

# SAVE COLONG bulletin

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## LAKE PEDDER REPORT

The Australian Government Lake Pedder Committee of Enquiry has made an Interim Report to the Minister for the Environment and Conservation, recommending a moratorium on the flooding, at Commonwealth expense, for a minimum of 3 years.

Dr. Cass, on 8 July, announced that he had received the Report, and he gave a brief outline of its recommendations.

The actual Report, however, was not released until 18 July, when 200 copies were distributed to politicians, the press, and conservationists.

Some confusion has arisen allowing misunderstandings of the nature, content, and estimates of the Report to result.

The report concluded that:

*"Of all the natural assets yet threatened in Australia, Lake Pedder is seen as the most precious",*

and noted that:

*"If Pedder is destroyed, it has been argued, then no natural feature of Australia is safe from economic predation, no matter how valuable aesthetically, scientifically, historically, or spiritually".*

The Australian Conservation Foundation in its submission to the Enquiry is quoted as stating:

*"If in the light of current day values it is considered that the 1967 decision was a mistake it would be irresponsible if the decision were not reversed."*

But, aware perhaps of the reluctance of certain Cabinet colleagues to take action on specific environment problems, Dr. Cass has warned that:

*"Conservationists should not be afraid to criticise the Government."*

Enclosed with this Bulletin is the 72/73 Lake Pedder Annual Report. It reviews the numerous happenings of 72/73, showing how they led to the Australian Government undertaking its first environment study on Lake Pedder, and it gives the recommendations of the Enquiry.

The Australian Labor Party has set Pedder as their own test of sincerity on conservation by pledging, at election time that a Labor Government would use Pedder to get its environment impact (policy) off the ground. Since Black Mountain conservationists are interested to see how their new Government will act on its first major test case.

The Tasmanian Premier, Mr. Reece, reacted with surprising calm to the Enquiry Report, by simply saying that it is now up to the Australian Government.

But the Hydro-Electric Commission of Tasmania reacted in a different way. The day after publication of the Report the HEC announced more major hydro-electric schemes costing \$200 million — the Lower Gordon River, the Olga, and the King Rivers. Two or three months earlier they announced the Pieman River Scheme. Like Pedder, the environment impact has again not been considered.

Something must be done about the HEC. The Federal Government should urgently review the use of Federal Funds by this arrogant and aggressive authority.

### THE TASK FORCE ON THE NATIONAL ESTATE

On April 16 The Minister for Urban and Regional Development, Mr. Uren, and the Minister for the Environment and Conservation, Dr. Moss Cass, jointly announced that a seven-member "Task Force on the National Estate" would be set up. Its function would be to advise on:

- *The nature and state of the national estate.*
- *The measures presently being adopted to preserve it.*
- *The measures which should be adopted.*
- *The role the Federal Government could play in the preservation and enhancement of the national estate.*
- *Grants which could be made by the Government to conservation groups such as the National Trust to enable them to increase their effectiveness.*

The Ministers stated that concern over the loss of Australia's heritage was apparent from the dramatic increase in the number of conservation and amenity groups, and the membership of major conservation organisations. The "concept" of the national estate would include natural parks and nature reserves, urban parks, urban recreation areas, scenic resources, areas of the coastline, water expanses and islands other than those designated as national parks and nature reserves, and land designated as scientific or archaeological documentation areas. The Task Force would report within nine months of its establishment.

As reported in our last issue The Colong Committee immediately wrote to Dr. Cass (with a copy to Mr. Uren), expressing its wholehearted approval of the appointment of a Task Force, drawing attention to the need for a national inventory of wilderness areas, and listing immediately threatened wilderness areas. It expressed the hope that development of these areas could be stayed at least until the report was submitted.

A fortnight later, after its next meeting, the Chairman of The Committee cabled Dr. Cass, strongly recommending the appointment of The Colong Committee Secretary, Mr. Milo Dunphy, as a member of the Task Force.

On May 16 Mr. Justice Hope, of the Court of Appeal Division of the N.S.W. Supreme Court, was appointed Chairman of the Task Force. Readers may recall that Mr. Justice Hope heard the Appeal of Associated Minerals Consolidated Ltd. against the Tree Preservation Order imposed on its leases by Wyong Shire Council.

