



# THE COLONG BULLETIN

THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS LTD.  
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*It is the philosophy of economic rationalism which promotes economic growth, privatisation of resources, reliance on market forces and the profit incentive for the allocation of resources and the determination of land use. Government mentality is fixed on false concepts of balance and conflict resolution, as opposed to genuine nature conservation objectives. The protection of wilderness is in many ways at the opposite end of the philosophic spectrum to economic rationalism. It is concerned with maintaining a community asset and with long term considerations.*

From report of task group established by the National Wilderness Conference

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## CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1993

1993 was another less than satisfactory year, with environmental issues receiving degrading attention from politicians, even though the community continues to rate the environment as one of the top two issues of importance now and the most important for the future. Sadly our politicians still look only as far as the next election and fail to have the courage to make the responsible long term decisions for our environmental security. This is particularly the case where nature conservation is concerned and even more so for wilderness preservation. With the National Party continuing to dominate our Liberal/National Coalitions, we continue to lose more and more natural heritage to the so-called "developers" of our society.

The Colong Foundation continued its core business of wilderness protection campaigning while supporting related issues where they impact on wilderness and associated buffer areas. I regret this is my last report for a few years. While not retiring, I am going to stand down for a more active chairman and thank you all

for the honour of serving for so many years. (*Peter will continue to serve as Vice Chairman - Ed.*)

The major issue for the year, the dedication of wilderness under the Wilderness Act, ended the year in the turmoil of government indecision and a generally regressive step in the wilderness protection process. The Wilderness Act allows any government and opposition to protect the wilderness of NSW. The members of the NSW Parliament who have genuine environmental credentials could quite easily endorse, with an overwhelming majority, the wilderness nominations, with minor boundary refinement. However, under the ridiculous situation where party politics prevails over right and common sense is not permitted, the world loses more of our natural heritage by the second. Our politicians must be proud of our record of making more animals extinct here than in any other country, as they continue to endorse the actions that created this situation in the first place. The wilderness

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THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS

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**THE COLOGN FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS LIMITED**

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**INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT**

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 1993

	1993	1992
	\$	\$
<b>INCOME</b>		
Donations		15,445
- for investment	20,119	494
- general	234	781
Sale of Blue Mountains books and posters	1,250	-
Book sales	204	234
Subscriptions to bulletin	668	516
Sale of publications, net	166	110
Sale of Wilderness calendars, net	7,739	7,412
Interest on investments	-	7
Nattai River Proposal	2,840	2,520
Annual membership fees	591	364
Red Index	3,092	9,074
Fighting Fund Donation	36,903	36,956
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Donations	1,500	-
Bulletin costs	1,945	2,445
Subscriptions to other conservation groups	161	195
Rent	2,281	3,025
Computer	200	-
Depreciation	614	253
Stationery	1,196	516
Campaigns		
- Secretarial expenses	1,318	1,010
- Bank charges	118	52
- Wilderness history book	7	-
- Research officer	12,180	9,930
- History of Wilderness Project	-	1,000
Wilderness conference	1,617	-
Other expenses	398	108
	23,535	18,534
Net Surplus	13,368	18,422

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areas remaining, which are the purest form of nature protection, are a small portion of NSW, but those who oppose nature protection want to destroy them with "development," 4WD, horses and generally by the tyranny of small decisions. Coupled with this is the over-reaction of government to bush fires initiated outside wilderness areas, the unnecessary building of "highways" through wilderness for bush fire protection and the allowance of 4WD access. The real issue is poor, or no real government planning. The true colours of all our politicians are shown by the generally poor opposition to the red-neck minority of our community who destroy our rare special places. All in all a frustrating and disappointing 1993 for wilderness

protection in NSW.

The Gardens of Stone campaign continued, as it has for over a decade, with the addition of Keith Muir's vigor, but still no resolution. The only good news is that people now know where we are talking about and there may be some scope for national park dedication. Maybe '94 or '95 will see the completion of the western boundary of the Greater Blue Mountains park

Urban development in the Blue Mountains and related issues, like helicopter flights over wilderness, continued to be a high priority on our agenda.

A significant amount of time was spent on the Sara River mining issue and its

threat to the Guy Fawkes wilderness and water quality. On the national scene Shoalwater Bay continues to have our attention. The fight continues.

Water, and the myriad of complex issues which evolve from the word, will always cause some Colong stirrings, if only to ensure another free river remains so or a little more wilderness is not flooded by another or higher dam because of our wasteful ways with water.

