



THE COLONG BULLETIN

Bulletin 160

THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS LTD.

January 1997

GLOUCESTER WALK, 88 CUMBERLAND STREET SYDNEY 2000 (ACN 001 112 143). TELEPHONE 02 241 2702 FAX: 02 241 1289 ISSN 1325-3336

MEETING DATES

*Meetings will be held
on February 13th and
27th and March
13th and 27th.*

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Please Pass The Ammunition

READERS of the Colong Bulletin fully appreciate Milo Dunphy's observation that there is no end to the proposals for the development of national parks.

This has been made abundantly clear in the present issue. Only in the 1.44% of the state declared as wilderness is development excluded, a prohibition bitterly attacked by the anti-wilderness lobby. Over the years we have fought against loggers, miners, resort developers, dam builders, off-road vehicle drivers, horse riders and others seeking to defile the last substantial remnants of the natural environment. They include wealthy corporations, often assisted by government departments. Being well financed they are able to employ a cohort

of highly paid public relations officers, lawyers and executives. The Colong Foundation receives no government assistance. It employs only one officer who is an underpaid and overworked part time worker. But our strength lies in the commitment of the volunteers who give their services. To quote Margaret Mead, "Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world; indeed it is the only thing that ever has." The efforts of the Colong Foundation would be ineffective without the means to rent our office, equip it and pay for electricity, phones, fax, postage etc. So we are making our annual appeal to our loyal supporters to renew their subscriptions and add a tax deductible donation if they can afford it.

Native vegetation clearance represents one of the largest contributors to greenhouse emissions in Australia.

Michael Krockenberger, in the ACF nomination of native vegetation clearance as a key threatening process under schedule three of the Commonwealth Endangered Species Protection Act, 1992.

We identified (native vegetation clearance) as the most serious threat to biological diversity in Australia we need to address it nationally.

Professor Ian Lowe, chairman of the Federal Government's State of the Environment Council, citing the State of the Environment Report.

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.

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DIRECTOR: Keith Muir

HON. PHOTOGRAPHER: Henry Gold

HON. MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: Shirley Dean

HON. AUDITOR: Arthur Andersen & Co.

BULLETIN DESIGN & TYPESETTING: Bungoona Technologies P/L

Heritage Reviews

Over the next two years the Commonwealth Government will review all Federal environmental legislation, including that governing the AHC. To help the Commission plan for the next decade, a discussion paper, *A National Future for Australia's Heritage*, was issued in August. Two further discussion papers will appear in early 1997.

To find out how you can contribute to shaping a positive future for our national heritage, contact Philippa Walsh, NSW Research Officer, on 02 9247 4126.

The Senate Environment Committee has also called for submissions on its Heritage Access Inquiry. In view of development pressure on Heritage areas, this is a matter of great environmental concern. For information phone Robert King at 06 277 3525. The Colong Foundation has made submissions to both inquiries.

Glenbrook – Wright Street*

**The Rape of the Bush,
Friday 8.11.1996
by Denis Kevans**

John Clare was there,
John Clare and I were there,
John Clare he saw
Cocoa-brown angophora gone down,
And sausage-sawed to bleeding chunks,
Scars of jaws along their trunks,
Measures and delicatessen-sliced
And sacrificed, in tuna-lumps.
The birds calling in the air,
Their nests were there,
The dollar-bird disconsolate,
Breeding rosellas, a silent pair,
And green kingfishers stabbing at the air
Their nexts in hollow limbs
gone crashing down,
In Wright St, in Glenbrook town.
A pile of dust,
Tank treads in the soil,
A tatter of green cloth
Against our nakedness;
And in the pub,
A man in a suit boasting of
How he'd made a killing
On "a piece of dirt".

(*The block at the end of Wright Street provided a popular walking access to Glenbrook Creek from the railway station).

NCC Conference Decisions

AT the Annual Conference of the Nature Conservation Council, held on Oct. 26th and 27th, the following motions submitted by the Colong Foundation were carried:

Wilderness Assessments

That the NCC write to the Minister for the Environment requesting the immediate exhibition of the wilderness assessment reports for the Wollemi, Deua, Levers and Kamilaroi (Pilliga) wilderness nominations.

Provisionally Identified Wilderness

That the NCC call on the State Government to protect Provisionally Identified Wilderness areas by an immediate logging moratorium during the wilderness assessment process, and subsequently by reservation under the NPW Act and the Wilderness Act.

Special areas catchment protection

That the NCC request that the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning take the steps necessary to ensure that the Special Area catchments are transferred to the NPWS, subject to NPWS – Sydney Water Plans of Management adequately funded by Sydney Water, that they be protected from damaging agencies such as ORVs and ensured continued funding for the treatment of urban stormwater.

Dunphy Wilderness Fund

That the NCC congratulate the NSW Government on its decision to establish the fund, that the Board of Management has four members of which two are NCC nominees and that funding be by an additional allocation from the Treasury and not from the existing NPWS budget.

Heritage (including Wild and Scenic) Rivers Act

That the NCC make representations to the Minister for the Environment requesting the establishment of the Act as soon as possible.

Motions by other organisations on matters of concern to the Colong Foundation included:

Development and privatisation policies of the NPWS in Kosciuszko N.P. Submitted by the Executive.

The policy in relation to ski resorts was deplored, including the proposal for an additional 1000 beds at Perisher. The Minister for the Environment was to be advised to discontinue the alienation of

national park land for private use and the approval of private leasehold apartments. Amendment of the NPW Act to prohibit such private residential development was called for

Blue Mountains for World Heritage Listing. Submitted by the Blue Mountains Conservation Society.

