



THE COLONG BULLETIN

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THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS LTD

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There are still people using the non-sense term 'sustainable development' (by definition no development is sustainable), in suggesting populations of 12 billion for the planet and of 100 million for Australia, being not only feasible but desirable. The lack of imagination about what such populations would do to this continent, and to the planet as a whole, is staggering. Even more staggering, such proposals come from people who don't have the imagination to see the potential effects of Greenhouse gases, or forest clearance, or pollution over a long period.

Dr. David Horton in
The Pure State of Nature.

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Southern Forest Decision a Political Deal, says Logging Industry

Noel Plumb, Joint Negotiator, South East Forest Alliance; Conservation Representative, Resource and Conservation Assessment Council

Cartography by George Elliott

THE NSW logging industry broke cover and savagely attacked Premier Bob Carr and Environment Minister Bob Debus over the April 2000 decision on new national parks and guaranteed timber resources for the Southern Forests. The decision delivered some 220,000 ha of new national parks on the South Coast and about 100,000 ha in the Tumut area.

The industry clearly judged that this decision was less favourable to it than previous forest decisions for Eden and the North East regions. Executive Director of the Forest Products Association, Col Dorber, alleged to the media that Bob Carr had put his entire forest policy at risk in order to do a favour for a political mate, Bob

Debus, and that the decision was a sellout to green interests.

It is quite clear that something extraordinary occurred to confound the industry's expectations. It seems that the Premier personally intervened at a late stage to support Environment Minister Debus and to counter pressure from NSW bureaucrats, various political 'advisers' and the Commonwealth government to deliver the industry's agenda. Colong Foundation and nearly twenty other conservation groups have been part of the South East Forest Alliance (SEFA) which over the past three years has developed its own community reserve proposals for the Southern Forests, particularly for the South Coast. The Premier's intervention seems to have been necessary to rescue some of the most important wilderness, old growth forests and sensitive coastal forests contained in

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THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS

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Southern Forest Decision

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these proposals.

The tension had been rising since November 1999 when negotiations based on the completed environmental, social and economic assessments for the Southern Forests were undertaken between State Government agencies. The logging industry and conservationists were also involved in these negotiations. The heart of the controversy was the South Coast forests from Nowra to Narooma, including areas on the Great Dividing Range. The other forests involved in the negotiations were around Tumut. These included commercial Alpine Ash areas on the northern and western boundaries of the Kosciuszko National Park, but they were expected to be less controversial as more timber resources were available.

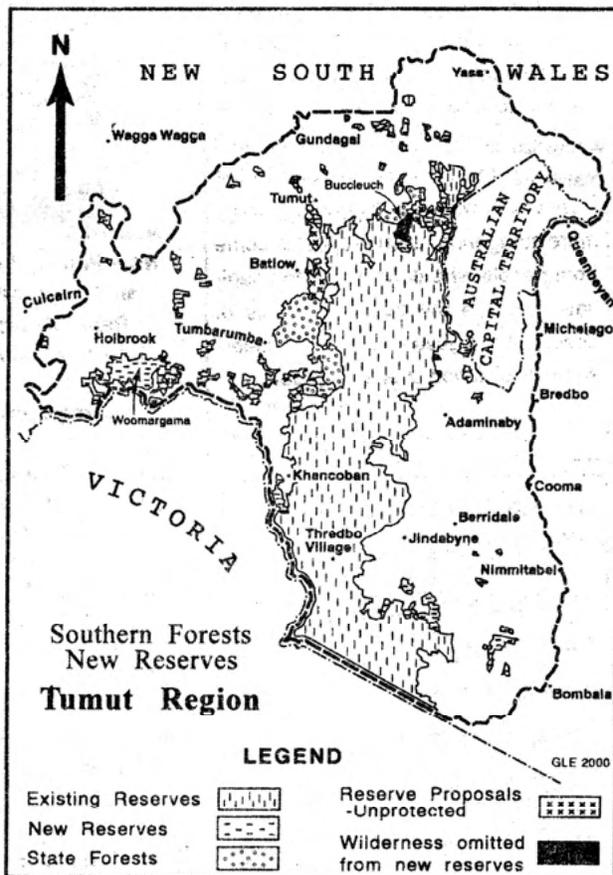
The industry initially sought an annual allocation of 75,000 m³ of quota sawlogs from the South Coast forests. It also announced its intention to intensify logging in the Southern Forests to the same extent as the notorious Eden woodchip operations, including proposals to log for so called 'biomass' fuel to feed to electricity plants. SEFA proposals for the South Coast called for the reservation of some 250,000 hectares including 15 major community reserve proposals and provided for the protection of all old growth and wilderness forests. We also called for an end to wood-chipping and intensive log-

ging in the region and special protection from logging for the Clyde River catchment.

The SEFA proposals for the South Coast permitted an annual supply of 32,000m³ of quota sawlogs as compared to the current interim supply of 42-44,000 m³. SEFA also provided independent expert advice to the Government that the quota sawlog specifications in NSW were unrealistic and out of line with all other States. A realistic specification would greatly increase the available supply of quota sawlogs and free up decision making on new national parks. While the industry had progressively reduced its demand from 75,000 m³ to 55,000m³ per annum by April this year, it clearly had been led to expect a decision close to its final demand.

The industry was enraged by the Premier's announcement that some 200,000 ha of state forests on the South Coast would be protected as new national parks and that the contracted sawlog allocation was to be capped at 42,000m³ per annum. The announcement also protected about 20,000 ha of non-timber Crown land as new reserves in the South Coast area. On the other hand the industry was given a very large increase in long term supply commitments in the Tumut area where the annual quota for the next 20 years was set at 48,000 m³. The new parks in the Tumut region total about 100,000 ha and largely comprise uncommercial state forest areas and Crown lands on the western slopes.