The Wilderness Red Index has been updated and extended to include more than 160 wilderness areas Australia wide. The Index is now on line and hence has a greater ability to be assessed more quickly for current details of size, land tenure, land use, ecology and threats. Continuous information input is required to maintain the accuracy of the data and this requires input from environmentalists and a constant resource allocation from the Foundation to ensure the information is up to date.

The Fourth National Wilderness Conference was a success, with all groups represented and most of our nation's key nature conservationists attending. The proceedings have been made available in the book "Wilderness - The Future." Conference resolutions started with the need for the total Australian community to devote the necessary resources to secure the future of wilderness. All other resolutions created mechanisms for the creation of this security. Bob Brown, in closing his inspirational address said "We must heed nature's call to action if we are to be able to look future generations in the eye and say 'We fired, we fought and we turned back the chainsaws, the drills and the concrete carriers from the last wild places, for you and for the wilds themselves forever.'"

Similarly, as Judith Wright, one of our prominent long time activists, wrote in 1993 to Milo Dunphy

"For heavens sake, where has the fight gone? Conservationists get side-tracked by anything and everything, placate unions, the miners, political parties, local government, ordinary people with axes to grind - and religionists who believe you can go on forever having children and God will look after everyone." They both have a common theme, one that I

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## WHO CARES ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT?

The Environmental Protection Authority's sample survey of 1,115 NSW residents carries some good news for nature conservationists. Ocean and beach pollution, fresh water pollution, air pollution, industrial emissions, waste and loss of bushlands and forests were individually rated by respondents as one of the two most important issues. The environment was ranked as a top priority by 22.8% as against 13.2% who favoured economic growth (which is the State Government's top priority). Whether the respondents were prepared to accept the measures necessary to counter environmental deterioration, such as energy taxes, the cessation of freeway construction or compensation to the loggers of native forests, was not surveyed.

The principal responses on natural environment measures were:

Few thought the regulation of the mining and forestry industries was too strict, but 58% thought that regulations governing mining were too lax and 50% thought regulations governing the forestry industry too lax.

Over 80% nominated environmental and conservation organisations as the most reliable sources of information. 42% had donated to an environmental or conservation organisation (a much higher percentage than the donors to political parties).

84.6% agreed that the community was doing "too little too late" to protect the environment.

83% were rated as "pro environmental." Of these 25.8% were in the 25-34 years age group and 44% nominated the environment as a top priority in 2004. 91% of those with tertiary qualifications were concerned about the environment and 52% of these thought the regulations too lax.

A negative finding was that 50.3% thought that there had been an improvement in the protection of endangered species and 42.2% thought that the environment in general had improved. This has not been the experience of the Colong Foundation. More than half the respondents in the 55 and over age group said they were "quite confused by all the different information and claims," but only 38% of those aged

25-34 said they were confused. This a measure of the success of the development lobby's propaganda.

The most unsatisfactory feature is that, despite the high rating given to the loss of bushlands and native forests, there was no survey on the degradation of natural areas. The "Highlights" paper which accompanies "Who cares About the environment," notes "The interplay between forestry and environment protection" and "disagreement about rainforest logging, the establishment of pine plantations, woodchipping and the logging of old growth forests." On biodiversity it notes that Australia has the world's highest rate of mammal extinctions. Extensive clearing of woodlands in the central region has left them "now fragmented, surviving in isolated areas surrounded by the vast cultivated and grazed lands of the wheat belt." Clearly habitat destruction is the reason for loss of biodiversity. Equally clear is the fact that the larger and least modified natural areas are the best refuge for endangered species. But despite the fact that wilderness has been in the forefront of environmental debate over the last year or more, it does not get a mention. Nor did the survey cover many other nature conservation issues such as woodchipping, resource security, logging of old growth forests, helicopters, horses and off road vehicle usage in national

parks, control burning, the raising of the Warragamba dam and management of its catchment, or population growth. The answers to questions on these major threats to the environment would probably have been embarrassing to the Government. It must be inferred that this is the reason why they were not included in the survey.

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traditionally have not adhered to, but with the inability to have commonsense arguments accepted by our so-called leaders, I am starting to wonder if a more aggressive tack is not required. We did it in the 70s and won in the early 80s. Perhaps it is time to do it all again and forget the "pussy footing" around that we allowed ourselves to be involved in over the last decade. We are slowly losing the few per cent of our natural heritage which was so hard fought for, let alone preserving the portions which are still to be protected.