The motion called for the expediting of documentation in support of W.H. listing, continuation of the bipartisan approach to listing, provision of sufficient Commonwealth funds to ensure that the nomination can proceed and extension of the area to accord with the extension of the area as recommended by the National Herbarium.

Blue Mountains Regional Plan. Submitted by the Total Environment Centre.

That the NCC call on the Minister for Urban Affairs to save the Blue Mountains from the environmentally damaging effects of urban expansion by taking the steps necessary to prepare an effective draft Blue Mountains Regional Environment Plan to control development.

Second spillway for Warragamba Dam. Submitted by the Total Environment Centre.

The motion congratulated the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning for rejecting the raising of the Warragamba Dam wall, called for expedition of the E.I.S. and for a responsible flood management strategy.

Declaration of the Coolangubra Wilderness. Submitted by TEC and Ryde-Hunters Hill Flora and Fauna Preservation Society.

That the NCC call on the Minister for the Environment to have the 1989 NPWS identified Coolangubra wilderness declared as a wilderness area.

Ban on clearfelling native forests. Submitted by the Wild Life Preservation Society

The motion called for the banning of all clearfelling of native forests.



Finance for Aboriginal Lands

by JIM SOMERVILLE

IN view of the controversy regarding the National Parks and Wildlife (Aboriginal Ownership) Act, members of the Colong Foundation should be aware of the financial resources currently available to the Aboriginal Land Councils.

Under Section 28 of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (1983) 7.5% of the NSW Land Tax revenue is required to be paid annually to the "NSW Aboriginal Land Council Account" for the 15 year period concluding on 31st December 1998. Half of this amount is invested in the Statutory Investment Fund and the other half is used by the NSW Aboriginal Land Council to finance their administrative costs and those of the 100 or so Local Aboriginal Land Councils. The Act intended that some of the money be used to purchase private land and some acquisitions have taken place. The 7.5% Aboriginal share of the NSW Land Tax in, the year ended 30th June 1996 was \$37 million. Half went into the Statutory Investment Fund,

which at 30th Sept. 1995 stood at \$338 million.

Assuming a modest interest rate of 6% and current levels of Land Tax collections, the Statutory Investment Fund is likely to reach \$470 million when the sunset clause expires on 31st December 1998. However, prior to the 1995 State election, the Labor Party promised a further five-year extension and this issue is currently under consideration by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. If the sunset clause operates the fund will produce \$28 million per annum from 1999 onwards in perpetuity at a rate of 6% per annum. This is \$10 million more than the current half share of the 7.5% Land Tax revenue, so that the Land Councils would be in a position to purchase freehold land rather than claiming vacant Crown Land under the 1983 Land Rights Act. Over 52,000 ha. has already been granted and claims are continuing at the rate of approximately 200 per annum.

The Restoration of Wilderness

THE NSW Farmers' Association President, Mr. Ian Donges, is dead right in saying that much wilderness land "has been extensively grazed for generations" (SMH 28th Nov.). The environmental damage inflicted by grazing is described by Associate Professor Andrew P. Smith in a report to the NPWS on grazing impacts on protected and endangered fauna in State Forests. He provides the following "checklist" of potential impacts:

1. competition with native wildlife
2. reduction in shrub and ground cover
3. alteration of floristic composition
4. soil degradation
5. stream sedimentation and pollution
6. succession (suppression of seedling generation and survival)
7. altered fire regimes

Anyone familiar with grazed State Forests would have no difficulty in checking this list. The Colong Foundation knows of no wilderness in Australia that has not been grazed in parts or been subjected to some form of development. This fact was recognised in the

Wilderness Act which includes in its definition of wilderness land "capable of restoration." Grazed forests amply fulfil this definition because the trees remain and other native flora and fauna will start to recover when grazing stops. The reason why grazed forests were declared as wilderness was described by a spokesman for the Minister for the Environment in these words: "Some areas have been disturbed but they can be restored. Only pockets have been disturbed but we didn't want to have a Swiss cheese effect, so we declared whole areas as wilderness." Obviously, if the most pristine areas remaining are to be preserved, restoration of disturbed areas within them is essential. This was the purpose of the non renewal of grazing leases on 238,000 ha. of State Forests.

Neither the government or the Colong Foundation has ever claimed that our wilderness remnants are pristine. The Farmers' Association claim for construction of grazing, supported by Australians for Animals, is therefore no more than a demand for the right to continue the damage already inflicted on potential wilderness and park lands.

Utah Wilderness Bill

ACF's August issue of *Habitat* reports that a bill for the establishment of 5.7 million acres of wilderness is before the legislature of the U.S. state of Utah. This is nearly twice the amount of wilderness declared in NSW, which is four times as large as Utah. Although a recent poll records 93% of Americans and 73% of Utahns in favour of the bill, it is opposed by Republican interests which have sponsored opposing 'wilderness' bills which would reduce the area to 1.8 million in which jeep routes, livestock trails, communication towers, roads, dams, transmission lines, grazing and clearance of native vegetation would be allowed. In other words the 'wilderness' would be a wilderness in name only. BHP Utah International, a subsidiary of Australia's BHP, has contributed to the 'wilder-less' campaign. The good news is that the wilderness bill was approved by President Clinton.

The Solution to Sydney's Airport Woes

by **KEITH MUIR**, Vice chairperson,
**Alliance for Airport Location
Outside Sydney**

AT the last meeting of directors for 1996, the Colong Foundation resolved to advocate the location of a second airport in the Southern Highlands.

