

Stark Sharks overdevelopment proposal



The management of Sharks International in a "Master Plan" of April 2001 proposes to build 250 units on the east side and 400 on the west side of their football site: a huge development totalling 650 (mixed: residences, flats, apartments, and some aged care).

Opponents see this as a stark case of overdevelopment in

the traffic-congested North Cronulla area. The S.I. management would sell off the present two junior playing fields and part of the parking area for the development.

Though the S.I. management claims popular support of the proposal, there is no evidence of it. Rather, most traditional supporters of the football club, what they hear about the

scheme, express doubt or disbelief.

Council has agreed to a period of public exhibition of the scheme, during which the Shire community's opposition is certain to grow. Opponents should write their protest to Shire Mayor, Councillor Tracie Sonda.

Bob Walshe

...Turn to Page 3 for more reactions

Australand outrage! Public meeting—Sunday 15 July 2001 at 10.30am Lucas Reserve, off Mitchell Rd, North Cronulla
More details page 5





by Jim Sloan, Executive Officer

Winter has arrived and the Centre has maintained its consistent buzz of activity over this last quarter. Our ever-growing reference library continues to be popular with the community, and the Centre phones are their usual consistent/insistent connection to the community as staff and volunteers respond to queries.

Staff

We welcomed a seasoned transport campaigner, Michelle Zeibots, onto our part-time staff recently. Michelle is going to be focusing on support for CARTS (*Citizens Advocating Responsible Transport for the Shire*) over the coming months. We also have welcomed two more regular volunteers into the organisation, Susan Gaines (office work) and Kathy Paquet (visual arts student).

Centre's Activities

A few of the Centre's activities over the past three months:

- Hosting a morning tea for Sutherland Council's General Manager and several staff.
- Participating in numerous meetings and discussions over development issues around the old Toyota site DA, Taren Point; the Sharks development plans; and the Australand (oops!) I mean DUAP review of the Kurnell REP (Regional Environment Plan).
- Centre staff attended a three-day environmental education workshop with RARE (Resource Recovery and Education) in preparation for expanded community outreach activities.
- Centre staff training with SCRAP in preparation for next year's implementation of the Environmental Education Policy for NSW Government Schools.
- Preparing for the next Centre Forum, which will focus on urban development issues.

Menai Indoor Sports Facility

In April this year, the Mayor sent residents in the Menai-Bangor region a letter regarding the Indoor Sports Centre planned for the Menai B site. This past week the Centre with the support of the Menai Precinct Residents' Association has distributed 10,000 copies of a brochure which responds to the Mayor's letter (*see attached brochure*). We encourage members to respond to this brochure.

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- *Late News:* On Monday 2nd July the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre served Sutherland Shire Council with a Class 4 Application in the Land and Environment Court to appeal Council's decision to allow an Indoor Sports Complex to be built in bushland on Allison Crescent, Menai. The basis for this action is the same as the Centre's previous appeal to the Land and Environment Court last year, but which was not heard in the court because Council surrendered its application.
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Volunteers

The Centre would not exist without the support of its volunteers. They are critical to the smooth operation of our office. They respond to visitors, answer telephone queries, collate mailouts, enter data into the Centre's databases, supply accounting support, do photocopying...the list goes on.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please contact us at 9545-3077. We are currently in need of these skilled volunteers:

- with MYOB experience to do data entry, 2-4hrs per week,
- with IT experience for miscellaneous computer support duties and to coordinate data backups, 4hrs once a week,
- familiar with MSWord97 and interested in researching online for information relevant to Centre activities.

What are NGOs?

by Miriam Verbeek

Non-Government Organisations have long been recognised for their social contributions through community activities, charities, campaigns and self-development programs. They exist at all levels of society – local, state, national and international. Common traits are: not-for-profit—work with volunteers—dedicated—independent of government—often very focused—often specialised and highly professional.

Article 71 of the United Nations Charter explicitly recognises NGOs and in 1992 the Rio Earth Summit (Article 27.1) stated "**NGOs play a vital role in the shaping and implementation of participatory democracy.** Formal and informal organisations, as well as grass-roots movements, should be recognised as partners in the implementation of Agenda 21".

