



# THE COLONG BULLETIN

Bulletin 216

THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS LTD  
**PROTECTING WILDERNESS AND NATIONAL PARKS**

May 2006

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## Government fails critical World Heritage Test

by Keith Muir

**W**ORLD Heritage listing failed a critical test when Planning Minister Frank Sartor approved a giant sand quarry at Newnes Junction in March. It seems that the Blue Mountains World Heritage property can be damaged by inappropriate development on an adjoining area so long as there are no immediately apparent significant impacts upon its listed values.

Sand mines are notorious for off-site environmental impacts and this

mine, on the doorstep of the World Heritage Area, will damage the largest and most precious wilderness area in NSW. Water pollution from the quarry would degrade the Wollangambe River; and noise, dust and ugly quarry scars will blight the wilderness landscape. The sand mine will also destroy the Newnes Junction Village Common, an intact bushland reserve containing two high conservation value shrub swamps. The compensation package and consent conditions for this quarry add up to very little compared to the potential loss of integrity to the World Heritage Area.

### Government watchdog muzzled

Despite long and vocal community protest, Government agencies was not galvanised into defensive action of this precious World Heritage Area. National Parks and Wildlife failed to lodge an objection, along with all other government departments!

Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) did not object to the quarry development because doing so would conflict with the Environment Protection Authority's role in regulating development control. National Parks and Wildlife is incapable of effective defensive action because it is unable to separate its reserve watchdog role from the regulatory role of the EPA as the department must speak with one voice. Government restructuring has unwisely muzzled the state government department most likely to object to damaging development.

National Parks and Wildlife should be split off from the DEC, so that it can be the risk-averse national park watchdog it was once.

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*The Department of Planning believes old sand quarries can be restored to look like Gooches Crater using environmental offset hocus-pocus. What do you think?*

## **Government fails critical World Heritage Test**

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DEC incorporates National Parks and Wildlife and is now more or less a regulatory rubber stamp that issues the 'General Terms of Approval' for developments, rather than making independent submissions on development proposals. For this development, the Department tinkered with regulations, and was dragged into consideration of the Department of Planning's dubious environmental offsets and compensation rules that sold the future integrity of the World Heritage Area down the drain.

It was the previously strong and vigorous objections of the former National Parks and Wildlife Service that ensured the previous sand mine proposal on the Newnes site was refused development consent. Mining was refused in 1996 because National Parks believed there would be damage to the national park and the water quality of the Wollangambe River. The Wollangambe River is the most intact wild river in the Blue Mountains, and so the damage that water pollution from the recently-approved quarry proposal will cause is maximised.

The wild Wollangambe Canyon enjoyed by thousands each year will be at risk. Conditions that require the quarry to store the runoff from large storm events may appear sound but the regulatory reality is that mine

stormwater controls become full of sediment and after a few years are poorly maintained. This is certainly the regrettable experience of mine regulation repeated with monotonous regularity throughout the world.

### **Let's make a deal**

The Department of Planning and the Department of Environment and Conservation are apparently into bargaining with developers – called variously “environmental offsets”, “green offsets” or “bio-banking”. It means you get your development provided you provide environmental compensation. The Newnes Junction example nicely demonstrates why this approach does not work. The offsets allow this marginal development, which should be rejected on its merits, to be garnished up with promises and then approved. If everything in the delicate offset negotiations work to plan, then something for the environment may be achieved but reality does not work that way.

The rehabilitation plan, for example, presents the creation of an artificial Gooches Crater at the decommissioned quarry site as a green offset. Colong's protests about despoiling the integrity of views from Gooches Crater were converted into this Frankinstien nightmare that apparently pleases the regulators. What this proposal could become is an ugly rocky square hole with a puddle at the bottom, as per the current Boral quarry site on the Old

Bells Line of Road. There are other appealing off-set proposals but I will spare the reader from more pain on this subject till a later date.

### **Pre-emptive Approval**

The Department of Planning is conducting a strategic sand survey of Sydney's sand resources. Planning Minister Sartor only last January advised that his Department was “working to identify key resource areas and that the strategy remains in progress.” The approval of the damaging Newnes Junction quarry pre-empts this strategy, reverses the site-specific rejection of sand mining and goes against the Planning Department's 1990 strategy for Newnes Plateau.

The quarry decision is a disaster for World Heritage and places an indelible black mark against the environmental record of the Iemma Government. The Colong Foundation for Wilderness has asked the Federal Minister for Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, to defer his determination of the quarry proposal until the NSW Department of Planning releases its sand resource strategy at the end of the year. If our Federal Minister defers consideration of the proposal, it would no doubt ensure the timely production of this Strategy. The Strategy may reveal that there is no need to undertake mining at Newnes Junction, and in that case there would be no need for Senator Campbell to approve the quarry at all. ■

## ***The Colong Foundation moving***

The office of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness will move either in late July or early August to a new premises at Level 4, 78 Liverpool Street. Although it is a short distance, the telephone numbers will also change as it is a new telephone subdistrict and the new numbers will be advised. Please use our current contacts until further notice.

## ***Meeting Dates***

Meetings will be held in our office at level 2, 362 Kent Street at 6pm on Thursday 8 June and at 2pm on Thursday 6 July. Please note the alternate afternoon and evening meeting times are to enable workers to attend at least one Board meeting every two months.