This resolution follows the motion carried unanimously by the October 1996 Nature Conservation Council Annual Conference that the NSW environment movement lobby the Commonwealth Government to reject any airport for Holsworthy or Badgerys Creek, and any increase of aircraft capacity at Kingsford Smith Airport.

The Colong Foundation has gone further than the NCC Conference policy on the airport issue because the Foundation firmly believes that successful environmental campaigns can only be based on viable alternatives. The failure to recommend a viable alternative would be fatal to the various anti-airport campaigns being waged in Sydney.

To avoid disaster, environment, community and political groups must band together under a united policy. All the major reasons for not locating at Holsworthy apply equally to Badgerys Creek. Hence the need for the widest possible coalition. There is no room for a second airport within a Sydney already deeply concerned with noise, air and water pollution.

The Alliance for Airport Location Outside Sydney is seeking to achieve that purpose and the Foundation's initiative will hopefully accelerate progress toward unity. The Foundation's policy assumes that airport development inside Sydney would exceed safe environmental and human health thresholds. Ms Marina Voncina, Chairperson for the Alliance for Airport Location Outside Sydney, and Mayor of Wollondilly also considers that all Sydney councils opposed to the Holsworthy/Badgerys airport proposals should be brought together in a powerful coalition covering half of Sydney's population.

The coalition against the Holsworthy site (Liverpool, Sutherland, Bankstown, Campbelltown, Hurstville, Kogarah, Rockdale) and the eight or more other Councils in western Sydney opposing the Badgerys Creek site (Blacktown, Blue Mountains, Camden, Campbelltown, Fairfield, Holroyd, Parramatta, Penrith and Wollondilly) must come together or their efforts will be self defeating. Similarly, NSW Cabinet Ministers Pam Allan, Gabrielle Harrison, John Aquilina, Kim Yeadon, Faye Lo Po and Carl Scully oppose the Badgerys Creek alternative, while Bob Carr, Michael Knight, Craig Knowles and Brian Langton oppose the Holsworthy option. This must be resolved positively. The NSW Coalition probably has similar divisions within its ranks.

The altered political landscape reflects the ten years of change since the airport was proposed for Badgerys Creek in 1985. The proposal has grown from an overflow airport to a 24-hour a day, three runway, international KSA equivalent, costing from \$3 to \$4 billion and designed to handle 30 million passengers a year. Few politicians could support such an airport proposition in their electorate and be reelected.

Meanwhile Sydney has expanded westward. New middle class suburbs of Gelmore Park, Hinchinbrook, Cecil Hills and Claremont Park and urban development along Cowpastures Road would be badly affected if an airport is built at Badgerys Creek. New suburbs also have sprung up around the proposed Holsworthy airport site. In December work started on the \$250 million Macquarie Links estate that will join Ingleburn with Macquarie Fields in an area that should have been part of the open space corridor along the Georges River. Another suburb is being built at Pleasure Point also under the proposed flight paths at Holsworthy.

The Minister for Planning, Craig Knowles, in early 1996 banned urban development within 10 kilometres of the smaller 1985 Badgerys Creek proposal.

These controls are designed around the 2.5 kilometre runway proposal, not the 4 kilometre, three runway scheme now proposed. They are too late and too small for the existing urban zones around the Badgerys Creek site.

If either airport in western Sydney was built many of these and adjoining suburbs would become new slums, as resident health, lifestyle and asset valuations decline. Yet Liverpool Council, that controls planning at both the Holsworthy and Badgerys Creek sites, has no intention of putting development on hold till the airport issue is resolved. From 1991 to 1996 Liverpool's population increased by 15,000. It has earmarked another 15,380 building lots for development by the turn of the century.

These planning deficiencies in locating another major airport in Sydney will, due to urban expansion, become more obvious when the flight path plans for the alternative sites are released in early 1998.

Solving the problem

For an airport outside Sydney to be viable, it must be served by a very fast train. It is not possible to build a fast train to an airport north of Sydney owing to the rugged terrain around Broken Bay. Similarly it is not possible to build an airport west of Sydney because of the Blue Mountains. To the south of Sydney, however, lies the geological feature called the Nepean Ramp that provides access to the Southern Highlands by a gradually rising sandstone tableland. Given these topographic considerations, and the extensive areas of flat land, the Southern Highlands are ideally suited for airport development outside Sydney.

It is also probable that a second airport at Badgerys Creek or Holsworthy would not be viable because no airline would relocate to it. The tourist industry and the airlines are happy to simply reinvest in Kingsford Smith Airport. However, Kingsford Smith Airport is only one third the size of most modern international airports. It is too small and relocation must be part of airport planning. International air traffic to and from Australia is doubling every eight years and viable alternatives must be found if this trend continues.

Airport relocation outside Sydney is the only solution that can satisfy all Sydney residents. The costs of relocation would be partly paid for by the

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The Second Spillway Solution

ON 28 November 1996, Sydney Water Corporation released its Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Warragamba Dam auxiliary spillway. Its release follows the Government's rejection of the dam raising proposal in September last year.

The Colong Foundation has strongly supported construction of another spillway rather than raising the dam wall. Warragamba Dam wall has already been raised five metres, and a further raising would be an engineering overkill, causing unacceptable environmental damage.

Sydney Water acknowledges that the spillway proposal recognises that the Warragamba Dam, as well as the Avon, Cataract, Cordeaux and Nepean dams already offer a measure of flood mitigation to Hawkesbury-Nepean floodplain. Due to these dams, the 1867 flood, the maximum flood on record, would be less severe if it happened today.

The second spillway will make Warragamba Dam safe and is the most environmentally and economically responsible way of dealing with the predicted very rare floods. Only very rare floods that happen less than once every two hundred years will trigger the spillway's operation.

