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THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS LTD

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PROTECTING WILDERNESS AND NATIONAL PARKS

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The greatest environmental challenge of the new century is global warming. If we fail to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases, deadly heat waves and droughts will become more frequent, coastal areas will flood and economies will be disrupted.

**Bill Clinton - State of the Union
Speech 2000**

In this issue...

Global Warming	1
Introducing Fioan McCrossin . . .	3
Western Woodlands emerge from the acronym thicket	4
What's in a name?	5
Wilderness protection on private land	6
World Heritage achievements . . .	6
Cooloolo Sandmass	6
Trail Blazing in the Woila-Deua Wilderness	7
Water Conservation Saves a Wilderness	8
Gas find a major threat to the Pilliga	9
Hunters and Shooters give more powier under "Game Bill" . . .	10

GLOBAL WARMING

by Alex Colley

EVIDENCE

THERE is no doubt that the earth is warming. Global temperatures have risen 0.6 degrees during the 20th century and we have recently experienced the warmest decade since temperatures were recorded. Supporting evidence is provided by the melting of ice in the polar regions. Two enormous icebergs covering 8788 sq. km. recently split off the Larsen Ice Shelves on the Antarctic Peninsula, and the largest iceberg ever measured, covering 11,000 sq. km., floated out to sea from the Ross Ice Shelf. The Arctic ice cover is some 40% thinner and the area of open seawater is increasing. Temperatures have risen 2.5 degrees on the Antarctic Peninsula and up to 4 degrees in Alaska, Siberia and Canada. Permafrost is melting in the high Alps and Siberia. There have been considerable

fluctuations in the earth's temperature in past times, probably due to changes in the sun's radiation, but the blanketing effect of greenhouse gases (largely carbon dioxide) as the cause of global warming is acknowledged by scientific bodies. Nearly 2,500 of the world's leading experts signed the 1995 Second Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The US National Academy of Science reported that greenhouse gases are accumulating in the Earth's atmosphere as a result of human activities, causing surface and subsurface ocean temperatures to rise.

The Kyoto Protocol, passed in 1997, sought to commit the participants to reducing greenhouse gases to 5% below 1990 levels between 2008 and 2012. The Protocol has been rejected by the US. Australia undertook to reduce emissions to within 8% above the 1990 level but has not ratified the Protocol. Emissions are now some 20% above 1990

continued on page 2

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GLOBAL WARMING

continued from page 1

levels and will continue to rise as the numbers of people, motor vehicles and electric appliances increase.

An analysis of United Nations statistics by the Australia Institute reveals that, on a per capita basis, Australia is the world's worst greenhouse gas polluter, being 25% above the U.S., the world's second worst polluter.

EFFECTS

Scientists predict considerable rises in the Earth's average temperatures. A United Nations panel warns that the Earth's average temperature will rise by as much as 10.4 degrees Celsius over the next hundred years. Predictions vary over a wide range. The CSIRO forecasts average Australian warming at between 1 and 5.8 degrees by 2070.

Sea levels will rise as land based ice melts, though floating ice will not raise the level. Ocean currents will be affected, with possible results such as the diversion of the Gulf Stream.

The unreliability of Australia's climate will probably be increased. The CSIRO predicts a decrease in available water resources, a reduction in arable land and the output of crops

and livestock, and an increase in fire frequency.

An expensive feature, causing the collapse of insurance companies, has been the rise in the cost of natural catastrophes from \$US 4 billion in the 1950s to \$US 40 billion in the 1990s. Inflation and volcanic damage would account for much of this cost, as would increasing population, but research by the geoscience group of the world's largest re-insurer, Munich re, clearly indicates that it is due to weather related disasters, as depicted in the accompanying diagram. The Munich re scientists report that large cities tend in themselves to intensify natural hazards, because these concrete expanses are heated more by the sun than surrounding areas. The catastrophic storms in the western, northern and eastern suburbs of Sydney during the past twelve years may well have been a symptom of global warming magnified by these local effects.

