

# colong bulletin

No. 228 | September 2008

## Catchment Protection **CODE RED**

KEITH MUIR

**A** Southern Coalfields Inquiry Report was released in July by the Department of Planning. The report notes that over the next two years seven collieries will lodge applications to expand mining operations in the drinking water catchments south of Sydney. Coal exports are planned to be expanded and the capacity of the Port Kembla Coal Loader will be greatly increased. This export expansion program follows closely on the doubling of Newcastle's coal loader capacity, which is itself part of Australia's three ports policy to boost coal exports.

How quixotic of Government to boost coal exports in response to climate change. The above Inquiry Report is similar in character, as it was a political response to the growing community concern over catchment damage. What the report does is seek to weaken environmental

regulation. The Department of Primary Industries (Minerals) convinced the Inquiry's expert panel to change the focus of environment protection for underground coal mining from prevention impacts to rehabilitation of the subsequent damage.

Further, the 2006 Strategic Review of the impacts of coalmining on the natural features in the Southern Coalfield will have general application to underground coal mining operations in NSW.

### **The proposed Risk Management Zones – a step backwards**

The Expert Panel proposes 'Risk Management Zones' or RMZs. The proposed RMZ regime will replace existing Protection Zones, where damage arising from coal mine subsidence is prohibited.

Risk Management Zones defer the hard decisions on whether to protect a particular value from the critical time-of-decision by a Minister for Planning,

to a subsequent unspecified date. Note that the Inquiry's Expert Panel believes that 'The identification of RMZs is not intended to represent either a determination of 'significance' or to suggest or require the exclusion of mining.'

These Risk Management Zones are then "further studies must be done" areas, and that is all they are. So, development control is going from a situation where the Planning Minister makes hard decisions that result in protection zones at the time of development consent to a situation where areas are identified for further study regulated by a pro-Mining Minister.

It does not matter how big these RMZs are, they are no good. Another worrying aspect on these study zones is that the Inquiry only flagged twenty two streams in our drinking water supply catchments south of Sydney for further assessment within these RMZs.

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## Parks not just "tourism assets"

PETER PRINEAS

A report to the Premier on tourism in NSW by Mr John O'Neill says we should be opening national parks to the tourism industry by making them available to people willing to pay, instead of protecting

them from people.

The report complains that national parks - described as "state-owned tourism assets" - offer limited tourist facilities and that legal limitations on tourism in wilderness areas make them "exclusive" to people or groups able to enter

them on their own.

The Report was prompted by tourism interests fretting about NSW's slipping performance - particularly in the regions - compared with other states. As usual, national parks are sitting within reach and, like the cat, they get a good kick.

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### *General Meetings*

Level 2, Fortuna House, 332 Pitt Street, at 2.00pm on the second Thursday of the Month: October 9th, November 13th and December 11th

# Catchment protection

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## Excuses

The expert panel found excuses to not act for the environment. They found a large range of environmental factors in play; including past swamp damage, such as scour pools, erosion, the effects of drought and/or severe bushfires, and the damage caused by subsequent heavy rainfall. Much of the surface damage arising from coal mining was conveniently obscured amongst these other less likely causes.

The experts found that cliff falls associated with mining were minor. This finding has nothing to do with the house-sized blocks of sandstone in the cliff falls at the Dendrobium mine. And somehow the metre wide surface crevasses near Cordeaux reservoir were not commented upon but rather a disruption to deep aquifers where further research and investigation is warranted.

The expert panel found no scientific evidence supporting the view that subsidence impacts have resulted in any measurable reduction in runoff to the water supply system or to otherwise represent a threat to the water supply of Sydney or the Illawarra region.

The mountain of circumstantial evidence in terms of dry stream beds, eroded swamps that is to the lay person an overwhelming case for action was dismissed. In doing so, the Expert Panel has disregarded the community's judgement regarding the significance of the damage.

The Inquiry reduced the nature and scale of damage that

was attributed to coal mining, which resulted in less definite findings, and no prescriptions to protect the catchment were in the recommendations. Plenty of studies and process, subsequent to the issue of resource security was recommended instead.

The expert's did not consider any option regarding less intensive mining methods than currently undertaken. If a larger proportion of coal was retained underground, then catchment protection and productive mining operations can be harmonised. Such an outcome has been achieved in the Western Coalfield at the Clarence Colliery. So why not apply this lesson in the more sensitive drinking water supply catchments?