The Premier's intervention and the commitment of Environment Minister



Bob Debus has delivered a relatively better conservation decision than the earlier North East or Eden decisions. Nature conservation and future generations will benefit from the creation of a string of marvelous new (or expanded) coastal parks, among them Conjola, Five Lakes and Murramarang between Nowra and Bateman's Bay. These parks will protect a number of superb coastal lakes including Swan Lake, Lake Conjola, Termeil Lake and Lake Durras. On the Great Dividing Range the major reserve gap between the Budawangs and the Deua-Wadbilliga National Park has been filled by the new Monga/Buckenbowra reserve. Its wilderness and old growth forests, ancient pinkwoods and the 'mist valley' of the upper Mongarlowe River complete a 350km long reserve link from the Victorian border

to Macquarie Pass near Nowra. There are many other outstanding new parks.

The decision is seen by many conservationists as a strong stand by the Premier and Bob Debus to make the outcome as green as possible within the restricted range that was considered politically 'realistic'. Constraints on the Premier included previous commitments to the logging industry and the logging union, the rise of a Country Labor strategy (which appears to be competing with the National Party for short sighted resource exploitation) and the views of an increasingly conservative Labor cabinet.

The decision has protected many of the core areas sought by the conservation movement yet has fallen well short of our

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Southern Forest Decision

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reserve proposals, omitting some altogether. Tragically, it has failed to protect all of the wilderness forests. Although only about 10% of the total decision, the NPWS identified wilderness areas left unprotected in the Badja, Deua and Wandella State forests cannot be recovered once they fall to the loggers and woodchippers. The identified Goobarragandra wilderness (Buccleuch State Forest) on the northern end of Kosciuszko National Park has been left largely to industry because of a small quota of Alpine Ash - in a region which has a larger supply of timber than currently used by the industry. This area, along with Alpine

Ash stands at Maragle on the western edge of the park, was excised from the park in 1967 and should have been returned to the park as part of this decision. Conservationists will be looking to the Government to address this omission in the Government's imminent wilderness protection process for the Southern Forests.

The decision has also omitted or greatly reduced a number of key east west links between the escarpment and the coast. These include narrowing the Conjola link, removing its catchment integrity, and severely weakening the best east west link in 1,300 km of coastline. The decision also ignored the strong east west link proposed between the new Monga/Buckenbowa National Park and the expanded Murramarang National Park. These links

are vital to the seasonal and migratory movement of wildlife but are also part of the long-term safeguards against climate change and catastrophe events such as wildfires.

The decision also protects areas not sought by us and which, generally, had little or no commercial timber resource. It has left the remaining areas of production forest open to intensive industrial logging as well as woodchipping. The government has been silent on the pulp log resource to be given to the Eden woodchip mill from the South Coast forests but current supply is 60-70,000 tonnes per annum and State Forests figures provide for up to 90,000 tonnes. In the final outcome, for the Eden region in 1998, the Government quietly gave woodchipper Harris Daishowa a new 20 year contract for 345,000 tonnes a year rather than meeting its promise to end export woodchipping by 2000.

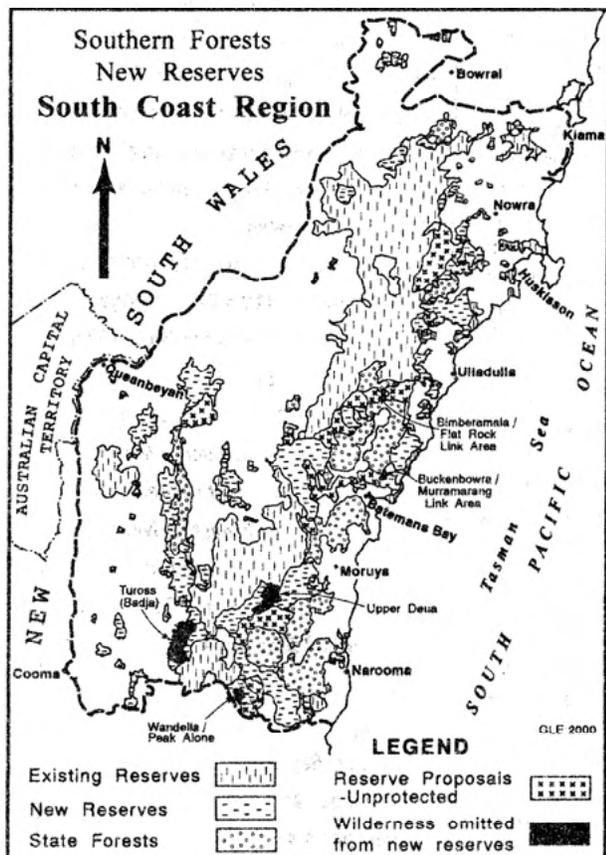
There is great concern that new initiatives by the Carr Government to encourage the use of native forest timber for biomass energy and for charcoal production will intensify logging and the consequent damage to biodiversity and catchments in the Southern Forests as well as the North East Forests.

The Southern Forests

decision is the last of the east coast forest assessments, undertaken by the Carr Government. More than a million hectares of new forest reserves have been added to the national parks estate, a lasting legacy from the Premier. Sadly, the protracted and expensive assessment process has not resolved the fundamental issues, which provoked the forest controversy. Despite expenditure of up to \$140 million of taxpayers money for industry restructuring we are left with:

- a reserve system which is much smaller than required by the agreed scientific criteria;
- continued woodchipping and intensive logging of over one million ha of native forests;
- continued logging of some old growth and wilderness forests;
- no long term plan for industry transition to plantations; and
- an industry and government agenda to further intensify logging with all the terrible consequences for biodiversity, catchment protection and salinity control.