Historically, NGOs have always filled the gap when government cannot/will not deal with an issue. But there is recognition by NGOs and govern-

ments that a growing gap exists between the welfare of humanity and environment caused by poor distribution of resources, globalisation, unsustainable use of the environment, wars and organised crime. NGO activities around recent WTO talks are sending a clear signal to decision makers that economic interests are not the only ones that should be considered at the highest decision making levels.

Governments and businesses have used SLAPPs, censorship, imprisonment, public embarrassment, denial of facts, exclusion and regulation to silence or devalue NGOs. The Attorney General recently stated that NGOs should be brought to heel. Governments and business should pause and think it is NGOs who:

- are on the scene to distribute aid and care to people impacted by war or by environmental disasters brought on by global warming,
- run hostels for the homeless and provide food runs for the needy, and who have, **through their persistence, brought the world's attention to the crisis in our environment.**

A Program for Botany Bay

Bob Walshe, Chairman

Kurnell Regional Environment Planning Council

The long period of neglect and downright abuse of Botany Bay, Georges River and Kurnell may be about to end – not soon, alas, but perhaps in a year or two.

Sutherland Council to its great credit responded to community concern by initiating an alliance of six Bay councils which launched a “Reclaim the Bay” inquiry.

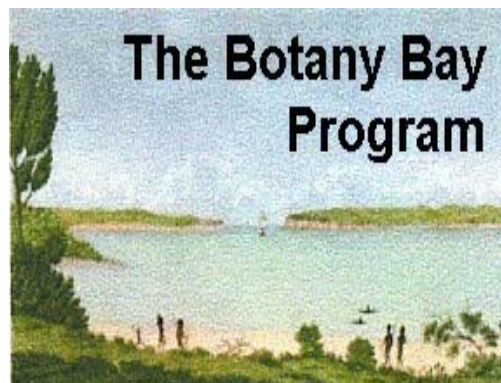
This led to support from a wider grouping, SSROC, which is the Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils – twelve councils, with influence on State Government.

SSROC called on an able planning consultant, Mr Jim Colman, to initiate “The

Botany Bay Program”, a year-long study of the problems of Botany Bay and the Georges-Woronora and Cooks Rivers.

Problems there certainly are! A dreadful picture of neglect and environmental degradation has emerged. Responsibility for remedial action, however, is nowhere to be seen – because of fragmentation.

Fragmentation, that is, among a host of “stakeholders”: 22 councils, 3 major industries (port, airport, refinery), many smaller industries, a dozen or more state and federal government agencies, and hundreds of community groups, not to mention scientific personnel who have an interest.



How to bring order out of this chaos? That’s what the Colman Report will hopefully suggest. It will be launched on July 9th at 10.00am at Kurnell. (Contact SSEC or Sutherland Council for details.)

At all stages of the Colman inquiry, community groups have been consulted. Its hope is that a form of Management Trust will be set up with the cooperation of the many stakeholders.

sharks

Sell off Shire playing fields for housing development?*No way!*

Shock waves are passing through the Shire community as the message sinks in that the management of Sharks International wants to pressure Sutherland Council into allowing the sale of its two junior playing fields to developers who will build flats and houses on them.

Here are half a dozen typical reactions:

- “**Unbelievable!** The Shire has an acute shortage of playing fields – we need more not less.” M.S., Como
- “It’s a **short-sighted** grab for easy money to keep the highly-paid top team in the NRL competition – at the cost of the juniors who are nevertheless expected to provide the Club with top players in future years.” J.T., Miranda
- “Is Sharks International the same club that was helped by Council around 1970 to acquire these fields – the club that was then called Cronulla-Sutherland District Rugby League Football Club?”
- No way!” J.L., Caringbah
- “The land they want to sell (the junior playing fields) was a Shire rubbish tip for many years, so it’s crazy to propose a housing development there. The risk of **toxic pollutants** surfacing could lead to endless trouble and compensation claims.” ... J.S., Oyster Bay
- “There’s **enough traffic congestion already** around North Cronulla without adding hundreds more houses and flats, as Sharks International is proposing.” S.H., Cronulla
- “What sort of management does this reveal? **Selling off precious assets** to make up a cash shortfall is no way to run a business. The *Herald* sportswriter, Roy Masters, says that with only \$600 cash in the bank and an earlier loss of over \$1 million, the Club can’t last more than another season.” ... (SMH, 26.5.01) R.W., Jannali
- “Money is all that matters in League these days. Look after the highly paid top players. **Sportsmanship and young players don’t matter.** As to Club loyalty, we’ve had the Sharks’ star player desert to Rugby Union, which is now more well-heeled than League.” C.P., Kurnell