The Inquiry experts remarked that it is for the Government to decide "How much impact will be permitted, and where?" But this is a bit disingenuous. Their proposed regulatory system will have those Government decisions made by the Minister in charge of mining. A mining minister would never say no to mining operations, so the proposed regulatory system must fail to effectively protect our water supply catchments.

## Case Studies:

### ■ *Dendrobium colliery*

In 2001 BHP-Billiton lobbying overturned the protection zones recommended at the commission of inquiry for its Dendrobium mine. Instead, BHP-B secured a régime of secondary approval areas for the areas that were to be protected. These secondary approval areas are, in effect, a stronger form of regulation than the proposed Risk Management Zone regulation. These second approvals are required from the Minister for Planning for

mining in these areas. The Inquiry experts made no such recommendation for secondary approvals by the Minister for Planning.

The proposed Risk Management Zones are a step down in environment protection from the secondary approvals for Dendrobium. Under these proposed risk-taking zones, DPI (Minerals) regains control of all approvals related to coal mining.

### ■ *Clarence colliery*

The Clarence colliery has operated from 1974. But after breaking two longwall mining machines and having major flooding issues, it gave up longwall mining around 1994.

From that time the mine has pumped about 15 to 18 megalitres a day into the Wollangambe River; sucking Newnes Plateau dry.

In 2000 the mine proposed another major expansion of its lease area, after being granted a previous extension in 1994. However, it was not until 2006 that this development application was approved.

The initial development proposed extensive protection zones to protect nationally endangered swamps and stored waters of Lithgow's water supply. Then in May 2005 Centennial Coal decided to make its entire lease extension area a protection zone! The Department of Planning assessment report notes that Centennial withdrew proposals for full coal extraction due to its 'concerns about subsidence and groundwater impacts associated with full extraction.'

### So what do these case studies tell us?

Protection zones work and can be applied by the Planning Minister upfront before

resource security in the form of a mining lease is granted.

The mining companies and their engineers know the damage caused by coal mining. Sometimes companies are prepared to admit it, when it suits them, such as when they can't mine without drowning their employees. Mining companies can moderate the impacts of their proposals to mitigate damage at the development consent stage; if they want to. If a Government is not strong, then miners will take advantage of environmentally sensitive areas, such as water catchments.

The DPI (Minerals), mining companies, mining experts and the bean counters in NSW Government won the Inquiry, and gained recommendations that maximise coal mining.

Risk management zones are worse than useless when compared to protection zones. The RMZs as proposed would defer the hard decisions from the Planning Minister's control and place these decisions into the hands of DPI (Minerals) and their Minister.

Subsequent decisions in RMZs would be very unlikely to generate adequate protection. More studies would always need to be done to determine 'scientifically' the effect of mining on the environment. This new scientific knowledge would never have any effect on decision making. A regime specifying that "more studies must be done" makes for the most notorious excuse for lax decision making.

The Iemma Government must reject the mining expert's proposals for risk taking zones and listen to the concerns of the community about damage to its essential water supply catchments. ♦

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# Wilderness Nominations... Sandon & Wooli River

ASHLEY LOVE, COFFS HARBOUR

OLDER conservation activists may recall that protection of the Sandon catchment on the North Coast as one of the few remaining natural coastal catchments was a priority of early coastal conservation initiatives by the Coalition and then the Labor Governments in the 1970's.

The Sandon catchment was then a pristine backdrop to a small coastal holiday village at the river mouth of predominantly holiday shacks and camp sites. A complicating factor in achieving broadscale protection of catchment was the tenure which was a mixture of state forest, vacant Crown land, leasehold land and freehold.

Conservation proposals, which included, in 1977, placing most of the catchment in the proposed Yuraygir National Park, were thwarted by some of the private landholders who took an approach of seeking to obtain maximum market value for their properties through clearing and establishing sugar cane and "improved pastures" on a range of sites including river flats and natural clay heaths.

The properties were eventually purchased, incorporated in Yuraygir National Park and restoration action taken. Fortunately, the extent of the agricultural development, whilst in critical conservation areas, was not extensive in terms of the entire catchment. Furthermore, restoration over the last twenty years has been so successful the Foundation believes the areas can now be included within a larger identified wilderness area which meets the criteria of the Wilderness Act of "being capable of being restored to a natural condition" to be included within an identified and declared wilderness area.

