



# Wallumetta

The Newsletter of Ryde-Hunters Hill Flora and Fauna  
Preservation Society Inc.

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## PRESIDENT'S NOTE

The Guardian Australia on-line news service reported on 23 May that Facebook will employ 50 percent of its employees remotely over the next five to 10 years. In the same article it was reported that Twitter's CEO, Jack Dorsey, announced that employees would be able to work from home "forever".

What does this mean for our society and why is it important?

During the recent restrictions in Australia, working from home was urged where possible and this has been taken up by a large number of employers and workers. Should this become the norm it has very significant implications for urban design and wider settlement patterns. Release from commuting means that workers have more freedom to live in their preferred location.

In respect of Facebook the Guardian reports 'The shift to working remotely has the potential to change the complexion of Silicon Valley. Until recently, the company offered new hires up to \$15,000 if they agreed to move within 10 miles of the company's flagship campus in Menlo Park, with some of the most expensive real estate in the country. A permanent work-from-home policy could encourage more employees to live in more affordable locations outside the high-priced Bay Area.'

Members would be aware that the NSW Government has a policy of promoting high rise development and urban expressways to accommodate the increased congestion in Sydney created by ever rising levels of population. This is based on the continued development of historical urban patterns.

For example the environmental impact statement for the proposed Western Harbour Tunnel dismisses travel demand management as inadequate in addressing congestion. Section 4.3.2 of the EIS states: 'To have a major impact on road traffic, travel demand management measures would require considerable changes in social attitudes, travel behaviour and government policy and can take many years to achieve'.

However this is precisely what has happened and it did not take many years to achieve. Judging by the Facebook and Twitter response it is also to become the norm.

The working remotely phenomenon can lead to different and better patterns of urban settlement and thereby less pressure to develop our natural heritage. Members are encouraged to be aware of the fundamental change that working remotely can have on our urban settlements.

*Frank Breen,  
President*

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## **MISREPORTING BY CENTENNIAL COAL...**

Nature Conservation Council (NCC) investigative team found a major coal company in NSW, Centennial Coal, massively underestimated carbon emissions from its mines for at least 10 years.

Last month, Centennial Coal applied to open a new mine near Lithgow called Angus Place. The company claims its mine will generate 0.36 million tonnes of carbon pollution a year, but the true number is 10 million tonnes a year. The company under-reported its emissions by 97%!

Digging deeper, NCC discovered this was not the first time Centennial Coal has made such a colossal “mistake”. Documents show the company has massively under-estimated carbon emissions in relation to several of its coal mines dating back to 2010.

NCC passed this information on to the *Sun Herald*, and the findings were published on page 3 of their 10 May 2020 edition – see <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/climate-change/we-stuffed-up-coal-miner-admits-to-submitting-wrong-emissions-data-20200508-p54r6i.html>

NCC also asked the NSW Planning Department to investigate and prosecute Centennial Coal if it has broken any laws.

Coal mining and coal-fired power generation contribute to devastating bushfires, floods and heat waves like those we saw last summer. We must do everything we can to switch from dirty fossil fuels to clean wind, solar and storage to prevent the climate heating to dangerous levels.

## **... AND THE TRUE IMPACT OF USE OF WATER BY COAL MINING INDUSTRY**

The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) has released a new report that brings us closer to understanding the true impact the coal industry has on our water across this dry continent of ours. Shockingly, it appears that coal corporations consume 383 billion litres of Australia's freshwater resource per year - equivalent to the water use of every Sydneysider or every Queensland household. Coal uses 120 times more water than renewables like wind or solar to produce the same amount of electricity.

So surely when our governments make choices about spending public money on creating a more resilient future, the priority is clear – more clean affordable energy, not coal!

Not only does the addiction to coal drive climate change and pollute our environment, we now know that it take 653 litres of water to produce one tonne of coal and that burning coal to generate energy also uses a lot of water. A typical 1000-megawatt power station uses enough water every year to provide the basic needs of nearly 700,000 people. The coal industry also sometimes pays much less for water than other customers. Adani's mine was granted a 60-year licence to take unlimited groundwater virtually for free.