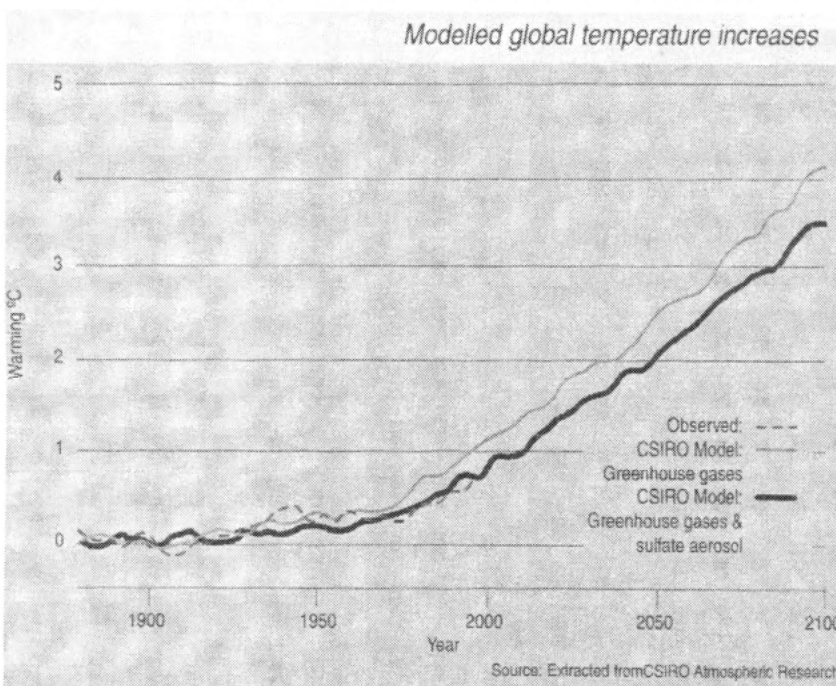
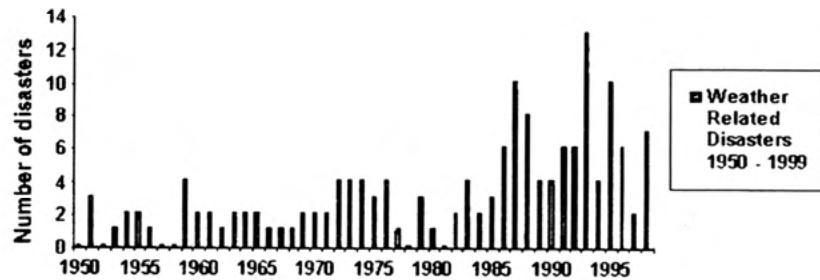
Ever increasing greenhouse emis-

sions will augment the incidence of respiratory diseases, such as asthma and lung cancer; and tropical diseases will spread to sub-tropical areas. The World Health Organisation rates climate change as the most serious problem civilisation has ever faced.

COUNTER MEASURES

The Commonwealth Government has committed nearly \$1 billion for action on its responsibilities under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol. Its Greenhouse Gas Abatement Program allocates \$900 million over four years to assist abatement of greenhouse gas. It has encouraged the use of alternative fuels and the establishment of natural gas refuelling stations. It sponsors the Fuel Consumption Guide for passenger vehicles and fuel consumption labels for new cars. These measures have, however, been insufficient to stop the increase in greenhouse gas emissions.

The conservation movement has described some of the effects of global warming, but has no effective program for reducing it. Effective control requires the reduction in the consumption of the two main generators of carbon emissions - petrol and electricity. The only effective means of reducing the consumption of these commodities is to introduce a carbon tax. Any government responsible for increasing the cost of petrol or electricity could face defeat, and conservation strategies favouring such a tax would not be popular. There are, however, other means of reducing emissions. Perhaps the most effective



continued on page 3

GLOBAL WARMING

continued from page 2

tive of these is the substitution of natural gas for petrol and coal. In its paper on a greenhouse "trigger" (whatever that may be) Environment Australia lists the capacity and cumulative emissions of electricity programs under construction and their cumulative emissions. Coal fired plants with a capacity of 5250 megawatts would emit 438 million tonnes of carbon dioxide. Natural gas plants with a capacity of 6455 megawatts would emit only 205 million tonnes. Natural gas is plentiful. Papua New Guinea gas could supply much of eastern Australia and Timor Sea gas could serve the rest. The Federal Government could probably ensure that Papuan gas is piped to Australia and Timor Sea gas piped to Darwin, instead of being shipped to Japan and the U.S., as is the present intention of Shell and Woodside.

Other measures for countering emissions are the retention of forest cover and the establishment of plantations on cleared land. The Colong Foundation's objective of wilderness preservation, and its opposition to the burning of forests for electricity generation or charcoal production, are a valuable contribution to the provision of carbon sinks.

The only means of substantially reducing petrol and diesel fuel consumption and coal fired electricity generation is to make it more expensive. The extra cost of motor transport and electricity might be offset by income tax reduction, as was the GST. The conservation movement should campaign for such a tax. As with other campaigns, the establishment will at first oppose it or treat it with apathy, but despite this many campaigns have been successful. As Nugget Coombes wrote in his book *The Return of Scarcity*, "Changes in values are fundamental to the emergence of an ecologically acceptable economic system... The transformation of public attitudes on questions of conservation and pollution in the last few years is beyond the wildest hopes of the earnest few who pioneered these ideas." ■

Introducing ... Fiona McCrossin, Assistant Director

A trip to the Coolangubra, in 1989, changed the course of my life. I shall never forget my first glimpses of that wild area, nor the horror of witnessing the result of the first push into its centre – the Wog Way Road. The sheer magnitude of events dragged me towards a decision to leave teaching and work on the South East Forests campaign full time. After months of activism both in the forests and in Sydney, I began working for the South East Forest Alliance (SEFA) out of Total Environment Centre (TEC). Under the guidance of my mentor, Jeff Angel, these heady years were some of the most amazing (and productive) of my working life. A marine science background was submerged as I read and read and read about forests. And politics.

In the Coolangubra I discovered wilderness. Identified under the Wilderness Act, but not declared, it was a focus for the intense opposition to the woodchipping of Eden. Every road, every logging compartment, undermined its wilderness status. Despite this abuse, most of the

Coolangubra is now national park, the result of almost two decades of campaigning.

