



THE COLONG BULLETIN

Bulletin 166

THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS LTD

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Environmental problems in Australia reflect developments over the years that have followed European settlement: the cumulative consequences of population growth, its distribution around our coastal fringes, our life-styles, the new technologies and the increased demand for, and exploitation of fuel and other resources. We Australians bear an extraordinarily heavy burden of obligation to ourselves and future generations to protect and preserve the environment of our continent. If we do not remain vigilant and address these problems, they will overcome us.

The Governor-General, Sir William Deane, in an address to the Keep Australia Beautiful Council 11/9/97

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Finance for Campaigning

We describe our objective in four words - the preservation of wilderness. Our earlier campaigns were directed against mining logging and grazing, which are now excluded from gazetted wilderness. These threats have now been superseded by those of recreational, commercial and development interests, as described in this Bulletin.

Most of the main campaigns of the Foundation have been successful. This is mainly due to the wide range of expertise voluntarily contributed by its members; it includes accounting, auditing, photography, secretarial, publication, company procedure and legal advice. The Bulletin costs are restricted to layout and postage. It would cost many dollars a copy if we had to pay for printing, writing, collation etc. We have only one paid employee who would earn a six figure sum if paid at public service rates, including overtime.

We cannot, however make this voluntary work effective without financial support. Campaigning requires communication with parliamentarians, the media, the public and other conservation organisations. This requires a large outlay on the printing of submissions and pamphlets, telephoning, postage, fax costs, photocopying etc, costs which are heavy because the Foundation frequently plays a leading role in the campaign coordination of conservation organisations.

The Foundation meets fortnightly, so as to keep abreast of events. All members are welcome, but we don't expect them to turn up regularly. They can however play a very valuable role by providing the finance to make the work of the voluntary workers effective. So we are making our yearly appeal to members and supporters to renew their subscriptions and make a donation if they can afford it.

THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS

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Wild Places

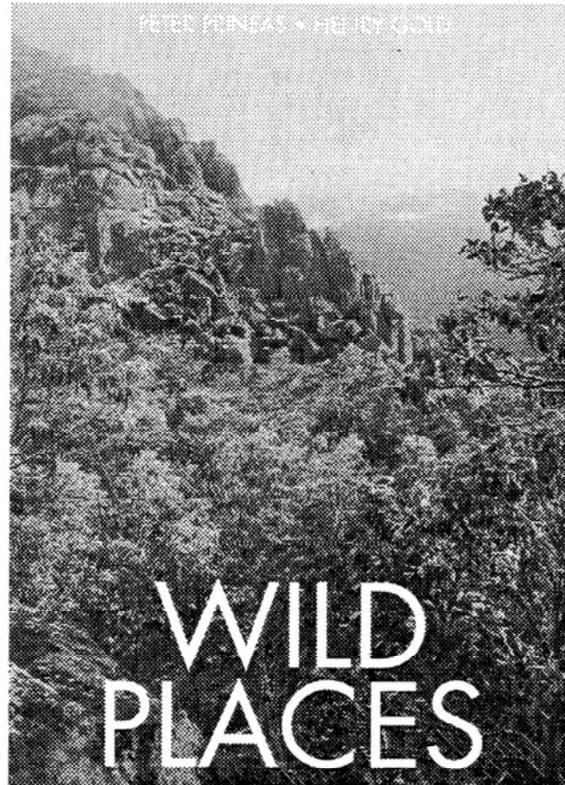
by Peter Prineas and Henry Gold

The new updated edition of *Wild Places* was launched by Robert Pallin on December 11th before an enthusiastic gathering of conservationists in the office shared by Envirobook and Colong. The first edition, published in 1983, has been out of print for some time, but constant enquires and the price of second hand copies indicated considerable demand for the book, which has been updated to include recent developments. It is the product of more than five years of detailed research, and visits to more than 20 areas.

The first five chapters describe the evolution of the concept of wilderness as accepted by conservationists.

Interestingly enough the book starts with a rebuttal of the concept of *Terra Nullius*, written 10 years before the High Court declaration that it did not exist. To the first settlers the wilderness 'seemed limitless and threatening.' The pastoralists had appropriated most of the fertile lands and watering places used by the Aborigines by the 1830s, and they were forced to take refuge in remnant wilderness areas, which were also the refuge of bushrangers and other criminals. The dawn of the wilderness conservation movement is described in a chapter on "The Cathedral", a title taken from the poet Roland Robinson's description of Blue Gum Forest. In the next chapter, "The Battleground", the post war fight for wilderness preservation, including the Colong, Boyd and rainforest campaigns, the Wilderness Act and subsequent declarations, is described.

The initial chapters are followed by descriptions of 27 eastern NSW wildernesses, covering history, geology,



exploration, early bushwalks, ecology and much else.

The book concludes with a survey of wilderness legislation, wilderness definitions, access points and 25 pages of references; a very valuable source of information for any researcher.

At the launch our chairman, Pat Thompson, whose advice and assistance in publication has been essential, introduced Robert Pallin and Peter Prineas. Robert emphasised the significance of the book to the conservation concept of wilderness and the need to 'educate decision makers and users about conservation and the primary purpose of our state's reserve system... This is a fight that must be won. It is a fight that future generations will praise us for if we win and condemn us if we lose. Wilderness is becoming more important as we convert previously natural

areas to the uses of humans. If we allow the overuse of national parks and the non preservation of wilderness we will be letting down future generations and ourselves.'

Peter described his book as 'A book that attempts to operate on a number of levels. It is an account of the wilderness idea in Australia, with an emphasis on NSW. It is a physical description of the state's eastern areas illustrated with photographs and maps. It is a history of NSW (and to some extent Australia) from the perspective of wilderness. It tries to provide an Aboriginal context for wilderness. It is a history of conservation and bushwalking. It is an account of government policy and legislation for wilderness conservation. The writing of the book attempts to bring it within the boundaries of literature and

the photographs try to make it art. Others should judge whether the book succeeds at any level.'

The book entailed years of painstaking research. Peter was encouraged to undertake it by a number of helpers, mostly members of the Colong Foundation. The first edition, which was financed by mortgages on the authors' homes, was not a financial success. We believe the second edition will be, but whether it is or not, its true value is its contribution to wilderness conservation. Peter describes it as 'a labour of love.' All the most valuable contributions to the battle for the bush come from the dedicated volunteers or the underpaid.

