



THE COLONG BULLETIN

Bulletin 161

THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS LTD

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A Plan to Stop the Commercialisation of National Parks

TOURISM development pressures arising from Sydney's "Green" Olympics and the recent establishment of the NSW Government's Nature Tourism Task Force could create enormous pressures for the exploitation of national parks. The well intentioned principles of the Task Force, such as environmentally sustainable development (ESD), can take on a terrible prospect when linked to the horrific growth trends projected for nature-based tourism.

The fundamental principle that national parks are areas set aside from development is directly challenged by the application of ESD principles to parklands. Formerly pristine areas could suddenly be subjected to "eco-tourism" activities such as scenic joy flights, jet boats, horse riding and four wheel drive tours when these are considered ESD by a government committee.

In the absence of effective guiding principles, there is no certainty that management of tourism in national parks will protect our heritage in the long term. Such an administrative vacu-

um could will permit the tourist industry to pick the eyes out of our parks, exploiting opportunities through growth-driven marketing. The commercialisation of parks is a disaster waiting to happen.

In response to growing tourism pressures and the Nature Tourism Task Force, the National Parks and Wildlife Service has decided to develop a Strategic Tourism Plan. It is of concern that part of the proposed Plan seeks a

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Measures to combat the continuing depletion of biodiversity are inadequate.

When environmental protection appears to be in conflict with potential economic development some government agencies still promote economic development with little regard to the environmental costs.

There is little sign that economic planning takes serious account of the ecological impact of the options.

State of the Environment Report

THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS

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strengthening of links with the tourist industry rather than establishing a clear definition of roles. The Service as a regulator of tourism activity, should not see itself as a service provider to industry clients. A client-based relationship would lead the Service into a confused role, and one that ultimately will seek financial gains from park development through a system of incentives.

Instead of keeping a healthy distance from development, two of the four projected outcomes of the proposed Plan are to assist employment opportunities and improve financial benefits to the NPWS. The Service also seeks to define appropriate partnerships with local communities in tourism while balancing environment protection with tourism. If parks are to come into such a pragmatic equilibrium, then these last remnants of nature will be developed! The Foundation contends that such park development will be contrary to the very reasons why society set aside these natural areas for protection.

Each year NSW national parks receive 23 million tourist visits compared to only a million in the Northern Territory. Yet the Northern Territory is widely perceived through its media promotions as a major tourist destination. The conclusion that must be reached from these overwhelming statistics is that park visitation, including tourism, can thrive without heavy Territory style promotion.

Part of the reason why NSW parks are so popular is because they are largely wild and undeveloped. Accordingly, the Plan's recommendations in the run up to the Sydney 2000 Olympics should be to refuse all the 'hair brained fast buck schemes' proposed for our parks.

Park management is not for the short term expediency of pandering to the Olympics. In keeping with the spirit of the Olympics, the Service should focus on enduring achievements. Citizens of NSW have a great record of achievement in preserving forests and wild places.

During the Olympics, the Service should promote how these wonderful natural places will be preserved for all time. A tourism management strategy is required where activities are managed to ensure the preservation of aesthetic values and natural resources, and that

provides adequate opportunities for quiet enjoyment by all visitors.

There are four principle methods for achieving such a strategy:

- All activities within parks must be in accordance with a plan of management;

- No accommodation within parks (such development could be encouraged in nearby gateway towns, villages and settlements);

- The majority of all parks should be subject to wilderness management with suitable areas on the edges set aside for motorised vehicle access;

- Vehicular access within the areas set aside for that purpose should be on properly formed 2WD roads that have been approved for public use by a park plan of management.

Vehicular access is the key to effectively managing tourist numbers. Suitable areas on the edge of parks subject to heavy use can be upgraded where appropriate. Heavily used areas with high conservation value should be closed to vehicle access to provide relief from further damage.

Almost all heavily used park areas are within an hour's walking distance of a vehicle access point. There are some exceptions, such as some places in Kosciusko and Budawang National Parks, but they are few. Most of the heavily used canyons in the Blue Mountains, for example, are close to vehicular access. Those that are more remote are generally less used.

Such approaches as increased fees and permit systems will never be as simple, effective and enforceable as regulating vehicular access. These demand management techniques could see park management becoming dependent upon development while bushwalkers and nature lovers become competitively excluded from parks by the guided tour operators. NSW parks could become like Kakadu National Park where most visitors join conducted tours.

Developers need to get the message loud and clear that national parks are not a set of potential development sites on cheap Crown land. The large scale resort in the bush is the major cause of the xenophobia developers and communities feel toward each other. These schemes are divisive and cause significant environmental damage.

