

THE COLONG BULLETIN

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THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS LTD

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Forests Outcomes

The Carr Government's forests decisions have raced ahead of our bi-monthly Bulletin!

A thorough review of these reforms will be published in the January edition.



Keith Muir

Trees, including old growth trees, continue to be felled, public spaces are shrinking, the Great Barrier Reef is terminally ill, topsoil will soon attract a higher price than gold and the air we breathe is often so foul it can make you sick. Yet still we worry – not about our precious, irreplaceable environment, not about over population or the breaches in the ozone layer, not about the questionable safety of the nuclear reactors perched within our major cities. Instead we privately and publicly worry about tax minimisation and about our superannuation plans for later.

Stephanie Dowrick – S.M.H. 13/8/98

WHY SAVE WILDERNESS?

NO PART of the earth's surface has escaped degradation due to human activity. Even the Antarctic is suffering the effect of global warming and ozone depletion. There are however some substantial remnants of the natural environment which retain much of their original quality.

Most Australians, up to 98 per cent in a Roy Morgan poll conducted in 1996, want these wilderness remnants protected, but there are many who seek to exploit them for profit or pleasure, regardless or ignorant of the damage they cause. For this reason we have published The Wilderness Advocate (copy enclosed) which describes the role of wilderness in conservation and society. It commemorates the first such publication –

Myles Dunphy's 1934 supplement to the Katoomba Daily.

Wilderness opponents fall into three main interest groups – economic, recreational and academic.

Although wilderness consists mainly of lands previously considered of little or no economic value, miners, loggers and graziers have wanted to exploit it – as at Colong, the Boyd, the Border Ranges, Kosciuszko and Coolangubra. Mining, logging and grazing have been excluded from national parks and wilderness. Old growth forests are still under a cloud, although the NSW and Commonwealth Governments allocated \$120 million to a programme of retraining of workers, redundancy payments and compensation.

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WHY SAVE WILDERNESS?

...continued from page 1

This program was recently opposed by a rally of 500 protesters at Eden. In the north eastern forests and in Tasmania, conservationists confront the loggers at great personal risk and are arrested in hundreds. Resort developers are keen to exploit the parks, as at Murramarang and Kosciuszko. The auditory amenity of parks is threatened by helicopter operators, as in the Cox Valley, and by the planned Badgerys Creek airport.

Most governments favour the anti-conservation interests, much depending on their party composition. Coalition governments, strongly influenced by the National Party, support commercial interests. The Commonwealth Government supports the Hinchinbrook resort, the Jabiluka mine, woodchipping and the logging of Tasmanian old growth forests. The Victorian Government is throwing the parks open to resort development. In W.A. (to quote David Mackenzie in *Wilderness News*) 'the Government is sprinting to try to lock us into another 20 years of woodchipping and clearfelling by signing The Regional Forest Agreement.' In NSW the decision on whether to allow the Packer Perisher Blue organisation to increase overnight accommodation by 3,500 beds awaits an Inquiry report.

50 Parks could go

A change of government in NSW would see a reversal of the forest conservation program. The leader of the National Party has sent a message to environmentalists that "the party is

over". And according to Environment Minister, Pam Allan, the Liberal Party Shadow Environment Minister, Ms Kerry Chikarovski, has foreshadowed the "undeclaring" of more than 50 national parks and the return of the areas to logging, grazing and mining.

Successive Queensland governments considered World Heritage part of a U.N. conspiracy, opposed the reservation of Fraser Island, wanted to drill the Barrier Reef for oil, subdivided and roaded the Daintree and opposed the Cape York Land Use Agreement.

...the Liberal Party Shadow Environment Minister, Ms Kerry Chikarovski has foreshadowed the "undeclaring" of more than 50 national parks and the return of the areas to logging, grazing and mining.

The recreational anti-wilderness interests comprise the organisations seeking to drive, ride or shoot in the wilderness areas, damaging fragile bushland and disturbing other park users.

The academic opposers of wilderness consist of professed conservationists who deny that wilderness exists or serves any purpose. They are a minority. The wilderness movement has received its strongest support from academics, who are abundantly reported in the Colong Bulletin. The opposition of the academic critics is based on the claim that wilderness does not fulfil the conservation objective which they consider important. Dr Tim Flannery writes that wilderness does not exist in Australia because the entire continent has been actively and

extensively managed for 60,000 years by its Aboriginal occupants. The management consists of regular burning which Dr Flannery believes should continue. It is difficult to find any part of the earth's surface that has not been modified by human activity. Does this mean that we should make no attempt to preserve or restore the least degraded areas?

