THE COLONG BULLETIN

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The Unending Battle

This generation is being is being forced to regroup and mount the battlements in defence of those conservation victories of the past.

National parks are under threat in all sorts of ways. In some states management agencies are being starved of funds. In others, management agencies have been subsumed into more general land management bodies, whose primary aims conflict with the purposes of national park, thus losing their focus, identity and effectiveness. New threats have appeared. Perhaps the most pernicious being the four wheel drivers and 'traditional' equestrian users. Ironically, both groups, who have generally opposed the creation of national parks, now want to exploit them.

The threat of governments seeing the commercialisation of national parks as a means of generating tourist dollars, is currently present in all states and territories.

Timothy Walsh, NPA Bulletin of the ACT, June 1997

Wilderness War II

In March 1985 the Colong Foundation met with Bob Carr, the newly appointed Minister for Planning and Environment, with the aim of furthering the cause of wilderness declaration and our proposal for a State Wilderness Act. We were pleased to receive from him a new draft policy on wilderness management and a proposal for the declaration of a minimum of three areas each year.

A wilderness working group was appointed with representatives from the National Parks and Wildlife Service, The Colong Foundation, The Wilderness Society and the Australian Conservation Foundation. The Working Group reported in May 1986. It proposed a Wilderness and Wild Rivers Act, the case for which was strengthened by a Reark Research Society Poll showing that 80 per cent of those polled wanted legislation. The Wilderness Act was passed in 1987, just prior to the defeat of the Unsworth Government.

In June 1989 the NPWS issued its Wilderness Conservation Policy. The policy was framed following a series of discussions with conservation organisations and covered their main concerns. Its management provisions were:

Motorised transport operated by any agency, commercial interest or

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Wilderness War II

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individual will not be permitted except for management operations where:-

* the operation is necessary
* there would be any significant long term impacts;

and

* it is the only feasible option available

Vehicle trails and helipads will be prohibited or where existing, closed and rehabilitated, except where required for necessary management operations.

Where possible wilderness areas will be maintained free from signs, trail markers and other management devices.

Recreational use of wilderness will provide opportunities for solitude and self-reliance subject to the following:-

* horseriding and other forms of animal transport will not be permitted in wilderness areas.
* commercial recreation activities may be allowable subject to specific consent conditions,
* mechanical personal transport must be manually powered.

The above policy is essential to prevent damage to the natural environment, whether it be Kanangra Boyd, Budawang or any other wilderness, though we are also opposed to commercial activities, which greatly increase use pressure on these primitive areas. By the same token the policy is essential to prevent damage to the Warragamba catchment.

Declared wilderness areas are mainly in national parks. Campaigning by the Colong Committee (as it was then called) and the National Parks Association succeeded in affording national parks protection from grazing, logging and mining. The NPWS wilderness policy afforded protection of wilderness areas from vehicular and equestrian damage, shack occupation, resort development and other damaging activities (as listed in the AEAM article in the last Bulletin). To the Colong Foundation, it appeared that public support for wilderness preservation had been won. There was a high level of support for wilderness. A 1996 Roy Morgan opinion survey sponsored by the Federal Government found 99 per cent of people believed wilderness should be conserved. This support has been transformed on numerous occasions into mass community action. The Coolangubra wilderness was the rallying point of the NSW South-East Forest campaign in which over 1600 people were arrested in non violent action supporting forest protection.

Public opinion was disregarded by the anti-conservation recreational interests which launched an offensive against wilderness spearheaded by the 4WD and equestrian lobbies. Unfortunately they are now joined by some bush-walking elements which apparently want to drive as far as possible and walk as little as possible.

In response some of the NPWS guidelines have been scrapped. Concessions have already been made to horseriders, anglers, bee keepers and cyclists.

The Washpool, Guy Fawkes, Macleay Gorges, Werrikimbe and Barrington wilderness have been trimmed or bisected to accommodate the Bicentennial Trail. It passes illegally through Washpool. And there are probably more concessions coming. The Environment Minister has announced a 'draft public access policy', not yet made available to the Foundation.

The public accepts that our precious parklands, which are islands in a seas of development, merit priority protection. In response to community opinion millions have been spent on the Blue Mountains Sewerage system, forest products have been redirected so as to stop rainforest logging, limestone mining relocated from Colong Caves, woodchipping cancelled at Coolan-gubra and the damming of the Franklin River prevented.

However, the big icon areas and fights over resource exploitation are perhaps easier campaigns to win than the insidious incursion by exotic pests and user groups. Future generations will see this decade as a turning point.

Theproposals for increased access and development in the last remaining substantial natural areas in Australia will be defeated in the next ten years, otherwise wilderness parks will cease to exist. Vehicular access brings increased demands on park managers to control visitor numbers and diminishes nature-based park management.

In the 21st century the case for wilderness protection will be obvious. Wilderness will be so valuable and scarce that future generations will wonder why more was not done sooner to protect it.