Tourist accommodation can be environmentally sensitive when it embraces

local communities and low impact technologies (or is connected to the adequately designed sewer mains) and not when it is located in the bush.

The tourist opportunities that exist in the use of parks should be linked up with a bigger regional picture. For example, the drive yourself and bus tour visits to the Greater Blue Mountains National Park system could offer a great opportunity to link park visitors with appropriate scale tourism appropriate in small country towns on its western edge. (The central Mountains are beyond carrying capacity already and opportunities should be developed out west.) Such tourism could also link to the north with the Hunter Valley wine and dine circuit. Once park management and wilderness areas are in place it would provide a truly unique and enjoyable tourist opportunities accessible to everyone without creating community conflict. It would see tourists spending weeks, not hours in the Greater Blue Mountains. It could even lead to community perception of Sydney as not only one of the most beautiful cities in the world but the only national capital surrounded by a World Heritage wilderness park estate. Now that's a goal the Service should be proud of achieving by 2000!

Blue Mountains Conservation Society Active

In "Hut News" the Society reports that it is actively lobbying in the Federal arena for an increase in government effort to submit a World Heritage nomination.. It has addressed Council twice and written to it three times to hasten the Environmental Management Plan, Stage 2 which "seems to have gone on forever" and covers many environmentally sensitive lands on township perimeters.

Free Consultation

THE Colong Foundation's free consultancy service has had a busy time lately. A common theme of our advice has been the failure to acknowledge the conservation value of wilderness.

Heritage Access Inquiry

In our submission to the Senate Environment, Recreation Communications and the Arts Reference Committee's Heritage Access Inquiry, we interpreted the Committee's aim of achieving a "balance" as a question of payment for access. Restricting our comments to national parks, we acknowledged that there are considerable costs involved in park management. This did not justify commercial fund raising within parks, which was contrary to the purpose of parks - the preservation of the natural environment. Nor did we support charges for entrance to national parks. We wrote that:

The purpose of creating national parks is the same as that of providing urban parks - to provide public open space for the enjoyment of the whole community. Urban dwellers, except those wealthy enough to own rural estates, have no access to privately controlled lands. There is no charge for urban parks, except those parts set aside for sports. Nor should there be any charge for entrance to national parks. Charges for entrance to national parks are charges levied on the public for the use of their own land. The maintenance costs of urban parks are paid from rate revenue. It is therefore implicitly acknowledged that the whole community benefits from the provision of open space in the form of parks. Similarly everyone benefits from the provision of national parks, even if they only view them as they pass through. It is therefore equitable that national parks, which are state provision for open space, should be maintained from state revenues. Parks, both urban and national, are no

different from other services for common use, such as street lighting and roading, which are publicly financed.

In addition we described the damage to heritage areas which would result by allowing off road vehicular access and the damage caused by commercial development within parks, quoting Kosciusko and Kakadu.

World Heritage Charter

In our comments on the World Heritage Charter we described the lack of government action to protect World Heritage areas (see Bulletin 158) and the threat from Aboriginal ownership (see Bulletin 160).

State of the Environment Report

We commented favourably on this report, though criticising some features. It was a most educational publication which, if offered to schools at a reduced price (retail price \$49.95) would be a very effective means of promoting conservation. It was regretted that the Environment Advisory Council did not include a representative of the voluntary conservation organisations. Nor did its description of the growth of population assess the pressure this growth places on the natural environment. Wilderness rated little more than a mention. Although the preservation of habitat is the key to the preservation of biodiversity and wilderness is the most complete habitat, this aspect was ignored. The section on forestry was inconclusive. No attempt was made to assess whether the number of trees woodchipped, clear-felled or cleared for rural purposes exceeded those established under the billion trees and other programs. Controversial subjects such as aircraft noise and the "Sydney Wall", were avoided. Though it was stated that the cause or causes of environmental problems are unknown, they were adequately summarised in the concluding chap-

ter (see page 1 of this Bulletin).

We also attended a conference organised by Mark Dignam and Associates, marketing consultants, at which we approved the presentation of the report, with the reservations covered in our submission. This time we were paid - \$55 for the Colong Foundation - the first payment we have received since 1975.

The Catchment Talkathon

On September 1st 1995, Sydney Water introduced a catchment regulation that would exclude bushwalkers, anglers and other park users from 300,000 ha of the Blue Mountains National Parks, a regulation described by Professor John Burton of the Faculty of Natural Resources at the University of New England as narrow minded and punitive. He pointed out that the impact of bushwalkers on the catchment would have a negligible effect on the water supply in comparison to other inputs. These include pollution from inadequately treated sewage and rural activities in the 66% of the hydrological catchment beyond the Board's special areas, over which Sydney Water has no control. We met with Sydney Water to discuss the implementation of these measures, but were unable to prevent them.