With this in mind the Colong Foundation nominated



*Yuraygir. Photograph Henry Gold*

Sandon together with the adjoining Wooli Catchments for assessment under section 7 of the Wilderness Act, 1987. The nominations were submitted to Lisa Corbyn the Director General of DECC on 12 October 2006 to seek wilderness management for the Sandon and Wooli River catchments.

Both rivers are now mostly within the Yuraygir National Park and up to the limit of tidal influence are part of the Solitary Islands Marine Park. These streams are essentially wild rivers upstream of the coastal villages of Sandon and Wooli respectively.

The Sandon River Wilderness nomination is approximately 9,500 hectares in size and the Wooli River Wilderness nomination about 12,000 hectares in size, so both are well in excess of the 5,000 hectare minimum necessary for a coastal wilderness.

These nominations are exclusive of Candole, Newfoundland and Barcoogere State Forests which still cover part of the upper reaches of the catchments, as wilderness values cannot be assessed in state forests due to the operation of the Forestry and National Park Estate Act, 1998. The nomination boundaries also pass around the Pebbly Beach and Illaroo camping areas. The nomination includes the Sandon Back Beach Track and Sandon Beach South.

The 2003 Yuraygir National Park Plan of Management identifies the Wooli, and Sandon Rivers as important hydrological systems. The Plan recognizes the park together with the offshore Solitary Islands group of nature reserves and the Solitary Islands Marine Park as being part of a small number of groupings of protected areas of national and international significance

which are found on the east coast of Australia.

The Plan adds that the Solitary Islands Marine Park in conjunction with the adjacent Yuraygir National Park, is one of the few areas in Australia, where a full combination of estuaries, beaches, headlands, islands and offshore waters, as well as a significant proportion of the catchments of those estuaries are protected. Protected habitats and breeding areas the plan claims, mean fish stocks and areas of aesthetic and scientific importance are guaranteed into the future.

The Plan recognizes as an outstanding natural feature and area of scientific interest the low salinity levels and restricted tidal flow in the lower reaches of the Sandon and Wooli rivers resulting from sub-surface freshwater movement from wetlands that

# Only you can protect national parks...

## *Letter writing appeal*

There is a political push on to have more commercial tourism in national parks. Holding up as desirable the cabins on the Overland Track and the Bay of Fires cabins in Tasmania, the NSW Government is planning to facilitate the construction of exclusive tourist resorts in our national parks.

These Tasmanian cabins are examples of luxury accommodation where guests have their needs brought in, over other park visitor needs.. Tourism developments of this sort can threaten the integrity of ecosystems through building in these precious areas.

Powerful elements of the tourism industry are gaining support in the NSW Government to change wilderness and park laws. Our spectacular parks, which have been protected up to now, are at risk of development.

If park laws are changed to favour development, the environment movement will be hard pressed to defend national parks and wilderness from exploitation.

Perhaps more than any other factor your letter to the Government can influence decision making on tourism. For example, a steady stream of letters arriving at the Environment Minister's office can influence whether or not our wilderness laws remain strong. One of the best tests of public sentiment, is how many people are motivated enough to write on an issue. That is why your letters are important.

Please take 5 minutes to write a letter and ask as many friends as possible to write for our parks and for wilderness. With your help, we can stop these changes to our national parks and wilderness laws, which will open our parks to development.

When you write to Premier Iemma and/or Environment Minister Firth ask a question or two, as questions help to ensure that your letter receives



*Bay of Fires accommodation, Tasmania*

a formal reply. Your letter to the Premier and/or the Environment Minister, could include some of the following points listed below.

### **Write to:**

 **The Hon Carmel Tebbutt**  
Minister for Climate Change and Environment  
Level 30, Governor Macquarie Tower  
1 Farrer Place  
Sydney NSW 2000  
dp.office@tebbutt.minister.nsw.gov.au

 **The Hon Nathan Rees**  
Premier of NSW  
Level 40, Governor Macquarie  
1 Farrer Place  
Sydney NSW 2000  
thepremier@www.nsw.gov.au

Request that Premier Iemma /Environment Minister Firth uphold the principle that nature conservation is the primary function of National Parks and Wilderness Areas.

