

# Repairing Kurnell—a step towards a brighter future for our precious Peninsula



Above, Merv Ryan (Kurrunulla Aboriginal representative), David Kemp and Bruce Baird discuss the future of the Kurnell Peninsula.

By Josephine Pajor-Markus

In between the rumble of 747s passing overhead, and the warbling of curious magpies, the Kurnell Peninsula witnessed a significant step towards the safeguarding of its heritage values.

On Tuesday, 18th May, Federal MP for Cook, Bruce Baird, met with Federal Minister for the Environment, Dr David Kemp, at Captain Cook's historic Landing Place to nominate Kurnell Peninsula for inclusion on the National Heritage List.

This official nomination comes after many years of community outcry over the continued desecration of the environmental, cultural and historic values of the Peninsula.

Representatives from NPWS, local community groups and Sutherland Shire Council turned out to bear witness and support the nomination.

Daphne Salt, local historian and author of *Kurnell—Birthplace of*

*Modern Australia*, welcomed the nomination, commenting, "This should have happened 100 years ago!"

Assessment of the Kurnell nomination against stringent national heritage criteria will be undertaken by the Australian Heritage Council of the next 12 months. The Council will then advise the Minister whether the place has National Heritage values.

### What would National Heritage Listing mean for Kurnell?

Once listed, the environmental, cultural and historic values of the area will be protected by Federal Statute. This means:

- a person cannot take an action that *has, will have or is likely to have* a significant impact on the listed place without the approval of the Australian Government Minister for the Environment & Heritage.

- If the place is on State or Private land, it can be protected by the Commonwealth.
- If it is an Indigenous Heritage site, it can be protected irrespective of the land tenure.
- If it is held by other title, it can be protected by the State & Commonwealth through bilateral agreement, or by the private owners under a conservation agreement with the Commonwealth.

Dr Kemp gave assurances to those gathered that he would do everything in his power to expedite the Listing.

The community will wait with bated breath as sand continues to be mined round-the-clock and the threat of expansion of Port Botany looms large from the north side of the Bay.

Heritage listing won't solve many existing problems

While the Listing will assist Council when it comes through in a year's time to control *future* development threats to the Peninsula, the Shire must fight against many *present* abuses.

- Existing sand licences should not be renewed.
- Legality of some present sand mining should be challenged.
- The many below-surface excavations—now filled with groundwater -should not be filled with polluting waste materials.

- The sand miners should be compelled to leave enough sand for rehabilitating and vegetating the plundered sites.

Council is aware of these issues and is responding to community demands to end sandmining as soon as can legally be affected.

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THE NEWSLETTER OF  
THE SUTHERLAND  
SHIRE ENVIRONMENT  
CENTRE



For years I've been trying not to bring plastic bags into the house. When shopping for groceries I ask for boxes to pack my purchases into, or I leave the groceries unpacked in the trolley and put them loose into the car. I seem never to be organised enough to bring along the many string and calico bags I have at home!

If I manage not to bring plastic bags home, then other members of the family do. I salve my conscience by returning most bags to the recycle bins now located in many grocery outlets.

The other day I was in Franklins and the check out attendant said very politely: "Could I interest you in our black material bags for ninety cents each instead of plastic bags?" Imagine the shock I gave myself when I responded with: "Ooh, more bags. I have so many bags at home and I forget to bring them back to use the next time."

I was so stunned by my response that I blushed and rushed out of the store like a guilty thief – with ten plastic bags full of groceries!

All the way home I thought about how to overcome this silly business of leaving my material bags at home. "What is the difference between putting

the material bags into the boot ready for the next shopping event and putting plastic bags into the boot ready for the next opportunity to put them into the recycle bin?" I asked myself.

So, the next time I went shopping I said: "Could you put my groceries into your black material bags, please."

Wow! What a bonus. The bags are very well designed. Better than a box and better than my many string bags and calico bags. As soon as I unpacked the groceries, I put the bags (because they are stronger than plastic bags, I only needed three for all my groceries) into one bag and into the car.

Congratulations, Franklins. I noticed a woman carrying one around with a "Coles" logo printed on the side. At Paddy Pallin, there are no plastic bags, only paper ones. The Body Shop has the same deal. More and more shops are beginning to look for alternatives. Good news!