The regulations were reformulated as a result of the recommendations of the Regulations Review Committee which restored access to the Board's schedule 2 areas (more than 3 km. from stored water). In a letter to Milo Dunphy, Paul Broad, Managing Director of Sydney Water, said it was the intention to build on the good relationship already developed with bushwalkers and the environment movement to ensure the good management of the water catchments and facilitate access for responsible bushwalkers. Near the end of last year Sydney Water invited environmental organisations to a meeting to discuss access. The only outcome was an assurance that there would be further consideration. This resulted in an invitation to participate in a Review of Access to Sydney Water Special Areas, described as an Adaptive Environmental Assessment and Management Workshop. It will extend over seven eight hour weekend sessions.

The first weekend workshop coin-

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Protection of wild rivers

THE NSW Government's 1995 wilderness election policy promised legislation to protect and manage wild and scenic rivers and vest the responsibility for planning and management of these river systems in the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The 1996 Annual Conference of the Nature Conservation Council unanimously resolved to call on the Government to expedite such legislation that should also permit community groups to nominate rivers for protection.

In May last year Total Environment Centre convened the Heritage Rivers Coalition to develop a community-based proposal for wild river legislation. The Coalition comprised representatives of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness, Total Environment Centre, Nature Conservation Council, the Inland Rivers Network, the Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs, National Parks Association of N.S.W. and the Environmental Defenders Office (EDO).

The Coalition prepared a list of

proposed rivers for nomination under the proposed legislation and developed ideas for management of wild rivers.

The aim of the proposed legislation is to give recognition to, and protection and management of waterways or parts of waterways that have significant wild, scenic and heritage river values.

The Colong Foundation, Total Environment Centre and the Environmental Defenders Office have prepared a proposal for a Wild Rivers Act.

Wild rivers are near-pristine, unregulated streams that flow through natural lands or lands that can be restored to that condition.

Heritage rivers may flow through partially altered landscapes of high scenic or ecological value that merit protection. Heritage rivers can be dammed upstream but one of the purposes of the proposed legislation is to ensure environmental flows are provided to restore heritage rivers to a more natural condition.

The proposal is based on existing legislation.

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cided with the gazettal of the Kanangra Boyd Wilderness, which covers most of the Board's Warragamba Special Areas. This declaration was the culmination of 35 years of campaigning by the National Parks and Primitive Areas Council, followed by 29 years of campaigning led by the Colong Foundation. Wilderness is the ultimate catchment protection. It precludes all forms of development, mechanised vehicles and horseriding. The area would not have remained wilderness had it not been for the Colong Caves, Boyd Plateau and Mount Piper Marulan power line campaigns. The Kanangra Boyd and Nattai Wildernesses are the only adequately preserved part of the hydrological catchment of the Warragamba dam. Rather than attempting to exclude bushwalkers, Sydney Water should welcome them and acknowledge the work of the Colong Foundation with a substantial donation.

For five years, Sydney Water has ignored Cabinet's instruction to transfer its Nattai lands to the NPWS and the Foundation has been excluded from the Catchment Advisory Committee.

No Peace in the Parks

The Penrith Association Against Airport Noise has obtained a leaked copy of a report by Airplan Pty Ltd which concludes that Badgery's Creek is the place for an airport, with runways aligned to funnel air traffic directly over Penrith and the Blue Mountains. It is reported in the Penrith Press that the Mayor, Kevin Crameri, said this would mean aeroplanes taking off and landing every 30 seconds 24 hours a day. Blue Mountains Councillor Terri Hamilton said it would have a devastating effect on the national park and residents at least as far as Katoomba would be greatly affected by noise 24 hours a day. Wollondilly Mayor Marina Voncina said the report was an "insult" to people in western Sydney.

More People, Less Wilderness

Certainly the real cost of supplying some important goods (clean domestic water for example) would rise with population growth, and positional goods like wilderness will have to be rationed.....Immigration is the cause of population growth, and the political parties have come to the conclusion that, in the short term, they can gain more votes than they lose by maintaining a strong immigration program. They conspire to ignore the strong likelihood that the population growth they are generating as a by product of immigration is having and will continue to have severe consequences for the quality of life of most present and future Australians.

Doug Cocks, Senior Principal Research Scientist CSIRO Division of Wildlife and Ecology in *Search*, May 1996.