global warming

Red Cross warns that disasters will outstrip aid effort as world heats up.

by Peter Capella in Geneva (London Guardian)

International aid will not be able to keep up with the impact of global warming, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said yesterday, after reporting a sharp increase in the late 1990s in the number of weather-induced disasters (200 in 1990, 392 in 2000)

“Recurrent disasters from floods in Asia to drought in the Horn of Africa, to windstorms in Latin America, are sweeping away development gains and calling into question the possibility of recovery,” the report says.

Blaming the trend on global warming, Roger Bracke, its head of disaster relief operations, said: “These are also the most deadly events; it is probable that these kinds of disasters will increase even more spectacularly.

“There is a natural limit somewhere to what humanitarian assistance can do; we are afraid that there will be a point where we can no longer provide assistance.”

Scientists working for the United Nations say that more frequent extreme weather is one of the signs of global warming, and low-lying island states are the first at risk, because of the predicted rise in sea levels and their exposure to harsher tropical storms.

With 41% of its population of about 380,000 killed or affected between 1991 and 2000, the Solomon Islands heads the first league table compiled of countries struck by disaster.

Two other island groups in the southwest Pacific, Tonga and Micronesia, are in the top eleven. Floods accounted for more than two-thirds of the 211m people a year on average affected by natural disasters in the past decade.

Famine caused by drought affected nearly a fifth, and accounted for most

Cont'd page 7

member alert

R.U.M.

Return Unwanted Medicines Program

When it next comes time for you to spring-clean your medicine cabinet, or to dispose of any unused or out-of-date medicine, consider returning them to your nearest pharmacy. Most NSW Pharmacies participate in a program for the free collection and disposal of unwanted medicines.

This is a much more environmentally friendly alternative method of disposal to putting them down your sink or into your putrescible rubbish bin. The pharmacies send all medicines collected to a central sorting centre where all of the medicine containers are emptied and recycled. The medicines are then disposed of in a safe and professional manner.

fundraising

Selling books on our street stalls has proved a winner in the new millennium! Concentrating mostly on books and plants, plus some of the regular attractions of cakes and jams, our 4 street stalls this year (March-June inclusive) in Gynea Shopping Centre have raised \$2,671.55 – truly amazing and very satisfying for all the group involved – not only those who actually work on the stalls but those who provide the transport, the goods and the support of our regular buyers. Yes, we do have some regulars who look for our notices in the “*Leader Calendar*”.

This wonderful total includes the sum of \$192.90 raised from a special raffle drawn at the stall on 12th May, for Mothers’ Day. Special mention should be made of the wonderful effort by Jean

Rodger who donated the 3 prizes, beautifully presented, and then sold tickets to the value of \$69, one third of the total! Jean has not been well recently and this donation is very much appreciated.

Our next stall, the first in the new financial year, will be held on 29th July, in Cronulla Plaza. This will be an experiment, new venue and maybe more competition, but it will be interesting to see the results. We’ll concentrate on books, no plants (mid winter!), some cakes and jams and our Annual Raffle.

NO MORE BOOK DONATIONS for the present, please! We’ve got more than we can handle, a wonderful variety, but they’re hard to store and move around.