On May 23 the Federal Government announced the names of the remaining six members of the Task Force. These were:

- *Mr. Reginald Walker, director of the National Trust of NSW, and secretary of the Australian Council of National Trusts.*
- *Mr. Milo Dunphy, a partner in a firm of architects and town planners, director of the Total Environmental Centre in Sydney and a councillor of the Australian Conservation Foundation.*
- *Mrs. Judith Wright McKinney, president of the Wildlife Preservation and leading poetess.*
- *Mr. David Yencken, joint managing director of Merchant Builders Group, and council member of the Town and Planning Association, who has an interest in the preservation of historic buildings.*
- *Mr. Keith Vallance, a Hobart businessman who is president of the Tasmanian Conservation Trust.*
- *Mrs. Judith Mary Brine, an architect and town planner and lecturer in architecture at the University of Adelaide.*
- *A senior officer of the Prime Minister's Department, Mr. George Brownbill, was seconded as secretary of the Task Force.*

The appointment of a Task Force with such strong representation of the wilderness preservation bodies was welcomed by The Colong Committee. Whether The Committee's letter to Dr. Cass influenced the decision to appoint Milo Dunphy we may never know; the consensus of opinion was that the appointment was no more than recognition of the leading part he has played in the battle for wilderness preservation.

Milo's appointment created some problems for The Committee, but these are far outweighed by the advantages it has gained. The first problem was that, as a member of the Task Force, Milo could not continue as Secretary. Fortunately Colin Boyce was able to take on the job, at least for the period of Milo's absence. A second problem is that the Task Force will probably request a number of submissions from The Committee, and as a voluntary organisation, the time of members and the facilities at their disposal are limited. A third letter was therefore written to Dr. Cass, pointing out the difficulty of preparing such submissions particularly when in opposition to large companies and public authorities with paid Public Relations and technical staffs constantly on the job. It has been suggested that some office facilities and consulting services might be made available to The Committee to assist it in preparing submissions.

## REPORT ON WIANGARIE AND LEVERS PLATEAU

In mid June Mr. Alex Colley, a member of the Committee visited the Macpherson Range and submitted the following report.

Livers Plateau extends along the southern side of the Macpherson Range from a point a few miles east of Mt. Lindsay to the vicinity of the Sydney-Brisbane railway line. The Wiangarie State Forest extends along the border from this point and extends south of Lamington Park to the eastern escarpment of the Tweed Range. The Tweed Range is a spur of the Macpherson Range. It extends south into N.S.W. for about 12 miles. The greater part of the 37,744 acre Wiangarie forest is on this range.

Livers Plateau was approached from Rathdowney, in Queensland, and Wiangarie from the two roads leading into it from the N.S.W. side. In the three days available for inspection, detailed inquiry was not possible, but I was fortunate in meeting two of the best informed conservationists working for the preservation of the forests. These were Mr. Gordon Philp of "Wongabah", via Rathdowney, and Mr. Rus Maslen of 1, Tyagah Street, Mullumbimby. From these enthusiasts were gleaned some of the main arguments supporting preservation.

Mr. Philp lives on his property adjoining the Livers Plateau State Forest on the northern side. It is approached from Rathdowney via the Running Stream and Tartar's Creek roads, which lead to his own privately constructed road up the mountain. Mr. Philp devoted the best part of a day to showing us the forest, of which he has an intimate knowledge.

This forest is probably the most impressive remnant of the once extensive brush, or rain, forests of northern New South Wales, and may be the most scenic of any remaining forest in Australia. The forest canopy is 100 feet or more above ground level, and the trees of monumental proportions. I was shown what is believed to be the largest white beech in Australia. There were great caribeen trees with buttress roots several feet high extending out from the base. I had to take 20 paces to walk round the base of one such tree. In one section are the largest hoop pines in N.S.W. One of these was the most magnificent tree I have ever seen. It was about 16 feet in girth and extended straight upward for some 80 feet without a branch. I estimated its height as 150 feet, the last 40 or 50 feet being above the rest of the forest canopy. But it was not the largest of the pines in the forest. The latticed trunks of great strangler figs enclosed the space once occupied by their host trees. There was a profusion of orchids, and elk and stag horns far up the trunks of the trees. In the upper branches were huge clusters of birds nest fern several feet across and weighing possibly half a ton or more. A list of some of the main species identified for me by Mr. Philp is appended.