Enquire of Premier Iemma /Environment Minister Firth what steps they will take to ensure wilderness areas remain undisturbed and free of all infrastructure, commercial tourism.

Remind the Government that national parks and wilderness areas are the public's land and the most democratic spaces we have. Ask Premier Iemma /Environment Minister Firth to take the steps necessary to ensure that everyone can continue to visit

these wonderful places and that the cost of doing so remains low.

Say that the national parks and wilderness areas of NSW also make a great contribution to regional economies already. Say that you believe that this should continue, however, you could also suggest that making parks into commercial precincts or 'profit-centres', or places for development, will ultimately detract from their economic value and such policies would be ultimately short sighted.

Point out that car parks, camp grounds and roads should not be 'upgraded' for commercial tourism to become international destination quality products. Such an approach will increase environmental impacts, and explain that it is impossible to increase such high impact use without increased environmental damage.

You could also explain that for those who desire hot showers, cafes and "hard top" accommodation, then it is in regional centres that they should seek them. Explain that local communities most benefit from tourism when accommodation is constructed in the towns.

Ask Premier Iemma / Environment Minister Firth to give you a written guarantee that whatever the outcome of the Taskforce on National Parks and Tourism there will be no special tourism legislation for commercial use of wilderness areas or for fast track approval processes for building

development in national parks.

Contend that all commercial use, except guided tours, should be excluded from parks, particularly the construction of new 'hard top' visitor accommodation.

Propose that increased and privileged access for high impact activities, such as use of off road vehicles, would be detrimental to primary nature conservation purpose of national parks. Explain that there does not need to be any additional vehicle access to national parks. Motor vehicle access should be on approved public roads, that these roads be kept short and close to park boundaries to minimise damage to the natural environment.

Point out that there are plenty of opportunities to enjoy the natural environment besides in national parks, which may be suitable for the more impacting forms of recreation such as horse riding and four wheel driving, such as in State Forests and other public lands.

Ask Premier Iemma/ Environment Minister Firth what steps they will take to protect parks from development of facilities, except for appropriately located car parks, toilets, walking tracks and basic camping facilities, and for some suitable parks a visitor centre? Explain that you believe that these low impact facilities also should be restricted to the edges of parks to minimise impact on the environment.

Suggest that Government investment in nature-based park management can deliver substantial benefits to local economies through jobs, increased tourism and further private investment.

Also remind the Government that investment in well-managed National Parks delivers a large range of ecosystem services including clear air, clean water, safe refuge for native plants and animals, intact water tables, carbon capture and climate

## Parks not just "tourism assets"

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make recommendations.

Environment groups have learned that there is some opinion in the Task Force in favour of "democratising" national parks and making changes to the National Parks and Wildlife Act and the Wilderness Act.

The national parks are already among the most democratic institutions we have. The parks are public land, open to everyone for a small fee and very often for nothing. Major national parks, like Blue Mountains and Royal, attract millions of visitors a year. The national parks system has hundreds of established camping grounds and thousands of kilometres of public roads and walking tracks. There are visitor centres, lookouts, picnic spots, interpretive signs, and other facilities for visitors. There are also visitor programs, like the seasonal rangers, to make the experience more meaningful.

Contrary to some of the opinions reflected in the O'Neill Report, legal limitations and regulation are not a drag on tourism development in NSW national parks. The legal regime has not prevented Kosciuszko National Park accumulating more beds than the town of Cooma. The resorts in Kosciuszko are as big as

towns and operate like towns. It should surprise no-one that the resorts are having an adverse effect on the natural values of the Park. What has happened at Kosciuszko is a warning for the rest of the national parks system which operates under the same legislation. If there is any need for legislative change, it is in the direction of limiting development within national parks, not encouraging more of it.

Warrumbungle and Blue Mountains national parks offer a better and more sustainable model than Kosciuszko. Those parks are popular and support many tourism facilities and services in the surrounding communities, yet they are largely free of intensive or large-scale tourism development.