Although collapse of the dam wall can be prevented, occasional submergence of the flood plain cannot be avoided. Raising of the dam wall would cost several hundred million dollars and even then does not prevent major flooding from very large, very rare flood events.

Nor would the prevention of flooding from upstream secure the safety of the flood plain. This is partly because flood waters enter the river below the dam and partly because the risk of flooding by a tidal wave surging up the Hawkesbury is probably greater than the risk of flooding from above.

Professors Bryant and Young have quoted convincing evidence of six giant tsunamis that have struck the coast of NSW during the last 8,000 years. The latest, which occurred 250 to

300 years ago is estimated to have been 110 metres high and would have flooded the Hawkesbury/Nepean flood plain. If the residents of the flood plain are to be protected from 1 in 1500 year floods from above and 1 in 1,300 floods from below an anti-flood barrage would have to be built below the flood plain, no doubt at a cost of many hundreds of millions of dollars.

Complete protection from floods is impossible. Accordingly the Government should move quickly with its floodplain management initiatives announced in November. Implementing the initiatives of the Hawkesbury Nepean Flood Management Advisory Committee will be cheaper than raising the dam wall.

The pro-dam raising Hawkesbury City Council are mainly interested in further development of flood prone land. Only last November it resolved to resubmit the controversial Bligh Park North residential development. The development was refused by the Planning Minister, the Hon Craig Knowles, on flood safety grounds (ref. *Hawkesbury Gazette* 20/11/96).

Proper flood management would stop forever developments on the floodplain, and ensure better flood warning and evacuation. Environmentalists don't want dam wall raising because of urban expansion on the floodplain and inundation of the southern Blue Mountains wilderness upstream. Economists don't want it because it will blow out the State budget.

Instead of loading the State and the taxpayer with an enormous capital expenditure and interest payments of probably unlimited duration, two other measures should be adopted. The first is an adequate flood warning system and a well organised rescue service. There would then be no loss of life, though there would be damage to property. This could be offset by a flood insurance scheme calibrated according to height above river level. Insurance companies should be required to insure for flood risk, as they do for bush fire. The cost of flood damage might well be less than that occasioned by the North Shore storm or the Newcastle earthquake. A government insurance organisation might be necessary, but the capital and interest costs of a flood control system that might never be needed would be avoided.

Any reader wishing to support the second spillway proposal should send a submission before 5.00pm, 28 February 1997, to Reply Paid 166, Safeguarding Warragamba Dam, Sydney Water Corporation, P O Box A248, Sydney South, NSW, 2000. All submissions should be clearly labelled "Warragamba Dam Auxiliary Spillway EIS" and indicate in your first sentence that the submission is in support for the proposal.

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redevelopment of Kingsford Smith as a fashionable waterfront suburb close to the city centre, linked by modern road and rail systems. The Badgerys Creek site could also be sold, but the Holsworthy site should be retained in public ownership. Holsworthy bushland should be linked with Royal National Park as it is part of Sydney's true greenbelt.

The existing 66,000 airport jobs and \$6 billion in export earnings and \$2.6 billion in international tourist spending will not be affected by relocating to a healthy rural environment. New towns free of aircraft noise and pollution can be planned in conjunction with a major new airport so that everyone's quality of life improves.

Closure and relocation of the airport will not be welcomed by business interests but this option is far more viable economically and politically than building a major airport in Sydney that no one wants. Airport relocation, like the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme, is a visionary project that would capture the imagination of a generation.

DONATIONS

The Colong Foundation gratefully acknowledges donations from the following:

Bankstown Bushwalking Club; The Budawang Committee; A. Chapman-Wade; M. Colless; A Coote; J. Fulton; C. Gibson; K. & J. Lawson; Dr. P. T. Millard; M. Plumridge; A. Shilling; L. Sullivan; W. Szckely; D. Taylor; B. Toovey; Prof. J. J. Veevers; M.J. & J.A. Ward.

Hinchinbrook

World Heritage Endangered by Resort

DEVELOPER Keith Williams, the man behind the Hamilton Island tourist resort and Sea World at the Gold Coast, now has permission to build the Port Hinchinbrook resort in Far North Queensland. He was given permission by the Federal Environment Minister Senator Robert Hill. No environmental impact statement was prepared.

The Port Hinchinbrook resort is a 1960s-style tourist resort with rooms for 1500 guests and 750 staff. It also includes a marina for 250 boats and a dredged channel and breakwater.

A large part of the site has been cleared of its natural cover and trucks rumble over the dusty ground. Mangroves along the foreshore have been felled, piled up and set alight. A floating dredge is currently excavating the basin and access channel for the marina. The site is a great brown scar on the Hinchinbrook area. This is no way to treat a World Heritage area.

Why is Hinchinbrook so important?

The Hinchinbrook Channel is a natural waterway of great beauty, but it is much more than that. A range of endangered species have been recorded in the waters of the Channel, including the dugong, the Irrawaddy dolphin, the humpback dolphin, and loggerhead, flatback and green turtles.

For all of these species, the seagrasses and mangroves of the Channel are an important habitat. Hinchinbrook Channel and Island has the most extensive stand of mangroves in a national park anywhere in Australia. These diverse mangrove communities are in a relatively undisturbed state, and there is a low level of human influence on some of the surrounding catchments.

Offshore from the mangroves, the Hinchinbrook Channel has the third highest seagrass biomass along the coast between Cairns and Bowen. These seagrass beds are particularly important to local dugong populations, as the number of feeding trails left by grazing dugongs shows. The area is also of special significance as the seagrass species *Halophila tricostata*, usually only associated with shallow inshore waters,

has been identified here.

