

THE BUSHLAND BULLETIN[©]

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MORE MAYHEM AT MONASH

by Patricia Bell

As far back as 1992, when Colin Gibson and Robert Miller were featured in the Torch complaining about the dumping of domestic waste around Yeramba Lagoon, the Society has been reporting on rubbish dumping by residents and contractors in our bushland reserves. Monash Reserve, over the years the Society has been involved with it, has had more than its share of this bad and anti-social behaviour, as well as inappropriate action by Council itself.

In 1998 Council employees cut out many years of naturally regenerating Casuarinas on the river-flat. Council admitted its mistake but contrived all sorts of retrospective reasons why this vandalism took place, such as “removing the trees at Monash has made it easier to get at the weeds” and “The Casuarina woodland is not an endangered ecological community and there

were no threatened species at this location”.

Again, in 2002 the reserve was attacked. The small area of very good bushland between the car park and Henry Lawson Drive was partially cleared. Shrubs such as Acacia, Pomaderris and Daviesia were cut off at ground level and discarded in piles for collection. All these shrubs were in bud and would have been in flower very soon. Through Cr. Richard McLoughlin a written reply was received from Mr. Gerry Beasley, then Group Manager, Ecologically Sustainable Development, who advised that the work was carried out by an unsupervised maintenance crew, who believed the undergrowth looked untidy and that it was a traffic hazard for vehicles entering and leaving the park.

Since then dumping at Monash has been like an epidemic. I’ve

lost count of the number of times I have phoned City Fix about rubbish littering the car park and, increasingly over the last four or five years the dumping of truckloads of bricks and soil, wood chips, palm trunks and fronds (see Bulletin No. 62).

After years of inaction Council has decided to close the boom gates to the car park between sunset and sunrise (see C-B Express 22-11-2011). But I am still finding the gates open when I go past in the evening and early morning. Cars are still parking in there all night and the dumpers coming and going freely. Just in the past month another truckload of soil and one of wood chips was dumped. Council no sooner removed these at which point another load of wood chips appeared. It’s like a factory processing line.

Colin has made suggestions to

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Bankstown Bushland Society Submission Against the Proposed Development at "Heathcote Ridge"

by Christopher Brogan

This submission on behalf of the Bankstown Bushland Society refers to the report "Heathcote Ridge, West Menai State Significant Site Ecological Assessment" prepared for the proponent the Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council (GLALC) by Cumberland Ecology (December 2011). This report has identified five Threatened Species Conservation Act (TSC Act 1995) listed Endangered Ecological Communities that would be significantly damaged by this development including two also listed under the Commonwealth Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999). These communities are Coastal Upland Swamp, Shale Sandstone Transition Forest, Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest, Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplain and Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest.

This report also states that a number of threatened flora species were either identified as present within the development site or have been recorded locally and have the potential to occur within the development site. These species are *Acacia bynoeana* (Bynoes wattle), *Acacia pubescens* (Downy wattle), *Callistemon linearifolius*, *Eucalyptus camfieldii* (Camfield's stringybark), *Hibbertia* sp. 'Menai', *Leucopogon exolasius* (Woronora beard heath), *Melaleuca deanei* (Dean's paperbark), *Persoonia hirsuta* (Hairy geebung) and *Pterostylis saxicola* (Sydney plains greenhood orchid).

Bankstown Bushland Society members who are familiar with this site note the presence of several rare species the significance of which has not been addressed in the GLALC commissioned report, among them *Prostanthera saxicola*, *Allocasuarina diminuta* ssp. *mimica*, *Hibbertia puberula* and *Eucalyptus squamosa*. Populations of these will all be destroyed by the proposed development.

Large areas of the heathland in this area are very significant having a unique assemblage of flora. Many areas have *Eucalyptus squamosa* as the dominant or co-dominant species. The high abundance of *Eucalyptus squamosa* in itself is unique from our observations. The abundance of this species is also documented by Benson & McDougall 1998, Cunninghamia Vol. 5(4) as Typical local abundance: Rare to occasional. They describe the conservation status as "unknown". This contradicts the proponent's claim that the heathland is well represented outside the subject area, when clearly it is not.