The conservation movement must ask itself whether it will be a party to the forthcoming assessments of the western forests if the ground rules are not improved? ■



Putting the Cart Before the Wilderness

'I assure the House that the local community does not want these 211,000 hectares gazetted as wilderness. There is a real need in the Eurobodalla area for a go-cart club.'

Mr R. H. L. Smith,
Liberal Member for Bega,
speaking out on wilderness.

Paying for Park Management

The NPWS New Millennium Trends paper published last year states that there is a growing need for conservation agencies to become skilled in attracting resources, making business planning, marketing and relevant negotiation skills.

These corporate prescriptions may be put into effect if the Government adopts the leaked NPWS proposal for amendment to the NPWS Act to provide for "more places" to commercial and recreational "stakeholders" on park advisory committees.

Who then are these "stakeholders" and do they support nature conservation? At Sydney Water's Adaptive Environmental Assessment Workshop, concerned primarily with the preservation of the inner catchment to Warragamba Dam, the stakeholders represented included the 4wd drivers, horseriders, anglers, local landowners and local councils. It was left to the Colong Foundation to represent the interests of the remainder of Sydney Water customers who drink the water.

We are very pleased that Bob Debus, the Minister for the Environment, assured us at our on March 24th, that any amendments to the NPWS Act were not about commercialisation and that he would rule out anything not focused on good conservation outcomes.

Queensland has no such Ministerial bulwark against commercialisation. Under review are claims for hunting and tourist operations in national parks. The State Government is considering a master plan for the handing over of park management to private contractors and Aboriginal owners. By reason of inadequate state funding many of Queensland's parks have been badly damaged and the proposed privatisation will increase the damage.

Parks are not for so-called "stakeholders" but for all people. This is recognised in the management of urban parks, which are maintained

free of charge by local councils. National parks too are for everyone and it is appropriate that they should be supported from state revenue. Provided the parks are not developed to provide revenue there is a range of charges, however, which visitors can afford and which can be levied without degradation of the natural environment. These include entrance fees, which would be a small fraction of the cost of vehicle use, and licence fees for tour leaders. Accommodation could be provided adjoining national parks with minimal damage to the environment.

Public interest is recognised in this years budget by an increase of \$18.5 million to \$223 million in NPWS funding. Peta Seton, shadow minister for the Environment, points out, that the increase will barely cover the replacement of staff lost during the recent restructuring and will not cover the management of the 180 new parks and additions. There is therefore justification for the extension of the "users pay" principle in park finance. This principle is particularly relevant to Kosciuszko, where expenditure on infrastructure, which supports accommodation and amusement facilities, far exceeds the revenue from these facilities. The expenditure of \$11.1 million on the Alpine Way above Thredbo is an example of such expenditure.

Budget expenditure on works and projects will be \$60 million. This would include necessary facilities such as visitor centres, parking space and toilets. It is to be hoped it does not include overnight accommodation, within parks, as recently approved in Kosciuszko.

The budget also includes welcome allocations of \$13.6 million for land acquisition, \$20 million for EPA research and \$36 million for improvement of NSW waterways. In addition funding for the Environmental Trust will provide \$11 million for environmental projects. ■

Taking All and Giving Little

Although many Billions are made by exploiting the environment, little is donated to its renewal. Interviewed by the ACF during his recent visit, David Suzuki said

Apparently there is not much of a tradition of philanthropic generosity to the environment in Australia. It's a thing that is amazing in the United States. You have these environmental grant makers, who are funded in the billions of dollars, and the money they give is extraordinary. Our own foundation (The David Suzuki Foundation) went from nothing to over \$3 million in a year. You have to tap into this wealth somehow.

Another U.S. organisation, the Nature Conservancy, has announced that it is committing \$1 billion to protect natural areas in America and abroad. It is spending \$35 million in acquiring Palmyra Atoll in the South Pacific.

The Carr Government's Nature Conservation Record

The Colong Foundation believes that, whether or not finance is available for adequate park management, reservation ends further exploitation. This is evidently the policy of the Carr Government which, in its 2000-01 Budget Papers statement on NPWS funding, states:

Expenditure since 1994-95 has increased from \$143.3 million to projected expenditure in 1999-2000 of \$245.5 million... Since 1995-96 the Government has declared over 150 new national parks and reserves, including additions. More than 700,000 hectares of State Forests in the north-east and south east of New South Wales have been transferred to the Service as a result of the Government's forestry reform process. An additional area of more than 300,000 hectares will be transferred as part of the Southern Comprehensive Regional Assessment, resulting in the declaration of a further 100 new national parks. ■

Underground Wilderness

The NSW statutory concept

by Tim Moore¹

IN late 1990, I took part, as an unpaid and little skilled field hand, in part of the work by Andy Spate, the NPWS Karst Investigation Officer on loan to the Tasmanian Parks Service. Andy was doing a plan of management of one of Australia's most significant cave systems - known as Kubla Khan State Reserve near Maracoopa Caves near Mole Creek.

One evening, Andy and I were sitting in the research hut at Maracoopa talking with Dr Kevin Kiernan about cave protection, legislative inadequacy in this regard and the possibility that "wilderness" could exist in an underground area. I also browsed a study by Dr Kiernan on cave management.

After coming back to Sydney, in early 1991, I wrote and submitted a Cabinet Minute in which, as I recollect, I described its main purpose as being "To provide a framework for the conservation of significant karst areas by the National Parks and Wildlife Service without the total acquisition of or unnecessary curtailment of activi-

ties on the superjacent surface areas." It also provided for amendment of the Wilderness Act 1987 so as to permit the declaration as a wilderness of land which may, but need not, be restricted to land that is wholly or predominantly subterranean land².

This was the first illustrated Cabinet Minute to be submitted in NSW and it contained the diagram below from Dr Kiernan's study.

