



# THE COLONG BULLETIN

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THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS LTD

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*I am convinced about the ecological problems, not only for NSW and which the Sydney basin has experienced, but which the entire continent is experiencing. There is a limit on the population growth that this continent, fragile and battered as it has been over the last 200 years can take. That has got to figure in the assessment of immigration intake from year to year.*

Bob Carr 23/5/95



Please note our new  
telephone number:  
**02 241 2702**

## Chairman's Annual Report

**T**he outlook for wilderness in the coming year is much brighter than it has been in the past year. Arguably, 1994 was perhaps the worst year for wilderness in the Colong Foundation's 27 year history. It was our 'annis horribilis'. The year started with a massive bushfire crisis and some extraordinary emotional outbursts from a small group of back benchers who are utterly opposed to wilderness. As the year wore on it became clear that all was not well at the federal sphere of government as the Keating government rejected most of the 1300 forest areas which were being considered for their high conservation values, issuing instead licences authorising woodchips. It was a devastating attack on

old growth forests and wilderness throughout Australia.

One bright aspect of 1994 was the determination of the Foundation to change the political outlook in the face of extreme adversity. Experience has taught us many times in the past that it is possible to turn events around through persistent campaigning backed by painstaking research. In answer to our critics we responded to the Bushfire Inquiry and the humbug of Messrs Cochran, Schultz, et alia, who opposed Premier Fahey's so-called Christmas present of promising to declare 280,000 ha of wilderness. Unfortunately for John Fahey, he decided to

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### THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS

The Gloucester Walk, 88 Cumberland St., Sydney. Phone (02) 241 2702 Fax (02) 241 1289

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

DIRECTORS: Pat Thompson, L.C.P. (Chairman); Peter Maslen, B.Sc.(Eng), B.Sc.(Botany) (Vice-Chairman); Milo Dunphy, A.M., A.S.T.C. (Vice-Chairman); Alex Colley, O.A.M., B.Ec., H.D.A. (Hon. Secretary); Albert Renshaw (Hon. Treasurer); Tim Cadman B.A. (Hons), M.A. (Cantab.); Phil Millard, M.B., F.R.C.S.; Keith Muir, B. Nat. Res. (Hons); Peter Princeas, B.A., LL.B.; Jim Somerville, A.M., A.A.S.A.

DIRECTOR: Keith Muir

HON. PHOTOGRAPHER: Henry Gold

HON. AUDITOR: Arthur Andersen & Co.

## Nationals Conservation Record

*Queensland is the only state where the National Party has been in power. Tom Burns, Deputy Premier, has listed their anti-conservation record as: Fighting the plan to World-Heritage list the wet tropics of north Queensland, building the Cape Tribulation to Bloomfield road, subdividing the Daintree rainforest, wanting to drill for oil on the Great Barrier Reef and planning to sell Lindeman Island overseas.*

▲ ...continued from previous page

listen to their humbug and he failed to honour his promise. In the end he was to pay dearly for his failure.

The federal government's actions of December 1994 remain on account. In the end only 265 of Senator Faulkner's 1300 forest coups have been protected. Since that date the Keating Government has promised a better deal for all with the signing of yet another National Forest Policy Statement in March 1995. Under its terms Regional Forest Agreements are designed to guarantee a sustainable resource to the timber industry and at the same time protect Australia's remaining forest diversity through a comprehensive, adequate and representative (CAR) reserve system. On their past performance, the public and the environment movement remain sceptical. Why should the March 1995 National Forest Policy Statement prove to be any more successful than its predecessor of December 1992!

My optimism for 1995 has been generated by the return of Labor to the treasury benches in the NSW State Parliament. The Colong Foundation campaigned vigorously for wilderness in the recent state election. An election poster designed and organised by the Foundation put clearly the position on wilderness programs being offered by the major political parties including those of the Democrats and the Greens. Our director, Keith Muir, worked tirelessly in marginal electorates and the election result proved yet again that political parties which ignore or downplay wilderness and nature conservation objectives do so

at their own peril.

The Carr Government must now live up to its promises. Only 0.8 per cent of NSW is declared presently as wilderness. The Carr Government has promised to raise this figure to a little under 2 per cent of the State during its first year in office. 90 per cent of this land is currently inside the NPWS Estate and will lead to about 38 per cent of our parks being declared wilderness. The Carr Government has also promised to bring to fruition the Colong Foundation's long standing Blue Mountains World Heritage nomination. It is an encouraging program being promised by Labor and one which will have the Colong Foundation's support.

The Foundation does however have its concerns on how the new Government will address the question of a proposed raising of Warragamba Dam wall by 23 metres for the purpose of dam safety and flood mitigation. This is far from being a satisfactory option. Public safety aspects of the existing dam can be addressed by a less expensive and equally satisfactory spillway option. The question of down stream flood mitigation requires a better ecological solution than one that simply alters flows which will affect periodic inundations of wetlands and will allow further urban development with this already stressed catchment. As the EIS on the raising of Warragamba Dam wall appears later this month the challenge will be set to defend over 50 square kilometres of our Blue Mountains wilderness from the threat of periodic flooding including much of the lower Kowmung itself.

**Patrick Thompson,  
22 June 1995.**

## Donations

We gratefully acknowledge donations from the following supporters during the half year ended June 30th. Their generous support has financed an outstandingly successful six months.