In her comprehensive book "Listen Our Land is Crying" Mary White devotes a chapter to the destruction of forests, particularly in Tasmania, but considers environmentalists should concentrate on soil conservation, not wilderness. Another opponent of the park and wilderness system is Dr John Wamsley, Managing Director of Earth Sanctuaries, who considers the only way to preserve the smaller native animals from feral animals is to protect them within fenced enclosures. This is undoubtedly true of the open areas where his sanctuaries are situated. It is not true of the wilderness areas of eastern NSW, which protect flora and arboreal fauna and a wide range of endangered animals and reptiles. Nor is fauna preservation the sole purpose of parks and wilderness. Like urban parks, but on a much larger scale, they provide for appropriate public recreation and offers us a chance to commune with the Australian bush.

The World Conservation Monitoring Centre at Cambridge University estimates that humans have destroyed 30 per cent of the natural world since 1970. Surely it is imperative to save what is left.

There is adequate scope for forestry, mining 4W driving, resort development etc in the 94 per cent of the State outside national parks.

We are pleased to provide, free of charge, this copy of an advertisement appearing in the flier "Visions of Explorer Country". The Rylstone Council opposed both the Wollemi Wilderness and Blue Mountains for World Heritage nominations.

Rylstone-Kandos

A Little Slice of Heaven

Situated right next to Wollemi National Park, NSW's Largest Wilderness Area. Rainforests, waterways and unspoilt beauty. Accommodation packages available from Tel. 02 6379 1592.

\$25.00 per night



The Legacy of VOLUNTARY CONSERVATIONISTS

THE National Parks Association of Queensland's Twelfth Romeo Lahey Memorial Lecture on the above was delivered April last. It was very appropriate that John Sinclair, who has voluntarily campaigned for 26 years to protect Fraser Island, should give this lecture. Romeo Lahey, like Myles Dunphy in NSW, was the voluntary father of conservation in Queensland.

John's experience mirrors that of the Colong Foundation, which receives no subsidy and is heavily dependent on voluntary work. We do not have space to reproduce the whole lecture, but some of the most relevant passages are quoted below:

Reductions in Voluntary conservationists' Numbers

Professionalism is usurping the role of volunteers. Conservation was a cause which until recently was only practiced by volunteers and unpaid advocates. That was certainly the case when Romeo Lahey began his career. These days there is an increasing number of professionals working for the conservation movement. This has reduced the role of volunteers. The role of volunteers has been reduced in almost every field where professionals are also employed. In many instances we see professionals usurping the role of volunteers and forcing volunteers out. Unfortunately, professionals don't seem to complement volunteers. They only replace them.

Economic rationalism is killing voluntarism. The economy can only 'grow' if the work is measured in terms of cash payments. The adage seems to be 'If people aren't being paid they are not part of the economy

which we want to keep growing indefinitely.' Thus government grants go mainly to organizations which employ professionals. There is no incentive to groups which rely only on the large unpaid effort of dedicated volunteers.

Politicians see the environment as an impediment to other decisions they want to make. Conservation is therefore a heresy. Governments in Australia sponsor and support sport, the arts, and church schools. However they are very reluctant to give unequivocal support to the environment. When politicians recognize the environment as a "sacred cow" in the same category as religion, the arts and sports, conservationists will be a much less endangered species.

Professional versus Voluntary Conservationists

Professional conservationists are mostly employed by government and non-government agencies. Almost all who work for non-government agencies are employed by non-profit voluntary groups such as the National Parks Association of Queensland, or the Queensland Conservation Council or the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland Inc. We need to recognize that our professionals all earn much less than they could expect to earn if they worked for a government agency or for a private environmental consultant. This helps to explain why there is a very significant turnover in the staff of voluntary conservation organisations. Few people have long careers working for voluntary agencies. Some of this is due to the pressures of the job. Unfortunately, too frequently, voluntary organisations (be they environment or welfare) are hard task mas-

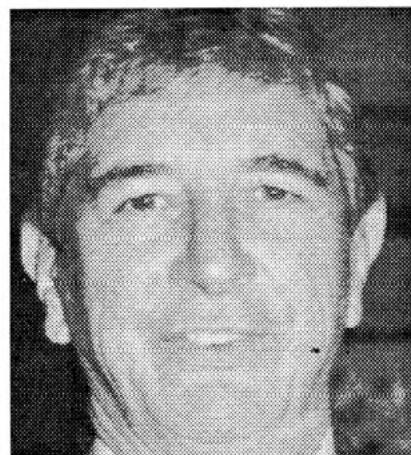
ters. But ultimately the reason that most professionals leave our service is economically based. Many are poached by more affluent government and non-government bodies. Most are subsequently lost to the conservation movement and indeed some end up actively campaigning against their former employers and the policies they have formerly advocated. The continual bleeding of the professional conservationists employed by the voluntary conservation movement explains why we need to have volunteers around to provide a sense of continuity and corporate memory.