Pat Elphinston

Next Street Stall

**Sun. 29th July 2001
in
Cronulla Plaza**



***Illegitimate landuse, tainted review processes, and claims of deception.
Where else but on the Kurnell Peninsula?***

Australand REP review

The most recent meeting of the Reference Group established by DUAP for the review of landuse on a number of large sites on the Peninsula (including Australand's) ended in outrage last month after it was revealed that the seemingly independent process was actually being funded by Australand to the tune of \$250,000 (with a further \$250,000 if needed). This, in itself, was an extraordinary revelation, but it was compounded by the fact that the Reference Group, which comprised community and environment groups and Council, was never informed of this funding arrangement either during the six-month review process, or in any letters from the Minister or the Department on the issue.

In response to this perceived deception, the Reference Group passed a motion of 'no confidence' in the review process and called for a collaborative Local/State Government review of the entire Kurnell Peninsula as a matter of urgency. A public meeting has been organised by Council for Sunday 15 July at Wanda Reserve starting at 10.30am

Council, in the meantime, will continue their campaign for the acquisition of private land on the Peninsula for parkland. Indeed, participants at a recent

public meeting in Kurnell convened by Bruce Baird also reportedly declared this as one of their most pressing concerns for the Peninsula. Council are currently investigating the possibility of applying to the Federal Government for funds to acquire the private land.

A Holt to sandmining?

Of significance in May was Council's notification to the Holt Group (the largest sandminer on the Peninsula) that it intends to issue an order to halt some of their potentially illegitimate sandmining operations. The order is reportedly based on the fact that the company is removing sand in areas for which they do not have consent. Council set a deadline of the middle of June for a response from the company.

The same Holt-owned company (Besmaw) has moved to 'release' some other of its parcels of land on the Peninsula. The 27 ha site on the shores of Quibray Bay, leased by the Kurnell Boarding Stables, is to be sold. The area contains two zones: 6(b) *Private recreation* and 8(a) *National Park*. The site is being promoted as ideally suited for development as a hotel, resort, convention centre, or boat building enterprise. Despite the fact that a strip of the site along the foreshore (zoned National Park) cannot

be developed to any great degree, a 100m wide right-of-carriageway will give any development on the remaining portion 'exclusive' access to the waters of Quibray Bay (Towra Point Aquatic Reserve). The Besmaw group is also selling a portion of their industrial land immediately opposite. Both sales are likely to have implications for the environment of the Peninsula although the exact extent of the impacts is still uncertain at this stage.

Debate over the **Sharks'** proposed multi-million dollar redevelopment is expected to continue over the next month as the community comments on the rezoning application presented earlier this year. (See frontpage article.)

On a brighter note for the Peninsula, NSW Fisheries have released a Consultation Paper recommending the establishment of a new **Boat Harbour Aquatic Reserve**. The new Reserve will place restrictions on fishing and bait collecting in areas next to and adjacent to the Merries Reef area. The area contains a variety of habitats including platforms, crevices, rock-pools, boulders and cobbles. Despite the fact that some intertidal organisms will be protected, finfishing and harvesting of abalone and lobster will still be permitted. There has also been concern expressed over the inability of Aquatic Reserves to protect other ecology such as birdlife. It has been suggested that since the area is frequented by a range of migratory bird species that the Boat Harbour area should be given a greater range of protection than can be afforded by an Aquatic Reserve. Submissions to the Fisheries Consultation Paper close in July. Copies of the Paper can be accessed at

<http://www.fisheries.nsw.gov.au>

The **Cronulla Sewage Treatment Plant** has now been commissioned by Premier Bob Carr following an official ceremony in May. Significant improvements to water quality along Cronulla Beaches have already been reported.



Lakes created by Sandmining on land owned by the Holt Group. (Photo: Daphne Salt)

The 1000 year old *muang faai* system in Thailand and why local decision-making matters

OR

Why Catchment Committees and the Hawkesbury/Nepean Trust should not have been sacked

Muang faai is a 1000-year-old community river water regulation system, which still operates in many areas of Thailand. To ensure that everyone gets clean water, river communities negotiate rules governing who receives how much water and when, and they implement those rules through adjustable weirs made of bamboo and teak poles. By adding or removing poles, by raising or lowering the weir's height, by scouring the river and irrigation beds they ration water to all users. Up-keep of the system is proportional to land-holding. Taxes to maintain the system are paid in the form of labour.

