



THE COLONG BULLETIN

Bulletin 201

THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS LTD

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PROTECTING WILDERNESS AND NATIONAL PARKS

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Indigenous co-management in the Blue Mountains

by Keith Muir

IN June 2002 Environment Minister, Bob Debus, announced that co-management would be established for the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. We understand that co-management for the Blue Mountains would be through Boards with a majority of Aboriginal members. The boards would be established under various Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with the NPWS. Such a

Park co-management model would satisfy the Government's intention to subsequently transfer these Boards to joint management arrangements under the Aboriginal ownership provisions of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1974*. It is further understood that MoUs with the NPWS may embrace Indigenous Land Use Agreements under the Native Title process. There are six Native Title claims over

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Are we going to see a situation where NPWS or State Forests counter-sue farmers for fires escaping from private property?

Bob Debus, Minister for Conservation

Property owners who have done absolutely nothing to protect their property from any fire can be the most vocal critics of others.

Phil Koperberg, Rural Fire Service Commissioner

THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR WILDERNESS

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Indigenous Co-management

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the World Heritage Area.

The co-management through Park Boards for the Mountains could be achieved within five years. However, Aboriginal ownership of the Blue Mountains National Parks will prove more difficult and may not be achieved in a short or medium time frame. Transfer of ownership requires formal recognition of Traditional Owners, a complex and uncertain genealogical process.

Traditional use – a first step

In the next two or so years, a number of memoranda of understanding of a smaller scope will be signed between interested Aboriginal communities and the National Parks and Wildlife Service. These MoUs will be to allow vehicle entry and use of the parks, including the Greater Blue Mountains national parks, for hunting, fishing and gathering of traditional foods for domestic, ceremonial and cultural purposes. These Indigenous arrangements will be in accordance with a state-wide policy being developed by the NPWS to allow for 'wild resource use' within Parks as specified by the Government's Partnerships with Aboriginal Communities Policy. It is also intended that these MoUs will be enshrined within Park plans of management and in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area strategic plan.

Some problems relating to local Boards running parks

Boards of management for national parks are not without problems and these problems are not unique to Aboriginal communities. Before the NPWS was established, Park Trusts made parochial decisions that served the local interests rather than the public interest. The classic case of mismanagement by a Trust was the logging of (Royal) National Park in the 1920s to provide funds for the development of park facilities. It was the poor performance of Trusts that led to the establishment of the NPWS in order to provide professional park management (see also 'Berowra Valley should be a national park', page 8 in this *Bulletin*).

Mr Haydn Washington is a member of the Mutawintji National Park Board of Management, representing the Nature Conservation Council of NSW. He has reported that Traditional Owners do not wish to remove farm dams from this arid land park. The enhanced water supplies have enabled the kangaroo and feral goat populations to overgraze the native vegetation. Haydn considers individual plant species and some plant communities are in danger of extinction due to the over grazing.

Shooting goats from helicopters should be introduced on the Byngano Range away from the art sites, supervised by a Traditional Owner. The Chair of the Board rejected this proposal, largely on the grounds that this was a waste of food. Like the mustering of feral horses in Guy Fawkes and Kosciuszko National Park, harvesting of feral goats is lucrative. An incentive has been created to retain breeding stocks of ferals, causing considerable environmental impact.

Is sacred wilderness sinful?

There is opposition to wilderness amongst some Aboriginal leaders and archaeologists who claim wilderness is an offensive concept. The offence appears to be based on the incorrect assumption that wilderness is some sort of modern day *Terra nullius* of enforced dispossession. Peter Prineas, in *Wild Places*, stated that nothing in the decisions of the High Court recognising Native Title requires us to remove wilderness from Australia's history and from the present landscape. There is of course a misunderstanding, as strenuous efforts have been made to adopt a multicultural approach to wilderness without any change to the name.

"Wilderness" is one of the six protected area categories recommended by IUCN and universally adopted. The IUCN defines wilderness as:

"A large area of unmodified or slightly modified land, and/or sea, retaining its natural character and influence, without permanent or significant habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural condition."

