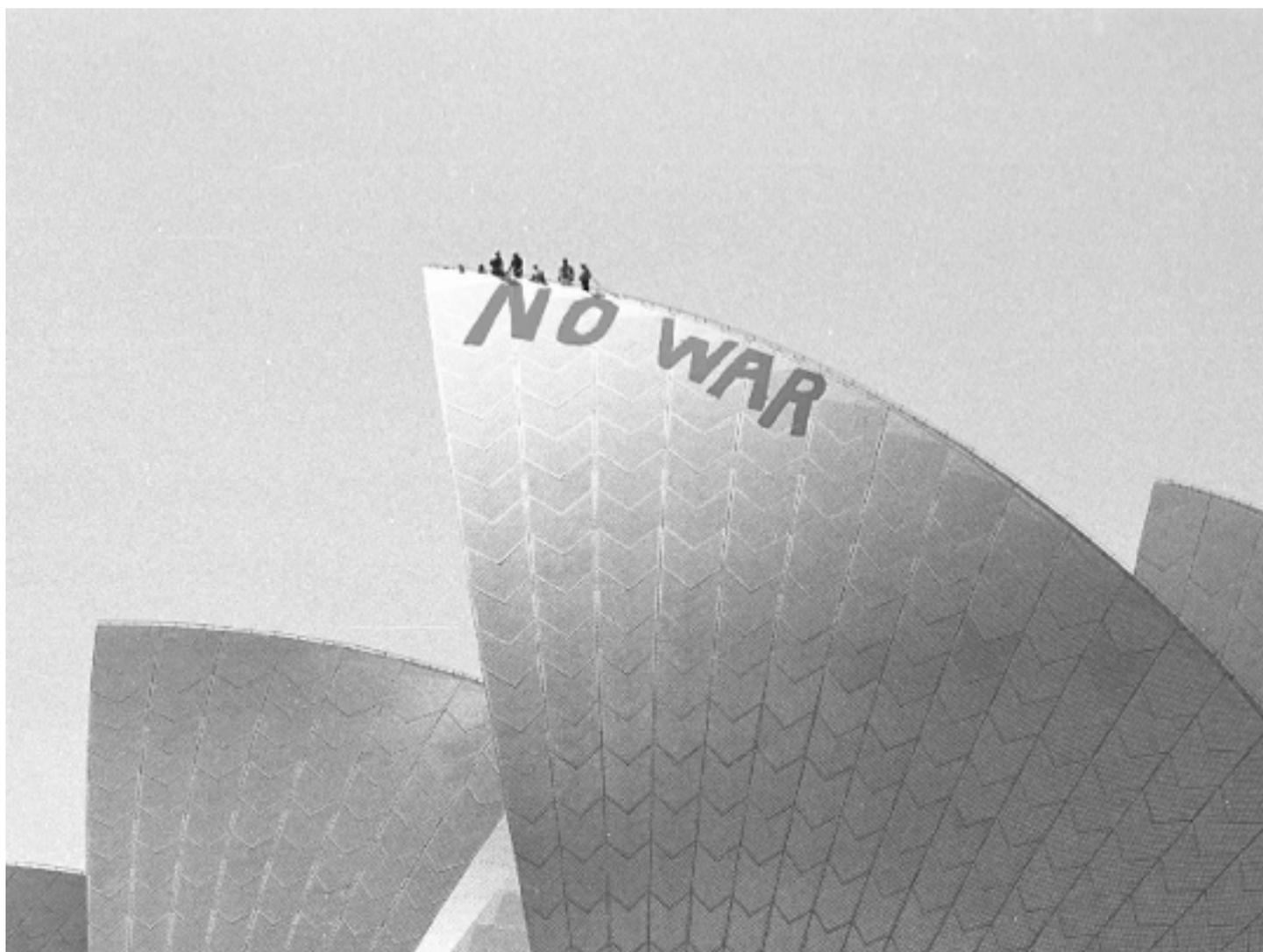


TREE

Tweed River Environmental Echo
Newsletter of The Caldera Environment Centre

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50c or free



By Dave Burgess and Will Saunders.
Peace Heroes

Lest We Forget.

The Australian Government went to war on the 20th March 2003. A few weeks later Bush declared the war to be won. The massive bombing of people and infrastructure (the sewage treatment plants, water supply plants, electrical generation plants, schools and universities) and the depleted uranium fallout from battlefield weapons, adds up to an horrendous social justice and environmental catastrophe.

editorial

Dear Reader,

Our last TREE was published some time ago, in December, so let me refresh your memory that it focused on ten “Topics for Discussion” which we were going to present to the administrators of our shire. And how did this “discussion” go? The first act happened on February 7th, when Hop.E – our co-ordinator – was given twenty minutes to inform the three administrators and other council officials about our environmental concerns. That gave him exactly two minutes per topic for explaining – so it was an absurd undertaking from the outset and raised the question how seriously the administrators are taking those consultations with the public.

Shortly after Hop.E gave some introduction Mrs. Turnbull took offence when she read what Hop.E projected onto a screen: “Who in council has the backbone and the ecological understanding to resist aggressive developers and obliging engineers?” In the following dispute that quote was characterised as offensive (“vituperative” was the exact word) language and as a question which doesn’t aim at a serious answer. It was obviously difficult for Mrs. Turnbull to see that question as an expression of how frustrated we are about the politics of the last years and how impatient one can get from waiting for a real change. After getting rid of the “puppets of the developers” in the council - and sadly losing also the good guys – we were hoping for a significant change of direction in council politics and planning

instead of a mere administration of business as usual, with the big-money deals handled by the Minister of Planning in Sydney anyway.

Because this meeting was such a farce, the Caldera Environment Centre (CEC) was given another opportunity to meet the administrators on the 28th February – this time for a whole hour – and present were Max Boyd, Lucy Turnbull and the acting general manager Mike Rayner. At the beginning we were told how much money is allocated for the envi-



ronment and that seemed to aim at setting the tone for the meeting ie protecting and caring for the environment is costly and some of our suggestions are simply too expensive...and besides that Tweed Shire is doing pretty well compared to other shires so we shouldn’t worry too much.

When it came to talk about how to dispose of the sewage from coastal developments we insisted that only the ecological best practice – disposal on land – is acceptable, and not the way it is going to happen, putting the treated sewerage into the Tweed River, choking the estuary with heavy loads of nitrogen. We were told that there is no land suitable for sewage disposal because it is either very expensive or it is prone to flooding. Again it was obvious that our understanding of planning was not compatible with that of the administrators. If the consequences of development are too expensive or not even possible to

be dealt with in a sustainable way then **SIMPLY DON’T ALLOW THOSE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIRST PLACE** – even if the developers may get cranky.