This Cabinet Minute, in turn, led to the National Parks and Wildlife (Karst Conservation) Amendment Act 1991 being passed by the NSW Parliament.

The first novel (and still unique provision) of the legislation is the concept of being able to "strata title" out a cave for conservation purposes. Put simply, there will be occasions when it is not necessary to own the freehold title to the surface in order to protect the environmental values of the cave area below. Some form of conservation agreement with the owner of the surface may be sufficient.

This legislation also introduced the specific karst wilderness provisions into the Wilderness Act 1987 which are discussed below.

In NSW, there are three statutory³ tests that must be satisfied before a wilderness can be so identified. These are, in summary, whether the site is (a) unmodified or capable of restoration to such a state; (b) of a size to make its status sustainable and (c) is "capable of providing opportunities for solitude and appropriate self-reliant recreation."⁴ Three matters⁵ are listed by the Act as tests which the Director General may consider in the identification of a wilderness. They are not relevant to this consideration of underground (or karst, as they should correctly be known) wilderness areas.

Obviously, a cave can easily be tested against (a) and (c) with a readily justified determination of whether it passes or fails.

It is the "area" test which caused some philosophic objection. Some opponents of the concept of underground wilderness say that any wilderness has to be of at least 25,000 hectares to be acceptable. This, in any karst context, is clearly absurd. Yet the Nadgee Wilderness, on the coast at the NSW/Victorian border and the only coastal wilderness identified in NSW, is not this large⁶. One might rhetorically ask is Nadgee accepted by these "sizist" purists as being a "proper wilderness"?

Their answer is an emphatic "yes" - and their reasons are that:

- the wilderness essentially comprises the whole of the Merrica River catchment - a catchment at my last visit (some time ago) which was largely in pristine condition despite the eyes of the loggers then being upon some areas then in State Forests outside the Nadgee Nature Reserve; and
- it is of "special significance" because it is on the coast.

I agree that Nadgee is special and deserves its wilderness status - any one who has walked (as I have) south

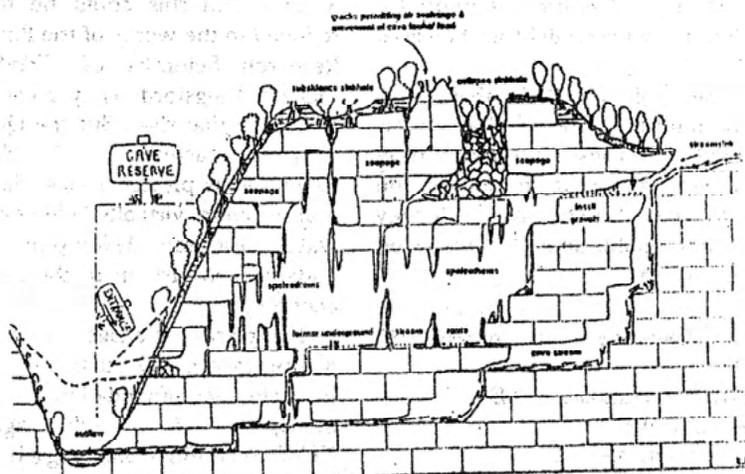


Figure 2. Limestone caves are often sensitive environments and their effective management requires attention being given to careful management of their catchments. This must include the catchments of seepage flows and protection of the chemistry of seepage waters that are responsible for the growth and maintenance of speleothems such as stalactites and stalagmites. Reserves that extend merely around the cave entrance, as in this case, are not adequate to protect the main attractions in most caves.

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Parks for Stakeholders

Mr. Garbutt, the Victorian Environment and Natural Resources Minister, has announced that the Victorian National Parks Service will be split into a conservation-focused National Parks Service and a Metropolitan Parks and Bays Service focused on recreation and tourism. "The new structure," he said, "would ensure against inappropriate development being proposed for our precious National Parks, such as the 150 bed hotel proposed for Wilsons Promontory by the previous Government."

The SMH of 24th January reported that the NSW Government intended

to scrap State Recreation Areas and replace them with State Conservation Reserves, where new mining and prospecting developments would be allowed. This proposal opens the way to consigning all the activities damaging our national parks, such as 4wd driving, horseriding, hunting, mountain bike riding and resort development, to the Conservation Reserves. Though the term "Conservation" as applied to these parks would be mere window dressing, the removal of the stakeholders would greatly benefit the national parks.

It has been the long standing position of the environment movement, however, that the Government must make the hard decision between either conservation or development. Multiple use reserves are not a substitute for national parks.

The Camphor-Laurel Menace

Camphor-laurel is spreading rapidly on the North Coast. Seed carrying pigeons are largely responsible for its spread. Joe Friend of the Camphor-laurel Research Centre (The Channon, NSW, 2480) reports that this aggressive-invasive tree is capable of part sterilising soil for years after its

removal and also induces sterility or death to a widening range of Australian fauna and domestic animals. It has been declared a noxious weed and can be destroyed with herbicides or diesel oil.

Effluent Control in the Hawkesbury/Nepean Catchment

Bushwalkers have for long known that nearly every major river in the Warragamba catchment is undrinkable. Even the Kowmung was badly polluted during the last dry spell. This problem is being faced very squarely - \$400 million is committed to improvement of the catchment. This includes \$45 million for the Mittagong scheme and \$78 million for Blue Mountains sewerage. Major improvement of sewerage treatment plants, such as those at Lithgow, Bowral and Marulan will be required.

Growth at Any Price

The Condamine-Balonne River system straddles the NSW-Queensland border. In 1990 it contained 1.2 million hectares of flood plain which fed two national park wetland areas. These areas protect a dozen species protected by international agreements. Only 25% of the original flow now gets into the Narran Lakes Nature Reserve and this could be further reduced. In the words of the Principle Research Scientist of NPWS, Dr Richard Kingsford, "They have virtually killed that river. But the Queensland Department of Natural Resources is pleased to see that natural resource 'virtually killed' because water resource development has underpinned growth in the regional economy."