Governments and park authorities around the world recognise this unified approach of seeing Aboriginal

MEETING DATES

Meetings will be held in our Kent St. office at 2pm on November 27th, December 11th and January 8th and 22nd.

use and culture as being in harmony with wilderness area objectives.

No one should doubt that all wilderness in Australia has been occupied and used by Indigenous people for many thousands of years. No doubt the rhetoric of the anti-wilderness lobby is partly to blame for encouraging misunderstanding. Wilderness, they claim, is unmanaged and 'locked up,' crawling with pest animals and weeds, and a fire-bomb waiting to explode next summer.

Those who love the Mountains know it contains five well-managed wilderness areas. Every weekend there are countless people walking in these areas. Weeds, ferals and fire are actively managed. The 'Willows out of the Wollemi' and the 'Great Gorse Gorse Walk' are two examples of strenuous and successful community-based weed control in wilderness areas.

Indigenous land use and wilderness

Many people believe that national parks, nature reserves and state conservation areas, as well as precious wilderness, must be protected from hunting. If Indigenous opposition to wilderness is partly based on the public's resistance to shooting and fishing, it should be remembered that this community opposition is not exclusive to wilderness.

If Indigenous hunting with firearms is allowed in Parks then how will the future Aboriginal managers of the Blue Mountains' Parks stop the sporting shooters from hunting? The Coalition parties already support sporting shooters controlling ferals in parks. It is terrifying to think that hunting in the Mountains could be just an election away.

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Further elements of Indigenous criticism of wilderness are that it prevents access to country by off road vehicles and precludes built accommodation. It is understood that vehicle access for ceremonial and cultural purposes for Aboriginal communities is already available. However these concessions have set a precedent for further vehicle use and can be used to justify the expansion of roads in remote areas. Special vehicle access provisions are also being proposed for disabled people and 4WD clubs. The Colong Foundation for Wilderness considers that wilderness access generally should be unrestricted, provided visitors walk. Such access avoids the environmental impacts associated with vehicle use.

The most recent demands for abolition of the wilderness term have apparently come from archaeologists associated with the investigation of Blue Mountains art sites. There is also opposition to the Bimberi wilderness in the ACT from some Traditional Owners on the Namadgi Interim Board of Management. This position runs contrary to governments and park authorities around the world who recognise a unified approach of seeing Aboriginal use and culture as being in harmony with wilderness area objectives.

Stripped of its spiritual elements, wilderness is essentially a park management concept. A wilderness designation effectively protects park areas from development, damaging uses, erection of accommodation and commercial exploitation. In the Blue Mountains, establishment of effective wilderness management has been a hard fought battle. And it is an ongoing struggle.

It would be unfortunate for the progress toward reconciliation through park management to unravel over a misunderstanding over what wilderness is and what it is for. But the biggest problem remains that if land rights are restricted to just the Parks, Indigenous people can then only obtain a decent financial benefit from their land by exploiting the very last areas that have been set aside from development. ■

Giving the Lie to Lomborg

by Alex Colley

IN the *Sydney Morning Herald* of October 2nd there was an article by Miranda Devine entitled *Giving the lie to all that greenie gloom*. On the other side of the page is a description of how fishermen, having fished out the tooth fish from Arctic waters, have been forced to turn to the far south where their ice encrusted vessels are in danger of capsizing.

The theme of Bjorn Lomborg's book, *The Sceptical Environmentalist*, is that, in spite the gloomy views of environmentalists, people and the environment are healthier than ever. He is half right – the people are healthier than ever. Only 18 per cent of the people in developing countries are starving whereas 35 per cent were in 1970. He quotes official statistics to prove that, almost everywhere, living standards have improved. This does not

prove that natural resources have been maintained, only that modern technology has enabled them to be exploited faster than ever before.

Nowhere is this more evident than in Australia, where our soil is being destroyed by salt, our rivers drying up, weather related disasters are frequent and we have the world record for mammal extinction.