In the future wilderness protection will continue to play an essential role in park management in a society subject to increasing environmental and resulting economic decline. ■

Winter wilderness magic

The protestations of the antiwilderness lobby has not stopped wilderness management being imposed over the entire Goodradigbee wilderness, at least during winter.

The Gundagai Independent reports that NPWS roads engineer, Ken Reedy, considers roads in northern Kosciuszko National Park are often very muddy and wet throughout winter. 'It snows over most of these roads and motorists risk finding themselves stuck in the wilds if they try to use them' said Mr Reedy.

During winter conquering wilderness in a $40,000 vehicle is too damaging to the fire trails, and life threatening to the motorised adventurer. Closure of the Long Plain, Broken Cart and Goobragandra fire trails effectively establishes wilderness management over the 144,000 ha wilderness.

The Parks Service also imposes a 80 km/h speed limit within the park in winter. The number of accidents involving ski enthusiasts is thereby be reduced. The speed limit also reduces the number of wildlife kills.

The speed limit in Kosciuszko National Park should be lowered to 60 km/h and imposed year round. Such a limit would ensure road kills are reduced to levels equivalent those in residential areas — any other limit is anthropocentric. ■

Make a submission

Help save the Wollemi wilderness

After nearly a ten year wait, the Wollemi wilderness assessment was finally released on July 2nd. Unfortunately, the 285,720 hectares area recommended for protection by the National Parks and Wildlife Service is just over half the area proposed by the Colo Committee.

Wollemi is only 75 kilometres north-west of Sydney, but its harsh plateau country, a labyrinth of gorges, ridges, cliffs, deep hollows and scattered humps of mountains is wildly different from the sprawling, seething city (apologies to P. Prineas).

The Wollemi is the largest wilderness in NSW. Securing protection for the Wollemi has been a key objective of the Colong Foundation. The 487,650 ha Wollemi National Park is, of course, home to the Wollemi pine — a living fossil, whose history goes back 100 million years. The Wollemi may well contain other plants and animals of great importance to science and society.

Please make a submission by the 26th September supporting the declaration of the entire 430,000 hectare wilderness as nominated by the Colo Committee. Write to:

Wollemi Contact Officer
NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
PO Box 95
Parramatta NSW 2124

In making your submission please note the following points:

- That you support the closure of all roads inside the nominated wilderness area, especially the Hunter Range and Wirraba Range 4WD trails.
- The Wollemi wilderness should be enlarged and reassessed using an approach consistent with those previously used to identify other wilderness areas. The declared wilderness should include the areas used for essential management purposes. Assessments aiming to maximise perimeter area ratios and apply buffer zones will only serve to reduce the effective wilderness area within the national park. Accordingly, you should request that the NPWS review the assessment report so that it is consist with other nominations and in the light of current standards.

The declaration of the wilderness should not be compromised by the granting of

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An Airport Outside Sydney

It is inevitable that if the new airport is located in south-west Sydney, flight paths will be directed, in response to the protests of residents in the south west and west, over the Blue Mountains. The Common-wealth Department of Transport and Regional Development has published diagrams of 18 preliminary flight path plans, all of which depict heavy traffic over the Mountains.

One of these is reproduced in the accompanying diagram. The heavy air traffic along these flight paths would destroy the amenity of the Blue Mountains, Kanangra Boyd and Heathcote Parks. For this reason we were pleased that our Director, Keith Muir, was entrusted with the task of helping to organise the Alliance for an Airport Outside Sydney (AFALOS). Unlike most of the anti-aircraft noise organisations, AFALOS does not simply want the airport 'somewhere else', but makes a specific proposal as to where it should be. In the experience of the Colong Foundation, campaigns succeed only when they prescribe a specific solution.

The essential requirements for an airport outside Sydney are fast transport and topographically suitable land. Only a very fast train, which would convey passengers at three times the speed of road transport, could make such an airport practical.

Only south of Sydney is the terrain suitable for this purpose. To the north Broken Bay is an obstacle and to the west the Blue Mountains render such a service impossible. To the south the gradual ascent up the Nepean Ramp to Mittagong and the relatively flat Southern Tablelands offer suitable terrain for the construction of a very fast train line.

For these reasons AFALOS has called for a replacement airport outside the Sydney Basin, located away from urban settlement and environ-

