

# NEW HOME FOR THE CENTRE !

Have you caught up with the news? The Centre has moved. We are now in Merton Street, behind the Council building, next to the Hardware store.

New address, new look, more resources...lots of ideas.

We surged into 2002 on the run and probably haven't stopped!

Not even to put together information for our regular newsletter...sorry about that.

We imagined that once having decided to purchase our own premises – then finding suitable premises and making those torturous decisions about type of carpet and colour of walls – the hardest work was over. But no!

First there was assembling the furniture. Jim did a great job finding furniture, but he found it in jigsaw puzzle bits. It tested more than one person's special abilities to put the desks, filing cabinets, drawers, bookshelves, etc. together, let alone finding floor-space – suddenly much smaller than imagined – to locate it.

Next there was the move – all those “things” that some of us wondered why the Centre keeps and other things that we agreed should be treasured. Then there was the unpacking – that goes on forever...or seems to.

To all those people who helped with all these activities, THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

We are settled in! In fact, it is

the building that is having teething problems, not the Centre. The lift groans awfully when you step into it – not good for nervous travellers. Doors on the stairwell have a habit of locking. The buzzer at the front door has a habit of not working. A number of people have demanded rewards for gaining entrance to our premises and questioned whether we mean our welcome.

We do. (The body corporate is working on rectifying the “settling in” issues).

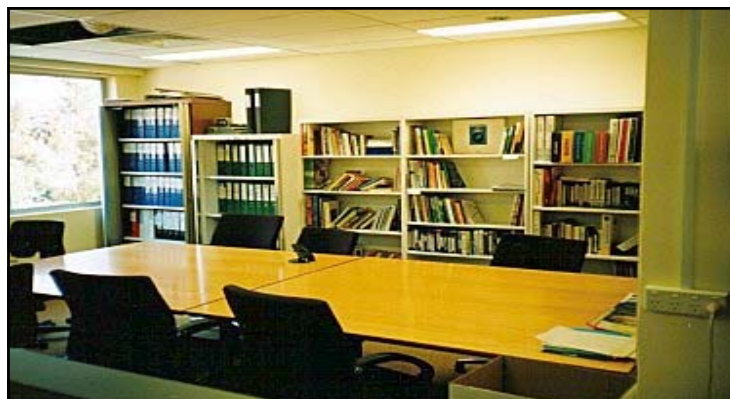
If you haven't “popped in” for a visit, do so. We had an open day at the beginning of June but every day is an open day at the Centre.

You'll see a number of new faces. With more space, we feel we've launched into a phase in our contribution to the Sutherland Shire community. We're busy exploring a number of initiatives: another forum, a trail system along the Woronora, an integrated transport network for the Shire, reacting to several Govern-



ment proposals - you'll hear more about these activities as we move along.

One idea is to keep you more up-to-date with issues that the Centre works with. We want to write a more informative newsletter. If you want to help with this project, contact us. We want to form a “newsletter committee”, to produce our quarterly publication. Anyone who wants to be involved is welcome. If you have graphics design skills, editorial skills, journalistic skills – or just like writing, you'll be very welcome. Please call us and leave your name (02 9545 3077). We'll then contact you to arrange a meeting.



## Above:

The building which is home to the new Environment Centre

## Left:

Our new meeting table and section of our ever expanding environmental library.

**More photos inside**



by *Jim Sloan,*  
*Executive Officer*

Greetings Everyone! Winter is here again and time has flown over the first half of this year..

### *Centre Activities*

**In January-February**, after 10 years we said goodbye to our old and much loved Eton Arcade office and moved into our brand new Merton Street Centre. It is over twice the size and we now have 9 workstations (instead of 5), a meeting table that sits 20 (instead of 10) and a very expanded library space.

**In June**, we hosted the Estuaries Forum at the Gunnamatta Pavilion in Cronulla with over 90 people in attendance. Our speakers all did a great job stimulating dialog on a broad range of issues. On behalf of the Management Committee, I would like to thank the Port Hacking Protection Society for the lead role they played in hosting this forum. The full proceedings of the forum should be available on our website by late July.