Mr. & Mrs. C. Austin, Australian Geographic, C.G. Benjamin, J.S. Bentley, J.W. Blanche, T. Bonahedy, G. Boulton, M. Bouman, Mr. and Mrs. A.P. Bowe, C.O. Boyd, P.E. Boyd, J.W. Brown, D. Butler, E. Cadzow, B. Chick OAM, R.O. Chalmers E.A. Chapman-Wade, Coast and Mountain Walkers, A. G. Colley, Dr. P. J. Conaghan, Dr. Peter Cook, A. Coote, A. Correy, D.M.R. Coward Snr., G. Cox, S. Dean, A.E. Dixon, R. Doyle, Dr. R.A. Duncan, M. Ellwood, Envirobook, M. Esson, C.L. Ferguson, P. Figgis, M.F. Flatteley, D.C. Fry, H. Gold, J. Greening, S. Hajinakitas, L.A.J. Hamill, P.B. Haydon, M. Hillsmith, J. Holly, M.J. Holmes, J. Howell, D. Johnson, M.M. Johnson, L. Jones, G.F. Kallir, A. J. Keen, H.A. Kilby, J. Lawler, Mr. K. and Mrs. J. Lawson, Dr. G.W. Lawrence, Dr. A.K. Lethlean, D. Lockwood, C. Lubbers, P. Maslen, J. Mayer, Dr. W. Muir, M. Nordon, J. O'Reilly, J.B. Palmer, M. Plumridge, J.H. Pratt, J.L. Rentoul, R. Rickert, M. Rodd, J. Scarsbrook, I. Sefton, A. Shilling, J. Simons, M. Simpson, J. Somerville, Dr. S. Stevens, B. Stow, R. Toop, J.J. Veevers, M. Wardrop, H. Whaite, M.J. White, Wild Magazine.

# Geological Evolution of the Blue Mountains

by Alex Colley

Geoff Mosley, in his book *Blue Mountains for World Heritage*, ascribes great geological significance to the age of the mountains (1). The gorges of the mountains, he writes, were already old six million years ago when the Colorado river was just beginning to cut its 1.5 kilometre deep gorge. The National Herbarium study describes the most distinctive feature of the Sydney plateaus as their long and significant record of landform evolution, which is unmatched in any other World Heritage properties.

The Blue Mountains are part of the Sydney Basin, a sequence of predominantly sedimentary rocks several thousand metres in thickness. Sedimentary rocks are the repositories of the erosion of uplands, in the Basin's case from mountain ranges that once existed to the north west, west and later the south east. In Permian times, over 200 million years ago, it was occupied by fresh water lakes and swamps, in which the coal measures were formed. At other times it was under the sea. How then did the depositional Basin become uplifted to form a mountain range, once considerably higher than the peneplain that is now the upland surface of the Blue Mountains? Regional variations in heat flow, due to upswelling magma, can cause crustal undulations. These result in the type of mountain range now seen partly preserved in the Blue Mountains, and they also create very large rifts. The precise timing of the undulations which lifted the region of the Blue Mountains is not known with certainty, but Geoff Mosley suggested that it was some time between 15 and 90 million years ago.

C.D. Ollier of the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, ANU, and C.F. Pain, of the Australian Geological Survey Organisation indicate that the event was significantly older (2). They have advanced a well supported explanation of why the Blue Mountains have remained in place (though eroded down)

while areas to the east and west have undergone considerable change. They propose that the region of the Blue Mountains and the high country down through into Victoria were once part of a major land surface that fell in elevation westward and northward from an 'undulation' termed the Tasman Divide. They consider that the situation existed during the Cretaceous period, over 130 million years ago, since there is strong evidence that all the drainage at this time was northwestward to the Eromanga Basin in north western NSW and south western Queensland. Thus many of the rivers, such as the Shoalhaven, the Deua and the Wollindilly once flowed northward.

Frank Kraft postulated that the Wollindilly once flowed through what is now the valley of the Cox through Piper's Flat to the north. A remnant of a once major river, the headwaters of which have been cut off, is the present Picton Lakes (see photograph in *Blue Mountains for World Heritage*). Uplift between the Eromanga-Surat and Murray basins diverted these streams to their present courses, whereas to the east of the Blue Mountains region there was much more dramatic change. What was once high land underwent downwarping along the margin of the deep ocean-filled rift (now up to 5,500 metres deep in some places) that evolved during the progressive separation of Meganisia, comprising Australia, New Guinea and New Caledonia, from Gondwana (as described, in biological terms, by Dr. Tim Flannery in *The Future Eaters*). The downwarping captured the headwaters of some of the northwestward flowing rivers, such that they became vigorous eastward flowing systems. The sequence of geological evolution is depicted in the accompanying diagram.

Diagram D clearly depicts the thesis that, while to the east and west land surfaces have sunk, the Blue Mountains have remained in place, subject only to the ever active process of erosion, which because of the restricted catchment, has been very slow. The authors suggest that, though there has been much emphasis in

the literature on the supposed uplift, there has been neglect of the equally important or even more important down-warping. They conclude that:

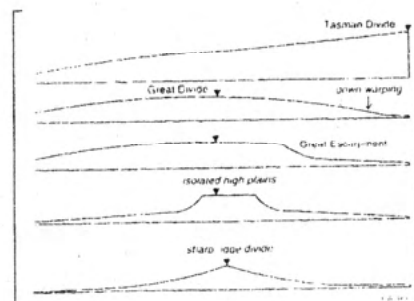
*There has been considerable evidence to suggest that the highland axes have a very long life that began when they were part of the paleoplain formed before Australia separated from the rest of Gondwanaland, and that the most important tectonic feature is the sagging of the basins that flank the divides. Down-warping of the basins formed the main divides, reversed rivers, and initiated erosion that led to formation of the Great Escarpment and other features, such as the Victorian high plains.*

*Uplift and down-warping are, of course, relative terms, but the evidence of major rivers, which can be interpreted despite eustatic changes, shows that subsidence has been a major tectonic feature. Instead of asking 'what caused the uplift of the highlands?' we should ask 'what caused the subsidence of the basins?'*

(1) See chapter 2 -- Geology and Land Forms, Origin of the Scenery.