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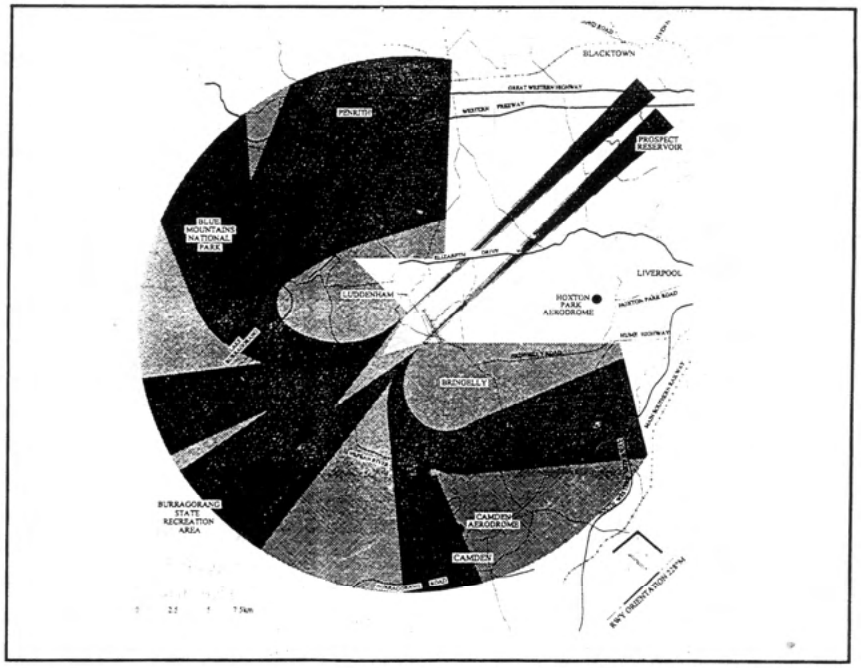

BADGERY'S CREEK OPTION B Landing from the North East and take-off to the South West

Save Wollemi wildnerness

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easements to private inholdings. Gazettal of wilderness exclusive of these easements will create rural hideaways and will increase acquisition costs. These concessions are unnecessary as existing user rights prevail over declared wilderness. The permissive occupancy licences should be cancelled without further notice. It is ridiculous that these annual grazing licences have been allowed to roll on since the national park was declared in 1979.

The wilderness areas likely to be threatened by park development and overuse should be included in the protected wilderness area. For example, the increasingly popular slot canyons located in the Wollangambe River catchment and in the streams that drain Newnes Plateau should be protected within the wilderness. Several park rangers have expressed concern that these fragile natural areas are being loved to death. The reservation of these wild canyons would effectively limit the number of places accessible on foot in any one day. The wilderness boundary should also protect the Colo Gorge area by extending the wilderness east to the park boundary on the Putty Road.

The areas of high conservation value centred on Mount Pomany should also be secured as wilderness. The area's deeply dissected gorges and volcanic necks, known as 'holes', contain red cedar and coachwood/sassafras rainforest that need priority protection. The peninsula projections of wild lands to the north between the cleared valleys of Widden Brook, Baerami, Martindale and Doyles Creeks west of the powerline and the Commission Road should be included in the wilderness as should the cliff-girt sandstone plateau forests that survive in perfect biological isolation. The wilderness qualities of the pagoda complex on the westerly projection of land above Newnes to Mount Dawson should also be recognised.

Please send the Colong Foundation a copy of your submission. The Wollemi wilderness has not received the recognition it merits and requires your support. ■

An airport outside Sydney

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mentally sensitive areas, within a region south of Picton/Wilton, including consideration of the Marulan and Goulburn districts, linked with Sydney and Canberra by fast rail. It is notable that AFALOS calls for a replace-ment airport, i.e. it envisages the relocation of Kingsford Smith.

There are four topographically suitable airport sites adjacent to the southern railway. The topographical features of three of these sites are shown on the accompanying maps, which have contour intervals of 20 metres.

One is at Wilton, 24 km south-west of Campbelltown. This is not far from the Sydney basin. It would require considerable levelling and is restricted by the Cataract River and Woolandolla Creek.

There is a topographically suitable area on the eastern outskirts of Moss Vale. The residents of Moss Vale would no doubt protest against the site, with good reason.

Marulan, 15 km east of Goulburn, is a possibility, but the area 10 km south of Goulburn is not only topographically suitable but extensive. It is about 200 km from Sydney and 100 km from Canberra and, since the proposed very fast train could reach Canberra in one and a quarter hours, it could serve both cities.

The location of the airport near Goulburn has considerable support from the citizens and the city provides a ready-made infrastructure. The additional rail patronage

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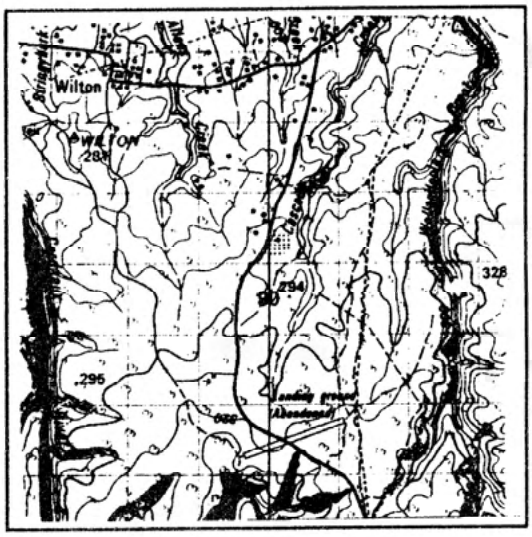
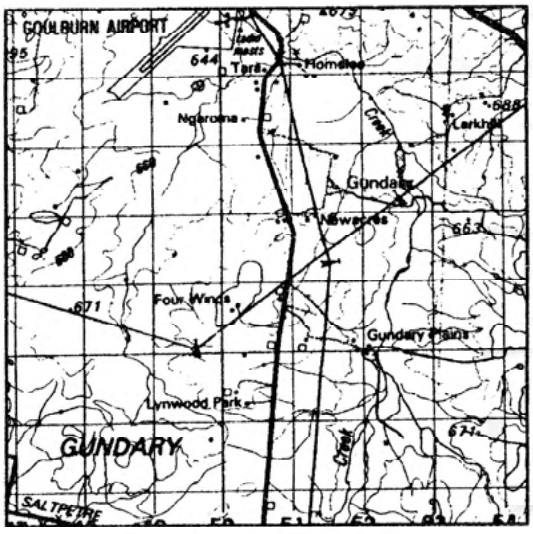
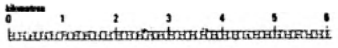