## ***Australia Is Drying Up***

by Alex Colley

One of the symptoms of global warming is higher temperatures in the tropics, which have caused Australia's weather system to move south. This has subjected the continent to a succession of high pressure systems which don't bring rain. Consequently rainfall has decreased almost everywhere except in the far north. Some of the worst affected areas have been the Monaro, Goulburn, Perth and the NSW Central Coast. The drying of the Alps is very significant. If our highest mountains do not attract rain, where else will it come from? Despite water shortages in nearly every state capital and prolonged drought in inland areas, the Commonwealth Government continues to inflict further pressure on our water resources by its immigration policy, which increases the population by over 100,000 a year.

## ***Don't Eat Your Pet***

Eating dogs and cats in Victoria has become more difficult. The Agriculture Minister said the Government would work with the RSPCA on the issue, which arose after a puppy was reportedly rescued before becoming part of a family meal in Melbourne. Eating a dog or cat is not illegal in Victoria, but the slaughter and sale or inhuman treatment of these pets is banned.

Wildlife Preservation Society of  
Queensland News, March 2006

Colong Bulletin 216, May 2006

## **BOOK REVIEW**

# **CRIMES AGAINST NATURE: Robert F. Kennedy Jr.**

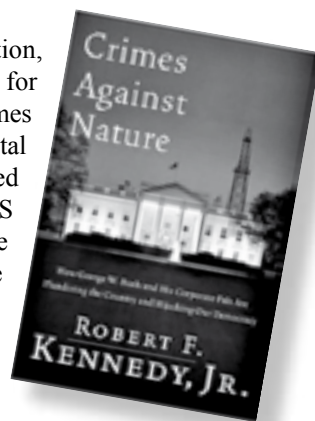
Fiona McCrossin

**I**N a world of instantaneous access to information, books tend to figure less and less in my searches for enviropolitical analyses. I was attracted to "Crimes Against Nature", however. Its author is an environmental lawyer, academic and activist. Further, it could be assumed that Kennedy's knowledge of, and access to, the US political landscape would be assured. Finally, the subtitle "How George W. Bush and his corporate pals are plundering the country and highjacking our democracy" was sure to be an interesting read.

The book is a narrative which reveals how the Bush administration has carefully orchestrated the deconstruction of long standing United States environmental policy and legislation. Kennedy uses case studies to reveal the nuances of the connections and interconnections between various industries and the administration. In doing so, he reveals how these industries, their representatives and advocates, often with considerable histories of environmental violations, have permeated through all levels of governance.

While Kennedy certainly doesn't berate "free-market capitalism", he does decry the lack of ethics that pervade the current US administration ... "In a headlong pursuit of private profit and personal power, Kennedy writes, George Bush and his administration have eviscerated the laws that have protected our nation's air, water, public lands, and wildlife for the past 30 years, enriching the president's political contributors while lowering the quality of life for the rest of us".

*Crimes Against Nature: 2004, Robert F. Kennedy Junior, Harper Collins.*



## **Wilderness 2006 an exhibition of wilderness photographs by HENRY GOLD**

at the Bondi Pavilion Gallery,  
Queen Elizabeth Drive on Bondi Beach  
from Tuesday May 23 to Sunday June 4  
to raise funds for wilderness conservation by the Colong Foundation.

Gallery hours are 10 – 5 daily

For the first time Henry is featuring his colour images of wilderness, as well as a selection of his stunning black and white photographs. This exhibition is your chance to own a beautifully framed Henry Gold photograph AND support wilderness protection.

**The Hon Neville Wran will open the exhibition at  
6pm Wednesday May 24.  
Everyone is welcome to attend the launch.**

# KAKADU NO LONGER A PARK

by Alex Colley

**I**n June 1975 the Colong Committee, having won the Boyd Plateau campaign, adopted the Border Ranges National Park as its first objective, the greater Blue Mountains National Park as its second and, at Milo Dunphy's suggestion, Kakadu as its third. All are now World Heritage listed. Milo had already walked in Kakadu with Geoff Mosley and Bill Walshe, with the object of testing the area's

potential for bushwalkers and examining its conservation values. In July 1976, soon after cyclone Tracy, Milo and I represented Colong in a symposium on uranium mining in Kakadu, organised by the Northern Territory Environment Council. We were accommodated in the last bedroom left standing in a cyclone shattered house. We were taken on some site visits, but preferred to put the area's bushwalking potential to a further test. We walked from the Noranda prospecting camp across the