The plan of management for this nature reserve was made last month. Its main recommendation for water management is to encourage the NPWS to continue wagging a finger at the Queensland authorities that deny water to these "protected" wetlands. We hope that Dr Kingsford succeeds in pricking a few consciences up in Queensland and in Canberra.

MEETING DATES

Meetings will be held on July 27th, August 10th, and 24th and September 7th, and 21st.

Underground Wilderness

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along the coast from Newton's Beach and into the hinterland could not fail to support its wilderness status.

But, I ask, again rhetorically, if there can be exceptions to the purists' size test on the basis of completeness of protection and scientific speciality, why cannot the same exception support an appropriate underground wilderness?

I believe it can - although I do not propose to nominate where in NSW ought to be the first. To my mind, the existence of unique underground species; the self-reliant nature of access and the pristine or near-pristine conditions of many cave systems speak for such a status. Who is aware of stromatolite fossils at Jenolan - radically away from the marine World

Heritage environment of Shark Bay with which stromatolites are usually associated? Or of unique species of invertebrates (such as the Bungonia silverfish - *Trinemura anemone*) - which live without light in the caves of NSW?

I can only conclude that those who doubt the concept of an underground wilderness have never truly experienced a visit to one of the great so-called "wild caves" - if they had, their doubts should be dispelled with ease. ■

- 1 NSW Minister for the Environment 1988-1992
- 2 s8(1) of the Wilderness Act 1987
- 3 s6(1) of the Act
- 4 s6(1)(c) of the Act
- 5 s6(2) of the Act
- 6 ~13,000 hectares was the area first declared as a wilderness in 1994 but it has since been added to so that it is now ~21,000 hectares - still below the "sizzists" threshold.

The Oyster Point Resort Inquiry

THE Senate References Committee on the Environment has at last published its report on the 'Hinchinbrook Channel Inquiry'. The Hinchinbrook Channel and environs are perhaps the most scenic region on the Eastern Australian Coast.

The report's title is significant, for it does not mention what the inquiry was all about - Keith William's massive Oyster Point tourist resort and residential development. The development, of course, is within the state of Queensland, while the Channel is within a World Heritage property - a Federal Government responsibility. The inquiry was required to keep within the Federal Government's World Heritage jurisdiction. Its terms of reference address government and developer relationships to the Hinchinbrook Channel. Queensland's planning and development controls that determined the nature of the Oyster Point resort were not directly addressed.

Through the Inquiry conservationists have learnt that the Great Barrier Marine Park offers no effective protection against inappropriate developments built on the Queensland coast. They have to relearn that the State, and not the Commonwealth, controls most natural resources within a State, except in very specific circumstances. If the development was in a World Heritage property, then the Federal Government could control it, but if, as in this case, it is outside that property control is by the state. This is especially so now that the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999 has come into force.

The export licence controls that saved Frazer Island from sand mining and native forest from woodchipping are gone, perhaps for a very long time. Enter the brave new world of state rights.

The Howard Government saw the

Hinchinbrook Inquiry as an attack on its performance, and rejected all its recommendations. The Howard Government sees its role as ensuring the developer's compliance to a regulatory regime for the World Heritage property. It does not see its role as deciding whether or not a development adjoining a World Heritage property should go ahead.

This view does not sit well with the management objectives for World Heritage properties that are applied world-wide. The management objectives clearly state that it is the responsibility of the owner Governments to identify, protect, conserve, rehabilitate and present the outstanding universal values for which the area was listed.

The Federal Opposition, on the other hand, agreed with the Inquiry's recommendations. These essentially require better environmental impact assessment, protection and development control for proposals that could threaten World Heritage properties. The Beasley Opposition recognises that the Hinchinbrook Channel Inquiry has wider implications in terms of the relationship between Commonwealth, State and local governments, and developers. As crucial as improved development control is the need for Commonwealth facilitation of regional planning and inter-governmental co-operation to protect Australia's World Heritage properties.

Enlightened local governments recognise that it is necessary to co-operate with State Government to protect national parks and wilderness, and with Federal Government regarding World Heritage properties. Such councils have established environmental protection zones to create buffer protection areas, such as the zones along the top of the Illawarra Escarpment that prevents development of private land. Every resident of Wollongong benefits from the strong

protection that ensures that city retains its forested backdrop. These efforts have helped Wollongong change its character from a dirty, heavy industry town to a modern healthy city with a major tourist sector.

The Oyster Point resort is clearly focussed around a boat marina. The boats and the channel dredged to enable their use will kill sea grasses and dugongs in the Dugong Sanctuary that surrounds Hinchinbrook Island.

A sound regional planning exercise for the coastal zone around Hinchinbrook would have identified the acid sulphate soils and the environmentally significant mangroves at Oyster Point. It would have particularly noted the incompatibility of the dugong sanctuary and the boating facilities. Better sites would have been identified for marinas and resorts outside the Channel area and these sites may have been developed instead of Oyster Point.

The days must cease when a developer can buy a biodiverse tract of estuary and mangrove swamp and then readily succeed in gaining a resort development rezoning from their property developer mates on local council. It is unfortunate that many high conservation value places already suffer from such exploitation blight. For once an area has been legally rezoned for development, future development proposals on the rezoned land are hard to stop, regardless of the environmental significance or potential damage. Perhaps current development zones that are constrained by highly significant environmental values and threats can be exchanged for development rights on less troublesome sites, permitting protection of key areas. Such opportunities can only be realised through well established regional planning processes and exhaustive public comment and review. ■

The Pure State of Nature

Dr David Horton's new book challenges the popular myths about fire stick farming and extinction of Australia's megafauna and Aboriginal land management

Published by Allen and Unwin and can be purchased for \$19.95

Book review by Keith Muir

ABORIGINES are accused of causing the extinction of megafauna by the use of fire that converted rainforest to grassland so as to 'farm' kangaroos. It sounds a good story, but according to Dr Horton's theses there are better explanations to fit the facts that the megafauna died out and the vegetation drastically changed over the last 50 millennia.