In closing, I implore you to regenerate from the ravages of the last few years and strive more vigorously than ever to prevent the weeds of our society from despoiling what little we have of wilderness in Australia. Sow more of your seeds in your fellow Australians' minds, so that they will pressure our governments and their bureaucrats into formally protecting these areas as well as educating society in general as to the values of wilderness, even if they only see them in books or in lounge room television. It would be satisfying for people to see these areas, even if not at first hand, and know they would be there forever.

## DONATIONS

We gratefully acknowledge donations from the following supporters during the half year ended June 30th:

Mr. and Mrs C. Austin, W. Barton, W.T. Bell, C.G. Benjamin, J.S. Bentley, J.W. Blanche, P. Bosma, M. Bouman, D.J. Bowman, MP, C.O. Boyd, P.E. Boyd, J.W. Brown, The Budawang Committee, D. Butler, E. Cadzow, R.O. Chalmers, E.A. Chapman-Wade, G. Chapple, A.G. Colley, G. Colman, Dr. P.J. Conaghan, A. Coote, A. Correy, E. Cunningham, S. Dean, A.E. Dixon, Dr. R.A. Duncan, M & J. Ellwood, H. Gold, J. Greening, L.A.J. Hamill, P.B. Haydon, M. Hillsmith, J. Holly, M.J. Holmes, J. Howell, D. Johnson, L. Jones, A.J. Kay, A.J. Keen, D. and J. Kelly, H. Kilby, P.G. Laird, J. Lawler, G.W. Lawrence, Dr. A.K. Lethlean, C.J. Lubbers, J.G. Marden, P. Maslen, J. Mayer, Dr. P. Millard, M. Mills, M. Nordon, J. O'Reilly, M. Plumridge, J.H.F. Pratt, J. Rentoul, E. St John, J. Scarsbrook, I. Sefton, A. Shilling, J. Simons, J. Somerville, Dr. S. Stevens, R. Toop, M. Watson, H. Whaite, M.J. White, J.D. Wrigley.

# HELICOPTER INVASION OF NATIONAL PARKS

In May the Colong Foundation wrote to the Blue Mountains City Council objecting to the proposed "Fly Neighbourly Agreement" that permits operation of helicopters over national parks.

The Colong Foundation has successfully opposed many resource exploitation projects in the twenty-six years since its inception. The advocates of all other proposals argue that society must accept environmental damage as the cost paid for jobs and resource exploitation. The Foundation in these cases has convinced decision makers that the cost of preserving the environment, for example Colong Caves, Boyd Plateau and rainforests need not cost jobs.

Helicopter joy flights have now expanded the horizon of environmental debate. Joy flights offer significant degradation of the scenic appeal of the Blue Mountains and possibly a loss of jobs from the tourism industry. Furthermore, it appears that unless conservationists and local residents campaign like tigers and get the issue in front of a decision maker, we will be unable to stop helicopters ruining the serenity of our national parks.

Ms Lisa Corbyn, Deputy Director of the NSW Environmental Protection Authority, reported in *Bulletin 142*, describes the effects of helicopters this way. "The Blue Mountains is one of the few places where tourists and residents can find peace and tranquillity that provide the antidote of our hectic modern lifestyles."

The Colong Foundation has submitted to the Council that loss of the peace and tranquillity of the Blue Mountains will discourage tourism. The visitors to the Fairmont Resort and even the Kedumba Emporium and local picnic grounds may well go elsewhere.

The question that every bushwalker, conservationist and local resident must wonder is how this proposal has got so far without environmental impact assessment and public review. It would seem that the so-called "Fly Neighbourly" agreement is a mechanism to avoid environmental assessment.

The answer seems to be nestled

somewhere in a running conflict between State and Federal "rights" and the excessive regulatory power of the Civil Aviation Authority to control aircraft operation without moderation injected through a democratic decision making process.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) considers itself solely responsible for aircraft flight operations. The CAA have prepared a voluntary scheme for pilots called "Fly Neighbourly" that it wrongly believes can satisfy all environmental requirements.

The CAA claims that it is improving environmental quality because the voluntary code raises the minimum flying height from 500 to 1,000 feet. The helicopter operators, however, are not obliged to comply with the code and complain that it will be impossible to reach the proposed 2,000 feet height suggested by Blue Mountains City Council in a six minute flight. The Foundation considers that the voluntary joy flight code will have no value if operators can ignore it.

Principle 2 of Fly Neighbourly states it is a "voluntary code of practice which accords with overseas practice, providing a simple and effective mechanism to overcome the need for unwarranted regulatory measures, or restrictive legislation that may result in legislative conflict between Federal and State Authorities". The CAA is busily working up new legislation that will give it the absolute power to regulate aircraft, and stop interference from such troublesome government agencies as the Australian Heritage Commission and the Commonwealth Environmental Protection Agency, and State agencies seeking to protect people's amenity from the spoiling effects of aircraft operation.