At TEC, I had an opportunity to see the dedication of the Colong Foundation, and I feel truly privileged working for this organisation. The people that pass through this office are extremely special human beings. I love meeting these people; hearing their views and aspirations. When I worked at TEC, people like Alex Colley and Herbert Beauchamp (of TEC's Toxic Chemicals Committee) left an indelible mark on my life. There is something very grounding about being in an office with such people.

I often talked about Alex and Herbert when I returned to teaching. Application of knowledge, dedication, and age were my themes. Teaching brings you huge strength of resolve when you hear the workings of teenage brains ... their needs; their goals; their fears. We have no right to pass on a sorry state planet to any of these wonderful young people. ■

Fiona McCrossin at Cradle Mountain in Tasmania with her son Robin.



The Western Woodlands emerge from the acronym thicket

By David Paull, environment group
RACAC representative, and
Fiona McCrossin, A. Director,
Colong Foundation.

GOVERNMENT assessment of key western woodland areas is now entering a critical phase. It is time to focus on the protection of western woodlands of NSW.

Since 1996, the State Government has worked very hard to negotiate forest resource allocation outcomes based upon the advice of Resource and Conservation Assessment Council (RACAC). "Comprehensive regional assessments" (CRAs), prepared by RACAC, have examined the forests of southeast, southern and northeast NSW.

RACAC is now undertaking western regional assessments over the central and western divisions of NSW. These assessments are

designed to further develop the CAR (comprehensive, adequate and representative) reserve system. The CRA/CAR process is inextricably linked to resource security, through the development of regional forest agreements (RFAs) that guarantee timber industry access to publicly owned woodlands and forests for twenty years. This makes the western negotiations and decision outcomes crucial for the long-term viability of threatened landscapes.

In the west, soil salinity and loss, and rapid decline in native plant and animal diversity are increasingly severe problems. In particular, the sheep-wheat belt with its remnant semi-arid woodlands, native grasslands and shrublands is the most threatened and poorly protected environment in the state. To halt the decline of its sensitive and beautiful landscapes, remnant habitats must be adequately protected. Safeguard-

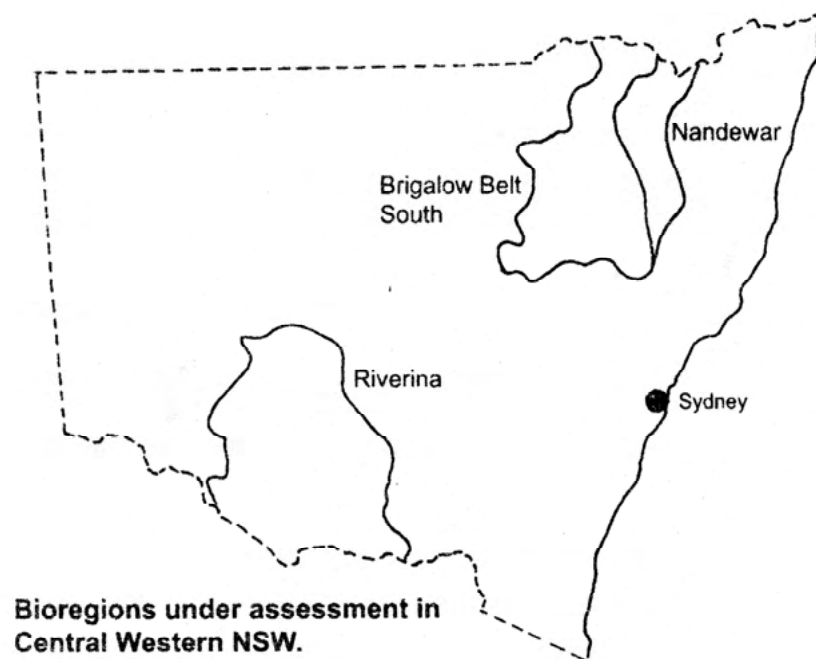
ing the function of natural landscapes in this fragile sheep-wheat belt is one of the biggest challenges conservationists now face.

The current western assessments, unlike previous forest assessments, include all land tenures, but do not involve export woodchipping and the consequential involvement of the Commonwealth Government. One outcome of this changed picture is that the State Government has greater opportunities for creative conservation outcomes and restructuring the logging industry.

Priority Assessment of the Brigalow Belt

The first western region to be assessed is the Brigalow Belt South Bioregion (BBSB). In NSW, the BBSB covers 52 400 square kilometres or 6.2% of the state. Agriculture represents 85% of this bioregion and the vegetation on private land is highly fragmented. Only 2.6% of the bioregion is in conservation reserves and these do not contain a representative sample of the region's ecosystems or plant communities. Existing reserves are mostly over rugged and/or infertile landscapes of low agricultural or timber supply capability.

"Stage 1" of the assessment began in October 1999, and was focused on the Pilliga and Goonoo woodlands of ironbark, box, red gum and cypress pine trees. These woodlands are in the region's two largest state forests, which the timber industry continues to log in an unsustainable manner. The process was intended to be a rapid determination of whether there was sufficient timber to supply a silicon smelter at Lithgow.



