

TREE

TWEED RIVER ENVIRONMENTAL ECHO
NEWSLETTER OF THE CALDERA
ENVIRONMENT CENTRE



WINTER 2001

Winter - 2001

\$2



IMPRESSION OF MOUNT WARNING BY JAN GOLDING

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stirring the calderan

Hare Om.

There actually is a spot of good news this go. There's a small, squeaking but striving on, force accumulating which seems to be giving power to the environment movement.

For a good few years we've been rerelegated to mad and sad status, but finally the mainstream is beginning to catch up. Lawyers for Forests, Liberals for Forests and Doctors for Native Forests are three manifestations of this new, sane approach to life. Why forests in particular? Because it's easy to show that forestry is 'a heavily subsidised, destructive and dying industry exploiting a natural resource over which governments have total control.' (Dr Keith Woollard, founder of Liberals for Forests) In fact, Liberals for Forests won a lower house seat in W.A. in February's state election, and they nearly took Richard Court's seat from him as well. These two electorates gave green candidates 30% of the primary vote. These people seem to know what they're doing, and it's gratifying to see both persuasions wising up. There are even small groups forming inside the Liberal and Labor parties. It's all happening!

Anyway, there's more. Ordinary but true.

- The Australian government is donating 6000 solar-powered radios to the people of East Timor.
- The NSW government is taking over the management of the entire coastline of the state. So local councils won't have the final say over coastal developments any more.
- (Kids Can) Free the Children was started by a 12 year old boy and ten of his friends. Six years later the organization has 100,000 members in 25 countries. It has funded 260

primary schools and three rehabilitation centres for children freed from bonded labour. It has also given thousands of families milking animals and land to replace the money the children were earning. They've done lots of other things as well, which you can find out on www.freethechildren.com

- And you can help find a cure for cancer. You see, we really do get it for you here. Need a reason for living? Why not look for a cure for cancer while you're not doing anything else. Seriously. If you spend any time on the internet, and you ever have time when your monitor puts up a screensaver, then you can help Oxford University to find a cure for cancer. Of course, I've lost my notes on the subject, and I haven't, through sheer slackness, had a chance to look on the internet, but it's something like this: there are billions of molecules to try hitting this whatever else with, which holds the key - it would take years, on their computers, to go through the nine billion or so options for just one of these whatevers which hold the key. Anyway, in three months they've done the first one, using people's computers throughout the world. They've found 200,000 'hits' (whatever) and now they're starting the next one. Confused? You won't be if you go to www.ud.com

So there you have it. I had planned to give you a rave about how brilliant Dave Gleeson is in keeping Save Wollumbin powering against the odds, but I'll save it for next time.

Keep those synapses buzzing,

Consuela

700 is a lot of Greens

There was the Mayor of Santa Monica CA., nine Senators of the Mexican Government, a Columbian woman Senator standing for President, a Dutch member of the European Parliament, six other European ministers, a skateboarding Rastafarian who is also an NZ parliamentarian and numerous other elected officials from 70 different countries.

In all 700-plus delegates, 350 for overseas, met in Canberra for three days over Easter in the first Global Greens Conference.

The purpose was to strengthen and formalise the links between the greens parties and organizations of the world, stressing positive globalisation rather than multinational exploitation. It was also to develop personal ties and an understanding of the diverse problems experienced in our different societies as we pursue goals of sustainability and social justice.

In Australia we are opposed by venal politicians, biased electoral systems, an 'establishment' media and self-serving sectional interests. In other countries greens are jailed (two currently in Mexico), beaten, have their families threatened and are sometimes murdered - the courage and commitment of these people is humbling.

Wangari Maathai, the impressive Kenyan woman who founded their 'Green Belt Movement' in 1977 gave a moving and graphic address on the grassroots effects of global corporatisation. In "putting a face to the problem" she described the exploitation, impoverishment and cultural degradation of her people while their forests are being destroyed by multinational business in concert with the World Bank and corrupt politicians. She has been jailed and beaten for her actions.

Ingrid Betancourt, a Columbian Senator, spoke movingly of the corruption of her country's 'drug economy', its social and environmental consequences. She highlighted the difficulty of telling her people to move to legal crops when they know the trade

agreements are not fair and they will go hungry. Ingrid has to have constant physical protection and has sent her children to NZ.

A resolve to boycott US oil conglomerate Exxon Mobile was agreed on the basis of its (\$1.2M US) funding of the Bush presidency campaign and the subsequent payoff, the Kyoto backdown. The ban is on till Bush ratifies the treaty.

Saving the New Caledonia coral reefs was adopted as a world green's project. These reefs were in a pristine state but are now threatened by uncontrolled mining effluent. They are protected from global warming by a cold current from the Tasman Sea. They will be the last reefs to survive naturally if left alone. They are to be nominated for World Heritage status.

A global greens coalition has been established to facilitate mutual support between all our countries and the Global Young Greens have received specific recognition of their involvement and vital importance in the political process.

There was much else resolved and many actions agreed, but I will finish with the words of Satoko Watanabe a member of Japan's Kagawa Prefectural Assembly. She was asked the main issues in Japan at the moment, and offered this comment:

"In Japan the Government spends a lot of money on construction which damages the natural environment. They built a huge dam in the mouth of the river near the sea and it killed the wetland. That kind of public construction will benefit the construction companies and the construction companies will donate money to the politicians. Tax money, public money is spent that way and now we have a huge deficit."

Sound familiar?

Tom Tabart
Tweed Byron Greens

EDITOR'S RAVE

The Caldera Environment Centre has been undergoing something of a renaissance in recent months. New faces, new input and new energy abound. Always evolving, the Environment Centre is a dynamic enterprise. The aims, ideals and priorities of the group reflect the aims, ideals and priorities of the individuals involved. This is one of the beautiful things about any volunteer community group. We can all contribute, and we can contribute in precisely the way that most suits us.

As a long-term participant in the Caldera I am always heartened by the fresh energy of new people. Looking after this fabulous corner of the planet is so important that the more people interested the better. We have a lot in common – in an environment group many people share similar broad ideals. Not only this, but in the general community most people have at least *some* concern about the environment. So in a way it's all a matter of priorities. We each decide for ourselves how much of a priority the environment is. Protecting our natural areas and native forests, giving a fair go to our fellow creatures, looking after the air and water and minimising our impact on the world around us are all part of it. The more people that care about these things the better.