In his recent address to Australia's corporate leaders Al Gore named five key issues where human pressure on the planet was leading to disaster: global warming, species loss, loss of rainforest, loss of fisheries and loss of fresh water. The Colong Foundation's campaigning for wilderness, forests and wild rivers is a significant counter to all these pressures. It was a pity Al Gore missed the US Presidency by a few votes, but the vote he attracted indicates strong popular support for environmental preservation. ■

Few Fires Burn Out of Parks

In 1912 an el Nino event caused temperatures to drop 20 degrees below normal in the Antarctic, causing the demise of the remnants of Scott's Polar expedition and allowing the iceberg which sunk the Titanic to drift further south than normal. In 2003 another el Nino event, reinforced by global warming and over 100 km per hour winds, carried fire into the Canberra suburbs of Duffy and Chapman destroying 500 houses. The planners of these suburbs could not have foreseen such a conjunction of events. The NSW Farmers Association is backing a Supreme Court challenge with the object of securing more hazard reduction burns in national parks, although the NPWS says this would have slowed the blaze by no more than three km per hour. Hazard reduction burns are often dangerous. A recent burn of the South Coast started more than 40 bushfires. Statistics provided by the parks service are very relevant. Between July 1995 and June this year 2385 fires affected park lands. Of these, 67 per cent started and were contained in parks, 22 per cent started elsewhere and moved into parks, and only 11 per cent started in a park and moved into neighbouring land. If NPWS is to be responsible for fires which escape park boundaries, farmers should be responsible for fires which escape from their properties into public lands. ■

Anti-Wilderness MP Ousted

by Alex Colley

MALCOLM JONES was elected as Outdoor Recreation Party (ORP) Member of the Legislative Council in 1999. He gained 7264 primary votes, equal to 0.2 per cent of the total vote. The preferences flowing from 11 micro political parties recruited for this purpose gained his election. They included the Four Wheel Drive Party; Three Day Weekend Party; the "Environment" Party; Free Education Party; Womens Party/Save the Forests; Wilderness Party and Stop the Greenies. The Electoral Commissioner and legislative amendment prevented a repetition of this scam at the 2003 State election.

The ORP slogan is "Access for All." Since there is access to all National Parks by foot and by public and park roads, this slogan would be meaningless if it did not stand for off road vehicular and equestrian access, regardless of damage caused. This is what voters whose parties directed preferences to the ORP voted for, including those who thought they were voting for wilderness or forest protection.

Malcolm Jones has been accused of using parliamentary allowances for purposes not connected with his parliamentary duties. The Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) has recommended that the Director of Public Prosecutions consider his prosecution for breaches of sections 178BA or 178BB of the *Crimes Act 1900* (obtaining money by deception or false/minding statements), the common law offence of breaching public trust, and a breach of section 87 of the *ICAC Act* (giving false evidence before the Commission). In addition the ICAC was of the opinion that consideration should be given to the expulsion of

Mr Jones from the Upper House. Although a free vote on his expulsion was scheduled for September 16th, this was unnecessary because Mr Jones, after a nervous faltering two hour speech, described by the SMH as a "rave", resigned half an hour before the debate on his expulsion was to begin.

Unfortunately the misuse of parliamentary allowances is not uncommon. Of much greater conservation significance is Mr Jones' influence on Government policy. He has consistently opposed wilderness. The highlight of his parliamentary career was his Wilderness Amendment (Procedure) Bill which, although defeated, won the support of the Coalition. The Bill, by allowing horseriding, 4Wdriving, and vehicle based camping in wilderness, would have effectively destroyed existing wilderness. Other provisions in the Bill would have prevented further declarations. He opposed wilderness assessments, favoured resorts and feral horses and supported the burning of parklands. Early in his term of office Jones reported that "probably the most important issue facing outdoor recreationists, particularly four wheel drivers, trail bike riders and horse riders, is access to tracks that have been closed as a result of the Wilderness Act". He claimed to have built up a good relationship with the Government, having made many successful submissions and having a "productive meeting" with NPWS on 7th, June last year. He may well be responsible for the policy of zoning parks, which can have no purpose other than allowing destructive "access" and resort development. His influence may also be responsible for the fact that wilderness assessment in the southern region has been determined, not by wilderness sup-

porters, who are a strong majority, but by ORP supporters, who constitute a small minority and have never campaigned for nature conservation.