National Parks have banned the use of plastic bags at Wattamolla in the Royal National Parks. It seems that the ban has been well received and there have been few complaints. I wish Sutherland Shire Council would follow the same lead and ban the use of plastic bags at fishing and picnic spots around the Shire. The mess some people leave behind is appalling.

There are few tasks more ghastly than picking up a plastic bag with scraps of rotted bait or chicken

sandwiches. Yet that is what many environmentally conscious people do while they walk along the foreshore – usually trying to enjoy nature, but distracted by the litter others leave behind.

Leaving aside the rotten stuff that can get left inside plastic bags, there is also the problem of their persistence in nature. Along with bottles and cans, they cause the eyesore that blemishes the lovely bushland and wonderful waterways that make this Shire so special. Perhaps if these thoughtless individuals need to bring their food and equipment in packaging that was more robust and expensive, they might take the containers home for re-use.

Maybe all of us should start lobbying Council to impose a plastic bag ban, or at the very least to discourage the use of plastic bags at any event they organise. An experiment to make at least one suburb plastic bag free has borne fruit in Oyster Bay, as you'll read on page 8.

For more info on the scourge of plastic bags go to [www.planetark.com](http://www.planetark.com)

## Who cares about the Environment?

Well, aside from us...

- 54% Australians think the environment is very important – it was the third most important issue identified by people after family and friends
- But, the government gives it a sixth ranking, after health, education, law and order, and roads and traffic
- 87% of Australians are concerned about environmental problems
- 81% agree that products that cause environmental problems should cost more
- 64% agree they would give part of their income if the money was used to fix environmental problems

More than 70% of people thought retailers, the State and Commonwealth Governments, industry and individuals are not doing enough to protect the environment.

## About SSEC

The Sutherland Shire Environment Centre was founded to speak for the environment of the Sutherland Shire and its related 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. For information on the Centre's policies, please visit the Centre website or call the Centre.

The editorial committee comprises: Vicki Simpson, Miriam Verbeek, and Jo Pajor-Markus.

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## World Environment Day on the Great Kai'mia Way

*Sunday, 6th June:* the day dawned clear and crisp. There was a general stamping of feet and rubbing of hands to ward off the cold as a dedicated group prepared for an expedition along the Como-Jannali-Woronora section of the Great Kai'mia Way.

Gathered together by Nick Benson, project co-ordinator of the Great Kai'mia Way, the group assembled to acknowledge World Environment Day, to discover-and-celebrate local, often overlooked wonders of Sutherland Shire's urban bushland environment. The aim of the walk was also to raise awareness of the Great Kai'mia Way, a vision for a sustainable trails network through the diverse bushland and urban landscape of the Georges and Woronora River catchments.

Ranging in age from 2 to 80, a group of 49 assembled at the Como Marina and crawled, trudged and ran (depending on age and energy) along a winding route through Paruna Reserve, Jannali Reserve (soon to be renamed Burnum Burnum Sanctuary), Bonnet Bay to Woronora.

Anyone wanting to do this walk, or others along the Great Kai'mia Way, should contact Nick Benson at SSEC on 9545 3077. For more information on the Great Kai'mia Way go to the website [www.kaimiaway.org.au](http://www.kaimiaway.org.au).



Far left, intrepid adventurers gather to celebrate World Environment Day. Middle top and bottom, a large contingent of under-10s conquered the walk (and loved it!) Above, Jannali Reserve overlooking the Woronora

## Staggering Marine Pest Facts

For more than a decade the Port Hacking Protection Society has been pointing out to State and Federal Governments that ships should not anchor at the mouth of the Port. One of the reasons for the Society's concern is the potential for the spread of marine pests.

When an ocean-going vessel offloads cargo, it then usually takes on seawater (ballast) to maintain ship stability. Upon reloading cargo at another port, which could be thousands of kilometres away, it discharges the seawater – often introducing foreign species that could – and have become significant pests.

In spite of twenty years of discussions and research, there is still no effective agreement or technology for controlling the spread of pests through ballast water. Botany Bay and Port Hacking continue to be threatened. The pest currently causing most concern in both ports is *Caulerpa taxifolia*,

A recent study highlighted that the spread of marine pests is even more complex than originally thought. A fleet of nearly 1 million vessels carry out domestic voyages around Australian marine waters. Ninety-eight percent are privately owned recreational boats, such as yachts, tinnies

and cabin cruisers, ranging from 2 to 175 metres long. The other two percent are vessels offering a variety of services such as policing and support – including support for the dozen or so mobile drilling rigs operating in Australian waters each year.