The Wealth Weapon

The trend that the law courts are now used by wealthy companies to deter individuals working to protect the environment in an honorary capacity is still alive and well, particularly in Queensland, although there are well known examples in every state. A significant number of ruthless exploiters are willing to pursue all kinds of punitive actions to intimidate any conservation opposition they encounter. Some are prepared to use the high cost of litigation as deterrent to any opposition. Despite the measures taken to minimize risks to members of voluntary organizations, the threat of being bankrupted by legal costs stops many from taking a more active role.

Volunteers should not be significantly out of pocket for attending meetings for which public servants receive full reimbursement of expenses.

John Sinclair delivered the NPA of Queensland's 12th Romeo Layey Memorial Lecture



LAWYERS for Forests

DAVID Helpern, a lecturer in Criminal Law at Southern Cross University and founder of Lawyers for Forests, describes the organisation as follows:

Lawyers for forests is a group of green lawyers who are committed to providing 24 hour a day legal support, advice and representation for environmental activists at blockade and other demonstration sites. We go with and stay with blockaders, assisting with police liaison, legislative interpretation, pre and post arrest advice and representation. Based on the North Coast of New South Wales, we have now attended 7 blockades, most of which have been managed by the North East Forest Alliance. We are currently negotiating a protocol with police for blockades, and have prepared written advice for protesters on their legal rights and obligations. We assist making claims for victims compensation when loggers or others attack blockades, ensure that charges are laid for acts of violence, and provide on the ground advice for the lawyers working on court challenges.

We have been on blockades when loggers violently attack in the night, where people are seriously injured, where trees are being felled around people and where bulldozers are driven dangerously in an effort to dislodge a blockade. There is an ever present threat of arrest, and the personal toll of having to give difficult advice without having had a shower for three days.

Describing a blockade he writes:

The sound of machinery echoes through the hills, breaking the silence and some scurry to place branches on the road. A NEFA banner is hoisted and a chain of four wheel drives moves slowly down the hill and stops at the blockage. A spokesperson emerging almost organically from that group moves

forward and greets the loggers with a smile and a welcome and a statement that there will be no logging here today. "In fact" she says "this is a deferred area, there should be no logging at all here, the logging is illegal and we have seized your equipment." It has been my experience that a red-neck and his dozer have a symbiotic relationship - separation when caused by greenie dole bludging activists is likely to result in rage and violence. The spokesperson's statement is answered by a stream of filthy abuse - and on cue I emerge from the shadows, clutching my briefcase and mobile telephone, suited and tied, shaved even. I introduce myself to the loggers, who stand in stunned silence, and I lecture them on the complexities of the deferred forest agreements, the amendments to the Forestry Act and Regulations, the defence of necessity and the right of free speech, assembly and protest. Without a word, they retreat to their vehicles, and drive off to go to the State Forests office. Another blockade has begun.

At one blockade, the loggers had formed a blockade of their own, trying to stop us from getting out of the forest. As an aside, the logic of this move caused much amusement. After all we wanted to be in the forest. A member of Lawyers for Forests, wearing a legal observer shirt, got out of the car on approaching their blockade, and explained clearly to them the law of false imprisonment. She then proceeded to write down their number plates. Their blockade was broken, which was just as well as we were running out of water back at the camp.

Blockades have been an effective tool in saving the forests of the North Coast of New South Wales since the battle for Terania Creek. NEFA, a non-organisation from a legal point of view, has been co-ordinating the fight in the forests and in the courts often at great cost to the activists. ■

The Realities Of Land Clearing

Queensland clears more native vegetation than any other state in Australia.

263,000 ha are cleared on average every year in Queensland in the first half of this decade - that makes about 60 football fields every hour of every day of the year.

Just over 40 per cent of this occurs on freehold land, yet we set have no statewide controls to protect native vegetation on freehold land in Queensland.

Tasmania is the only other state in Australia with no statewide controls over freehold land.

In the last four years - 1994-97, 2.5 million hectares were approved for clearing by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

In the last two years - 1996-97, over 900,000 hectares were approved for clearing by DNR.

Less than 4 per cent of the State is in a park or other protected area.

There are 120 endangered vegetation communities in Queensland.