The developer proposes clearing the majority of the ridge top vegetation where these and other rare plants occur. In the case of *Acacia bynoeana* the report clearly states that this species will become locally extinct if attempts to transplant it are unsuccessful. While areas such as the Mill Creek Valley are proposed to be set aside as a conservation zone the report concludes that "the proposed project has potential to have a

significant impact on the biodiversity values of the project area". If the development goes ahead it is likely that the valleys and creek lines proposed to be reserved as a conservation zone will become smothered in weeds such as Privet, further degrading their ecological values.

In addition to the negative impacts on flora and native plant communities the report notes that six threatened animal species were recorded as present within the proposed development site and a number of locally recorded threatened species including the Koala have the potential to occur within the development site.

The report also acknowledges the significance of the site as a wildlife corridor connecting important natural areas including the Georges River National Park, Holsworthy Military Area, the Royal National Park, Heathcote National Park, Dharawal State Conservation Area and Nattai National Park. We agree with the proponent that the gully of Mill Creek is worthy of inclusion in a conservation reserve, but add that the threatened ridgetop vegetation along Heathcote Road is even more so.

The Bankstown Bushland Society objects to this proposal on the grounds that it will destroy large areas of bushland which represent vital habitat for both rare plants and threatened fauna and we recommend that these lands be protected and incorporated into the adjacent Georges River National Park.

(Continued from page 1)

Council regarding possible modifications to the car park that would make it more difficult for dumpers to access the site. Council's response to date has been lukewarm and it would appear its only solution is to keep picking up after the dumpers and slugging ratepayers for the cost. It's bad enough when the car park itself is dumped on, but when the dumping spills onto the edges of the bushland our hands-on work, in the space of a few seconds, is set back by years.

Council's fund for rubbish removal does not extend to cover the cost of remediation of the damage done to the bushland fringe, even when that damage

results more from the "cleaning up" process than from the dumping itself. This damage includes removal of a particular protective barrier (a log on concrete shoulder) to make it easier for the clean up vehicles to get at the dumps. This is a retrograde step that only accommodates the dumpers, making it easier for them in future to despoil not only the car park but the bushland perimeter as well.

Council can't be happy with the situation at Monash, Sometimes we wonder if vulnerable bushland remnants such as Monash matter much to Council.

We will keep trying to get a

better deal for the bushland at Monash. We live in hope, but we may have to wait for a time when Council places a greater significance on the protection of vulnerable bushland remnants such as this.

EAST HILLS Canterbury-Bankstown Express
22-11-2011

Reprieve for rubbished reserve

COUNCIL TO CLOSE BOOMGATES EVERY NIGHT

THE PROBLEM
ILLEGAL dumping continues at Monash Reserve, in East Hills, and members of Bankstown Bushland Society are determined to do something about it.

Members monitor the conditions of Bankstown's bush reserve to make sure they stay in good condition.

President Susan Roberts said Monash Reserve was smaller and not as well-known as the other bush spots in Bankstown, and so it was less well-protected and more vulnerable to dumpers.

"The dumping there is just horrendous," Ms Roberts said.

"And it costs a lot of money in terms of cleaning it up."

Ms Roberts said the problem was caused by the boom gate at the reserve entrance not being regularly closed at night.

Society secretary Colin

THE SOLUTION
Members of the society have requested an on-site meeting with Bankstown Council staff to discuss the litter problems at the reserve.

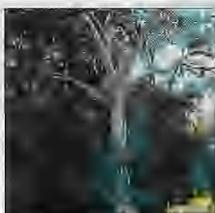
Mr Gibson also contacted Councillor Ian Stromborg regarding the matter.

Cr Stromborg said after discussing the matter in the council, it was decided to ensure the boom gate at the entrance of Monash Reserve would be consistently opened at sunrise and closed at sunset.

"We took the concerns of the society on board and decided to do something about it," he said.

"The council cleans up the illegal dumping, but it is a huge cost.

"Bankstown Bushland Society members do a very good job in these areas and Bankstown is lucky to have them."



The trees in Monash Reserve give good cover to dumpers.



Colin Gibson wants Monash Reserve to be closed at night to stop people dumping rubbish.

NOTES ON WEST MENAI VEGETATION WITH REFERENCE TO THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT "HEATHCOTE RIDGE"

by *Robert Miller*

Georges River Biodiversity:

The vegetation within the project area at West Menai "Heathcote Ridge" forms a mosaic of heath, woodland, forest and wetland that reflects topography, geology and drainage. It is comprised of a diverse range of indigenous plant species and distinct ecological assemblages, especially those found on the plateau tops. The ridge tops along Heathcote Road are part of the Woronora Plateau, which in this locale is largely comprised of shale-enriched sandstone deposits forming the Lucas Heights Soil Landscape. Much of the vegetation on this soil landscape in the lower Georges River has been cleared. The relatively large area of native vegetation within the development area is therefore significant in the local, regional, state and national contexts.