Conservation First

The *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* defined the primary objective of parks as being "to protect the unique scenery or natural phenomena." The Act has been considerably amended since then and now fills 361 pages. Section 30E of the amended Act states that the purpose of reserving land as national park is to "identify protect and conserve areas" and specifies conservation of biodiversity as the primary management principle. Section 2A describes the first object of the Act as "the conservation of nature." This theme is endorsed in sections 7, 12 and 72AA. We hope that the NPWS will once again ensure that conservation is the priority consideration in our parks and reserves. ■

Bush Massacre at Glenbrook

Describing land clearing at Glenbrook, Denis Kevans writes:

It is (was) an area beautiful for mature angophoras, native plants and sandstone sculpture. It was essential to the natural contouring and weathering of the shoulder, and slope, down to Glenbrook Creek and the Blue Pool. The first attack, some years ago, occurred after a pro-environment vote on the Blue Mountains City Council. The second attack, some years later, occurred after a pro-environment vote on the council.

Were they both, Denis queries, attacks by the same tiny mind? ■

In 1995 Milo Dunphy represented the Nature Conservation Council on the Kosciuszko Advisory Committee. In April that year he wrote to the newly appointed Minister for the Environment, Pam Allan, in his beautiful script, about the management of Kosciuszko National Park. He wrote that he had visited the park for over 45 years, often for two or three weeks walking or camping. He had a special interest in the park because his father and his colleagues of the National Park and Primitive Areas Council were its first proponents. His letter described the impact of its commercial and recreational abusers. Some extracts from his letter are given below.

The Kosciuszko Amusement Park

IT HAS been a terribly frustrating experience to watch the inexorable takeover of the Crackenback Range and Thredbo River, in the heart of this great park, by private commercial interests. In principle public facilities should be sited at the edge of a park, at its boundary. This principle is particularly appropriate to overnight accommodation but Perisher, Thredbo and Blue Cow are right in the park's centre! Largely under political pressure, NPWS has given way to commercial and sectional interests which want to use the park more or less regardless of the damage caused to the values which the park was dedicated to preserve. Nowadays budgets for roads and other works greatly exceed expenditure on wildlife management and supervision of

the park outside the central development area.

Several years ago the long held principle that developments inside the park must be 'park related' was abandoned. The result is that anything which contributes to the profitability of private investments can now be approved, e.g. skating rinks, a sports academy, supermarket, subdivisions and speculative housing, even churches – some national park!

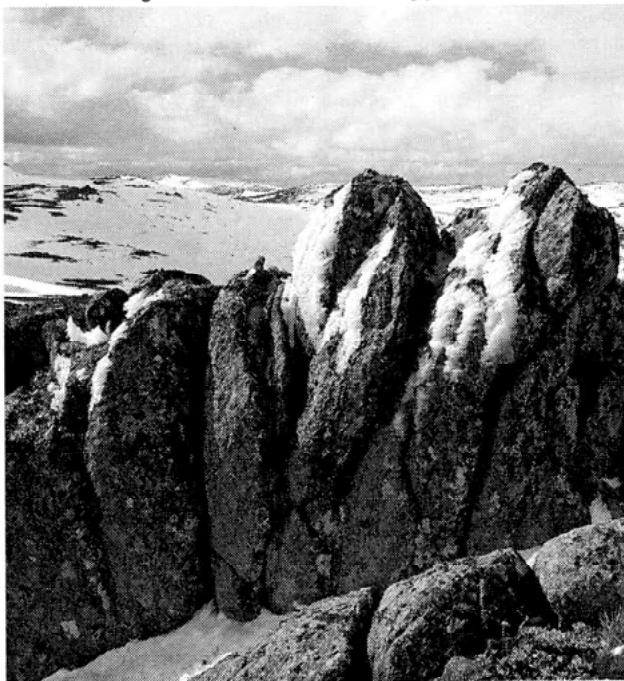
Growth of both Perisher and Thredbo has destroyed the concepts on which they were supposed to be founded. Perisher was supposed to consist of a number of discrete buildings, more or less hidden among the copses of the snowgums. By contrast Thredbo was sold as a compact village on one side only of the river. Now Perisher's architects are trying to build up a suburban centre and Thredbo sprawls along both sides of the river.