FIRST NOTICE
The Alliance for Airport
Location Outside
Sydney
is convening a
FORUM

Airport Solutions for Sydney

Saturday 3 May
9.00 am – 6.00 pm
Petersham Town Hall,
107 Crystal Street

Cost: Corporate/government:
\$145, local government: \$90,
non profit community groups
\$40.

The one day FORUM will critically examine the proposed solutions for airport location in Sydney.

Is it possible to reduce travel costs, protect our heritage, reduce aircraft noise and air pollution by locating the aviation industry at a better site? The answer affects millions, including Colong Bulletin readers.

All citizens interested in an objective examination of the alternative solutions to Sydney's Airport problems, including representatives of State and Federal Departments, Local Government, industry, consultants, professional groups, airport activist and environment groups should attend.

For registration and further information please call Keith Muir (02) 9241 2702.

**Book early to
avoid disappointment.**

Barraba Track to Nowhere?

A KEY policy of the Colong Foundation is that the majority of each national park should be managed as wilderness. The Mount Kaputar National Park is essentially managed according to this principle. In 1989, the Foundation welcomed the introduction of a park plan of management that discontinued further consideration of the Barraba Track.

Unfortunately, the Minister for the Environment, the Hon Pam Allan, does not support the management plan. In July 1995, the Minister announced that she would support the opening of the Barraba track that is currently managed as a walking track (according to the plan of management).

Barraba Council's road proposal will damage Mount Kaputar National Park and will not provide residents with any benefit.

The proposed track upgrade will not increase tourism to Barraba. Tourists will not drive hundreds of kilometres to use the road. The scenic route to Mount Kaputar is from Narrabri and will remain the favoured route by park visitors.

Visitor facilities in national parks should be provided with one access road. If all country towns gained a separate access to key attractions in nearby parks, national parks would really become a maze of roads.

The proposal seeks to set an unacceptable precedent that gives vehicle-based tourism priority before all other park management considerations. It effectively downgrades wildlife conservation, which is the purpose of national parks.

The proposal also includes a needless car park. There will need to be another set of lookouts and visitor facil-

ties as well, as the existing facilities are too distant from the proposed car park. Local families will not be content to walk 300 metres with all their gear to the existing facilities. The scheme is a wasteful duplication of facilities that doubles the developed areas on top of Mount Kaputar.

The proposal is in reality a scheme for establishing a through road that cuts the park in half. The difference between the current proposal and a through road is a locked gate. The gate won't last six months and then you will have heavy traffic tearing along the road.

Mount Kaputar is a small island of nature in a sea of cleared agricultural land. The Council's proposed road will prevent effective wildlife migration in the park.

The Government should instead unite the Rusden and Nandewar wilderness areas in the park. Such a scheme would ensure that the increasingly isolated park retains the wildlife diversity it contains.

The Mount Kaputar wilderness is one of two such areas in north west NSW. Wilderness comprises the last substantial remnants of the natural environment and is the most effective habitat for the preservation of biodiversity. The fragmentation of the area resulting from the road and associated development would seriously reduce its habitat value.

Meeting Dates

*Meetings will be held on
April 10th and 24th and
May 8th. and 22nd.*

Less Rabbits Less Foxes

There can be little doubt that foxes, having decimated the small native mammals, now subsist largely on rabbits. It is not surprising then that the Centralian Australian Land Management Association reports that detailed monitoring and surveillance of rabbit calcivirus disease in southern regions of the Northern Territory has found increasing populations of small native mammals where wild rabbit numbers have been significantly reduced by effective warren ripping and more recently RCD.

Many Leaseholders Poor Managers

THE Australian community has been conned into believing that pastoral leaseholders own the land and have managed it sustainably. These beliefs are completely wrong. Further, except for a few isolated cases, State governments have cravenly avoided enforcing even their own low control standards for management practices, such as maximum stocking rules.

For much of the semi-arid interior of Australia it would have been much better for the land, the Australian community and perhaps even for pastoralists if pastoral leases had never been granted.

K.E. Thompson, S.M.H. 12/2/97



Victorian Parks in Crisis

IN Victoria, as in NSW, most remnants of the natural environment have been preserved only as a result of long and bitter conservation campaigns. These included the long fight for the Alpine National Park, the battle for the Little Desert and the struggle to protect the East Gippsland forests. Parklands, however, are now menaced by development. In the March issue of *Park Watch*, Doug Humann, Director of the Victorian NPA writes:

Victoria's parks and open space - rural and urban - are in crisis. Continuing threats to Wilsons Promontory National Park, the Twelve Apostles and Nobbies symbolise the attacks being made on our parks throughout the state. The common thread is a mentality which sees open space and natural places as easy development sites and potential money spinners. No account is given of the environmental, social and economic costs or to the future amenity we leave to our children. Instead profit, usually private, is being put ahead of the public good. Park conservation and open space are shoved to one side while our parks are gradually whittled away...