Bioregions under assessment in
Central Western NSW.

continued on page 5

WESTERN WOODLANDS

continued from page 4

The smelter was abandoned due to the uproar over the proposed Narrabri charcoal plant. During the assessment, the NPWS proposed the addition of Deriah, Rusden and Playgen State Forests to Mt Kaputar National Park; the reservation of all of the Goonoo and Lincoln/Bree-long/ Eura State Forests; and the reservation of the areas of highest conservation value of the Pilliga State Forest. Nevertheless, in February 2000, in a surprise move, the NSW Government signed a long-term supply agreement with one of the Cypress sawmills in the region without providing interim woodland conservation outcomes, such as wilderness protection.

Dryland woodlands and other semi-arid environments are as beautiful as our wonderful coastal environments, only less familiar. Yet our knowledge of the bioregion's ecosystems is woefully inadequate. For example, the rushed fauna survey program conducted by the NPWS for Stage 1 process resulted in a 50% increase in wildlife records in the region.

Resource negotiations for

Pilliga-Goonoo to start in June

RACAC maintains that "Stage 2" will be a more comprehensive assessment. Negotiations between interest groups are planned for June 2002, with reserve/resource outcomes for this bioregion to be agreed by the end of this year, and new parks reserved before the next state election in March 2003.

So far, the natural resource assessment processes have not adequately defined conservation targets for reserves. Time is running out, for without these targets the government promises for significant increases to the reserve system will be difficult to implement. The assessment can only flag negotiable Crown tenures (e.g. vacant or reserved Crown land and State Forest) for immediate reservation. The option of using other mechanisms to achieve conservation options on private land is more problematic, and the security of outcomes offered

beyond the March 2003 timeframe must be closely examined. In particular, conservation agreements to be negotiated with land holders on private lands must not be substituted for national parks on public lands during the June negotiations.

Significant additions to the reserve system can be achieved for the Pilliga and Goonoo woodlands, as well as the many smaller areas of public lands within state forests scattered throughout the bioregion. For the Stage 2 assessment, state agencies have proposed that ninety percent, or more if practicable, of the region's wilderness be protected in reserves. Environment groups are seeking additions of 21,160ha to wilderness in Mt Kaputar National Park and the declaration of the Pilliga (126,419ha) and the Bebo (20,070ha) wilderness areas.

Riverina and Nandawar

Assessments also get underway

In addition to the Brigalow Belt South Bioregion, assessment has commenced, or is due to commence for:

- The Riverina, with its important River Red Gum woodlands – only about 0.05% of this landscape is currently protected; and
- The Nandewar region on the north-western slopes and foothills west of the New England Tableland, with extensive areas of remnant grasslands and woodlands but less than 1% protected in reserves (see map on previous page).

The gross imbalance between the conservation of remnant native landscapes in western NSW and over production of timber, firewood, sheep and wheat must be addressed now before it's too late. Not only do western ecosystems depend on improved protection measures, but our economic well being is linked to the maintenance of healthy ecosystems in central western NSW.

The Western Regional Assessments offer a once in a generation opportunity to protect the western woodlands. Clearly it is time for the conservation movement to get out in front, as it did for the coastal forests. ■

What's in a name?

In late January, the NSW Electoral Commission considered the registration of a number of new political parties. These parties included the Environment Party, Anglers Party, Marijuana Freedom Party, Horse Riders Party and Free Education Party.

Only one of the parties listed above has been registered – the Horse Riders Party. We understand this party has primarily been established to push for horse riding access in national parks, wilderness and nature reserves.

The other parties seeking registration did not meet the Commissioner's requirements. These requirements included that the party have a minimum membership of 750 and that 75% of a random sample of 300 of the members reply to a letter from the Commissioner, indicating support for their party.

The Colong Foundation considers that party names should accurately reflect their philosophies and intentions. In particular, organisations voicing policies that counter the primary objectives of existing environmental organisations should be clearly differentiated from them.

Further, the Foundation is concerned that parties seeking registration should support the intent of the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Amendment Act 1999. According to Mr Paul Crittenden, the Member for Wyong, during the last state election there were many allegations that the same people were registering many parties. Voters also needed to know what the party that they were voting for actually supported, otherwise people could be elected with completely different and opposite agendas and philosophies to the voters' intentions (The Hon. H.S.Tsang, Legislative Council Hansard 10/11/99).

The new electoral Act now effectively counters the registration of dummy parties. The rush of party registrations last state election resulting in many parties, with no track record of membership or community support, and proffering dubious supporting documentation, cannot be repeated. ■

World Heritage achievements

Australia was one of the first countries to ratify the World Heritage Convention in 1974. Twenty eight years later we have 14 properties listed.

Australia has much to be proud of in that we have more sites listed for their natural values than any other nation and we have the largest site – The Great Barrier Reef.

The Colong Foundation can rightfully claim to have played a leading role in the listing of two of the four sites in NSW. Without our decade of advocacy the Greater Blue Mountains certainly would not have been placed on the list.