As some see it - and I do not necessarily attribute this opinion to Mr O'Neill - the fact that national parks offer a visitor experience that is free, or nearly so, is the problem. For them, this is a lost business opportunity. These "tourism assets" need to be put into private hands so that a good profit can be squeezed from "people willing to pay". Luxury accommodation and champagne wilderness tours are seen as the way forward. The holy grail is an exclusive development site inside a national park, enjoying the cachet of the national park name, and an unbeatable advantage over competitors. Visions like this seem to lie behind some of the complaints about regulation

and planning constraints in national parks. Ordinary members of the public would deeply resent the appearance of a resort or a row of up-market bungalows in the middle of their favourite national park view, but they would still be expected to foot the bill for the park's management costs.

It is not easy to see why - apart from ideology - wilderness areas receive particular mention in a report on commercial tourism. Wilderness areas are the most remote and inaccessible places in the national parks system, and indeed in NSW. These areas are managed under the NSW Wilderness Act so as to provide no visitor facilities at all - where visitors must be "self-reliant", depending on their own physical efforts, skill and judgement. Wilderness areas have a legitimate place in the recreational spectrum even though they do not cater directly for commercial tourism. For the NSW tourism industry, access to wilderness areas could not be an important issue, as the vast majority of international and interstate visitors will be satisfied with the "near wilderness" experiences already provided in national parks. Those who want a true wilderness experience will

value it precisely because that is what it is, and they will continue to come to NSW and undertake their own visits to these areas. In any case, it should be recognised that wilderness areas already make a big contribution to the tourist industry's bottom line, as wilderness areas are often the view that visitors go to national parks to see.

There are of course improvements that can be made in the way NSW national parks are promoted in overseas and interstate tourist markets. There is also scope for national parks and regional tourism interests to better integrate their activities. It would be refreshing to see an effective strategy along these lines come out of the Tourism Task Force instead of some tinkering with legislation for the benefit of narrow development interests.

So far I have not even mentioned the primary purpose of national parks and wilderness areas. It is not tourism. It is the protection of nature. National parks are not, as the O'Neill Report describes them, "State tourism assets". Tourism is a role which these areas also serve, but it must always take second place to nature conservation. ❖

## Only you can protect national parks... Letter writing appeal

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resilience.

☐ Seek confirmation from the Premier/Environment Minister for support of the current arrangements for public consultation on the draft plans of management. Draft plans should continue to consider management of low impact park visitation in the context of the primary nature conservation purpose of parks.

☐ Ask Premier Morris Iemma/Environment Minister Firth to give you a guaranteed

undertaking to provide better management of our National Parks through increase government funding.

☐ Tell the Premier/Environment Minister that Government investment in managing National Parks for nature can continue to deliver ever increasing benefits to the citizens of NSW who visit them such as healthy lifestyles, spiritual and mental wellbeing and awareness of the environment. ❖

### BOOK REVIEW

## *The Passes of Narrow Neck*

by Michael Keats and Brian Fox,  
reviewed by Keith Muir

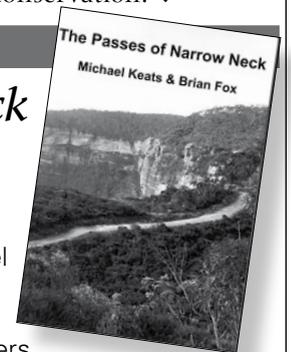
This short book describes all the known routes off Narrow Neck Peninsula. Michael Keats describes in detail the passes, most of which have some exposure. The book will be most valuable to experienced walkers with abseil skills who are looking for a great winter's day in the bush. The passes described are not for the faint hearted but they do sound like a lot of fun.

Narrow Neck has been passed over for too long and this book is timely. Narrow Neck, like the Grose Wilderness, used to be a major bushwalking destination.

With the coming of Peak Oil, the prospect of bushwalking being reliant upon public transport could be a reality for most of us within a decade. If that is the case, then places like Narrow Neck will become once more a bushwalking Mecca.

You can get to Narrow Neck by rail via Katoomba Station and have a weekend of fun, no trouble at all. While it is true that the Passes of Narrow Neck suffers from the trials and tribulations of a self published work, you should not put off buying a copy if you want to get to know 'the Neck'.

Available from Keats Holdings P/L RRP \$24.95; 126 pages



# More Plans for a Newnes Expressway

THERE have been many super-highway schemes proposed through the Blue Mountains. One was through the Blue Labyrinth, another for a tunnel and a third for a road passing north behind the towns through the National Park. A \$3 billion plus superhighway along the Bells Line of Road with a diversion over Newnes Plateau was rejected as too damaging and expensive.