Cumberland Ecology (the developer's flora consultant) records over 400 species for the area. This diversity alone is significant and highlights the conservation significance of the area. However, the true level of species richness is likely to be much more, as shown by surveys of localities in the Yeramba Lagoon - Blackwall area in nearby Bankstown where over 500 species have been found in an area of no more than 50 ha. (compared to West Menai's 850 ha.).

The vegetation present in the proposed development area

reflects the often subtle change in geology along the ridgeline and plateau and the diversity of habitats created by the incised valleys. Many species are cryptic and may retreat to the soil seed bank after a number of years and/or have restricted habitat preferences, therefore these species require survey effort to be undertaken within the flowering season, at varying stages of recovery from disturbances such as fire, recovery from drought or extensive rain periods and be undertaken by persons with extensive knowledge of habitat preferences and ecology of those species.

Analyses of the Cumberland Ecology report reveals little survey effort has occurred within many areas, especially in those habitats which will be cleared for development along Heathcote Road and elsewhere. The results of their surveys indicate lack of survey effort in shale-influenced locales, as a large majority of those species not found by Cumberland Ecology are species of the shale/sandstone ecotone (characteristic of the Lucas Heights Soil Landscape). The inadequacy of the ecological survey is further highlighted by the large number of species (135 in total) recorded by others e.g. Mills, NPA, Sutherland Council etc (sourced from various lists) not recorded by Cumberland Ecology. This represents approximately 34% of species known to occur in the area that

were not noted by Cumberland Ecology.

The fact that so many species have been missed is not surprising when the distribution of quadrat plots is analysed. Few quadrat plots were located on the shale influenced plateau top, or within seepage/wet heath environs. This is especially so in the localities proposed for maximum development such as along Heathcote Road.

Endangered Ecological Communities and Threatened Species:

The lack of survey ground truthing is likely to have underestimated the extent and distribution of EEC's especially Shale/Sandstone Transition Forest. This community generally occurs on soils derived from a shallow shale or clay material overlying sandstone, or where shale-derived materials have washed down over sandstone-derived substrate close to the boundary between the Wianamatta Shale and the Hawkesbury Sandstone. It occurs on plateau and hillsides and at the margins of shale capping over sandstone. The proponent has down played the significance of this vegetation. For instance, *Eucalyptus squamosa* is the dominant or co-dominant species in much of the ridgetop heathland. The high abundance of *Eucalyptus squamosa* in itself is unique from my observations.

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The abundance of this species (Scaly Bark) is documented by Benson & McDougall 1998 *Cunninghamia* Vol. 5(4) as "Typical local abundance: Rare to occasional". They describe the conservation status as "unknown". The heathland at this locale (West Menai) is therefore critical habitat for the *Eucalyptus squamosa* due to the high population density.

The proponent's consultants dismiss the heath as being well conserved in other areas e.g. Sydney catchment lands & Dharawal etc. They infer that the heath is the same as in those areas (heath often dominated by mallee *Corymbia gummifera* etc.). This premise is erroneous, neither David Keith's botanical survey work for Dharawal State Conservation Area or my extensive surveys of that area record significant *Eucalyptus squamosa*, nor rare species such as *Allocasuarina diminuta* ssp. *mimica* or *Prostanthera saxicola* which are present at West Menai.

Rare or threatened species missed or dismissed as irrelevant at West Menai by the proponent's consultants include *Acacia bynoeana*, *Darwinia diminuta*, *Darwinia camptostylis*, *Hibbertia puberula*, *Logania pusilla*, *Philothea buxifolia* subsp. *obovata* and *Prostanthera saxicola*.

Hibbertia puberula is listed as Endangered under the TSC Act, but Cumberland Ecology dismisses its presence at West Menai as irrelevant. However, the incidence of this species east of Heathcote Road is the largest population known in the Sydney area. West Menai must be

regarded as critical habitat for the species in the Sydney Basin. *Prostanthera saxicola* is a local endemic occurring more extensively in the subject area than is indicated in the consultant's report.