On the site and the lands that surround it, other endangered species have been seen: Torresian Pigeon, Mahogany Glider and Beachstone Curlew.

Being so close to the rainforests of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, these marine and shoreline communities provide a rare opportunity for conserving a complete series of ecosystems from below sea level to mountain ranges. It is this extensive set of ecosystems, still very much intact, which earned the region a place on the World Heritage list.

What are World Heritage areas?

The Hinchinbrook Channel lies at the junction of the Wet Tropics and the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage areas. World Heritage areas are the best of the best - places of world-wide importance for preserving the earth's nature and culture.

The World Heritage List includes the Pyramids of Egypt, the Grand Canyon, the Taj Mahal and the Great Wall of China. As well as the Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropics, Australia's World Heritage properties are Kakadu, Willandra Lakes, Lord Howe Island, Tasmania's Wilderness, Uluru-Kata Tjuta, the Central Eastern Rainforests, Shark Bay, Fraser Island and the Fossil Mammal Sites at Riversleigh and Naracoorte.

What will be the impact of the development?

* The impacts from the development start on the construction site, where the threatened Beachstone Curlew nests. This threatened bird has defied the bulldozers for some time, but is unlikely to stay forever.

* The shoreline next to the site was once lined with mangroves, however many have been cleared, and the shoreline is already beginning to erode. There are further proposals to clear mangroves and to trim their tops to improve the view for guests at the resort.

* The greatest threat from this development comes from the 250-berth marina. Constructing the access channel will create a plume of muddy water which will shroud the sea-grass beds in silt.

* The marina channel will need

annual dredging to keep it open. This is because the Hinchinbrook Channel receives heavy inflows of silt from the surrounding catchments. The financial cost of this dredging will fall on the rate-payers of Cardwell however, not Keith Williams.

* Once the resort is established, 250 boats will be moored in the marina. Their noise will drive dugongs from their feeding grounds, while others will be killed by boat strike. At the moment there is only a small amount of boating traffic in the area.

What about developments elsewhere in the region?

The project proposal raises many unanswered questions about the infrastructure needed to support this resort.

An upgrade of the dirt airstrip into an international airport at nearby Dallachy is mentioned. This would require the partial clearing of the Edmund Kennedy National Park, part of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

Further away, and less clearly articulated, is the issue of a water supply for the resort. Cardwell Shire Council has agreed to supply one megalitre per day to the site, but it is barely able to meet the existing needs of the region. If a new dam is to be built there are many potential sites nearby, but all lie within the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

What does the Federal Court case mean for World Heritage areas?

The Friends of Hinchinbrook, a local conservation group, are challenging Senator Robert Hill's approval of the resort. The case is testing whether Senator Hill did all he should have to protect the World Heritage properties in his care.

For that reason, this case could be important for the future of all World Heritage areas. Already other areas with World Heritage values are under threat:

* Uranium mining proposed within the boundaries of the Kakadu World Heritage Area,

* Logging adjacent to Tasmania's Wilderness World Heritage Area,

* Logging in the catchment of the

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Central Eastern Rainforest Reserves
World Heritage Area,

* Intensive fishing within the Great
Barrier Reef World Heritage Area,

* Heavy tourist use of most World
Heritage Areas.

**Help us to support this legal action
by donating to the Hinchinbrook
Fighting Fund.**

What you can do

* Donate to the Hinchinbrook Legal
Fighting Fund (Ph: 02 9247 4285 for
info).

* Write a letter to your local Federal
MP.

* Call talk-back radio and express
your concern about inappropriate
development in World Heritage Areas.

* Write to Prime Minister John
Howard calling on him to oppose a
marina at the Port Hinchinbrook resort.

* Visit your Federal MP and let him
know of your concern for Hinchinbrook
and other World Heritage areas.

* Tell all your friends about
Hinchinbrook.

* Join the Sydney Hinchinbrook
Campaign Team (Ph: 02 9247 4285).

* Help raise money for the
Hinchinbrook Fighting Fund.

* Help organise letter writing stalls.

When you write a letter...

When you write to your local Federal MP
or the Prime Minister (c/- Parliament
House, Canberra 2600), write from the
heart. Tell them of your concern for the
rainforests, reef and marine environment
of the Hinchinbrook area. You may like
to mention some of the following points:

* The Federal Government should do
all it can to prevent inappropriate
developments in World Heritage areas.

* A resort development that includes
a marina should not be permitted at
Oyster Point.

* The Hinchinbrook area is of
international importance and deserve the
highest level of protection.

*Reprinted with permission of the Australian
Conservation Foundation, 10 December, 1996*

LATE NEWS

Queensland authorities have
admitted to a third breach of an
agreement that the Federal
Government had promised would
ensure the controversial Port
Hinchinbrook development in North
Queensland could proceed without
damaging the environment.

Ownership of National Parks

**THE Nature Conservation Council, the
National Parks Association and Colong
Foundation maintain that the national
parks estate should be retained in
public ownership, except for lands
identified as being of particular
Aboriginal significance to traditional
owners.**

The passage through the NSW
Parliament of legislation enabling
Aboriginal ownership of national parks
goes further than enabling transfer of only
those parks that would ensure
maintenance of the cultural integrity of
the Aboriginal communities and the
granting of parks that would be subject
to a successful native title land claim.

The Act is focused on ownership of
whole parks (as expressed in its title). The
legislation has transferred at its inception
seven parks, sites or reserves and raises
an expectation in this and many other of
its provisions for further transfers of
ownership on a similar scale.