## **LOGGING MAKES FORESTS MORE FLAMMABLE**

(from a report published on the ABC website, 11 February 2020, by Dani Cooper)

Commercial logging of moist native forests creates conditions that increase the severity and frequency of bushfires. The finding by Australian, Canadian and US researchers is based on a review of previous studies and is published in the journal *Conservation Letters*. The team focused on how industrial logging practices in native forests might change fire loads, fire frequency and susceptibility to ignition.

**When you mess with [native wet] forests they become more flammable.**



*According to researchers, logging has shifted the composition of moist forests to resemble drier, more fire prone ones.*

Team member Professor David Lindenmayer of Australian National University reported:

“Removal of trees by logging creates canopy openings and this in turn alters microclimatic conditions, especially increased drying of understory vegetation and the forest floor. Work in tropical rainforests suggests that when microclimatic conditions are altered by selective logging, the number of dry days needed to make a forest combustible is reduced.”

In one study, uncut native forest would generally not burn after less than 30 rainless days but selectively logged forest would burn after just six to

eight days without rain, possibly because fallen logs and fresh saplings are added to the fuel load.

After the 2009 Black Saturday wildfires, the National Association of Forest Industries and some politicians called for logging of forests to prevent major wildfires. This study throws doubt on that.

### **IN NSW, LOGGING CONTINUES...**

During May, the NSW Forestry Corporation started logging in Nambucca State Forest, one of the few remaining patches of unburnt koala habitat.

Nambucca State Forest is a green belt around the Nambucca Heads town, and home to masked owls, little bent-wing bats and yellow-bellied gliders. It’s a place of recreation and retreat, a tourism attraction and a special area for the local community who, with the Gumbaynggirr custodians are peacefully protesting at the entrance to the forest to stop this destruction.

This summer’s bushfires ravaged forests across the state, but Nambucca State Forest was spared and is a critical refuge for wildlife after the fires. Despite the devastation, the NSW Government’s logging agency is chopping down native forests more intensively now than before the bushfires.

The Nature Conservation Council is urging collective action to contact members of parliament (MPs) of all political parties across the state. They need to know that our forests and wildlife are being devastated, and have the power to take action. Coalition MPs have a direct line to decision makers in government, and MPs from other parties also have a key role to play by opposing this destructive logging in parliament and through the media.

After the worst bushfires on record, our unique wildlife is struggling. Logging of habitat for toilet paper, woodchips and power poles should not be allowed.

### **... AND CLEARING FOR LAND DEVELOPMENTS**

The Greater Glider was on its way to extinction, but in Conjola National Park NSW and the surrounding forests they were making a comeback. But, after the summer fires, the last piece of richly biodiverse land inhabited by Greater Gliders and supporting an Ecologically Endangered Community is being destroyed by Ozy Homes to make way for a housing development.



Shelley Hancock, Member for South Coast, has come out in support of stopping the development and saving the Glider habitat. And Planning Minister, Rob Stokes, said “I never would have approved plans for blanket urban sprawl replacing pristine bushland along an iconic coastline”. But Ozy Homes are continuing their schedule of destruction. We hope the NSW Government stops this development before it is too late.