The first six months of this year have been frantic at the Centre, because we are in a much larger space it has required a huge amount of time to bring the offices up to a fully functional state. This has impacted on our ability to complete all of our usual tasks and I apologise for our late delivery of our first newsletter of the year. We will be bringing three more out before Christmas 2002.

Because we now have twice as much space, its seems to also have made us twice as busy.

The Centre now has six community sustainability fact sheets available for the public. We have timed their releases with our forums.

No. 1 "Population and the Environment"

- No. 2 "Local Planning & the Environment",
- No.3 "Ecologically Sustainable Development"
- No.4 "Globalisation Fact Sheet"
- No.5 "Port Hacking – State of an Estuary"
- No.6 "The Botany Bay Program"

We encourage our members to visit the Centre and check the fact sheets out. We will continue with our community sustainability series in September with a further focus on rivers and biodiversity.

### *Staff*

It is with great sorrow that we bid farewell to one of our hardest workers and most active volunteers. After a fall at the beginning of the year, on the 26th of May Pat Elphinston died. She was an example of a selfless individual that put over 50 years of service into our community. We all miss her cheerful presence. The Centre's annual report will have a one page tribute to volunteers with a focus on Pat.

In February we were sorry to say goodbye to Aaron Skelsey, the 2<sup>nd</sup> year engineering student who completed a 14-week practicum with us. His support in all things electrical during the move was fantastic. With his expertise we wired our network, telephones and set-up all our computers. He will be sorely missed, but rumour has it that we may occasionally see him about with his volunteer hat on.

In March we welcomed a number of new staff:

Lorraine Foster who has joined us first as a volunteer and later as a part-time staff member who is responsible for volunteers and the library.

Jane Northway was onboard for two months to help coordinate the June Estuaries Forum.

Sapna Kamath joined us for six weeks to replace Simon while he was on secondment to the NSW EPA

Since Lorraine took control of the volunteer activities at the Office, we have had a steady stream of volunteers

through the door, Martin Rehak, Helen Evens, Petronella Mavunga, Ann Simmul, Pat Pomroy, Ian Jeffrey, Renate Brenner to name a few.

In June we welcomed Nick Benson onto the SSEC team as a project officer. Nick has been a ball of energy, trying to organise a community trails feasibility study on the Woronora River from Como to Heathcote.

### *Membership*

In closing, after much thought on ways we may improve on the administration of our large membership we have decided to make membership renewal on a set date each year. That is, all memberships will now fall due on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December each year. All members with memberships due for renewal during 2002 will automatically have their memberships extended until 31 December 2002. The same will apply to any memberships which fall due in ensuing years.

### **Our oversized ecological footprint?**

The CSIRO just analysed the federal State of the Environment 2001 report. They noted that we have one of the highest consumption rates in the world. For example we each:

- Use 1,540 kL of water per year, (*the highest per capita consumption in the world*).
- Consume 180 tonnes of material use per year (*the highest in the OECD*).
- Generate 27 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per year (*Our energy consumption has increased 60 per cent since 1975, while the population has increased by 35 per cent*).
- Dispose of 620kg/person/year as domestic waste, (*second only to the US*).

This rate of consumption cannot be sustained indefinitely.



## *The Botany Bay Program*

The Botany Bay Program was the subject of an Agreement in 1999 between the Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (SSROC) and the Commonwealth. Significantly the NSW State Government was not a signatory and is still an external party.

The Agreement covered the development of a framework for the integrated planning of Botany Bay Catchment to satisfy overall aims of the Coastal and Marine Planning Program. The original Terms of Reference were prepared in 1999 and reflected the governmental realities in NSW as they existed at the time.