Wild Places is available from the Colong Foundation for \$34.95, including postage. Payable by cheque or bank card. The retail margin of \$14 accrues to the Foundation for books purchased from it. ■

Marketing Park Integrity

by Jim Somerville

The draft Nature Tourism and Recreation Strategy is excellent in the manner in which it espouses the philosophy that visitation to National Parks is not only in the national interest but also in the interests of the National Parks and Wildlife Service in that the end result is increased public support for the concept of protected areas. However, a downside, not mentioned in the Report, is that as tourism becomes a vital revenue earner for the Service, park managers and administrators may be tempted to overlook their guardianship role of minimal impact. The restriction of visitor numbers in fragile areas is rightly seen as essential but setting the right number involves Park managers in a conflict of interest. Pragmatically, when budgets are set for each of our popular Parks, they will be tempted to take risks and if they guess wrongly, the adverse results may well be irreversible. The determination of carrying capacity is absolutely vital, yet it is an inexact science with very little data available with which to decide the level of abuse an ecosystem can tolerate before it collapses.

Certainly in small highly used areas, boardwalks such as at Mt Kosciuszko, Minnamurra Falls and Dorrigo allow massive increases in carrying capacity but this must be offset against the necessary parking areas and toilet facilities and rubbish removal. On longer tracks, such as Bundeena to Garie and Otford, boardwalks would be extremely expensive. The planning process proposed in Figure 4 on page 40 envisages the determination of visitor numbers based wholly on 'ecological sustainability' but nowhere is there any guideline as to how this would be determined.

The Service has accepted the IUCN definition of a National Park as 'a natural area ... designed to protect ecological integrity of one or more ecosystems for present and future generations' while at the same time 'excluding exploitation inimical to the purpose of the dedication of the area.' However, in Appendix 3 on page 81, under which it is proposed to classify all the parks, Class 5 includes 'substantial modifications which dominate the immediate landscape.' In no way could such modifications 'enhance the conservation status of the area' or satisfy the above definition.

Similarly the provision of 'roofed accommodation' would be quite inappropriate, involving as it must roading, parking, and services such as electricity, garbage and sewage disposal. Inevitably the ecological integrity would be compromised. 'Integrity' is a much better guide than 'sustainability'. Large groups inevitably travel by coach and if overnight accommodation is necessary, then it should be provided by private enterprise outside the Park - the policy in U.S.A. for the last 20 years at least.

The Statutory provisions of the N.P.W. Act in Section 72 (4) state that in preparing plan of management regard must be had to the prohibition of the erection of any works adversely affecting the natural conditions or special features of each National Park yet, in the interests of dubious economic gains, it is now proposed to ignore this obligation. Commercialisation is already a factor in two of our Parks - Kosciuszko and Warrumbungles - to their ecological detriment. Both are continually being expanded to accommodate more visitors in a manner largely at variance with the IUCN definition which the Service supports. In the latter case

permanent facilities are now proposed at two separate areas within the heart of the Park instead of relying on accommodation available outside. In the light of experience gained by the U.S.A. Parks Service where one third of 54 major parks plan to demolish such facilities, this is absurd. In Grand Canyon, Sequoia and Yosemite, buildings have already been demolished while at Zion, Denali, Arcadia and Yosemite entry by car is already denied completely at certain times.

It is a dangerous philosophy which would allow 'supply and demand' considerations to determine carrying capacity. The clear implication is that so long as the demand for facilities exists then it should be met in line with paragraphs 103 and 104 on page 53 of the Report. Phrases such as 'strategic marketing and product distribution' give the clear impression that the aim of bringing economic benefits to the Service and the State as enunciated on Page 14 is more important than the NPWS's primary conservation role - in other words this draft policy is driven by tourism and not biodiversity.

The Strategy proposals in regard to the five destinations around Sydney Harbour are excellent. But some of the strategy proposals in regard to the parks in fifteen regions require change. For example, in the Warrumbungles all the cabins should be outside the Park.

Little wildlife can be seen in parks close to Sydney. The Service should negotiate with Dr John Wamsley to set up an Earth Sanctuaries Ltd fenced area on private bushland outside Sydney which would be large enough to enable visitors to see not only wildlife common further west, but also endangered wildlife not normally seen in NSW, such as numbats, bilbies, woylies and boodies.

In conclusion, the Report has some excellent features but there is concern for some of the proposals for parks in regional areas which are clearly incompatible with the requirement for ecological integrity. Expansion of facilities to meet growing tourist numbers while at the same time enhancing the conservation status are mutually exclusive policies. ■

Meetings claim parks for nature

Two public meetings, one in Glebe of over 200 park supporters and the other in Katoomba of a further 150, called for NSW parks to be retained for nature conservation rather than exploited for commercial gain and inappropriate recreation.

The meetings were sponsored by peak environmental groups, including the Colong Foundation, to explain to a concerned public the movement's objections to the Carr Government's Draft Access Strategy. Bulletin 165 explained that the Strategy encourages expectations that parks will be opened up to increased four wheel driving, horse riding, commercial touring and other high impact uses. The draft strategy also states that there is a need to investigate commercial opportunities in national parks and that commercial resorts and lease operations enhance visitor experiences.

The Access Strategy has since been followed by the Draft Nature Tourism and Recreation Strategy released in mid November. This strategy seeks to facilitate tourism by identifying high tourism potential lands and marketing national parks overseas (see briefing attached to this Bulletin).

Speakers at the meetings were Penny Figgis, AM (ACF), The Hon. Ian Cohen (NSW Greens), Noel Plumb (NPA), Felicity Wade (TWS), Jeff Angel (TEC) and Peter Prineas (NCC). The central theme of the meetings was the opening up parks to commercial tourism and increased vehicular access which will compromise their central role in conserving nature. It was well received. Attempts to disrupt the Glebe meeting by the access lobby failed to win support from the meeting.

The meetings resolved by acclamation to call on the Minister for the

Environment to scrap the draft Access Strategy and replace it with a broadly-based visitor management policy that gives precedence to nature conservation and includes the following:

- No commercial tourism development should be allowed within national parks; and
- No increased access for four wheel driving and other high impact activities.

Frances Kelly of TEC introduced both talks with the Pam Allan's new vision of parks as a pie to be divided up amongst stakeholders, with nature competing for a slice of the pie, along with commercial operators and the four wheel drive lobby.