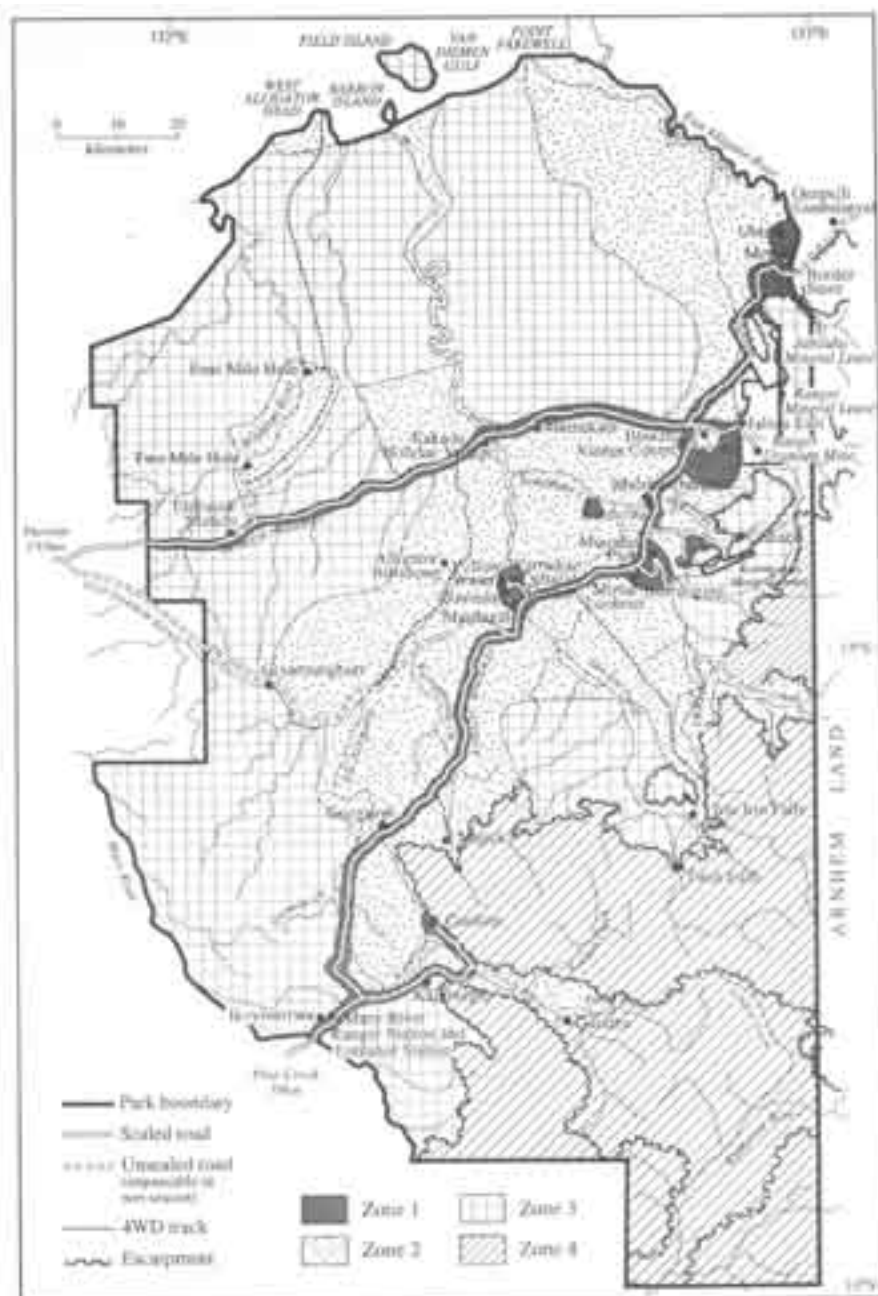
savannah to Lightning Dreaming on Sawpit Creek. Milo was concerned about buffalos and crocodiles, but the buffalos fled at our approach and no crocodiles were seen. We hoped to walk across the escarpment to Jim Jim Creek. We started by climbing a cleft in the escarpment which I described in Bulletin 33 as "one of the most intricate landscapes imaginable: cirque after cirque of eroded rocks led up a rocky ridge to the horizon. Corridors between rocks the size of houses led to little valleys between even bigger rocks. Sometimes the valleys were filled with fig trees and vine scrub, or they opened up a vista of Desert Hakea. Here and there the ancient sandstone became architecture with interior rooms, sets of freestanding columns, rows of monkish cells floored with white sands and groups of monoliths." Our route was blocked by a wall of 60-80 foot cliffs and a jumble of fallen slabs, but we were able to camp at a beautiful waterhole near the escarpment edge.

Near the end of 1976 Colong made a submission to the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service and the National Estate Inquiry. We submitted that "We cannot too strongly stress the responsibility of the Australian Government in the Northern Territory. Its record in the past has been poor."

Members of the Colong Committee made a number of visits to the park, none more than Keith Muir, who enjoyed many walks with the Darwin Bushwalking Club (see Bulletin 215), before working for the Total Environment Centre and Colong. In 1983 Jim Somerville, Henry Gold, Milo Dunphy, Dot Butler and I spent a fortnight walking in the park. We were warmly welcomed by the Ranger, Claude Azzopardi, who showed us the Aboriginal art in a cave under Mount Brockman, gave us permission to see other artefacts on Death Adder Creek and treated us to a barbecue of confiscated Barramundi.