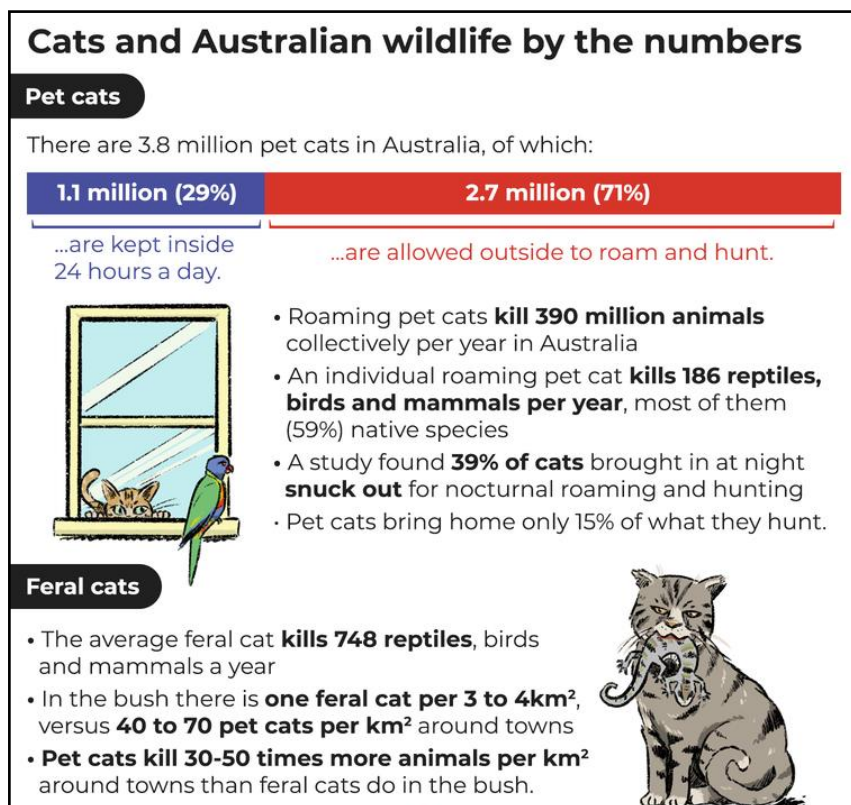
## KILLER CATS - one cat, one year, 110 native animals: lock up your pet, it's a killing machine

Recently published in "The Conversation", you can read the full article here:

<https://theconversation.com/one-cat-one-year-110-native-animals-lock-up-your-pet-its-a-killing-machine-138412>

Cats have played a leading role in most of Australia's 34 mammal extinctions since 1788, and are a big reason populations of 123 other threatened native species are dropping. See the National Environmental Science Programme's Threatened Species Recovery Hub:

<http://www.nespthreatenedspecies.edu.au/news/a-review-of-listed-extinctions-in-australia>



### But pet cats wreak havoc too.

Over one-quarter of Aussie households have pet cats. CSIRO analysis compiled results of 66 different studies on pet cats to gauge the impact of Australia's pet cat population on the country's wildlife. On average, each roaming pet cat kills 186 reptiles, birds and mammals per year, most of them native to Australia. Collectively, that's 4,440 to 8,100 animals per square kilometre per year.

These huge numbers may lead some pet owners to think the contribution of their own cat wouldn't make much difference. However, even

single pet cats have driven declines and complete losses of populations of some native animal species in their area. Documented cases include feather-tailed gliders in NSW; skinks in a Perth suburb; and olive legless lizards in Canberra.

Pet cats are confined to cities and towns, where you'll find 40 to 70 roaming cats per square kilometre. In the bush there's only one feral cat for every three to four square kilometres. So each pet cat kills fewer animals than a feral cat, but their high urban density means the toll is high. Per square kilometre, pet cats kill 30-50 times more animals than feral cats in the bush.

### Impact of Roaming Pet Cats on Australian Wildlife

Many native animals don't have high reproductive rates so they cannot survive this level of predation. The stakes are high for threatened wildlife in urban areas. Pet cats living near areas with nature also hunt more, reducing the value of places that should be safe havens for wildlife.

### Australia is in a very good position to make change

Compared to many other countries, the Australian public are more aware of how cats threaten native wildlife and more supportive of actions to reduce those impacts. **It won't be easy.** But since more than one million pet cats are already being contained, reducing the impacts from pet cats is clearly possible if we take responsibility for them.

## IVANHOE ESTATE DEVELOPMENT AT MACQUARIE PARK

Ivanhoe Estate is a NSW Government development and a declared “State Significant Project”. On 28 April 2020, it was announced to be first of 24 projects to undergo a fast-tracked assessment process as part of the NSW Government’s new [Planning System Acceleration Program](#).