Your current editor, for all his good intentions, has once again disgraced himself with an unacceptably late edition of TREE. (We won't dwell on the original intended deadline.) Nevertheless, here we are. Most readers will have received a two-page missive last month concerning an upcoming trip to Redland Bay and ideas for the next Ecologically Sustainable Development workshop. A plea for more participation (and for subscriptions) was included. A timely word from our esteemed co-ordinator is reprinted on the back page.

Many thanks to contributors Tom Tabart, Ann Whittingham, Henry James, David Gleeson, and Paul Hopkins. Now in the final flush of editorial enthusiasm, I feel emboldened to announce that our next issue will be out in early September. Contributions are most welcome, especially on local issues.

-Ian Herscovitch

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Dance Fundraiser:** A dance and music night for the Save Wollumbin Campaign will be held on Friday August 31 at Uki Hall. Three groups are booked – **Monkey and Fish**, **Tia Nullum**, and **Zen Zoo**. A great night is assured, with refreshments provided by the inimitable Caldera Katerers
- * **Environmental Film Night:** Watch out for news of an upcoming film night at the local Regent Cinema, Murwillumbah, possibly in early August. Details are not yet final, but patrons and supporters may be treated to one or two movies with refreshments for around \$10. Watch your local telephone pole for posters!
- > **Magical Mystery Tour.** Bus trip to Redland Bay to see worm farming and composting of sewage sludge in action. Also having a look at Redland Bay wetlands, so it will be a day of great variety. Sometime in August, either Saturday or Sunday. Register at the Environment Centre. The day might cost around \$10
- ! **Annual General Meeting:** Environment Centre AGM upstairs at the Court House Hotel, Murwillumbah – 5.30 pm Tuesday August 14th

**DO YOU EVER FEEL AS THOUGH THE BEAUTY OF THE CALDERA IS BEING
NIBBLED AWAY SILENTLY IN FRAGMENTS, OR GNAWED APART BY
INSENSITIVE INTRUSIONS?**

*Could there be a way to save the beauty and integrity of the Caldera, respecting it as the
unique and World Heritage place that it is?*

WHERE ON PLANET EARTH IS THERE A BETTER PLACE TO JOIN TOGETHER AS A
GROUP AND SEEK TO LIVE IN HARMONY WITH THE RESOURCES AND BEAUTY OF
THE NATURAL WORLD?

ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY WORKSHOPS

The Caldera Environment Centre was awarded nearly \$10,000 on the eve of the last federal election to hold three workshops on practical, everyday applications of the principles of ecologically sustainable development within the Tweed Shire.

What is 'Ecologically Sustainable Development'? There are not many human economic or commercial activities that are genuinely ecologically sustainable. Some possible views of this concept:

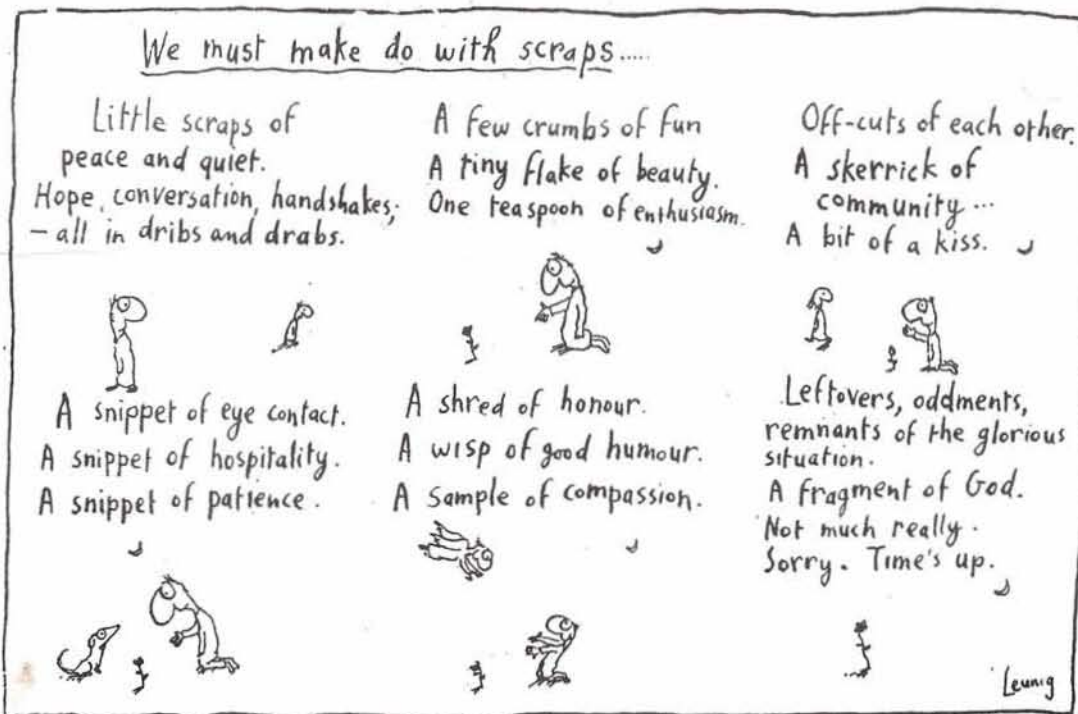
- * 'Human activity which does not significantly damage native (or at least natural) ecosystems'
- * 'Activity which does not diminish the natural inheritance (heritage) of future generations.'
- * 'Activity which does not impair inter-generational equity'

Perhaps you can think of a better definition.

Two workshops have been held to date:

1. On-site disposal of household waste and sewage
2. Vegetation Management Strategy and Plan

Both these days attracted a good attendance of interested residents and stimulated lively discussion. Now a third workshop is being planned, this time taking the form of a bus trip to Redland Shire sewage disposal works, where earthworms are used for the breakdown of sewage material. The day will include a look at coastal development and Redland Bay wetlands. We'll also be looking at local landscape problems en route. Date of this outing to be announced soon – probably in August. Register at the environment shop.