Clearing leads to a loss of biodiversity and land degradation - it is senseless to continue down this path now when we understand the problems.

Only a handful of the 130 local governments in Queensland have local vegetation protection laws (about a dozen).

Queensland Conservation Council fact sheet

Meeting Dates
Meetings will be held on December 3rd and 17th, and January 14th and 28th.

Forests Go Into the Parliamentary Crucible

THE Carr Government's 1995 Forestry Policy requires "the establishment of a comprehensive, adequate and representative conservation reserve system". The policy also ensures logging areas would provide sustainable levels of timber that also protects soil, water and endangered species, following community consultation on environmental impact reports.

The policy announced the "transfer of logging from high conservation old growth and wilderness to plantation and regrowth forests" through the biggest review of forest resources ever undertaken in the country. Provision of \$120 million was made to allow the industry to restructure to plantations and regrowth forests and assist the workers affected.

Vast amounts of computer-based information has been collected on forest types, old growth forest, wilderness, fauna habitat and wood resources, as well as satellite data, and topographic information. So far the north-east and south-east forest areas have been assessed - about 2 million hectares in all.

In the south-east, the scientific reserve criteria indicate that nearly 85,000 ha of forest should be reserved. In order to meet minimum timber resource requirements, however, the conservation groups wound back its position to 57,000 ha. The Carr Government responded sympathetically, announcing a 37,000 ha. national park addition.

In the north-east, negotiations recently stalled when over two thirds of the very highest conservation old growth forests (those with populations of endangered species and rare forest types) proposed by conservationists were rejected by the loggers.

The industry does not want to stop logging of big old growth trees. The industry now appears to be determined to woodchip the north-

east forests. The spectre of 90 per cent forest removal from logging areas has been proposed to provide the timber industry with its desired wood supply.

The conservation negotiators for the north-east have proposed a further compromise of maintaining current logging levels for eight more years and a reserving a minimum set of areas needed to protect the best of the remaining forests, including wilderness. Such a proposal is rejected by the industry which, in a repeat of the rainforest stand off 15 years ago, wants to heavily log the wilderness and old growth forests outside parks.

To continue to increase logging, without regard to soil, water and endangered species requirements would fly in the face of Carr's Forest Policy which guarantees proper regulation of timber operations following environmental assessment and public review.

The Government is now seeking to introduce forest legislation that will reserve parks and perhaps give the

Wilderness areas ... are at risk of becoming logged into oblivion.

industry the same level of resource security provided to the mining industry. Once a mine is approved, it doesn't matter if thylacines are found there, or 60 metre tall old growth, the last wild river or another Wollemi pine - mining is guaranteed to proceed free of appeals to the Land and Environment Court seeking to stop unforeseen environmental damages or even gross breaches of operating conditions.

Our precious wilderness was not a guaranteed protected layer in negotiations in either the north or south east forests. The Brogo wilderness additions were greatly reduced in the south east forest announcement last



UNSUSTAINABLE FORESTRY:
No recovery of this former rainforest that was once part of Fenwicks scrub 20 years after logging

month and wilderness areas like Mummel Gulf near Walcha and Timbarra near Tenterfield are now at risk of becoming logged into oblivion.

In a last minute bid to save such threatened north east forests, the key negotiators, Dailan Pugh and Susie Russel have appealed to the Government to accept the compromise solutions proposed by the conservation movement.

The Carr Government promised to save the high conservation value native forests, old growth and wilderness. Such protection can only be achieved by reserving the best forests in parks. And the industry's proposal to exclude forests from the laws protecting endangered species should be rejected as ludicrous. These animals are endangered usually because they are rare and as such many key populations remain unknown. Surely if resource security is to be granted it should be for endangered species habitat and not for the loggers.

KAKADU URANIUM DEVELOPMENT PROVINCE

EARLIER this year the Colong Foundation wrote to the Chair of the World Heritage Committee, Professor Francesco Francioni, requesting that Kakadu National Park be put on the World Heritage in Danger List.

Recently the Foundation received a reply via Environment Australia (a Federal Department) advising that a Mission from the World Heritage Committee would inspect the park. The Department informed UNESCO's Committee "of the stringent measures taken to ensure that the proposed uranium mine did not cause any adverse effects". It also welcomed the Mission as an opportunity to provide reassurance the Government is protecting Kakadu.

Such assurance will be difficult as Kakadu looks like becoming

Australia's premier uranium area. (The initials of the now renamed UDP Falls in Kakadu Stage 3 stood for Uranium Development Province).