Its stated purpose is to redirect resources within the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment to accelerate assessment and determination of projects that inject investment into the NSW economy and keep people in jobs (in the construction industry) during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is claimed that the assessment process is accelerated, not changed; but many are projects previously refused by Councils and Planning Panels and still within the Land and Environment Court process. It is critical that all the usual planning rules and policies will apply, and that all projects will be assessed under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

**The Ivanhoe site currently contains 3.4 hectares of vegetation, with over 1,000 trees.** A mix of native and exotic species includes dense concentrations along the Shrimptons Creek and Epping Road frontages. Two major plant communities exist on the site, which are Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest (STIF) and Smooth-barked Apple Turpentine-Blackbutt open forest, both adjacent to Epping Road. The 1.64 hectares of STIF is a Critically Endangered Ecological Community (CEEC).

547 trees within the site had previously been approved to be removed as part of a separate approval for demolition works. However, following the initial stage of demolition works, 37 trees that had been approved to be removed under Part 5 were retained. The revised proposal has therefore reduced the number of trees to be removed from 547 to 510 – still a staggering number!

Predominant issues in our submissions were potential impact on existing trees, particularly in the STIF, and also in the riparian wildlife corridor along Shrimpton’s Creek. We wish to preserve the overall biodiversity of the site. In response to our concerns, the proposal was amended to retain more trees and reduce impact on the STIF. These changes included:

- deletion of a proposed road connection to Epping Road and associated deceleration lane;
- increased buffer zone to Shrimptons Creek riparian corridor;
- increased basement setbacks to boundary with 137-143 Herring Road;
- retention of a retaining wall and some existing concrete alcoves along the south-western development boundary to minimise impacts on the STIF/CEEC.

These changes increased the total number of trees to be retained from 231 (21%) to 453 (35%) and reduced impact on the STIF from 0.45 to 0.02 hectares which is 1.2% of its total area.

We remain concerned by, and do not accept these contentions of the NSW Government:

- *The long-term survival of [STIF] plants is considered unviable in the long term due to their location either within the existing residential development or adjacent to a major roadway;*
- *Fauna habitat is highly modified due to existing development and proximity to Epping Road;*
- *No threatened fauna species have been identified and a habitat and an assessment found that the only fauna habitat within the site are hollow-bearing trees along Epping Road;*
- *The total number of trees to be removed on the site has decreased from 858 to 853... Longer-term impact of the proposed tree removal would be suitably mitigated because a minimum of 950 replacement trees would be planted.*

As a result of our representations at various levels and meetings, the potential impact to STIF + CEEC has been minimised and trees around the Epping Road, Shrimptons Creek and Herring Road boundaries should be retained. Our Society and City of Ryde Council have been in consultation with the NSW Government since April 2018 and continue to monitor this development.

## **BORONIA PARK PLAN OF MANAGEMENT**

Hunter's Hill Council (HHC) has now adopted the revised Plan. It took 14 months to reach a disappointing finale. It was clear from the start that Council intended to support the Rugby Club in their long held wish to have a major facility for organised sporting groups that went beyond providing better amenities such as women's changing rooms - for which the Club's patron Trent Zimmerman gained a \$500,000 Federal government grant.

There was also an amount of \$1million given to HHC, apparently as compensation following the amalgamation fiasco. Residents had hoped this would be put towards an overdue upgrade of the heritage grandstand with other club needs accommodated by a moderately sized building alongside - and the majority voted this way. However, it wasn't to be. All funds will be spent on an over-sized two-storey construction between Ovals 1 & 2, the preferred outcome of the sporting clubs.

The proposed playground will now be sited at Riverglade reserve, the location nominated in the \$200,000 grant application. The BMX track will be provided if demand is proven.

Floodlighting will be permitted for Oval 3, very unfortunate for nocturnal wildlife in the E2 Zone, and parking still allowed within the park on certain days, but hopefully better managed than before.