(2) C.D. Ollier and C.F. Pain, 'Landscape evolution and Tectonics in southeastern Australia', *AGSO Journal of Australian Geology and Geophysics*, 15(3) 335-345.

(With thanks to Professor Brian Marshall for bringing Ollier and Pain's thesis to my attention and editing my amateur review - A.G.C.)



5. Evolution of the Great Divide of southeast Australia. tial paleoplain sloping down from the Tasman Divide. wn-warp of paleoplain to coast, forming an initial C—Formation and retreat of the Great Escarpment the coast. Much of the Great Divide is in this stage. treat of slopes from the coast and inland reduces the plain to isolated High Plains, common on the Victoria . E—Continued retreat of the escarpment of the inland consumes the High Plains and produces a sharp ridge as along much of the Victoria Divide.



# The Delineation Of Wilderness

The Australian Heritage Commission has completed a National Wilderness Inventory, which Senator Faulkner says has received international acclaim for charting the wilderness quality of an entire continent. The Commonwealth Government is to be congratulated for recognising the national significance of wilderness, a concept which, not long ago, was embraced by only a handful of conservationists.

Wilderness value is depicted on a series of maps in which wilderness value is rated from high to low, high value being shown in dark colours and lesser values in lighter shades grading down to white, where there is no wilderness value. Wilderness areas were rated on the basis of their remoteness from settlement, remoteness from access, apparent naturalness and bio-physical naturalness. Remoteness from settlement, in the age of planes, helicopters cars and trains, no longer exists. There are few areas in Australia which cannot be reached by air within an hour or less from the nearest settlement and most can be reached by car in a few hours. Since all settlement is accessible, remoteness from access means the same as remoteness from settlement, unless it means vehicular access within the wilderness area, which would be as *non sequiter*, since vehicular access is precluded from wilderness.

'Apparent naturalness' could not be assessed without site surveys of all the areas depicted as having wilderness value, a project beyond the resources of the Heritage Commission. The assessment of 'bio-physical' naturalness too depends on detailed site inspection.

It is not surprising that, applying the above criteria through the study of aerial and satellite photography and maps, most of the high value wilderness shown on the maps was desert. The inventory has nevertheless indicated the wilderness potential of many seldom visited northern and inland areas.

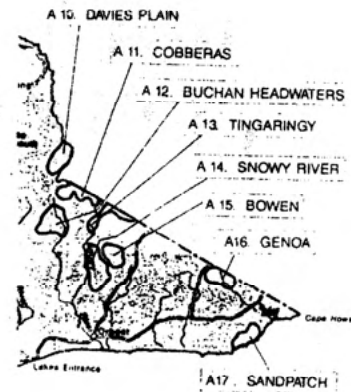
The Inventory does not delineate the areas worthy of reservation. It is obvious that if only the small patches of high wilderness value other than deserts are

preserved the recognised south eastern Australian wilderness areas would be greatly reduced. The high value areas are too small to make viable areas for preservation. It therefore becomes necessary to add to them areas of lower value which have been determined according to the four Inventory criteria. The determination of suitable additions would require large scale detailed site inspection. Apparent and bio-physical naturalness is a matter of individual perception and democracy requires its determination by public opinion rather than bureaucracy.

The results of the Preece and Leslie survey of wilderness in Victoria, which used the National Inventory criteria, illustrates the shortcoming of confining wilderness to the Inventory high value areas. Large desert areas in the west were recommended but only small and fragmented areas included in the east.

The Inventory shows a considerable area of eastern NSW with wilderness value, though only small portions of many recognised areas are shown as having high value and others, such as Nadgee and Nattai, are downgraded. Most of the country between the Dividing Range and the Western Division is colourless, a realistic assessment since it has been cleared, farmed and grazed. Most of the Western Division is shown as having wilderness value, some of it in the high category. Since most of the Western Division consists of grazing properties, while the flora has been extensively modified and nearly all the smaller ground fauna destroyed, it is difficult to reconcile this assessment with the criteria of remoteness from settlement, remoteness from access, apparent naturalness and bio-physical naturalness. The colouration of the Western Division is the same as that of many of the recognised eastern areas and about half the state is shown as having some wilderness value.

NSW has adopted a very different approach to wilderness definition and determination. Under the Wilderness Act, wilderness is defined as 'an area which together with its plant and animal communities is in a state that has not been



The Fragmentation of Wilderness

substantially modified by humans or is capable of being restored to such a state.' It must be 'of sufficient size to make its maintenance in such a state possible.' More importantly, any member of the public can nominate a wilderness area. This means that wilderness delineation is initiated from the grass roots up, rather than from the bureaucracy down. It has proved a very effective procedure. The wilderness areas of the state have been clearly recognised by bushwalkers and other nature lovers for many years. Most of them are described in Prineas and Gold's book *Wild Places*, published in 1983 and the Foundation's Red Index has built upon this knowledge. The criteria of remoteness and accessibility have been ignored in the NSW definition, a realistic approach in view of the fact that two of the State's largest wilderness areas commence just beyond the outskirts of Sydney and nearly all the rest can be reached in a few hours driving time.