The Central Eastern Rainforest Reserves Australia (CERRA) listing followed the successful conclusion in 1982 of the Border Ranges campaign, which began in 1972. A member of the Colong Foundation suggested listing as World Heritage in order to frustrate the Coalition's threat to log the rainforest when they regained government. Both the NSW and Federal Labor Governments embraced the idea with enthusiasm and listing was achieved in 1986.

COOLOOLA SANDMASS Support for World Heritage listing

A report commissioned by the Fraser Island Scientific Advisory Committee has recommended that the 650,000 ha Cooloola Sand mass be added to the Fraser Island World Heritage area, increasing it in size by 30 per cent. The scheme would protect the land between Noosa and Fraser Island and has the support of the Beattie Government. The initial nomination of the area was rejected in 1992 because of fears the listing would be compromised by tourism development, but local and state governments have since acted to protect the area.

The listing would recognise: the diversity of rainforest and sclerophyll vegetation types; spectacular scenery including coloured sand dunes, perched freshwater lakes and the pristine Noosa River; the ground parrot and other endangered wildlife

Wilderness protection on private land

In August 1995, in a bold move towards environmental sustainability, Craig Knowles, the then Planning Minister, introduced a policy (SEPP No. 46) designed to prevent land clearing in NSW. The policy protected native vegetation and operated until 1998. The protected areas of private land included those within NPWS identified wilderness and all private "inholdings" in national parks.

In 1998, the Native Vegetation Conservation Act replaced the visionary planning policy and effective control of clearing on private lands within wilderness virtually ceased. Recently, the Department of Land and Water Conservation advised the committees developing regional plans under the new legislation that wilderness, unlike old growth forests or endangered species habitat, could not be protected. The government's policy reversal ignores the enduring values of wilderness, which is perhaps the most rapidly diminishing of all the natural resources in NSW.

The Departmental advice aims to block the efforts of at least one regional vegetation committee that sought to protect identified wilderness on the north coast from logging and clearing. The Native Vegetation Conservation Act, however, requires that vegetation mapping protect areas of high conservation value native vegetation. Effectively the government's policy ruling asserts that wilderness is not of high conservation value under this legislation, despite the recent government efforts to protect it.

Wilderness identification should continue to inspire and initiate appropriate protection for these rare

areas, as indeed has been the case for leasehold lands, where clearing and logging have been prevented since the days of the Greiner Government. Of course, wilderness on private land is best protected through Dunphy Wilderness Fund acquisition and subsequent addition to the NPWS estate.

The Dunphy Wilderness Fund has acquired 38,867 ha of identified wilderness on private land since 1996 (NPWS Annual Report 2000/01, p36). These acquisitions have considerably expanded the Macleay Gorges and Guy Fawkes wilderness areas. Surely these private wilderness lands, the "inholdings" within national parks and other critical areas, such as the wilderness links between NPWS reserves, should be granted adequate interim protection in view of their high value to nature conservation? ■

DRYLAND SALINITY SPREADS AS CLEARING CONTINUES

For every tree planted in Australia one hundred are bulldozed. Seventeen million hectares of Australia is now at risk of dryland salinity.

ACF Biodiversity campaign

Land clearing is still tax deductible in Australia. But planting trees is not. I will vote for the party that removes the tax incentive for land clearing.

David Eden Nov. 5, 2001 - SMH

TRAIL BLAZING ^{in the} Woila-Deua Wilderness

WHEN the Colong Foundation reported what it understood to be illegal clearing in the Woila-Deua Wilderness it had expected the NPWS to respond decisively to stop the damage. Instead, in a carefully worded letter, the Service prepared itself to do nothing, by advising that "some members of the local community have in the past expressed interest in maintaining access (to historic stock routes)". The claim of historic tracks is dubious, as there are no formed tracks in the upper part of the valley and spurs leading into the valley. The only tracks that exist are mere negotiable routes within the upper valley, developed through usage during the 19th Century, before the modern roads that now serve the region were constructed.

A NPWS letter advising that the trail clearing was "unauthorised," at the same time reported, "the

nearby landholder was given assurances that access to the in-holding would not be denied". Apparently, in the eyes of the NPWS, the unauthorised tree cutting is an issue of either maintenance clearing of an existing track or upgrading of current access. The question of new track construction is overlooked. The NPWS letter is apparently intended to ensure the Service avoids decisive action on the issue, ignoring the gravity of illegal track clearing in the Woila-Deua Wilderness within the Deua National Park.

The apparently illegal track clearing in protected wilderness within a national park is an anathema to park management. It can herald further park abuse, perhaps in the form of fires (arson) to encourage 'green pick', the succulent sward of native grass shoots that follows burning. Then comes illegal grazing of the park by cattle. If an inholding is involved, as in this case,

then the track clearing may also be followed by development of an exclusive wilderness resort or commercial horse riding activities. Burning off can be associated with such horse riding. It creates fresh pasture out of the wilderness so that expensive stock feed need not be brought into the area.

In view of his long association with the area, Dr Geoff Mosley, of Peak Environmental Enterprises, has written to the NSW Environment Minister, Bob Debus, explaining that the unauthorised clearing is a matter of utmost seriousness, threatening the integrity of both the Woila-Deua Wilderness and, by acting as a dangerous precedent, the State's wilderness system in general.