Rural Fire Service Runs Amok – Government Does Nothing

Late in the afternoon on 13 September 2000 an area of rainforest near the headland at Hastings Point was burnt. The Rural Fire Service (RFS) and a number of other emergency services had attended a bushfire about a kilometre to the south earlier that afternoon.

Amongst the resources available to put out what was a relatively small fire was a helicopter equipped for the purpose, a nearby creek and ocean for it to scoop water from, plenty of fuel for the helicopter, a town fire brigade tender, a number of RFS tenders and a plentiful supply of town water.

Over the following days, people in attendance complained that the ample opportunities available to put out the original bushfire were not used by the RFS. Instead, according to the complainants, some members of the RFS deliberately spread the fire 0.5 – 1.0 km further to the north than was necessary. The rainforest was damaged as a result.

A number of the complainants are members of the RFS who were in attendance on the day.

The burnt rainforest was one of the few areas of coastal dunes not destroyed by sand-mining last century. It is on crown land in the care of Tweed Council and is the site of many years of rehabilitation works by Dunecare, a number of teams employed under federal government labour market training programs and professional bush regenerators hired by Tweed Council. It is zoned for environmental protection under council and state government planning rules.

By a slim majority, council voted to undertake an investigation into the incident. An internal investigation

was also undertaken by the RFS. The results of the investigation by council were published in April 2001.

The documentary evidence in the report raised more questions than it answered. Despite this, senior council officers responsible for the report recommended that the RFS be exonerated. The great majority of councillors not only accepted the recommendation, but chose to congratulate the RFS. Only councillors Luff and Carroll supported a motion by councillor James to refer the matter to the state government for further investigation.

The most senior officers of the RFS have offered two lines of defense to the accusations. The first is that the officers in question did not know that the rainforest was there, that it was protected by planning regulations and that the community had invested quite a bit of effort in its rehabilitation.

Complainant members of the RFS say they provided this information on a number of occasions during the afternoon. The chief fire officer for Tweed confirms this evidence. Only officers of the RFS who actually lit up the rainforest deny they were told.

The second line of defense is that the emergency was so great that the "back-burning" of the rainforest was justified to protect houses across the road. This claim is equally suspect, given the evidence on record.

What is perhaps of greatest concern is that the most senior staff of the RFS and Tweed Council have avoided the evidence.

The chief officer of the RFS in Tweed has somewhat reluctantly admitted that an error of judgement may have been made on the day.

Volunteer staff who actually set the fire deny any error and say they would do the same again in the same situation. The north coast regional chief of the RFS supports their claim.

When John Corkill, secretary of the North Coast Environment Council, recently delivered a paper on coastal vegetation management along the NSW coast, he cited the incident at Hastings Point as an example of problems that the NSW government needed to deal with. The paper attracted considerable publicity.

In response, the commissioner of the RFS made claims on radio that gave the impression he was unaware of the very different accounts of the incident coming from his own officers.

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW – the peak environment group for the state – intends to ask the commissioner to explain contradictions before referring the matter to the office of the ombudsman.

Meanwhile Councillor James says the people who have spent so much effort on rehabilitating this rainforest are rightfully affronted by the claims of a very small number of RFS officers who say they would do the same again. "If senior management of the RFS cannot bring itself to apologise for the incident and promise it will not happen again, the reputation of the RFS will be seriously damaged. If the NSW government does not take any action, it will stand condemned. Dunecare groups will be entitled to think that government does not care if their hard work is deliberately and unnecessarily put to the torch by renegades in the RFS."

WATER – UNDER SIEGE FROM THE TOURIST PLAGUE

With its insatiable appetite for remote, unspoiled places and unusual destinations, international tourism is having a huge impact all over the world. One major casualty of the tourist trade, but one that is barely recognised, is water. The demand for swimming pools, golf courses and western-style bathroom facilities is having drastic consequences for many countries.

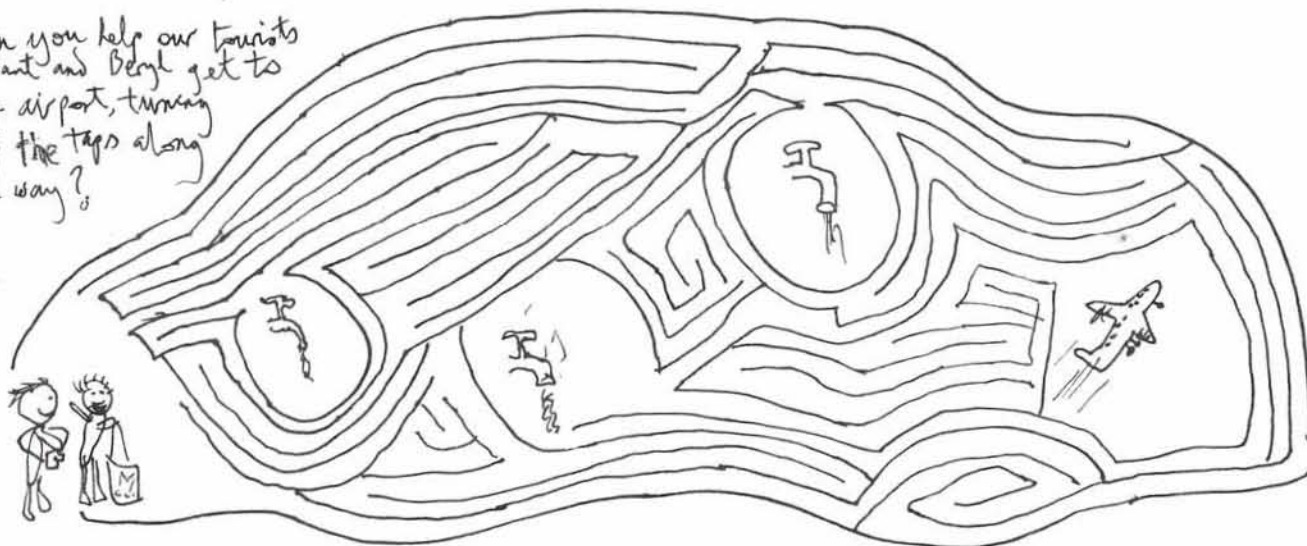
"The issue is massive and global," says Tricia Barnett of Tourism Concern in Britain. "Tourists in Africa will be having a shower and then will see a local woman with a pot of water on her head, and they are not making the connection. Sometimes you'll see a village with a single tap when each hotel has taps and showers in every room."