Penny Figgis drew attention to the US example where over one third of America's 54 national parks are currently implementing plans to reduce car use and protect and restore natural lands. The US Parks Service has seen that, in an ever-crowded world, commercialisation and accommodation of intrusive recreation, is a slippery slope to completely undermining the nature conservation purpose of national parks.

Ms Figgis, who is Vice President of the Australian Conservation Foundation, concluded that Parks Services should see as their highest priority the promotion of a key message: these lands are different - they are the only spaces on this crowded earth where we give a nodding acknowledgment to the rights of other creatures. They are sanctuaries of peace and beauty - beauty and wonder not just for human consumption - the birds don't just sing for us. To visit such refuges of the natural world is a privilege, not a right. Any visitation or tourism must be modest, accept constraints, walk lightly and respect the fact that these are, and must remain, sanctuaries for life's grandeur. ■

Carbon Emissions and Sinks

The most direct means of reducing carbon emissions would be a carbon tax. Since this would increase the cost of motoring and electricity, any government which introduced it would face defeat.

There is, however, another means of reducing Australia's net emission to zero. This is by increasing our forest cover, a policy which would be ineffective while land clearing exceeded reforestation. The Intergovernmental Committee on Ecologically Sustainable Development has been advised that the rate of clearing is approximately 2.5 times the rate of revegetation. Tree planting will make no net contribution to carbon absorption unless it exceeds clearing. An end to clearing and a large scale tree planting program could not only absorb all carbon emissions but be an essential counter to soil erosion and salination.

Commonwealth Greenhouse Policy Challenged

Both the NSW Government funded Sustainable Energy Development Authority and the Government itself contend that NSW can profitably meet any likely target from Kyoto for cuts by 2010, despite being even more reliant on coal fired power and coal exports than Australia as a whole. Canberra's economic research on the subject is partly financed by the fossil fuel industries. Professor Ian Lowe has stated that "the Government position has been unduly influenced by the fossil fuel industries. The most obvious evidence is the very close parallel between the industries' stance and that of the Government."

From a report by Murray Hogarth
SMH 25/11/97

The NPWS Corporate Plan (1995-96 to 1997-98) laid down a deadline of April 1996 for implementing the Government's policy to establish 7 new wilderness areas and extension of 9 existing areas. The Service did not meet this difficult challenge, but times up apparently, and the NPWS is now pursuing tourism as a priority (despite tourism in parks not being a part of the Government's election policy platform).

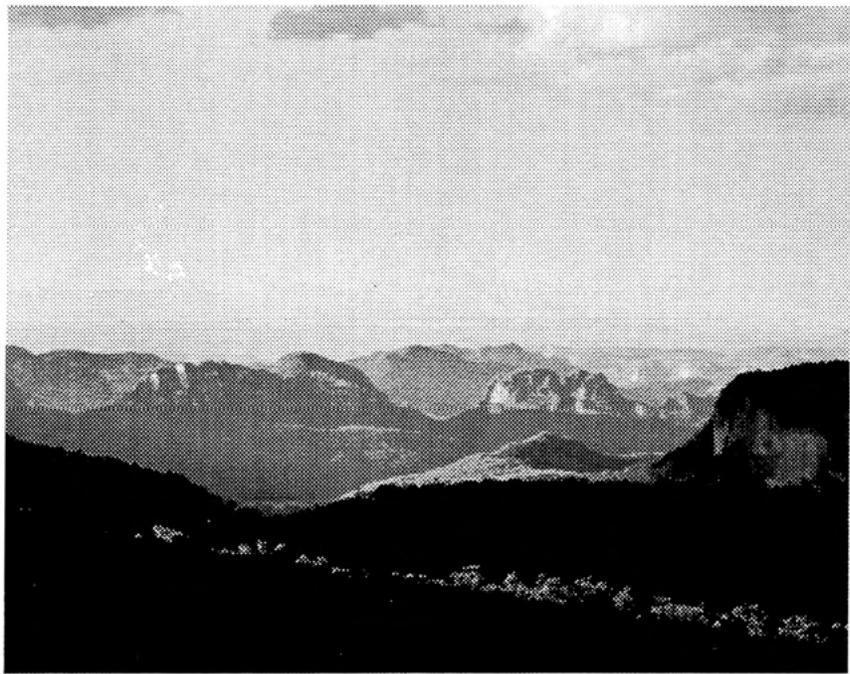
The capability of the NPWS Wilderness Unit declined significantly when the Unit's unflappable manager, Alan Ginns, was diverted to the national park tourism agenda. His replacement is likely to be overwhelmed by the large, highly political portfolio. The 'Unit' now consists of its new manager, and part time administration and technical officers. The Unit's project officer position is vacant.

Many in Government believe almost all wilderness in NSW is protected. The interim forest assessment reported that 90 per cent of the NPWS identified wilderness is 'protected'. The analysis, however, assumes that wilderness in a logging moratorium area or unreserved, but in a national park, is secure, while those areas over the Great Divide, like Pilliga, were not considered. While this may be appropriate for the forest policy, it is misleading. More than two thirds of the wilderness said to be protected is not gazetted under the Wilderness Act.

The Carr Government's wilderness election policy was supposed to increase the area of protected wilderness from 0.8 per cent to approximately 2 per cent of the state. So far the Government has declared 361,940 hectares or less than 0.5 per cent of the state.

Freedom from information

Even with capable and enthusiastic NPWS staff, the Deua additions nominated in December 1992 by the TEC's Canopy Committee has not been released and is over three years late. The Levers nomination was prepared by the Colong Foundation in August 1992 and the Pilliga wilderness nominated by Richard Rickert in June 1994 are also overdue by more than a year.



Headwaters of Widden Brook - a critical link in the Wollemi wilderness

Wilderness Delayed & Diminished

Contrary to the NPWS Corporate Plan, these delays signify an absence of priority for wilderness protection.

We have been informed that the wilderness assessments for Levers was completed in 1993, Deua additions in 1994, Yengo (Macdonald) in 1994. The NPWS claim these assessments cannot be released for public comment but have to be upgraded - an excuse intended to keep the wilderness assessments on hold. The Pilliga and Grose wilderness assessments should also be complete.