Many of the Kosciuszko staff believe development of Blue Cow was a mistake, its eroding ski slope a scar visible for many miles. The Mountain Pygmy possums seem to have migrated elsewhere - so much for the protection of endangered species.

The major lessees should not be allowed to build any more accommodation within the park. Incentives could be offered for alternative accommodation at Jindabyne, Berridale, Khancoban. 'Design life' standards could be applied to existing buildings which require their demolition when dilapidated, rather than their reconstruction, leases could be cancelled for infringement of lease conditions such as exceeding bed limits. If the major lessees become any more powerful in the situation there will come a day when they persuade a government to revoke the dedication of the 'skifields' and reclassify them as a tourist park.

Linking the main development sites, access roads and Crackenback Range is a vast and ever-increasing 'catscradle' of ski lifts, ski tows and 'groomed' ski slopes. 'Grooming' means clearing away the snow

The ski resort lobby is now pushing for access above 1800 metres. As climate change impacts on the ski resorts, the Main Range wilderness will increasingly be at risk.



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The Kosciuszko Amusement Park

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gums, shoving heaps of dead trees into the exposed edge of the forest and dynamiting exposed granite outcrops and isolated boulders.

As always when private companies get the bit in their teeth, outdoor advertising runs amok.

Milo details many other commercial and recreational management problems. The Thredbo River is very polluted. Illegal horseriders, 4Wdrivers and trail bikers repeatedly break the park's wilderness regulations. The Barry Way on the middle Snowy River is 'suburbanised' over Christmas by horse floats and 4WDs which have no outlet except into wilderness areas. He predicted that horseriding will expand because the Service gets a licence fee from commercial riding groups despite the damage it causes to swamps and creek banks and despite the weeds which it spreads. Shooters drive quietly at night into the northern end of the park. Because of the Services' concentration on managing the centre of the park, remote entrances are ignored. Entrance gates and signs are destroyed.

Milo was eminently qualified to describe the abuses to the natural environment of the park, which have continued to intensify. His condemnation of urbanisation has been supported by Vince Gare, Superintendent of the Park from 1959 to 1971, and by the Independent Scientific Committee set up under the current Plan of Management review. These protests have often been ignored because of the influence on the Government wielded by wealthy commercial interests and the claimed economic benefit to local communities. The most effective present environmental protection is the dedication of wilderness areas. The environment movement has successfully campaigned against many powerful commercial interests and perhaps the day will come when the natural value of Kosciuszko will be recognised and prioritised. ■

The Department of Environment and Conservation

The National Parks and Wildlife Service, Resource NSW (waste management), the Botanic Gardens and the Environment Protection Authority will now become the Department of Environment and Conservation. Bob Debus, the Minister for the Environment, said that the new Department would "link enormous skills and expertise". There will be eight Divisions in the Department. Three of these, The Royal Botanic Gardens, The Sydney Catchment Authority and the Parks Service manage areas of public land devoted solely to a specific purpose. The three others are: Environmental Protection and Regulation, covering conservation regulation programs; Sustainability, covering waste management and environmental education; and Policy and Science, covering biodiversity and environmental policy.

Although Tony Fleming, Director of the Parks Service, will be a Deputy Director General of the Department, National Parks will lose staff to the newly created Divisions within the Department. Biodiversity regulation, such as permits to destroy endangered species habitat, will be transferred to Environment Protection and Regulation, while biodiversity policy will be transferred to Policy and Science. Since biodiversity is dependent on habitat preservation on and off park, this is a division, rather than a link, of skills and expertise. ■

Colong Foundation Old-Fashioned - Wilderness outdated

by Alex Colley

On his retirement as head of the NPWS Mr Brian Gilligan said that he had been frustrated by green groups with ideology dating back to the 1960s, that thwarted plans to licence tour operators in wilderness areas. No wonder it has been such a battle to keep 2 per cent of the State in pristine condition and that identified wilderness has been sacrificed to the "access" lobby. A wilderness opened to vehicular access is no longer a wilderness. In an article in the October *NPA Journal*, Alan Catford describes one result of "accommodating every kind of desired recreation in national parks". Describing what he saw on a visit to Samurai Beach in Tomaree National Park, he writes:

Where the descent to the beach is made [the access road] is up to two metres deep in the forested dunes. A long flat sandy backshore corridor leads to the beach proper, which on this winter Sunday was criss-crossed with tread marks over most of its length (1800 m) and breadth. A large part of it was so mishmashed that there were no patches of undisturbed sand. ■

Miners Respect World Heritage

The International Council on Mining and Metals, comprising 15 of the world's largest mining and metals companies, has agreed that "ICMM member companies undertake not to explore or mine in World Heritage properties."

The World Conservation Union (IUCN) Director General, Achim Steiner, welcomed the decision. He said: The "announcement by ICMM sets an important precedent. By making this 'no-go' pledge, 15 leading mining and metal producing companies of the world have now created a threshold for corporate responsibility against which they and, indeed, others in the extractive industry will be assessed."

Rio Tinto, a member of ICMM, will return 50,000 tonnes of unprocessed uranium ore to the shafts of its Jabiluka mine and begin rehabilitation of the site. Pity that Sydney Construction Materials, which proposes to mine at Newnes Junction, is not a member of the Council. But with this new benchmark, the world will be watching. ■

DON'T RUIN WORLD HERITAGE

by Keith Muir

THE Colong Foundation and the Blue Mountains Conservation Society convened a public meeting in Katoomba last month to protest about the proposed sand mine at Newnes Junction. A packed hall strongly supported two strategic motions that will set the framework for the next stage of the campaign, with a tiny lobby for the mining company being the only opposition.

The meeting was opened by Greens Parliamentarian Ian Cohen MLC who urged supporters to take the quarry issue to the decision makers. Ian informed the meeting that a rally would be held outside Parliament House at lunchtime Tuesday November 18th starting at noon. Mr Cohen has already agreed to address the rally.

Sean Butler, a concerned local resident and naturalist of Newnes Junction, then addressed the meeting. He was primarily concerned with the damage to the natural environment if the mine went ahead. Fiona McCrossin, Assistant Director of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness, then explained the alternatives to developing the quarry at Newnes Junction, including the recycling of construction materials. Fiona forcefully outlined our obligations to future generations including adequate protection of the Wollemi Wilderness, the largest wilderness in NSW.

Haydn Washington, the Secretary of the Colo Committee since 1974, who played a key role in the fight to gain Wollemi National Park, said he had never seen such a poor environmental impact statement. He explained that many common native plant species on the quarry site had been overlooked in the assessment.

Andrew Cox, Executive Officer of National Parks Association of NSW, spoke with passion for protecting the Blue Mountains' World Heritage Area. Andrew moved that "this meeting oppose the location of a 27 million tonne sand quarry proposal adjoining the World Heritage listed



The proposed Newnes Junction quarry would cut a 750 metre long gash in the Wollangambe River valley. This ugly scar would be visible from Gooches Crater, one of the many wonders in this valley.

Blue Mountains National Park at Newnes Junction and call on the Government to develop a strategic plan for the supply of construction materials by the extractive industry that would protect areas of conservation value in the Greater Sydney Region' and environs". Only six people opposed the motion: the developers, its public relations consultant and three supporters.

A second motion, passed unanimously, supported expansion of the Gardens of Stone National Park to cover the Newnes Plateau, preventing any new mines, logging or other exploitative proposals.

The day following the meeting Kevin Bell, President of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, in a media release said that "For next to no jobs, the sand mine will create a big crater dug to within 50 metres of the National Park and World Heritage boundary, in the upper catchment of the pristine Wollangambe River. Newnes Plateau, just to the north-east of Lithgow, is a very special place with very high plant diversity. It must not become Sydney's sand pit. A park plan is the only way to stop these environmentally damaging proposals."

The area proposed for destructive sand mining at Newnes Junction, as

well as the Newnes Plateau, has been previously proposed as an addition to the National Park estate as early as 1932 by the National Parks and Primitive Areas Council, later in 1985 and again in 1993 by others. It is now time for the Carr Government to stop the damage before the sand miners create a moonscape of the whole area.

