

THE COLONG BULLETIN

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The Labor Party ought to aim at the reversal of this decision because it sells out the aspirations of millions of Australians.

I have seen no evidence they now believe our natural heritage should be sacrificed to compensate for the failures of some of our business elite or Australia's long-term economic problems.

NSW Opposition Leader, Mr. Bob Carr in a letter to Mr. Hawke on February 7th which described the resource security legislation as a blot on Labor's environmental record.

Sustaining the Environment

Last year the Colong Foundation decided to reject the Australian Government's goal of sustainable development and adopted instead the goal of a sustained environment.

Development requires the use of more natural resources. This means more land clearing for rural use, more mining, more dams for essential water, more subdivision of rural land etc. Can this be done while maintaining the natural environment? No attempt has been made to explain how it can be done because of the widely accepted obsession with growth.

Nowhere is this more clearly demonstrated than in the plans for urban water supply. In a paper entitled 'Welcome Reef Dam - a Solution for Sydney's Water Problems?' Ulrich Grunmuller and Siegfried Bacher, third year landscape planning students from the Technischen Universitat Berlin, analyse the outcome of unlimited growth and sustained per capita consumption.

As a counter to irregular rainfall, the Sydney Region already has the largest per capita water storage capacity in the world. However, to provide for growth at the rate predicted by the Department of Planning and accepted by the State Government and the Water Board, plans for future storage capacity, which take many years to implement, must start in

the not too distant future. Several options are under consideration. One is to build an enormous earth and rock fill dam, estimated to cost \$300 million, below the existing Warragamba dam and 30 m higher than the existing dam, or a dam on the Kowmung. Both these projects would mean the flooding of valleys in the Blue Mountains parks and wilderness areas. Another option is to build the Welcome Reef dam, some 50 km south east of Goulburn on the Shoalhaven River. The 66 m high dam would inundate 15,300 ha. of land and extend some 50 km up the Shoalhaven River, to the vicinity of Braidwood, 30 km up Mongarlowe River and 20 km up Boro Creek. The estimated cost is \$200 million (without allowance for the inevitable over-run). Pumping the water to the Tallowa dam would involve additional costs and energy usage. The destruction of flora and fauna by the wholesale flooding occasioned by the new dams needs no elaboration. Another spin-off of the projected population increase would be a 50% increase in western Sydney smog, as predicted by a CSIRO-Macquarie University report. So much for "sustainable development."

The counters to these environmental disasters are simple and obvious.

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THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS

18 Argyle St., Sydney. Phone 247 4714

PATRON: The Hon. Neville K. Wran, A.C., Q.C.

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HON. PHOTOGRAPHER: Henry Gold

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Continued from front page

Grunmuller and Bacher point out that natural increase in Sydney is virtually cancelled by internal emigration from Sydney to other places. The main cause of population increase at the rate of over 30,000 a year is immigration from overseas. This increase could be eliminated, without inflicting hardship, by limiting immigration to political refugees and close relatives of new Australians. The number of these immigrants would be offset by emigration from Australia. This policy was adopted by the Colong Foundation last year and submitted to the Nature Conservation Council Annual Conference.

A second counter is to introduce the user pays principle. The current pricing system charges only 10% for direct water usage. The rest of the rates are to cover the infrastructure cost of water supply. The Water Board lists a number of means of saving water, such as the installation of dual flush toilets, water saving devices on washing machines and substitution of native plants for exotics. These measures would occasion no hardship. Other Australian cities have already introduced the user pays principle. In Newcastle it reduced water consumption by 30% and obviated the necessity for an expensive new dam.

A third counter was described by Peter Maslen in our last Bulletin — recycling of water. This is already an economic proposition for some industrial users and would be greatly encouraged by a realistic water pricing policy.

A fourth counter would be a clampdown on development within the Nepean-Hawkesbury catchment area. Nearly all the areas designated for future development are within this catchment, because there is nowhere else for Sydney to expand.

The environmental effects of unlimited development dont stop with water supply. The Warragamba River has been diverted to flow through the urban areas and reach the sea, or the area below the dam, in the form of sewage. On February 11th the managing director of the Water Board warned that:

Water quality in the Nepean-Hawkesbury system, Sydney's major source of

drinking supplies, was deteriorating so rapidly that without remedial action, the river would die.