Colong then made another submission, advocating cessation of economic activity, location of tourist accommodation outside the park, transport by bus accompanied by a ranger, cessation of burning (we

*The zones in the Kakadu management plan, including zone 4 (the wilderness zone) would be abolished if the current draft plan is adopted.*



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## KAKADU NO LONGER A PARK

*continued from page 4*

narrowly escaped a bushfire), elimination of feral animals and employment of Aborigines, who would be appropriate guides. Dot Butler, who had done four prolonged bushwalks in the park, made a supplementary submission in which she described the opinion of her son in law, Professor Pettigrew, who made a study of birds because of their relevance to human vision. Ornithologists had recorded some 270 species of birds in the park and he had himself recorded over 100. He rated Kakadu as far above other sanctuaries he had visited, such as the Everglades. Dot attributed the preservation of bird life to the absence of air-boats, observation towers, board walks, roads at 2 km intervals and other developments within parks which she had visited during her extensive travels.

Throughout the complex history of the park its management has acceded to development pressure. In his foreword to David Lawrences's book *Kakadu, The making of a national park*, Sir Edward Woodward writes of the difficulties of the park's planning and management because of "conflicting claims to large wilderness areas, favoured tourist sites, valuable mineral deposits." National parks are created for only one purpose - the preservation of the natural environment, and the natural environment is preserved for the enjoyment of the park's owners - the public. The so-called "park" has become a melange of economic interests, including the Commonwealth Government (uranium mining), the Northern Territory Government (tourism), and the Aborigines, who now own it. It is managed like a private property. The public is confined to roads, the township of Jabiru and approved tracks. This means they are excluded from some 99% of the parkland. A fifth management plan is now in draft form. It does not stipulate what development will be approved: this is left to the Kakadu Board, which, in view of the Commonwealth Government's uranium export policy, will probably approve another mine. No doubt further tourist accommodation and the inspired restriction of bushwalking will also be approved. Wilderness zoning is to be eliminated. How long it will be before World Heritage listing is declared to be endangered, remains to be seen. ■

# HighFire Grazing ...A FURPHY?

BY Fiona McCrossin

SENATOR Campbell, Federal Minister for the Environment, had a lot to say about the heritage values of cattle grazing when he recently attempted to bring the country's precious alpine areas under one huge "use and abuse" Greater Alpine National Park. Mining and cattle grazing came in first on his list of values with conservation last. The Park's cornerstone, an attempt to bring alpine grazing back into the Victorian High Country, was immediately denounced by the Victorian and ACT governments.

In yet another thinly veiled attempt to advance grazing in the Alps, the Federal Government is funding the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre with \$3 million dollars. The research will involve Kosciuszko National Park. Bob Debus, NSW Minister for the Environment, was quick to denounce the plan and the office of Anthony Albanese, Federal Shadow Minister for the Environment, who has figured strongly in opposition to alpine grazing, provided the Foundation with a transcript of ALP Senator Lundy's questions relating to the funding.

On 31 March Senator Lundy raised the issue of Federal Government funding for grazing research in the Kosciuszko National Park in the Senate Inquiry into National Parks. Given Senator Campbell's well publicised position on grazing, and the \$3 million cost of the project, the lack of Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH) knowledge is surprising.

**Senator LUNDY** - I would like to go to the issue of alpine grazing ... Are you aware of the \$3 million being provided to the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre for the HighFire project and will that \$3 million come from the Department of the Environment and Heritage?

**Mr Borthwick (Secretary of DEH)** - I know no more than (information in a Canberra Times Report). Mr Cochrane has suggested that the money might be coming from the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) portfolio.

**Senator LUNDY** - Do you know the

funding source? Can anyone advise the committee of the funding source?

**Mr Borthwick** - No. It is not from this portfolio.

**Senator LUNDY** - Can you take on notice to find out?

**Mr Borthwick** - Since we are representing the Commonwealth before you, yes, we can take on notice to find out where it is sourced from.

**Senator LUNDY** - Are you aware of the purpose of the HighFire project?

**Mr Borthwick** - No, I do not know of that project.

**Senator LUNDY** - Do you have access to the terms of reference for that particular project?

**Mr Borthwick** - I do not even know what the project is about.

**Senator LUNDY** - It relates to a national park.

**Mr Borthwick** - It is a state park.

**Senator LUNDY** - Can you tell me whether or not the Minister for the Environment and Heritage has had any role in the approval of this project?

**Mr Borthwick** - I will have to take that on notice. We do not know anything about the project.

**Senator LUNDY** - Does your department have a view or does the government have a policy on support or opposition to grazing in the Kosciuszko National Park?

**Mr Borthwick** - We have not considered the issue at all in our portfolio.

**Senator LUNDY** - You are not aware of any policy on this?

**Mr Borthwick** - No, we are not aware of any policy with respect to the management in Kosciuszko National Park.

**Senator LUNDY** - You mentioned earlier that \$2.7 million is being spent on the wet tropics to protect some of the heritage aspects up there. Does it concern you that \$3 million has been found for this particular project, obviously from somewhere other than your department - but nonetheless from somewhere?

**Mr Borthwick** - I cannot comment one way or another. We just do not know anything about the project or what is involved.

**Senator LUNDY** - I think that is extraordinary in itself. ■



# *An Unresponsive Lithgow Council Rejects the Gardens of Stone Stage Two*

by Keith Muir

**W**AS I dreaming when I hurriedly entered the Lithgow City Council chambers on April 18, the day after Easter, to be accused of half-truths, hidden agendas and outright lies? My train was late, and Council had started proceedings regarding the proposed Gardens of Stone reserve extension as I hurried into the chamber. The Mayor, Neville Castle, spoke from the chair; he told the rowdy meeting that the Gardens of Stone reserve proposal was a threat to the mining industry and riddled with inaccuracies.