## All National Parks at risk

The CAA is establishing these "Fly Neighbourly Agreements" (FNA) for environmentally sensitive areas (eg national parks, wilderness areas, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, etc).

CAA have already promulgated its first

FNA and aim to gazette another "Fly Noisy Agreement" without environmental assessment for the Blue Mountains National Parks on August 18.

The actions of CAA in regard to establishing FNA's is disturbing and worrying. It is disturbing because the FNA for Kakadu National Park has been established **contrary to the park's plan of management 1991**.

The CAA have established a precedent which may overrule the stricter requirements for the regulation of aircraft in Kakadu National Park imposed by the Australian Nature Conservation Agency.

The Kakadu plan of management requires a 4,000 feet minimum flying height over wilderness, high intensity use areas and living areas. The FNA for Kakadu National Park set a minimum flying height of 2,000 feet. The noise intrusion from flying aircraft over the park will now be much greater as noise attenuation is a logarithmic function of distance from its source.

The FNA for the Blue Mountains National Park was to be first, but the Blue Mountains City Council, the NSW Environmental Protection Authority and the National Parks and Wildlife Service raise strong objections and the trial assessment period was extended. This is very fortunate as the FNA for the Blue Mountains National Parks system intends to set a minimum flying height as 1,000 feet above the ground. This level is half that set in the first Australian FNA for Kakadu National Park.

## Wilderness Noise Standard

The CAA's regulatory activities are worrying because it is now developing an Australian Noise standard for environmentally sensitive areas.

These proposals would have far reaching implications for the Australian Heritage Commission's ability to protect the National Estate.

The Colong Foundation has requested that the Australian Heritage Commission inform the CAA that the Heritage Act

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# NO REAL NEED TO FLOOD THE COX AND KOWMUNG

by Alex Colley

There are still many people around who remember the beauty of Burratorong Valley and the wild Warragamba River before the dam was built. There was little opposition to the construction of the dam, because the then existing dams could not guarantee water for the then existing population and the expected increase. The present proposals to increase water storage are, however, meeting strong opposition. The ostensible reasons for raising the dam are to prevent a collapse in a king sized flood and reduce flooding of the flat lands below. The main concern is that, should the flood waters exceed the capacity of the present conduits and overtop the crest of the dam, the dam wall would be severely damaged by the action of the overflow. By strengthening the dam and raising its height, more water could be stored above the normal full storage level and released in a regulated flow. The severity of floods below the dam would thus be decreased.

There are a number of proposals for increasing storage capacity. The one at present favoured is to raise the dam wall in two stages, first by 12 metres and later by another 24 metres, both of which entail considerable concrete additions to the dam wall. The 12 metre addition would enable the flooding of the Cox 5 km. above the present full storage level and the Kowmung for 2 km.. The full 36 metre increase would enable the flooding of the Cox for 29 km. and the Kowmung for 8 km. The flooding would last for up to 30 days. Much of the flora beneath the flooding would die, as would much of the fauna. The band of bare soil, gravel and weeds now existing below full storage and present storage levels, would be greatly increased. There are several other options. One is for an enormous rock fill concrete surfaced dam to be constructed above or below the present dam. This would entail much greater flooding. Another is for new dams on the Cox, Kowmung and Wollondilly. The use of a raised Warragamba Dam for water storage, rather than flood control, would be a lot cheaper than constructing new dams, and would be a temptation which a financially strapped Water Board would find hard to resist.

It is nevertheless unlikely that the

flooding will cause much concern beyond nature conservation circles. Most people have never been to the areas to be flooded and never will go there. There are, however, strong economic reasons why the enormous expense of creating the extra storage - several hundred millions of dollars for raising the dam wall and much more for new dams - is not justified. This expenditure would be in addition to the \$7 billion required to repair Sydney's rundown water reticulation and sewerage system.

The threat of collapse can be met by strengthening the dam wall and building a spillway, as described by Keith Muir in our last issue.

There are three ways in which the supposed need for extra storage can be avoided.

The first is decreased consumption. This could be achieved if everybody tried to save water by following the Board's recommendation. But many won't, and therefore increased user pays charges, offset perhaps by reduced service charges, would be effective.

The second is water recycling, already practiced by many industrial plants, which no doubt would be increased by higher user pay charges.