Perhaps the main value of the Wilderness Inventory is that it depicts how little high value wilderness remains within a short distance of the main centres of

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## Meeting Dates

Meetings will be held  
on August 3rd, 17th  
and 31st and September  
14th and 28th

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population. This means that if the Wilderness Act's purpose of 'providing opportunities for solitude and appropriate self reliant recreation' is to be fully realised it is important that areas easily accessible from the main centres of population which have high wilderness quality, or can be restored, should be preserved. The significance of the Red Index is that it records the public perception of natural and scenic areas appropriate for reservation for the purposes both of the preservation of flora and fauna and the provision of opportunities for solitude and appropriate self reliant recreation.

## Treasurer's Report

**Income and Expenditure  
1994-95, see page 10**

Members will be pleased to see that in 1994 our income (as in previous years), has more than covered our expenditure, although this year our surplus is considerably lower than that in previous years. This is primarily because of our increased spending on wages – most of which has gone into improving the information on our Wilderness Red Index, and doing our best to make it known and accessible to government and non-government organisations, and individuals, throughout Australia.

A special 'Thankyou!' goes once more to all those members who have supported the Foundation through the years with their continued membership and generous donations – we've needed you in the past and will continue to need you in the future.

**Albert Renshaw,  
Hon. Treasurer.**

## Meeting the Carr Government

The Executive Director of the Colong Foundation recently enjoyed a vigorous wilderness walk down the Kowmung River with the new Premier, the Hon Bob Carr, and Dr Tim Flannery of the Australian Museum and Mr Andrew Cox from the Kowmung Committee. Mr Carr was keen to discuss his concerns regarding population with Dr Flannery and the possibility of a seminar on the issue, while his affection for his favourite river was renewed.

The lower Kowmung River was its wonderful self, running strongly after late autumn rains. Messrs Carr, Cox and Muir braved its cold, clear depths for an invigorating swim. The Premier's enthusiasm for wilderness conservation has if anything grown over

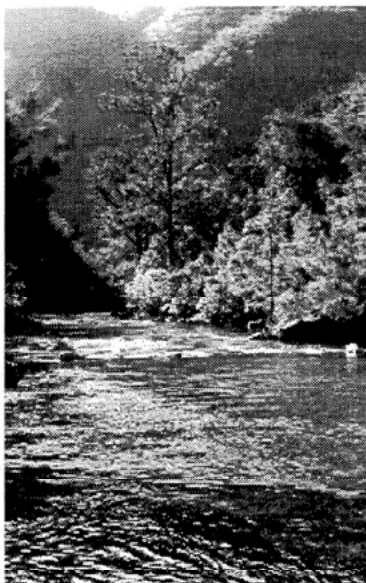


*Bob Carr on the Kowmung River*

the years, and the Foundation anticipates that NSW Government will have move energetically to keep up with Mr Carr.

A deputation from the Colong Foundation also met with the new Minister for the Environment, the Hon Pam Allan last month to discuss the Government's wilderness policy and the Blue Mountains World Heritage proposal. It was an encouraging meeting. Ms Allan's views on these matters were largely in accord with those of the Foundation, including our concerns about the misuse of the National Wilderness Inventory data.

The Carr Government is progressing with its wilderness policy (see Labor's Wilderness Moratorium), and is also preparing a funding submission for the Federal Government that will delineate and develop management plans for the world heritage proposal. A more complete change of the political climate on wilderness conservation than that experienced over the last few months would be hard to imagine.



*The lower Kowmung Gorge*



# Labor's Wilderness Moratorium

**T**he Colong Foundation is delighted with the progress made by the Carr Labor Government on its wilderness policy. On Tuesday 23 May, Mr Kim Yeadon, Minister for Land and Water Conservation addressed the House. Hansard records 9 interruptions to his speech from members, mostly National Party members, dedicated to trading the old growth forests for cash. Mr Yeadon reported that:

"We have begun implementing our policy. Firstly, we have ceased logging in all areas of identified wilderness in New South Wales. Currently there is no logging in identified wilderness in New South Wales, and that will remain the case in the future. That is an election promise fulfilled."

Mr Yeadon went on to say that

"On 11 May we stopped logging within the Deua wilderness, in the Dampier State Forest in the State's south-east. Deua includes catchment areas for Georges Creek and Diamond Creek.

This ban will end the destruction of identified wilderness areas that was sanctioned by the previous Government. The Government has therefore honoured its commitment in relation to wilderness areas. It has also protected areas of old-growth forest which were scheduled for logging under the previous Government. The Government is currently working on a major rescheduling strategy to shift logging out of old-growth forests which will be announced in a matter of weeks."

Mr Yeadon also reported the miraculous transformation of Mr Col Dorber, the Executive Director of the New South Wales Forest Product Association — a National Party member. Mr Yeadon quoted Dorber as follows:

"The fierce criticisms being made in recent days by Opposition politicians and the National Forest Protection Society ... is doing nothing to help our ... attempts to work with the new Government to bring about the best result for the native forest industry." (Mr Dorber wants to get back in the game perhaps?)