In my reading, the book rebuts the "fire stick farming" theory. The doctrine of terra nullius has been taken by many to imply that if you didn't farm the land, you didn't deserve to keep it. In response to this doctrine of resource appropriation, anthropologists have argued on the behalf of Aborigines that the landscape is an artefact of Aboriginal endeavour, hence "fire stick farming". This popular theory also supports the new right's thinking that you can conserve and protect the environment by developing and exploiting it. If the native bushland is an artefact of human endeavour, then why shouldn't it be manipulated by farmers, graziers and foresters or even miners?

Dr Horton theses reject the arguing that Aborigines caused megafauna extinctions, and these extinctions caused a change in vegetation that led to the adoption of "fire stick farming" as Dr Flannery claims.

Dr Horton considers that there is a critical difference between farmers and hunter-gatherers that has to do with process, not ranking, for they have fundamentally different ways of interacting with the environment. The relationship difference is between 'interferers' and 'observers'. Farmers interfere with plants, soils and cli-

mate. Hunter-gatherers observe and develop a detailed knowledge of climate and native plants and animals. The hunter-gatherers system remains stable because the observations are designed to detect surplus, and there is little interference in the process that generates the surplus.

Dr Horton argues that Aborigines worked to conserve ecosystems and that such management did not permit the development of farming native wildlife through the use of fire. Aborigines did, to some extent, attempt to manage the environment by manipulating the Australian fire regime, but whether their use of fire has had a significant and extensive effect on native vegetation is questioned.

Dr Horton's theses include the claim that lightning ignited fires had occurred for millions of years before the arrival of the Aborigines, and his claim that broad vegetation changes and fire patterns are in response to climate change is probably right. The claim that Aboriginal use of fire made little difference to vegetation, however, is probably unsupportable, at least in Northern Australia.

In the Top End Aborigines (and White Territorians) still continue to burn the bush "with singular ruthlessness". There can be no doubt that fires, lit both by Aborigines and later migrants have severely damaged the natural environment. An increase in burning removes the soil that sustains key ecosystem functions. The State of the Environment - Australia Report states that up to 50 tonnes per hectares of irreplaceable topsoil is lost after a fire.

There are doubts as to the extent of Aboriginal fire practices in temperate forest areas. In 1997 J.S. Benson and P.A. Redpath claimed that there is no evidence to support the thesis that Australia was "a vast grassland". These plant scientists claim that fire frequency has increased since the coming of Europeans and was rare in the escarpment forests of 60,000 years ago.

Unlike Rhys Jones and Tim Flannery and in support of Benson and Redpath, David Horton considers that there is no evidence that there was a

change from fire sensitive to fire tolerant vegetation following human presence in Australia. To support this proposition Dr Horton points to the well-known fact the Australia's fire adapted native vegetation evolved over millions of years, not tens of thousands. The vegetation was adapted to fire, but it was lightning induced fire, not man induced. Perhaps more significantly, reference is also made to lake deposits of Atherton Tablelands that record in their sediments vegetation changes from rainforest to dry eucalypt forest and back to rainforest during the period of Aboriginal occupation. These changes were controlled by climate, not 'fire stick farming'.

The assertion by Horton that drought was the cause of the extinction of the megafauna is well supported. The megafauna of the inland, forced to retreat to a few remaining waterholes, weakened by hunger and thirst and unable to reach the still flowing rivers of the east, would have been subjected to predation by the Aborigines and at risk of extinction.

Dr Horton further explains that these extinction theories have political implications that are crucial to the concept of wilderness. For if people substantially altered ecosystems and caused extinctions prior to colonisation, then wilderness is an artificial construct with no reality independent of people. If nature has no independent reality then there is no wilderness. Of course this is an extreme view that overlooks the responsibility of the current generation to manage what's left of the least undeveloped lands for nature, that is as wilderness set aside from development.

The Pure State of Nature may not be a best seller but it challenges conventional theories on fire and Aboriginal land use. Testing theories on Aboriginal land use, regardless of whether they are considered politically correct, helps Australians to advance toward a better understanding of our environment. For anyone interested in these issues the book is essential reading. ■

'The earth must come first'

THE *Penguin Book of 20th Century Protest* published by edited by Brian MacArthur and published last year by Penguin Books, describes Earth First! as a movement that "was founded in 1979 to fight a 'lethargic, compromising and increasingly corporate environmental community'" (p. 487). Note that "fighting" is the editor's word. The Earth First! Manifesto uses the word "re-energise" to describe its effect upon the broadly based environment movement. Earth First!ers use direct, non-violent action to gain publicity against damaging development activity. Earth First! and Greenpeace demonstrate the power of activists to push conservation through media and back onto the political agenda. They both remind conservationists that there are times for protest against environmental damage and times for co-operation with the reform agendas of Government.

The following is an extract from the Earth First! manifesto taken from the *Penguin Book of 20th Century Protest*. It also indicates that Earth First! is also a wilderness-focussed movement:

DONATIONS

In 1989 Bob Carr, then Minister for Planning and Environment, accepted Colong's proposal for a Wilderness Act and shortly afterwards the NPWS accepted our proposals for wilderness management. Over a million and a half hectares have been declared under the Act. Forty five wilderness areas are now being assessed and will be exhibited for public comment. The Colong Foundation's resources will therefore be stretched to the limit and we are very grateful for the support of our members. Donations from the following during the half year to June 30th are gratefully acknowledged:

'Why wilderness?'