In May this year, in an effort to determine progress and direction of the wilderness assessment, the Colong Foundation requested drafts of these wilderness assessments under the Freedom of Information Act. These applications were refused by the NPWS on the grounds that

these reports were yet to be submitted to the Minister for the Environment. In August the Foundation appealed the decision on the grounds that the decision ignored the discretionary power in the Act to release the information. An internal review met with the same response and the Foundation will now appeal to the NSW Ombudsman.

Wollemi - back to first principles

The NPWS Wollemi wilderness assessment has severely trimmed the largest wilderness in the State. The difference between the NPWS identification of Wollemi and previous assessments is exclusion of buffer areas. Only 285,720 hectares are recommended

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Wilderness Delayed & Diminished

...continued from page 5

by the NPWS for protection, even though the Wollemi Wilderness is mainly within the 492,220 hectare Wollemi National Park. Adjacent public lands of high wilderness value adjoin Wollemi, including the Blue Mountains National Park were also overlooked. Even the leader of the Public Land Users Alliance, Ms Christine Bourne, casually remarked that she thought it a 'reasonable compromise'.

As a result of excluding wilderness buffer areas, core areas, like the Colo Gorge - icon of the park, may become a buffer area with ready vehicle access nearby and all the attendant problems of rubbish dumping and general dilapidation. Other areas, such as remote broken rock and plateaux country in the north of the park, were excluded because these areas overlook rural areas. Such views have no bearing on the ecological integrity and little on the experience of solitude.

Many declared wilderness areas in NSW adjoin farm land because wilderness consists of the 'left overs' of rural development - the Macleay Gorges, Mootwingee, Guy Fawkes, Bindery-Mann, Barrington, Nattai, Washpool, Werrikimbe, Grattai, Bimberly, Warrazambil, Lost World, Rusden, Grattai, Nandewar, New England and the Budawang wilderness areas adjoin grazing land. Yet the identified Wollemi wilderness avoids adjoining such lands.

The Rocky Creek Canyon, a natural cathedral of Gothic proportions, is subject to heavy use. Apparently if you use it, you lose it, as this popular and fragile area, and its companion, the Wollangambe Canyon, have been recommended for exclusion to accommodate tourism and heavy use. Nearly everyone, bar teenage thrill seekers, returning from a canyoning trip to these parts will attest the wilderness qualities of this area, providing adequate justification for wilderness reservation.

The alternative to wilderness is site hardening - a likely prospect if heavy use continues. Conservationists fear that the NPWS, instead of providing sensitive maintenance of tracks in

wilderness to prevent soil erosion, will upgrade vehicle and walker access (eg. stairs and rock bolts) to facilitate visitor use. The latter outcome would ruin the natural appeal of the area, and lead to a vicious cycle of increased use and further degradation. Such management is a classic example of placing the needs of park users reliant on vehicle access before nature-based park management.

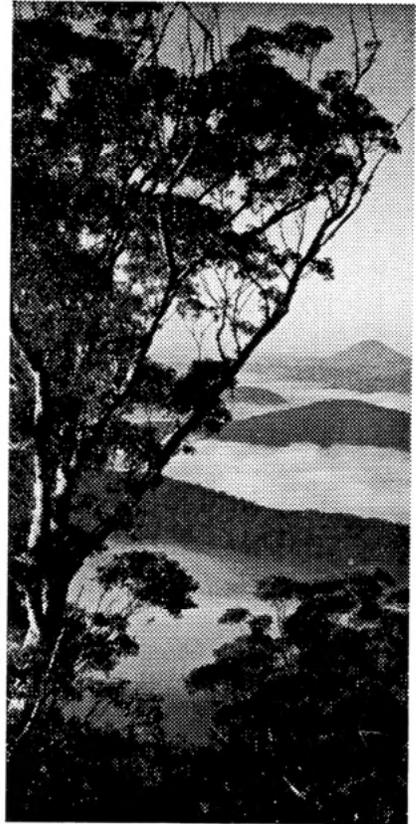
In response to the NPWS wilderness assessment, The Wilderness Society, Total Environment Centre, the Colong Foundation and the National Parks Association proposed the Wollemi Wilderness Plan. The Plan applied the same standards of wilderness identification as with previous wilderness assessments and, after weeks of careful aerial photographic interpretation, site inspection and review of historical data, included key buffer areas that remain in a wilderness condition. The Wilderness Plan boundary was drawn to the edge of the park or to intervening cultural features, such as major roads or power-line easements, or areas that have been heavily disturbed. The unnecessary trails in the Plan, once closed, will recover a wilderness condition in a reasonable time (eg. Since 1982, the controversial Coombadjha Road to the Viper Scrub in the Washpool wilderness has all but disappeared).

The Wollemi Wilderness Plan identifies all the wilderness within parks for protection totalling approximately 402,000 hectares. The Plan received the unanimous support of NSW environment groups at the Nature Conservation Council's 1997 annual conference, and includes the proposed park additions in the Coricudgy State Forest and headwaters of the Wollangambe River, as well as wilderness protection for canyon areas, such as Rocky Creek.

The Foundation awaits with interest the outcome of the Wollemi wilderness review to see if the NPWS has amended its proposal in the light of the Wilderness Plan. A condensed version of the Plan, richly illustrated with Henry Gold photographs, has been circulated to Government Ministers.

Fortunately the Brogo, the most recent wilderness to be identified by the NPWS, has adequate boundaries.

The Wollemi assessment may just be an aberration. But with the decline of the Wilderness Unit the conservation movement must make wilderness protection an even higher priority if these precious areas are to be secured under the sympathetic Carr administration.



Valley Mist and Mount Boonbura in the Wollemi Wilderness
PHOTOGRAPH BY HENRY GOLD

Donations

The Colong Foundation gratefully acknowledges donations from the following during the 6 months to Dec. 31st.: C.O.Boyd, the Budwang Committee, J Barnard, The Bush Club, Dr. J. Holt, A. Krol, J. Mayer, A. Mewett, Dr. P. Millard, J. Simons, P. Tate, Tukuthyme Trust.

Meeting Dates

Meetings will be held on
January 15th and 29th,
February 12th and
26th and March 12th
and 26th.

Wilderness... The Hard Yards

The Carr Government's March 1995 Wilderness Election Policy committed the government to gazetting the Macleay Gorges, Wollemi, Budawang, Kanangra-Boyd, Werrikimbe, Barrington Tops and Pilliga wilderness areas, and making substantial additions to the Ettremma, Nadgee, Goodradigbee, Deua, New England, Guy Fawkes, Mann, Washpool and Lost World (see map).