These are exciting words coming from

a Minister responsible for forests. The excitement of placing the old growth forests of Stewarts Brook and the Styx River were somewhat dampened by the decision to continue logging in Glenbog.

Mr Yeadon announced that he had inspected all these forests and found that the assessment by him and government agencies "clearly indicated that that particular compartment was not old-growth forest".

The Colong Foundation is not sure to which compartment in the Glenbog State Forest the minister was referring. The Foundation, however, does know that the Department of Planning and State Forests visited certain compartments in Glenbog where all parties agreed there was old-growth forest. Foresters on this particular inspection were particularly impressed by the size of the Blanket Bush understorey. The foresters mentioned that they had never seen such big specimens of blanket bush.

The Foundation is sure that the Minister did not see these areas of Glenbog. The decision to log Glenbog indicates some relatively small sections of old-growth may be sacrificed either because

a key decision maker does not see it or because it was not identified.

The problem of old-growth identification is made more difficult on the coast and foothills than it is on the eastern escarpment of the Great Dividing Range. This is because coastal old-growth is very fragmented due to the longer and more intense forestry activities in these areas.

It is understandable that the Government seeks to protect the big bits of old-growth adjoining national parks inside identified wilderness first. The much smaller fragments must be dealt with by a more careful assessment as these pieces may be the only examples of a particular forest community left.

The Carr Labor Government will need all the help it can get from the voluntary conservation movement to assist it in successfully implementing its policy. There is no value at this early stage in seeking to blame the Government or its officers for any mistakes. Rather it is necessary to provide clear, concise advice on issues to retain the Government's confidence in the environment movement.

## Tree Clearing Up 700 Per Cent In Queensland

*In Queensland more trees are presently being felled than in the other states combined. Despite Landcare and other much publicised programs aimed at encouraging native tree planting, bushland is being razed in Queensland at a rapidly growing rate. According to previously unpublished data compiled by the state Lands Department, the government last year issued 786 permits to clear a total of 1,079,927 hectares of leasehold land....It would appear the rate of clearing native forests and woodlands has increased by about 700% in five years, despite one of the state's worst droughts.*

**Greg Roberts in The (Sydney) Bulletin 9/5/95**



# Lessons for future eaters

by Keith Muir

Alex Colley reviewed Dr Tim Flannery's book — *The Future Eaters* in Bulletin 149. The book's key theme is that the future of the human race will depend on adaptation, as with every other species. Most of the focus of this exciting new book has been upon human impact on native fauna.

Toward the end of the book, Dr Flannery suggests some adaptations that Australian society could make to survive in the face of its diminishing resource base. These thoughts require more critical examination.

Like other large, longer living mammals, humans can't adapt genetically very quickly to the changing environmental conditions because our breeding cycle operates at speed too slow to bring about the desired changes within the time frame of ecological change.

Humans, however, have evolved socially to change the environment to suit. But when the biological limits are reached, food resources and human populations diminish. Human history and prehistory demonstrates that societies are virtually incapable of limiting use of commonly held low yielding natural resources to a sustained level, be it consumption of micas in New Zealand by Maoris, or blue fin tuna or blue swimmer crabs by latter day Australians.

Dr Flannery solution to loss of natural resources is to retain maximum flexibility and diversification of use of all the available resources. Setting aside national parks that limit exploitation of resources of future generations is opposed. He even suggests rainforests should be logged sustainably.

There is one major problem with this approach — economics.

Rainforests have never been logged sustainably in Australia because the sustainable harvest rotation cycle would be 300 years or more. Economic forces re-

quire continuous logging that is at odds with sustained yield practices. Similarly, continued whaling was found to be impossible because competing whaling interests found it more economic to keep whaling than to collectively abstain for a future benefit. The only workable solution found to protect these relatively slow yielding natural resources was to stop using them.

National Parks have sadly been declared only over the most economically useless and unproductive parts of Australia. The tragedy of poor quality lands held in common by society is that exploitative use leads to environmental degradation. Use of poor quality or slow yielding natural resources invariably results in land abuse due to economic realities.

Economics places considerable restriction on how natural resources are used. National parks could be logged but mostly for low quality wood fibre for paper. Such low value resources must be harvested intensely, leading to environmental degradation. There are few sawlogs in national parks which make them unsuited for selective logging. Those few areas set aside with some saw logs, Washpool and the Border Ranges, are the only protected areas with good populations of arboreal mammal fauna. Economically viable logging of them will remove these habitats and their fauna.

## The burning issue

Dr Flannery recognises the impact of fire on soil fertility and erosion but suggests regular burning as one means to prevent disastrous fires and to replace the loss of large herbivores which once may have reduced flammable vegetation to safer levels. As an alternative, Dr Flannery also suggests that the bushland could be managed to encourage vegetation of the less fire-prone Australia of pre-Aboriginal times that supported the richest biota.

Whilst there may be a good argument to preventing loss of very extensive wild-

life by patch burning in the semi-arid parts of Australia, the same is not the case for the well watered areas.

Dr John Benson senior plant ecologist with the Botanic Gardens is definite that "grassland and savanna vegetation types may have been regularly burnt by Aborigines but most forests and woodlands of Australia would not have been subjected to frequent (less than ten year) burns. In fact there would not have been the fuel or human resources to burn them so regularly". Most woody plants around Sydney, he says need fire intervals of more than ten years for regeneration and many species require intense fires to break dormancy in seeds. On the North Coast of NSW, the recovery periods for blackbutt forest is 300 years, for brushbox 300-400 years and rainforest more than 1,000 years.