A population cap was one other issue we talked about and we were told that “you cannot shut the gate”. Well, yes, that sounds reasonable but when we read in council’s publications that Tweed Shire will grow from now 80,000 to 120,000 people in the next fourteen years, then one asks oneself: ...and what happens after 2020? Any ideas? Will it slow down or accelerate? Will it go on until it doesn’t work any more? Not work for whom and what? Nature, wildlife, drinking water, pollution...?!

Engineers have the built-in optimism that when the shit hits the fan they will come up with some kind of technological tricks to fix it. That’s just not good enough, it’s way too risky for me. This is the same lack of responsibility that is seen when politicians talk about economic growth. Growth is a very dangerous concept. Resources are finite and letting growth happen without talking about its limits is nothing short of madness.

My suggestion of declaring the Tweed Shire a nuclear free zone was totally ridiculed, but the presence of depleted uranium in this country is a completely possible, indeed there is a group of very concerned Tweed shire residents which formed in response to the film on this issue called *Blowing In The Wind*. But it needs probably some backbone to stand against the uranium interests in this country.

Declaring a nuclear free zone would not even put any strain on the budget.

Max Boyd contributed an interesting thought when he said that the result of the last council election doesn't allow us to assume that even those who did not vote for the developer councillors are as enthusiastic about the environment as the members of the Caldera Environment Centre. Well then why don't we do a survey to find out how much support there is in this community for the environment? Gary Payne, the chairman of the administrators, said recently that he is seeking policy direction from the public and the introduction of more elements of direct democracy like such a survey would be one way to go.

Do the administrators see their role as merely administrating what "has to be done" OR can they be encouraged to set an example of what can be achieved by looking into the future and REALLY establishing sustainability ON ALL LEVELS? Good guys like Dan Walton - council's Sustainability Officer - are doing what they can but we need strong messages from the top of our administration. We cannot afford to wait and see.

I am aware that a lot of people nowadays use the word "sustainability" similar to the way almost all politicians claim to care about the environment - but the concept of sustainability is extremely radical when taken seriously. It means an essentially different way of producing goods, not only where things are produced, but what and how much, how we deal with transportation, traffic, urban design, resources, waste, energy ...

Are the administrators up to this?

Klaus Fuhrmann

KINGS FOREST

The Chief Town Planner's recommendation regarding the King's Forest rezoning has Iemma's and Sartor's grubby finger marks all over it.

In a letter dated 24 of January this year, the Department of Planning (DoP) announced that it had come to the conclusion that the majority of the Cudgen paddock was suitable for development.

This came despite the fact that for years the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) had said it was completely unsuitable.

The report to the council meeting from the chief town planner remarks that DEC had adopted a 'revised position' in January after meetings with DoP and the landowners. In a letter to council dated 9 February DEC said "some development of the Cudgen Paddock will be possible".

Around the same time DEC refused to allow consultant authors of expert fauna reports prepared for the department to attend a meeting convened by council. The report to council says the meeting was attended by the landowner and its fauna consultants, but DEC was represented only by two administrative officers of the department.

I think we can safely assume that DEC only changed its view after getting its marching orders from the office of the premier.

DEC's about-face has clearly affected the chief town planner's recommendation to rezone the majority of the Cudgen Paddock for urban development.

It has also been revealed that the DoP has threatened to take over the planning for Kings Forest.

This follows similar threats made regarding large development sites elsewhere on the NSW coast. Last year the Minister Sartor took over control of the Becton site despite opposition from Byron Shire council.

The administrators should call Sartor's bluff.

"He is very likely to call it up whatever is decided at council".

If he denies reasonable opportunity for the public to comment on this very major draft LEP by calling it up, then at least the Tweed community will know a whole lot better what he stands for."

Green groups have complained that there is a growing trend to significantly lower quality outcomes for the environment and the community when minister Sartor takes over planning control.

The current situation is like that of the dying days of the Unsworth Labor government in 1987.

"It ticked off the original Kings Forest rezoning for a consortium that included Brian Ray, creating a mess that is still not repaired."

"It also stripped protection from large areas of wetland at Ocean Shores and Wooyung for Bond Corp. The taxpayers bore the cost of that blunder when some years later the government purchased the land at premium prices to add to Billinudgel Nature Reserve."

Henry James
Former Greens Councilor

THICH NAT HAHN'S 14 PRECEPTS

In the Zen Buddhist tradition, coming from India to China to Japan and now the West down through the ages, precepts or guidelines for life have been used daily as a method for seeing one's place in the order of things.

Thich Nat Hahn, a Vietnamese Buddhist monk, also in the Zen tradition, has given us a new version suitable for today's modern world.

Thich Nat Hahn has been active in issues of humanity and ecology for many decades. During the American war (Vietnamese war to Western society) he and his monks took no sides with either force but instead chose to assist or resist both sides where they felt it applicable. As a consequence each side considered them as enemies and they were persecuted and many monks killed. Thich Nat Hahn eventually escaped and went to France where he set up an idealistic

community (known as Plum Village) where he lives today when not travelling teaching. He was nominated by Martin Luther King for a Nobel Peace Prize and is considered by many to be a living saint or at least an embodiment of absolute wisdom in today's world.

Although these precepts were written for the Zen Buddhist community (Sanga), I feel much of what is said is very applicable to all humanity. Some will be obvious to you, others perhaps you feel do not apply. Perhaps as an activist - politically or environmentally - sometimes it may be good to stand back and see where you, yourself fit into this. If you read the following with an open mind and, dare I say it, an open heart, I'm sure you cannot help but benefit.

Thank you,
Dokan

Do not be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory, or ideology, even Buddhist ones. All systems of thought are guiding means; they are not absolute truth.

Do not think that the knowledge you presently possess is changeless, absolute truth. Avoid being narrow-minded and bound to present views. Learn and practise non-attachment from views in order to be open to receive others' viewpoints. Truth is found in life and not merely in conceptual knowledge. Be ready to learn throughout your entire life and to observe reality in yourself and in the world at all times.

Do not force others, including children, by any means whatsoever, to adopt your views, whether by authority, threat, money, propaganda, or even education. However, through compassionate dialogue, help others renounce fanaticism and narrowness.

Do not avoid contact with suffering or close your eyes before suffering. Do not lose awareness of the existence of suffering in the life of the world. Find ways to be with those who are suffering by all means, including personal contact and visits, images, sound. By such means, awaken yourself and others to the reality in the world.

Do not accumulate wealth while millions are hungry. Do not take as the aim of your life fame, profit, wealth, or sensual pleasure. Live simply and share time, energy, and material resources with those who are in need.

Do not maintain anger or hatred. As soon as anger and hatred arise, practise the meditation on compassion in order to deeply understand the persons who have caused anger and hatred. Learn to look at other beings with the eyes of compassion.

Do not lose yourself in dispersion and in your surroundings. Learn to practise breathing in order to regain composure of body and mind, to practise mindfulness, and to develop concentration and understanding.

Do not utter words that can create discord and cause the community to break. Make every effort to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.