Inadequacy of Compensatory Measures:

Cumberland Ecology states "... the project area occurs in proximity to a substantial reserve system including Georges River National Park, Heathcote National Park and Royal National Park, which provide long-term security for EECs and threatened species. As such, the need for a substantial land-based offset is reduced. The proposed project includes provisions for both land-based offsets and indirect offsets." However, a range of significant species not adequately conserved in the reserve system will be destroyed if the proposed development proceeds.

The consultant also states "the project would have an impact on the biodiversity values within the project area. The proposed Heathcote Ridge development will remove areas of heath, woodland and forest that form habitat for a range of native flora and fauna species. A total of 337.10ha of native vegetation and associated habitat will be removed from the development footprint ... Offsets will complement other government programs ... The Heathcote Ridge Conservation Area [the gully of Mill Creek] will assist in providing permanent connectivity between Georges River National Park and vegetation to the south of the project area which connects to

Heathcote National Park and the system of National Parks to the south."

Clearance of 337.10ha of habitat will permanently destroy connectivity values along the Georges River corridor. Biodiversity values will decrease in the short and long term as a result of the proposed development if it were to proceed. The proposed development will cause fragmentation of habitat across the locale and significantly increase the edge to area ratio.

Offsets must be underpinned by sound ecological principles. Cumberland Ecology states "Detailed surveys have been undertaken within the HRCA and the biodiversity characteristics are known... A parcel of land in Maroota owned by Deerubbin Local Aboriginal Land Council (DLALC) (awarded under ALRA83) was investigated as a potential option for inclusion within the additional voluntary contribution land. Although DLALC land within the Maroota area has been identified within this process, additional parcels of land may also be considered as an alternative to this land."

The proposed compensatory habitat as identified by Cumberland Ecology is 60km away and in no way compensates for the loss of high value Georges River bushland. The habitat values (species assemblages) are markedly dissimilar. Cumberland Ecology states "The considerations for reducing the ecological impacts follow the avoid, mitigate and compensate hierarchy of principles." Clearing of such

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large-scale areas of habitat is hardly avoidance. Substantial sections of the Maroota habitats as acknowledged by Cumberland Ecology are of *Eucalyptus piperita* - *Syncarpia glomulifera* forest, as well as woodland dominated by *Eucalyptus haemastoma* and *Eucalyptus punctata*. None of these vegetation types occur within the proposed development area at West Menai and are therefore unsuitable as compensatory habitat.

Conclusion:

The proposed development will have profound impacts on the intrinsic values of the Georges River, large areas of high value conservation habitat will be destroyed if the development proceeds. This will lead to the continuing decline of species diversity across the Sydney Basin, and significantly impact the water quality entering the Georges River. Most of the bushland areas the proponent claims will be protected are located on land that is not suitable for development (the slopes and gullies) and is not representative of the ridge top habitat it intends to destroy.

As stated in the Cumberland Ecology report the ridgetop habitats will be devastated are:

- * 211.56 ha. of the identified *Angophora hispida* - *Eucalyptus haemastoma* Heath/Woodland to be cleared out of a total of

240.33ha., i.e. **88.03% of the habitat.**

- * 3.94 ha. Of *Banksia ericifolia* Damp Heath to be cleared out of a total of 10.92 ha., i.e. **36.08% of the habitat.**

- * 1.34 ha. of the identified *Leptospermum polygalifolium* Wet Heath to be cleared out of a total of 1.39ha., i.e. **96.40% of habitat.**

- * 0.94 ha. *Lepidosperma neesii* - *Shoenus brevifolius* Wet Heath to be cleared out of a total of 0.97 ha., i.e. **96.91% of habitat.**

The above habitats are not compensated for within the proposed conservation areas. The site endemic *Prostanthera saxicola* R. Br s. str. is facing an extremely high risk of extinction in New South Wales in the immediate future if the proposed urban expansion in the West Menai area proceeds. Urban development will locate houses, shops, factories, roads, etc. on the site. The proposal threatens the survival of the species directly by clearing of habitat, trampling, compaction, drainage alteration and weed invasion, and indirectly by nutrification of ground.

Prostanthera saxicola R. Br. s. str. is threatened by environmental and demographic stochasticity due to its restricted distribution and small population size. As a result of the aforementioned threats, *Prostanthera saxicola* R. Br. s. str. is at risk of further decline in abundance, geographic distribution and habitat quality. Similarly, a wide array of other

taxa will be significantly impacted by this proposal. Without extensive tracts of interconnected habitat the flora and fauna of the Georges River catchment will continue to decline.