Is it because wilderness makes pretty picture postcards? Because it protects watersheds for downstream use by agriculture, industry and homes? Because it cleans the cobwebs out of our heads after a long week in the auto factory or over the video terminal? Because it preserves resource extraction opportunities for future generations of humans? Because some unknown plant living in the wilds may hold the cure for cancer?

No. It is because wilderness is. Because it is the real world, the flow of life, the process of evolution, the repository of that three and a half billion years of shared travel.

All natural things have intrinsic value, inherent worth. Their value is not determined by what they will ring up on the cash register nor by whether or not they are good. They are. They exist. For their own sake. Without consideration for any real or imagined value to human civilisation.

Even more important than the individual wild creature is the wild interconnected community - the wilderness, the stream of life unimpeded by industrial interference or human manipulation ...

A. Abbott, Arthur Andersen & Co., J. & D. Alexander, V. Atkinson., C. & C. Austin, R. L. Badgery, E. Bell, C.G. Benjamin, J.S. Bentley, J.W. Blanche, G. Boulton, M. Bouman, C.O. Boyd, J.C. Brown, The Bush Club, S. Ciffin, M. Cawte, E.A. Chapman Wade, B. Chick OAM, K.M. Clacher, A.G. Colley OAM, Coast and Mountain Walkers, J. Cook, Dr. P. Cook, A. Cooper, A. Correy, G. Cox, I. Cox, L. Coyne, C.J. Davidson, A.E. Dixon, B. & P. Dodd, R. Doyle, Dr. R.A. Duncon, M. Esson, E. Elenius, M. Ellwood, C. Ferguson, P. Figgis AM, V.R. Figgis, M.F. Flattely, M. Floyd, J. Fraser, J. Friend, C. Gibson, G. Giles, W.J. Gillooley, J. Greening, E. Hanvin, P.B. Haydon, Dr. G. Heinsohn, M. Hillsmith, M. Holber-

The Outdoor Recreation Party promotes more logging

The Outdoor Recreation Party (ORP) has revealed to its supporters its anti-conservation/pro-logging platform in its Summer 2000 newsletter. It asked its members to support the maximum logging options for the South Coast Forest Region. The ORP opted for more logging than the logging industry - the 65,000 cubic metre maximum logging option. The newsletter also pushed for more control burning by the Rural Fire Service and claimed that NSW conservation areas are nowadays just wilderness areas.

ORP is also campaigning to gain the 700 members it needs to register at the next election. The Party is smarting from being in the media spot light for its push for hunting in national parks that has set back its political credibility.

The ORP got into power on the back of the "Wilderness Party" - a party set up to collect votes from wilderness supporters and feed them to the ORP. The Outdoor Recreation Party's policy platform includes more forest logging and burning, and hunting in parks. The ORP through its confusing policy twists and turns risks being marginalised from its recreation focused support base, particularly those that voted for the "Wilderness Party".

ton, Dr. J. Holt, M. Holmes, J. Howell, I. Imhof, D. Johnson, L. Jones, A.J. Keen, D. Kevans, B.R. Kijurina, M.E.V. Kilby, Professor P.G. Laird, J. Lawler, Dr. G.W. Lawrence, K. & J. Lawson, Dr. A.K. Lethlean, G.E. Limberg, P. McCrory, A. Macqueen, Prof. B. Marshall, J. Mayer, D. Mellor, P. Meredith, P. Mooney, Dr. W. Muir, M. Nordon, M. O'Dean, Prof. R. & S. O'Neill, J. O'Reilly, Oatley Flora and Fauna Society, R. Pallin, K.L.J. Parkhouse, D. Rice, Rover Speleological Society, R. Scott, I. Sefton, J. Sheldon, A. Shilling, J. Simons, J. Somerville AM, Dr. S. Stevens, L. Sullivan, M. & C. Tenhave, R. Toop, B. Toovey, T. Walsh, H. Whaite, M.J. White, J.F. Whitehouse, R. Willis, F. Winter, R.W. Younger. ■

Recreation Planning

IN 1997 the NPWS produced a draft park access strategy that implied there was a lack of vehicle access to parks. The strategy was in response to an unfounded attack on national parks by the anti-conservation 4WD and equestrian lobbies. These groups seek access to previously closed national park areas and oppose wilderness management. For example, vehicle access to the innermost parts of the Warragamba catchment that, if it succeeded, would have placed the health of Sydney's water supplies at risk.

The claimed lack of access to national parks is blamed for a broad array of environmental ills, including the spread of wildfires and feral animals. The public is somehow missing out on "access" and "freedom" to ride, hunt, shoot, kill and drive. Such activities of course are trampling over the long standing NPWS conservation policies as well as the precious pristine areas protected by them. The "access for all" sloganeering hides a broader agenda of park development and multiple use for the benefit not only of shooters and 4WD motor sports people, but also loggers and miners that indirectly benefit from any public opposition to nature conservation.

To protect national parks and wilderness areas and to provide for the full spectrum of recreation opportunities, the Colong Foundation developed a planning proposal for regional tourism. It advocated appropriately located accommodation in nearby rural settlements be better networked with the existing NPWS park facilities through local guidebooks. As part of regional tourism planning, Colong recommended that the NSW Government also identify and promote 4WD and horseriding opportunities outside national parks, nature reserves and wilderness areas. State forests and, where appropriate, state recreation areas are better suited to provide for these more environmentally damaging recreation pursuits. While these opportunities would not satisfy the demands of the Outdoor Recreation Party, the holidaying public would really appreciate access to information on appropriate recreation opportunities.

To further advance this strategy in 1998, NSW environment groups commissioned Mr John Macris to examine the regional recreation opportunities in the north-eastern forests of NSW. This plan identified the broad range of public and private open space and recreational attractions that exist in the region. It found that wilderness protection would add to the recreation opportunities and that vehicle-dependent recreation can also be enhanced by the creation of new state forest recreation reserves.