Do not say untruthful things for the sake of personal interest or to impress people. Do not utter words that cause division and hatred. Do not spread news that you do not know to be certain. Do not criticise or condemn things that you are not sure of. Always speak truthfully and constructively. Have the courage to speak out about situations of injustice, even when doing so may threaten your safety.

Do not use the Buddhist community for personal gain or profit, or transform your community into a political party. A religious community should, however, take a clear stand against oppression and injustice, and should strive to change the situation without engaging in partisan conflicts.

Do not live with a vocation that is harmful to humans and nature. Do not invest in companies that deprive others of their chance of life. Select a vocation that helps realise your ideal of compassion.

Do not kill. Do not let others kill. Find whatever means possible to protect life and to prevent war.

Possess nothing that should belong to others. Respect the property of others but prevent others from enriching themselves from human suffering or the suffering of other beings.

Do not mistreat your body. Learn to handle it with respect. Do not look on your body as only an instrument. Preserve vital energies (sexual, breath, spirit) for the realisation of the Way. Sexual expression should not happen without love and commitment. In sexual relationships be aware of future suffering that may be caused. To preserve the happiness of others, respect the rights and commitments of others. Be fully aware of the responsibility of bringing new lives into the world. Meditate on the world into which you are bringing new beings.

Do not believe that I feel that I follow each and every one of these precepts perfectly. I know I fail in many ways. None of us can fully fulfill any of these. However we must work towards a goal. These are a very appropriate goal. No words can replace the practice, only practice can make the words. "The finger pointing at the moon is not the moon."

D.

The ecological crisis:

the collapse of the ecology, the ecological imperative for change, ...

The ecological crisis, the collapse of the ecology, the collapse of the inter-related, inter-dependent systems of living things on this planet, causes for us the ecological imperative for change, an absolute reason for change, ... we must change.

The existing culture - the existing way we are - reproduces itself through teaching and learning processes happening everywhere, reproducing ideas within our minds which cause or excuse our behaviour, reproducing the existing way that we are. The existing culture is teaching us that it is ok to do to nature what we do to it.

It is not ok to do to nature what we do to it.

It is not ok to do to the other animals what we do to them. To crowd thousands of them together, from birth so they know no mother, no caring, no help or protection, we create lives of fear and pain, of complete trauma, and we do this with no concern.

Our culture, the way we are, is reproducing itself. Our culture is teaching us ideas, putting ideas into our minds, ideas that make it ok to be so awful to nature.

God, after all, made nature for us, and told us to go use it, not to nurture and protect and multiply it, not to treasure it, rather just use it. Eat the animals, trash the forests, it has all been made for you. The idea of God is implicated in the ecological crisis.

Science, to explain nature - to explain the world, and everything, to explain how it all works - science has told us the idea of the world as a machine, with everything, from the workings of planets to the working of our bodies explainable in terms of matter in motion, collections of atoms. It is the philosophical back-stop for theories of individualism and competition, for what does one collection of atoms owe another? Nothing, according to ideas in our minds that we, and all of nature, are merely matter in motion. The model of the world as a machine is implicated in the ecological crisis.

Our worlds are made up of the ideas within our minds, the meanings we attach to things and associations we create, the representations we have for things. Our representation of the chicken death factory is that it is a norm. Our representation of the chicken death factory however is a facade, behind the facade another interpretation, a different set of meanings and associations, a different perspective, a different subjectivity, a different dialogue, a dialogue which brings us pain and shame when we hear it. What we do to the animals is so shameful that we conceal it from the very young children, for they will judge our actions and find us frightening. They would be frightened that we - you and I - could do such things to the animals, to deliberately mistreat, to deliberately traumatise the animals beyond what any person in their right mind could do. They would judge us to be monsters and they would separate from us, they would fear us and despise us.

Our culture, the way we are, is a human historical construct, an artefact, it is something we have learned through politically charged teaching and learning processes happening everywhere.

The enculturation, conditioning and socialisation processes which have constructed the meanings within our minds re the chicken death factory are not necessarily innocent experiences. At all stages through the traumatising, killing and carcass retailing chain there is money to be made and advantage to be had, reason to promote the product, reason to create the meanings within our minds that all is ok at the chicken death factory. All is not ok at the chicken death factory.

We say we care for nature. We cannot say that we care for nature and eat chicken from the chicken death factory. It is not an arguable position.

What we call the ecology is the system of inter-related and interdependent lifeforms on this planet. We are a dependent part of the ecology. It is collapsing. Our attitudes towards nature are the cause. We are trashing the place. Our trashing of the place is institutionalised, it is built into the physical and mental structures which determine how we live.

The ecological crisis, the collapse of the ecology, is the ecological imperative for change. We must change. We have no choice. To rescue the ecology, to rescue ourselves, must radically adjust our behaviour towards nature.

Brian Summers.

Council Status Report:

During the 70's and 80's, Tweed Shire was ruled by a triumvirate of the Mayor, the Shire Clerk and the Shire Engineer. For much of this period Max Boyd, Jim Nixon and Peter Border held these offices.

Developer councillors like Peter Kriekleberg developer backed councillors like Tom Hogan wielded much influence. Twenty five years later and little has changed. A small cabal including Max Boyd and Chief Engineer / Acting General Manager, Mike Rayner, control the Council's Administration and decision making mechanisms.

The Town Planners are merely development servicers. Now, as then, natural resource management is largely lip service and window dressing. There are only a few council ecologists and there is no environmental department that can withstand the demands of the local development industry.

The engineers and the engineering budget dominate council expenditure. Half of the Shire budget is spent on water and sewerage services. The ex General Manager, John Griffin, said that the provision of roads had been his main concern and greatest achievement.

At our meeting with Administrators Turnbull and Boyd, and GM Rayner, their vibe was that we should listen to them and be grateful that so much money had been budgeted for good environmental outcomes. Max said that he knew of councils, especially those in Queensland, where the environment ranked much lower than in Tweed Shire. Lucy said that issues like nuclear-free zones could not be considered because they were not "imminent" or "necessary". Mike said that the disposal of sewage effluent on land was not possible in the caldera because of our high rainfall and frequent flooding. Strategies for the irrigation of crops with sewage and green cane harvesting were not practical they said, and the UNESCO Biosphere idea could not be supported as it would not be popular Max advised.

They did agree however, that the Vegetation Management Plan should be supported, but only if rate payers approve a rates increase. Therefore, Mike said, it is up to the green movement to persuade the majority of rate payers to approve expenditure to fund the plan.

The Administrators did not support the funding of constraints land mapping to determine which slopes were too steep or too unstable to build on.

This important tool was central to the planners argument for abandoning the Environmental protection zones in the Western part of the Shire in favour of constraints mapping based on the slope gradients (steep land above 18 degrees).

Without Environmental Protection areas like Scenic-Escarpment Zones or slope gradient mapping, the western part of the Shire could become open slather for developers.