Village wells in Goa are running dry and rivers are being polluted by effluent from hotels. In the Caribbean hundreds of thousands of people go without piped water during the tourist season as water supplies are diverted to resorts. In Spain ancient springs and underground aquifers are drying up. Five of the seven springs on Ibiza have been so overtaxed that seawater has seeped in, ruining the water.

The problem is that tourists demand so much water. According to the World Wide Fund for Nature a tourist in Spain uses 880 litres a day compared with 250 for a local. A golf course in a dry country can consume as much as a town of 10,000 people. A United Nations study has estimated that 100 tourists in a poor country use as much water in two months as it would take to grow food to feed 100 villagers for 15 years. These figures are breathtaking, yet they illustrate dramatically how severe the impact of tourism can be.

It is not hard to imagine that in the near future fresh water will be seen as a precious commodity. In our culture water is probably the most undervalued resource. We treat it so wastefully when we're at home and it seems that when we travel we take our standards with us. Tourism is the world's fastest growing industry. We would do well to spare a thought for the countries, cultures and environments that suffer the consequences of our enormous appetite for mobility and luxury.

Can you help our tourists
Grant and Bergh get to
the airport, turning
off the taps along
the way?



TAKE A LOOK AT THE ARRAY OF STOCK IN THE ENVIRONMENT CENTRE SHOP. YOU'LL BE DELIGHTED AT THE VARIETY OF GOODS AVAILABLE – SOAPS, CANDLES, JEWELLERY, CLOTHING, RAINFOREST TREES, BUSH TUCKER, HONEY, INCENSE, TOYS, STATIONERY – AND THE BEST SELECTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL BOOKS AVAILABLE IN THE SHIRE.

CALDERA ENVIRONMENT CENTRE – 10 COMMERCIAL ROAD, MUR'BAH

CONDONG SUGAR MILL GREEN WASTE POWER GENERATION

The Federal Government has undertaken to produce 2% of grid power by environmentally friendly processes. This would include solar, wind, tidal and hydro- power etc. although this latter method has many negative ecological effects. Although this objective is exceedingly modest the economics of 'rationalism' makes it difficult to achieve. Thus the bureaucrats are scratching around for any source of electricity that can be claimed as 'green'. The concept of dubbed cogeneration has been identified as a process that they feel can be fitted into the definition. This is the burning of cane waste (bagasse), camphor laurel clearings and forest waste to fire sugar-mill-based generating plants. The power produced is to be utilised by the mill during the crushing season and supplied to the grid at other times. On the North Coast a generator has been approved for the Condong Mill, a DA is under consideration for a Broadwater installation and there are plans for another at the Maclean mill. The Condong plant is scheduled to be commissioned by July 2003.

Rationale

Although the plants will produce greenhouse gases from combustion, it is argued that by burning in controlled conditions less gases will be produced than if the fuel was left to biodegrade. In addition there is the offset of the power produced, which would otherwise have to come from coal-burning power stations. The net result is claimed as a saving of some 180,000 tonnes of CO₂ from each plant. It is also claimed that there will be an improvement in local air quality, it will create jobs and enhance the viability of the sugar industry.

General Impacts of Cogeneration

The project did not rate the compilation of a full EIS, and the REF (Review of Environmental Factors) is non-specific and general in its assessment of many of the impacts of the development. The very fact that an EIS was avoided by a very doubtful interpretation of the Environment Planning and Assessment Act would indicate that close scrutiny of the development was not welcome.

CO₂ Production – The savings claimed are highly suspect, it is unclear if the gas currently produced has been deducted in the calculation and the fact that the release of gas by biodegradation would be on a much greater timescale and greatly reduced if the wood component is not utilised, is not considered. Other factors producing greenhouse gases such as the greatly increased truck movements are not included in the calculation.

Truck Movements – It is claimed that 4000 movements to the stockpile and 4000 from the pile to the plant would be required per year, this is an extremely conservative figure in light of the fact that at least 30,000 movements would be needed just to establish the stockpile. Also with the generator working all year and the trucks coming increasing distances as the forest fuel becomes scarcer, it is clear that the impact on the village and routes to it are not only grossly understated but will increase with time. An idea of the value of the official figures is illustrated by the calculation for the Broadwater plant; there the estimate is an increase of truck movements of 185,000 by 2008.

The Fuel Stockpile – The figure supplied for the pile is 200,000 tonnes of bagasse and 200,000 tonnes of wood, these figures fly in the face of the Broadwater totals of more than double this for a plant of the same output. Even using the official figures the pile will take up 64,000 square metres (6.4 Ha) on the southern side of the present highway, this area is scheduled to increase by an unspecified figure. The location of the pile will generate 24-hour truck movements across the highway.

Health Effects of Stockpile – Bagasse produces a dust, which can cause a potentially serious lung condition (bagassosis) and is the trigger for other allergic and respiratory pathology, its effects are exacerbated when the material becomes mouldy, as it will in the stockpile. The developer claims that the piles, not in use, will be covered but has abandoned this measure in the plans for Broadwater as "too labour intensive". We have no figures for Condong, but at Broadwater it is calculated that the village will receive 2750 Kg of

airborne dust each year and this is using a conveyor feed system, not the more disruptive truck transport.

Environmental Effects – The general impact of a 24 hour operation over the entire year involving diesel powered trucks, plant noise, disease-causing dust, movement disruption and visual pollution will, of itself, cause a significant degradation of the health and social amenity of the Condong village. In addition the use storage and treatment of chemicals required for the expanded operation have not been satisfactorily covered in the REF, a big question remains over the additional load on the river (the discharge licence for Broadwater is being increased from 1 cubic metre/sec with strict chemical load restrictions to 4 cubic metres/sec with no chemical load restrictions). The thermal/chemical pollution from the cooling water has been dismissed as inconsequential despite no impact studies having been completed. The additional leachate from the stockpile goes to river via a sump and solids interceptor but there is no study to show what will get through these rudimentary measures. It is clear that the developer has chosen to 'gloss over' these impacts.

