

Understanding the draft

By Vicki Simpson

Following the promises by many councillors at the last election, Sutherland Shire Council has put on exhibition a new plan to control development in the Shire. Known as "The People's LEP", the draft plan was on display for comment until 31 May 2003.

The *dLEP* covers heritage, biodiversity, foreshore and waterfront development, environmental risk (bushfire, flood liability, acid sulphate soils, contaminated land management, telecommunications and electromagnetic radiation emitting structures), social impact assessment, transport, ecologically sustainable development (ESD), and urban design amenity.

Unlike the existing *LEP*, the new plan layers all these categories together in order to cut down on the many zonings that presently control development. As well, Council has boldly decided to bring



What's at stake at Kurnell?

See page 4 & 5 for our feature on the Kurnell Peninsula.

together all the planning rules and regulations - from all levels of government - into the one document, thereby simplifying procedures for future developers. Not surprisingly, the *dLEP* is being viewed nervously by State Planning authorities. It is not common for a local authority to take such comprehensive charge of its own urban environment.

Council's hope is that wide-

spread community support will persuade the State Government to approve the *dLEP*.

Some developer organisations have begun an active campaign to sink the initiative, spreading alarmist messages about the implications of the plan.

According to Council, many of the warnings are based on an inaccurate understanding of the

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Making tracks on the Great Kai'mia Way

By Nick Benson

As you've probably already heard, the Environment Centre is working in partnership with the Georges River Environmental Alliance and the local community on a long-term plan for public access to open space in the Georges and Woronora River valleys, making the best use of existing tracks and trails. This project has been named the Great Kai'mia Way, after Kai'mia (the Gynea Lily), the Aboriginal dreaming story of the Dharawal People.

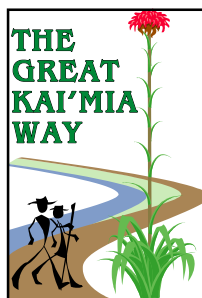
The one-year feasibility study of the Great Kai'mia Way is nearing completion, and we're about to embark on a community awareness program of the environmental value of the area, and how the project will benefit biodiversity and heritage preservation, as well as

community health and lifestyle.

However, we'd like this program to be a two-way street. We've developed a short questionnaire to help us gauge your opinion of, and suggestions for, a *Way-marked* track network. We are particularly interested in suggestions for the Woronora section. You will find the questionnaire in the centrefold of this newsletter. Please assist us with our work by filling in the form and returning it to us by Friday, June 20th.

If you want to know more about the project, please see the website www.kaimiaway.org.au or call the Environment Centre on 9545 3077.

Your contributions are vital to the success of the project!



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THE NEWSLETTER OF
THE SUTHERLAND
SHIRE ENVIRONMENT
CENTRE

From the Chair

By Miriam Verbeek, Chair

I couldn't believe it!

The phone goes. I pick it up and hear: "Mrs Verbeek, this is... from... Thank you for your support of our last raffle. We have a new one..."

With some frustration, I blurted: "Do you guys all collude to call me! Am I a soft touch!"

There was a confused silence at the other end of the phone and I winced at my own impatience. "Sorry. It's just that you're the third person ringing for money in the last half hour."

"Oh—well you're a hard person to catch and maybe this is the first time you're home."

Strange answer, I thought, and pondered about how many calls I—mercifully—must miss from charity groups wanting money.

I read somewhere that in some cultural traditions giving to charity is regarded as a social obligation. The giving can be either in kind (by expending energy in helping the community—say, volunteering) or through donations. The article went on to say that such giving is a way of ensuring that everyone recognise they have a responsibility to the welfare of their community.

I was told once that when the United Nations was set up, the decision was made to have it funded by member nations at the rate of 0.7 of 1 percent of the GDP. Well, I found out subsequently that it's not as simple as that, but I thought it would make a nice benchmark for me to use—something like 0.07 of 1 percent of my income after tax. So if I earn \$30,000 in one year, I'd have an income of about \$27,000 after tax and I'd budget to pay about \$1800 to charity or give the equivalent amount in time in voluntary work (budgeting at \$15 per hour—that's 120 hours of volunteer time a year or about 2 hours a week).

Of course, the richer I am, the more likely I'm going to have to mix time and dollars because I won't have enough hours in the week to devote to volunteer hours!