The policy to expedite wilderness protection worked effectively until the proclamation of the Forestry Revocation and National Park Reservation Act 1996. The legislation contains provisions that have delayed wilderness reservation of 130,000 hectares of forest.

The story so far

The previous Coalition Governments of Greiner and Fahey declared 652,000 ha of wilderness, mostly over existing national parks, despite constant harassment by the anti-wilderness lobby. The Carr Government has so far secured about 360,000 ha: A good initial effort, but less than a third of the area captured by its election policy. These areas included the less controversial national park and low productivity forest areas.

Round one

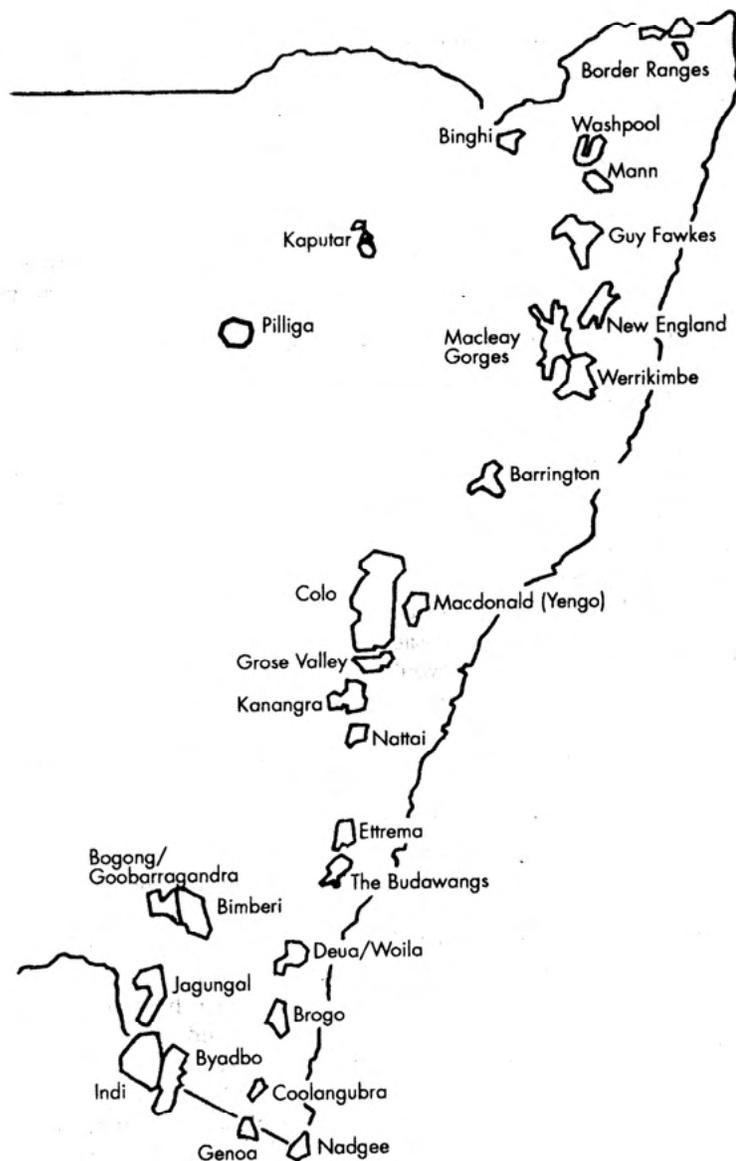
The Carr Government's first wilderness areas were gazetted in April 1996. These areas included some very important, and much loved wilderness - parts of Barrington, Budawang, Werrikimbe, Macleay Gorges, the southern half of Lost World wilderness (Warrazambil) and most of middle section of Goodradigbee (Goobarragandra), and additions to Ettrema and the western section of Goodradigbee (Bimberi). The Binghi wilderness was not part of the Government's wilderness policy, but

the core area was reserved as the 29,370 hectare Torrington State Recreation area, that will prevent most logging, while allowing mineral exploitation and existing uses.

Significant concessions within these wilderness areas were made to

accommodate the access lobby. So many concessions were made to the Kanangra-Boyd, that its declaration was delayed till February 1997. Part of the Boyd Plateau and the Kowmung River trail was excised for 4WD use, an easement was provided through Byrnes Gap to an inholding, and, worst of all, an easement eight kilometres along the Coxs River and six kilometres up Kanangra Creek for horse riding. The Sydney Water freehold lands in the Kanangra-Boyd wilderness, have not come over to the NPWS. Sydney Water, unhelpful as ever,

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Wilderness in Eastern NSW

insists that it has a legal obligation that requires the NPWS to buy its lands. So the lower Kowmung remains in the Corporation's hands - pending Sydney Water's next inundation scheme.

Round two

Following the September 1996 interim forest assessment process, the NSW Cabinet resolved to add key old growth forest areas to Nadgee, Budawang, Barrington, Werrikimbe, Macleay Gorges, New England, Guy Fawkes, Mann and Washpool wilderness areas. However, only the Barrington wilderness has been more or less secured, while other wilderness additions are still in limbo.

Round two was complicated by a provision in the Forestry Revocation and National Park Reservation Act, 1996 that excluded numerous internal trails from the new parks. Following further assessment, these easements should be included in the new parks and declared wilderness, but only with the agreement of Kim Yeadon, Minister for Forests.

As a result of the roads, the 128,930 hectares of forest wilderness were reserved as 'spaghetti' parks. The review process for these easements, however, is better than the alternative. The Upper House National Party Members, such as the Hon Douglas Moppett, proposed to delay passage of the legislation. Such delay would have led to an orchestrated opposition to the Government's conservation and forest initiatives.

There were of course major concessions to the access lobby apart from the road easements. The Government decided that when the expanded Werrikimbe wilderness is declared, it will be in three areas, allowing 4WD access between these areas. The western side of Washpool was to be split off to become the Timbarra wilderness leaving a gap to accommodate 4WD and horseriding access (including the Bicentennial National Trail).

A further 16,000 or so hectares of

identified wilderness were also made national park but not declared wilderness because these areas were either bisected by an access road or isolated from the main body of wilderness by private land.