In parks generally the push for

commercialisation is rampant. The VNPA's gravest fear for all parks, including the Prom, is for development bit by bit, year after year, particularly if private finance is allowed. After all 'growth' is the lifeblood of private development. For example, more lodges need more on-site parking and could lead for demands for tennis courts, saunas, swimming pools, more upgraded trails in remote and wild areas, more huts and more facilities for staff to service all this.

There have been some victories, but not enough to stem the tide. The 150 bed lodge at Tidal Flat on Wilsons Promontory was abandoned after a "community uprising." Community opposition to downhill ski development at Mount Stirling was also successful.

In NSW sympathetic governments have listened to the conservationists. The national park estate now covers 6% of the state and declared wilderness covers 1,125,363 ha. The menace of development is however increasing. There is the 1,000 bed Kosciusko proposal and commercial development in Warrumbungles National Park. Public land is being provided for private occupation both in Kosciusko N.P. and in the Royal National Park.

Environmentalists Move On

Murray Hogarth reports (S.M.H. 21st Feb) "There are widespread doubts about the quality of current leadership and a generational handover has been occurring as a number of former top greens turn up working for industry or government."

It doesn't happen in the Colong Foundation. That is why requests for information from the media, writers, academics and others occupy so much of our time.

The Enemy Within

DR. Tim Flannery's description of the ecological limitations of the Australian environment (see article 'Living Within Our Ecological Means', page 9) is confirmed by an article in *Search*, (the ANZAAS publication) entitled 'The Enemy Without and the Enemy Within', by Professor Jared Diamond, Professor of Physiology at the University of California.

The moral is that our country can be wrecked by ourselves no less than by foreign invaders.

Professor Diamond takes as his starting point Easter Island, isolated from invasion for 1,400 years. Though, like Australia, it lies within the zone of ENSO-driven climatic fluctuations, it is not nearly as dry as most of Australia. When Polynesians arrived the island was covered with rainforest.

The Polynesians proceeded to kill and eat the fauna, eat the fruits and cut down the trees for firewood, clearance for gardens, and canoes. They also used them for logs over which they rolled those 33 feet high 85 tonne statues. By 1500 there were no more palm fruits to eat, no canoes for fishing and no more logs. Soil erosion had set in. Deprived of food, the inhabitants turned to cannibalism and warfare.

This sequence of events occurred in many other Polynesian islands with low rainfall, sometimes to the point where the whole population was wiped out, though it did not occur on many islands where rainfall was high and regrowth faster.

Professor Diamond says that similar conclusions apply to societies in arid environments elsewhere, such as the Fertile Crescent and the Mediterranean, where civilisations

damaged or destroyed their resource base. The main causes of their collapse or decline, he writes, was deforestation (for agriculture, firewood, and construction) exacerbated by overgrazing by hundreds of millions of goats and sheep, which eat growing young plants.

With clearing of the forests, soil began to erode down from the hills into the valleys; terraces and dams had to be built to hold back that erosion and eventually the whole basis of human economy collapsed in one area after another. The collapses began in the Fertile Crescent, because it was the oldest centre of Western civilisation, and proceeded through Greece and North Africa and Rome.

Thus all over the world human societies in arid, unpredictable environments have been especially vulnerable, even though all the environments discussed are less arid and less predictable than most Australian environments.

He points out that, by exporting most of our primary produce, we are "going increasingly into ecological debt regarding landscape alteration." But he also points out the crucial difference between modern societies and the ancient civilisations. We have books and histories, and he might have added, scientists to enlighten us. If we repeat the mistakes of the past it is our own fault. He concludes that:

The main dangers that we face are not ones from the outside posed by aliens or asteroids and beyond our control.

Fortunately, the main dangers are from the inside, arising from us alone. Hence it is completely within our power to stop those dangers—if we choose to do so.

MILO SAID IT ALL

THROUGH the window of our office above The Rocks we look towards Sydney Cove, past the black shrouded abomination near the Opera House, to the grounds of Government House. This vista will be blocked out when the Sydney Wall is completed. Architects have been criticised for their silence on this issue, but one spoke out. Six years ago Milo Dunphy wrote to the S.M.H. as follows:

SIR: The three major public issues in the proposed Circular Quay buildings are their height, their width, and the bargain the building promoters will drive in return for the provision of a bus parking station. The existing buildings on these sites are already too high - the result of a developers' coup in a period when an administrator ruled the City Council. The site ratios that were permitted considerably exceeded what was normal.