A feature of the forest is the almost complete absence of undergrowth, possibly caused by the height and thickness of the canopy. There is consequently no difficulty in walking through it.

The forest is of course earmarked for destruction, and is used at present by the army, which has cleared some of the growth which occurs beneath the canopy, notably the piccabeen palms, for camp sites. Despite the Forestry Department regulations forbidding the removal of plants, large numbers of walking stick palms, and most orchids, staghorns and elkhorns within reach from the ground have been taken. This is something which the army authorities could prevent, though they may take the view that, since the forest is marked for destruction anyhow, the flora removal regulations are pointless. Apart from these infringements, there has been little damage to the standing trees and little litter to mark the army's presence.

The size of the trees may be caused by the depth of soil. On Mr. Philp's avocado plantation nearby soil depth is over 23 feet. Rainfall is believed to be about 70 inches.

Shortly after our visit to Livers Plateau we spent a night at O'Reilly's guest house on the Lamington Plateau. The main interest of this visit was the contrast the Queensland and N.S.W. attitude towards rain forest remnants. Queensland has several national parks along or near the border protecting such scenic features as Mount Maroon, Barney and Lindsay, and the Lamington Plateau. Despite the scenic and recreational values of the N.S.W. side of the Macpherson Range, there are no reserves on that side. The Macpherson Range and environs is undoubtedly one of Australia's most scenic areas.

From Lamington we travelled to Mullumbimby to see Mr. Rus Maslen, who gave us detailed directions on the two routes by which the Wiangarie State Forest may be approached. Mr. Maslen's interest in the area was aroused when truckloads of beech orchids were brought down the newly opened roads. To obtain such quantities of orchids, it was probable that the antarctic beeches on which they grow had been cut down, and this proved to be the case. Mr. Maslen said that his son, Mr. Peter Maslen, who first drew The Colong Committee's attention to Wiangarie, had made a study of rain forests, and believed that Wiangarie was the best of the remaining forests, even including those in North Queensland. Clouds sweeping in from the sea caused heavy precipitation on the abrupt eastern escarpment of Wiangarie. The rainfall was believed to be about 170 inches and the area had special, although perhaps no unique, features. Two comparable forests — Wian Wian and Dome Mountain, have already been cut out, and Wiangarie and Livers Plateau are now the last extensive remnant of rain forest in N.S.W.

Our first approach to Wiangarie State Forest was via Uki, Kunghur, Barkers Vale, Williams Rd. to Perrys Creek, and thence along the Forestry road to Bar Mountain. This road leads to the precipitous eastern escarpment of the Tweed Range. Until early in January, when the matter received adverse publicity, the road ran along the edge of the escarpment, spoil being dumped over the edge. Since then it has been constructed away from the escarpment. Magnificent views of Mount Warning and the coast were obtained from points along the road. The forest was extremely luxurious, though the individual trees seen from the road were not as large as those on Levers Plateau. Felling is under way, though it is not much in evidence near the access road.

Our next approach was via Kyogle, Wiangarie, and Lynch's Creek. This is an older and better ballasted road than the Bar Mountain road. Clearing is extensive on either side of the road, and already the forest trees have been replaced by forest "weeds", while trees show the effect of exposure. Areas have been bulldozed for log dumps, and felling is under way. Growth here appeared very similar to that on Bar Mountain, though to the expert there may be differences.

#### The case for Preservation:

Australia is the flattest and driest of the continents, characterised by enormous stretches of arid country ranging between savannah and desert. Only a small percentage of the land surface has ever been covered by true forest, and this area has been reduced to minute proportions. Rain forests of the Wiangarie type are found only in small patches near the North-eastern coast. Wiangarie and Levers Plateau are the last extensive areas remaining in N.S.W.

Wiangarie is within easy reach of some 150,000 persons living on the far north coast. The whole of the seaside in this region is fast developing as Australia's premier tourist attraction. By reason of its climate, scenery and surfing beaches, it may well become one of the world's tourist centres, attracting overseas air travellers during the northern hemisphere winter. In the whole of the far north coast of N.S.W. there is only one national park — the 5000 acre reservation at Mount Warning.