Within 6 months of the Program commencing in May 2000 those realities had changed significantly, to the extent that a number of the issues originally intended to be dealt with by the Program had been assigned to other bodies within State government. By a happy coincidence perhaps connected to earlier energetic moves by the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre, the Shire Council and SSROC - the newly established Southern Sydney Catchment Management Board (SSCMB) and Healthy Rivers Commission of Inquiry (HRC) had both been charged to deal with precisely the same study area as had been assigned to the BBP.

In particular, the Catchment Management Board had been mandated by legislation to produce a draft Catchment Management Plan (currently in preparation).

The Program has been complex one. A few statistics help to make the point.

The Botany Bay catchment covers about a third of the area of metropolitan Sydney, approximately 1,100 sq km. Population of the catchment is in the order of 2 million. 24 out of the 40 local government authorities in the Sydney region are located wholly or partly in the Botany Bay catchment. Within the catchment, hundreds of community groups are active; at least 40 local conservation and environmental groups are known to be active within the Southern Sydney Regional



Organisation of Councils area alone; invitations to a community forum early last year went to in excess of 200 groups. A peak group has at last been formed. 18 state and commonwealth agencies and organisations are active in the catchment.

Outside government, industry and commerce are major players, with some of the nation's biggest industrial enterprises being active in the bay area in particular.

### *A threshold position*

Botany Bay is at a threshold point in its history, with major development proposals under way or imminent. Government and private sector spending on Bay projects will probably continue at a high level. What is now needed is a commitment from state government in particular to take the lead position in Bay management, with a focus on the environmental health of the entire system.

It is significant that Minister Bob Debus announced in November last that the Government was to develop a "single, coordinated Botany Bay management plan" and that a Botany Bay stakeholder committee was to be established. These initiatives are encouraging, reflecting a determination on the part of the State to at last take a lead role in Bay management. At the launch of the Program's final report early in March last, the same Minister reiterated the State's position: but we are still waiting for the meat on the bone.

### *A vision for the Bay*

Out of the work on the Program to date, and reflecting the aspirations of key players and community interests, has come a vision for the Botany Bay

of the future. It will be a Bay which has achieved a reputation as the cleanest in the nation; in which the quality and dynamics of the natural environment are respected and matched by a high quality built environment; where maritime, industrial, port and air transport infrastructure is designed, built and maintained to the highest environmental standards; where the bay's potential as a focus for tourism, sport and aquatic recreation is recognised and supported; and where indigenous as well as post-colonial culture and heritage are fully respected by all.

From this vision has emerged the goal of achieving the sustainable development of the Bay and its tributaries whilst recognising the Bay's various roles as the city's and nation's premier entry and departure point for air travellers, the setting for a diverse range of nationally important industrial and commercial enterprises, the State's leading seaport for the container and bulk liquid trades, a focus for aquatic and other forms of recreation, serving a catchment population of around 2 million people as well as visitors from outside a rich and diverse ecosystem incorporating significant terrestrial and aquatic habitats including those protected under international treaties, a setting for the custodial efforts of the traditional owners, a setting for suburban housing and related urban uses, the "birthplace of modern Australia", an educational and cultural resource of immense value to school and university students and the community generally.

For Botany Bay, the door to a new and more enlightened management future is now wide open. At this point of time, action is more important than words: and such action, in the first instance, must come from the State. The fact is that local government and the community sector can only do so much. State Government participation and leadership is now essential if the goals of the strategy are to be successfully pursued in partnership with all other sectors.



*Jim Colman, Manager,  
Botany Bay Program*



## Free range kids in a livable community

I remember racing home from school, tugging off my school uniform and running out again with a hastily flung, "I'm going to the river, mum!" over my shoulder. I remember teaching my little brother how to swim in the pool at the bottom of the cliff, being rescued by a man when I became trapped in rapids after a flood, and helping release our dog, Lassie, from a rabbit trap. And I remember the giant willow we imagined was "the jungle" – we were all Tarzan. Dukie Britz slipped while swinging through the tree. He broke his arm. I'm sure my heart is stronger from the number of times it pounded in fright as I carrying out yet another dare to climb higher and further. We all bear the physical scars of a childhood spent "free range" in an exciting world.