These measures might defer the need for extra capacity for a decade or two, but would not be sufficient for an ever increasing population, a trend which the State Government not only expects, but welcomes. Population is estimated to be 4.5 million in 20 years and 7 million in 50 years. It is probable that, having raised the Warragamba dam, the next project would be the Welcome Reef dam on the Shoalhaven, the waters of which would extend for 50 km up the river and inundate 15,300 ha of land. After this where? The Colo? the Grose? and then?

It is clear, however, that the above measures will not be necessary if Sydney's population is stabilised. Stabilisation is a matter of choice, not necessity. The city's natural increase is offset by the number leaving to live in cheaper and more salubrious places such as the north coast and Queensland. Population increase depends on the level of migration, since some 40% of migrants settle in Sydney. If the level of immigration were reduced to

the level of emigration, this would enable to admission of the 14,000 political refugees and an equal number admitted on other humanitarian grounds. There would be no increase in Sydney's population.

All but occasional abnormal floods can be controlled by the means described by Keith Muir. Damage to buildings can be controlled by a realistic planning policy, which would exclude development on flood prone lands. The main damage would then be crop loss, which could be an insurable risk.

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requires consideration of all prudent and feasible alternatives before undertaking an activity that could adversely affect the National Estate (eg Australia's national parks). The Foundation is taking action to require the CAA to undertake an environmental impact assessment for the proposed regulation of aircraft by Fly Neighbourly Agreements in order to discharge its responsibilities under the Heritage Act.

The Colong Foundation rejects the concept of FNA's. Protection of the National Estate should be mandatory, not discretionary.

The Colong Foundation believes that in order to reasonably protect the acoustic amenity of national parks and wilderness areas, the CAA must prohibit flights in these reserves.

As far as wilderness areas are concerned, exclusion of motorised transport is the first point in the Parks Service wilderness management guidelines. The reverberation of helicopters in the canyons and valleys will shatter the tranquility of parks visitors seeking a wilderness experience.

The Colong Foundation has also sought the assistance of the Commonwealth Environment Protection Authority in wresting excessive regulatory powers from the CAA and, hopefully, through proper environmental assessment and review, return some decision making power to the citizens of New South Wales, a state with one of the best national park systems in the world.

# Shoalwater Bay - Wilderness National Park or Defence Playground?

Shoalwater Bay, the largest, most biologically diverse area of high wilderness on the east coast of Australia, will remain under threat from sandmining and damaging defence operations unless appropriately protected as a Federally managed wilderness National Park.

The area centred on Shoalwater Bay, 50 kilometres north of Rockhampton, is about the size of Metropolitan Sydney.

The Federal Commission of Inquiry instituted in 1992 has just completed its final report and recommended against sand mining or exploration for any minerals go ahead.

Mr Ted Mack, the Independent Member for North Sydney, and some Labor MP's, have taken up the issue of a National Park for the Shoalwater area.

Mr Mack considers the unique ecosystems of Shoalwater Bay deserve to be ranked with the Tasmanian Wilderness and the Barrier Reef. "What the Government and Coalition should be doing is supporting this recommendation and declaring Shoalwater Bay a Wilderness National Park", he said.

A former Queensland Party minister in the Bjelke Peterson government when discussing the matter with Mr Mack said "Ted, it's so good even we refused for 20 years to let it be mined and you know us - we would mine a telegraph pole if there was a quid in it!"

## Critical test for Keating

The Inquiry's recommendations have gone to Cabinet and will be a critical environmental test for the Keating Government.

A issue will be the compensation claims of Pivot Mining NL which holds five leases in the area.

Mr Mack suggests one question needs answering. "Why was a sand mining lease issued in 1991 for an area like Shoalwater Bay, exposing the public to a \$20 million

compensation claim if sandmining is not permitted?"

## Inquiry Exonerated

*Colong Bulletin* readers will note that the Colong Foundation predicted in *Bulletin 142* that the Inquiry would be a whitewash unless the mining leases are acquired and revoked. Clearly the Inquiry has passed the Foundation's test!

The Foundation, however, remains unconvinced about the claim by the Inquiry Chair, Mr John Woodward that multi-objective analysis is a transparent process.

Multi-objective analysis is not a science, nor objective, because it is based on the assessor's value system. It is not transparent unless that value system is revealed and explained.

The Inquiry's recommended scenario, continued Defence use, is more a restatement of the status quo than a statement of the most appropriate landuse.

Surely an area more biologically diverse and less disturbed than the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area merits protection as a national park?

The assessment of preferred scenarios would have been assisted if a national park proposal was submitted to the Inquiry.

The Australian Nature Conservation Agency, the Australian Heritage Commission and environment groups did not submit such a report and so this option was not adequately assessed by the Inquiry.