The intrinsic value of the West Menai lands needs to be acknowledged and brought under conservation in their entirety, preferable in joint management and with the consent of the Local Aboriginal peoples. This would be best achieved by a lease back arrangement by the State and Federal Government and through taxation reduction measures. Such an arrangement would provide employment opportunities for the local aboriginal community whilst Protecting Country.

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BANKSTOWN BUSHLAND SOCIETY MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

Bankstown Bushland Society meetings are held at Padstow Progress Hall (annex), Ryan Road, Padstow.
3rd Wednesday of every month. In annex at the rear. Time: 7.00 pm
Tea and biscuits provided. All welcome.
Further inquiries please ring : 9785 2374

BBS VOLUNTEER BUSH REGEN PROGRAM Update by Col Gibson

Our volunteer bush regen program is suspended at the moment. This past year both Pat Bell and I have not been well enough to put regular days on. Participation has been well down on previous years due to a number of our regular volunteers retiring or moving on. We are in need of someone to take on the role of bush regen volunteers coordinator. We are well stocked with equipment and there is no shortage of places to work. At some of these sites we have been working for over twenty years.

At present Pat, Darryl, Susan and I are keeping in touch to plan occasional days in the field, a few hours here and there as can be managed. But we are much in need of new volunteers if our group effort is to have a future. Bankstown Bushland Society is Bankstown's original bushland care group. We initiated volunteer bush regen efforts at many sites including East Hills Park, Monash Reserve, The Crest, Norfolk Reserve, Irene Jones Bush and Smith Park, to name a few. Many of our members have also participated in Bushcare since its inception about a decade ago. Let's hope we can keep going.

To keep in touch with things you can ring me on 97886232 or email greenaisance1@gmail.com

BULLECOURT FOREST UPDATE

by Col Gibson

In response to our concerns regarding the intended childcare centre at Uni of Western Sydney Milperra campus we received a letter from Professor Janice Reid, Vice-Chancellor (28-10-2011) who stated *...we have been actively involved in ensuring the remnant woodland is intact and we have been regenerating the area on a continuing basis. We have also undertaken an extensive study on the area including bush fire protection and management and a flora and fauna assessment. UWS is committed to maintaining the Cumberland Plain Woodland and*

will continue to monitor the area in future. The building of the centre has been specifically designed and located to minimize the impact on the area.

A feature in the Torch (28-3-2012) revealed that the location of the centre would require the removal of 22 native eucalypts adjacent the bushland on the corner of Bullecourt Avenue. These should be considered part of the remnant Cumberland Plain Woodland. In fact the mown understorey beneath these trees also has the potential to recover as woodland. Local residents have pointed out that there is an alternate site for the childcare centre at the back of the campus where no trees have to be destroyed to make way.

We acknowledge the good intentions expressed by the Vice-Chancellor, but as time goes by we see fewer and fewer original trees in Bankstown, making way for urban infilling or developments of some kind or other. To lose 22 mature trees (Grey Box and Forest Red Gum) to a development that could be located elsewhere is a great shame. In this case the trees already adjoin (and should be considered as part of) a recognised woodland remnant, part of the Cumberland Plain Woodland Endangered Ecological Community. It is hoped that Bankstown City Council as the consent authority will take this into account and reject the development application in its present form.

WHY NOT JOIN THE SOCIETY ?



The Bankstown Bushland Society is an incorporated association under the Associations Incorporation Act (NSW) 1984.

We are Bankstown's only incorporated association dedicated to protecting our City's environment.

The Society's objects are:

- To protect the environment of Bankstown
- To assist other persons in the protection of the environment in Bankstown
- To foster better community awareness of environmental issues
- To lobby through Government, commercial and other persons for the maintenance of a high quality of life through the progressive improvement of the environment

If you are concerned about the local environment, then consider joining our Society. As a member, you receive one year's subscription to this newsletter, and can participate as a voting member in the direction and decisions of the Society.

✂

Yes, I wish to join the
Bankstown Bushland Society Inc:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Suburb: _____ Postcode _____

Telephone Number: _____

Membership fees
 Family/Group - \$20
 Ordinary - \$15
 Concession - \$10
 "student/unwaged/pensioner"

Attached please find my payment of:
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