Wilderness reservation was also complicated by 43 annual occupation permits for grazing. These permits should lapse on expiry at the end of 1997. If previous Governments had intended that these lands remain for grazing, a long term lease, rather than a permit, would have been issued. The task force set up to address the concerns of farmers consisting of the director generals for NPWS, Department of Land and Water, State Forests and a representative of NSW Farmers Association has reported. Its recommendations while secret, are unlikely to advance wilderness protection in NSW.

Round three

The strength of the Government's resolve to protect wilderness is now being sorely tested. Wilderness round three will run on for several months and possibly years, as it progresses wilderness protection in parallel with the forest assessment process.

The Wollemi, Deua and Pilliga areas contain the largest areas of unprotected wilderness within the Government's Wilderness Policy. A further 9,000 hectares of state forest from round two have been referred for further study under the forest policy processes, including about 3,500 hectares of the Bondo and Micalong State Forests within the Goodradigbee wilderness. All 9,000 hectares will be protected until the end of the forest process, and permanent preservation should result from the negotiated process outcomes (provided the Carr Government remains in power).

Another 22,000 hectares of identified wilderness on the north coast is leasehold land in state forests. A further 144,000 hectares of private leasehold land exist outside state forests. These leasehold wilderness areas include parts of the identified Washpool, Mann, Guy Fawkes, Deua and smaller parts of the New England and Werrikimbe areas.

The Dunphy Wilderness Fund, established for acquisition of wilder-

ness lands, shall receive five million dollars over the next five years (but the NPWS administration is dying to get its hands on it, despite the \$6.8 million 1997/98 increase in funding). Through voluntary acquisition the outstanding problems regarding access to inholdings could be solved over time.

Provisionally identified wilderness

Further areas, known as Provisionally Identified Wilderness, were identified through the State-wide wilderness assessment of the forest estate in 1996, an initiative conducted tirelessly by Anne Perry, former head of the Wilderness Unit. A total of 130,000 hectares (66,000 ha in 5 new areas and a further 74,000 ha in 12 additions to existing areas) were flagged by this process.

To ensure these areas received proper assessment, environment groups, including the Colong Foundation, nominated these areas for assessment (along with some suggested additions) under the Wilderness Act.

Unlike wilderness identified previously, the Provisionally Identified Wilderness (PIW) areas are not automatically protected under the forest policy. However, these PIW areas have generally fared well during the 1996 interim forest assessment, most areas being aside in a logging moratorium to the end of the forest negotiations. The Monga PIW forest area unfortunately is mostly available for logging, as is a large part of the proposed addition of part of the Gibraltar Range State Forest to Mann wilderness and the Styx River State Forest addition to Macleay Gorges.

The Current situation

The final forest negotiations for the Eden Region are all but complete, bar the public consultation process that will take place over the 1997/98 summer break. Tied up with these negotiations are key additions to the Brogo wilderness, proposed by environment groups. The final fate of the Coolangubra wilderness will also

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No Shacks in the 'Bungles - please!

Anyone who has been to the Warrumbungles at Easter time knows that this tiny park of 21,534 hectares is already developed enough. At Easter the park is packed out with 900 people staying overnight in its car camping grounds and a further 1,250 day visitors.

The new plan of management allows for the cabins, setting a precedent by opening the parks to 'hard top' commercial accommodation. According to Enviro News No.3, produced by the Environment Centre, Armidale, the park plan is a blueprint for development at nine sites within the park's boundaries, from car camping to cabins.

The Foundation understands that the local business community, NPWS District Office, the District NPWS Advisory Committee, the majority of submissions to the draft plan of management, the NPWS State Advisory Council and the Commonwealth Government all oppose the reinstatement of the cabins in the Warrumbungles. The cabins were removed from the park in 1986 by Mr Carr when he was Minister for Planning and Environment.

The NPWS Head Office apparently has advised Pam Allan to ignore this broad body of opinion or did not inform the Minister of the breadth of

opposition. In other areas opposition to park development is also broadly based. The Snowy Shire has pointed out that the local economy is suffering because resorts within the park are capturing local business. In many US parks accommodation is being removed, a policy which has public support.

The cabins are a precedent for new hard top accommodation in national parks, other than the ski resort accommodation in Kosciuszko National Park that has its own special issues. Those people who do not want to camp, can stay in the cabins, motels and hotels provided outside parks and enjoy parks as day visitors and that benefits local economies. NSW should not repeat the mistakes made elsewhere by developing parks.

It is obvious that the NPWS executive is keen on figuring out how the Service can part tourists from their money as a means of financially supporting park management. In order to market the parks, saleable and bookable facilities are necessary (e.g. cabins). The unpriced environmental impacts of sewage effluent and ugly powerline easements are not recoverable, and the service costs in providing sealed roads, car parking and utilities are not fully recoverable. So in realising the value of the parks assets there are

greater ecological and financial costs. But the main impact is that it denies the very purpose of parks, which is to set aside lands from development.

The NPWS executive support for cabins in the middle of Warrumbungles is indicative that NSW parks are no longer safe from tourism pressures. It suggests that the draft Nature Tourism and Recreation Strategy now on public exhibition will place a powerful administrative tool into the hands of those keen to establish park developments similar to the cabins at the Warrumbungles. The conservation movement needs to oppose this draft Strategy that advocates accommodation in parks. Good alternative development opportunities exist outside the parks.

Even if the arguments against cabins in the 'Bungles leaves the new pro-development NPWS unmoved, there is an even bigger issue, one that diminishes our vision of the universe. The greatly increased background light from the 'Bungle's modern-day tourist shanty town will blind the telescopes of the Siding Spring Observatory. The diminished effectiveness of an observatory containing the Southern Hemisphere's principal optical telescopes is not an acceptable price to pay for the NPWS-style of economic rationalism. Perhaps the nine figure observatory relocation costs should be factored into the NPWS balance sheet. But even if the money could be found there is no alternative site for the observatory, hopefully that's enough to put lights out on the development. ■

*Wilderness... The Hard Yards
...continued from page 8*

determined by this decision.

The Brogo wilderness of 54,500 hectares includes most of the Murrumbidgee state forest, as well as parts of the Wadbilliga and Bemboka national parks. The Brogo is one of the best forest wilderness areas on the eastern seaboard. The Brogo and Deua wilderness areas together make up the only region in NSW where a topographic sequence of forested tableland, escarpment and coastal foothill terrain can be reserved as wilderness. The Eden forest assessment, highlighted the importance of the Brogo

wilderness, giving the area some of the highest 'target scores' for forest type, old growth and habitat in the region.