The Colong Foundation thought that the national park plan would die at the Inquiry stage before it was born. Mr John Langmore, the Chair of the Environment Committee of the House of Representatives, however, has also been pushing hard to declare a wilderness National Park.

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## U.S. PETITION TO SAVE KOALAS

The Foundation has agreed to a request from "Australians for Animals" to be listed, together with other Australian organisations, on a petition for the preservation of Koalas to be lodged, together with the US Fund for Animals and more than 30 other US conservation groups, with the US Fish and Wildlife Service under the provisions of the US Endangered Species Act. The necessity for this action to save one of our best known native animals is a reflection on the inadequacy of Australia's provision for wildlife protection.

Many leading ecological scientists have contributed to the petition, which proves beyond doubt that habitat destruction is the main threat to the species. Mr. Alistair Melzer, PhD candidate from the University of Queensland writes that

*Habitat destruction through forest manipulation for timber and clearing for development is ongoing in all east coast states, including Queensland, and is the single factor which, in my opinion, will lead to the destruction of the Koala through the gradual eradication of regional populations. In NSW the main remaining habitats are in the northern native forests and the south east forests. The NSW Government has recently announced that it will extend interim legislation so that the logging of these forests can continue without the completion of environmental studies. Of the southern forests Dr Carrick writes:*

*Between Sydney and the New South Wales/Victorian border, the Koala is almost extinct, and the few places where relict populations are known to occur are being clear felled for export of wood chips under the control of the Forestry Commission of NSW.*

There can be no doubt that the old growth forests within wilderness areas, which the Colong Foundation is striving to save, are the best preserved Koala habitats. Elsewhere land clearing, habitat fragmentation, roading, disease, tree dieback, reduction in numbers leading to inbreeding and isolation of individuals will continue to reduce their numbers and eliminate them from many areas.

## **Report of the National Wilderness Campaign Task Group**

The Task Group, consisting of Ross Scott, Georgia Stewart and Pat Thompson, was established by the Fourth National Wilderness Conference to report on the main elements of a campaign to establish a national wilderness protection system.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty in mounting such a campaign is the fact that land use planning is a state responsibility. Nevertheless the Commonwealth has acknowledged the national significance of wilderness by such action as its establishment of the National Estate Register, its World Heritage nominations, the finance it has provided for employment compensation, the establishment of Kakadu National Park, the compilation of a national wilderness inventory, a commitment to establish a national system of conservation reserves, the campaign for Antarctica and the signature of the Biological Diversity Convention.

The report recommends the establishment of a national wilderness register and a special Commonwealth Wilderness unit. The campaign strategy proposed embraces the methods adopted by the Colong Foundation, methods proved successful on a state level. The most essential ingredient is leadership, a role assumed by the Foundation in most of its successful campaigns and assumed, in conjunction with Envirobook in the organisation of the National Wilderness Conference. The Foundation, however, is not the most suitable vehicle for a national campaign. This should be conducted by an organisation with branches in every state. There are only two such organisations - The Wilderness Society and the Australian Conservation Foundation, a fact acknowledged in the report by its recommendation that these organisations conduct a joint campaign. However wilderness has not been a high ACF priority since Geoff Mosley resigned as Director and a higher wilderness profile for the ACF is one of the action proposals. The Colong Foundation is nominated for the role of further developing the Red Index for the purpose of listing potential reserves and providing a monitoring/watchdog mechanism. The campaign would have

little hope of success unless it could provide specific information on the location, status and condition of wilderness and the development pressures which threaten it.

The task group's terms of reference included consultation with Aboriginal people. This was not possible because an offer to consult with the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation was not accepted.

A copy of the full report is available from the Colong Foundation. There is a charge of \$2 to cover photocopying and postage.

### **Shoalwater Bay**

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### **What must be done**

The most important natural area on the East Coast of Australia need not remain Defence land, there are other sites. Unless a national park is declared, the Shoalwater Public Inquiry will have achieved nothing, except deferring sand mining.

It would be far better if the Department

of Defence relinquished the Bay and sought out some "clapped out buffalo country" in North Queensland recognised by conservationists and traditional owners as having no significance.

As a Wilderness National Park the granting of leases and explorations licences would be effectively prevented. By declaring Shoalwater Bay a Wilderness National Park now, the protection which up to now has been granted by default would be assured.

Failure to declare Shoalwater Bay a Wilderness National Park denies the area the recognition and protection it deserves. It will result in a situation not unlike Jervis Bay, where exhaustive public protest was required to draw attention to the incompatibility between continued military use and conservation of the Bay.