High buildings on these sites destroy the relationship between the Tarpean Way and the Quay. In addition, they compete with the Opera House. The low northern section of the proposed buildings pays lip service to these civic considerations.

The next developers' coup goes unmarked in Michael Dickinson's review "Welcome developments at Circular Quay" (Herald, March 28). He mentions a colonnade and states the general width of the buildings above will be greater than those now, i.e., the developers propose to build over the public road. A better design by a previous promoter started low in the north and stepped up to a southern tower.

But why not add the present roadway to the public concourse which leads to the Opera House? Why provide public open space in Sydney's most focal foreshore to private development?

Down with the Greens

THAT dedicated anti-conservationist, Peter Cochran M.P., though becoming increasingly isolated in his campaign for the logging of old growth forests, was at full throttle during the Forest Revocation and National Park Reservation Bill. He denounced the A.L.P. and accused Bob Carr, Col Dorber (Executive Officer of the Forest Products Association) Kim Yeadon, and Pam Allan of having "climbed into the same cot as the Greens."

He accused Gavin Hillier, Secretary of the CFMEU, Forestry Division, of "selling the timber industry down the drain." Even the Church was relegated to the doghouse for taking seriously the responsibility of mankind's "dominion over every living thing." He quoted church leaders as saying that:

It is clear to us that Australia's old growth forests are both ecologically precious and of great natural beauty.

They are home to rare and endangered species. As such they mirror the creativity of God.

Therefore to continue to log them for whatever purpose must be considered ethically and even morally wrong...there is simply no economic justification for this to continue in the face of our ethical obligation to protect the natural world.

To continue such activities irresponsibly would be sinful



The Politics of Dam Raising

THE environment movement has opposed the raising of the Warragamba Dam wall due to its upstream and downstream environmental impact of flood mitigation and its encouragement of urban expansion on the floodplain.

Mr Brian Crowther of Kurrajong has provided the Colong Foundation with the following letter that reveals the extent of urban development that could arise from the dam raising proposal:

It's impossible to miss the "Dam It" signs as you drive around the Hawkesbury area. In my case they have had their desired effect of raising awareness. Upon investigation I find that these "Dam It" Committee lobby group signs are sponsored by the Hawkesbury City Council which stirs my interest further as I am not sure rates should be spent this way.

Both, the environmental impact statements (EIS) for adding 23 metres to the Dam wall and the EIS for the spillway alternative, mention the need for water supply security and consider social, environmental, economic and safety impacts. However, neither look specifically at the Shire of Hawkesbury and particularly, how the issue of the dam wall affects development in this area. In the circumstances this logically led to the question, "What possible pressures could be driving the push for the dam wall?" by the Dam It Committee.

By using simple mapping techniques it was possible to map the area that could be released from being flood prone for planning purposes and would have the potential to be developed. (It was a surprise to find that neither the council nor the dam EIS could supply me with this information). During this process interesting patterns became apparent. Firstly, large portions of the Hawkesbury Shire are given over to national park, the waste dump, the RAAF and reserve. Secondly, only the south east corner, that is Richmond and Windsor, has population and infrastructure and these are severely limited by

flood prone areas. For example, Windsor appears to have run out of space. If we now consider, what land is released for development by building the dam wall, we will have very strong evidence for what could be driving the "Dam It" campaign.

When the land around already developed areas is considered, it is found that new land for development could be roughly double that currently available and two and a third times more land than is already developed. Windsor would more than double its area. There would also be substantial amounts of the floodplain released between Richmond and North Richmond.

It is up to the people of Hawkesbury to weigh up what they value, indeed why they choose to live there. In this case there could be conflict between the character of the area and extra development made possible by (raising) the dam. It seems incomprehensible that, on such an important issue, a council did not have the appropriate data and that I had to find the data myself. For these reasons I think political considerations have kept this issue off the agenda, that to hide only behind a stated concern for life is dishonest and it is highly likely that potential for development is a major driving force of the "Dam It" Committee.

Even if we get assurances from the authorities that development would be limited and of good taste, imagine the pressures to change these and ways in which promises could be broken. It is also worth remembering that if development were to occur more lives and property would be at risk as these areas are still flood prone but only less and for longer periods.