With two (of 3) Administrators residing in Sydney, local knowledge and resident access was always going to be a problem. To help overcome this structural difficulty, a secretary has been appointed to interface between the public and the administrators. The ability and integrity of this person (who again does not have local knowledge) will be critical to the success of this measure. A filter could impede access to the administration rather than help.

The Part 3A changes to the EP&A Act will also disenfranchise local residents by concentrating more power in the hands of the Planning Minister, Frank Sartor, in Sydney.

The administrators are likely to advocate the reduction of 11 to 7 elected councillors at the next shire election.

This action will weaken the representation of small to mid sized interest groups and is likely to strengthen the power wielded by the development industry. This major change is being initiated by the current Administration arguably not democratically constituted, but rather imposed by the state government

In today's council climate, the bureaucrats are riding high and their is little check on their power because the administrators do not appear to be in control of the process. Hardly surprising considering their work load and infrequent meetings in Murwillumbah. There is also a reluctance by the administrators to step outside the mainstream.

Hop.E

GLYPHOSATE

by Christine Moore

Since I can no longer convince pro-glyphosate people to engage in a debate, I cannot continue on that track. But I will persist. This issue is undefended, and I am sufficiently convinced of its importance to pursue it. So this edition I offer two strands on the issue. The first is a sheaf of reasons not to use glyphosate. The second is the first part of a discussion of alternatives to chemicals in reforestation. But first I have to say one more time: as far as I'm concerned there's no need to provide evidence that glyphosate is bad. The fact that there's any doubt at all means to me that greenies should back off. To use it is to exercise the same short-sighted thinking which underpins uranium mining, the suppression and non support of sustainable energy, and the full-on pursuit of more and more wealth. Why take risks with the health of the community and the environment? Why not look for alternatives to poison use, and give them the same kind of dedication currently bestowed on glyphosate? If the manpower currently employed in poisoning the weeds was devoted to non-chemical eradication, then we would have a reasonable basis on which to compare the two methods. The current climate of hysterical fear of weeds combined with a shrugging acceptance of the poison allows for no rational discussion.

But I understand that most of the green movement has a deeply ingrained conviction that it cannot be done without, and so need that evidence. Please forgive the lengthy references in the text, but it is important to remember that we are dealing in facts.

Rick Relyea of Pittsburgh University has found that Roundup kills frogs and tadpoles, and this happens at much lower concentrations than previously tested. "The most striking result from the experiments was that a chemical designed to kill plants killed 98% of all tadpoles within three weeks". Relyea, with his assistants, found that one third of the maximum concentrations of the chemical expected in nature killed 71% of tadpoles. The maximum concentration expected in nature killed nearly all of the tadpoles and 79% of all frogs, in one day. (*Ecological Applications*, journal, 1-8-2005)

There is much other evidence of the dangers of glyphosate, including to humans, for example a link with glyphosate use and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (De Roos AH, Zahm SH, Cantor KP, et al. "Integrated assessment of multiple pesticides as risk factors for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma among men". *Occupational Environment Med* 2003, 60, E11 <http://oem.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/60/9/e11>) and suicide through drinking glyphosate (Sawada, Y et al 1988 'The Lancet' 6-2-88). Glyphosate has been found to kill human

placental cells after eighteen hours of exposure at levels less than those found in agricultural use ('*Environmental Health Perspectives*' magazine, June 2005). See also Talbot A.R. et al 1991 "Acute poisoning with a glyphosate herbicide (Roundup): a review of 93 cases." *Human EXP. Toxicol.* 10:103-07

Glyphosate has been found to cause liver damage to rats after brief exposure, with the surfactant in Roundup acting in unison to increase the liver damage. (Benedetti AL, de Lourdes Vituri C, Trentin AG, Dominguesc MAC and Alvarez-Silva M "The effects of sub-chronic exposure of Wistar rats to the herbicide Glyphosate-Bio-carb. *Toxicology Letters* 2004, 153, 227-32)

Glyphosate inhibits RNA transcription in animals at concentrations well below the recommended level. Thus the chemical is a health concern due to inhalation from spraying. (*Toxicology and Applied Pharmacology* 2005, 203, 1-8)

Glyphosate, when bound to soil particles, may still be toxic and bioavailable to filter feeders such as crustaceans and molluscs, and potentially other organisms which ingest lots of soil during normal feeding, such as bottom-feeding fish, shorebirds, amphibians and some mammals. (Welton, R et al (2000) "Ecotoxicity of contaminated suspended solids for filter feeders (*Daphnia magna*)." *Archives of Environmental Cont. and Tox.* 39 (3): 315-323).

So there you have some grounds for a fresh look at the issue. There are many new studies (2004, 2005) which are putting glyphosate in a very bad light. How many adverse findings are enough? Don't take it personally. You are not your glyphosate. You can give it up any time you like.

And now to part two. Let's just imagine you have decided that glyphosate is bad, and that you should not be using it. You might then feel guilty that you have been poisoning the environment, but it would be unfortunate to let this stop you from changing. Just because you've inadvertently done something bad, there's no reason to perpetuate the mistake through refusal to acknowledge it. Recognising and realising a mistake is a step forward. If you can then stop making the mistake you really are winning. There is a lot at stake. There's no way we can get the land back to no poisons, but we can stop putting any more in, and so let what nature can do, take its course. The fact that we've poisoned the earth is no reason to keep on poisoning it. Why not put our considerable collective intellect into solving the weed problems without poison. Yes I know the people are

yelling at me that's all very well for me but the problems they've seen or have mean that poison is imperative. It's just not possible without it. It's like a mantra. There is no alternative. Well I would like to offer a few alternatives.

First, here is one strategy for controlling a very nasty weed like madeira or jasmine. If you have a large area which is infested with weeds you must get rid of, the first thing to do is to surround the area. Go around the perimeter, or perhaps a bit outside the perimeter, and weed a strip one metre wide or a bit less, all the way round. This may take a long time, and a lot of effort, but it gives you an immeasurable gift – you know it won't get any worse. The next task is to go round the perimeter again, and make sure there are no renegades on the wrong side of the line. This is something which should be done regularly, combined with weeding the metre path. You'll find that this policing won't take much effort at all, and indeed will give you a lovely walk and a large feeling of satisfaction. You might already start to see some volunteer native plants by the time you come to police the path. As the natives take over in the space provided, the task will get smaller and smaller. Even if you do no more on a site than this, you have done heaps. If you can maintain a boundary on a weed, particularly over a huge area, then you're doing heaps. Imagine that circle getting bigger, as it would if you had not made your boundary, and you can see you're saving everything outside your circle. You can move the circle in when you have more person-hours to put to it.