All these calculations and thoughts are very much at the forefront of my mind as the Environment Centre's Management Committee considers how to keep the Centre financially viable. As you know, the Centre is dependent and totally reliant on the goodwill of the community for its continued operations.

Many people give freely of their time to the Centre, and it has a hard-working

fundraising committee who hold a monthly stall. Membership fees bring a further amount, but still the bulk of the Centre funding must come from donations—from the supporting pockets of members, such as yourself.

A phone call such as the many I receive from other charities is hardly the way that the Centre wants to plague its members. The question then becomes: In what way can the Centre raise the funds it needs? There are a number of options, of course, and the management team is exploring them. Ultimately, I wonder in what context would you contribute more to the Centre's viability?

I don't ask questions lightly. My rule of thumb when trying to decide whether or not to give to a community group is whether it actually deserves to be supported. Does the Environment Centre? What has it achieved?

I went through the Centre's history to find out and was rather staggered by the number of achievements—big wins and little ones—of local, state and national importance. From taking on Federal Government over airports and nuclear reactors, to producing world-class information about electromagnetic radiation, to heading campaigns on the reduction of waste, to saving urban bushland, waterways and whole regions, to coordinating councils to formulate strategies, to developing a great library and website. The Centre has developed networks with local councils and governments at all levels. It has strong affiliations with other non-government

groups and international organisations. It has a great reputation. Not bad for a small organisation operating from one room!

Soon, you will be receiving a package of material from the Centre asking you to consider supporting its work on a more sustained basis. I hope you will find there are ways you can help the Centre more.

Ultimately what we are looking for is a healthier future for all of us—this generation and the next... and the next. There is no way to achieve such a goal unless we invest today in action that continues to produce outcomes today, tomorrow and so on...



A Community Garden for Sutherland!

An exciting new Community Garden is being planned for the Sutherland Shire, with an emphasis on "Education for Sustainability". If you would like to be involved, contact Jo Winkler at the Environment Centre or call John Vlamitsopoulos on 0404 250165.

About SSEC

The Sutherland Shire Environment Centre was founded to speak for the environment of the Sutherland Shire and its bioregions. The Centre seeks to bring to its advocacy role: well-researched information, participation of all stakeholders in debates; inclusion of the needs of future generations; and a genuine desire to seek win-win solutions to competing aims for the utilisation of natural resources.

Officially launched on 22 July 1991, the Centre is a totally independent body,

open at all times to public scrutiny and public participation. This newsletter is provided to members and interested readers to supply up-to-date information about Centre activities. Opinions expressed in the newsletter are the authors', and not necessarily policy of the Centre.

The editorial committee comprises: Pam Cook, Don Pagé, Vicki Simpson, Narelle Towart, Miriam Verbeek, and Jo Winkler.

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Casting a shadow on light—the ignored pollutant

By Ian Jeffrey

Member of SSEC & Sutherland Astronomy Society

Light pollution—what is it?

It is the consequence of the poor use of artificial light, that is, excessive use, badly directed. It is readily observable in one of its major consequences, that is, the wholesale loss of the stars. Soon, the only stars that many of us will ever see, will be on the silver screen from Hollywood. Goodbye to our heritage, goodbye to the absolute beauty of the heavens, and the thousands of years of our ancestors, philosophers and the generations of astronomers.

Astronomy, Asteroids, Comets, Lighting, Costs and the Big End of Town

Pollution, pure and simple

There is no excuse for excessive light pollution; the technology for environmentally friendly lighting is already available and with no cost imposition. In fact, there should be cost advantage, in that the electricity bills should be reduced and also the cost of greenhouse gases. It has, for example, been estimated that the USA wastes \$1-2 billion a year in electricity bills alone. Additionally, many existing light fittings can be made non-polluting by retrofitting.

As a measure of light pollution on our own doorstep, let me quote Dr Nick Lomb, curator of the Sydney Observatory, who recently stated in the *Herald*, that once upon a time we could see some 2,400 stars from this city, but this figure is now nearer to 220. Already one star has gone from the Southern Cross and another is on its way, and when this one goes, we will be down to about 60. If we persist with our sacrilege, one day we could emulate London, New York and Paris, with only 2 or 3 stars visible on a clear night. Try explaining that to our grandchildren!!