To conclude, it is at the very least suspicious that the council finance the "Dam It" Committee prior to the above issues being fully linked and publicly debated. Our rates should not be spent on signs put up by lobby groups especially when some people stand to make a lot of money should it be successful, they can finance their own campaign.

Living Beyond Our Ecological Means

by Alex Colley

SINCE the last Federal election population debate has been centred on racial tensions. Such tensions are now acknowledged and nearly everybody hopes that they can be reduced, if not eliminated, but the present racial composition cannot be altered. We must all share the future fruits of the Australian economy.

Now, and probably far into the future, economic prosperity depends on ecological sustainability, because primary produce not only sustains our population but is the mainstay of our export income. It is beyond doubt that the present rate of exploitation of our ecology is unsustainable. Soil degradation through erosion, salinity, acidity etc. is widespread, forest clearing far exceeds re-afforestation and fisheries are greatly depleted. The constant pressure to log, mine, graze or otherwise develop some of the most economically unproductive land in the continent – the wilderness areas – is a by-product of over-exploitation. The limitations of our resource base have been adequately described by Dr. Tim Flannery in a paper presented to the Australian Academy of Science's population symposium, though his contribution was edited out of the published read *Population 2040: Australia's choice*. However Dr. Flannery has kindly supplied a copy to the Foundation. Quoting Charles Darwin's 1835 perceptive analysis of Australia's ecological limitations caused by poor soils and droughts, he describes Australia's soils as being old, often skeletal and frequently deeply leached. "In addition," he writes "Australian soils generally have low soil water storage capacities and high soil temperatures. They are also notoriously deficient in plant nutrients." They are deficient in phosphorus, nitrogen and trace elements.

On climate he writes that "Australia is unique among the continents in the extent it is affected by ENSO (The El

Nino Southern Oscillation). ENSO brings a very large inter-annual variability in rainfall to Australia and this, along with the effects of scleromorph vegetation, makes variability in surface water runoff far greater in Australia than on other continents. The impact of impoverished soils and extreme climate variability on the Australian biota has been profound...without doubt the most pervasive and influential of all adaptations in the Australian flora is scleromorphy."

The fauna too are adapted to the soil and climatic limitations, being distinguished by their economy of energy. The koala with its slow movements and low rate of reproduction "is possibly the greatest energy miser of all mammals. wombats are the only large herbivorous mammals anywhere on earth that live in burrows...where they experience near constant temperature and humidity."

On the human 'carrying capacity' of Australia Dr. Flannery writes: "If Australia's population were smaller we could afford to do many things differently. The argument over logging of old growth forest, for example, would be less intense – for the housing construction industry, which uses much of the hardwood timber produced, would be scaled down. Likewise, increased levels of affluence would mean that the dollars earned through woodchips would not be so valid."

Dr. Flannery quotes a number of estimates of desirable population. He does not hazard an estimate of optimum population, though, he quotes Sahlin's 'golden rule' derived from the life style of hunter-gatherer societies, that in 'normal times' the human population rarely exceeds 20–30 per cent of the carrying capacity of the land. In his article, 'Australia: Overpopulated or the Last Frontier', published in Bulletin 132, he writes: "Perhaps the lesson of the hunter gatherers (to keep population within 20–30 per cent of carrying capacity) is a wise one to follow. If we did so we should aim to stabilise Australia's population at 6–12 million in the long term."

Professor Erlich, pointing to the 'huge problems' with soil erosion, overgrazing and the destruction of native vegetation, believes Australia should reduce its population to 10 million. "With 18 million people, Australia's environment is steadily running downhill. At 10 million people, you might be able to hold your own if you are really careful." (SMH 11/11/95).