Area 24 km south west of Campbelltown



Area 4km south of Goulburn

Area on the outskirts of Moss Vale



BUDGETS 1997

In the NSW State budget $339.4 million has been allocated to the environment, despite a decrease in capital spending due to the completion of stage 1 of the scientific laboratories at Lidcombe. This is an increase of $24.7 million, which includes an additional $6.8 million for the NPWS, a necessary increase in view of the additions to the national parks estate.

Senator Robert Hill claims that the Federal budget has allocated $255 million to the environment, which is up from $194 million last year. The National Heritage Trust Fund (created from the Telstra sale) will contribute with $290 million being spent on Trust related programs for biodiversity and sustainable agriculture. On current estimates a total of $1.75 billion will be spent on Trust related environmental programs between 1996-7 and 2001-2.

Senator Hill's claims are attacked by the environmental movement. The ACF claims that the Natural Heritage Trust fund is about 25 per cent less than was promised before the election, that the Trust funds have been spread over six years instead of five, as was originally promised, and that the funds may be able to subsidise commercial operations such as plantation establishment.

Senator Meg Lees says that spending on the National Estate, National Parks and World Heritage is $60 million short of the ALP's forward estimates, even taking into account Natural Heritage Trust funds. Senator Bob Brown says that further cuts and harsh re-structuring for environment protection agencies are likely following the budget.

He says that Prime Minister John Howard promised before the 1996 election that the Natural Heritage Trust Fund would be additional to normal budget funding. 'That promise has been broken. The claim that $3 billion will be spent between now and 2000-01 is a monumental swindle - in one swoop that figure is equalled by the $3 billion handed out through the Diesel Fuel Rebate to a handful of mining corporations.' Mr Duncan Kerr, Shadow Minister for the Environment, says that the Coalition has effectively torn asunder the fabric of its electoral mandate.

At the centre of its campaign commitment was as unqualified promise to provide $1.25 billion over five years to the environment - on top of Labor's forward estimates.

Instead it has re-badged existing programs and put them under the Natural Heritage Trust Fund banner which has been spread over six years, while cutting ongoing spending at the same time including - $28 million from environment programs; $2 million from the Australian Heritage Commission, $3 million from payments to states for World Heritage management; $7 million from Australian National Parks and Wildlife Conservation; and $12.5 million from the scrapping of the Daintree rescue package. ■

THE GOVERNMENT GIVETH AND THE GOVERNMENT TAKETH AWAY

In March Australians for an Ecologically Sustainable Population received word that the Minister for Science and Technology, The Hon. Peter McGauran, had approved a grant to AESP of $20,000. Three weeks later a member of AESP received a phone call warning that Senator Harradine was trying to get the grant blocked. Four days later AESP received a phone call, confirmed by a fax, from Dr. John Bell, Deputy Secretary of DEST, saying that there had been a 'Departmental mistake' and AESP would not receive the grant.

AESP cannot prove that Senator Harradine leant on the Minister for Science to withdraw the grant. On the other hand it is no secret that Senator Harradine's vote is critical to the passage of government legislation. It is known that he was successful in holding back Australia's foreign aid commitment to family planning under Labor. His rejection of all that AESP stands for is recorded in Hansard.

AESP Newsletter
June 1997

An airport outside Sydney

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which an airport there would engender would probably ensure the profitability of the very fast train.

Considerable environmental advantages would be gained from the train service. It would replace much of the air polluting air and road traffic between Sydney and Canberra and reduce road traffic in the Sydney area.

The effects of auditory pollution from Sydney sites would also be reduced if Kingsford Smith were abandoned. The train trip to Goulburn would occupy little or no more time than that now necessary to drive through the congested suburban road system to Kingsford Smith or the south western suburbs.

A little more time spent reaching the airport is not much to ask of the 1 per cent of the NSW population flying on any average day. ■

MEETING DATES

Meetings will be held on July 31st, August 14th and 28th and September 11th.

Experimental Mismanagement

In the last Bulletin, the activities of Sydney's Water's perplexing Adaptive Environmental Assessment Management (AEAM) process were described. The process is examining possible increased access for 4WD users, horseriders, commercial tour operators, anglers, canoeists, cyclists and bushwalkers to the water supply catchments. The self interest of most of those participating in this process is apparent from the repeated calls for more access, and disregard shown for the NPWS wilderness policy, including by Sydney Water.