Comets and Asteroids

Astronomy is one of those rare pursuits where the amateurs can make a meaningful contribution to research, which can be of considerable practical value. An item receiving publicity recently has been the need to monitor comet and asteroid orbits, to determine which might impact with Mother Earth. The force of impact is directly proportional to the mass and the square of the body's velocity (say 11-74km/sec.). So a relatively small object can cause a tremendous amount of damage. The object that devastated a large section of forest at Tunguska in Siberia in 1908 was estimated to be only 50-100m in diameter. Fortunately, it was not a densely populated area, but next time, who knows? We must also remember that such an object is estimated to hit the

earth every 100 years. There are estimated to be about 300,000 near-Earth asteroids over 100m diameter and about 2,000 over 1km. The mother of all impacts was when a 10km asteroid hit Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico some 65 million years ago, leading to the extinction of many species, including the dinosaurs. A 10km asteroid travelling at 30km/sec. would generate shock waves in the Earth's crust, tsunamis, firestorms, destruction of the ozone layer and atmospheric alteration for periods ranging from hours to 1,000s of years. This was not an isolated or one-off event; some 140 major craters have been identified on Earth. Only a short time ago, in 1989, Earth had a near miss from an asteroid, but it was only detected after making its closest approach to Earth. If it had impacted, it would have been equivalent to about 5,000 Hiroshima bombs!

The US House of Representatives Committee on Science, Space and Technology, following the near miss, believed "that it is imperative that the detection ratio must be increased substantially. The cost of an accelerated detection program would be small compared with the damage caused by the impact of a small asteroid. If we don't perform the right set of activities in the next decade or two, it is the age of inexcusable ignorance. We need a new breed of political operator." It must be added that, in this country, the Government, in its infinite wisdom, has stopped its funding of comet and asteroid research. The Science Minister Peter McGauran referred to it as "a fruitless, unnecessary self-indulgent exercise." Philip Chapman, former astronaut and physicist, referred to Mr. McGauran as a "scientifically illiterate lawyer." He also suggested that we should stone him every time he appears in public, just to let him know that stones can hurt.

So you will say, what can be done? The general thrust is as follows:

- Increase and improve comet and asteroid detection, that is, find them all, find them

sooner, determine their orbits accurately and maximise the notice given. At the present rate of detection, we could be looking at something like a 100 year program - so, even more emphasis on the urgency.

- This clearly includes the need for improvement in Earthbound detection and, therefore, reduction in light pollution, that is, lights and light fittings correctly designed for the purpose and correctly installed. This should include a serious look at retrofitting. It must be emphasised to the public that this does not mean the loss of light.

What do we do if a comet or asteroid is detected, and detected in good time, on collision course with our planet?

- Identify the point of impact and evacuate the population.
- Depending on the comet or asteroid size, destroy it or deflect it, either by blowing it up or nudging it away.

Clearly there is a need to maximise notice, develop accurate orbit prediction and develop the techniques for deflecting and destroying.

Here we have addressed very serious matters and identified parts that we can play in the greater scheme of things. In the next issue, we will address the effects that light pollution may have on humans, fauna and flora.

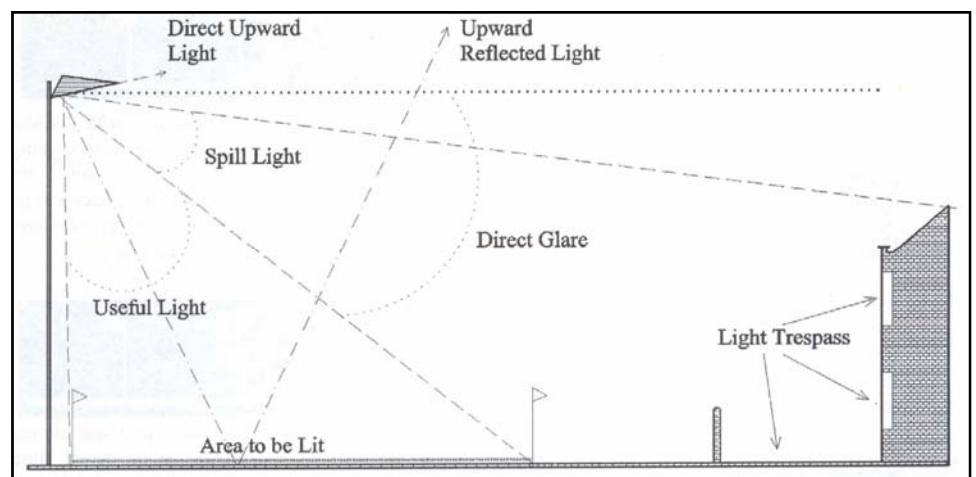
Footnote

The Czech Republic has become the first nation to outlaw excess outdoor light.