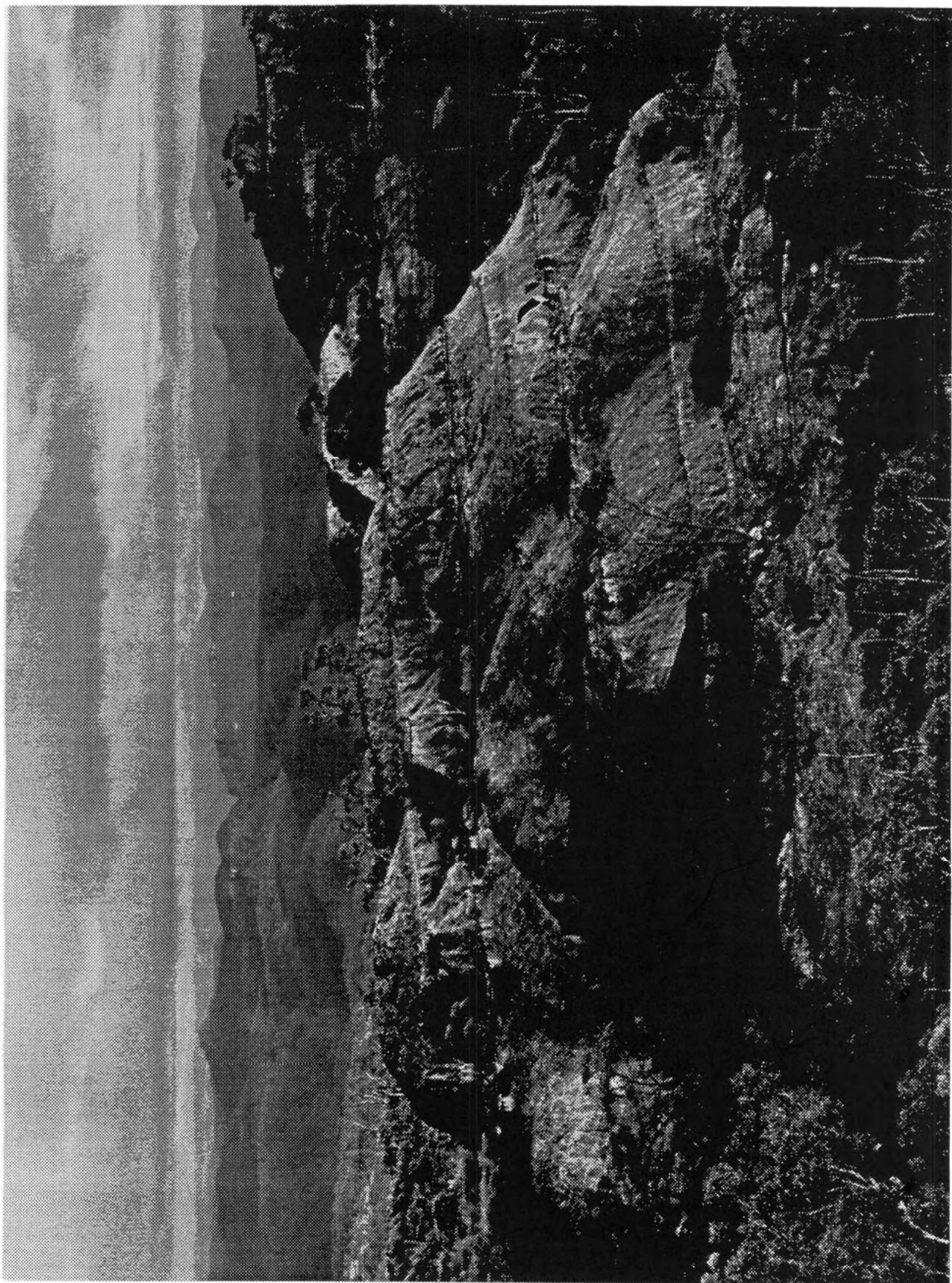
It is beyond doubt that Australia's natural resources are being depleted by the present population. Nor can it be doubted that a greater population would mean accelerated depletion. This could be overcome only by a massive shift in economic and environmental policy. It would mean a ban on land clearing and overcutting of forests, an enormous reafforestation program, billions of dollars spent on erosion control, stringent control of stocking rates and the abandonment of both grazing and agriculture in marginal rainfall areas. This would require greatly increased taxation and draconian land use supervision. Given the present opposition to tax increases and rural land use control, such measures are politically impossible.

Australia's future population however, is a matter of choice. Since natural increase is below replacement level, population increase is dependent on the level of immigration. If immigration were reduced to the level of emigration – a level sufficient to cover admissions on humanitarian grounds and skilled migrants – the population would stabilise in a few years. This might not solve the problem of living within our ecological means, but it would at least make the solution of the problem easier; perhaps even politically acceptable.

Our Disappearing Forests

The rate of clearing expected to occur in the current five year period is approximately 2.5 times the proposed rate of revegetation under all programs and private initiatives.

Discussion paper prepared by the Intergovernmental Committee on Ecologically Sustainable Development.



*The Kanangra Boyd Wilderness
View from Wangenderry Tableland over the Blue Breaks*

PHOTOGRAPH BY HENRY GOLD

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"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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Return to The Hon Secretary, Colong Foundation for Wilderness, The Gloucester Walk, 88 Cumberland Street, Sydney 2000



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

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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.....

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NAME.....

ADDRESS

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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

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The Gloucester Walk, 88 Cumberland Street, Sydney NSW 2000



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