The system is frequently conflict-ridden, and constantly adapting through trial and error and discussion. The system recognises that each community living along the river needs the river to irrigate its crops, water its animals, and provide for its members' personal needs. The system also enshrines the reality that land-use practices along the river are everybody's business because land-use affects rates of erosion, and thus contamination of the river and irrigation systems. In places where *Muan-faai* operates, upland forests, vital to bringing the rains each season and controlling runoff, cannot be cut without permission.

Muang faai has proven to be the basis of a sustainable agricultural system in Thai river catchments for more than a thousand years. It is successful because people who are directly affected by degradation of that environment make decisions about the environment*.

The United Nations consistently broadcasts in its numerous reports, protocols, agreements and conventions that the moves towards sustainability will only be successful if community - the affected community - is empowered to decide its own fate. This creed is enshrined in Agenda 21, which Sutherland Shire Council has adopted; it is what the Commonwealth Government's Inquiry into Catchment Management says is vital if we are serious about sustainable management of our environment; it was one of the loudest

messages sent to the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning through submissions to the Department's proposals to review the Environment Planning and Assessment Act (EP&A Act). The Department's PlanFirst proposal moves a little way, but not very far, towards more empowerment of communities.

PlanFirst and other attempts at empowering community cannot move far because of basic flaws in our regulatory systems. Under these systems, it is relatively painless for proponents of destructive endeavours to go through an environmental review and then to proceed with the project much as they originally intended, because at the end of the day, the decision is the developer's, not people's who will have to live with the consequences of the development. Environmental assessment procedures entrench the rights of governments and regulators to make decisions to destroy other people's environments.

Many people in the community who enthusiastically embraced the flurry of interest in "community participation" offered by councils, state and commonwealth government more than a decade ago are now doubting the sincerity of the process. These "participants" are realising that when they pose a threat to entrenched interests of government or the private sector, they lose. They don't always lose, but the wins are few and hard won, and environmentally unsustainable development continues almost without pause. Regulations currently force affected people to plead (called 'participation' or 'making submissions') but do not allow them to decide.

Yet, as the example of *muang faai* demonstrates, the best insurance against careless decision making is to empower those who have to live with the environmental consequences of a decision, who have the most information about how their environment works, and the most incentive to protect it for future generations. If the government (any government!) is serious about sustainability, it needs to put legal

bite behind the universal NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard). It means not sacking groups such as the **Hawkesbury-Nepean Trust** when they start threatening pet government projects, it means being "fair dinkum" with interested community members who give freely of their time in endless meetings, nurturing them (with more than sandwiches, coffee and tea) with real power (and maybe even \$\$) so they don't "burn out", feeling despondent and helpless.

As long as proponents or third parties, not individuals and communities who will pay the environmental price, make final decisions, the decision making system is corruptible by the political interests of decision makers. Local interests and those of future generations are almost certain to be sacrificed to "national interests" or to some abstract and specious "greater interest." A decision making system is inherently illegitimate and failure-prone when the rights of victims are subordinated to the rights of proponents. On the back of current regulations, government agencies enable: the building of the third runway at Sydney Airport; nuclear reactors in Australia; development at the ADI site; motorways through wetlands; developments in unsuitable, ecologically sensitive areas; and so on.

**"Progress" is overriding the Muang faai system. Thai government officials, armed with foreign money, concrete, and plans for a Green Revolution, started arriving in the 1950s to replace the old-fashioned bamboo weirs with concrete barrages. Those who depended upon the river could no longer regulate it along its path. A giant dam and reservoir upstream, under the control of the Royal Irrigation Department in Bangkok, would control the flow. As the river communities of Thailand lost control over their environment, their economy began to fail. This article is based on information from the CATO website: www.cato.org*

Miriam Verbeek

From page 4

deaths: about 42% percent of all those caused by natural disasters.