Part of the AEAM process involves opinion surveys of the thirty or so participants. If a collective view of stakeholders is determined by these surveys, the process incorporates that opinion into the development of access management proposals.

The bias of the participants is revealed by some of the responses to the many surveys of the AEAM participants. Nearly all users believed that the risks to water consumers from their activity are insignificant and/or overstated. Most participants also thought that the risks to water quality from other users activities have been understated.

Those adversely affected by increased access for all, the water consumers, would take a much more precautionary view of the risks posed by the proposed activities of land holders, commercial tourism operators, off road vehicle users and horseriders than those users. The views of interest groups representing water consumers, however, are not represented in the process.

Another remarkable outcome from one of the questionnaires is the breadth of common ground perceived by Recreational 4WD Clubs Association and the Public Land Users Alliance with other participants.

These anti-wilderness groups even claim common ground with the Colong Foundation. We anticipate these statements of common ground will not be taken seriously by the AEAM facilitator, Professor Alistair Gilmore.

The weakness of the AEAM process is that it is seeks comprehensive explanations of complex catchment problems simply by analysing and describing its parts. Environmental impacts of access to catchments can be related by simple relationships to levels of use, and hence complex phenomena are apparently explained.

Given the bias and political motivation of the interest groups denying the environmental impacts of their activities, the social inputs to the reductionist modelling of the AEAM process will be misleading. That is, garbage in, equals garbage out. For example, the Recreational 4WD Clubs Association consider the potential 4WD use of the Warragamba catchment is about 400 of their members per year, whereas the Parks Service consider the figure closer to 24,000 per year!

The most controversial issue with the AEAM approach is the degree to which sociological factors can magnify the ridiculous conclusions into absurdity. Comments, such as those from the anglers who desire to fish on Lake Burragorang in electric powered boats but claim they will toss the fish caught back in the lake, indicate that this factor will be very large indeed.

To overcome the absurdities of technical/sociological analysis with little or no facts, two techniques are used - technical committees and experimentation. There have been three technical committees convened so far and at least another will deliberate on the access issue. About half of representatives of the dozen or so of these committee members are Sydney Water bureaucrats, while the NPWS has only one representative. So much for joint catchment management.

Experimentation, called adaptive management, may overcome the lack of information by a series of trials that will measure the impacts for various levels of access. The only problem with this approach is that in attempting to discover the facts in the information detritus, the off road vehicle users, anglers and commercial tourist operators get access to sensitive catchment areas - and not just a few.

Professor Gilmore believes that from a resource management viewpoint it is better to have a big increase in use so that the impacts can be measured, than an incremental increase where the changes to the environment may be obscured by other factors, such as rainfall for example. Nor is there any need to assess the effect of 4WD usage and horseriding.

This has been adequately covered by the State Pollution Control Commission Inquiry on the recreational use of off-road vehicles and the Victorian Track Monitoring Project of Peter Jacobs. In any case such experiments would damage the ecological integrity of the drinking water catchments and be contrary to Sydney Water's objectives.

The political problem of getting unsuitable users out again is not well addressed by the trial management approach.

The retention of shacks in Royal as described in the previous Bulletin, intrusive and environmentally damaging exotic bee keeping in parks, and the acceptance of severe erosion through horseriding in Kur-ring-gai National Park are examples of why

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Factor Four

Factor Four: doubling wealth – halving resource use: the new report to the Club of Rome by Weizsacker, Lovins & Lovins, Allen & Unwin, 322pp, $24.95

reviewed by John Blay

The Club of Rome's Limits to Growth, published in 1972, was arguably one of the most influential works of the past fifty years and there is every reason to believe that Factor Four will follow its lead. It states the case of more for less, that if resource productivity were increased by a factor of four then the world could enjoy twice the wealth that is currently available. The book gives many examples of revolutionising resource productivity, not just theoretical models but directions we can take as well as some of the practical things we can do in our day to day lives.

Many of the examples are of a nature that government should promote, that architects and builders should be incorporating in their buildings and we should be demanding. They give techniques on how to improve air conditioning, alternative methods of cooling, superwindows and ways to save concrete. They even show ways to dramatically improve vehicle manufacture as well as the productivity of transport systems.

There are also methods for reinventing agriculture, such as using ordinary perennial prairie grasses as an alternative to the highly hybridised, genetically vulnerable, input intensive cereals that cannot survive weather and pests without constant intervention.

Factor Four also, it would be interesting for our Prime Minister to note, has a significant contribution to make in answering the challenges of the Rio Earth Summit, namely, sustainable development, biodiversity and climate.

Amidst the wide confusion caused in society generally by changing market forces and the technological revolution, it is now generally accepted that technology in itself is insufficient to save the world. The authors do not shy away from the big questions, just as they recognise the mistakes of the past, including their own. There is a new political agenda currently being written for Australia and, if justice has anything to do with it, this book will be a big player in the end result.