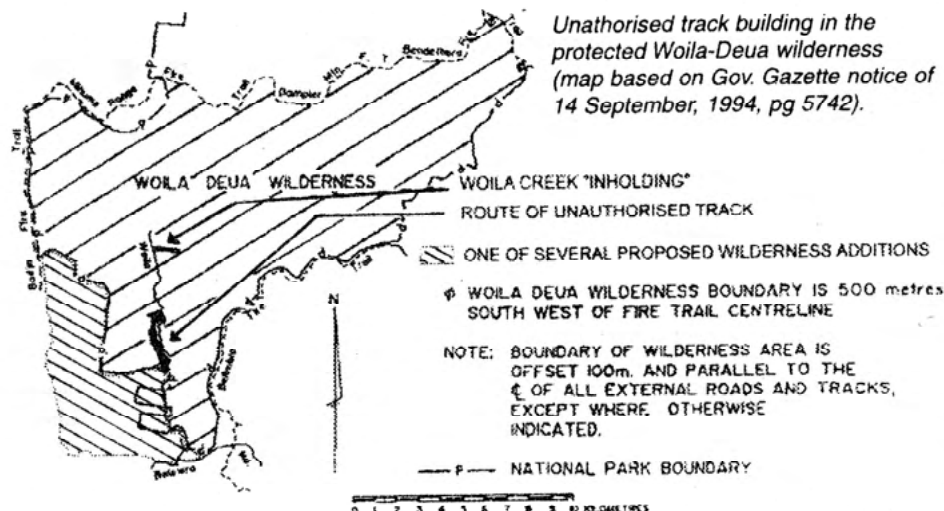
Dr Mosley has asked Mr Debus to take the steps necessary to: see the tree cutters prosecuted; organise rehabilitation of the affected areas; and commence compulsory purchase of the Woila Clearing

on the grounds of the damage caused to the Park.

The Colong Foundation understands that a chain-saw has been used to clear a track 2.5 to 3 metres wide to provide access to the clearing. The new track extends for at least a kilometre and, if completed, will provide upgraded access to the tiny piece of private property in the heart of the Woila-Deua Wilderness.

Most worrying is the new National Parks and Wildlife Amendment Act 2001 that contains provisions which enable the Minister for the Environment to grant additional access rights to owners of landlocked areas. Given the assurances apparently already made to the current land-holder by the NPWS, this provision could well be used to formalise access in a manner that is contrary to responsible park management, and in spite of the considerable environmental impact caused by the unauthorised clearing.

If such additional access rights can be granted on the recommendation of the NPWS, despite the requirements in the new Act for the Minister to consider environmental impacts, then the new legislation will be revealed as containing a very dangerous flaw that could threaten the integrity of the national parks estate. Unauthorised activity damaging a national park should be sufficient grounds for compulsory acquisition processes. In Victoria, the Minister for the Environment acted to acquire a key area because the owner of the property ploughed it up without a permit. ■



water conservation saves a wilderness

Our ability to retain wilderness is a key indicator of whether the Australian environment is sustainable. For example, to cease building wilderness-flooding dams, Australians need to stop wasting water.

In March, the Minister for the Environment, Bob Debus, announced just such a step towards sustainability where "years of environmental education have paid off, with Sydneysiders now conserving, rather than wasting, water. Over the past decade, Sydney's per capita use of water has fallen by 16 per cent."

The positive results of these water savings are that the billion dollar Welcome Reef Dam proposal has been permanently shelved and a new 6,000 hectare Welcome Reef Nature Reserve announced over the dam site, 10 kilometres north of Braidwood in the Southern Highlands.

The proposed nature reserve will protect the ancient forests and grassy woodlands of Sunset Mountain and parts of the Durrant Durrant Range from clearing and weed invasion. The ice-age relic, *Euclayptus recurva*, one of the rarest of all Eucalypts, is found in the vicinity. Its closest relative is found in Tasmania. A large population of Cabbage Gum (*Eucalyptus amplifolia*) of botanical significance will be reserved, and the area around

Sunset Mountain, known for its abundance of Koalas, as well as the threatened Long-nosed Potoroos and Powerful Owls, will be protected.

The koalas are particularly important, as the Minister has set a precedent by announcing that local farmers will be consulted regarding the management of the nature reserve before its formal reservation. Koalas may vouch safe the protective management of the area, a task that may prove difficult, as locals would also like to see the area returned to primary production.