The test of cultural significance that
determines whether a park is transferred
to Aboriginal ownership is measured
against the attributes in the parks
transferred when the Act is made. Many
parks, such as Royal, Kuring-gai and Blue
Mountains, would have the cultural
significance of Jervis Bay and so could
become Aboriginally owned.

Economic exploitation of parks

The leaseback arrangements are for
thirty years, placing the future security
and protection of these Aboriginaly
owned natural areas at risk. The
legislation puts in place provisions that
allow economic exploitation to eventuate
over the next thirty years of the park's
lease, especially in conjunction with
sympathetic developers and ministers.

The degree of park development that
will occur will vary according to the
park's board of management and the
Government of the day. For substantial
development, a pro-development Board
and Minister would be required. Under
the Aboriginal ownership legislation, the
current role of the National Parks and
Wildlife Service and its Advisory Council
as a moderating force are much reduced.

National parks are created to protect
from development some of the most
highly scenic and biodiverse natural areas
in Australia. This protection will be

challenged by the legislation.

Discussions between conservationists
and the NSW Aboriginal Land Council
confirmed that they believe a natural
consequence of the park freehold title is
the right to economically exploit the
lands. This view was confirmed by Piers
Akerman of the *Telegraph* who said that
Aboriginal groups wish to use their
involvement in national park
management to become economically
self-sufficient. He also says that
Aborigines wish to live in parks and
maintain hunting rights using modern
weapons. Of course, Mr Akerman does
not speak for all Aboriginal communities.

The Act gives the park's owners
development control powers. The park's
Board of Management, often with a
majority of members being also the park's
owners, will have the powers currently
vested with in the NPWS Director-
General to determine development
approvals under the Environmental
Planning and Assessment Act.

The park ownership legislation also
requires payment of rent. The rental
payments must be expended on park
management that may, in consequence,
drive park development. Wilderness
lodges and camping areas,
accommodation for local Aborigines,
and road upgrades and tour operations in
our parks are the likely results flowing
from rental payment.

Park boards will decide on how the
parks are managed, but the park lease
back arrangements conspicuously lack
any provision for nature conservation.
The park boards, will divert park funds
away from conservation objectives
toward economic and social objectives
under the community purpose provisions
of the legislation.

The legislation also permits parks,
such as nature reserves, to be downgraded
to recreation areas. The natural
environment will then be more easily
exploited. Parks could be logged for
Aboriginal housing and firewood needs.

Hunting in parks

The legislation effectively converts the
transferred parks into hunting reserves.
Hunting wildlife in Aboriginal parks is now
generally permitted for domestic purposes
using guns and off road vehicles.

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KAKADU NATIONAL PARK

— THE FUTURE —

THE following picture of Kakadu National Park will develop in fifty years time, if current park expansion and exploitation continues:

KAKADU NATIONAL PARK, the biggest park in Australia, generated \$200 million from tourist visitation in the 2045/46 financial year. Over 5 million visit the park each year. The continued growth was achieved by the recent upgrading of the Jabiru airport that now serves as a regional facility for the Arnhem development province. There are over 50,000 flights to and from the airport each year on its parallel runways. The dramatic landing over the escarpment remains a major drawcard. The new Aboriginal city, Koongarra, was located on the former uranium mine site and is linked to the airport by a four lane parkway.

The town of Jabiru, relocated after the tailings dam at Ranger collapsed during the earthquake of 2005, is now the second biggest city in the Territory and serves the entire Arnhem development region.

The Magela Creek wetland recovery area is still largely free most vegetation, and like Mt Lyell in Tasmania, it is becoming popular with visitors on the heliscenic tours over the park.

The serious concerns regarding the effects of development of the Kakadu

National Park continue to be carefully addressed by environmental management plan processes that are rigorously audited by the traditional owners each year, in consultation with other interested parties.

Development of the southern part of the park commenced in 2000. The former Coronation Hill gold mine is a great drawcard. Visitors gain an appreciation of how the beliefs about "Sickness Country", that stopped this mine proceeding for over a decade, were revised by the younger generation of traditional owners.

Ironically, the glass-walled restaurant that shines like a jewel in the tropical sunset and crowns the Hill, not only provides a stunning view of the South Alligator River valley but also creates more wealth each year than the mine did during its entire life. And of course no account of the park would be complete without a description of the lavish 5,000 bed Koolpin Resort that incorporates the natural pools and cascades of the gorge into its grounds. The resort snakes over the escarpment like the serpent of the dream time. Both these world class

facilities were funded by the gold royalties from the mine.

The road to Jim Jim was sealed in 1998 on a close vote by the Park's Board, but the tourists on the tour buses remained discouraged by the heat and rain during the wet season. The expense of the road was found to be unjustified till a scenic skyway was installed in 2020.

The skyway was instrumental in overcoming the downturn in park visitation in the wet season. The skyway traverse of the escarpment over the dramatic waterfalls at Jim Jim and Twin Falls and is a must for every tourist to the park. The skyway paid for itself in only two years of operation. The key selling point is that tourists could step from airconditioned bus into the comfort of the "jungle terminal" where they could enjoy a nutritious Macdonalds family meal before boarding the skyway.

As the skyway is reaching the end of its design life, an even more ambitious project is being proposed that will enable tourists to travel by monorail across the escarpment from one end of the park to the other and then past wetlands and wild rivers without having to step out of their seat.

World Heritage listing is no longer a bar to development. It was withdrawn in 2010 owing to the extinction of wildlife arising from commercial and domestic hunting operations.