Camphor Laurel as a Fuel – It is difficult not to conclude that this source of fuel has been included as a PR ploy. The practicalities of its harvesting have not been considered and the extent and availability of the 'resource' have never been quantified. Unrestricted clearing of the species without a careful regeneration plan will cause massive weed growth and erosion. To implement such a plan would make its use as a fuel source uneconomical.

Forest 'Waste' as a Fuel – One of the great lies of the forest industry and its bureaucratic and governmental allies has been that woodchips come from forest 'waste'. In many areas 90% of timber harvested is converted into woodchips and the popular conception of waste (the branches left after the cutting) are left on the forest floor. There is no reason to believe that a similar deception will not be employed in this instance. The implications

are further degradation of our already overexploited forests. In fact, for the majority of each year timber will become the major source of fuel for the power generation, and once committed, the demand will become the imperative for ongoing forest destruction into an unlimited future.

Economic Factors -- Even accepting the doubtful figures for greenhouse gas savings and ascribing them a monetary value (not a conventional economic practice) the overall cost benefits of these plants must be viewed with extreme scepticism. All the fuel types are low density with high water content, which means low efficiency combustion and expensive power. The lowest cost fuel, bagasse, will comprise far less than half the demand and the other sources will incur high harvesting and transportation costs and the 'environmental costs' of this would have to be deducted from the greenhouse gas calculation. The deliberately (?) vague nature of all the parameters of the project makes it impossible to quantify the economics in any way but the general description would indicate that this is going to be financial mess subsidised by the taxpayer.

Conclusion

On balance it would seem that the Condong and other sugar mill power plants are a principally a political device to bolster the token commitment to alternative energy and greenhouse gas reduction. That it fails on both counts has obviously not worried its proponents who have the resources to win the PR war. It also fails the basic criteria that, all claims aside, it still produces greenhouse gases. Other technology does not and the savings in environmental costs more than compensates the claimed difference in efficiency. The environmental and social costs to the community and the ecology have been cynically downplayed and the economics have been neglected. It is perhaps unlikely that these plants will ever be built in the current economic climate, but the venal stupidity of the vested interests involved means that they will need to be vigorously resisted.

T. Tabart

OUR RAREST BIG ANIMAL

The northern hairy-nosed wombat has the distinction of being Australia's most endangered marsupial, and one of the rarest mammals in the world. There are less than 100 left, all of them confined to a 300 hectare site, Epping Forest National Park in Central Queensland. Surrounded by farmland in a state with a rampant land-clearing rate, the animal is virtually under siege.

A century ago, northern hairy-nosed wombats were found as far south as Victoria. Identified by fossil remains, bones and skins over the years, it was not till 1983 that the animal was recognized as its own species. It is very reclusive and nocturnal, and recent attempts to keep animals in captivity have failed. No attempt at a breeding program has worked. The entire world population of the wombat, restricted to Epping Forest, is threatened by feral animals and dingos. Last year alone dingos wiped out 10% of the population. It is estimated that of the 100 individuals left, only about 30 are female. This uneven sex ratio may be a factor further threatening the survival of the species.

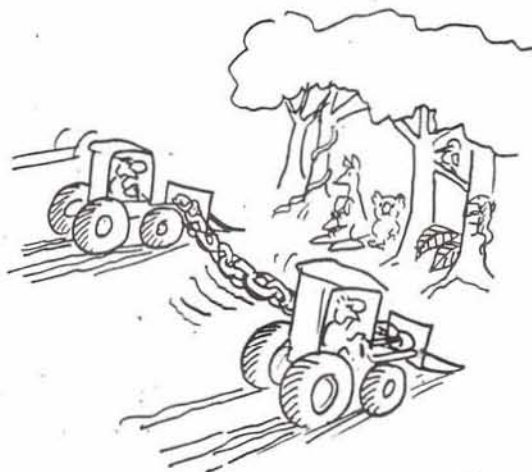
Koalas, pandas and others have a cuddly appeal which, for all the public interest they arouse, may still not save them from decline. The northern hairy-nosed wombat, like our own flying foxes, has not such a high profile. In a state that clears up to 450,000 hectares of scrub and forest each year – that's an area over 60 kilometres squared – their status is critical. A single 300 hectare refuge in the entire continent is a poor reflection of our national attitude and land management.

A.M.P. REVIEWING ITS LAND-CLEARING AGENDA

Australia, a country that has been devastated by land clearing and inappropriate farming practices over the past 200 years, is still in the grip of a land-clearing orgy. The Australian Conservation Foundation has revealed that over 560,000 hectares has been cleared across Australia each year over the past decade, most of it in Queensland. In vast areas of Central Queensland farmers have been engaging in panic clearing, fearing that legislative action could impose restrictions. Peter Beattie's government has been reluctant to act to curb this destruction.

Now, insurance giant A.M.P. has been identified as a major perpetrator of rampant land-clearing in Queensland. The Stanbroke Pastoral Company, a subsidiary of AMP, held permits to clear 104,000 hectares of woodland last year, about 8000 of it virgin bush. In response to a public outcry, AMP has announced a moratorium on removal of virgin bush, and will conduct biodiversity and salinity surveys across its 12,600,000 hectare landholding.

The company has also launched an ethical investment fund, permitting investors the option of putting money into projects that are not environmentally detrimental. The company released a statement that "AMP believes that land clearing is an important issue for Australia in terms of its impact on biodiversity, salinity, land degradation, climate change and food production." Permits to clear land will not be acted upon until an environmental audit is conducted. The A.C.F. cautiously welcomed the move. Clearing land for agriculture is the single greatest threat to the nation's ecosystems and habitat. At least now a major offender is rethinking its attitude and hopefully will rein in some of its excesses.



UNCHAIN AUSTRALIA

Save Wollumbin Forest Campaign

The Save Wollumbin Forest Campaign is still working hard focusing on public awareness and lobbying State and Federal Governments. We would like to thank our community for it's on-going support. We have been extremely successful, as shown by our recent visit from Shadow Environment Minister Nick Bolkus who made a fly in visit to meet with the Save Wollumbin campaign and members of our community; a great day was had by all with Nick making strong commitments to the preservation of our mountain - *Let's wait and see!*

Environment Days 2001

We started off with the Gold Coast Environment Day on Sunday 3 July. It was a very successful day. We served up hundreds of cups of Chai and sold heaps of stickers.