See website for Sutherland Astronomical Society on Page 8 (www.sasi.net.au).

Below, 'Wasted light' from outdoor lighting such as street lights, one of the ways light pollution occurs.

Picture, courtesy The Institution of Lighting Engineers, UK.



What's at stake at Kurnell?

The Kurnell Peninsula is today the subject of much concern and speculation, perhaps more than ever before. Major development proposals threaten to rob the Peninsula of what's left of its environmental integrity, while the newly-formed Botany Bay Strategy Advisory Committee seeks to protect and consolidate Kurnell's unique and significant place in Australia's history and environment.

Why, you ask, is so much attention now focussed on Kurnell? What is it about the Peninsula that makes development issues so controversial?

There is much at stake on the Kurnell Peninsula, both natural and cultural. While Kurnell has long been appreciated by locals, the wider community must recognise its values if this area is to have a sustainable future.

Sand dunes. The sandhills, largely covered with trees, scrub and native grasses prior to European settlement, were a life-giving resource and a home to Aboriginal people, native flora and fauna, and migratory birds. In the years since, the sandhills were stripped almost bare of vegetation by a series of disastrous management decisions, including sheep grazing and unchecked timber felling, and mined within an inch of their existence to service Sydney's hungry building industry. Sandmining continues to this day, although its legality is a much-debated topic. Its legacy is a few remnant dunes and many deep water-filled pits – some being currently filled-in with demolition waste from building sites around Sydney. The native indigenous vegetation is feeling the pressure from invasive weeds such as Bitou bush, introduced to the area for the purpose of dune stabilisation. The dunes have been nominated for heritage listing, but the nomination must



be assessed before a formal recommendation is made to the State Government.

Towra Point Wetlands. A United Nations for the avian world, these mud and sandflats, saltmarshes and mangroves, the last of the large tidal wetlands of the Sydney region, play host to migratory birds from China, Siberia, Japan and the Arctic Region. Their role as habitat for migratory birds earned Towra Point a Ramsar declaration in 1984, to be protected as a wetland of international conservation significance. The saltmarsh, seagrass and mangrove plant communities are a source of food and shelter for birds, commercial fish species and shellfish. Seagrasses also work to decrease wave energy and stabilise the seabed, limiting erosion of terrestrial communities. Saltmarshes and mangroves act as buffers helping to protect waterways from pollutants and other impacts of land-based activity. But like any buffer they can be



Above, the "great wall of Towra" constructed to slow the erosion of Towra Beach, caused by development within Botany Bay.

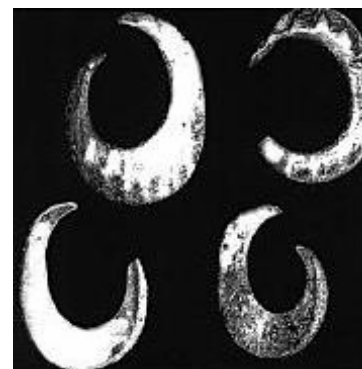
overwhelmed themselves by damaging activities.

Developments in Botany Bay, such as the Third Runway and Port Botany (which is proposing a large extension) have changed the shape and currents in the Bay. This has led to extensive erosion of Towra Point Nature Reserve, threatening the future of its inhabitants and, therefore, the site's Ramsar listing.

Aboriginal Heritage. The Gweagal Aborigines were the human inhabitants of the Kurnell Peninsula who witnessed Cook's landing. They are part of the

Left, What the Kurnell dune system would have looked like before sandmining

Dharawal nation extending from the southern side of Botany Bay to Nowra in the south and Camden in the west. On the Peninsula the abundance of food and shelter sources enabled the Gweagal to be less nomadic than inland tribes. In the words of Cook himself: "They live in a tranquillity which is not disturbed by the inequality of condition: the earth and sea of their own accord furnishes them with all things necessary for life". Their footprint on the land was small, the only evidence of their inhabitation of this area are middens, cave paintings, rock engravings, and their tools for daily life.