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Traditional hunting may be appropriate if applied to the goats in Mootwingee National Park. It is totally inappropriate when applied to small, often isolated wildlife populations in parks on the east coast. These hunting provisions, if taken up, may lead to either considerable public risk or exclusion of the public from areas set aside for hunting. It could place some wildlife populations, for example the eastern grey kangaroos in Jervis Bay National Park, at risk.

Summit on Aboriginal Park Ownership

The Shadow Minister for the Environment, Mr Brad Hazzard MP made passage of the Aboriginal Ownership legislation contingent upon the Government/ALCS convening a summit between Aboriginal and environmental representatives. The summit will examine the legislation on park ownership and procedures on how Aboriginal and environmental groups could relate on a broad range of issues.

The Sacrifice Of Victorian Parks

IN an article entitled 'Parks or Profit' in the December issue of *Park Watch*, Doug Humann, Director of the Victorian National Parks Association, describes the march of development in Victoria's national parks, despite the Victorian National Parks Act definition of the primary purpose of parks as "the preservation and protection of the natural environment."

He points out that sound conservation management has created tourist demand. Like the Colong Foundation, he therefore urges that "developments associated with the provision of services for the public, and for that matter non-essential management services, are outside the parks." Among the developments targeted by the VNPA are the following proposals: an airstrip, nine hole golf course and polo field with grandstand near Dinner Plain in the Victorian Alps, developments along the Great Ocean Road, Nobbies development at Phillip Island, tourist roads in the mallee parks, mineral rights in the Chiltern National Park, quarrying for sandstone in the Grampians National Park, a 150 person licensed hotel and a serviced lodge in the Wilsons Promontory National Park (despite the fact that there are untapped reserves of accommodation of three and four star level around the Promontory). Doug Humann writes that these plans "elevate the importance of tourism above the conservation priority." He quotes *The Age* saying that, "The parks are havens that offer confirmation that life has more to offer than profit and loss," and draws attention to the fact that "commercialisation of parks has been clearly demonstrated in the United States to be a mistake...We must resist going down that path."

KAKADU LOST

THE Kakadu National Park Vision Statement for the 1996 draft plan of management aims to "carry out a management program to the highest possible standard for the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage of the park."

On tourism the main principles are described as "providing for Aboriginal peoples' rights as traditional owners and conserving the natural and other cultural and heritage features of the park."

The draft plan will not achieve its vision. If implemented, the draft plan of management cannot adequately control development nor offer effective environment protection because it is "a plan for a plan". The plan's zoning provisions will be determined during the life of this plan and meanwhile the park will be in limbo.

The 1996 draft Plan treats the park as a "cultural landscape", that will allow development, such as commercial tourism, property speculation, unspecified living areas and the grazing of domestic buffalo in the park, and will examine the commercial use of wildlife.

Development out of control

Traditionally national parks have not been areas set aside from development. This Plan overturns the development moratorium in the 1991 park Plan and allows further commercial tourism development in the already over-developed park. However, it does not adequately address how to effectively regulate development.

Tourist development should be located outside national parks, but if we are to have development imposed upon national parks, then a statutory (Black Letter) planning system must regulate it. There must be certainty on the limited range and specific locations of the developments permitted. The Plan for Kakadu, however, is a vague strategic planning document that gives no certainty and imposes no precise limits on development (eg no limit on bed numbers is proposed).

The Colong Foundation is very strongly opposed to the Kakadu Board of Management representing both owners and potential developers of Kakadu National Park determining development proposals, especially in the flexible

planning environment created by this Plan.

The Kakadu Board of Management has a vested interest in any future park development. While a traditional owner should always have a right of veto and to impose conditions on development, another body must protect a national park from excessive development.

The Plan threatens the park

The Plan admits that the natural and cultural values "are being challenged by tourism that is growing without being controlled." The provisions of the plan will aggravate these threats and other potential threats to World Heritage values of the park in the following ways:

The township of Jabiru, established to house people associated with uranium mining in the region, is proposed as a major development site. If natural values are to be respected it should be relocated to a site outside the park when uranium mining ceases. However, contrary to the recommendations of the Fox Report, it is now proposed to "evolve from a regulated and closed town into a more open town operating as a regional service centre" which would "allow a property market to develop." This would introduce the problems of serious environmental degradation, increased sewerage disposal and waste disposal problems which have significantly degraded the Kosciuszko National Park. The urban expansion proposal would require either a high tension powerline through the national park or a gas pipeline, if natural gas were to power the generators at Ranger.

The environment movement has strongly opposed real estate investment and speculation in other national parks (see Bulletin articles *The City in a Park* and *Kosciuszko's abominable snow cities*). Kakadu is becoming "just a shopping mall and theme park in the forest". This description was recently applied to Banff National Park, Canada and Kakadu is well on the way to overdevelopment (see the Economist, 19/10/96, pg 60). Such development is threatening Banff's World Heritage Listing.

The policy on roads is very rubbery. Despite the admitted undesirable impacts of roads "access roads and tracks are to be maintained for the benefit of residents and visitors." Roads to Jim Jim Falls and

across Magela Creek are opposed by the Kakadu Board of Management but traditional land use permits traditional Aboriginal owners to use vehicles off roads.

The park is already adequately roaded. One of the greatest threats to natural values is the use of service tracks by off-road vehicles. Except for the existing maintained roads there should be no road access to undeveloped areas of the park either by visitors or Aborigines. The erosion caused by ORV access to Jim Jim Falls is a sorry example of vehicular damage.

Commercial accommodation activities have no place within the park. They should be located outside the park boundaries. Otherwise the problems of commercial accommodation experienced at Kosciuszko National Park will be repeated. Expansion of accommodation facilities in the south of the Park is opposed.