Retaining the area as Defence land will almost certainly mean that conservationists will have to fight the sand mining issue again immediately following an incoming Coalition Government.

Please write to the Prime Minister, the Hon Paul Keating, at Parliament House Canberra requesting that the Shoalwater Bay area be made a Federally-managed Wilderness National Park.

### **TREE LOSS OUTWEIGHS PLANTINGS 4 to 1**

In 1989 the CSIRO warned that roughly 40% of Australia's degraded land would be best treated by revegetation and conserving existing areas of natural vegetation. About 10-20% (included in the 40%) needed to be reafforested.

Since then about 500 million trees have been planted under the 1 billion trees replanting program. But, according to the Australian Nature Conservation Agency, some 2 billion trees have been "harvested or removed" - i.e. cut down, bulldozed into heaps, burnt, or minced for export to Japan. - since the planting program commenced.

ANCA figures show that 1.3 million hectares were cleared in NSW between 1979 and 1980. The dust which enveloped Sydney on May 25th was blown off cleared and over-grazed western lands. There is no surer recipe for desertification in Australia, with its arid climate and thin soils, than the destruction of vegetative cover.

Logging reduces wild life habitat and

clear felling virtually destroys it. Plantations remain as saplings for years, affording subsistence to only a very limited range of wildlife. Allen E. Greer, Principal Research Scientist of the Australian Museum writes (*S.M.H. 1/7/94*):

Most of the tree-clearing means the destruction of entire local habitats, whereas most of the tree-planting is restoring only one small component of those lost habitats (the trees). There is no assurance that the thousands of animals and other plants that help make up the destroyed habitats will ever be replaced. Planting trees may give the impression of restoring "habitat", but it probably does relatively little to compensate the national estate for the loss of complete, intact habitats which themselves are the basis of healthy ecosystems. It is a classic case of not seeing the habitat for the trees.

## MURKY SKIES

ON Wednesday May 25th a severe windstorm lifted several millions of tons of surface soil, rich in soil nutrients, from South Australia and inland NSW, carried it to the coast and beyond to the sea, and probably even to New Zealand. Visibility in Sydney was restricted to some 5 kilometres.

On Saturday the 28th there was an outbreak of prescribed bush fires in the bushland not burnt in the January fires. The destruction of native flora further reduced the habitat and food supply of surviving native fauna. The smoke combined with water particles and, together with the pollution from motor vehicle exhausts, again created a smog which extended beyond Katoomba and restricted visibility in Sydney to a few kilometres.

Both these disasters were man made. The dust storm was the result of land clearing, the burning of stubble, cultivation in preparation for sowing of wheat and soil exposure through grazing during the drought. The bush fires were, like most fires, deliberately lit. Their purpose was the protection of property.

The degradation of bushland caused by frequent burning is not appreciable to those who have not known the bush for long. Dorothy Butler, a bushwalker with over 70 years of experience, writes:

"In suburban Sydney 70 or 80 years ago when I was a young child the surrounding bush was a wonderful way of life. Splinter-pullers clung to the wattle bark. Among the gum blossoms beetles buzzed - shining Kingies, duller Queenies, Washerwomen, Cowboys with a black stripe down their side. Every clearing had its sugar ants and meat ants with their gravel nests. There was no lack of green ants and bull-ants to beware of and into the house came the busy busy little black ants. Warm nights brought out the soft summer moths, and flying ants to mate and drop their wings in drifts. Every pond had its tadpoles, frogs and water boatmen oaring around on their backs, and around the margins were bees and wasps and darting dragonflies.

Summer brought the locusts - Green Grocers, Yellow Mundies, Cherry Noses, Black Princes - droning deafeningly through pulsating air; if they stopped

suddenly it was as though Life had been snapp'd in the middle. It was a common sight in the evening sky to see wavering flights of black swans and arrow flights of ducks. Lured by the scent of figs, flying foxes flopped out of the night sky. Erratic fluttering signalled the passing of bats with their pin-point squeaks audible to a child's ear.

There was hardly a tree that didn't have its birds' nests - sparrows, doves, magpies, pee-wees, crows. On the suburban lawns little finches and blue wrens danced on delicate legs. When we went crab-catching in the mangroves bordering Homebush Bay the ground larks' far-up song could always be heard dropping from the sky as the parent bird fluttered above its invisible nest. School children kept a cardboard shoe box in which they would lay out 'blown' birds' eggs, and vied with each other as to who had the greatest variety. Most envied was the owner of a magpie's egg - it was a brave child who could face the fiercely pecking bird when attempting to rifle its nest. In the 1920's the Gould League of Bird Lovers, seeing the writing on the wall, was doing its best to discourage the collecting of birds' eggs.