Now a new 40 kilometre by-pass north of Mt Victoria village is being considered by the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) that would traverse the headwaters of the World Heritage listed Grose Wilderness and then pass over Newnes Plateau. The spectacular scenery of the Grose Valley would be blighted by massive road works. Where the proposed highway crosses the Newnes Plateau it would impact upon nationally endangered shrub swamps, Lithgow's water

supply and significant pagoda landscapes.

At the Federal election last year, the candidate, now Federal Member for Macquarie, the Hon Bob Debus, MP promised a Mt Victoria by-pass. So it was inevitable that the long-running push to waste huge sums of money duplicating the highway from the Central West to Sydney would again heat up. In July the RTA commenced its community consultation on a proposed corridor between Mt. Victoria and Lithgow that would avoid Victoria Pass and the River Lett.

During the recent community consultations, the residents of Hartley Vale naturally called for the RTA to examine the



RTA map in flyer to householders, July 2008.

(Note: "Hardey" should be "Hartley")

possibility of an alternative route over the Plateau. The RTA say that no specific route has been developed, while it has detailed engineering plans for the super-duper road, just

like the Tasmanian Hydro-Electric Commission.

The Newnes route appeals to those in the Central West, like it does for Bell Line super-roader, Ian Armstrong, because it could be the western end of the hoped for road. The super-road proposal is taking on the characteristics of a cult, where all politicians have to do to keep hope and power alive is promise a bit of superhighway.

The super-road would cut the Plateau in half, ruin the Gardens of Stone, as well as drawing a concrete line across the western side of the Grose Gorge to the south. Efforts and millions spent to restore the Grose River by removing sewage pollution would be drowned in millions of tonnes of sediment.

If a not in my backyard approach continues, then all groups risk being played off against each other. If that is allowed to happen, the RTA and its super-road boosters would get their own way at everyone's expense.

The best solution is for all groups to co-operate in development of a joint position. An approach that could see money spent on an upgrade rail and road access where people live, rather than an obscene engineering monument that blights the landscape.

The proposed super-road would enable the increasingly uneconomic road freighters (B-double trucks) to traverse the Mountains rather than going north to the Hunter Valley or south through the Southern Highlands. Instead of a super-road, these large trucks could be loaded onto an integrated road-rail system to reduce traffic and energy use. Bigger and bigger dinosaurs heralded their extinction. Our transport thinking should not go the same way. ❖

## Climate Change... The Defining Moment

ALEX COLLEY

THE UN International Panel on Climate Change, which consists of several thousand scientists, has confirmed, with 99% certainty, that global warming is caused by the increased emission of several gases caused by the burning of fossil fuels and the clearing of vegetation. About 6000 million tons of carbon is added to the atmosphere every year, from the burning of fossil fuels, and 1000-2000 tons from the clearing of vegetation. Any burning will emit carbon dioxide, but fossil fuels are the main source. Carbon stored underground some 300 million years ago is being released.

Concentration in the atmosphere has risen from 285 parts per million in pre-industrial times to about 380ppm. Today, other gases entering the atmosphere are methane, nitrous oxide and chlorofluorocarbons. Methane

emissions are about a quarter of carbon dioxide emissions. Their source is mainly domestic animals and rice paddies and some is emitted from coal and natural gas fields. Nitrous oxide is emitted by the burning of fossil fuels.

These emissions have increased the amount of carbon dioxide and other gases located in the upper atmosphere. This has a blanketing effect, reducing the radiation of heat from the surface of the Earth and raising world temperature by nearly one degree.

Because carbon dioxide stays aloft for some 80 years, the blanketing effect can only continue to increase. It has been estimated that temperatures will eventually rise by two to seven degrees. It is impossible to estimate with any certainty how much of how soon the rise will take place, but everyone has experienced rising temperatures, reduced rainfall

and the resulting shortage of water. Nor can there be any doubt that these symptoms will worsen as temperatures increase. The climate might eventually become unbearable.