The more far reaching effect of the Welcome Reef decision is that it

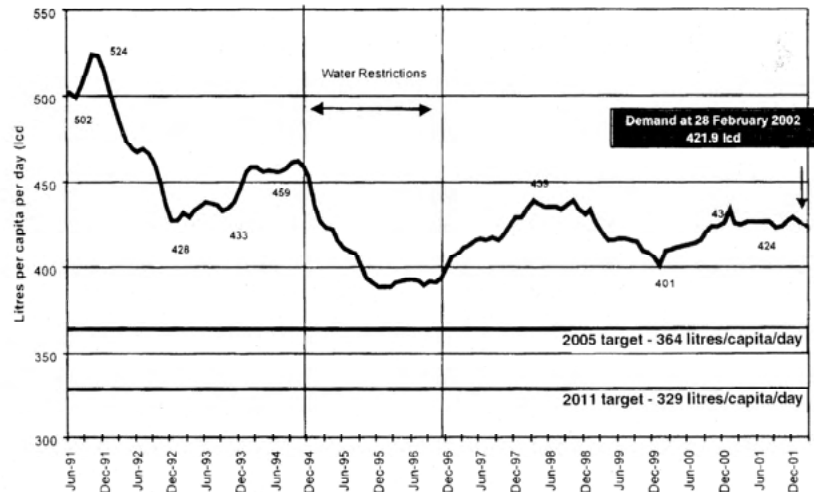
saves the wilderness within the magnificent Shoalhaven River gorge from becoming a ditch starved of water, and the near pristine Mongarlowe River east of Braidwood from being inundated.

Water reductions off target

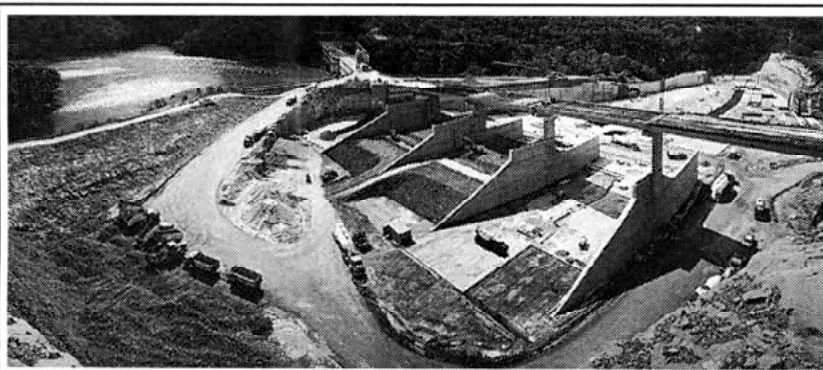
Sydney's per capita water consumption must be further curbed, or dams, like the now rejected Welcome Reef, will be constructed to meet increasing water demand, flooding thousands of hectares of valuable land, be it either wilderness or prime pasture. Sydney Water Corporation, has a commercial incentive to sell more water, and water conservation will drop away unless reduction targets are enforced.

The reductions in demand were achieved between 1991 and 1997, but since then per capita demand has resumed rising. Without further efforts it is impossible for Sydney Water to reach its 28% reduction target of 364 litres per person per day by 2005.

Fortunately, a water conservation expert panel, headed up by Bob Wilson, has been announced by the Minister to help ensure we use water more wisely. Demand management



Sydney's water demand has increased since 1996.
Note demand targets for 2005 and 2011.



Warragamba Dam side spillway nears completion after ten years of study and four years since it was approved. The spillway is five times cheaper than the alternative of raising the dam wall and preserves the biodiversity of the wilderness areas upstream.

continued on page 9

GAS FIND A MAJOR THREAT TO THE PILLIGA

On March 21 this year, Eastern Star Gas Limited announced its acquisition of 35 kilometres of seismic survey lines over the Bohena Gas prospect, within the northern extremities of the Pilliga on both sides of the Newell Highway. This is the first time Eastern Star Gas has worked in the area and its gas dis-

covery lies in the sandstone strata that lie deep below the coal measures the lie deep below the Pilliga area. Over the last three years, however, other overseas groups have drilled nine wells looking for coal seam gas.

A key political implication of the new find by Eastern Star Gas is that the Department of Mineral Resources

will insist on mining before conservation. Mining interests will also want resource security for the gas exploration. The gas issue must be addressed if decent conservation reserves for the Pilliga are to be achieved.

It is the Colong Foundation's view that the Pilliga coal seam gas resource is not clean energy as it is associated with saline groundwater. This saline groundwater must be pumped out to access the associated gas resource within the coal seam. The groundwater effluent pumped from the gas field has toxic salt concentrations, with reported conductivities of 14000 $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ in the groundwater.

There have already been pollution spills that killed the trees within tracts of woodland in the Pilliga. It should, however, be noted that these spills were not associated with the Eastern Star Gas Limited operations but with the previous coal seam gas exploration.

The gas with toxic groundwater may compromise the gas resource. One of the complications observed by members of the Colong Foundation associated with managing the salty groundwater is that it can flow from the well-head without pumping (i.e. a toxic artesian aquifer is associated with the coal seam gas prospect!). ■

Panorama of gas exploration drilling site in the Pilliga September 1, 2000



water conservation

continued from page 8

was initiated very modestly some years ago, but much more can be done to encourage gradual change in water use habits through user pays. A cursory look at your last water rate bill will reveal that most of the charges are still for services, not water usage. To achieve demand reduction targets, water pricing reform should be implemented that replaces service charges with water use charges.

Water reuse also presents a major opportunity to save water, particularly for large users such as industry and agriculture. Steel cooling does not need drinking water and treated effluent is an ideal water resource for horticulture and golf courses. Obliging industry to reduce its toxic effluent discharges to the sewer must also reduce water consumption and fur-

ther clean our waterways. The active leakage control program (repairing and maintaining the pipes) should also be accelerated, as this program represents a third of all water savings achieved up to 1997.