The following week we met 2 commitments with The Tweed Environment Day in Murwillumbah, thankyou to Kim, Sunni and Stella. David and Willow took the other half of the campaign to the Sunshine Coasts Environment day in Cotton Tree, the sun shone on all days which proved very prosperous in our endeavour of public awareness.



Jenny McAllister with Nick Bolkus standing on Brummies lookout, amazed at this high conservation value forest.

Beazley set to visit Murwillumbah

Wollumbin Forest campaign is hoping to get a meeting with Mr Beazley on Friday 20 July, as he will be visiting the Tweed. Although Ms McAllister's office has made it clear that he does not have the time to listen to local issues regarding the destruction of the Tweed.

He is set to launch a media campaign at the Murwillumbah Telstra depot in the early arvo, stay tuned for more info as our campaign is considering a public rally.

Your Forest - Your future

Save Wollumbin forest Campaign aims to protect the:

- 40 threatened and endangered fauna species
- 100 threatened and endangered Flora species
- Our Water supply
- Aboriginal and cultural heritage

And to create

Tourism, Education, Employment and Recreation for the Tweed

We need your HELP!

Currently the Save Wollumbin Forest Campaign is seeking a new office/education centre.

We are also seeking donations of office equipment (computer)etc

But most of all we need you to

- Write letters to the editor and to State and Federal Politicians
- Help fund our campaign through donations
- Cut down your own need for timber products RECYCLE!
- Contact us for further information

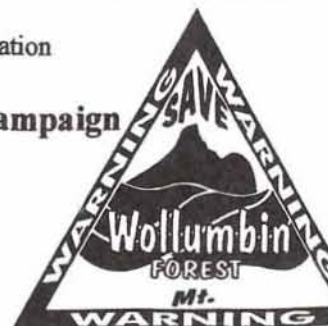
Save Wollumbin Forest Campaign

PO Box 308

UKI NSW 2484

(02) 6679 5522

email: savewollumbin@mailcity.com



Thanking You!

A big tanks to Chris Degenhardt for his kind donation to our raffle. Chris donated yet another work of art, which will be raffled off in the next few weeks.

Thanks also to Dr Liz Elliot for donating part proceeds of the sale of her great book "Energy" to the Wollumbin Forest Campaign.

A special thanks to the Community for its ongoing kind support, without their effort our campaign could not continue.

Local Government Inspectors Report into Tweed Council Planning

The NSW Minister for Local Government, Harry Woods, has ordered an investigation into Tweed Council. The investigation is to be undertaken by inspectors of the Department of Local Government. It centres on rezoning and development applications for two parcels of land in the South Kingscliff area known as Kings Forest and Seaside City.

Kings Forest – the background

Kings Forest is the site of a proposed township of 10 to 20 thousand people. It is owned by Narui, a Japanese logging company. None of the site is developed for urban purposes at present. When the land was first zoned for urban purposes in the mid 1980s, only a relatively small part of the native vegetation on the site was zoned for environmental protection. Not long before the last election, council decided that all significant areas of native vegetation should be zoned for environmental protection. The tradeoff offered to the owner to reduce any loss of yield was to rezone cleared rural and rural residential land owned by Narui for intensive urban purposes.

The Local Environment Plan (LEP) and Local Environment Study (LES) for the rezoning were on public exhibition earlier this year. The Caldera Environment Centre made a submission generally in support of the proposed rezoning.

A development application (DA) has also been lodged by the applicant to subdivide a significant part of the site down to house lot size. The DA proposes the clearing of proposed environmental protection zone and so pre-empt the outcome of the exhibited LEP.

Apart from the opposition to the draft LEP expressed indirectly in the DA, Narui have also more directly opposed significant parts of the draft LEP in submissions made during and subsequent to the exhibition period. They have had the support of some councillors, in particular Bob Brinsmead, who owns land adjacent. Rather than proceeding to the debate about where the lines should be (re)drawn, Cr. Brinsmead chose to make the accusation that senior planners of Tweed Council had acted improperly in preparing the publicly exhibited LES and LEP. It was these accusations that finally triggered the decision of the NSW government to mount the investigation.

Seaside City – the background.

Seaside City is a 1920s paper subdivision that has never been constructed. Located on the south Kingscliff peninsula immediately north of Casuarina Beach, it consists of 204 house lots and a larger residual lot along Cudgen Creek. Most of the notional house lots are owned by the same group of companies that has owned most of the peninsula since the late 1960s (Lenen / Richtech).

Soon after the last election Tweed Council agreed to consider an application by Richtech to have the land zoned from exclusively tourism to residential purposes. The state government planning authority (Department of Urban Affairs and Planning or DUAP) ruled that the LEP should be accompanied by an LES given the significance of the planning issues.

Many of the planning issues that need to be considered arise from the fact that the land has long been cut up into many lots but no infrastructure such as roads, sewer or public parks was ever provided. This was not a great problem while only three of the lots had houses built on them and the expectation was that consolidation of the remaining lots would occur as part of approvals for tourism development.

Other issues include:

- How to deal with the row of house lots closest to the beach that are located more or less in the coastal erosion zone under the zoning scheme in place since the mid 1980s – especially in view of the fact that the worst affected are almost entirely located in the erosion zone.
- The management of the crown reserve between the subdivision and the beach.
- The management of the residual lot between the subdivision and Cudgen Creek.
- Whether this land should continue to be reserved for sustainable income-generating purposes (tourism) or whether government should allow it to be used for yet more housing.

Controversy arose when a majority of councillors decided not to engage the cheapest consultant bid for the LES.

The Seaside City site is also affected by a DA that was lodged following the council election. It sought approval for the re-alignment of the part of the existing coast road through the site and

its reconstruction within one of the unformed road reserves in the paper subdivision. This DA became controversial when, against the advice of senior planning staff, a majority of councillors rushed the approval through. Staff advised that it was not possible to consider all relevant environmental matters at that stage because the applicant had failed to provide adequate information in a timely manner.

The investigation – Seaside City

When a council undertakes a rezoning (an LEP) at the request of a landowner, the landowner must pay for the LES if one is required. The brief for the LES is prepared by government and if outside consultants are used for any part of the job, they are chosen by and get their orders from council.