Five minutes into his speech I realised that this was not a public hearing but a ritualistic denunciation. After the Mayor had finished reading his 'inditement' I was invited to speak. I read out the short dedication in the front of the Gardens of Stone lobby book. Its five paragraphs outline the key values of the area and end with *Lithgow is an absolutely spectacular place*.

Shortly after reading the dedication, I was not permitted to speak to the proposal further, but rather required to respond to a lengthy interrogation by the elected Councillors. I was cross-examined about sterilisation of coal, the impact on off road vehicles, superhighways and logging. It appeared that nothing could be said that would change the minds of these councillors; they wanted more mining, development and roads, not conservation. The anti-conservation lobby had also been at work with petitions that claimed the reserve proposal was a threat to 'Australian rights for the continuation to free and open access to local Crown

land'. Such rights apparently extend to environmental abuse and degradation.

## **Local conservationists rebut council's attack**

Following this deplorable meeting, Blue Mountains Conservation Society, Lithgow Environment Group and the Capertee Valley Environment Group all wrote to the Council expressing concern at the council's discourtesy and in-principle rejection of the reserve proposal. Local GP, Dr Richard Stiles, expressed concern that 4WD'ers and motorbike riders enjoy riding their machines over difficult terrain ... "I do not object to them having a legitimate interest in undertaking such activities. However to do it in such an area of conservation value is not appropriate. The tracks created cause significant erosive damage - and just cutting a track through a native environment can have a significant ecological impact. In its current unregulated form, the effect of the mazes of tracks throughout the region has been devastating."

"Discussion could be had with the interested parties as to alternate sites for them to undertake their leisure pastimes. State forestry pine plantations could be an option - where the detrimental ecological effects of their activities are likely to be reduced."

"Lithgow has an industrial heritage that it has a right to be proud of. However times change and knowledge evolves. We also now realise that on our doorstep lies a natural wonderland - an area that has produced some remarkable botanical, geological and ancient cultural discoveries in recent Australian history. It would indeed be sad, I think, if we passed over this opportunity to support the natural preservation of such

an area - should we be more concerned with some short term economic gains (in the case of sandmining) than long term damaging ecological effects. The other adversely affected parties should be able to be accommodated to a satisfactory end."

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society was most concerned at the reception given to the reserve proposal by Lithgow Council. Dr Brian Marshall wrote to Mayor Castle stating that "negligible consideration was given to the time and effort put in by dedicated proponents, who seek to protect the magnificent values of the region; and certainly do not to receive 'donations' from the Emirates or Centennial, as implied in the Lithgow Mercury (02/03/06). It is instructive that Len Ashworth reported (Lithgow Mercury, 20/04/06): 'The session was held in an atmosphere of undisguised hostility...with Councillors accusing the lobbyists of engaging in hidden agendas, half-truths and outright lies'."

"Disregarding the unsatisfactory way in which the meeting was conducted, Councillor's questions largely focused on: the implications of the proposal for the coal industry; the methods of achieving better environmental protection from irresponsible trail-bike and 4WD use (versus their 'right' to use the land unimpeded); and the implications for the 'local' timber industry and the Bells Line of Road Superhighway. No significant attempt was made to examine the implications for Lithgow in terms of the protection of a beautiful region with unparalleled values and its potential to sustain an expanding tourist industry."

"Much was made of Centennial's

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refusal to endorse the proposal. This was based on the argument that Government already heavily controls operations, and reservation within an Sydney Catchment Authority (SCA) might place further constraints on underground mining. The emphasis is on 'might'! Centennial's attitude is a classical expression of corporate risk-aversion. In essence, why take the slightest risk when the company has nothing to gain? Why give the 'environment' a free kick? In fact, why do anything for the benefit of the environment that isn't mandated by Government? The fact that underground mining is compatible with an SCA, and that SCA protection was chosen for that precise reason is disregarded."

"The impact on open-cut mining was raised. The Sydney Catchment Area is incompatible with open-cut coal mining or sand extraction. A small tract with open-cut coal potential in the upper Cox's River-Long Swamp region would be affected by the proposal. However, because this involves water supply, environmental groups, concerned local residents, the Environment Protection Authority, State Water, and the Federal Department of Environment and Heritage (in relation to protection of endangered swamps under the EPBC Act) would probably oppose a development application. Granting an SCA could therefore save everyone substantial amounts of time. In any case, it should be realised that the State Government can excise any portion of the proposal that it deems inappropriate."

"A sand/kaolin mine was recently approved and the Boral property remains on care and maintenance. The Society is opposed to the mine and to any additional sand extraction. Granting an SCA over the unaffected region would preclude further development applications. ..."

"Lithgow Council is apparently more concerned with immediacy, scare-mongering and 'freedom' to wreak environmental mayhem, than it is with a sustainable future. Council can have its coal industry, AND an expanding and sustainable tourist industry, AND preserve its magnificent environment."