The flight of aircraft over the park is an aggravating disturbance of the natural quiet of the wilderness zone, particularly helicopter operation and joy flights. There is no need for aircraft activity in the park, except for management and rescue work.

The rejection of wilderness management is further proof of the abandonment of the vision of "the highest possible standard of conservation". Wilderness management is the highest possible standard of conservation because it precludes all forms of development. The fact that Aboriginal people lived in it is testimony that wilderness and traditional Aboriginal land use are compatible (provided the use of vehicles, modern accommodation and guns is not encompassed by the definition of wilderness).

The complaint by Aboriginal people that wilderness management affects "how they continue to use that country, including its use for economic purposes" overlooks that parks are created not for economic purposes but for nature conservation. That these views are dictating future park management is alarming.

The use of guns and of roads (other than maintained public roads) should be prohibited in the park. Such regulations would be for the benefit all Australians since the attraction of the park is the natural environment. Again, the concept of a national park is compromised by the Plan.

According to the Plan, Aborigines

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"need vehicle access to areas for hunting or ceremonies." The plan allows for the use of guns and vehicles off roads, as they have in Arnhem Land. As it is unrealistic to expect hunting with boomerangs and spears, the only solution is to offer alternative areas outside the park for hunting, such as in the Mary River catchment.

There should be no commercial hunting of wildlife in the park. The draft Plan should not have raised these proposals that are against the spirit of national park management.

The practice of burning the bush is traditional. It may well account for the poor soils and stunted scrub which covers much of this area. The only justification for its continuance would be the creation of fire breaks and maintenance of biodiversity.

The mining enclaves in Kakadu National Park further compromise national park management. Mining has no place within this park and has modified landscapes and left a dreadful legacy of radioactive waste dumps. The establishment of another uranium mine at Jabiluka will add to the vision of the park as industrial landscape.

The expansion of Jabiru will occur with the new mine. The draft plan of management fails to indicate where the development that will arise from mining and property speculation in the town could take place. The public should be able to comment (and oppose) the expansion of Jabiru into the surrounding natural landscape.

Bushwalkers — visitors on sufferance

Bushwalkers are relegated to the status of visitors on sufferance by the Plan.

The Traditional owners commitment to "share parts of their country with park visitors" means for bushwalkers restriction to "approved bushwalking routes" (page 91 of the Plan). Exactly how many of these approved routes there are, and how people can use these routes, like almost everything else in this wretched Plan, is not explained.

The Traditional owners, who have established the bushwalking restrictions, do not have a clear perception of what bushwalkers do, or why they do it (see page 18, of *Management Strategy for Bushwalking*).

In other parts of Australia limitations on bushwalking use typically arises where bushwalking activity is vastly more intensive than in Kakadu (e.g. the

Overland Track in Tasmania). Restriction of bushwalking to approved routes effectively bars visitation to 99% of the park. There are no such restrictions on bushwalking in NSW parks where annual visitation totals many millions.

The only parts of Kakadu available to visitors are the easements for walking, driving on roads, in camp grounds and on the waterways available to tourism and fishing exploits. It appears that the Kakadu Board of Management has excluded public use from Kakadu, just as much as European freehold ownership does elsewhere.

All Australian's should be allowed to enjoy appropriately regulated access on foot to the majority of any national park Gazetted under Commonwealth legislation.

National parks should not be seen as a "magic pudding" where its scenic and wildlife resources are exploited for tourism, the rest being out of bounds. Similarly park visitors should not be seen as tourists that must pay to use facilities or not come at all.

If effective steps are not taken to properly protect Kakadu National Park, the Colong Foundation will begin pressing for the park to be taken off the World Heritage list of properties.

The Colong Foundation has called on the Federal Minister for the Environment to retain the existing Plan of Management until a more satisfactory Plan is developed that reflects the public interest in nature conservation and bushwalking. The new Plan should place strong restrictions upon future tourist development in the park and ban future resort and infrastructure development.

Park The Place For Low-flying Training

ON receiving reports from Howard Jones and Henry Gold of naval aircraft flying low above the bottom of the Clyde River Gorge, we wrote to The Hon. Ian McLaughlan AO, Minister for Defence, requesting that training exercises should be relocated in the gorges of neighbouring State Forests.

We requested that the matter be referred to the Australian Heritage Commission under, the provisions of the Heritage Commission Act and said it was an activity defined under the provisions of the Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act. In reply we were informed that "the area is a designated low-flying training area and has been used for this purpose for over 30 years... While the noise from low-flying aircraft may be annoying to people bushwalking in the National Park, the flying is essential to pilot training, is only conducted for short periods, and has taken place in this area for many years without detriment to the environment. There are certainly no plans to relocate or suspend these operations." In other words, we don't care if it's a park, we'll go on using it.



Photograph by HENRY GOLD

Valley of the Clyde River.

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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 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 Street, Sydney 2000



SUPPORT THE COLONG FOUNDATION!

The Treasurer, Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd
The Gloucester Walk, 88 Cumberland Street, Sydney. 2000

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I subscribe to the Foundation's aim of preserving Australia's wilderness remnants. I accept the liability provided in the Colong Foundation's Articles of Association to guarantee \$20 should it be needed in the event of the winding up of the Foundation

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PROGRESS OF THE FOUNDATION

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, through not in name, and the Foundation is campaigning for World Heritage listing for the Blue Mountains. Recent campaigns for the Gardens of Stone and Nattai 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. The Foundation is working for the preservation of old growth forests, particularly those of wilderness value and for scenic river legislation. 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 Street, Sydney NSW 2000



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