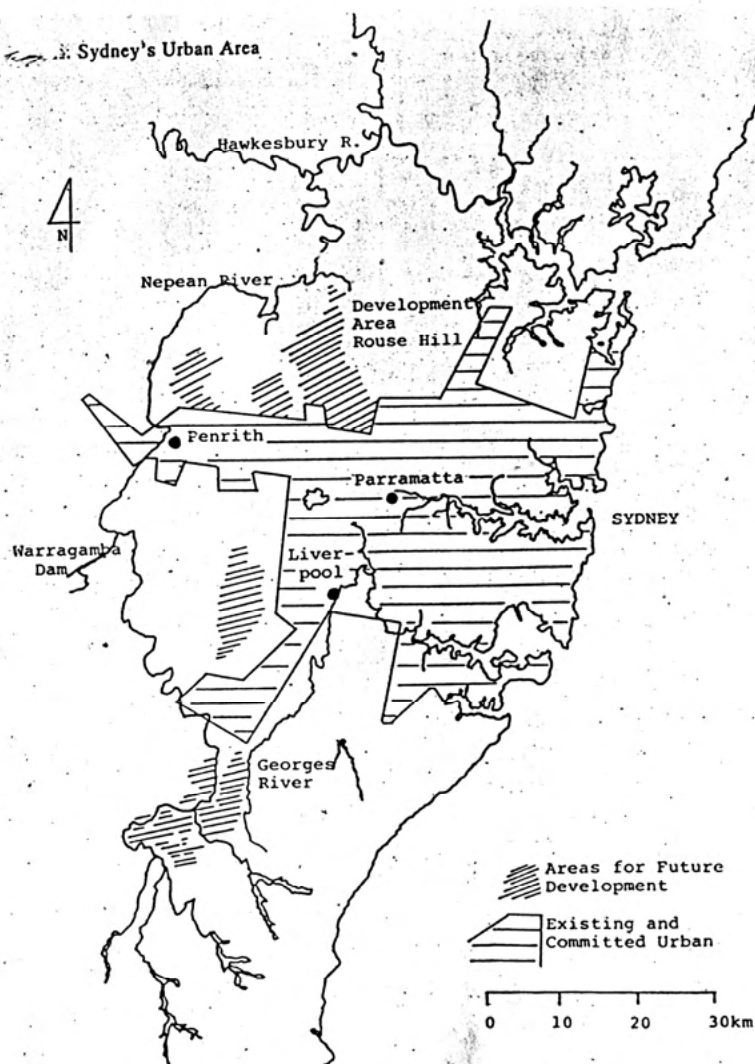
So far this summer, the flagging river had suffered three 'strokes' which had alarmed the Board. In one of them, only rain saved the turbid, sluggish river from turning toxic via a deadly bloom of blue-green algae which dies off, forming a poisonous porridge equivalent to low-level arsenic. Algae blooms have been associated with deaths of stock, birds and children overseas and are greatly feared by the Water Board. Inspectors contained a 10-hectare bloom in an arm of the Warragamba Dam in November. (SMH report)

Perhaps the most alarming aspect of Mr. Wilson's warning is that an illegal bloom occurred not below but within the dam. This is largely the outcome of the sorry state of the Blue Mountains sewerage system.

The Blue Mountains environmental plan, which is in fact a development plan, sets no limit on population. It will be several years before the recently approved \$80 million dollar sewerage system is completed. It may provide for the development which takes place before it is completed, but cannot provide for the substantial development which will take place beyond reach of the system. The death of the river during dry periods will be averted only by the release of dam water to flush out the putrifying water below.

Given the continuance of development there is no real prospect of saving the lower Nepean-Hawkesbury. Adequate treatment would cost many billions of dollars. The money will not be available because the Water Board faces an outlay of \$20

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adapted from:
NSW Dept. of Planning 1989 [b]

Park Finances

The Colong Foundation has made a submission to the Public Accounts Inquiry into the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Its main features are as follows:

UNESCO has amongst its formal listed objectives the preservation of the world's cultural and natural history.

The Committee of Inquiry into the National Estate (1974) recommended in regard to conservation through reservation that the selection of national parks, nature reserves and other reserves should be "based on objective scientific criteria, the need for representativeness of ecosystems, protection of threatened species and the recreational needs of urban populations". The recommendations also stated that adequate funds must be made available for their establishment and maintenance.