When I see my childhood friends, we reminisce and laugh. Pressed to reflect, we could probably all tell of the important incidents that taught us how to gauge the limits of ourselves, the tolerance of others and the bounty of nature. As much as school, these days of interaction with peers and strangers – beyond the supervision of parents and guardians – shaped all of us.

### Holistic child development

A paper I recently read, written by Mayer Hillman, made me reflect the experiences of my youth. It also brought into focus two other incidents in the past decade.

The first was the remark of an employee: "If I find out a likely candidate for a job comes from the country, I'm interested. I've found that country people are more likely to take the initiative. They know how to work with others. And they know when to take orders and when to question them."

The second occurred at our farm. We had invited a family with two city-born-and-bred children, aged ten and twelve. Within an hour they reported being bored. The efforts of our younger children to engage them in the excitement of climbing into the cubby house, swimming in the river, damming a creek, or making a superhighway in the mud of a gully held no attraction. Within four

hours, the family left, unable to bear the isolation and lack of television and computer games. It is disturbing – and maybe coincidental – that both children, now in their late teens, are still not adept at dealing with adults, cannot hold a job and complain often of "being bored".

Mayer Hillman reminded me of other literature I had read on experiments on social mammals. In these experiments, it was found that "damage to the development of their social behaviour by depriving them of the rough and tumble of their early years cannot be restored: survival rises with the extent of experience of risk-taking.

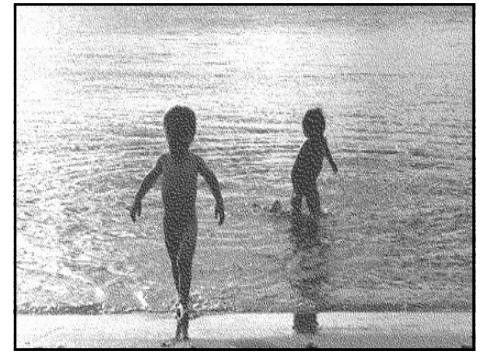
### Increasing risk unintentionally

Mayer details the many ways we are organising the infrastructure and the social interactions in our city so that we curb the capacity of our children to experience society and the environment in all its positive and negative richness.

Cars rank high on his list of detrimental effects. The use of cars close to our homes and schools makes the environment unsafe for our children. In an effort to protect them from cars, we drive our children to their destination, inadvertently increasing the number of cars on the road and decreasing the opportunity of children to get to know their neighbourhood, engage in spontaneous pursuits, practise independence, and engage in unsupervised physical activity.

Also high on Mayer's list is our "relentless pursuit of minimising even the slightest risk of our children being harmed. We build pictures for our children that the world "out there" is dangerous. We teach them about "stranger danger", set up Safe Houses programs, and forbid their unsupervised time in areas beyond our control.

Our efforts are probably doing more long-term harm than good. Several reports show an increasing level of anxiety about the world and the future. By cocooning our children we also insidiously harm them by reducing their opportunity to grow into fully independent, socially competent and confident adults. All of this when we live in a society which is demonstrably safer than ever, and where more than 90% of the incidents of harm to children are caused by



people the children know, not strangers.

However, our desire for drama, enables the media to feed us with information that would have us believe differently!

According to Mayer we could do better for our children than we apparently are doing. But it's hard to know how.

The fact is that most of our neighbourhoods are made for cars and not pedestrians – especially unpredictable child pedestrians. The fact is that there are few places where children can go for unsupervised, spontaneous activities. Bushland and waterways, the traditional venues for such play, have been driven to such a point of rarity in our cities that they are regarded as precious – sanctuaries for the survival of once abundant co-inhabitants of our planet. These sanctuaries are protected from the ravages of youth cutting down limbs, building bike paths, cubby houses and the like. Signs adorn most bushland with the word "prohibited" prominent before the list of "don'ts".