To progress the wilderness program, roads in the new parks must be closed and the areas added to the wilderness estate. The Pilliga, Deua and Wollemi wilderness areas are core areas of the Government's Wilderness Policy and should be declared as soon as possible independent of the forest policy considerations. The Deua, however, is likely to be placed in the forest negotiation framework. It contains up to 33,530 hectares in the Dampier, Badja, Tallaganda and Wandella state forests including the Donald Creek

and Tuross area additions. These important forest areas should form part of the automatically protected layer as occurred during the earlier forest reviews. A further 55,364 hectares of identified wilderness in existing National Park has not been declared.

The 130,000 hectares of provisionally identified wilderness should also be declared through the forest policy. These areas should be subject to moratorium to protect the integrity of these areas during the process and negotiations should give priority to protecting these areas ahead of more fragmented areas of forest habitat. ■

PARK ACCESS SUBMISSION

The Colong Foundation and the Total Environment Centre prepared a joint submission on the Draft NPWS Public Access Strategy. Its aim is to refute the claims of the so-called 'stakeholders' in national parks. The parks are not reserved for the use of particular interest groups. The stakeholders are the people of NSW.

The submission covers 23 pages. It is supported by 8 appendices which reproduce authoritative support. They include the entire State Pollution Control Commission's Report on the Recreational Use of Off road Vehicles, Milo Dunphy's article on Horse Riding, P. Jacobs' Alpine Track Monitoring Report and NPWS Ranger Ian Brown's paper on Adventure Recreation in Protected Areas, which is of particular significance in relation to the NPWS policy of 'controlled access'. It may be possible to control the volume of access by a system of permits to favoured organisations, but the impact of vehicles and horses on dirt tracks cannot be controlled. Describing Current/Emerging Issues concerning the use of four wheel drive vehicles he reports that:

- 17 parks are reported to be suffering significant impacts.
- Impacts include localised damage from intensive activity, new trail formation and hill-climbing, as well as more dispersed impact from general deterioration of roads and trails. Specific trails through steep, erodi-

ble or otherwise sensitive terrain may exhibit severe impacts and track proliferation.

- The existence of four wheel drive tracks and fire trails provides opportunities for illegal activities such as arson, theft of rock and firewood, fauna poaching, animal dumping and illegal crop cultivation.
- The existence of vehicle tracks interferes with the natural movement of native fauna and promotes the ingress of introduced species.

On Current/Emerging issues concerning horseriding he writes:

- 9 park areas report horseriding as a major concern.
- 7 parks report horseriding as causing severe impacts.
- 8 parks report horseriding as a significant conservation issue.
- 11 parks report illegal horseriding.

Horseriding is known to cause rapid deterioration of trails and erosion at low thresholds of use on steep slopes and certain soil types.

Horseriding and walking on the same routes are generally incompatible recreational uses.

It is also noted that horseriders have a well organised and effective lobby and that effective management needs greater political commitment.

The South East Forest National Park

South East Forest conserves old-growth forests which contain a large diversity of habitats. Old-growth trees in the moister mountain areas can measure almost three metres in diameter and some are hundreds of years old.

from NPWS News Autumn 1997

It has been revealed that scientists and financiers told Mr Howard that rather than being a threat to Australia's economy tough world action to stop global warming would be profitable. Their strategy was to grow trees to absorb the main greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide. It was estimated that Australia has 53 million hectares suited to developing forestry "sinks".

SMH report 27/11/97

The Big Red Truck Turns Green

The Nature Conservation Council is convening a bushfire conference on Friday 27 February and Saturday 28 February, 1998 at Camperdown in Sydney. The conference follows up the first *Bushfire! Looking to the Future* in 1994 (available from NCC and published by Envirobook).

This second conference examines the operation of the Rural Fires Act (1997) which incorporates environment protection, public participation and appeal rights into bush fire management. It should make an interesting conference, especially now that Mr Peter Cochran, Member for Monaro is Shadow Minister for Emergency Services!

The conference costs \$90 for individuals and non-government organisations. For further information contact the Nature Conservation Council on 9247 4206.

NPWS Draft Nature Tourism And Recreation Strategy

The theme of this document is that parks can be both developed and conserved. The purpose of development is to generate revenue. The submission on the draft strategy by Jim Somerville is reproduced on page 3. It is critical of the proposed market oriented development proposals. A briefing document written by Frances Kelly, Project Officer with the Total Environment Centre is attached at the end of the Bulletin. It summarises the 107 page report, which only the most dedicated environmentalists are likely to read from end to end.

For more information on the draft Strategy, including a guide on making submissions, please contact Keith Muir on (02) 9241 2702.

TOTAL ENVIRONMENT CENTRE BRIEFING DOCUMENT: NPWS DRAFT NATURE TOURISM AND RECREATION STRATEGY

Introduction

The NPWS Draft Nature Tourism and Recreation Strategy is a program for major change to national park management designed to benefit the tourism industry and make parks pay their way.

Rather than managing NSW protected areas primarily for nature conservation, the NPWS will be adopting a "far more business-like approach" (p9) by focussing on marketing, promoting and facilitating tourism and recreation. This will be done in partnership with private and government tourism bodies and with increased "stakeholder" input to management decision making. **As a result management direction will be significantly influenced by those wanting to exploit national parks for profit and inappropriate use, despite a stated concern for environmental impacts.**

Restructuring parks for profit

National parks are seen as having the potential to greatly increase tourist spending in NSW. There are currently 22 million visitors to NSW parks each year but this is predicted to rise to 32 million by 2005 under the Strategy (p20). In seeking increased revenue, the NPWS will sell their "product" to those who are easy to charge and likely to bring in the most money - the organised recreational users and mass tourism market. This means providing more facilities in parks for visitors who prefer to stay in built accommodation or travel through them by vehicle. In turn the tourism industry will profit more from parks through increased touring and development opportunities.

Stage One of the plan is timed to be "completed and operational" for the Olympics (p71). In partnership with private enterprise and Tourism NSW, the NPWS will ensure that 15 "key destination" park areas are "directly linked with the marketing of the 2000 Olympics." (p9).

Development within national parks

The NPWS policy of "no new accommodation structures within protected areas" (p69) will be swept aside by: "Exceptions to this policy may apply to situations that demonstrate a net overall benefit to the conservation status of the affected protected area or *where existing planning processes have proposed the need for accommodation.*" (emphasis added) (p69). If adopted, this means that built accommodation will be provided where it is considered commercially viable (park privatisation). In the Warrumbungles National Park, for example, cabin developments have been proposed (p104).