The 1989/90 Annual Report of the NPWS describes the functions of the Director as set out in Act No. 80 of 1974. These may be summarised as to investigate and acquire land as national parks, nature reserves, historic sites and aboriginal sites and state recreation areas, to manage these reserves, to develop facilities for visitors **without impairing the values of the areas managed** and to protect, manage and research native flora and fauna.

It is axiomatic that funds must be made available from the State Treasury and the general public to carry out these functions. The terms of reference of the inquiry are primarily concerned with the proportion payable by the public and possibly whether concessions should be operated by the Service itself or by an entrepreneur. The Colong Foundation believes that individual concessions should be kept to a minimum and wherever possible provided **outside the parks** by private enterprise. Facilities within the parks should be operated either by the Service or privately, depending on which method is the most efficient. As one of the objects of the Service is to "develop facilities for visitors **without impairing the values of the areas managed**" it follows that leasing and concessions should aim to provide essential needs rather than to increase Service revenue.

A lessee's main interest would quite naturally be the maximisation of profit rather than the enhancement of the natural environment. To some extent this could be controlled by the plan of management, but there is ample evidence that expansion of leasing within Kosciuszko National Park has been at the expense

of the natural ecosystem, due to pollution caused by inadequate sanitary facilities, clearing of native vegetation, oil spills, etc.

The experience of North American Parks clearly indicates that it is most unwise to encourage visitors as they are now causing more damage than any natural occurrence. Although NSW parks are not in danger of being "loved to death" it is only a matter of time before the problems evident at Yellowstone and Yosemite are repeated here. In mid-summer entry to these parks and many others is severely restricted and even wilderness trips to Mount McKinley National Park in Alaska are rationed.

Any suggestion that a national park, as distinct from a state recreation area, be handed over to an entrepreneur would be completely unacceptable as the emphasis would be on profitability rather than the integrity of the ecosystem. Bushwalkers would provide little or no revenue to concessionaires as they prefer to camp away from recognised areas, but they use tracks the maintenance of which is labour intensive. Under the present system it is very difficult to have funds allocated for this purpose, although most bushwalkers enter by car and pay the appropriate fee.

The principle of "user pays" in respect of national parks and nature reserves is rejected. It should be noted that there is a large range of community services provided without charge by both the state and Federal governments, either because of the impossibility of collecting charges, or as a means of making the services available to all irrespective of income limitations of individuals. In fact the principle has been used extremely selectively in an attempt to justify the imposition of unpopular charges.

Urban parks cater for public recreation and aesthetic enjoyment in exactly the same way as national parks, but public access is free. Other examples of the provision of free community services are the Forestry Commission's receipt of \$3,761,000 from the Treasury to cover expenditure for the "public good" on recreational use of forests; education, art galleries, museums and public libraries, bushfire protection, archival information, legal aid; assistance to victims of crime and the services of the Ombudsman.

It is submitted that the present system whereby a reasonable charge is made for each vehicle using metropolitan parks and certain country parks with high visitation should be continued, but no attempt should be made to recover full costs as it is in the public interest for citizens to be able to enjoy their heritage areas.

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billion to replace 35,000 km of aging water, sewerage and drainage pipes, channels and other major works.