Above, Aboriginal fish hooks made from shells. Fred McCarthy

Importantly, Aboriginal people valued the land as a living entity, a "wholly integrated system which would respond to love and care" (*The Tide is Turning*, 2001).

Kurnell, often called the birthplace of Australia, symbolic of the meeting of cultures, has long been denied the respect and care paid by the original inhabitants. Acknowledging the Peninsula as an integrated life-force of people, animals, plants, earth, sea and air, will hopefully steer its course away from resource plundering and polluting development, to one of sustainability and respect.

On 16th April, the Botany Bay Strategy Advisory Committee had its inaugural meeting. This committee represents the first step towards a unified management plan for the Bay and its catchment, which has suffered from 215 years of piecemeal governance.

For further information regarding the Kurnell Peninsula and the Botany Bay Strategy, please call the Centre on 9545 3077 or visit www.ssec.org.au.

Kurnell's controversies

By Josephine Winkler

So, what are the major issues currently threatening the Peninsula's environmental health?

Sharks Club development proposal. The Sharks' Club and grounds sit along the edge of Woolooware Bay, one of the Shire's largest and finest waterways, a sub-bay of Botany Bay and part of Kurnell Peninsula.

The huge development proposal as it currently stands is as follows:

- 5 blocks of residential units (about 210 units), 4-7 storeys high
- 1 hotel block (about 60 suites)
- 500 sqm of retail and commercial space
- 850 sqm of conference, seminar, exhibition facilities
- extensions to the Club's existing building
- 2 levels of parking

All of this is to fit on the Club's eastern carpark, a mere 30m from the edge of Woolooware Bay. Sutherland Shire Council's Planning staff have labelled the proposal "an overdevelopment".

Shifting a large population into a natural area has always and everywhere led to decline or disaster for nature. Aside from the impacts from detergents, fertilisers, pesticides, weeds and litter, there are at least two major environmental factors to be taken into account—length of a foreshore buffer zone (should 100m, but Sharks want 30m) and the release of acid sulfate poison into the waterways by soil disturbance.

The proposal has the support of a majority of Councillors of Sutherland Shire, despite the opposition to it from staff. However, at the end of May, PlanningNSW sent a letter to the General Manager of Sutherland Shire Council, withholding permission to exhibit the draft LEP for the development pending



conclusion of a major Government study of the environment of Botany Bay.

H6—Australand site. One of the most controversial sites on the Kurnell Peninsula, it has been sandmined extensively during the last 40 years. Only one large exposed dune remains.

In 1999 the owners of the site, Australand, lodged a proposal to rezone the site and establish 350 residential dwellings and 150 aged care dwellings. Under this proposal, pond habitat for Green and Golden Bell frogs that had been observed on the site, was to be filled in, and the only remaining dune was to be diminished by 8m. Council rejected the proposal, intending to pursue an environmentally-focussed rezoning, which would consider the site's proximity to Towra Nature Reserve.

In a surprise move, the Minister at the time for the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, Dr Andrew Refshauge, stripped Sutherland Shire Council of its power of consent for the Australand development, so the power to decide was solely in his hands.

All development on the Peninsula, however, has since been placed on hold after Dr Refshauge's announcement on 3rd September 2002 of the initiation of a "Botany Bay Study".

However, it is feared that if the Sharks' proposal is given the nod, there will be little to

stop the Australand development, just 1km down the road.

Sandmining has occurred on the Peninsula in one form or another since the 1930s. Dunes that once rose to 200 feet have been reduced to water-filled holes up to 26 feet deep in places. Plant and animal communities have been wiped out or displaced. The current rate and expansion of sandmining has led to concerns about the stability of the sand body separating Botany Bay from the ocean.

After the election of the current Council in September 1999, and in response to community concern, moves were made by Councillors to establish a committee to investigate the legalities of the current sandmining activities. These investigations focussed on whether consent was ever granted for the current activities being undertaken in their current areas by the property owners. The legal battle to put a stop to sandmining on the Kurnell Peninsula continues, at the same time as sand continues to be mined from the area.