Fire use around Sydney and the Illawarra, where Aborigines utilised the food resources of rock platforms, estuaries and terrestrial habitats, was much greater because these areas were more closely settled, hence the resultant vegetation was more sparse than the forested hinterland.

There is another piece of evidence that refutes Dr Flannery's claims — the Macdonald River once afforded access to St Albans for large ships to carry produce to Sydney. Now the very shallow river now flows over a sheet of sand. Frequent burning and subsequent soil erosion of its wilderness catchment is the main change in land management in the last 200 years.

The examples do not mean that the Colong Foundation is opposed to reducing the strategic fuel reduction around settlement, but rather that many people have erroneously generalised the fire stick farming argument.

Some parts of Australia with fewer wildlife resources had lower Aboriginal populations. Others would not burn so

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readily and fires were probably isolated or infrequent wildfire.

A review of *the Future Eaters* by the Colong Foundation would not be complete without a critical examination of Dr Flannery's views on wilderness. He is correct to claim that one of the most problematic of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's reserve categories is the wilderness area.

His claim that the concept of *terra nullis* is alive and well in the minds of those who promote such a concept as wilderness is a bit unfair. Wilderness definitions should, but do not refer to lands being free of influence of modern technology and its works. Wilderness protection seeks to maintain the natural resources of an area in a state that resembles the way in which an area were managed by Aboriginal people for the last 60,000 years, with one proviso — that the needs to protect the fragile biodiversity of the area is paramount.

The great irony of the opposition to wilderness protection by some Aboriginal leaders is that such a view risks blotting out all vestiges of pre-European land management in national parks. If wilderness is lost in national parks then there will soon be nowhere free from road access and the influences of technology based European culture.

#### Population stabilisation

Whilst there is little chance of curbing consumerism in the short term, Dr Flannery concludes that future eaters residing in Australia can limit population through immigration policy. It is likely that natural increase will then stabilise in a few years.

Economic growth, however, will be reversed when key resources become exhausted. Consumption will then decline. Provided there aren't too many of us, there may be an opportunity to adjust to a more humble lifestyle. Whether national parks are mined, grazed and logged is basically irrelevant to this issue. National parks are not the cornucopia of unexploited resources that can affect the economic well being of future Australians, as claimed by so many National Party politicians.

#### A million hectares of wilderness

The Government's decision to declare a million hectares of wilderness is based on the advice it received from the Colong Foundation on areas which could be declared without loss of employment, though there may be some adjustments to boundaries.

# Saving the Rivers and the Parks

It has been reported that the Warragamba Dam might not withstand an abnormal flood of the type which might perhaps occur on average once in 100 years. If so there would be a disastrous inundation of most of the Cumberland plain. There can be no question that the dam should be strengthened to obviate this risk and that a spillway should be constructed to control the dam level. A flood equivalent to the worst recorded, that of 1867, would affect 10,000 residences.

Sydney Water has stated that its proposal to raise the dam wall by 23 metres is purely for flood prevention. The additional height, it is claimed, would allow the release of water to be phased over a period of a week or more, providing a safeguard against the kind of flood which might occur once in 1500 years. The cost of the proposal is estimated at \$250 million, without allowance for an indefinite period of interest payments.

Not only would the cost of raising the dam have to be met, but the dam wall would require a great deal of strengthening to safely contain the increased depth of water.

The risks of disastrous flooding if storage capacity remains at the present level are small. The flow of water from the catchment is monitored and adequate warning could be given. Many NSW towns are situated on flood plains. Few enjoy the flood mitigation benefit of a large dam. Providing the warning was heeded no lives need be lost. Structural damage to property would not be heavy, though there would be considerable loss of crops and household contents left in place. There is no reason why this should not be insurable like most other risks. There can be little doubt that the outlay on insurance would be much less than that of raising the dam.

It may therefore be inferred that the reason for raising the dam wall is not the

safety of those on the flood plain nor the cost of insurance, but the additional water storage which would be required if population continued to increase. Previous governments saw no end to population growth, which was regarded as a measure of progress. Mr. David Hay, ex Minister for Local Government, forecast a doubling of population to 7.2 million by 2060 and there have been no warnings from essential service departments or planners on the environmental effect of population pressure. There is nowhere in the Sydney region other than the lower Hawkesbury-Nepean valley for the accommodation of such a population, hence the dam raising plan.

The Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Trust accepts the necessity for housing Sydney's ever growing population on the flood plain. The June Newsletter of the Trust describes this necessity as follows:

*Being located on the western fringe of Sydney, the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley has always been important in Sydney's growth. There has already been intense development of parts of the catchment and its floodplains. Further growth and expansion of the Sydney Metropolitan area will result in even more significant development. There is concern that this development has often taken place without adequate account of the hazards and risks associated with mainstream flooding. This concern will mount because of the expected pressure to develop further flood susceptible land. Rising values of the limited land resource also encourages its maximum utilisation.*

Increased storage and consumption of water would further reduce river flow, converting the river below the dam to a series of stagnant sewage ponds. As P. Meier, Chairman of the Brooklyn Cham-

▼ continued on page 10...



# Kosciusko's *ABOMINABLE* Snow Cities

In 1980, the Parks Service issued an information sheet identifying the principal planning issue for the Kosciusko National Park as the need to limit development. The NPWS also recognised that restricting overnight accommodation would save up to 95 per cent of the in-park water demand. Even 15 years ago, sewage discharges from the alpine ski resorts into the 'protected' receiving waters were exceeding acceptable levels. Since then, levels of water pollution have become worse with increased visitor numbers as the frigid winter conditions limits effective sewage treatment.