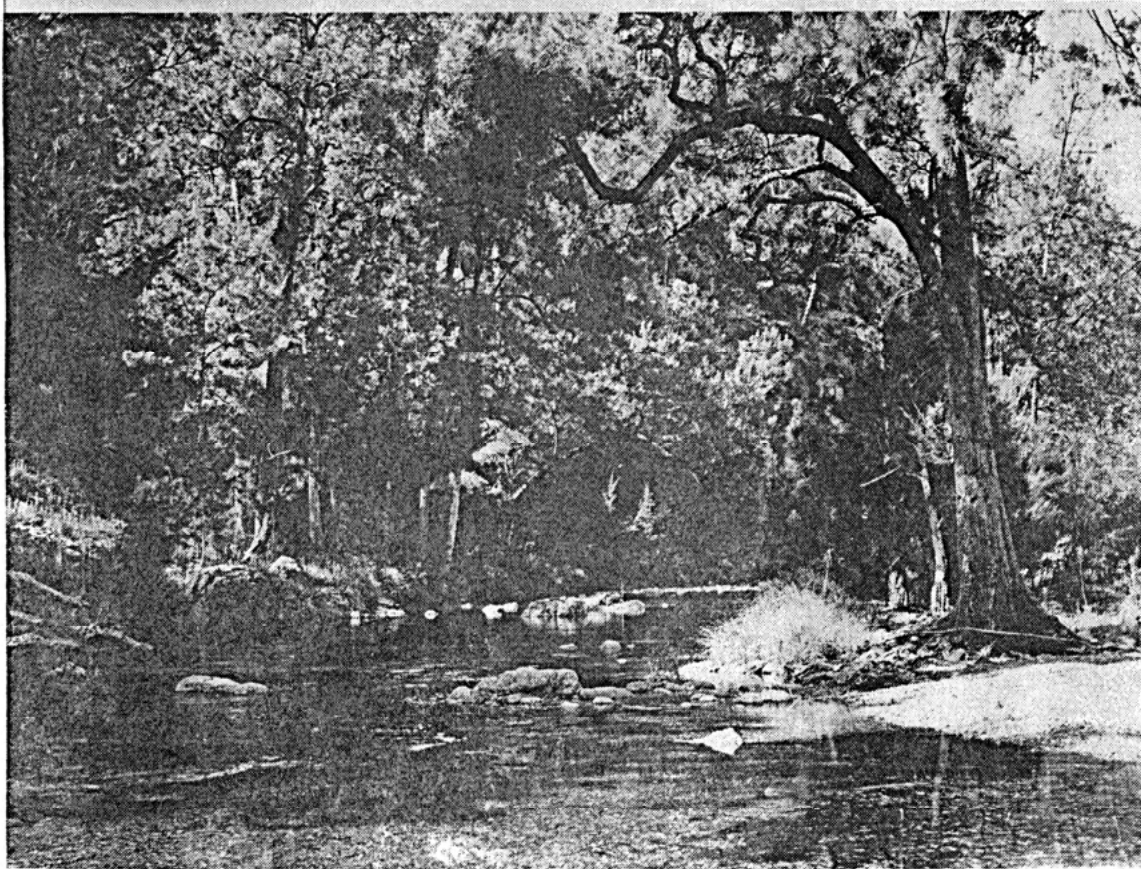
Growth limitation would save many billions of dollars in new infrastructure development costs. Expenditure could then be diverted to

sewage treatment and replacement of installations. The pressure being exerted by the Government to jam more people into already crowded areas, such as Balmain and Pyrmont, could be lifted.

The Colong Foundation's main concern is that the Cox, the Kowmung and the upper Shoalhaven

should not be flooded, but this concern is just one aspect of the environmental cost of unlimited growth. This is particularly true of forestry. Given a reduction of immigration and a user pays pricing policy (instead of subsidisation) the pressure on old growth forests could be removed.

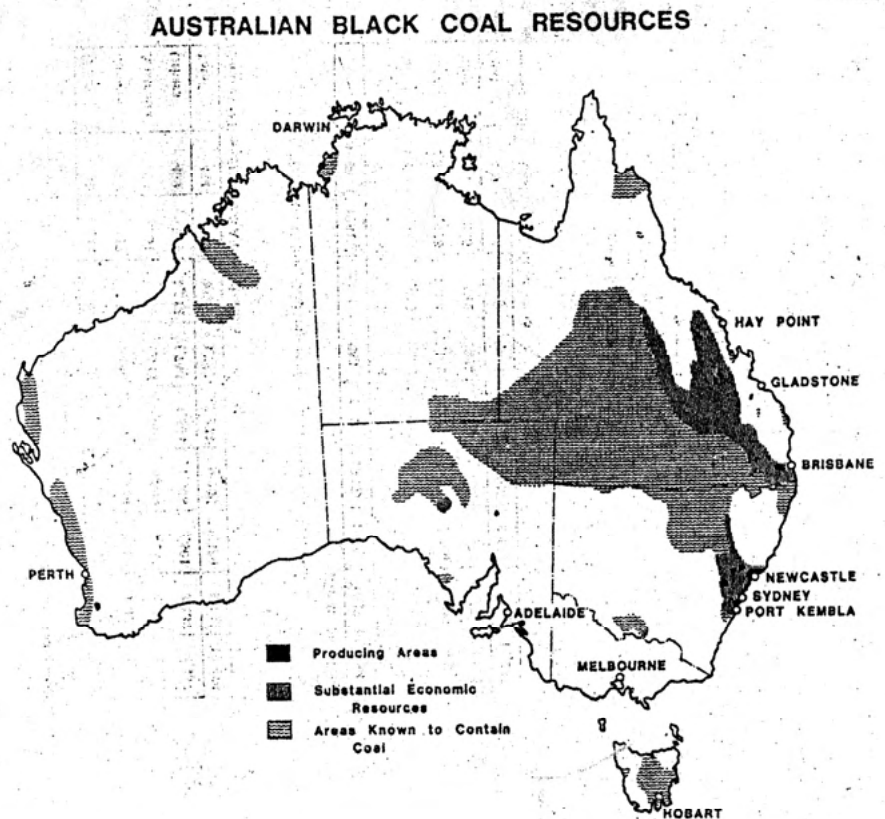
The Shoalhaven River in the proposed inundated area
Photograph by Sandy Nicholson.