We are often asked at the Environment Centre, "What is being done to stop the damage?" We are hard at work, lobbying Local, State and Federal Governments, but **we need you to add your voice to our concerns.** If you feel strongly about any issue affecting the Kurnell Peninsula, please send us a letter or email expressing your thoughts. In doing so you will become part of the great effort to create a positive future to the Peninsula.

For more information on these issues, please see our website, www.ssec.org.au or call us on 9545 3077.

Left, part of what remains of the once mighty Kurnell dune system.

Offshore Sandmining

On 19th March 2003, Sydney Marine Sands Pty Ltd lodged an exploration licence for an offshore sandmining project three nautical miles off the area stretching from Narrabeen to Palm Beach, which is in Commonwealth Waters. The NSW Government opposes the grant of the exploration licence.

Compensatory Wetlands

By Miriam Verbeek

The NSW State Wetland Advisory Committee (SWAC) was set up to encourage and assist with the implementation of the NSW Wetlands policy. SWAC was appointed by the Minister for Land and Water Conservation and comprises representatives from government agencies, non-government organisations, the community, research areas and industry.

The policy is based on nine wetland management principles. Principle six of the policy states that natural wetlands should not be destroyed or degraded, but when social or economic imperatives require it, the rehabilitation or construction of a wetland is necessary.

When wetland loss occurs or is projected to occur there is no guidance for compensation in NSW. The compensation that does take place is ad hoc, not transparent, and mostly inadequate in that there is no allowance for the long-term management of, and responsibility for the wetlands. Compensation appears to be

a fact of life under Ecologically Sustainable Management and it is important that sustainable guidelines are developed.

To address this inadequacy, SWAC has prepared this discussion paper to outline the major principles, options and issues associated with wetlands. It is hoped that one of the outcomes of this document is the development of guidelines on the compensation principle under the *NSW Wetlands Management Policy*.

To view the policy, go to the website listed under *Useful Websites* in this newsletter (www.dlwc.nsw.gov.au/care/wetlands/wetlandmanagement/policy.html).

Menai Central

The surrounding community complain that the promised sound barrier, landscaping and low-scale lighting haven't been delivered. In addition, residents near the entrance to Carter Road have had an increase in traffic they were all assured would be controlled. The developers believe they have delivered all they are required to deliver, if not more. Council is apparently unable to do more to rectify the situation because of a range of reasons—one of them being the involvement of private certifiers. The developer complains he does his best to rein in the un-neighbourly practices of some of his lessees—such as unauthorised advertising

and deliveries—but achieves little success. When the Environment Centre suggested an ongoing consultative process, no one saw it as their role. Currently the Environment Centre continues to bring together major players in an ad hoc and tortuous process, trying to iron out at least some of the major issues. There have been some significant gains, and hopefully more to come.

Two court cases, assurances from developers, complaints from the community, many hours of consultation and still unhappy people! The community have seen their neighbourhood amenity decline in the name of progress. "Progress" is a funny thing!

Allison Crescent, Menai



Above, Permanent fence around endangered ecological community promised by February, still not complete today.

Shiprock Reserve—Port Hacking

The scar to the landscape that recently opened up on the Port Hacking foreshore is an illustration of the lack of understanding some landowners have about sustainable development. The owners of this block removed all vegetation shortly before days of heavy rains. Silt and rubble washed into the waterway. Sediment from sites like this are causing significant infilling of bays and smothering of seagrass beds—nurseries for fish.

In itself this is bad enough, but this site is close to precious Shiprock Reserve, already under significant stress from other pollution events. Rather than remaining a remarkable habitat for coral and marine life, the Reserve is in danger of becoming just a big rock in the water.



Photo, George Cotis

Kirrawee Brick Pit Proposal

A controversy over redevelopment of the Sydney Water owned brick pit area is about to boil over.

Planning NSW (as called Urban Design Advisory Service) has been exhibiting a relatively high density residential plan for the area and calling for public comment. Generally the public have been unenthusiastic and have suggested alternative uses for the land. Sutherland Council has so far simply told Planning NSW that their proposal lacks the detail to enable constructive comment and appears outside planning controls set for the area.

ACTION: If you have a view about the brickpit proposal, please contact SSEC via phone, email or letter.