All these vessels have the potential to spread marine pests.

For more information on marine pests, visit [www.oceans.gov.au](http://www.oceans.gov.au)



Photo, David Harafti, NSW Fisheries

## PORT BOTANY: Commission of Inquiry Adjourned!

The Commission of Inquiry into the Construction and Operation of a New Container Terminal at Port Botany was adjourned on the morning public hearings were due to commence.

The adjournment follows the release of the Interim Report of the NSW Legislative Council's Standing Committee on State Development, which has criticised the EIS submitted by Sydney Ports Corporation for not adequately addressing the issue of alternatives to Port expansion.

Craig Knowles, Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources, has amended the terms of reference for the Commission to include:

“An analysis of any potentially feasible alternatives at Port Botany to the carrying out of the development, including, the alternative proposed by P&O Ports Ltd.”

The Commission is now inviting all parties to make new or supplementary submissions. A due date is yet to be released.

For further info on the proposed Port expansion, go to [www.botanybay.info](http://www.botanybay.info) or [www.savebotanybeach.com](http://www.savebotanybeach.com) or call SSEC on 9545 3077.

## Sutherland Shire Environment Centre Committed Givers Program

Sutherland Shire Environment Centre would like to invite you to participate in a new program. The Committed Givers Program is designed to increase SSEC's ability to promote initiatives to bring about a sustainable natural environment and a sustainable, productive, healthy urban society. It is also designed to encourage more of you to make use of the extensive resources it has.

The Environment Centre has now been part of the Sutherland Shire Community for more than twelve years. In those twelve years it has spearheaded and participated in a number of campaigns to protect the Shire's environment, as well as initiated programs that encourage sustainable development.

It has also provided a resource for community groups and members concerned about the Shire's environment. SSEC relocated its office from a small room in Eton Arcade, Sutherland, to its current larger premises with the intent of making better use of those resources.

SSEC staff and volunteers have spent the past two years developing its resources. Now SSEC wants to share its resources with members in a more formalised way than has been the case in the past. In addition to the standard membership, SSEC now offers various new membership options and different levels of rewards tied to those options.

We don't want to hide the fact that this letter is a method for us to try to encourage a greater and more stable flow of funds to support SSEC's work. With photocopiers, computers, software, desk and meeting space, telephones and the like, also come the requirement to meet overhead costs. Your decision to participate in a committed givers program outlined on the opposite page would help the Centre greatly.

Please consider our offer and please participate. Above all, do come to the Centre. Use what we have to offer and get to know more about what SSEC does.

### The Centre's resources

All members and friends are welcome and encouraged to use the Centre's environmental library, comprising:

- Videos about the environment
- Text books about the environment
- Press clippings relevant to the Shire Environment
- Reports about various proposals and developments in the Shire and impacting on the Shire

All members may use the Centre's resources at reduced rates (subject to conditions). The Centre has a wide range of computer software available. Come talk to the staff about availability.





Committed Givers Form

## Global population moves to cities

"The number one issue that is of concern to the developing world is mortality and for some countries also rapid population growth," UN Population Division director Joseph Chamie said.

For the first time in history, most of the world's population will live in cities by 2007, according to United Nations demographers.

They say 48 per cent of the world's population lived in urban areas last year.

The UN experts say the figure is "expected to exceed the 50 per cent mark by 2007, thus marking the first time in history that the world will have more urban residents than rural residents".

They project that the world's *urban population* will rise to 5 billion by 2030 from an estimated 3 billion in 2003.

Conversely, demographers expect the rural population to decline to 3.2 billion from 3.3 billion in 2003 by that year.

Global urban populations would grow at an annual average rate of 1.8 per cent and double at that rate in 38 years, according to the UN Population Division report *World Urbanisation Prospects: The 2003 Revision*.

Tokyo, the world's most populous city with 35 million, was projected to still be the largest in 2015 with 36 million people, followed by the Indian cities of Mumbai at 22.6 million and New Delhi at 20.9 million.

Next on the list were Mexico City at 20.6 million and Sao Paulo at 20 million.

The population division simultaneously released another report, *World Population Policies 2003*, which said high mortality was the most significant concern for developing countries.

"In contrast, the concern for many and most of the developed countries is low fertility and declining population growth."

The report said more than 90 per cent of countries supported providing contraceptives and that developed and developing countries held a similar desire to lower immigration.