More inducements for saving water associated with residential development, major renovation of existing dwellings, and through urban consolidation should be developed. Urban sprawl, gentrification and consolidation should not translate into per capita increases in water use.

Each Sydney resident now uses 405 litres a day, instead of 506 litres in 1991, which still puts us among the planet's biggest water wasters. The good news about being so wasteful is that water savings are easier and less economically painful. Conservationists are now pushing to ensure the Government establishes a water supply contract

with Sydney Water, which requires enforcement of a 35 % reduction in per capita water use to 329 litres a day by 2011.

The primary benefit of living together in a heap is that we save through sharing utilities, such as water and sewage. There is a limit to these savings, but looking at the water rate charges, we seem to be nowhere near them. These limits will bite, as predicted with remorseless accuracy by Malthusian Laws, when Sydney's population shoots beyond 5 million.

There is every reason to reduce Sydney's ecological footprint. The saving of a wilderness, and the creation of this important nature reserve 200 kilometres away in the Southern Highlands, are tangible benefits gained from taking another step down the path we must go if Sydney is to live up to its status as one of the world's best cities to live in. ■

Hunters and Shooters given more powers under "Game Bill"

by Fran Kelly
Total Environment Centre

It appears both State Labor and the Coalition are falling over themselves trying to gain the rural shooter/gun enthusiast vote in time for the next election. The NSW Labor Government recently introduced the Game Bill – a bill which hands vast powers and opportunities to shooters, pig doggers and other hunters across the State. The Bill was drawn up following strong lobbying by shooters under the leadership of the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia and their representative in parliament – John Tingle MP of the Shooters Party.

Apart from trying to gain the shooter vote – a sad effort in times of the much publicised gun proliferation in NSW – there is no reason for the Bill. It has been "sold" by the Government, Opposition and shooters as pest control and regulation of hunters, yet neither of these arguments add up. Recreational hunters have a long history of maintaining and dispersing pest species for their blood sport enjoyment. A recent state government feral animal inquiry saw hunters admitting to the "seeding" of fresh areas with pests such as pigs. A submission from the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia to the Game Bill argued for the "sustainable management of game species" (i.e. to keep pests for their sport) and reports in mainstream newspapers have stated that shooters are suspected of introducing foxes into Tasmania for the first time – an act described as "bioterrorism".

As the Bill creates a "Game Council of NSW" which would be dominated by hunters who will take on the roles of licencing, monitoring,



inspecting and controlling all hunting and shooting activities – there is no effective regulation. That is, unless you count putting the fox in charge of the chicken coop as regulation.

The biggest problems with the legislation have been seized upon by a large alliance of environment, animal welfare and gun control groups who have come together to oppose it outright. Although it has passed through the Lower House, it has yet to enter the Upper House. It is here that there is still hope it may be defeated. And it will be defeated if Labor comes to its senses and realises that it could lose far more support from those who would be, and already are, horrified at the contents of this unnecessary and cruel piece of legislation, than it would gain from shooters.

The main objections to the Bill by the alliance of groups include:

- The powers granted to the Game Council of NSW – including the right to demand almost any public land be declared available for hunting;
- The endorsement of animal cruelty through promoting the use of 'any method or instrument' to kill native (waterfowl and quail) and non native animals. The Coalition is keen to extend the list of "game" species – which could end up including large native animals such as kangaroos, wallabies etc;
- It enables the reintroduction of

recreational duck hunting;

- The creation of an easy next stage for hunters to access National Parks – particularly as the Coalition is pushing for our national parks to be made available to shooters;
- The exacerbation of pest problems;
- The undermining and weakening of other Acts and government departments by taking away control and prosecution powers and putting them into the hands of hunters;
- The increased deliberate and accidental shooting of wildlife on public and private land as hunters and shooters are given more opportunities to carry out their sport; and
- It could pose a threat to public safety and alienate the public from lands they have always used.

To defeat the Bill, local Members of Parliament are being urged to follow their conscience, take up the issue and lobby against the legislation within their own parties. Please, if you haven't already done so, contact your local MP, and also write to the Premier Bob Carr using some of the points above.

For more information contact the Total Environment Centre by phoning 9299 5599; 9299 5680 (two lines) or visit their web site on www.tec.nccnsw.org.au

Meeting Dates
Meetings will be held
in our offices at 2pm
on May 30th, June
13th and 27th, and
July 11th and 25th.

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 2002
(NB Membership application covers Bulletin subscription)
- ☐ Colong Bulletin Subscription (\$11) to 31 December 2002
- ☐ Membership renewal to 31 December 2002 (\$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.

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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 for 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. 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 listing of the Blue Mountains as World Heritage.

It is at present working for the protection of threatened wilderness in NSW; the preservation of national parks from commercial development and damaging use; and 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

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The meticulously researched, beautifully written book on wilderness by Peter Prineas with photographs by Henry Gold (285pp)

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Geoff Mosley provides a comprehensive explanation of the wealth of heritage values in the Blue Mountains (135pp)

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