"Instead, the baby is going out with the bath water!" ■

# Sale of the Snowy-Hydro Corporation means an end to environmental flows

by Keith Muir

**T**HE selling the Snowy Hydro Corporation means passing control of a critical large part of the water storage capacity of NSW to a private company intent on making profits out of power generation. A considered assessment of the current complexities of the water management objectives required for the most beneficial operation of this complex scheme would demonstrate that there will be many losers if these current decision rules are replaced by profit maximising strategies.

If sold, the owner of the Snowy hydro-electric scheme will not produce the socially optimum outcomes of water. Farmers and the environment are likely to miss out on water resources.

Power generation is currently the most profitable aspect of the Corporation, so the operation of the infrastructure will misuse (in a social welfare sense) its water resources to maximise profit. Water use priorities will change to suit power generational needs. Storing water to insure against generator failure is the most profitable part of its power generating operation, so the most profit may be gained by storing more water for these rare events.

The contract arrangements and pre-conditions of sale may not ensure the best outcome because the NSW Government, and especially Treasury, will insist upon getting the best price. Environmental management plans and social objectives will be minimised in order to increase the attractiveness of the asset sale.

The only likely new buyer of water that the hydro schemes new owner will be interested in selling water to would

be one who can afford to pay a high price for water. The only likely buyers of expensive water from the Snowy are Sydney's residents.

Over the next seventy plus years of the current water licence, a scenario may develop where the Corporation either sells water to Sydney's ever-thirsty consumers at the corporation's high price or stores it for the growing number power generators who need risk management services (e.g. sellers of wind energy). Supplies to farmers and environmental flows will quickly dry up and any concept of balancing competing interests would be ignored.

There is little doubt that the reliability of Sydney's water supply will deteriorate as climate change reduces rainfall over the catchment area. The CSIRO metrological and atmospheric specialists forecast a 38% drop in rainwater over the habitable parts of southern Australia in the next quarter of a century (Financial Review 4 May 2006). The heavy rain and snow precipitation on the Alps may one day constitute the only reliable natural source of fresh water within reach of Sydney's ever growing needs.

The above scenario indicates how the intended sale abrogates the Government's duty to manage the water resources of NSW, and by extension, the Snowy hydro-electric scheme, for the greatest good to the greatest number of people.

**If you don't agree with the sale of Snowy Hydro, send a message to the NSW and Commonwealth Governments by signing the electronic petition at [www.savesnowyhydro.com](http://www.savesnowyhydro.com) ■**

# ***RALLY* to stop woodchipping of our southeast native forests**

**T**HE Colong Foundation for Wilderness is joining a coalition of environment groups in a peaceful MASS RALLY on 2 July 2006 at the South East Fibre Exports woodchip mill just south of Eden on the Far South Coast of NSW. The purpose of the rally is to alert the public, the media and politicians to the continued woodchipping of native forests in southeastern NSW and Victoria's East Gippsland. The rally is part of the intensification of a locally driven campaign to close the chipmill and end native forest woodchipping.

The Foundation recognises that the NSW State Government has played a leading role in declaring national parks under the National Forest Policy. Iconic areas of the southeast region such as the Coolangubra and Tantawangalo have been protected in the South East Forests National Park. Further, through the work of the Far South Coast National Parks and Wildlife Service, the region boasts the greatest number of voluntary conservation agreements in NSW. Such areas in NSW and Victoria are the focus for the Foundation's campaign to see forests from the coast to the Alps included on the National and World Heritage Lists.

While working in the region, the Foundation has encountered major local concern over the continued woodchipping of areas that have not been protected in national parks. The changing demographics of the region have led to a number of people encountering the impacts of the woodchip industry for the first time. These impacts have been exacerbated in that, since the signing of Regional Forest Agreements accompanying the reservations, Forests NSW does not need to prepare any environmental impact statements for their operations.

The Foundation understands that there is minimal monitoring, or disclosure, of any violations of logging protocols.

**Gerry Watt, a local campaigner, has made *inter alia* the following points on behalf of the Mass Rally Coalition:**

The Eden chipmill consumes over 160 truckloads of native forest logs a day that is 840,000 tonnes a year. None of this is waste wood, as industry and government would have us believe.

The tragedy of woodchipping in southeastern Australia continues unabated behind a smokescreen of glossy propaganda, which has led many to believe the problems in our forests are over.

Forestry management practices are rapidly converting old growth forests into quasi "tree farms" which can no longer provide a habitat for native wildlife.

Since woodchipping started in the 1960s millions of animals have died, directly killed by logging, or through affecting their habitat. A number of species are threatened with regional extinction.

Poor logging practices are leading to siltation in the region's streams and coastal lakes.

Jobs in tourism, which underpin

the local economy, will be threatened by continuing degradation of the natural environment, while the highly mechanised low value adding woodchip industry effectively exports jobs.

Australia now has enough mature plantation timber to meet all local and export demand.

South East Fibre Exports has not made the switch because the price they pay for native forest wood is about a third of the price of plantation wood; and they receive other subsidies including exemption from local government rates, provision of roads, port facilities and other infrastructure. On top of this, contract loggers are subsidised with grants for equipment and training.