Unlike many of the world's rain forests, Wiangarie is accessible, safe, disease free, and has a mild climate. There can be no doubt that it could be developed as a prime tourist attraction both for the people of Australia and overseas visitors.

The Forestry Department contention that the forest can be "selectively" logged without causing irreparable damage is insupportable for the following reasons:

The forest is the product of over two hundred million years of evolution. Antarctic beech trees, similar to those on the plateau, have been found in the ice of Antarctica and date from the palaeozoic era when Australia and Antarctica were joined together in the ancient continent of Gondwanaland.

Over many thousands of years the forest has developed its own eco-system conditioned by the temperature, humidity and light intensity created by the three level vegetative system and the litter of the forest floor. The forest canopy is a shield against wind, light and evaporation. Once trees are felled it is no longer effective. This can be plainly seen alongside the roads cleared by the Forestry Commission. The roads are lined, not with forest flora, but with shrubs and trees accustomed to sunlight. It is probable that many of the forest trees will be killed by wind and desiccation.

'Selective logging' has been going on in the coastal forests for about a century and a half. It started with the cedar getters. Less valuable species were next removed, and eventually every thing saleable.

The felling of the enormous trees will result in irreparable damage to remaining trees. This will occur not so much as a result of physical impact but as a result of borer penetration. Even a minor injury gives the borers a start.

Many of the trees are several hundred years old — some of the giants may be up to 1000 years old. Even if the forest could regenerate, it would take many centuries to grow, and it is probable that many of the species would be lost forever.

The logging of this forest makes a mockery of the Forestry Departments proclaimed doctrine of 'sustained yield'. Even if it lasts a thousand years, the Department will never reproduce trees to replace those cut down.

The logging of the forest is not a forestry operation at all in the sense that the Department would like this term understood. It is simply a "mining" operation of the worst type. The mining of most minerals usually affects only a small number of acres. When the operation is complete all payable ore will have been removed. This is tolerable because it is known that expenditure on exploration will lead to the discovery of other ore bodies. At the worst the richer ore bodies will be exhausted and lower grade deposits will have to be mined. This will mean higher priced minerals, but not complete exhaustion of resources. The remaining rain forests are known. Once they are mined the last of this valuable recreational resource will have disappeared forever. It is ironical that such an operation should masquerade under the banner of "conservation".

The timber from the forest will go into cabinets, furniture, plywood and other products, most of which will be scrapped within 50 years. The standing forest would provide education, inspiration and recreation for as long as there are people to enjoy it.

#### LIST OF SOME OF THE SPECIES GROWING IN LEVORS PLATEAU FOREST:

<i>Tallow-wood</i>	<i>Caribeen</i> - Yellow
<i>Ash</i> - Pigeon Berry	Grey
<i>Sally Wattle</i>	Blush
<i>Fishing Rod Tree</i> - Green Heart	Red
<i>Gum</i> - Water	<i>Pines</i> - Hoop
Small Leafed	She (or Brown)
Sydney Blue	<i>Cherry Wood</i>
Stringy	<i>Southern Maple</i>
<i>Bolly Gums</i> - Hard	<i>Cedars</i> - Red
Soft	White
<i>Silky Oak</i>	<i>Hickory</i>
<i>Beech</i> - Silky (flange)	<i>Kurrajong</i>
White	<i>Myrtle</i> - Black
<i>Ash</i> - Red	<i>Handlewood</i> - Grey
Crows	<i>Corkwood</i>
Bennets	<i>Blackwood</i> (acacia)
<i>Mahogany</i> - Rose	<i>Quandong</i>
Scentless Rosewood	<i>Strangler Figs</i>
<i>Stinging Tree</i> - Giant	<i>Box</i> - Pink
Shiny Leaf	<i>Fig</i> - Sandpaper leaf
<i>Tamarind</i> - Native	<i>Palms</i> - Tree
Corduroy	Walking Stick
Fern Leaf	
<i>Vines</i> - Native <i>Wistaria</i>	<i>Ferns</i> - Stag
Wonga	Elk
Water	
Pepper	<i>Orchids</i> - Banana
<i>Moss</i> - large (grows about 4" high)	Spider
(pine)	Iron Bark
<i>O'land Lily</i> (like walking stick palm)	Orange
<i>Cunjevoi</i>	