The public meeting demonstrates that the local community wants to ensure that the Blue Mountains World Heritage area is properly looked after and protected from damaging developments. ■

Budget Surplus, Environment Deficit

The Federal Treasurer has revealed a surplus of \$7.5 billion and economists have forecast a surplus of \$6 billion next financial year. As we wrote in *Bulletin 200*, quoting a forecast of a \$2.5 billion surplus, "There has never been a better time to finance environmental rehabilitation". However Mr Costello has expressed a preference for tax reduction. So surpluses will continue to be declared while natural resources diminish. ■

Keeping tourists happy in Kakadu

MANAGER of Kakadu National Park, Chris Hayes, says that when it comes to access, national parks can only survive when what he calls the "99-1 rule" applies. That is "99 per cent of the people only ever visit 1 per cent of the area" (SMH, Sept 20, 2003). Mr Hayes goes on to explain that nine out of ten of Kakadu's main attractions are open to visitors, who are flat out appreciating these in three days. To facilitate the rush around, sealed roads now ring the park.

Colong views Kakadu is a park where commercial interest is increasingly married to Aboriginal ownership, through management providing Indigenous communities opportunities for delivery of tourism products and services.

The Traditional Owners have restricted public access to Kakadu, but they do not like the term wilderness. The 1999 plan of management renamed the wilderness zone Zone 4. The renamed wilderness zone still protects many sacred sites along the sandstone escarpment. Bushwalkers have been restricted to specific routes through Zone 4 and permission to walk must be obtained so that their progress can be monitored.

Bushwalking culture remains misunderstood by Traditional Owners and only just gets a look in. Twenty years of Aboriginal ownership and management of Kakadu National Park has not lead to a reconciliation based on what bushwalkers and Traditional Owners have in common: a passionate love for country.

In other Northern Territory national parks, there is a real risk that many more of the best sites will be picked out for tourist development. At least Kakadu has only been partly sacrificed for the tourist dollar. Wilderness lives as Zone 4 – a bureaucratic mystery. ■

Berowra Valley should be a National Park

ENVIRONMENT groups on the North Shore are pushing for a national park over the Berowra Valley, rather than a regional park jointly managed by the NPWS and Hornsby Shire Council. At stake is the professional conservation management of a fine tract of bushland roughly 3,830 hectares in size.

Red Gum Bushland Committee member, Geoff Dowsett, considers that the Council should not be trusted with protecting bushland reserved as a regional park. He points out that other regional parks are highly modified landscapes while some nearby national parks, such as Lane Cove, have greater visitation and more disturbed land than the Berowra Valley.

The Berowra Valley supports: over 500 vascular flora species within 18 separate flora communities, at least 10 of which are rare and/or threatened; more than 230 species of vertebrate fauna; more than 18 identified vegetation communities, including three endangered ecological communities described under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*; and one threatened native mammal. It also contains a number of significant sites from Aboriginal and European history.

Fears are raised by recent development proposals. According to Democrat MLC, Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans, Council has plans that 'prioritises the development of sports fields and amenities at Stringybark Ridge' within the regional park. The three Councillors that are to be placed on the Park Trust would be probably more familiar with providing sports fields for football clubs than preserving stingybark forests.

Walking pet dogs for healthy

exercise would also be an argument more likely to find favour amongst Councillors than any case presented based on the protection of wildlife populations from being stricken by the daily terror of alien predators. For a possum on a foraging trip to cross a fire trail constantly used by pet dogs is equivalent to us accessing a supermarket occupied by a 450 kg Royal Bengal Tiger (big enough to make you lose your appetite, isn't it?).

Greens MLC, Ian Cohen, says that 'the major argument for council's active involvement in the management of the park — that it makes major contributions in money and kind towards the cost of managing the park — is clearly not supported by the evidence... If the truth be known, Hornsby Shire Council could be using the Berowra Valley Regional Park as a cash cow to fund other activities in the Shire.'

Dr Chesterfield-Evans believes that 'the future of Berowra Valley Regional Park should not be subjected to the vagaries of council; rather, it should be protected in perpetuity as a national park.'