Factor Four does not avoid issues like profitability and taxes. Ecological tax reform, it suggests, would allow fair prices to be paid for the consumption of common goods and it could even be done with no loss of revenue.

A shift from tax to environmental charge on 'bads' rather than on 'goods' could well work to arrest the damage to our economy by 'perverse taxes' which plainly penalise 'goods', namely human labour and the successful use of capital.

How long can green economics remain the ugly duckling to market forces? And yet the economics are only a small part of the greener agenda. It is only too easy to forget the ends that economic tools were constructed to serve.

The authors say, 'Markets, if allowed to work properly, are very good at achieving their stated goals, but those goals are far from the whole purpose of a human being. It is to seek that fuller purpose that we have politics, ethics and religion; and if we ever suppose these greatest achievements of the human spirit can be replaced by economics, we stand in peril of our souls.'

We do things by rote, by custom, and appear blind to any sort of different approach. When Mullah Nasrudin was asked which was the more important, the sun or the moon, he responded in favour of the moon, 'Because it shines at night, when we need the light more.'

First printed in 'The Republican' on July 3, 1997 ■

Environmental mismanagement

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increased access in Warragamba catchment will become non-reversible experimental mismanagement.

The Foundation considers that continued exclusion of vehicles and horses is the only effective means of protecting these important areas from inappropriate development and overuse by the 4 million Sydney residents nearby. That is, wilderness management which precludes these activities is the best form of catchment protection.

The Burragorang Valley, Yerranderie area and Bindook Tablelands are sandwiched between the declared Nattai and Kanangra-Boyd wilderness areas. If this link area is not managed in sympathy with the surrounding tracts of wilderness and the inner catchment requirements, then the natural environment will be degraded and stored waters polluted.

The claim by off road vehicle enthusiasts and horseriding groups that they can prevent environmental impacts through regulation is as credible as their claims that they cause less impact than any of the others wanting access to the catchments. ■

Ethinvest

If you have anything left over after supporting the Colong Foundation and would like to make an environmentally benign investment, we suggest you ask Ross Knowles of 15 priory Close St. Ives, Phone 02 9440 8024, Managing Director of Ethinvest, for a copy of Ethical Investment in Australia.

Ministers decide not to decide on the environment

The above is David Humphries' description (SMH 17th June) of the outcome of the Australian and New Zealand Environmental Conservation Council meeting in Cairns. The problem of environmental controls on Commonwealth facilities was passed to yet another intergovernmental summit – the Council of Australian Governments. In otherwords they decided the issues deserved further consideration.

Licensed to burn

The NSW Government has prepared bench mark legislation to improve regulation of the Rural Fire Services (previously the Department of Bush Fire Services). The Rural Fires Bill opens bushfire risk management plans to public exhibition and review. The Nature Conservation Council of NSW will be represented on both the peak Co-ordinating Committee and the Advisory Council of the Rural Fire Services. This should accelerate the adoption of environmental principles within Rural Fires Services.

The principles of ecologically sustainable development (ESD) laid down in the proposed legislation will be applied to bushfire risk management plans through prior ecological assessment and implementation strategies. Rural Fire Services can exempt land owners from undertaking prescribed burn offs for ecological purposes.

Under the Victorian Flora and Fauna Act, inappropriate fire regimes and implementation strategies are often listed as a major threat to biodiversity conservation. The Victorian bush fire brigades addresses this concern by issuing burn off exemptions for conservation purposes. The NSW legislation also reflects these environmental concerns. Minister for Emergency Services and Member for the Blue Mountains, Mr Debus, has given further undertakings that the environmental provisions in this new act will be incorporated into the Fire Brigades Act so that urban bushland is managed to the same environmental standards.

Under the new NSW legislation, bushfire fire risk management strategies other than burning, such as selective hand/mechanical removal of understorey bushes, are recognised. A fire permit under the proposed legislation can not be used to burn off threatened species habitat. A separate licence under the Threatened Species Conservation Act, 1996 will be required for such burn offs. Nor can land owners be directed to destroy trees if it affects threatened species, populations, communities or critical habitats. Bush fire risk management plans can restrict or prohibit use of fire, for example, to protect flora, fauna or cultural heritage.

The issue of hazard reduction permits does not remove the requirement for a licence to destroy threatened species. Inappropriate burn offs are still possible. Environmental issues such as scale, fire frequency and ecosystem vulnerability also are not required to be addressed under the revised proposals for fire management plans. Only specifically genuine fire emergencies threatening life and property should be exempt from the environmental assessment and endangered species legislation. A very important initiative is the right of private landholders to appeal locally against notices requiring them to carry out hazard reduction burning. Appeals heard by the Land and Environment Court are also possible.