Send a message to the State and Federal Governments that our precious native forests must be protected before it's too late. Have a fun weekend, or holiday, in the southeast and be part of a truly MASS RALLY. For rally details see the website at [www.woodchippingsux.net.au](http://www.woodchippingsux.net.au)

## **Contact details:**

Gerry Watt

On behalf of the MASS RALLY Coalition

PO Box 2287 Central Tilba 2546 Ph: 4473 7530 or 0439 737 530

## ***Government Sponsored Woodchipping***

In a request for Colong's support of the mass rally against woodchipping in East Gippsland and SE NSW, the SE Forests Coalition states:

There is no economic reason for the intensive industrial logging to continue, the exception being the profiteering by the woodchip company South East Fibre Exports, which is being done with the cooperation of the Victorian, NSW and Commonwealth Governments. The State Governments are selling the pulpwood at prices well below commercial rates and effectively subsidising this operation.

The solution to the destruction of our publicly owned native forests is to close the Eden chipmill and for South East Fibre Exports (if it must) to source wood from the 1,800,000 ha of hardwood and softwood plantations now on stream in Australia.



# Antarctica Is Not For Sale

**By Geoff Mosley**

**Co-ordinator for people for an  
Antarctic World Park**

THE future of the world's largest protected area – nearly twice the size of Australia – is something which all conservationists should be concerned about. If we cannot defend this last great wilderness, an area with such overwhelming values, we can surely kiss goodbye to lesser parks and reserves everywhere.

I suppose it was inevitable that sooner or later someone would try to resurrect the issue of mining in Antarctica. We do live in a world which depends on fossil fuel for nearly every facet of living and which is becoming increasingly frantic about future supply.

Nor was it surprising that the case for opening up the Antarctic to that oxymoron – 'sustainable' mining – was put by renegade Senator Barnaby Joyce (on ABC 'Australian Story', May 1<sup>st</sup> – April 1<sup>st</sup> would have been more appropriate). What the Senator did not acknowledge were the basic facts of the matter, namely that Antarctica is a 'Natural Reserve devoted to peace and science' and that it is subject to an indefinite ban on all mineral activity.

The story of how this came about goes back a quarter of a century. In 1972/73 a Conference in the United States recommended that Antarctica become the first world park and a few months later natural gas was found under the Ross Ice Shelf. The options from then on were crystal clear – give the area a status that would reflect the case for complete protection, a World Park for all, or open up Antarctic for regulated mining.

It was another eight years though before the Antarctic Treaty nations began to give serious consideration to a minerals regime. In the meantime, while the negotiations were proceeding, a moratorium was placed on all mineral activity on the continent. In November, 1988 the Convention on the Regulation of Antarctic Mineral Resources was opened for signature in Wellington, New Zealand. However, to enter into force it needed to be ratified by 16 of the 20 Consultative Parties to the Treaty (ATCPs) including all of the

seven claimant states. Two claimants – Australia and France, – exercising their power of veto, said 'no'.

It is highly relevant to today's attempt to revive the debate on mining to understand that the pro conservation option had widespread public support both nationally and internationally. In Australia the lead was taken by the Liberal and National Parties. On 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 1989 the leader of the Opposition, John Howard, and the Shadow Environment Minister, Chris Puplick, made a joint statement in favour of a non mining solution. Exactly 20 days later the Hawke Government followed decided to act. Prime Minister Bob Hawke favoured calling the new reserve 'the Antarctic Wilderness Reserve'.

In early 1989, fortuitously in one sense, there was massive media portrayal of two major high latitude oil spills – the Bahaia Paraíso off the Antarctic Peninsula and the Exxon Valdez off Alaska. Oil in the cold polar environment takes much longer to degrade.

From mid 1989 the effort of the treaty parties was concentrated on the difficult task of developing the complete protection option, the end result of which was the adoption in Madrid in October, 1991 of the Protocol to the Antarctic Treaty on Environmental Protection, otherwise known as 'The Madrid Protocol'.

So what did the Madrid Protocol achieve and what is the current status of Antarctica's protective regime? Given that mining had been the main competing land use, probably the most important achievement was the indefinite ban on mineral activity, which replaced the earlier moratorium. The ban applies to all prospecting and exploration as well as mining.

Some have mistakenly referred to the mineral activity ban as a 50 year moratorium. The confusion has arisen from the provision in the Protocol for a treaty party to call for a review conference after 50 years from when it came into force and because, whereas before 2048 the ban can only be lifted by consensus of the ATCPs, after this date it can be lifted by a simple majority provided this includes three quarters of the 26 ATCPs at the time of adoption in

1991. Both before and after 2048 this is clearly a very high hurdle.

It is very very important indeed therefore for conservationists to note that the Madrid Protocol decision was not a case of putting mining on hold until the miners were ready to go to work but a clear exercise of choice between two alternatives. The competing resources were well known and the choice was for wilderness. If it had been a case of deferral until the world wanted the minerals then the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties would not have made it 50 years before a review conference could be called and set such a high hurdle before and after 2048 before the ban could be lifted.

Whilst some may have little concern for history the fact remains that Antarctica has been one of the most tightly contested arenas in global history with the decision going firmly in favour of science, peace (the area is demilitarised) and nature conservation and against non living resource exploitation. There are so many places and situations around the world which need a similarly determined and visionary approach involving people and their governments working together.