The NPWS position went part way to implementing the Colong Foundation's policy of relocating overnight ski resort accommodation to Jindabyne and Berri-dale and extending the 'Ski Tube' rail link to Perisher.

Our policy protects the natural resources of the park. It enables accommodation to be built more cheaply, enabling the ski fields to be available to lower income earners. Sewage treatment would be more effective and less damaging as most of the sewage pollution would be produced outside alpine areas.

The park management plans are enshrined in legislation. They require the conservation of wildlife and the preservation of all national parks. The rampant resort expansion now being proposed by Kinhill Engineers for an unsatiated development lobby — the Kosciusko Ski Association — should be prevented by these legal requirements.

## **The Master Plan**

An anti-conservation master plan and environmental impact statement is now being prepared "to determine the best way for the (Perisher, Smiggin Holes and Guthega) resorts to develop." It represents the Kosciusko Ski Association's strategy to continue its exploitation push

permitted under the Coalition Government. The Association wants to urbanise Perisher, including a proposal for a major shopping centre.

It is impossible to increase alpine resort accommodation and make the resorts compatible with the natural resources of the park. These accommodation plans are made even more unsympathetic to nature conservation by other proposals to groom Perisher's ski slopes and provide facilities for cross country skiers. Grooming ski slopes is likely to threaten the rare Mountain Pygmy-possum (*Burramys parvus*). The developers, however, have skilfully separated the ski run proposals from the resort development so as to minimise opposition to the project. Once the development is established, the push for more runs over areas such as between the ski resorts will be on through the cross country and downhill ski slope development plans.

The developers want to increase the capacity of existing resorts by 60 per cent to cater for about 55,000 visitors. At a planning workshop in June it was revealed by that the resorts were not currently at capacity and the proposal to increase bed capacity was unnecessary.

The Master Plan will also consider further development beyond 2000. According to the ski industry the role of the resorts is to accommodate growth. They want more beds than the 1000 now being considered. Kinhill Engineers will assist by identifying the nature of future growth and the development of competitive ski resort areas and suggest timing the development stages. Shopping and food facilities are even being proposed for cross country skiers — a ludicrous idea to make more money out of this less expensive activity.

Mr John Arup is working for the Kinhill consultants. He was responsible for

Master Plans for major development proposed at Falls Creek and Mount Hotham. Regarding environmental management, the problem with inadequate water supply will be fixed by building another dam inside the park. Large new water supplies are needed for extra snow-making machines, raising concerns about severe alteration of natural runoff patterns. These machines will be needed by 2070 when Australia may be five degrees warmer and the winter snowfields greatly diminished.

The engineers' public relations newsletter fails to mention the sewage pollution poisoning streams and lakes, the adverse impacts of snow-making, future traffic increases causing wildlife road-kills, or the appalling prospect of sprawling resorts in our only alpine national park.

Instead they are concerned for building colour schemes, the visual appearance and the need to keep a village form so that the new resorts look pretty to the prospective users prepared to hand over fists full of money to enjoy this most expensive form of holiday accommodation.

The newsletter suggests there is the need to improve the ski trail capacity and lifts to ensure long queues do not put the potential skiers off. Transport concerns focus on reducing delays in getting to resort accommodation and car parking. The Ski Association is even demanding multi story car parks for Perisher and Smiggins Hole.

The Master Plan process has been flawed from the outset. The need to protect the environment will not determine the development limits. Rather, 1000 new beds will be installed for a start, and only the physical engineering limits will

▼ continued on next page...

**THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS LIMITED**  
(A company limited by guarantee)

**INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT**

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 1994

| INCOME                                     | 1994          | 1995          |
|--|---------------|---------------|
|  | \$            | \$            |
| Donations                                  |               |               |
| - general                                  | 22,975        | 20,119        |
| Sale of Blue Mountains books and posters   | 1,247         | 234           |
| Book sales                                 | -             | 1,250         |
| Subscriptions to bulletin                  | 243           | 204           |
| Sale of publications, net                  | 2,868         | 668           |
| Sale of Wilderness calendars, net          | 181           | 166           |
| Interest on investments                    | 11,566        | 7,739         |
| Annual membership fees                     | 2,720         | 2,840         |
| Red Index                                  | 855           | 591           |
| Fighting Fund Donation                     | 575           | 602           |
| Wilderness Conference                      | 10            | -             |
| Blue Mountains for World Heritage          | 721           | -             |
|  | <u>43,961</u> | <u>39,903</u> |
| EXPENDITURE                                |               |               |
| Donations                                  | -             | 1,500         |
| Bulletin costs                             | 1,305         | 945           |
| Subscriptions to other conservation groups | 130           | 161           |
| Rent                                       | 2,353         | 281           |
| Computer                                   | -             | 200           |
| Depreciation                               | 1,267         | 614           |
| Stationery                                 | -             | 196           |
| Campaigns                                  |               |               |
| - Secretarial expenses                     | 2,622         | 375           |
| - Bank charges                             | 195           | 115           |
| - Wilderness history book                  | -             | -             |
| - Research officer and other wages         | 20,953        | 1,180         |
| - Publications - Wilderness The Future     | 6,797         | -             |
| - Red Index                                | 812           | -             |
| - Blue Mountains for World Heritage        | 96            | -             |
| Wilderness conference                      | 205           | 617           |
| Other expenses                             | 2,796         | 348           |
|  | <u>36,521</u> | <u>7,822</u>  |
| Net Surplus                                | <u>7,440</u>  | <u>32,081</u> |

▲ ...continued from page 9

be considered.