Nattai Assessment

The Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Tim Moore advises that the Director of Parks and Wildlife has almost completed his formal assessment of the Nattai Wilderness nomination and that he expects to be in a position to discuss his recommendations with his cabinet colleagues shortly. The Director has also been asked to review options for protecting the area, including the feasibility of establishing a National Park.

The existence of coal deposits within the area of the proposed park — albeit probably sub-marginal, particularly in the present depressed coal market — has been cited as the reason for delaying a decision. Below is a map, published by the Joint Coal Board, showing the extent of Australia's coal resources. They are probably sufficient to raise global temperature by a degree or two. The area of the park is too small to be depicted on the map.



Alpine Cattle Fodder

Last year the Hon. Tim Moore reaffirmed this State's opposition to Alpine grazing by refusing to allow Riverina graziers adjustment in the Kosciusko National Park. In the places called national parks in Victoria, anything goes — grazing, infestation by off road vehicles, logging, mining, resort development — the lot. After a visit to the Alpine National Park, Brenda Cameron of The Sydney Bush Walkers wrote to Mrs Kirner, Premier of Victoria, as follows:

"I recently visited the high mountain country of Victoria, and being quite keen on walking spent what would have been a glorious day walking in the Alpine National Park. I qualify my enthusiasm for this area because I was, frankly, surprised and quite appalled by the only too obvious results of the cattle grazing which is still allowed in this national park — cattle excrement, resultant over-population of flies and the virtual denudation of the wild flowers which during the summer months would, and should be, carpeting the alpine plains.

"I have often visited the New South Wales Kosciusko National Park during the summer months, particularly the area between the Thredbo chairlift and Mount Kosciusko, and this area never ceases to please and delight me — despite its ease of access, popularity and hence large numbers of people walking around this area, the fact that the cattle were banished from here some time ago has enabled the park to return to its

original splendour, the mess and abnormal quantities of flies long gone and wild flowers once again flourish on the mountain sides and plains.

"These alpine regions particularly of South-East Australia are not only splendid places but they are also absolutely treasures of the nation. In a vast country such as ours, with so much space, it seems hard to justify the use of our fine national parks as grazing areas. Australia can, and should preserve its national parks in their natural state, as they always were, that is before the impact of man and his beasts upon the environment. There is room, and indeed greater know how and technology than previously, to enable cattle to be grazed on designated farmland and grazing areas outside the parks. In my opinion, the Victorian Government in allowing this misuse of Alpine National Park is as guilty of spoiling a treasure of the nation as if it were perpetrating a defacement of any other work of art. It is time to move the cattle out of the national parks and preserve our heritage.

"I would be interested in hearing of your Government's future proposals on this subject."

(The Alpine National Park is certainly a treasure of the nation — it is not only on the Register of the National Estate — but, in the opinion of the Victorian National Parks Association, a treasure of the world. The Association has published an Australian Alps World Heritage Nomination written by Dr Geoff Mosley — Ed.)

Wilderness Saved — The Battle for the Bush

The above is the provisional title of a book on the history of wilderness conservation which the Foundation has commissioned Dr Geoff Mosley to write for it.

Starting from the pioneering of the wilderness concept in the Sydney area and the birth of the wilderness movement promoted by Myles Dunphy, it will cover the first proposals for the Greater Blue Mountains, Tallawalla Primitive Reserve, Garrawarra and other proposals. It will describe the early campaigns of the Colong Committee, and cover the origins and history of the Kosciuszko National Park and the development of the wilderness movement over the last thirty years, including the rainforest and Tasmanian campaigns.