### Creating livable cities

In a talk to the Livable Cities Forum, Dirk Bolt explained how we might think about a "retrofit" of our cities. Such a retrofit would bring back a capability for people to live together in a community. It is only in communities, where people trust the behaviour of others – whether in cars or in playgrounds – that we can give our children their fundamental right – surely it must be a fundamental right – to grow into fully functioning adults.

For a full transcript of Dirk Bolt's paper, see the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre web-site: [www.ssec.org.au](http://www.ssec.org.au). A summary of that talk follows in the next issue of this newsletter.



# WORK FOR AFRICA

## Volunteers Wanted!

- \* Social Work with Street children
- \* Build Schools and Clinics
- \* Teach agriculture, carpentry and literacy
- \* Prevent Spreading of HIV/AIDS

4 to 6 months training in Campus California TG

6 months in Africa at a Development Project

2 months of Informational activities

*Join an International team for an 11-14 month program.*

*No prior experiences needed.*

**Boarding expenses. Support available, Start: August '02 or 09/01/2002**

For more information contact:

Campus California TG

[www.cctg.org](http://www.cctg.org)

[info@cctg.org](mailto:info@cctg.org)

We are holding an informational meeting in Sydney on July 27<sup>th</sup>.

You are welcome contact us for details!



## *Sutherland Shire Environment Centre 2002 Annual General Meeting*

*Friday 13 September 2002, 7.30pm*

*Sutherland Memorial School of Arts Hall,  
East Pde, Sutherland*

## SSEC launches new Association

It is the single inevitable, inescapable and predictable constant in our lives. Change. From the moment we first draw breath it is our close companion, ushering us through growth and learning, to new insights, new careers, new places and new people.

And so it is with organisations. To remain static is to decay; to grow is to change. According to Peter Drucker, eminent American social scientist writing in *The Economist*, "To survive and succeed every organisation will have to turn itself into a change agent." (03.11.01.)

And so the EMR (Electromagnetic Radiation) Alliance has ceased to be and in its place is the new, incorporated organisation, the EMR Association of Australia. The EMR Association will continue to be a source of independent information and a consumer advocate. It will, however, have the advantage of a formal structure, an expanded team, and the experience of years of involvement with the Alliance.

During its six-year history, the Alliance fulfilled a number of important roles. Primarily, it was a source of independent information about the health implications of EMR. To this end it produced a quarterly newsletter, fact sheets, information booklets and a website. Representatives addressed numer-

ous public meetings and conferences and responded to literally thousands of phone calls, emails and letters.

Secondly, the Alliance served as a consumer advocacy body. It represented the public on two RF (Radiofrequency) standards-setting committees, the ACIF (Australian Communications Industry Forum) committee which developed *the Code for the Deployment of Radiocommunications Infrastructure* and two national EME (Electromagnetic Energy) Reference Group, convened by the Departments of Communications and Health. It represented the interests of the general public in the writing of numerous submissions to government authorities and delivered presentations to two Senate Inquiries (Telecommunications Bills, 1997 and EMR Inquiry, 2000).

Like its predecessor, the new Association will provide information to the public about EMR and represent the public on relevant committees. It will be governed by a Board, chaired by Bob Walshe, the Centre's founding Chairman. Lyn McLean will serve as Executive Officer and John Lincoln as Technical Advisor.

The Association has a new website, which is the result of months of painstaking work by Mr Aaron Skelsey. It has a new-look newsletter, and a new

volunteer, Bruce Kirk, who is providing two days of work for the Association each week.

The aims of the Association:

- (1) to provide information about the health effects of EMR independent of industry and government;
- (2) to provide advice on how to reduce exposure to EMR from power and radiofrequency sources;
- (3) to work with government and industry to develop regimes to protect public health;
- (4) to serve as a central organisation for disseminating information about EMR to the community;
- (5) to provide feedback to government and industry about community opinion on EMR-related issues;
- (6) to represent the interests of the general community on issues concerned with EMR.

The new Association holds to the vision of a society that enjoys the benefits of technology safely. To become a reality, this requires that all levels of society be fully informed about the risks and committed to minimising them. It requires an unflinching commitment to creatively exploring options, and to the principles of truth, honesty and integrity.