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW is concerned that the legislation still provides the Rural Fire Services with the ultimate power to fight fires in national parks (including wilderness areas) and water supply catchments. State Forests, National Parks and Water Catchments can be entered by Rural Fire Services to carry out bush fire hazard reduction Ôto the extent necessary to give effect to a bush fire risk management plan. The right to enter these lands is of concern, as these activities are not subject to environmental assessment. The NPWS and Sydney Water should retain full responsibility for operational control of wildfires. A repeat of the unlawful access to Mount Kerry, Wollemi National Park, established during the January 1994 fire emergency must be avoided.

The legislation should give Rural Fire Services a greater role in town planning. The Commissioner of Rural Fire Services should be able to pre-

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Pest Species Management

A draft pest species management plan for the Blue Mountains has been completed by Mr Chris Banffy of the NPWS Oberon Office. Mr Banffy is one of several pest species managers, a position created in the last two years to upgrade park management in this important area.

Pest management programs have recently been implemented in the Abercrombie River National Park, the Wolgan Valley and in elsewhere in the new Gardens of Stone National Park. About 800 goats have been destroyed in the Abercrombie Valley, and hundreds of hectares infested with Serrated Tussock treated in a cooperative effort with local council officers.

A significant rock wallaby habitat in the Wolgan Valley has been assessed for future feral cat and fox control programs. While rangers were in the valley, weeds were controlled along the Wolgan River in the Wollemi National Park.

New pig control techniques for use in remote areas, such as the Kowmung River valley, are being developed with the assistance of bushwalking clubs. Pigs are a recent occurrence on the area. Moss Vale Rural Lands Protection Board ranger, Mr Andrew Glover, warned in the Penrith Press that 'its illegal to transport a live feral pig.' A $10,000 fine applies. Pig doggers - hunters that use dogs to chase down pigs for 'sport' - are reported to be active in the Lithgow, Orange and Bathurst Districts.

Pig migration 'by utility' threatens the viability of humane pig control techniques, such as using radio collars to locate pigs and then trapping the whole family. Anyone seeing pig doggers or dangerous black pigs being transported, especially within a national park, should immediately contact the local ranger station or rural lands protection board. ■

An environmentally friendly uranium mine — *What's next, selling parks!*

There can be no greater folly than uranium mining in a world heritage national park — except for Energy Resources Australia's CEO, Phillip Shirvington claim, that Ranger uranium mine has 'no detrimental effect on the environment'. ERA is relying on Ranger's environmental performance to obtain approval for the Jabiluka uranium mine.

Readers are reminded that the Ranger mine, a huge rock crushing and uranium extraction factory, is set inside Kakadu National Park. The Arnhem Highway and the medium sized town of Jabiru were built to serve it. These activities have a huge impact on the natural and cultural environment of the park. A giant hole and a one kilometre square heap of finely ground rock dust full of chemicals and radionuclides has been created, along with numerous huge ponds and rock heaps that are somewhat less radioactive.

The Colong Foundation reported in our submission to the draft environmental impact statement that total containment of contaminants is yet to be achieved. Ranger used the spray irrigation system to dispose of excess water from the mine. Under this system bushland near mine is irrigated so that excess water accumulated during the wet season is discharged by land application. The proposed underground mine at Jabiluka will collect ground water. It is likely that water far in excess of requirements of uranium processing will be collected and require discharge to World Heritage wetlands downstream.

In addition to mine-based problems, the Jabiru mining town exports thousands of tonnes of plant nutrients via its primitive sewage treatment plant to the park environs. World Heritage listed wetlands have been altered, for example, the plant nutrients from the sewage have promoted the spread of aquatic weeds, including s. molesta.

The Jabiru township is set to double, if the Jabiluka uranium mine is approved as foreshadowed by Deputy Leader, Tim Fisher. The establishment of a permanent town is contrary to the findings of the Fox Report (the report of the Federal Government Inquiry into uranium mining in the Alligator Rivers Region). The Fox report found that the 'greatest threat to the environment... may prove to be the large white population. If the Pancontinental mine [sic]' is also developed the position could become unacceptable' (Pancontinental's Jabiluka mine was purchased by ERA).

The expanded town must cause an increase in weed infestations in downstream wetland areas. The ecological threshold will be reached that threatens the area's delicate ecology. Any expansion of the Jabiru township and expansion of its population also will exacerbate existing social problems for the local Aboriginal community.

A private all weather haul road would then be built for the mine, in addition to the public highway extension that goes right past the Jabiluka mine lease. The haul road, of course, is to ERA 'the no detrimental impact option'. The proposal will lead to increased wildlife road kills as wildlife corridors are not proposed. The alternative option, threatened by ERA if it does not get its way, would include construction of another uranium factory in the park.

Uranium is a very special heavy metal. After use in power stations it can be recycled into atomic bombs. ERA is excited by China's ambitious plans for nuclear power production. But, ERA assures us that none of its uranium will end up in bombs.

Jabiru realty realisations

An interesting sideline for ERA mining operations is the proposed sale of home blocks in the Jabiru township, a part of Kakadu National Park. ERA wants to recover the money invested in the town's establishment. Buy our uranium and at no extra cost receive your place in tropical paradise at our Kakadu condo, — could be a good sale line with northern hemisphere power corporations, especially in winter.