My memories of the Blue Mountains in the 20's are of great green forests that seemed to go on forever, watered by clear unsilted streams and waterfalls dropping white spray onto rocks clothed in moss and orchids. Great fallen trees, their trunks bright with fungoid treasures, lay rotting on the hill slopes, their hollow boles large enough for a child to sleep in, or shelter in the rain. Nestling close, bright green ferns and wild violets grew luxuriously in their rotting compost, undisturbed for a half century.

What have the pesticides and burning done to this once rich profusion of life? Will our children and grandchildren see the same clean unspoiled bushland that we of the older generation took for granted and thought would last for ever?"

## MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

As the Chairman's report describes, the Foundation has been extremely active over the past year. As our experience proves, it takes years of hard campaigning to preserve even a single wilderness remnant from the depredations of development interests. Even when accorded national park status, wilderness is subjected to degrading or destructive pressures from off-road vehicle, horse riding, helicopter and other interests.

As the Treasurer's report shows, we received generous support from our members and supporters during 1993 and support has been even better this year. This support, together with investment income, has enabled us to employ our Director, who has greatly increased media coverage, and two part time employees. These are Andrew Cox, who as conservation secretary of the Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs, is bringing member clubs into our orbit, and Derek Mackrell, who is bringing us into the 1990s by putting our Red Index onto a computer network. We aim not only to retain the services of our part time employees, but to extend their days of work, or, given enough support, hopefully, to make them full time workers. At the same time the contribution of voluntary workers, upon whom the Foundation was, until recent years, entirely dependent, has been not only retained, but increased.

We believe the Foundation is well organised. Its operations are computerised. It has the benefit of much expert publicity, advice and assistance, mostly voluntary, from Envirobook, its landlord, and the use of the library and facilities of the Total Environment Centre, with which it liaises closely. Having received a good deal of media publicity in the past few months, we believe it is an opportune time to canvass new members. With this in view we have brought out a new edition of "The Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd. - an Introduction," which we will distribute to likely members. If you know of any such, we will be pleased to send you a copy to give them, or mail them one at your request. We believe each of our members would know at least one potential new member.

**MEETING DATES**  
**Meetings will be held on**  
**August 11th and 25th**  
**and September 8th and**  
**22nd**

# THE COLONG BULLETIN

SENDER THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS

The Gloucester Walk  
88 Cumberland St.,  
SYDNEY NSW 2000



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# SUPPORT THE COLONG FOUNDATION

## BULLETIN SUBSCRIPTION

Membership of The Colong Foundation for Wilderness covers Bulletin subscription fee.

Non-members of the Foundation may subscribe to the Bulletin for a fee of \$10.00 (covers all issues of the Bulletin to 31/12/94).

### A BEQUEST

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..'*

## 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, The Gloucester Walk, 88 Cumberland St, Sydney 2000



The Treasurer  
Colong Foundation For Wilderness Ltd.,  
The Gloucester Walk, 88 Cumberland 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)
- Life Membership (\$500)
- Membership renewal (\$20)
- Colong Bulletin Subscription to 31/12/94 (\$10.00) (Non-members only)
- Tax deductible donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the Colong Wilderness Fund (cheques to be made payable to the Fund).

NAME (MR, MS, MRS, MISS) \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

POSTCODE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNED \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby apply for membership of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd.

I am nominated by \_\_\_\_\_ and seconded by \_\_\_\_\_

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 \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

POSTCODE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

The Colong Foundation originated as the Colong Committee, which was appointed in 1968 by a meeting of conservation societies to prevent the quarrying of Colong Caves. Shortly afterwards the Committee extended its objective to cover the saving of the Boyd Plateau from becoming the site of a 15,000 acre pine plantation. Both objectives had been achieved by 1975, when three new objectives were adopted. The first of these was the creation of a Border Ranges National Park, an objective which escalated to become the rainforest campaign. The other objectives were the creation of a Greater Blue Mountains National Park and a Kakadu National Park. The rainforest parks and Kakadu are now World Heritage areas, the Greater Blue Mountains Park is in being in fact, though not in name, and the Foundation is campaigning for World Heritage listing for the Blue Mountains and the extension of the park system to include the "Gardens of Stone". The Foundation's proposal for a Wilderness Act was accepted in 1987. It has been supplemented by the Red Index of Wilderness, now being updated and extended to other states. A more detailed history of the Foundation is available in its introductory brochure.