Lyn McLean

## Watt's the Buzz?

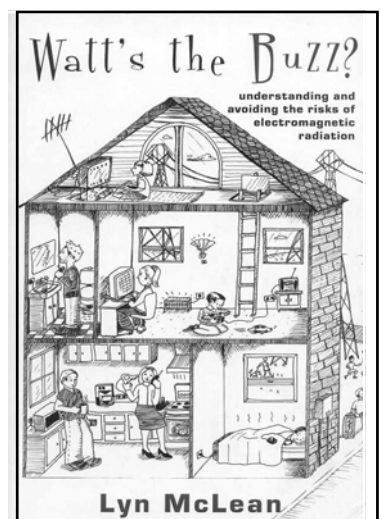
*Does living near high voltage powerlines increase your risk of leukemia? Is your mobile phone safe to use? Can your toaster give you cancer?*

On March 4 a new Australian resource on EMR hit the book stores. *Watt's the Buzz?* by Lyn McLean is a comprehensive reference that answers all your questions about EMR in a simple and easy-to-read manner.

The book contains information about the health effects of EMR from electricity, mobile phones and base stations, computers and microwave ovens. It provides an alphabetical listing of appliances and how to reduce exposure from them. There is a comprehensive 41-page list of relevant studies and information about precautions that have been adopted internationally.

This book is a vital reference for everyone. It contains information that is of relevance to householders, architects, designers and builders, employers and employees, schools, tertiary institutions and education departments, occupational health and safety officers, unions, councils and government planners.

Cost: discounted to members \$25 (rrp, \$30) plus \$5 postage and handling per book. Phone the Centre on 9545 3077 to order your copy

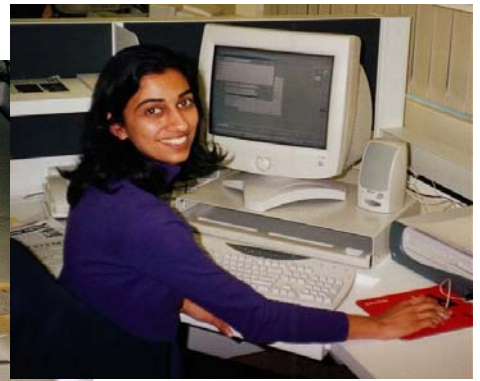




**Above:**  
Office volunteer Caroline Ten



**Below:**  
Our library and volunteer coordinator,  
Lorraine Foster



**Below:**  
Computer and web volunteer Sapna Kamath



**Right:**  
Some of the people who visited the new Centre during our recent Open Day

**Left:**  
The Centre's new Project Officer, Nick Benson preparing to give a presentation on the Woronora Trail proposal



Taken  
2002

**Left:**  
Bob Walshe and Michelle Zeibots celebrate the opening of the new Environment Centre in a re-inactment of their pose from the 1991 opening of the Environment Centre in Eton Arcade (right)



Taken  
1991

## Trails – Health; Heritage; Movement; and Biodiversity.



**A Community Forum**  
Saturday 7th September 2002  
Sutherland Entertainment Centre



*Following the success of the Estuaries Forum in June, the Centre is busy organising another full day community event, this time the theme is public trail systems.*

The forum is an initiative of the Botany Bay Program and is a joint venture in partnership with Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils and Sutherland Shire Council. The forum will help

1. Stimulate informed public debate about trails and public access projects
2. Raise awareness about, and launch public participation in, the development of local trail initiatives such as the Botany Bay Trail and The Explore-the-Woronora Trail.

# 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.....	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.



Sutherland Shire Environment Centre  
Suite 4, Level 1, 2-4 Merton St, Sutherland  
PO Box 589, Sutherland NSW 1499  
Telephone 02 9545 3077 Fax 02 9521 1477  
Email [office@ssec.org.au](mailto:office@ssec.org.au)  
Web <http://ssec.org.au>



Print Post Approved  
PP245358100013