The sale of national park land would be immoral. National Parks are for nature conservation, not windfall profits. ■

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scribe areas of high bush fire risk. The Colong Foundation considers that residential subdivision should be prohibited in areas of high bush fire risk. Nearly all fires originate in developed areas and if owners in these areas took responsible action it would seldom be necessary to burn breaks in parklands.

Council approval of residential areas in fire prone bushland ultimately threatens the volunteer basis of Rural Fire Services. No volunteer should have to risk their life to save the dwellings of those foolish enough to build in fire prone bushlands. Mr Debus in his second reading speech has indicated that he would consider such an amendment should the need be identified (the Foundation is eager to obtain photographs and reports of new homes being constructed in known fire prone areas). ■

Photographic exhibition: Eighty years of conservation

A photographic exhibition, sponsored by the Hon Bob Debus M.P., featuring the art of Alan Rigby and Henry Gold, will be held at the Fountain Court in NSW Parliament House from September 23rd to October 3rd. Jeff Rigby's description of the background of the exhibition and details of viewing times will be published in the September Colong Bulletin.

Donations

The Colong Foundation gratefully acknowledges donations from the following supporters during the six months to June 30:

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Building up Victoria's snow country

Lifts on Mt. Loch and Mt. Mckay; a jet airport to service Mt. Hotham; a Mt. Hotham-Falls Creek Helicopter transit over the Alpine National Park; a golf course and a polo field at Dinner Plain; real-estate expansion everywhere – is this just the beginning? Will five-star wilderness lodges at Lake Mountain and at Mt. Stirling be next?

from Park Watch, VNPA Journal, June 1997

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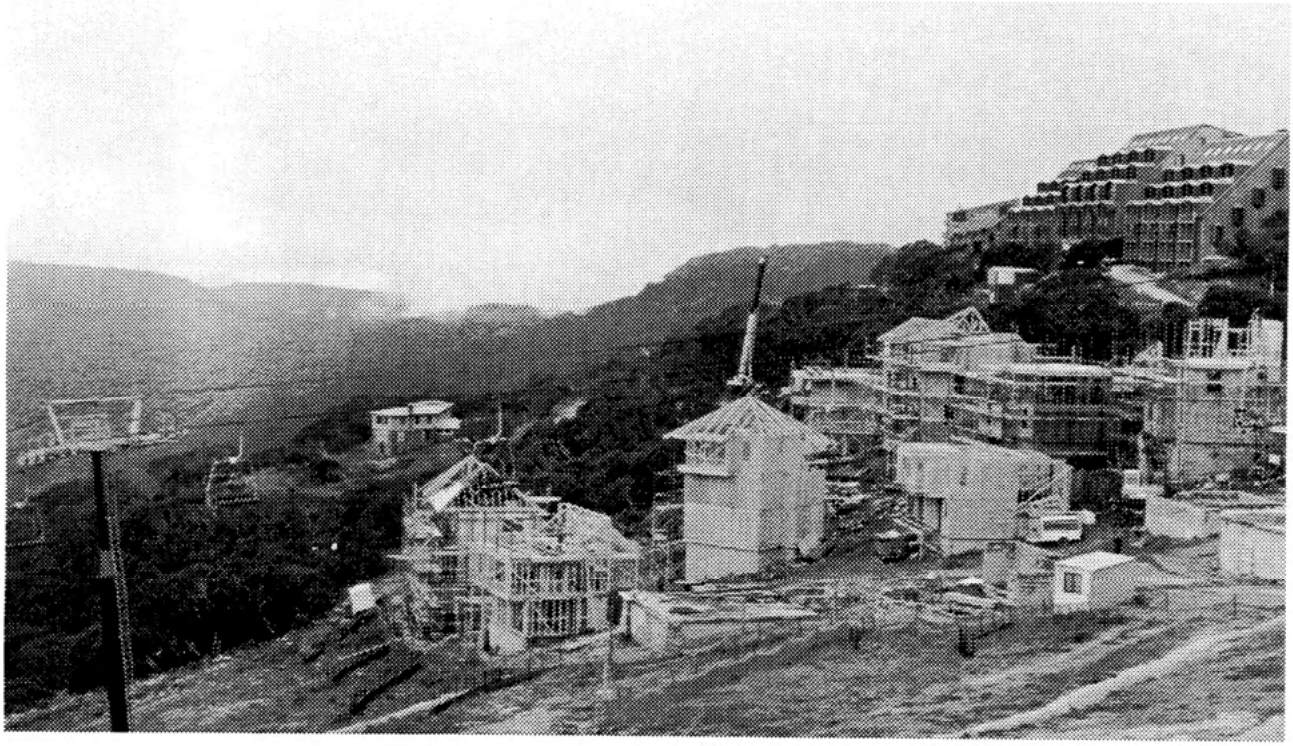

Real estate expansion at 'The Basin' Mount Hotham, a real estate rather than skier driven development. PHOTO: RODNEY WATERMAN

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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

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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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