### Population facts:

NSW resident population	6,640,355
NSW population increase between 1996 and 2001	370,000 – average annual growth of about 1.2%
NSW population living in the Greater Metropolitan Region (GMR = Sydney, the Illawarra and lower Hunter) or coastal area outside GMA	5,655,402 – about 85% of NSW resident population
GMR plus coastal area outside GMA	9% of NSW land area
GMR area	4,980,266 – about 75% of NSW resident population
GMR area	2.5% of NSW land area
Sydney growth	Almost 50,000 people per year since 1996
GMR growth	About 59,000 per year since 1996

For more information see, [www.epa.nsw.gov.au/soe/soe2003/chapter2](http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/soe/soe2003/chapter2)

## A DIFFERENT FUTURE!

"The 1990s was the warmest decade ever recorded with measuring instruments, and the last 100 years were the warmest of the millennium according to instruments and other means of estimating temperature... In 2002, Australia recorded its highest-ever average March-November daytime maximum temperature, with the temperature across Australia 1.6 degrees higher than the long-term average and 0.8 degrees higher than the previous record. Evaporation rates were also the highest recorded so far."

This news is part of the comprehensive report on climate change produced in June 2003 by the Commonwealth Biodiversity Advisory Committee.

By 2100, the report tells us, global temperatures will increase by between 1.5 and 6 degrees centigrade. Just in case you don't think that such a change is significant, consider that an average increase of 1 degree to Melbourne's climate would make it like that of Wagga Wagga, a 4 degree average increase would make Melbourne climate like

that of Moree.

Even the most conservative of scenarios for climate change predicts that we are in for a future such as we – *Homo sapiens sapiens* – have never known in our 90,000 to 130,000 year existence. Overall, Australians are in for a more variable and unpredictable climate with increases in extreme fires, floods, droughts and tropical storms. (For more information on climate change log on to the CSIRO website: [www.dar.csiro.au](http://www.dar.csiro.au).)

With good controls on our activities – such as suggested by the Kyoto Protocol that the Australian Government refuses to sign – we may be able reduce the degree of climate change, but there seems to be no hope of halting and reversing it. The effect is that climate change is occurring at a rate greater than what plants and animals can adapt to. This means that the chances of a great number of extinctions are high. In fact, many scientists are already calling the era in which we live the "Sixth Extinction", predicting that in the next fifty to one hundred years we

will see a greater loss of species than that which occurred when the dinosaurs died out.

Over 2,800 ecosystems are threatened in Australia, with the greatest number in the highly cleared regions of southern and eastern Australia. A number of these threatened ecosystems exist in the Sutherland Shire, such as the Shale Sandstone Transition Forests, Littoral Rainforests and freshwater wetlands.

The challenge for all of us is to review what we consider our "rights" and "privileges" and support measures that allow rather than hinder ecosystem adaptation. Eliminating activities that destroy the environment are vital to give ecosystems some chance of coping with a very different future climate. For example, we should all attempt to ensure recreational activities don't harm the environment, developments cause the least impact on the environment, and resources are available to rehabilitate and protect the environment.

**New Volunteers...**

Sutherland Shire Environment Centre welcomes new volunteers:

**Elaine Lucas**, who has admirably volunteered to transcribe the Botany Bay Forum proceedings—not an easy task!

**Ellen Zunica**, a qualified librarian, is helping the Centre catalogue our resource collection.

**Julie Wilkinson**, has been helping us tidy-up around the office and collecting newspaper clippings.

**Karen Symes**, a post-grad student, has been researching and writing submissions.

Their contributions are highly valued!

**We are seeking volunteers for media-related tasks! If you're interested or want to know more, please call Jo at SSEC on 9545 3077. THANKS!**

**Reminder of Level 2 water restrictions!**

- Hand-held hosing of lawns and gardens will only be permitted before 9m and after 5pm on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays only.

- Permits will be required to fill any new or existing pool with a capacity greater than 10,000 litres. A permit will be given if you agree to retrofit your home with water efficient appliances.

There have been calls from various pockets of the community for a new dam to be built to cope with an increasing population in Sydney and surrounds.

**But consider this...**

Drought is a regular feature in this delicately balanced, incredibly complex landscape. Generations of Indigenous inhabitants worked successfully with this

characteristic of the Australian environment for tens of thousands of years. At present, it would do no good to build a new dam when there is no rain falling in the catchment areas!