## **CONNECTING WITH COUNTRY – ENGAGING WITH CULTURAL LANDSCAPES**

*On 7 May 2020 Lyn Langtry took part in the Government Architects Office Webinar discussion of the importance of **cultural landscapes** during planning and designing of built environments...*

Michael Edwards, Ryde City Council's Heritage Officer, stated that there is a growing interest in the heritage industry to provide more focus and emphasis on cultural landscapes.

Colleen Morris, landscape heritage consultant defined cultural landscapes as being the result of human interaction, record of human interaction, record of activity and values, a complex dynamic, and profound social attachments. She referred to:

1. UNESCO's Historic Urban Landscapes (HUL) approach (downloadable)
2. National Trust list of landscape conservation areas, e.g. Sydney Harbour
3. The "landscape lens philosophy" beyond cadastral boundaries but considering aspects such as Horton's Aboriginal Map (a valuable document), drainage and geological boundaries
4. A grant allowed consideration of Sydney Harbour from perspective in 3: Confluence of Aboriginal and European, drainage, vistas, threatened areas, parks and foreshore reserves ("Green Necklace"). There was a focus on the latter with consideration of Berry Island Reserve, Wollstonecraft Foreshores Reserves, Balls Head Reserve, Carradah Park in Birchgrove, Ballast Point Park, Yurulbin Point Park and Gladesville Hospital Landscape. (reference made to Sydney Harbour Environmental Plan and Sydney Harbour Catchment Plan)
5. Presenter posed question: How can we enhance with "the landscape lens model"? Engage with community (allow a long lead time for this); explore spiritual values of cultural landscapes – connect with Country; be open to what the landscape tells you.

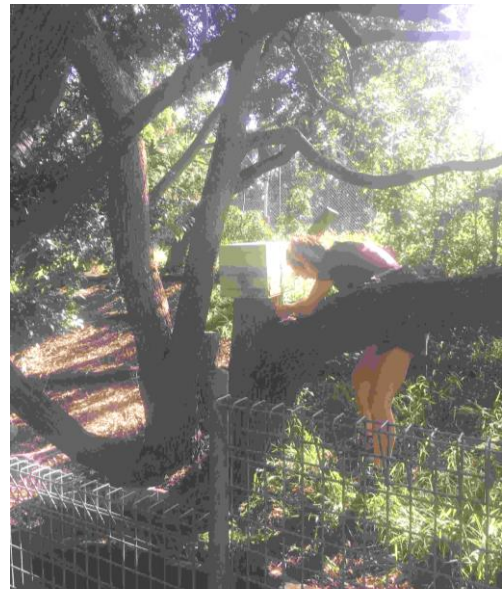
The last 15 minutes of questions from the attendees covered:

- Managing conflicting desires
- Equity and distribution of knowledge
- How to better lobby and work with regional bodies
- Cost benefits / aspirations / financial viability
- Link between landscape values and health and welfare.

## **B&B HIGHWAY**

For over 30 years, the Ryde East Public School community has been developing and maintaining their school grounds as a wildlife corridor between the Field of Mars Reserve and Wallumatta Nature Reserve in Twin Road, East Ryde. Recently, the school was one of eleven educational institutions in Ryde chosen to take part in PlantingSeeds B & B Highway.

This was made possible through the NSW government's My Community Project Grant. The grant funds year-round pollinating flowering plants, wicking bed systems, a native stingless bee hive and additional habitats. Each B & B provides a "Bed & Breakfasts" for birds, bees, butterflies and biodiversity to form wildlife corridors in the urban environment.



*Photo by courtesy of Sophia Kloosterman*

Sophia Kloosterman (co-ordinator) said, "PlantingSeeds is an environmental non-for-profit that is heading this project, as well as a citizen science project that aims to engage students with the gardens and provide detailed data for researchers in the field of ecology, in particular, native bees. To get this project up and running, we have been working with the NSW Department of Education, University of Technology Sydney, Macquarie University, WaterUps from Down Under, The Habitat Nursery, Ku-Ring-Gai Council, and researchers in the field of native stingless bees."

Because of coronavirus restrictions this project has been off to a difficult start; nevertheless work has started on preparing the gardens and the native bee hive was recently installed.

