After a brief reappearance in 1915 Mark Foy's sad little sideshow disappeared forever, public interest in the Medlow mermaid and her consort eclipsed by a greater monstrosity being nurtured thousands of miles away among the powers of Europe.

John Low (grizzlybear3au@yahoo.com)

The Gardens of Stone Visitors Map

\$7.50 plus \$1.50 postage.

Buy the map online

(www.bluemountains.org.au) or

write to BMCS, PO Box 29, Wentworth Falls
 2782 with your cheque or money order.

**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 \$30 Concession (Senior/Student) \$20

Household \$35 Household Concession \$25

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

Welcome to new members

Jana Mader, Katoomba

Saranti Diamantia, Woodford

**BLUE MOUNTAINS
 CONSERVATION SOCIETY Inc**

'Like' us on Facebook:
 Blue Mountains Conservation Society
 Follow us on Twitter: [bmcsnsw](https://twitter.com/bmcsnsw)

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.

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".

Federal budget cuts undermine community environmental action *National Landcare Program cut by \$483 million*

"Federal funding for the National Landcare Program has been cut by nearly \$500 million over the next five years", said Pepe Clarke, NCC Chief Executive Officer.

"This is a cruel blow for the thousands of dedicated farmers and conservationists who volunteer their time, effort and expertise to restore their local environment." Government has merged the *Landcare* and *Caring for Country* programs into a single *National Landcare Program*, and cut funding for the program by \$483 million over the next five years.

"Between 2008 and 2012, more than 80,000 volunteers were involved in *Caring for Country* programs, representing an enormous in-kind contribution to restoring our rural landscapes."

"Government claims that it values voluntary community action to restore the environment, but these massive cuts to the *National Landcare Program* tell a different story."

Requiem for the River

Do you know the Cox's River?

Did you ever hear it roar?

Since they dammed it for the powerhouse

We don't hear it any more.

Its deep and rugged gorges,

Its wide flat open reign,

Now pocked by stagnant waters

Some kind of rural drain.

Have you seen the mighty boulders

That it rolled before its path?

Seen the smoothed off ledges

It carved off as its craft?

There's a trickle in some seasons

When their dam has had enough,

And if the locals call for more

There're told that times are tough.

When explorers crossed the mountains

While their thirst called out extreme,

They were yet to cross The Great Divide

When they found this flowing stream.

It was named as Coxs River,

Explorers' dreams fulfilled.

They had no thought that in our time

We'd see dry gullies near those hills.

When rains do come the river runs

Far less than it did before.

In ponds and pools where platypus ruled

They are seldom seen anymore.

The willows and the silt banks grow,
Swimming holes are a shade of green.

The fish no longer dwell round there,

Less native birds visit the scene.

Fanciful dreaming? Eco romance?

Bring back what we had there before.

In the balance of life is it all worth the price

Of this stream's sacrifice any more?

Revive the river oak forest,

Remove blackberry and weeds.

Bring back the wildlife to life 'long the banks,

Let Mother Nature do her best deeds.

Reg Reid, *The Nature of Things*.

Loose Feathers, with Carol Proberts



At the top of Katoomba is a street whose name must puzzle many visitors. As people come out of the railway station they might see the sign proclaiming: GANG GANG ST. Of course, those of us who love birds know that it's named after a charismatic species of cockatoo, but I bet it's a long time since there were any Gang-gangs in Gang Gang Street. I can clearly remember seeing a small flock years ago eating the fruit of a cotoneaster in Kingsford Smith Park, right beside Gang Gang St. That would have been during the 1980s. Has anyone seen them there since?

Gang-gang Cockatoos can still be found in many parts of the mountains - the male with his bright red head; the female all grey, each feather edged in red, pale grey or pale yellow with olive tinges, giving her an intricate beauty close-up. Both sexes have a wispy up-curved crest like a lacy frill atop their head.