So. To bring the boundary in, it's probably best to move in from the edge, working towards a half circle. So you just weed out the weeds and plant what you like. I always do all weeds, not just the bad ones. That way what you're left with is rainforest park. But you can choose how far you want to go, because if you get rid of the bad ones, you're way ahead. If you have limited time and/or a huge job, then take out the weeds that are too horrible for you to allow, and plant trees and shrubs. Of course you do this anyway, and all you have to do is to keep the weeds away from the trees, and to eradicate the climbers. Non climbing plants will die in the shade, but choking climbers won't give up, they'll just climb, (mind you, there is evidence that morning glory gives up if it's not allowed to climb). Madeira vine has to be eradicated, because it will persist, and those wretched corms will grow and grow. I really believe if you want to get rid of madeira, you have to do the rainforest park. You can't see the ground sufficiently otherwise. The good news is that it really doesn't take a lot of time to make a lot of difference. The big effort is in the beginning, making the boundary. Once that's done, the rest is all fast progress with little effort.

So the rainforest park method. Move the boundary in slowly, so you're not scared. Remember you've stopped the progress of the invasion. It can't go any further. First you look for basket grass and pratia. If you're anywhere near a couple of trees together you might well have some basket grass at least. If you find any, then very carefully weed around them. It is in your immense interest to coddle this plant and make way for it at all costs. If you give it sway it will grow thickly enough eventually to prevent any seed getting to the ground. It won't win over grass in a fair fight, but once it's established it will keep out every grass, except of course the encroaching kind. Ideally you will eventually get rid of every blade of non-rainforest grass, but in the meantime it's enough to maintain the boundary. Every step forward you take will be won forever, provided you maintain the boundary. And of course eventually it will all be done and the only maintaining will be against encroachment from outside. Even that won't be any harder than the original boundary maintenance. But back to the method. Look, as I say, for basket grass and pratia.* If there is not a shred of either, or if you've already weeded around all your specimens, then pull out a metre diameter circle of weeds and plant basket grass or pratia or both. If you have either on your land it is easy to move pieces around, as it is very hardy. It just needs its roots covered, and water for the first few days.

Now I know there are a thousand exceptions to these rules, and a myriad of problems which need fixing. I would be delighted to hear your comments, and hear about specific problems. I am convinced that our combined intellects can come up with a solution for every conceivable eventuality.

*With any luck you will be able to see specimens of two kinds of basket grass, and pratia, at the shop. Unfortunately we don't have any for sale as yet.

DANCE

Stokers Siding Hall
Friday April 21st
Melbourne band

Symbiosis

gyp/ska, reggae/rock
Irresistable rythmn

Chemical Free Weed Control

By Geoff Dawe

Part 1 of a 4 part series:

The following was originally published in the Byron Environment Centre Newsletter. The project described is an example of non-poisonous regeneration.

Philosophy

Chemical free weed control at Cumbebin Wetlands on the western edge of Byron Bay is based on the knowledge that soil organic matter levels (OML's) in western land use patterns are in decline. The method aims to aid in the retention, or even increase of OML's and therefore is not separate from other rural land use activities including agriculture.

Weed species currently dominate because soils are under threat. Nature is well aware, even if people are not, that what grows and lives upon the soil is secondary to the need to retain soil. Whilst our species through ignorance collapses soil health, weed species rush in to provide the biomass that provides the organic matter that healthy soil requires. Many native species are no longer able to optimally provide organic matter for organic matter-starved soils and they have been replaced by exotic species better able to return biomass to soil if for no other reason than they have volunteered for their position in place of natives.

Weeds also shade and hold soil, soften heavy rains and feed many animals, all of whom manure, and some of whom are native. Weeds therefore have a part to play in land regeneration.

Social Perception of Weeds

Weeds themselves, in common with all land degradation, are created by an imbalance in social perception that can only be effectively cured by a rebalancing at this level. All parts of nature have both positive and negative effects, and the current debate on Camphor Laurel shows quite clearly that the balance is now shifting in social perception to this, rather than what could be called an American Culture view that things can be clearly differentiated into the good and the bad; things that deserve existence, and things that do not. The chemical free regeneration technique at Cumbebin therefore incorporates a continual search for the usefulness of the various weed species, particularly as aids to the growth of native plants.

Weed Rampancy

Many weeds are despised because of their rapid growth. It is precisely this characteristic that makes them important in regeneration. Western culture is experiencing reducing OML's and if focus begins at the soil in overcoming land degradation, then it is obvious that it is the rampancy of plant and animal life upon any area of soil that is the means by which soil OML's most efficiently rise. Many of our rampant plants, and therefore provisioners of higher OML's are weeds.

Non-chemical Use

The issue of the non use of chemicals does not concern itself primarily with the potential toxicity of chemicals, although there

is little doubt that this occurs; no pesticide has been proven safe and many have been withdrawn from sale when proven unsafe. The primary issue is technological dependence which brings about the consumption of products thought to be so necessary that there is denial of side effects, and the mind ceases the search for alternatives.

A further concern of chemical use is that it is part of a technological armory including artificial fertilizers and genetic engineering that is able to support plant and animal growth artificially without the need (in the short term) to particularly notice soil health. Soil OML's drop because production is able to occur without the necessity to completely return organic matter.

Since weeds are symptoms of land degradation, their proliferation is linked to ignoring land health by using technological inputs.

The chemical use which many bush regenerators see as part of the solution, can be seen to be part of the problem.

Unless there is an attempt to highlight the need for experimentation with non-chemical control of weeds, and the finding of information associated with that, the ongoing soil and water degrading effects of land clearing and chemical use will have simply jumped from agriculture to bush regeneration.

What then is a chemical free method of regaining native plant dominance without neutralizing the regenerative ability of weeds?

Find out in Part 2,
next issue.

CHANGES TO THE PLANNING SYSTEM IN NSW

Planning legislation in NSW is governed by the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (1975) and many subsequent amendments.

The Act is structured in several parts, the more pertinent of which are represented by the following table:

SEPP	: State Environmental Planning Policy
REP	: Regional Environmental Plan
LEP	: Local Environmental Plan (mandatory new state wide template)
DCP	: Development Control Plan (local)
DA	: Development Application

Recent changes to planning laws in NSW include:

- A new Regional Environmental Plan based on a new Far North Coast Strategy is currently being formulated to give developers more surety. eg. Threatened species habitat will be mapped (largely from the desk top) and protected “now” rather than investigated before a DA is lodged (ie less field “truthing”)
- New Local Environmental Plans (LEPs) throughout NSW based on a common template. The rationale is to simplify by reducing the number of “Planning Instruments”, types of “Planning Zones” and “definitions”. Tweed Shire’s new LEP which is currently being drafted will have to be re-cast to conform to the new standard LEP incorporating new core and mandatory provisions. ‘Backward’ shires will be brought up to standard whilst “enlightened” shires will be “dumbed-down”.
- Development Control Plans will be rationalised and limited to one per land parcel.
- The general trend is away from flexible plans subject to local participation (tailor made) to a “one size fits all” paternalistic agenda formulated in Sydney and determined ultimately by the Minister for Planning (currently Frank Sartor).
- It is worth remembering that large property developments yield millions of dollars for (especially) large corporations like Leda, Multiplex and the Ray Group. They can afford to make large donations to political parties (half of Labour’s campaign coffers are filled by property developers) and they can afford to intimidate local residents and dissenters.
- Some radical changes were made to the part 3A provisions in August ‘05 which take determining authority away from Councils and give even more power to the Minister (Section 75L). Large infrastructure projects and any project above \$50 million can be “called-in” by the Minister and appeal rights by objectors are lost if an “Expert Panel” or Public Inquiry is involved; or a “Concept Approval” has been issued by the Minister!
- Where Development Consents may be lacking in the way they have been processed by Council (the determining authority) many commercial Class 1 objectors who are not a “party” to the process are seeking a “Judicial Review” in an attempt to find some breach of an environmental or planning law under the “doctrine of Jurisdictional fact” ie “Justice” for the rich and powerful.
- Where Councils bargain with developers to achieve contributions for the benefit of the community, three models may be applied:
 - i. S.94 Contributions Plan
 - ii. Planning Agreements
 - iii. Striking a Levy over a long period of time
- Section 94 Contributions must be structured via a specific and detailed plan well in advance of the DA stage, and a direct nexus must exist between the plan and the land which is subject to development.
- Planning Agreements allow for greater flexibility concerning the application and outcomes for various types of contributions and benefits. Eg Habitat protection for land at Pottsville Wetlands and Koala Beach.

The account by Colleen Davis of the views of Paul Brinsmead concerning the Daly Inquiry and the Woodward Report gives the false impression that neither Daly nor Woodward found anything wrong with the Planning process in Tweed Shire.

In fact both the Daly 2nd Report and the Woodward Report found that their were/are serious Strategic Plan-

ning defects in Council’s Strategic Planning Regime, namely:

- Lack of community consultation.
- Lack of public participation
- Poor quality Environmental Reports from some malleable consultant
- Lack of clear vision from Council planners
- Lack of Ecological expertise within council available for Planning Re-

views

- Lack of co-operation with and between DOP, DIPNR & DEC
- Council out of step with Far North Coast Regional Strategy

The fact that solicitors Paul Brinsmead and Tony Smith were not indicted by ICAC or other bodies, does not necessarily exonerate their behaviour relative to the Inquiry.

Hop.E

ARTIFICIAL MASS EARTH MOVEMENT OF HILLSIDES

The deficiency of the supporting argument for the continued practice of whole hillside regrading is that it is based on short-term monetary concerns rather than long-term ecologically sustainable and aesthetic outcomes. The Policy Report has been written from the viewpoint of engineers in the service of large-scale developers and land speculators. It is not the proper purpose of Council to protect the speculative profits of large development corporations.

- What about the rights and long-term effects to the commons, existing residents and the calderan community including plant and animal communities?
- What about soil erosion, turbidity and water quality?

ENGINEERING ARGUMENT

- It has taken 20 million years to reach the reasonably stable landscapes of the largely natural contemporary erosion caldera. Most hillsides have achieved stable angles of repose. It is obvious that any significant disturbance must have a knock-on effect, especially at the edge or interface between natural and artificial landforms.
- The simplified “ideogram” profile drawing used to illustrate the regrading proposals do not show what happens at the extremities of the earth works, or what happens if only part of a hillside is re-shaped.
- The slope of 20% or 18° above horizontal has been the basis of constraints land mapping planning in Tweed Shire by both Council and Government agencies for the past thirty years. There is no discussion of maximum hillside slopes, maximum heights or maximum areas suitable for regrading. There should be limits to the scale of earthworks.

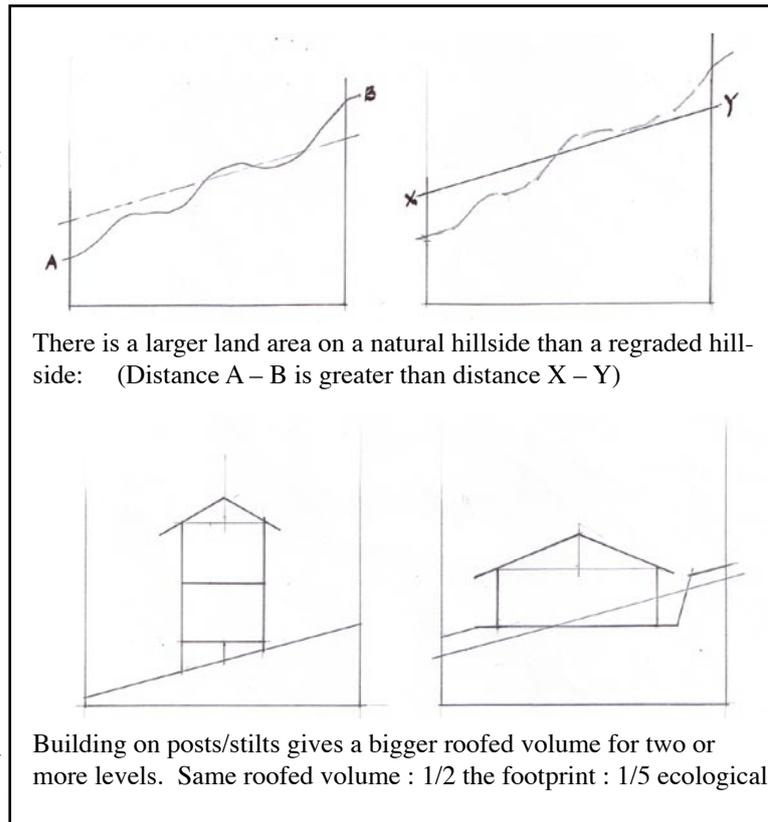
ECONOMIC ARGUMENT

- Land investment and property development are inherently highly speculative activities where high returns depend on high risks. It is arguably not the Council’s job to bolster unwise investment, but rather

to ensure the long-term ecological (and therefore) economic sustainability of the shire. **NO ENVIRONMENT = NO ECONOMY**

- When a major landslide occurs or a retaining wall fails or a major deluge happens in the middle of mass earthmoving works, who pays? How can the damage ever be calculated or rectified? **THE PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE SHOULD AND MUST APPLY.**
- Concrete slabs on the ground have associated negative costs:

- The earth batters must be gradual and are therefore wasteful of land or costly to treat; or abrupt and requiring substantial retaining walls.
- Concrete is not an attractive or suitable surface and needs polishing and sealing, floor coverings or surfacing (ceramic, stone or wood veneers etc.) to make it good.
- Building on posts or stilts can effectively double the floor area for comparatively little extra cost (i.e. two or more



floors share common footings and roof).

- Yields can still be viable without cut and fill slab-on-ground techniques.