Given this is how the process is supposed to work, the local government inspectors will presumably be impressed by the following facts:

- The bid made by the consultants chosen for the LES by the national party councillors and their mates ("the successful consultants") was halved following an amendment to the brief.
- The other bidders made little change to their price following the amendment to the brief.
- The original bids were inadvertently disclosed to representatives of Richtech at a meeting with DUAP prior to the closing of the second round of tenders.
- The final bid made by the successful consultants was very nearly the same as the second lowest original bid.
- The final bid made by the successful consultants was \$30000 more expensive than the lowest final bid.
- The successful consultants have done much work for Lenen / Richtech in the past.
- Richtech have not complained that they are now expected to pay \$80,000 for the LES rather than \$50,000.
- Councillor Brinsmead attempted to give councillors the impression that the lowest bidding company was not up to the job, was virtually unknown in the town planning business and was not known to officers of DUAP with whom Cr Brinsmead met.

Tweed Council under investigation continued... ..

- The lowest bidder is a multinational company that has been in business for many years with local offices in Brisbane and Port Macquarie.
- The head of the Port Macquarie office of the lowest bidding company was for a number of years the chief town planner of Hastings Council and so is well known to DUAP.

The inspectors will presumably also be interested in the haste with which council approved the DA for the road against the advice of senior planning staff.

The investigation – Kings Forest

Cr Brinsmead's accusations are basically that:

- An early draft of the LEP that was prepared by hired consultants (and that was more to the liking of Narui) was withheld by planning staff from all councillors except for Cr James.
- The planning staff exceeded their powers in directing the consultants to amend the early draft of the LES and LEP.
- Some amendments to the LES requested by planning staff were so critical of the work done by consultants for Narui's DA that they were defamatory.
- The exhibited LES should be withdrawn to reduce the likelihood of Narui's consultants pursuing their threatened defamation actions.
- The planning staff behaved improperly in hiring a Koala expert to review submissions from Narui's consultant biologist because the consultant hired by council staff had allegedly expressed opposition to the development some years before.

The local government inspectors will presumably be impressed by the following facts:

- The allegedly suppressed version of the LES and LEP was the subject of a workshop to which all councillors were invited.
- Councillor Brinsmead chose not to attend the workshop.
- It is within the power of council to direct consultants to make changes to draft LESs and LEPs and is within the power of senior planning staff so long as they have delegation.
- The planners had delegation in this case.
- The allegedly defamatory parts of the LES merely observe that some of the studies undertaken by the developer's consultants for the DA were not entirely suitable for the purpose of the LES and LEP.
- Council planning staff could not be expected to know if the Koala expert they hired had ever expressed opposition to the development of the

Narui property, even if it was true that the expert expressed such an opinion.

- National Party councillors and their mates withdrew the exhibited LES and LEP following the institution of the inquiry but before any ruling has been made as to whether they were improperly prepared.

- The withdrawal of the exhibited LES and LEP will cause delays to the amendment of the zoning scheme and these delays will suit the developer.

The tables turned

When Cr. Brinsmead first made his accusations and called for an inquiry into the behaviour of planning staff, it is unlikely he thought the inquiry would be extended to include the behaviour of councillors.

It is also unlikely he expected it to be extended to his interference in the recruitment of consultants for the Seaside City LES and the hasty approval of the road through this site.

Judging by his more recent claims that the outcome of the inspectors report will be irrelevant because these matters will be settled in court, he appears to have realized he may have made a tactical blunder.

The question is – will Cr. Brinsmead or the residents of Tweed pay for his blunders?

Didn't quite sell...

ESD / £\$dX

ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

ESD is development which doesn't cost the earth.

Can you think of ways to reduce our ecological footprint?

Would you like your children and their children to enjoy our NATURAL ENVIRONMENT and share equally in our NATURAL CAPITAL?

Would you like to see our NATIVE ECOSYSTEMS continue to function indefinitely into the future?

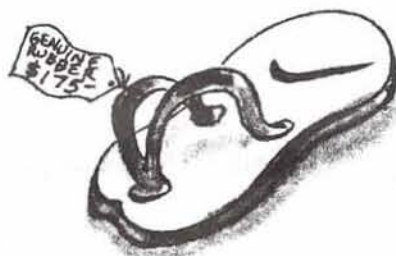
CONSERVE AND INCREASE NATURAL CAPITAL B4 \$\$\$CAPITAL!

REDUCE * REUSE * RECYCLE * REGENERATE * REPLANT

Which of these ideas are you interested in? How do we apply these strategies locally?

- +On-site disposal of domestic by-products: humanure
- +On-site collection of rainwater and disposal of grey water
- +Renewable energy sources and reduction of CO2
- +Conservation and regeneration of native vegetation
- +On-site/ local production of organic food, fuel and fibre
- +Reduction of motor vehicle use and greenhouse gases
- +Better town planning and more appropriate land-use
- +Less costly and more efficient buildings, with lower energy use
- +Conservation and enhancement of natural landscapes

Workshop/ bus trip to look at and talk about sustainable development coming up soon. Keep an eye out for date at Environment Centre.



NIKE THONGS



ROSS RIVER
CABERNET SAUVIGNON

POISONING THE REEF

As if global warming, oil spills, sedimentation and the crown of thorns starfish weren't enough, the Great Barrier Reef also has to contend with enormous chemical fallout from farming activities on the mainland. A collection of 20 scientific studies, published early this year by the Marine Pollution Bulletin, reveals that the World Heritage Great Barrier Reef is under threat on many fronts.

Of the 3,000 main areas of coral growth that make up the reef system, about 700 are within 20 kilometres of the coast. It is these which are most at risk from activities on the mainland. The pesticide deildrin was found in the flesh of crabs at every location sampled. Dugongs have concentrations of dioxins at levels never seen in marine mammals anywhere in the world. The herbicide diuron is in such high concentrations between Townsville and Cairns that photosynthesis in seagrass is inhibited. DDT and atrazine are also prevalent. Levels of mercury, cadmium and arsenic in the Hinchinbrook region and near Ayr have been linked to drainage from areas of intensive cropping.