The Federation said the impact of climate change in poor countries placed an enormous responsibility on aid-giving states, commenting: "The latter commonly both create the problem and set the terms by which it will be managed."

It suggested that poor countries might seek legal compensation to pay for reconstruction through an "international tort climate court", adding: "Increasingly sophisticated analysis of climate change means that ignorance of the consequences of industrial consumption and pollution can be no defense for inaction".

The report points out that the poor are the most vulnerable to disasters, 88% of those affected and two thirds of those killed in the past 10 years living in the least developed countries.

But emergency international aid to the poorest countries declined in the late 1990s and the amount sent elsewhere rose sharply.

The Federation criticizes the quality of most emergency aid, saying that donors focus on high-profile projects, to "rebuild infrastructure, not people's livelihoods", and often fail to keep long term commitments to affected countries.

"We feel very often there is a lack of understanding of what really works, and very often donors want visibility," Mr Bracke said.

The chance of recovering from a disaster is weakened by "the widespread leakage of aid dollars". Nearly two-thirds of the funds spent on a flood action plan in Bangladesh in 1990-95 left the country to pay foreign aid consultants, thereby undermining the local economy, the report comments.

Do you have



*photos
of the Shire?*

The Centre needs photos for its newsletter and website.

So if you have any photos on the Shire's:

- natural features;
- history;
- personalities; or
- bush fires, storms

then please give us a call on 9545 3077

We will return all photos to you.

***Annual Dinner
26 October 2001***

This year The Tradies have given us the auditorium as the venue for our Annual Dinner. In past years we have had to confine our numbers to 100, but we look forward to many more members and friends attending on Friday, 26 October 2001.

As well, it's our 10th Anniversary, so let's make it a big one. Pat and Ruth are working on a Federation theme and live music, since everyone loves dressing up. So don't throw grandpa's old waist-coat and grandma's shot-taffeta skirt out just yet.

There will be prizes for costumes, trivia and an adventure mystery to solve. Ruth's working on the script, so some lucky people will be chosen for Indiana Jones character parts - but please no whips.

We guarantee it will be fun!

**You are invited
to the Year 2001 General Meeting of
Sutherland Shire Environment Centre**

where you will hear

- ✓ an account of the past year's many activities
- ✓ what's happening to our green-marine-urban environment

where you will meet

- ✓ convenors of our numerous committees
- ✓ other members, and executives of the Centre

where you will see

- ✓ displays of some of the Shire's environmental problem areas

At 7.30pm, Friday 20 September

(please try to arrive on time) supper too
Sutherland School of Arts Hall,
beside station, on west side

ph 9545 3077 fax 9521 1477

Want to Help or Simply Find Out More?

The Centre has a range of committees dealing with issues in and beyond the Shire. These are listed with the names of their convenors below. If you would like more information about their activities, or would like to help, contact the Centre

Eco-Tourism	John Cox
EMF Radiation	Lyn McLean and John Lincoln
Environmental education	Phil Smith
Fundraising.....	Pat Elphinston, Ruth Zeibots
Hacking River.....	Tim Tapsell
Kurnell.....	Simon Kimberley
Nuclear Issues.....	Michael Priceman
Population.....	Gordon Hocking
Toxic Chemicals.....	John Earl
Transport.....	Michelle Zeibots and Malcolm Cluett
Urban Bushland.....	Miriam Verbeek
Urban Issues.....	Neil deNett
Waste minimisation.....	Jim Sloan

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM



I'd like to join Sutherland Shire Environment Centre

Name.....

Address.....

.....Postcode.....

Telephone.....

I enclose fee of: \$27.50 (1 yr) \$49.50 (2 yr)

\$66 (3 yr) \$16.50 concession or student

Signed.....Date.....

N.B. Fee includes four issues of "The Centre" per year

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Sutherland Shire Environment Centre
 Suite 16, Eton Arcade, 754-760 Princes Hwy,
 PO Box 589, Sutherland NSW 1499
 Telephone 02 9545 3077 Fax 02 9521 1477
 Email office@ssec.org.au
 Web <http://ssec.org.au>



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