ENVIRONMENTAL ARGUMENT

- Excavating for an individual house slab-on-ground is not environmentally desirable but is very different from regrading a whole hillside. **SIZE DOES MATTER** and the environmental impacts of massive earthworks are many orders of magnitude worse than a few individual slabs.
- There is no way (and becoming increasingly so?) that the probability of a major deluge can be predicted. A heavy rain event can create havoc to a large and steep hillside stripped of all its vegetation causing erosion and sedimentation on a massive and irreparable scale, viz. South West Kingscliff and Terranora.
- The part of the foot slope where the gradient changes near the bottom of a hill is an environmentally sensitive

area where ground water often exits near to the surface forming special ecological niche habitats. Hillside re-grading frequently causes unforeseen problems to previously stable and/or beneficial hydrological regimes.

ECOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

- The caldera is justly famous for its unique natural landscapes. Engineers and Planners have a duty to ensure the on-going ecological sustainability of our shared natural environment and native eco-systems.
- Soil erosion causes sedimentation, siltation, and leads to damage to benthos, sea grass and the marine/aquatic environment including water quality.
- To strip a large hillside of all its vegetation and topsoil kills 99% of all living organisms. The heritage of millenia can vanish in a few weeks and the damage is unacceptable, inappropriate, easily avoidable and potentially disastrous.
- No trees or vegetation of any kind can survive this total wipeout regime and the result is a manufactured disaster zone which can never recover its pre 1788 condition. THE FINAL AND UNSUSTAINABLE "CROP"

AESTHETIC / SOCIAL ARGUMENT

- Residents and visitors all agree that the natural landscapes of the Caldera are unique and worthy of protection through regulations and restrictions to development.

Just a little tease for you this time, to see if you're paying attention. We have scads of good news in the wings, but we'll save up most of it, just letting you in on a couple of local glints of hope.

Biodiesel is now available in Byron Bay. North Coast Biodiesel is open Tuesdays and Thursdays 7-10am and Thursdays 3-6pm. They're using recycled cooking oil, and there's no alteration needed to an ordinary diesel engine. Apparently you can't switch back and forth from normal diesel to bio though, you need to go bio, then change your car's filter after ten hours, then after another fifty hours. I also heard on Radio National that a conglomerate of farmers are not



We have a famous and beautiful landform, which is very attractive to tourists and new settlers. It is the task of engineers and planners to avoid unnecessary damage to our shared natural assets.

- In a competitive market, quality does ultimately matter.
- Please refer to illustrations of recent developments in Tweed Shire.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS

- The CEC fully endorses and supports the Report by the Government Architect.
- The Council appears to be treating the problem of whole hillside regrading as an engineering exercise rather than heeding likely environmental effects and 21st Century best-practise town planning and urban design.
- The economic arguments offered by developers are based on unenlightened and outdated attitudes and standards rather than considering contemporary concerns for ecological (and therefore) economic sustainability i.e., short-term profits for a small sector of the "foreign" economy rather than the local caldera community as a whole.

E.P. Hopkins
CEC Co-ordinator

only using biodiesel for their farm machinery but have started growing crops to make their own. Very nice.

And if you're concerned about the welfare of any farm animals in your ken, you can ring Animal Liberation on 1800 751770. This is an anonymous service which will follow up reports and refer them to police [call them even if it the cruelty and abuse is institutionalised, tell them that you are reporting it anonymously so that they can report it to the police on your behalf, as they have promised to do].

It's good to know we can help the police to enforce the intent of the laws, laws which are designed to protect the other animals.

Every little bit helps.

Consuela

SEA SHEPHERD

The Sea Shepherd Conservation Society is calling for donations to fund a ship fast enough to keep up with Japanese whalers. Sea Shepherd managed to keep whalers on the run for fifteen days during the killing earlier this year. During all of the time they were within distance of the killing boats the killing boats were on the run and no whales were slaughtered. They need a faster boat to better chase the illegal whalers. They have quickly established a network of members in Australia and have raised already half the funds for the new boat. Sea Shepherd acts legally as an enforcement agency and is for this reason feared by the whalers. Nobody else is enforcing International Law. But to keep up the pace they need a faster ship. Go to www.seashepherd.org to send them some of your money.

BEN OQUIST ON THE ELECTIONS

Tasmania

One in six Tasmanians voted for the Greens – that's 16% of the vote across the Apple Isle. Although there was a small swing away from us of 1.9%, this compares to a swing away from the ALP of 2.3% and was achieved in the face of unprecedented negative attacks against the Greens.

In addition to a sustained campaign against the possibility of a minority government, a massive underhand anti-Greens advertising blitz was unleashed in the last days of the campaign funded by the big parties, big business and the religious cult - the Exclusive Brethren.

Yet despite this, the Greens have won 4 Upper House seats. Scrutineers in Bass tell us that there was a strong flow of preferences from the anti-pulp mill independent.

Our vote held up slightly better in the south of the State than the north where the underhand attacks on the Greens hit the hardest.

However, as commentator and University of Tasmania academic Richard Herr pointed out in Hobart ABC radio, 16% is a big vote for a minor party.

Under the old Tasmanian electoral system - which the Labor and Liberal parties worked together to remove in 1998 in a devious attempt to get rid of the Greens - we would have won 7 seats.

No election in Australia has ever seen such a negative advertising blitz from so many sources directed at one party.

The massive advertising blitz funded by big business and the wood-chipping industry against "minority Government" in Tasmania is actually nothing of the sort.

It is a campaign against the Greens. During the final weekend of the campaign every single ad break on evening commercial TV featured attack ads on the Greens and "minority government" (often more than one such spot in each break).

It is not just the Exclusive Breth-

ren who funded advertising targeting the Greens. On top of the Labor and Liberals anti-Green material there is the forest industry's mega bucks and a huge spend from the shadowy big business group Tasmanians for a Better Future. Every day, new full page advertisements appeared in the paper.

Had an election in Australia ever seen such a negative advertising blitz from so many sources directed at one party?

And this was not the first time that the Exclusive Brethren has entered into the electoral fray against the Greens. Tasmanian Liberals' state director, Damien Mantach met with them and then admitted that the Liberals in NSW had a financial arrangement with the Brethren when targeting the Greens in the 2004 federal poll in NSW.

South Australia

Great news from South Australia where Mark Parnell has won the first Greens upper house seat in the SA Parliament.

The Greens more than doubled its lower house vote to 6.3% in a tight tussle with Family First who scored 5.8%.

Although no Family First candidate stood in Tasmania, the preference deal it brokered for the last Federal election saw it almost knock off popular Greens candidate (and now Senator) Christine Milne – despite a primary vote of less than 2%. And as the Exclusive Brethren have shown in this election, the religious right is alive and well in Tasmania.

So with the death of the Democrats, it looks like the next big minor party battle ground will be the struggle between the Greens and Family First for Senate seats in 2007.

Hold on to your hats as we do battle with the religious right in the campaign to Rescue the Senate next year.

CALLING CALDERA CATERERS

We have two events coming up, one of them RIGHT NOW.