Dredging—Port Hacking

The NSW government and Sutherland Shire Council are spending around \$1.75m this year, to re-dredge channels primarily for deep keeled recreational vessels—this work while hospitals, volunteer fire brigades, and other needed community services are struggling to find funds. This work is progressing in spite of fears that it will spread the invasive weed, *Caleurpa taxifolia*. There are supposed to be safeguards in place and monitoring—but judging from past dredging activities, results will not be made public. The Port Hacking Management Panel is seeking further information.

Gandangarra Lands

Good news for those people concerned about the mooted proposal to urbanise much of the Gandangarra Lands! The *Leader*, March 2003 reported that the Land Council do not plan to build 6000 homes. They have plans to build a cultural centre and to restore the land to its original pristine condition.

Transport Statistics

ACTION!

Have you sent in your endorsement of or comments on the People's Transport Vision—sent to you some weeks ago? If not, please do so. If you've lost your copy of the Vision or want to view it, visit www.ssec.org.au or call the Centre on 9545 3077.

Here are some statistics you might like to ponder:

- In 1945, Sydney's trams carried 300 million passengers per year.
- In 1955, trains carried nearly 400 million passengers a year.
- Although there are improvements in power supply, train design, management systems and timetabling, train travel is no faster today, nor more reliable than it was 50 years ago.
- Sydney's population has more than doubled in 50 years but train passengers have dropped to 230 million per year.
- Sydney's rail network has had one significant extension since 1930s (the Eastern Suburbs Line in 1970s).
- In the same period, the number of motorways has exploded but there are still "missing links".
- There are now huge areas of Sydney where no decent public transport service exists.

The Government continues to subsidise private transport at the expense of public transport, alienating all those who can't drive or afford a car.

Vale Ted Lawes

Extracts from a eulogy by Bob Walshe.

I've not known anyone more sincere and upfront, more committed and passionate, more helpful and extravagantly generous with money and time than Ted Lawes.

Ted was on the doorstep when we set up the Shire Environment Centre and opened a shopfront-office in Eton Arcade in Sutherland on 22nd July 1991.

Ted was ceaselessly active on several fronts. He has regularly bombarded politicians with letters and with forthright statements at their meetings. He could always be relied on to attend demonstrations and protest gatherings. He had a veritable artist's studio where he produced and stored posters, placards and banners. He devised and did the signwriting for the sandwich boards that stand outside the Environment Centre's office.

Throughout the past 12 years of the Environment Centre, Ted has been a frequent visitor. He seemed always to have heaps of photocopying to do – of his letters, his poems, and the press clippings he wanted to send with letters. Though we invited him to use the



photocopying facilities for free, he insisted on giving 20 cents a page and would often add a five dollar donation. Knowing we had a Monday morning executive meeting, Ted would often arrive with tea cake or a sponge.

Despite his accumulating physical problems, Ted if anything became more active as American intentions to invade Iraq became clear. Nothing could keep Ted from joining in the 16th February Peace March which drew 300,000 participants.

A staunch republican, Ted's preference was for the Eureka flag, a symbol of Australia's initial struggle for independence.

May I pass on just one stanza from Helen Palmer's "Ballad of Eureka", a stanza that seems appropriate today to the spirit Ted always expressed:

There's not a flag in Europe
More lovely to the eye,
Than is the blue and silver
Against a southern sky.
Here in the name of freedom,
Whatever be our loss,
We swear to stand together
Beneath the Southern Cross.

(Continued from page 1)

Understanding the draft "People's LEP"

dLEP. Environmental and community groups are taking a cautious but encouraging stand. They say the plan is a significant improvement, and should be supported by the people, though they advise a few modifications to improve it further.

Of course, ultimately it is not only the details of the plan that will finally decide whether or not Shire residents get good development; it is whether Council will have the skill to guide and

enforce the development. Nevertheless, the *dLEP*, with its comprehensive set of rules, is a bid to strengthen planning controls which aim to protect our precious bushland, fauna and flora, open space and waterways, and we commend Council for its hard work in developing the plan. Such a comprehensive overhaul of development planning deserves careful attention and plenty of time for people to digest implications. When Council has made revisions following 31 May, the *dLEP* will again go on exhibition in August.