The Colong Foundation is pleased that in March this year the Minister for Forests, the Hon Kim Yeadon, took up these recreation management ideas when he created over 400,000 hectares of informal reserves stretching from the Queensland Border to Newcastle. These reserves provide places for horseriding, for walking pet dogs and to enjoy extensive vehicle access in a conservation setting. Although these new reserves only exist at the Minister's discretion and may be shifted around to meet logging needs at the will of the Minister, they also reduce tourism pressure on core park areas. The new reserves also keep the options open to advance more permanent park reservation of these areas.

To promote appropriate recreation, State Forests have just produced an excellent new forest map for the Lower North Coast, replacing its Barrington Forest Project Map. The full colour map explains the opportunities for small and large group car-based camping and promotes the various state forest cottages that are available for rental. The back of the map also features various forest drives, such as the 110 kilometre Allyn River Forest Drive. The new map explains how in state forests you are allowed to walk your dog and ride a horse but in the national parks of the area these activities are not permitted. The promotion of appropriate recreation opportunities in state forests and national parks helps provide adequate nature conservation and access for all. ■

Greenhouse Emission Control Opposed

At the Kyoto Protocol meeting Australia agreed to restrict greenhouse emissions to 8% above 1990 levels by 2012 and to stop landclearing. By 1998 emissions were already 18% above 1990 levels. Industry leaders have asked the Federal Government not to sign the Protocol unless the U.S. does so first.

In Queensland permits to clear 644,500 ha. of bushland were issued last year and farmers are panic-clearing in anticipation of the enactment of the Vegetation Management Act. The Queensland Government will not proceed with the Act unless the Federal Government provides \$103 million to compensate farmers for not clearing their land. The Federal Government, despite its Kyoto commitment will not comply. Meanwhile the Queensland Government has announced the expenditure of \$200 million on a football stadium.

Population boom on the edge of Destruction

"Some of the catastrophes of past history, which have thrown back human progress for centuries, have been due to the reaction following on the sudden termination, whether in the course of nature or by the act of man, of temporarily favourable conditions which have permitted the growth of population beyond what could be provided for when the favourable conditions were at an end."

John Maynard Keynes, speaking in 1919 against German reparations ('The Economic Consequences of the Peace', quoted in *Protest*, 1999 page 75, published by Penguin). As in the past, today's perils lie with reliable access food and energy resources that are dwindling relative to population increase.

SUPPORT THE COLONG FOUNDATION!

To: The Treasurer, Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd.
Level 2, 362 Kent Street, Sydney NSW 2000

The enclosed remittance or advice covers the item(s) indicated by a tick. (One cheque is sufficient to cover subscription and donation.)

- Membership application (\$25) to 31 December 2001
(NB Membership application covers Bulletin subscription)
- Colong Bulletin Subscription (\$11) to 31 December 2001
- Membership renewal to 31 December 2001 (\$25) Life Membership (\$550)
- Tax deductible donation of \$..... to the Colong Wilderness Fund (*cheques to be made payable to the Fund*)
- PLUS \$___ being for publications as indicated on the reverse side of this form.
- NAME (Mr, Ms, Mrs, Miss)
- ADDRESS
-P/CODEDATE
- SIGNEDAMOUNT

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION Why not join or invite a friend to join?

- Yes, I wish to become a member of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd. 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

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 of Wilderness Ltd. shall be complete discharge to my executors in respect of any sum paid to the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd."



PROGRESS OF THE FOUNDATION

The Colong Foundation is the longest-serving community advocate for wilderness in Australia. It has initiated or been part of Campaigns that have secured over a million hectares of national parkland, most of which is wilderness. But a further million hectares of wilderness in eastern NSW is still not reserved under the Wilderness Act, although much of the area is now in national parks.

Now more than ever the Colong Foundation needs your support. Well financed anti-conservation lobbies, representing resource development, 4WD enthusiasts, equestrian and commercial tourism interests, have greatly increased development pressures on wild places.

The 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 parts and Kakadu are now World Heritage Areas. The Greater Blue Mountains Park is in being in fact, though not in name. 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 up-dated and extended to other states. It has successfully campaigned for the nomination of the Blue Mountains for World Heritage listing.

It is at present working for the protection of threatened wilderness in NSW, for the preservation of national parks from commercial development and damaging use, and for the preservation of old growth forests.

THE COLONG FOUNDATION

SENDER: THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS
Level 2, 362 Kent Street, Sydney NSW 2000



PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE FROM THE COLONG FOUNDATION

- | | Price Posted \$ | | |
|---|--------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| WILD PLACES
<i>The meticulously researched, beautifully written book on wilderness by Peter Prineas with photographs by Henry Gold (285pp)</i> | 27.50 <input type="checkbox"/> | MYLES AND MILO
<i>A biography, written by Peter Meredith, of The Colong Committee's Patron, Myles Dunphy OBE, and its founder, Milo Dunphy AM D.Sc. (376pp)</i> | 27.50 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| BLUE MOUNTAINS FOR WORLD HERITAGE
<i>Geoff Mosley provides a comprehensive explanation of the wealth of heritage values in the Blue Mountains (135pp)</i> | 17.60 <input type="checkbox"/> | THE BAREFOOT BUSHWALKER
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| HOW THE RAINFOREST WAS SAVED (59pp) | 9.00 <input type="checkbox"/> | WILDERNESS RED INDEX - complete | \$110 <input type="checkbox"/> |
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<i>Geoff Mosley's account of the genesis of the nature conservation movement and saving of the Blue Mountains environment (174pp)</i> | 27.50 <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>The Index describes the land ownership, values, history and threats to NSW wild places</i> | |
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