The Minister for Planning, the Hon Craig Knowles, probably has no idea of the controversy surrounding alpine resorts. According to the engineers he is the unlucky Minister who will determine the proposal that will be released in about November this year. The Minister for the Environment, the Hon Pam Allan, who is more interested in protecting parks will not play a major role. But the Ski Association is not satisfied. Like their counterpart in Victoria they want to excise the resort area from the Kosciusko National Park so unfettered development can continue forever.

▲ ...continued from page 8

ber of Commerce has written: 'The compete damming of the southern catchment and lack of depth has completely reversed the flow patterns in the system. The flood tide is now the dominant flow and is so swift that it is moving sediment upstream and self-destructing its fragile banks. The river and its tributaries are all in danger of becoming stagnant ponds of effluent at low tide. This is happening now. Berowra Creek now breaches at zero low tide past Calna Creek and becomes a series of sewage ponds.' (S. M. H. 24/6/95)

Bob Carr's statement that Sydney was 'bursting at the seams' and that population growth in Sydney was degrading the landscape and pushing the city's infrastructure beyond its limits, holds the promise of a realistic, environmentally oriented policy. He has proposed several measures for putting an end to Sydney's growth. The first is a cut in immigration. The number of people leaving Sydney is roughly equivalent to natural increase. Overall increase is caused by the influx of immigrants. If the Australian Conservation Foundation's policy of reducing immigration to the level of emigration was adopted, this would stabilise Sydney's population. A second solution he has suggested is the dispersal of population to country towns, but this is unlikely to appeal to immigrants and it is evident

that decentralisation to centres such as Bathurst-Orange and Albury-Woodonga has not been successful. Rural Councils nearer at hand, such as Camden, Wollondilly, Gosford, Hawkesbury and Blue Mountains, don't want an influx of residents. He has also suggested that migrants be directed to other states, which, despite the example of Sydney, welcome more population. It would be difficult to insist that immigrants settle in these states and remain there.

Immigration is a Commonwealth responsibility, but it is the states which have to provide infrastructure and jobs for immigrants. Whether or not development and ethnic interests oppose lowering immigration levels, this would be the most effective means of controlling Sydney's population.

Mr. Carr wants Sydney's interests to figure larger when immigration intakes are considered. If he is successful in stabilising Sydney's population there will be no need to raise Warragamba dam, flood the Cox and Kowmung Rivers and perhaps jeopardise World Heritage listing for the Blue Mountains.



## Colong Foundation Joins In Celebrations For World Environment Day

**World Environment Day was celebrated in the Blue Mountains on June 4th, with a World Environment Fair at Springwood.**

The Colong Foundation was represented with a presentation provided by Edith Taylor, Project Officer for the Wilderness Red Index. The display included a computer slide show giving a history of the Colong Foundation from its inception in 1968, through its many achievements, including the campaign for the addition of the Konangaroo State Forest to the Kanangra Boyd National Park in 1977. A detailed summary and description of the Wilderness Red Index was also included outlining the Index, its contents and uses. The celebration was well attended with interested parties inquiring on the progress of the 'Blue Mountains for World Heritage'. Bob Debus, the local member, also visited the display. Jeff Rigby provided invaluable support by fielding questions from the many interested visitors.

The event also heralded the launch of the first edition of the Wilderness Red Index Newsletter, which is enclosed with this edition of the Bulletin. Please read it and pass it on to those that might find it interesting.

## 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 31/12/96)

### 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..*

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Membership fee of \$20 covers  
Bulletin subscription

If you are not personally known  
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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



## SUPPORT THE COLONG FOUNDATION

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.  
(One cheque sufficient to cover subscription and donation)

- ☐ Membership application (use form below) (N.B. Membership fee covers  
Bulletin subscription)
- ☐ Life Membership (\$500)
- ☐ Membership renewal (\$20)
- ☐ Colong Bulletin Subscription to 31/12/96 (\$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 .....

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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 .....

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DATE .....

The Colong Foundation originated as the Colong Committee, which  
was appointed in 1968 by a meeting of conservation societies to  
prevent 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. Recent campaigns for  
"Gardens of Stone" and Natfai National Park have been successful.  
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.



# THE COLONG BULLETIN

SENDER THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS

The Gloucester Walk  
88 Cumberland St.,  
SYDNEY NSW 2000



## Publications Available From The Colong Foundation

|  | Price posted<br>\$ |
|--|--------------------|
| The Colong Bulletin, bi-monthly, per annum   | 10.00              |
| Blue Mountains for World Heritage  | 16.00              |
| The Colong Story   | 8.00               |
| How the Rainforest Was Saved   | 8.00               |
| Park or Pines  | 8.00               |
| Nattai National Park Proposal  | 20.00              |
| Nattai, Kanangra Boyd, Nadgee, Goodradigbee<br>and Lost World Wilderness Nominations, each | 4.00               |
| Barefoot Bushwalker  | 27.00              |
| The Growth Syndrome  | 3.00               |
| Wilderness - The Future  | 25.00              |
| Red Index - complete   | 100.00             |
| summary brochure   | 2.00               |
| listing of individual areas  | 5.00               |