#### DOUBLE DEALING ON BUNGONIA

After a prolonged hearing in the Mining Warden's Court, in the course of which both APCM (Australia) and conservation bodies gave detailed evidence for and against the mining of the recently revoked Bungonia Creek reserves, the Mining Warden, Mr. K.S. Anderson, recommended a drastic restriction of the area which should be available to the Company. The Premier then announced that the Warden's report would be referred to the State Pollution Control Commission for further study. APCM then made a submission to the Commission in which it proposed that it be allowed to mine limestone to a depth of several hundred feet below the escarpment, thus achieving a concession very similar to that rejected by the Mining Warden. Nothing was heard of this submission until the Minister for Environment Control, Mr. Beale, advertised that copies were available for inspection and invited further submissions. Having already gone to a great deal of trouble and expense to submit all relevant evidence, the conservation bodies were, in effect, asked to go through the whole process again.

The Colong Committee simply reiterated its claim that reserves should not be violated and protested against the holding of a second, secret, inquiry on a matter which had already been the subject of a public inquiry. It referred again to the necessity to rationalise mining leases rather than sacrifice a magnificent scenic area to economic interests.

The National Trust is strongly opposed to the Minister's action. Mr. R.N. Walker, executive director (and now a member of the Task Force on the National Estate) said that whereas the government had given the impression that its intentions, through the Pollution Control Commission was to give everybody involved - those in the mining operation and those with environmental interests - participation in any decision, the Commission was in fact being used to defeat the provisions of the Mining Act which provide for public inquiries. In a letter to Mr. Beale quoted in the Sydney Morning Herald, Mr. Walker wrote:

"Your action has made a complete mockery of the Mining Warden's inquiry and casts grave doubts on the preparedness of the Government to involve the community in the decision making process on environmental questions. In view of the lack of information which has been made available to the public and the fact that you have provided the company with a virtual 'court of appeal' to which objectors have not had equal access, the National Trust requests that you now refer the matter to a public inquiry under Section 23 of the State Pollution Control Commission Act."

Further support came from the National Parks Association of the A.C.T. which wrote to the Minister for Mines pointing out that:

*"The area is less than two hours' drive from Canberra and regular excursions are arranged by this Association and like groups. The Gorge is not only a readily accessible recreation resource to the growing Canberra population but also to the other large urban areas of Wollongong and Sydney. Moreover, Goulburn and other nearby towns could well expand in future decentralisation along the Hume Highway axis . . . One would have assumed that at least the northern slopes of the gorge would have remained sacrosanct, being designated public reserves . . . . We are appalled to find that Application 558 extends right down to Bungonia Creek."*

On 13 July Mr. Beale, Minister for Environment Control, announced that:

*"the Commission finds that the scheme which presents the least environmental damage consistent with reasonable mining opportunity at Bungonia is the scheme known as Q8 (closed)".*

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#### EXTRACT FROM THE FRAGILE PATTERN by DR. COOMBS

Arrayed against the wilderness preservationists are the paid public relations and technical staffs of the wealthy companies and powerful public authorities intent on destruction of wilderness remnants. Because of their constantly sustained effort and their resources they expect to win. The arguments they use are invariably based on the "economic" necessity of exploitation of resources. There is a growing body of opposition to this view from economists not in the pay of development organisations. Here are Dr. Coombs views on the Great Barrier Reef, as quoted in Rydges Business Journal of June, 1973:

*"Let us assume that there are vast quantities of oil and gas buried there beneath the Reef. One thing is certain — that is that in the fragment of geological time allotted to us and our descendants it will, if we do not disturb it, still be there. We lose nothing by deciding for the present to let it lie. There are other — less precarious — sources at present being developed which do not threaten a heritage we hold not for ourselves alone but for all mankind. Even if there were not, we can at least for the present afford from the proceeds of other production to buy our oil products from people more desperately in need — or more oblivious of the future even than we.*