Friday 21st April, Stokers Siding Hall, we're doing the food for a brilliant band from Melbourne called Symbiosis. They're young, bright, energetic, and on our side. Guaranteed to get you dancing. Please support this event as we are sorely in need of funds right now. Bring your family and friends. We need cakes and vegetarian food to sell, plus lots of people to eat it. Food starts at 6:30 and if you can't come but you can make food, you can leave it in the shop on Friday or call Kim (66795881) or Christine (66795363).

The other event is

World Environment Day,

Knox Park, June 4th. We're doing cakes and slices etc - no savouries for this one - and we're hoping for your usual amazing contributions. We'd be nothing without you.



MINUTES, CEC GENERAL MEETINGS (edited)

14-2-06

- Boulder Close: Gary Smith is considering the submission made by the CEC regarding the quarry.
- Area E: Hop.E reports that the Area E workshop was “pathetic and a farce.” Seminar was well attended but participants were allowed only three minutes each to air their views and it has become obvious subsequently that no notice was taken of their complaints. Hop.E visited the site and reports that the palm forest on Trutes Bay is amazing; large and pristine. Chief concern of the scheme is the threat of a major connecting road ploughing across the large wetland.
- Chinderah Marina: Rally held on Saturday. Concerns about scale of project. 115 berths. Developer may have lost touch with reality. Support received from Idwal “JJ” Richards, a local pillar of society who is also opposed to the Marina. A letter is to be sent to the Planning Minister.
- C4 Rally: Poorly attended. Organisation was not great. Lengthy interval between arrival time and presentation from Kooris - understandable because of the media pack trailing them, and issues of *security* at the airport.
- Fingal: Concern raised that the Tweed Vegetation Management Plan (TVMP) does not provide much protection. It was noted that the TVMP is a tool not a planning instrument. The TVMP is still supported by the CEC.
- Flail Mower/Glyphosate/Roadside Maintenance: Eddy has received Draft Plan from Council for a new proposal for roadside maintenance. The outdoor staff are being educated to distinguish between natives and weeds and vegetation will be classified into three ranks and managed according to those classifications. 1 = good, unspoiled vegetation and will have no or minimal work. 2 = some weeds and some native vegetation

and will have limited work to control weeds. 3 = seriously degraded, and will be treated in the usual method (next to farms). Other strategies in the Draft Plan include: limiting parking to degraded sites, Management plan to be developed for particular weeds and stretches of road, possible Management plan for the use of glyphosates, use of Flail Mower to be constrained within “a box” with strict dimensions, eg 3 metres out and up, either side of the carriage-way. Trees will be allowed to grow but pruned where they pose safety hazards.

- Tweed Shire Council State of the Environment (SOE): Currently in draft format. Contains 20 headings of different environmental indicators. Eddy suggests reporting on litres of glyphosate used and metres of total areas sprayed or maintained. Copy of the Draft Plan to be made available to CEC by Eddy.
- Water Law reforms: Presentation by Department of Natural Resources concerning new regime for water use in Northern NSW. Large quantity of water guaranteed to the Shire, 17,000 GL. Ecological flows given high priority. However it is up to users to determine practicality of new laws. Little concern raised about quantity of Tweed commercial water users seen as sustainable by the Water Reform committee. May provide mechanism to prevent Byrill Creek Dam.
- Other Legislation: LEP (Local Environment Plan)/Part 3A reforms by State government are very worrying. Drastic changes may negate community representation by placing decision making in the hands of the Minister, who has vested interests in approving developments, as it is widely known this is how they generate Party revenue. Changes are to be summarised by Hop.E and presented in the next TREE magazine.

14-03-06

- Area E: Rezoning
- King’s Forest
- Mass earth movement of hillsides
- Meeting with Administrators: Hop.E, Jim and Klaus met with Lucy, Max and Mike Rayner. Meeting was not very fruitful because Administrators were keen to look good by announcing all the initiatives under the Seven Year Plan, whilst CEC were intent to demonstrate the need for greater regard for the environment in the Council’s planning agenda. A couple of highlights:
 - Max says Tweed Shire is much better off environmentally with the Council than is the case in many other shires, especially those in Queensland.
 - Max also said issues that did not have the support of the majority of residents would not be considered as policy.
 - Lucy was very defensive and said that “back zoning” was not possible because developers would sue the Council in the Land and Environment Court; and a “Nuclear Free” Shire was not possible because it was not an immediate necessity.
- Meeting with Dan Walton, Klaus and Wendy. Dan, Klaus and Wendy to liaise about Sustainable Living Starter Kit
- Auspice for Gatherings Project
- Invite to CPM for Hybrid submission that focuses on collaborations between artists and non-artists (environmentalists).
- Sea Shepherd funding campaign for faster ship to better intervene in Antarctic Whaling
- Council spraying of Roundup along roadside.

Gatherings

Artists in Residence

A community and Environmental Art Project

Gatherings began its life creating art installations for festivals at the Wollumbin Festival in October last year. You might remember the stunning giant bird archway over the stands. The Wollumbin Festivals' and Tip Bits Recycle Shops' wonderful support of this seed project has given it a great beginning by encouraging and facilitating community and environmentally orientated emerging artists and giving them a chance to express themselves freely in a fun way.

All artworks are community collaborations with many artists involved in visioning and making each work. They aim to stay "green" using predominantly recycled and natural materials and presenting environmental alternatives through art like alternative energy systems and straw bale techniques. "Green" artists, performers and non-arty environmentalists (especially those with construction skills in any material eg timber, bamboo, metal) are welcome. Of particular need are people with a builders' licence to supervise. All are welcome to join the network. Please call Heidi on Ph: 02 6672 3669 or 02 6686 8918 Email: heidikeevers@yahoo.com.au

UPCOMING EVENTS

Dance, Symbiosis, gyp-hop n' reggae, Stokers Siding Hall, Friday April 21st, food starts 6.30pm.

Friends of Wollumbin welcomes you to hear Dan Walton (Tweed Shire Council's Sustainability Officer) and Hop.E (Caldera Environment Centre) discuss practical ideas for creating sustainable living at a personal level, Saturday 22nd April, 2pm to 5pm at Uki Hall.

World Environment day, Knox Park Sunday June 4th.

Friends of Wollumbin Landcare, Riverbank Project workday: Kyogle Rd. Uki/Byangum - First Saturday morning of each month, 8am.

Tweed Landcare Inc., meetings 3rd Wednesday of each month, RSL Murwillumbah, 6:30pm.

Tweed Greens, 1st Thurs each month, Birdwing Cafe, 7pm, Tumbulgum.

Gecko general meeting, Gecko House, 139 Duringan St, Currumbin, 2nd Wed of each month.

Meetings of the CEC are always 2nd Tuesday of the month, 5:30pm, next meeting is on Tuesday the 9th May.

Volunteer positions available at the Caldera Environment Centre Shop and as research persons. The CEC is located at Queen Street, Murwillumbah, Phone 66721121, Email tree@calderaenvironmentcentre.org

If undelivered, please return to:
Caldera Environment Centre
PO Box 5090 Sth Murwillumbah 2484