Often the first sign of their presence is a continuous cracking sound and a shower of gumnut pieces falling from the canopy of a eucalyptus. They growl softly as they feed on native seeds like eucalypts, wattles, geebung, callitris as well as various exotic berries and nuts.

But like other cockatoos they are not strictly vegetarian and will tear open pupae and galls to eat the grubs inside. Surprisingly, they will also chow down on sawfly larvae, also known as *spitfires* because of the irritating liquid they disgorge when disturbed. The Gang-gang holds the spitfires in one foot while it eats the soft parts, discarding the skin and the head which is probably rather vile-tasting!

In January 2012 I had the wonderful experience of seeing a flock of 50 Gang-gangs near Cabramurra in the Snowy Mountains. Here in the Blue Mountains the largest numbers tend to be seen at Mounts Wilson and Irvine, though I've never seen 50 there, and a few can usually be found around all the other upper mountains townships. They're altitudinal migrants, breeding in the wet forests of the mountains and moving into more open habitats and to lower altitudes in autumn-winter. They don't usually breed until 4 years of age.

They're able to take advantage of some introduced plants, feeding on the fruit of certain weeds and garden trees. Despite this they are declining and listed as Vulnerable in NSW. The reasons for this decline are not well understood but loss of suitable nest hollows - whether due to general habitat loss, altered fire regimes or competition with more aggressive species - may be a major factor. The spread of Psittacine Circovirus "beak and feather disease" has also been suggested as a threat.

The name *gang-gang* comes from the Wiradjuri name and possibly other Aboriginal languages, and is thought to be onomatopoeic, describing the call. Their call is unforgettable! It sounds like a rusty, creaky hinge with a rising inflection. Or like a cork being pulled from a bottle - a sound which is becoming quite rare these days, a bit like the bird.

Carol Proberts, origma@westnet.com.au, Twitter: [@carolproberts](https://twitter.com/carolproberts)

Photo: Male Gang Gang Cockatoo by Carol Proberts.

It is just lovely among large and tall eucalypts (Brown Barrel, *Eucalyptus fastigata*), and the snaking paths in the dry canyons are so enveloping. My bright coloured human company are dwarfed within the eroded elevated squattish sandstone pillars which are interspersed with patches of conglomerate.

So ancient....such millennium upon multi-millennium has this land seen...risen from the sea ever so slowly... and still tectonic plates move/rise/submerge.

A final blind canyon and then we turned back, still finding items and channels we had not quite seen before. There were some ironstone infiltrations which made great designs. Wind and water have scooped out what are protective shelters.

There were some fascinating insects here and there among the rocks. One hole beneath an almost cave could have been wombat territory.....but no wombat



special high cubes were found (wombat territory markers). Helen Lambert. (Photo by Helen Lambert)

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 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 Jim Percy—phone 4758 6009, email jp34@tpg.com.au Check www.bluemountains.org.au for updates.

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)