## **NEWS FROM THE FIELD OF MARS**

### **Shared User Path Construction along Pittwater Rd**

Work continues. There will soon be a safe path linking the Field of Mars Reserve with High St Boronia Park, which will benefit visitors using the route 538 Gladesville-Woolwich bus service.

### **Bushcare**

Volunteer bushcare remains suspended since 16 March. City of Ryde Council officers are monitoring each site so our good work is not lost. Meanwhile, we have noted new developments within the Field of Mars Cemetery. More crypts are being constructed, this time in a row alongside the "Upper Greek Area" from the main internal road to the Children's Lawn Cemetery. Previous developments in this vicinity resulted in drainage being altered and this impacted on the bushland and Sand Track near Cemetery Creek 2. We rescued some native plants along the reserve boundary and will continue to monitor the situation.



### **Visitor Centre**

After being shut down in April and most of May, we reopened the Centre from Saturday 23 May. Large numbers are visiting the Reserve, many for their first time, probably because bushwalking is one of the few activities people can enjoy during the coronavirus restrictions. On our first day back over a hundred visitors were counted, and 24 came in to the Centre for advice and refreshments.

## CONGRATULATIONS, JOHN WEST!

Society member and Visitor Centre volunteer John West celebrates his 90th birthday on 30 June! After working as a buyer at Anthony Hordern's, John was employed at Gladesville Hospital from 1965 to 1994. John has won prizes for ballroom dancing, and has been a dancing teacher. John and Sharon met at his classes; they married in 1958. In retirement John has been a volunteer for Seniors Card, for the 2000 Sydney Olympics and now of course at the Visitor Centre.



### Memories of the Field of Mars

Since 1961 John and his wife Sharon have lived on Westminster Road, overlooking the Field of Mars Reserve. At the time their house was the last on the street. *Wallumetta* asked Sharon and John to share some of their memories.

Sharon's link with the Field of Mars goes back longer, as she was brought up in a house near the end of Westminster Road, within the bounds of what is now the Reserve. Demolished long ago, its remains can be seen next to the Westminster Road steps.

So what was the Field of Mars like then? John and Sharon remember Buffalo Creek being much more tidal than now. There was no bridge, but at low tide, they say, you could wade across the creek without getting too wet, and you could then use the bush tracks to get up to the cemetery.

But when the tide was in, they remember how it formed a large sheet of water, waist-deep, near the present site of the Visitor Centre — and they have photos to prove it. This was the famous swimming hole, at which, as they recall, Dawn Fraser came to swim. Bathers were afraid of sharks coming up the creek, so locals, including Sharon's grandfather, put in large stones as a barrier.

John and Sharon remember areas of mud flats, with mangroves more extensive than now. There were lots of crabs, and you could catch shrimps and eels. On land there were echidnas, still occasionally seen.

Life at the Reserve's edge had a more rural flavour than nowadays. Sharon's mother had a cow, and the Wests had a pet donkey — actually a wild donkey, they say, though it became very tame.

When land around Buffalo creek was transformed into a rubbish tip in the early 1960s, the creek was affected and the swimming hole was gone. John and Sharon remember the horrible smell, and fire burning for years under the surface of the tip. Rubbish dumping came to an end, of course, largely through the efforts of this Society, the RHHFFPS.

As for bushfires, John and Sharon recall two particularly dramatic ones. One was over 50 years ago, while the second, as many readers remember, was in 2002. That time they had to briefly evacuate their house.

So, two lives intimately linked with this historical piece of urban bushland. Many thanks to you both, and

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, JOHN!

**EVENTS**                    ***(Our Society events remain indefinitely postponed or cancelled, but we hope to advise soon of a revised date for our 2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING)***

### **National Tree Day – Sunday 2 July 2020**

This year we are not involved in organised activities because of coronavirus restrictions, but Planet Ark still encourages us to celebrate trees. If you cannot plant, you could do another nature care activity, such as weeding or watering. See <https://treeday.planetark.org/get-involved/community>