Dr David Haynes, who co-edited the studies, says "An immediate minimisation of vegetation clearance and responsible use of pesticides and fertilisers are essential if water quality in the Great Barrier Reef is to be maintained and protected." He writes that the accumulation of organochlorine pesticides and PCBs has been implicated in reproductive and immunological abnormalities in birds and animals in the Northern Hemisphere.

Agriculture occurs on 80% of the mainland adjacent to the reef. Already a delicate and finely tuned environment, the Great Barrier Reef now faces the relentless run-off of fertilisers and chemicals. One of the world's prize natural wonders – and one of Australia's major tourist destinations – is in serious need of protection. The most urgent step, as Dr Haynes points out, is that "fundamental changes" in our land management practices need to be made.

POWER COMPANY VANDALISM IN THE SOUTHERN FORESTS

In early May the State-owned electricity supplier Transgrid cleared a 60 metre wide scar for 35 kilometres through three national parks. The work would normally involve pruning and lopping under power cables. Instead, the contractor employed by Transgrid completely obliterated all vegetation. The vandalism occurred in Brindabella, Namadgi and Kosciuszko national parks. Licences to do the clearing were never sought, Transgrid's own operational procedures were ignored, and notification to relevant authorities was ineffective.

Now four NSW and ACT government agencies are investigating. Transgrid has admitted in a draft report that its own environmental officers failed to supervise the operation and that "there was no consideration in the selection process of the competency of plant operators." Ironically, Transgrid officials had undergone

'environmental training' last year. Transgrid's report reveals that "it does not appear that the work quality was adequately assessed or directions given to change the nature of the work underway. There was no consultation with the NSW N.P.W.S. or ACT Environment with respect to the extent and method of work under their control."

The minister responsible, Mr Yeadon, said the failures detailed in the report amounted to a fiasco. The failure of other agencies to detect the damage earlier will also come under scrutiny. Tens of thousands of native animals are feared destroyed, and major soil erosion and siltation of waterways is inevitable. The Environment Protection Agency has demanded that Transgrid rehabilitate the areas, a task that will take decades. The National Parks Association wants guarantees that such an incident will never happen again, and says that Transgrid should contribute to the management of the three degraded parks.

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY CELEBRATIONS 2001

On Sunday June 10 the Tweed Valley celebrated World Environment Day. A superbly sunny winter day saw a very pleasing turnout for the daylong festivities in Knox Park. Brought together in conjunction with the regular Knox Park markets and the Caldera Kin folk club, the World Environment Day celebrations encompassed music, speaker's corner, children's activities, food and information stalls. This has been Murwillumbah's second year of actively participating in W.E.D., and it looks set to become a regular event. Tweed Shire Council, the Community Support Centre, the Environment Centre and Save Wollumbin Campaign, together with hard working volunteers, all contributed to the resounding success of the day.

STOTTS ISLAND TOURISM

As community concern grows regarding the impact on Murwillumbah of the highway bypass, several people have come up with ideas for the future. Brian Boyd, of Tweed Heads, proposes that Stotts Island be developed as a tourist destination. He envisages a retractable footbridge to the island, a wetland boardwalk, a canopy walk and office/kiosk.

"Stotts Island was left as a monument to how the Tweed once looked," he said. "It's a wilderness nearly in the middle of town and about five kilometres square. It's also flat, which makes it easily accessible to people in wheelchairs and an aging population."

Attractive as such a proposal may be, both for education and recreation, great care needs to be exercised. Opening up natural areas to tourism always brings with it the risk of degradation. In the case of Stotts Island, the Tweed's unique remnant of riverine rainforest, the impact of human traffic on a delicate environment needs to be very carefully considered.

Mr Boyd's accompanying proposal for the old highway to be turned eventually into a big avenue of bangalow palms is an immediately attractive idea.

MELALEUCA MAYHEM

Last December a camper at Myall Lakes was crushed by a falling paperbark. The incident has led to concern that because of the age of the paperbarks – up to 300 years old – the tragedy may well repeat itself. Consequently, the NPWS faces a dilemma, whether to relocate the camp grounds or to cut down trees to protect campers. Myall Lakes is internationally protected as a wetland, so removal of trees would entail Federal involvement.

NPWS closed 180 of its 550 campsites while assessing the situation. Regional manager Robert Quirk is reluctant to fell any trees. "There's such a desire to camp here," he said. "The whole game is ensuring a balance between people and conservation."

The age of the paperbarks, many found to be over 200 years old, and three recent consecutive wet years, are thought to be factors contributing to the weakening of the trees.

TIBET'S CELEBRATION IS AUSTRALIA'S SHAME

On Thursday a celebration took place: a celebration that an Australian Government official attended, commemorating the 50th anniversary of China's takeover of Tibet. The fact that Australia was represented at the reception sends a clear message about our attitude towards the appalling human rights violations that continue to be a part of so many Tibetans' lives. It is a message of support for the Chinese Government's actions in Tibet, and we should be ashamed.

- Nicole Gibson, May 24 (S.M.H. letters)

CALDERA ENVIRONMENT CENTRE

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM of the C.E.C. will be held on Tuesday 14th August 2001 at 5.30pm sharp at the usual meeting venue: upstairs at the Court House Hotel, Murwillumbah. All offices to be declared vacant. Please indicate your support by attending. It will not be a late night. To be followed by our regular monthly meeting.

A message from the Co-ordinator

Your past financial support for the Environment Centre is appreciated. It is important that it should continue, as the need for advocacy for the quality of the environment is as strong as ever.

If we join together as a group we have the voice and strength to achieve what we can only dream about as individuals. We are all affected directly or indirectly by the modification of the environment and the real costs of "development" – global warming; over-exploitation of the seas, forests and fresh water resources; loss of biodiversity; alienation of traditional cultures and the steady narrowing of options for future natural resource management.

An account of the efforts of the C.E.C. will be given at the AGM on Tuesday 14th August. To simplify our membership records, annual subscriptions from now on will run for the 12 months from 1st July. Please show your support by renewing now.

Front cover: JAN GOLDING

The editor and committee of the Caldera Environment Centre do not necessarily agree with opinions and comments expressed in TREE.

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL ENVIRONMENT CENTRE – Act Locally

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