As the ex Director of the ACF, a member of the IUCN Council for seven years and the author of *Australia's Wilderness Heritage*, *Blue Mountains for World Heritage*, and the *Australian*

Alps World Heritage Nomination, nobody is better qualified than Geoff to write this book. As time goes on sources of information will be more difficult, if not impossible, to trace.

Nature conservation is already a major national issue and may well be the dominant concern in the not distant future as natural resources are depleted or degraded. The book will be an important source of information now and an invaluable record in the future. It will be a valuable reference or text book in the educational field.

The book will strain the financial resources of the Colong Foundation to the limit. It is initially being financed by an indefinite maturity interest free loan which will not be repaid until all other outlays have been recouped. As with our Blue Mountains book, our payment to Geoff Mosley will be far below the real value of his work and we will rely heavily on voluntary photographic, research, graphic and other services. Any financial help would be greatly appreciated.

Consumer Boycott to Save Fraser Island

(from Moonbi 76)

The Queensland Government has already shown its support for the exploiters by appointing Peter Laurance, chairman of sand mining company, Pivot Group Limited, to lead the Queensland Tourist and Travel Corporation. Mr Laurance is considered highly unsuitable for the tourism job by environmentalists because of a conflict of interest. The Goss Government has dealt the Queensland public a tragic blow by entrusting the state's largest industry to a man whose major objective is to mine one of the natural wonders of

the world — Fraser Island.

FIDO (the Fraser Island Defenders' Organisation) is now co-ordinating a national campaign of economic sanctions to persuade companies to withdraw from Fraser Island. Fido will be working in co-operation with a number of other conservation groups to develop ways of promoting and implementing an effective consumer boycott. Companies that will come in for attention include Boral, Pivot and Hyne and Son.

Adbusters Quarterly

This unusual journal, published by the Media Foundation of Vancouver, targets the overwhelming might of the advertising industry. It attacks advertisements for dangerous or antisocial products, ridicules absurd claims by parody and, above all, attacks "consumerism".

It challenges the economists who can see no purpose but "growth" and, being a product of British Columbia, it attacks Mac-Millan Bloedel and other leading foresters for their clear-felling and slash-burning practices. It accuses television of drenching the population from infancy onwards with mindless pap interspersed with plugs for the costly products of the advertising fantasy world.

Why should a conservation body concern itself with the advertising industry? Just consider:

- The vast resources that are used: the skills of artists, psychologists and strategists; mountains of glossy magazines and newsprint (acres of trees and a lot of electric power).
- The visual and auditory pollution of city and country.
- The multibillion cost of the industry, paid for by the ultimate customer (\$100 million per annum for one Australian department store group!).

Consumerism is stimulated to the limit in a world whose resources must run out. In this day and age people should be exhorted to confine their expenditure to real needs rather than to buy more of everything.

(Adbusters is available from the Media Foundation, 1243 West 7th Avenue, Vancouver B.C. V6H1B7. Subscription \$A25).

Meeting Dates

Meetings will be held on
April 4th and 18th and May
2nd, 16th and 30th

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Please remember us in your will. The Law Society of NSW recommends the following wording:

'I bequeath the sum of \$.... to the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd. for its general purposes and declare that the receipt of the Treasurer for the time being of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd. shall be complete discharge to my executors in respect of any sum paid to the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd..

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**Please note that ACF
mail out receipts only
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MEMBERSHIP

Membership fee of \$20 covers Bulletin subscription. If you are not personally known to the Foundation, the Secretary will nominate you and ask one of the directors to second your nomination. The signing of this application will be accepted as evidence of your support of the aims of the Foundation. Return to The Hon. Secretary, Colong Foundation for Wilderness, 18 Argyle St, Sydney 2000

The Treasurer
Colong Foundation For Wilderness Ltd.,
18 Argyle Street
Sydney NSW 2000

The enclosed remittance or advice covers the item(s) indicated by a tick.

Membership application (use form below) (N.B. Membership fee covers Bulletin subscription)

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I have donated \$ _____ to the Australian Conservation Foundation expressing a wish that my donation be spent for the purposes of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd. (see form below). I would like this donation applied to:

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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

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