The national park push is supported by United Residents Action Group of Berowra, the Association for Berowra Creek, Galston Areas Residents Association, Pennant Hills Red Gum Bushland Committee, the Hornsby Conservation Society, the National Parks Association of NSW and the Nature Conservation Council of NSW. ■

**Write to Bob Carr,
Premier of NSW,
Parliament House,
Sydney 2000, requesting
that the Beowra Valley
become a national park.**

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 2003
(NB Membership application covers Bulletin subscription)
- ☐ Colong Bulletin Subscription (\$11) to 31 December 2003 (non members only)
- ☐ Membership renewal to 31 December 2003 (\$25) ☐ Life Membership (\$550)
- ☐ Tax deductible donation of \$_____ to the Colong Wilderness Fund

☐ PLUS \$_____ being for publications as indicated on the reverse side of this form.

NAME (Mr, Ms, Mrs, Miss)

ADDRESS

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Payment by credit card. Mastercard ☐ Visa ☐ Bankcard ☐ Expiry date ____

Card # _____

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."



ABOUT THE COLONG FOUNDATION

The Colong Foundation, the successor to Myles Dunphy's National Parks and Primitive Areas Council, is Australia's longest-serving community advocate for wilderness. Its proposal for a *Wilderness Act* was accepted in 1989. To supplement this legislation, our Red Index, audits NSW wilderness areas, identifies threats and formulates site specific protection remedies. There are now 1,836,000 ha of protected wilderness in NSW. However, many beautiful and environmentally highly significant wilderness areas are not protected, such as the 13,000 ha Green Gully in the Macleay Gorges, Pilliga and Goonoo on the north west slopes, Yengo in the Blue Mountains, the Deua Valley on the South Coast and the Tabletop and Main Range in the Snowy Mountains.

The Colong Foundation for Wilderness has had a long and successful history. From its foundation in 1968 until 1975 it was the fighting force that prevented limestone mining and the destruction of native forest for pine plantations in the southern Blue Mountains. The Foundation not only played a leading role in realising Myles Dunphy's plan for a Greater Blue Mountains National Park, it pushed for its World Heritage listing, as well as the reservation of a Border Ranges National Park and Kakadu National Park. It has initiated successful campaigns for the protection of over a million hectares of wilderness in NSW.

The realisation of Myles Dunphy's vision of a comprehensive system of national parks with protected wilderness areas remains the primary objective of the Colong Foundation.

Now, more than ever, the Foundation needs your support. Well financed and powerful rural interests, miners, loggers, resort developers, as well as four wheel drive enthusiasts, horse riders and others, have greatly increased the threats facing Australia's wild places.

Only with your help, through continued membership and donations, can the Foundation continue its campaigns for the preservation of the natural environment and effective nature-based national park management, and by concentrating on wilderness, these rare areas can be kept safe from development and misuse.

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 | 27.50 <input type="checkbox"/> | THE BAREFOOT BUSHWALKER | 27.50 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <i>The meticulously researched, beautifully written book on wilderness by Peter Prineas with photographs by Henry Gold (285pp)</i> | | <i>by Dorothy Butler, Australian Geographic award winner. A story of a lifetime of adventure in wilderness and high mountains (292pp)</i> | |
| BLUE MOUNTAINS FOR WORLD HERITAGE | 17.60 <input type="checkbox"/> | CLASSIC BUSHWALKING MAPS | by Myles Dunphy |
| <i>Geoff Mosley provides a comprehensive explanation of the wealth of heritage values in the Blue Mountains (135pp)</i> | | <i>(Gangerang and Kowmung Maps)</i> 6.00ea <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| HOW THE RAINFOREST WAS SAVED | (59pp) 9.00 <input type="checkbox"/> | WILDERNESS RED INDEX | – complete \$110 <input type="checkbox"/> |
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| THE BATTLE FOR THE BUSH | 27.50 <input type="checkbox"/> | – Summary brochures \$2.20 <input type="checkbox"/> | |
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| MYLES DUNPHY (SELECTED WRITINGS) | 43.95 <input type="checkbox"/> | THE COLONG STORY | (42pp) 9.00 <input type="checkbox"/> |
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