To view SSEC's draft *People's LEP* submission go to the website www.ssec.org.au.

Volunteer News

By Josephine Winkler

Over the past couple of months we have said goodbye to a few volunteers, and have welcomed quite a few more. New to the highly-valued ranks of Environment Centre volunteers are Geoffrey Woo, Garth Holmes and Zana Jancic. All are assisting Nick Benson and Bob Symington with the development of maps and the website for the Great Kai'Mia Way. They have skills in programming, website design or geographical information systems, and are proving invaluable to the trails feasibility study effort.

Giving Becky a hand with cataloguing our resource library are Karen Hall, Ann Gorey Rixon, Margaret Lewis, Ruby Soleil and Juliet Lee, in addition to Renate Brenner, who has been with us for over a year.

Our volunteers, new and long-term, are the backbone of our organisation and we value the generous donation of their time, effort and expertise.

More volunteers are always welcome—have you got some time?



Left, Shirley Renshall has been a volunteer at the Centre for many years.



Right, Garth Holmes is one of our new faces.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION :

I would like to become a member of Sutherland Shire Environment Centre



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
Web www.ssec.org.au

Name.....

Address.....

..... post-

code.....Telephone.....

.....

I enclose fee of: \$27.50 (1 yr) \$49.50 (2 yr) \$66 (3 yr)

\$16.50 (concession or student)

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

RISKY BUSINESS—GE FOOD

The science behind genetic engineering (GE) is extraordinary. Unlike traditional breeding processes that have evolved over the past 10,000 years, GE takes genes from one life form and forces them into another. Genes from bacteria, viruses, plants, animals and even humans have been inserted into plants like soybeans, canola, corn and cotton, to grow commercial crops. Many Australians, perhaps unaware, are now eating imported processed foods made from these GE crops. These staple food crops could never have occurred in nature: corn engineered to produce its own insect killer and canola that is immune to toxic herbicide spray.

GE food products, without adequate labelling, first appeared quietly on Australian shelves in 1998. Now, with the support of the Federal Government (perhaps mindful of the strong support given the GE industry by the US Government), the chemical and GE giant, Bayer, is likely to be issued with a licence for the unrestricted commercial release in Australia of GE canola in a matter of

weeks—ending our country's GE-free status forever.*

Undertandably, there is much scepticism about GE foods. With accusations and innuendos flying thick and fast between the major players in the GE debate, how can we, the unsuspecting and vulnerable public, establish where the truth lies?

The supporters of the technology (mainly the international chemical and seed giants like Monsanto and Bayer, the biotech companies and the food industry) insist that GE agriculture will boost the Australian economy and that the technology is safe. Opponents (scientists, farmers, consumers and environmental groups) claim that too little is yet known about the health, environmental, social and economic impacts of GE. Will the long-term health of consumers be affected? Won't non-GE food crops be cross-pollinated with GE crops?

At least now in Australia we have a more comprehensive (but not entirely satisfactory) labelling for GE foods. And in March 2003, Premier Bob Carr promised that his government will place

an immediate 3-year moratorium on the growing of GE food crops in NSW. It now remains to be seen if Queensland will come into line with all other states by setting in place a moratorium (Victoria has also just announced a 12-month 'voluntary' moratorium). Surely this is a wise step considering the many issues involved and the need for further research... And perhaps, in relation to food, we should all be asking, "Why GE technology, and who will benefit from it?"

**Note:* Australia already grows two GE *non-food* crops commercially—cotton and carnations.

Suggested reading:

Teitel, Martin & Wilson, Kimberley A. *Changing the nature of nature: genetically engineered food*, London: Vision, 2000.

Some related websites:

www.abc.net.au/science/slab/consconf
www.foodstandards.gov.au
www.geneethics.org

USEFUL WEBSITES



NSW Wetlands Management Policy
www.dlwc.nsw.gov.au/care/wetlands/wetlandmanagement/policy.html

Sharks Development Proposal
www.ssec.org.au/SharkFeb03

\$1 million for Migratory Shorebirds
www.ea.gov.au/water/wetlands/bulletin/index.html

Efforts to reduce plastic bag waste
www.ea.gov.au/industry/waste/ieu

The Great Kai'mia Way
www.kaimiaway.org.au

Sutherland Astronomical Society
www.sasi.net.au



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