Existing structures in national parks will also be utilised for accommodation and other purposes to support tourism (p54).

More commercial tourism and high impact recreation

The NPWS licences 162 commercial tour operators in protected areas but this is only a fraction of the actual number and does not include coach tours (p32). Under the draft Strategy, commercial tour businesses will be helped by a system that will "lead to further licensed commercial tour opportunities within protected areas" (p9). This help will include advertising commercial tour opportunities, regular liaison meetings with "clients and stakeholders", "developing a special relationship" with the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife (whose current main sponsor is Toyota) and developing "working partnerships" with tour operators (p62).

The NPWS will broaden the range of experiences in national parks for all visitors including the mass tourism markets and "recreation pursuits" such as horseriding and four wheel driving (p27). Nature tourism in the document is defined to include *all* visitor use of parks (p27). Current infrastructure (roads, walkways, visitor centres etc) will be upgraded, and "new or improved" tourist destinations will be established in national parks with assistance from the private sector and other partnerships (p33).

Restructuring park finances

The implementation of the Strategy's program will be resourced by reallocating existing NPWS funds (p10). No additional government funding is planned because increased revenue is expected from commercial opportunities. The draft Strategy states that the improved "planning and commercial management skills" of NPWS staff is expected to "significantly improve return of revenue" (p63) and management practices and techniques will be constantly reviewed to maintain customer service "even in environments of decreasing funding" (p52). Increased commercial tour licences will also earn the NPWS more money and a "whole of NPWS retail product line (or lines) will be developed in partnership with private enterprise" (p61).

Internal NPWS funds will be realigned to reinvest in "improvements" to the key regional destinations (p56). However, **it will be difficult to retain funds to protect an increasingly pressured environment, when those who pay to use the parks will demand visible value for money in the form of better roads, services and facilities.**

NPWS staff as tourist managers

Staff will be recruited with business, financial and management skills and existing senior management will be trained in "business management training skills, particularly in relation to financial and economic management principles, marketing..." (p60). Staff performance will be measured in key aspects of business (eg. response time to commercial tour

operating licence applications) (p60). New uniforms and badges will be introduced before the 2000 Olympics (p51). **The emphasis on marketing and providing customer service distorts staff duty statements from primary environmental duties. In many cases staff will be reduced to little more than glorified tour agents and traffic wardens.**

Competing with other States

Despite the already high visitor numbers relative to the rest of Australia, NSW is claimed to be lagging behind other States who "heavily market" their protected areas and are "far more organised for the holiday maker" (p27) such as Victoria (Wilson's Promontory resort), Queensland (Hinchinbrook resort) and Tasmania (Tarkine road).

In NSW, visitor desires, determined by stakeholder surveys etc, will be big influences on how parks are managed (a demand driven ideology). "Supply and demand" will be managed through methods such as "strategic marketing and product distribution" (p53).

Parks targeted for development

Parks in 15 regions will become prime tourist destinations through increased marketing and the identification, expansion and development of visitor facilities and commercial opportunities. These 15 regions are labelled in the Strategy as "key regional destinations proposed to be improved to *"international destination product quality"* (emphasis added) (p104). For example, in the Blue Mountains Govetts Leap at Blackheath and Valley of the Waters at Wentworth Falls will be upgraded for coach facilities (p104) and in Northern NSW at Mt Warning, rainforest boardwalks and a visitor centre/transport interchange will be provided (p56).

Parks in "key destination" regions are to be themed as follows: "Australia's Holiday Coast" (mid north coast), "Northern Rivers and Tropical NSW" (north NSW), "Explorer Country" (Central West), "The Living Outback" (Far West), Blue Mountains, "The Hunter", "Snowy Mountains", "South Coast", and "Southern Highlands". **These areas have been targeted because of their "ability to sustain visitor use" (p56), however, environmental values in many of them are already threatened by inappropriate use such as the ski resorts at Kosciuszko.**

Other parks, such as Barrington Tops and Myall Lakes will be marketed on a regional level for the domestic tourism market. (p58)

Relationship to the NPWS Draft Access Strategy

The Draft Tourism Strategy is a far more detailed and unambiguous program for change compared to its companion, the draft Access Strategy. This earlier policy document, which created expectations for more vehicular and other high impact access to national parks, will be rolled into this strategy (p13). Input to the Access Strategy will also be used for developing the final Nature Tourism and Recreation Strategy (p13).

"Stakeholder" input to national park management

Greatly increased input from "key stakeholders" to national park management decisions is planned. This will be achieved through consultative forums and expanded advisory committee roles. The key stakeholders will include: tourism industry representatives, local government representatives, recreation user groups [4WD etc], local residents, and conservationists (p40). **This means management decisions will be more influenced by those interested in high impact use and profit rather than nature conservation.**

Categorising parks for recreational opportunities

NSW parks will be categorised using a "Recreational Opportunity Spectrum" (ROS) to indicate where, how much and what type of development, access, recreation etc is permissible or appropriate within each park. Increased use can be directed to areas ranging from Class 1 (least developed) to Class 5 (suitable for resort development). This analysis is based on systems developed in Queensland and Victoria (p43).

The ROS has the potential of allowing parks to move up the scale to a category allowing more development.

Existing park access and facilities adequate

There are currently 2136km of public access roads, 1334km of walking tracks, 158 camping grounds, 400 picnic areas, 115 lookouts and, 57 visitor centres in NSW national parks. (p20).

A further 500km of roads and highways that pass through park areas, and private resort and lease arrangements already exist in places like Kosciuszko.

Environment

NSW National Parks make up about 5% of the State. There is a worldwide trend in loss of habitat and the ensuing extinction of species. Globally Australia is one of only 12 mega-diverse countries that account for 75% of the world's total biodiversity. In the last 200 years however, 100 plant and animal species have become extinct with 82 of those in NSW. Another 600 known species in NSW are listed as endangered or vulnerable with many others deserving that status. (p11) These figures indicate the importance of putting areas aside simply for the sake of keeping them

The Strategy states that "Habitat fragmentation and clearing is the main cause of species extinction", (p11) yet the change of direction in NPWS management will lead to increased fragmentation and development in parks.

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