But what about the Antarctic itself, is there more that we can do to make this the obvious beacon for a better world; that will increase its educational and inspirational value while simultaneously enhancing its protective status? Several ways of consolidating the area's protection have been canvassed but need more discussion. One way of widening the constituency for protection and gaining better understanding of the values would be by including the whole continent on the World Heritage List.

The advantages of listing are clear. First it would acknowledge the nature of its heritage values in the international forum specifically established for this purpose. Conversely, if the world's best wilderness and best example of international cooperation for peace, science and conservation was not on the list the aberrant view that the area was simply on ice for future mining would be reinforced. Second, it would broaden the

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# Celebrating Wilderness

## NATIONAL WILDERNESS CONFERENCE, 2006

by Geoff Mosely

THIS, the fifth national wilderness conference to be held in Australia, takes place at a critical time in our history. The first three conferences, beginning in 1977, were organised by the Australian Conservation Foundation and the fourth by the Colong Foundation for Wilderness in 1993. The land down under was one of the birth places of the wilderness movement and our aim is to continue to provide leadership.

Under the heading of *Celebrating Wilderness* the Conference theme is *The Contribution of Wilderness to a Sustainable Society*. While celebrating what we have achieved, and the many benefits of wilderness for human happiness and environmental conservation, the principal objective of



the meeting is to work out how wilderness can make an even bigger contribution as part of a move towards a more environmentally conscious society.

The speakers and the closely integrated workshops will discuss progress in wilderness conservation, the many values of wilderness, how these values can best be presented, and how the wilderness estate can be extended as part of a truly national system.

There is ever growing agreement that the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a cross roads for humanity's future. We can continue with our profligate way of life or we can start on a journey to a more satisfying and more secure society based on a healthier environment.

Wilderness reserves are large and relatively natural areas, managed to be free from exploitation, where the environment can evolve in response to natural forces and where visitors on foot can enjoy an experience to be found only in wilderness. As the antithesis of the approach that sees the land and its wildlife primarily as sources of commerce, wilderness is one of the best proofs we have that a major change in outlook towards the environment is possible.

But wilderness is much more than this. For people living in vast cities, divorced from nature, it can offer renewed contact with the processes of nature and the wonders of the natural world. It is not hard to realise that in this, and its other roles in habitat and catchment protection, education and science, wilderness is vital to a revolution in attitude towards the environment. As one of the best teachers we will ever have, wilderness can be a vital part of a wider renewal, contributing both inspiration and knowledge to the processes of changing our value system and working out what is required for an environmentally sustainable future.

Nearly all progress in conservation

has originated from the ideas and persistent efforts of a few individuals and groups and this is particularly true for wilderness conservation. When, in the 1920s, Myles Dunphy began to develop his revolutionary ideas about wilderness protection he was not put off by the difficulties. Dunphy and the National Parks and Primitive Areas Council pursued their grand vision with vigour and understanding. Obstacles were things to be overcome.

This is the spirit we hope will prevail at his Conference. We want to celebrate and better understand what we have achieved while working out how best to consolidate and go forward.

We believe the Conference will appeal to both activists and professionals; indeed to anyone who is interested in the role the wilderness areas can play in the environmental revolution we must have.

*Celebrating Wilderness* – the Fifth National Wilderness Conference will be held at the Main Campus, University of Technology on Broadway, Sydney from 8 – 10 of September. Further copies of the brochure can be downloaded from our website [www.colongwilderness.org.au](http://www.colongwilderness.org.au)

The speakers include Helen Gee, on celebrating wilderness; Bob Brown on wilderness and inspiration; John Sinclair, Keith Muir and Alec Marr on the current status of wilderness; Virginia Young and Haydn Washington on moving the wilderness agenda forward; and Peter Prineas on the need for a National Wilderness system.

The work of the conference will be undertaken through three wilderness workshops. The first workshop will consider how best to promote to the community the enduring benefits of wilderness; the second will examine the obstacles and opportunities to achieving more (and better) wilderness protection across Australia; and the last workshop will seek to overcome management and philosophical difficulties confronting wilderness protection.

**For more information and to download a brochure on this conference go to the Colong Foundation website [www.colongwilderness.org.au](http://www.colongwilderness.org.au)** ■

### Antarctica Is Not For Sale

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sense of ownership to all the people of the world, and it would do this without disturbing the primacy of the Antarctic Treaty. Lastly it would increase the opportunities for presentation of the area's values, including the precedent for large scale interventions to protect the global environment.

Australia can play a leading role in this as it did in the development of the Antarctic Treaty in the 1950s and the Madrid Protocol between 1989 and 1991. Already the Australian Antarctic Territory has been nominated for the National Heritage List – a first step to World Heritage nomination. Of course it would be better for the whole continent to be placed on the World Heritage List and this may well need cooperation between both the claimant states and the Treaty parties through the ATCMs.

The Australian Antarctic Division based at Kingston, Tasmania has a vision statement, which could very well be applied to how the whole world could benefit from a better protected future for the Antarctic. It reads: 'ANTARCTICA valued, protected and understood'. ■