Sir Nicholas Stern, the world's leading economist on climate change, has forecast that we have only 13 years to cut emissions. He has forecast that we face a continuous future of droughts, storms, sea level rises and the collapse of the Great Barrier Reef. He believes that Australia should slash its output of greenhouse gases by 30% by 2020 and 90% by 2050.

The IPCC has flagged the threat of "an abrupt and inevitable climate change" The chairman of the IPCC, Rajendra Pachauri, said: "If there's no action before 2012 that's too late. What we do in the next two to three years will determine our future. This is the defining moment" (in *SMH*, 17.12.07). ❖

# SUPPORT THE COLONG FOUNDATION!

To: The Treasurer, Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd.  
Level 2, 332 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW 2000

The enclosed remittance or advice covers the item(s) indicated by a tick. (One cheque is sufficient to cover subscription and donation.)

- Membership application (\$25) to 31 December 2008  
(NB Membership application covers Bulletin subscription)
- Colong Bulletin Subscription (\$11) to 31 December 2008 (non members only)
- Membership renewal to 31 December 2008 (\$25)       Life Membership (\$550)
- Tax deductible donation of \$\_\_\_ to the Colong Wilderness Fund
- PLUS \$\_\_\_ being for publications as indicated on the reverse side of this form.

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..... P/CODE ..... DATE .....

PHONE..... EMAIL: .....

SIGNED ..... AMOUNT .....

Payment by credit card. Mastercard  Visa  Bankcard  Expiry date \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_

Card # \_\_\_\_\_

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION Why not join or invite a friend to join?

Yes, I wish to become a member of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd. I subscribe to the Foundation's aim of preserving Australia's wilderness remnants. I accept the liability provided in the Colong Foundation's Articles of Association to guarantee \$20 should it be needed in the event of the winding up of the Foundation. Signed .....

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## Wilderness nominations

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cover the majority of their catchments.

The Plan of management requires that the freshwater and estuarine systems of the Woolli, Sandon Rivers be protected and that the two rivers and catchments be managed to protect their special scenic, natural and catchment values.

The Plan requires DECC to liaise with, and maintain, a cooperative approach with local government and other government authorities to manage and maintain the natural setting of the catchment and waterways of the Woolli and Sandon Rivers.

Neither the plan of management nor the more recent fire management plan for Yuraygir National Park make reference to the provisions of the Wilderness Act 1987, though on ground management activities are clearly directed to

### "...recognition of the interconnectedness of the entire catchment area will help to ensure that ecological processes are maintained."

management of the bulk of the catchment areas as wilderness. Internal vehicle access has been largely removed and an emphasis placed on visitor access and facilities on the catchments perimeter.

Recent management of marine parks and in particular of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park has illustrated the importance of the sympathetic management of adjacent terrestrial areas and catchments for the sustainable management of marine conservation areas.

The Identification and management of the Woolli and Sandon catchments as Wilderness would offer considerable benefits to this integrated conservation complex and lead to consistent regulations between the Solitary Islands Marine Park and the Yuraygir National Park and

demonstrate the integration of management and policy.

Peak Conservation Groups made the point in a recent submission to the review of the zoning plan for Solitary Islands Marine Park that the recognition of the interconnectedness of the entire catchment area will help to ensure that ecological processes are maintained.

In particular support was provided to the following recommendations presented by the Friends of Solitary Islands Marine Park:

- ✓ Immediate completion of the Sandon and Woolli wilderness nominations;
- ✓ Immediate assessment of the wild and scenic character of the Sandon and Woolli Rivers;
- ✓ Marine Park zoning to reflect the wilderness and wild and scenic characteristics of

these rivers;

✓ Marine Parks to support the acquisition of key habitat areas (such as Red Rock and Moonee wetlands and Coastal Range Forests) within the catchments feeding into the Park; and

✓ Marine Parks to take a proactive approach to land use within the catchments in a manner modeled on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park approach.

Now that both national parks and marine parks solely are under the control of the Minister for the Environment, integration should be much easier.

Unfortunately, with the statutory provision requiring the wilderness assessments to be completed by October 2008 and no evidence from DECC that the process has seriously commenced, this chance for wilderness protection could be missed. This opportunity to use the Wilderness Act, 1987 as a basis for integration of reserve management for this outstanding area of coastal heritage merits a higher priority within Parks and Wildlife. ♦

# THE COLONG FOUNDATION

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