- June 14 **Crossing of the Blue Mountains of NSW 2013/14, Day 7. Mt Victoria to Mt Blaxland.** Bus transport will be required, cost \$12 pp. Postponed from December 2013. Leader Jim 4758 6009 – Please ring to book your bus seat. Meet at Mt Victoria Station carpark 8.15am. Walk distance approx 12 Km. Maps Mt Wilson/Hartley
- June 14 **Gardens of Stone.** A short, slow walk, Gr. 3/4 exploratory. 4WDs necessary. Walk full, but cancellations may occur: please ring Hugh after 7pm. 0423 309 854.
- Jun 21 **Wolgan Trig and Cliffline.** Great views into the Wolgan Valley. Leader **Emanuel** 4757 1090, 0419773906, email emanuelanddi@yahoo.com.au Contact Leader after 7pm for details. 5-6 Kms. Gr 3. Map **Cullen Bullen.**
- Jun 28 **Glenraphel Head from Green Gully Carpark then via Dunphys Pass to Glenraphel Swamp includes a 350M ascent.** Leader **Warwick** 4757 1354. Meet at Blackheath rail carpark at 8.00am. 12 Km. Gr 4. Map **Jamison/Jenolan.**
- Jul 5 **Gladstone and Roberts Passes.** Beautiful historic walk. "A narrow ravine of extraordinary picturesqueness" (*Cumberland Argus* 1902 guide to Blue Mountains and Jenolan Caves). Not maintained, some challenging sections. 4-5 km, grade 3 / 4. Map Katoomba. An alternate walk will be provided if raining. Contact leader Bart 4739 9947 beforehand.
- Jul 5 **Gardens of Stone.** A short, slow walk, Gr. 3/4 exploratory. 4WDs necessary. Leader **Hugh** 0423309854 after 7.00pm. Bookings open 23 June. Contact leader for details.
- Jul 12 **Noble Canyon**—An interesting canyon with marvellous views into the Wolgan Valley at the end. Leader **Harold.** Meet at Wentworth Falls Stockade Carpark at 8.00am. 5Km Gr 3. Map **Cullen Bullen.**
(Check with the leader first, then the BMCS website (www.bluemountains.org.au) for updates)

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, keithdor53@hotmail.com

- Jun 9 **Flat Top, Leura,** off Mount Hay Road. Overlooks cliffs and onto Flattop for lunch. Meet Leura Station car park 9.30 am. Car pool. Leader Liz Stark 4754 4966. Grade 2.
- Jun 16 **Horse Track, Blackheath.** Meet Blackheath Neighbourhood Centre 8.40 am. Leader Eddie 4784 2691. Grade 3.
- Jun 23 **Boorong Crags via Mt Hay.** Meet Leura Station car park 8.25 am. Car pool. Leader Robyn Hine 4739 3923. Grade 3/4.
- Jun 30 **Katoomba to Leura via Apprentice Track.** Meet Katoomba Station car park. Leader 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, roybev12@bigpond.net.au

- June 12 **Numantia Falls, Faulconbridge.** Walk down Victory Track to falls seeing rainforest and creeks. Take lunch. Meet Faulconbridge Station south side 9.30am. Leaders Maurice 4739 4942 and Lindsay 4751 6640. Grade 3.
- June 19 **National Pass Wentworth Falls.** Car pool. Take lunch. Spectacular walking track with unrivalled views. 5.4ks round trip. Wentworth Falls Stockyard Car Park 9.30am. Leader Beverley 4757 2076. Grade 3
- June 26 **Bus trip to Bundeena.** Pick up along highway. Book and pay \$12 to Barrie 0407300525. Take lunch. Meet Council Depot South Street North Katoomba 8.00am sharp. Leaders Tracy 0434362611 and Maurice 4739 4942. Grade 1
- July 3 **City walk—La Perouse.** Train to Central, then bus. Coastal walk around the area. Take lunch. Meet top of escalators Central Station 9.30am. Leader Keith 4736 1010. Grade 2
- July 10 **Redgum Park Bullaburra.** Take lunch. Meet Bullaburra Station south side 9.30am. Leader Maurice 4739 4942. Grade 2

Winter Visitors

Flying in undulations, like speed boats crossing the sea,
Crying in ululations, currawong, currawong, currawee.
In winter the currawongs come to my house,
Beady eyes gleaming, ready to pounce
On any weak creature—bird, lizard, mouse.
But they eat all the grubs that eat my lawn,
And sing such a sweet chorus, nostalgic, forlorn.

Graham Alcorn, *The Bird Baths of Umbigumgi.*

"Australia is a veritable ecological paradise,
but it is a paradise being rapidly sacrificed.
The good news is we can stop this loss.
So let's do it.
There is no time to lose!"

David Lindenmayer, Ecologist,
Conservation scientist.

JOIN Blue Mountains Conservation Society,
or renew your membership online.
www.bluemountains.org.au