The record of Ranger Uranium Mine is hailed as a great success by the Department. Yet its "no release" water management failed and the mine's operators now irrigate nearby lands to rid the mine of waste water. The tailing disposal method also failed and was completely redesigned, exposing the radioactive uranium tailings to the air. Sewage from the mining town of Jabiru has caused serious weed outbreaks in World Heritage listed wetlands and the new mine will ruin the scenic attractions of the northern end of the park.

The Koongarra uranium deposit to the south-west could also be approved spreading the uranium mining cancer across the park and many

other uranium deposits also exist.

The on-going processes of this scenic, ecological and spiritual landscape have won the hearts of most Australians. These will be replaced by the on-going processes of bulldozer, truck, jack hammer and dynamite that are used to win uranium, potentially the deadliest of fuels.

The World Heritage Committee must be a thick skinned lot. The Committee has seen illegal logging, witnessed the trade of endangered species from World Heritage properties and been tangled up in guerilla wars. Fortunately for the Committee, Australia is a civilised country so its battles are fought on an intellectual landscape with ideas and legislation.

The Howard Government has the upper hand and can permit the vital Kakadu landscape to be torn apart but in doing so it will destroy the principles of World Heritage listing. Such approvals are acts likely to be awarded the international community's very highest environmental abuse Oscar - inscription on the World Heritage in Danger list. Australia will then be vilified for its environmental abuse record, achieving a complete reversal of its international standing on heritage conservation in less than a decade. ■

4WD Wilderness

Walcha, home of the timber expo which was visited by NSW Minister for Forests, Kim Yeadon, when he announced the opening of a new timber mill at nearby Gloucester, also is home of the amazing 4WD wilderness experience.

A promotional magazine introducing the timber expo, sounds off that "Riverside, in the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park, is the only area in Australia where visitors can gain vehicular access (4WD only) to a wilderness core."

The Colong Foundation has strongly objected to the retention of this road (alias the El Com Road to the bottom of the Apsley Gorge), installed for a now rejected dam but which continues to seriously compromise the Macleay Gorges wilderness area.

Green Gully Purchased

Historic Carlon's farm has been acquired by the NPWS, securing walking access to the Blue Mountains National Park by the Megalong Valley.

Carlon's Farm, also known as Green Gully and Pack Saddlers, has been in the Carlon family for generations and its acquisition will ensure wilderness access that could not be guaranteed by future land owners. However, the car park on the farm used by bushwalkers will remain in the ownership of the Carlon family and for the time being they will continue to collect parking fees for use of that area.

Every Sydney bushwalker would have visited Carlon's Farm at one stage and would be aware of the strategic significance of this acquisition. While the property is not wilderness, it is the most popular gateway to the Coxs River and Wild Dog Mountains.

Apparently the Dunphy Wilderness Fund was used in its acquisition, as wilderness management will be improved.

The Colong Foundation understands that only identified wilderness was to be acquired by the Fund. For this reason the property at the base of Mount Colong has not been purchased despite several representations to the Environment Minister that it merits wilderness protection. The NPWS has not yet convened a meeting of the Reference Group of the Dunphy Wilderness Fund, perhaps because it does not want its priorities questioned.

BULLETIN SUBSCRIPTION

Membership of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness covers Bulletin subscription fee.

Non-members of the Foundation may subscribe to the Bulletin for a fee of \$10.00 (covers all issues of the Bulletin to 31/12/99)

A BEQUEST

Please remember us in your will. The Law Society of NSW recommends the following wording:

"I bequeath the sum of \$..... to the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd. for its general purposes and declare that the receipt of the treasurer for the time being of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd. shall be complete discharge to my executors in respect of any sum paid to the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd."

MEMBERSHIP

Membership fee of \$20 covers Bulletin subscription.

If you are not personally known to the Foundation, the Secretary will nominate you and ask one of the directors to second your nomination. The signing of this application will be accepted as evidence of your support of the aims of the Foundation.

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



SUPPORT THE COLONG FOUNDATION!

The Treasurer, Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd
2/362 Kent St., Sydney 2000

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(N.B. Membership fee covers Bulletin subscription)
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Tax deductible donation of \$..... to the Colong Wilderness Fund
(cheques to be made payable to the Fund)

NAME (Mr. Ms. Mrs. Miss).....

ADDRESS.....

POSTCODE.....DATE.....

Signed.....AMOUNT.....

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

I hereby apply for membership of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd.

I am nominated by..... and seconded by

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

SIGNED.....AMOUNT.....

ENCLOSED.....

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

POSTCODE.....DATE.....

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 FOUNDATION

SENDER - THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS

2/362 Kent St., Sydney 2000



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