*Let us consider also the alternative. The Barrier Reef is a source of knowledge of understanding, of mystery and delight. Any one who has gone below the surface with snorkel and mask, however amateurishly, will have experienced the sense of discovering a new and magical aspect of the Universe. Properly organized to avoid despoliation but to open new worlds of experience, it could add to the richness of human life for many from all parts of the world. And this while leaving untouched and potentially available the fuel resources reputed to be there — fuel resources which, if competent authorities can be believed, have in the places where they are being exploited already a definitive life expectancy.*

*If the alternative of using the Reef as a certain source of enrichment to the quality of human living is preferred, does this in cold commercial terms compare unfavourably for our own people with its development as a source of fuel by one of the great international corporations of the world? When one breaks up the price of a gallon of petrol or of oil it will be found that the greatest part of the cost is composed of payments for property rights — for royalties, for processes, for know-how, and for profits as a reward for risk and entrepreneurship. Most of these property rights are owned outside Australia. The part of the price which goes to local labor and other resources is comparatively small. Australia would gain primarily from the taxation of profits in one form or another. By contrast the payments made by those who want to enjoy the Reef would largely be payments for services rendered by Australians. To them the Reef would be both a source of income and an opportunity to participate in a unique experience.*

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#### NATIONAL TRUST OPPOSED TO PINE PLANTATION ON THE BOYD

Following an inspection by the Nature Conservation and Landscape Committee of the National Trust, arranged and conducted by the Forestry Dept., and consultation with The Colong Committee, the National Trust has informed the Minister for Conservation, Mr. Freudenstein, that it advocates incorporation of the Konangaroo State Forest in the Kanangra-Boyd National Park.

Its main reasons for this decision are that, by reason of its location and special features of climate, elevation, flora and fauna etc., its significance as a catchment and wildlife habitat, its accessibility to major present and future population centres, and the questionable basis of the Departments cost estimates, the plateau should be incorporated in the park and other land used for softwood plantations.

## GWEN HANLEY

The sudden death of Gwen Hanley was a great loss to the Colong Committee, and a personal loss to every member of it. Gwen had been a member of the Committee from its earliest days, and was one of its most consistent and tireless workers, concentrating on many of those vital but unglamorous tasks which are so necessary in keeping any voluntary body active. Gwen kept the minutes of meetings. She came to working bees, and when an activity such as attendance at the A.G.M. of APCM, the A.G.M. of the Colong Committee, a demonstration, or an exhibition was approaching she would arrange halls, ring up supporters etc. and make sure attendance was good.

The interest of Gwen and her sister Aleen in conservation built up gradually over the years through their realisation of the decline in wild life, and their reading of the works of conservationists. A little less than 8 years ago they became members of the Wild Life Preservation Society. From 1967 to 1969 Gwen was Hon. Secretary of the Society, from 1970 to 1972 its Assistant Hon. Secretary, and in 1973 Publicity Officer. She was also very active on various sub-committees where there was work to be done. The 1971/2 Annual Report of the Society pays the following tribute to her.

*Modest to an almost unbelievable degree, no task was too menial for her. Nevertheless she held the work of nature conservation so high that no goal was too ambitious to attempt. Many a time we have been put to the blush by Gwen's scorn of our timidity in the face of an undertaking that seemed to us overwhelmingly ambitious. Nor did failure intimidate her. Truly it depressed her momentarily, but only to give impetus for an attack from another direction. For Gwen was a fighter; for those things she believed in she held "an appetite a feeling and a love." . . . . . But Gwen had other qualities that endeared her to us all. She had so much to give and gave it all so willingly; she demanded nothing for herself. She was the first to rejoice at good news, the first to recover from bad news and set about rectifying its cause. She was passionate in her devotion to whatever she held dear. She had a deep sympathy with everything living, including humans. She loved beauty.*

Gwen also assisted the David G. Stead Memorial Wildlife Research Foundation whenever possible, taking a special interest in the Dew Memorial Field Studies Centre at "Wirrimbirra." The Wild Life Preservation Society has opened a Memorial Fund for the purpose of building a cabin at "Wirrimbirra." A donation of \$1,000 to the fund has been followed by \$2,000 from Society Funds. Any additional funds will be used to furnish the cabin.

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