Changes in the way we use water is the only way we'll learn to respect and conserve this precious resource.

***~Thank you Jim!~***

On 30th April, SSEC farewelled Jim Sloan as he stepped down from his role as Executive Officer.

Jim's contribution to SSEC has been considerable. He was instrumental in the Centre's successful move from Eton Arcade to Merton St and in building up SSEC's in-house technological resources. Under Jim's guidance many important community partnerships and projects were created and maintained.

Happily, Jim's involvement with the Centre will continue—he has become a member of the Board, and will play a vital role in the implementation of fundraising strategies.



**Futures thinking...**

Ever wondered what the year 2050 is going to be like? David Singleton, Chairman of ARUP, a Global Engineering and Consultancy firm, has given it a great deal of thought.

Radio National's *Ockham's Razor* program, aired on 23 May, presented David's rather amazing, detailed vision of the not-so-distant future. It is not simply a glossier, patched-up version of the world as we know it; rather, it is a place where long-term planning has been embraced, individuals share a resource account with the rest of their street, and where tax rebates are achieved by meeting resource-use targets. But that's not all...

To read the full version of David Singleton's vision, log onto:  
<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/science/ockham/stories/s1112963.htm>

(It's too long to publish in this newsletter!)

***Do you have a vision for the future? What needs to happen to achieve that future? What would you be prepared to do to achieve that vision?***

**Let us know! We may compile your visions and post them on our website.**

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION :** *I would like to become a member of Sutherland Shire Environment Centre*



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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.....**

## Oyster Bay goes plastic bag free!

To all those who say, "I can never make a difference", read on.

Alexandra Hills and her sister-in-law Caroline Hills are shining examples of how individuals, with a little patience and much persistence, can make a big difference.

Alex and Caroline are the Oyster Bay residents behind the successful campaign to make Oyster Bay the first plastic bag-free Sydney suburb.

Sick of seeing plastic bag litter around the area, and ending up in the already polluted Georges River, Alex and Caroline approached Oyster Bay retailers with the idea.

With the knowledgeable assistance of Planet Ark, Alex and Caroline soon made the retailers willing accomplices, and local real estate agent, Cobb & Co., offered to



Above, Alex and Caroline hold aloft the calico bags that will now be available in Oyster Bay retail outlets in place of plastic bags.

Right, Planet Ark co-founder, John Dee, launched the initiative at the Oyster Bay Arts & Crafts Fair.

pay for each Oyster Bay household to receive a sturdy paper shopping bag.

Sutherland Shire Council chipped in some funding to pay for 1,500 calico shopping bags, which were distributed at the launch of the initiative on 29th May at the Oyster Bay Arts and Crafts Festival.

Sutherland Shire Environment Centre congratulates Alex and Caroline for their selfless hard work! SSEC will offer support or advice to any other communities within the Shire looking to follow their lead.



### USEFUL WEBSITES

**ACTION:** Scientific evidence suggests that populations of Great White Sharks have declined by at least 20% over the last three generations. The Australian Government is proposing to seek a listing of

the Great White Shark under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and would be interested in public comment on the proposal. <http://www.deh.gov.au/minister/env/2004/mr13feb04.html>

Those of you with a desire to place bets may like to mix it with conservation. Log on to <http://www.ladbrokes.com/bigbirdrace/> and place your bets on a 6000 km bird "race". Teachers, this may make a wonderful school project!

### Juggling Legislation!

Ever since the NSW State elections the "legislative landscape" for environmental Acts has been changing constantly. On 5 December 2003, the NSW Upper House passed the *Native Vegetation Bill*, *Natural Resources Commission Bill* and *Catchment Management Authorities Bill 2003*.

The Natural Resources Commission Bill (NRC Bill) establishes an independent commission to oversee the implementation of regional and state wide environmental (worryingly, called "natural resources") targets and standards. Many advisory committees, including the State Wetlands Advisory Council, Coastal Council, State Weir Review Committee, Healthy Rivers Commission, Fisheries Resource Conservation and Assessment Council, have been effectively abolished. There is currently much discussion about what sorts of changes should be made to *Threatened Species Act 2002*.

Until all changes are made it is hard for "natural resource" authorities, such as Department of Infrastructure and Planning (DIPNR), and Departments of Environment and Conservation (DEC) to operate effectively, and members of the Environment Movement must stay alert to changes that will weaken protection for the environment.



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