



RHHFFPS

Wallumetta

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

Website: <http://rydehffps.org.au/>

Member of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW (NCC)
and founding member of the Powerful Owl Coalition

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We acknowledge the Wallumedegal, original inhabitants of the Ryde – Hunters Hill area.

PRESIDENT'S NOTE

Recently I noted reports in the on-line daily, The Guardian, that Australia is likely to be releasing more emissions from deforestation than reported to the United Nations. In an article dated 22 March The Guardian reported that Australian government is 'aggravating extinction' through land-clearing approvals.

The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) [compiled publicly available information](#) on federal decisions that gave the green light to developments that involved clearing of forests and other areas relied on by threatened species.

It found levelling of [more than 200,000 hectares of threatened species habitat](#) was approved over the decade to the end of 2021. More than half of that total (120,000 hectares) had been approved in the five years since 2016.

ACF found nearly three-quarters of the clearing approved under national environment laws was for new and expanded mining developments. Dr Megan Evans, a lecturer and research fellow at the University of New South Wales, said the results of the investigation were not surprising.

Dr Evans said the federal government had no central record of how much threatened species habitat remained and officials relied almost entirely on information provided by developers when assessing proposals. Developments were routinely approved with a promise that offsets to limit their environmental impact would be decided later.

A spokesperson for the federal environment minister, Sussan Ley said \$128.5m funding recently announced to ["advance environmental law reform"](#) would lead to better management of the cumulative impacts of developments in some areas by moving from project-specific to region-level assessment. It would also pay for a review of national offset strategies and improvements to data on threatened species, they said.

Last year the former competition watchdog head Graeme Samuel, released his review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act. The Samuel review found [Australia's natural environment is in decline](#) and the EPBC Act is failing.

The current federal government's response to the Samuel review has been entirely inadequate and the report by the ACF demonstrates its appalling track record in protecting habitat for threatened species. Urgent action is required to prevent further loss and to restore habitat.

Frank Breen, President

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POLITICAL DONATIONS: \$1.2 BILLION OVER 22 YEARS, AND 'ASSOCIATED ENTITIES' DOMINATE

From an article by David Crowe, published by The Brisbane Times January 31, 2022; see the full article at <https://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/politics/federal/political-donations-1-2-billion-over-22-years-and-associated-entities-dominate-20220130-p59sau.html>

Over a third of the cash flowing to the Liberal and Labor parties is from entities that hide the true source of funds, according to an analysis that shows the main parties collected \$1.2 billion over the past 22 years.

The property industry led the list of business sectors donating to both parties, giving \$37.4 million to Labor and \$53.1 million to the Coalition, but the study by the Centre for Public Integrity (CPI), an independent organisation, concludes that **too many other donations are being hidden**. Both sides rely on "associated entities" - investment companies and foundations - so 42 per cent of Coalition donations and 33 per cent of Labor donations have come from entities that do not always reveal the source of their cash.

University of Melbourne Professor Joo-Cheong Tham, a director of the CPI, said: *"Donation caps are needed to rein in the influence of millionaire donors and we need real-time disclosure of donations over \$1000 so that the public knows who is funding our political parties before they vote."*

CPI chair, former NSW Supreme Court judge Anthony Whealy, QC, said the large amounts of money paid to the parties by their associated entities were a cause for concern because of the inadequate disclosure rules.

And in 2021?

Fossil Fuel Donations - 2020-21 Financial Year

Source: AEC

Donor	Labor	Liberal	LNP	National	Greens	Grand Total
Ampol Limited	\$34,500	\$42,850	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$77,350
APPEA Limited	\$31,650	\$49,710	\$22,900	\$2,750	\$0	\$107,010
APT Pipelines Limited	\$27,500	\$27,500	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$55,000
Chevron Australia Pty Ltd	\$38,750	\$28,750	\$0	\$7,150	\$0	\$74,650
Empire Energy Group Limited	\$25,000	\$40,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$65,000
LET Australia Ltd	\$47,000	\$40,500	\$2,000	\$22,000	\$0	\$111,500
Minerals Council of Australia	\$64,660	\$87,205	\$13,987	\$28,091	\$0	\$193,943
Santos Limited	\$44,000	\$0	\$0	\$22,000	\$0	\$66,000
The Trustee for St Baker Family Trust	\$52,444	\$42,230	\$70,528	\$0	\$0	\$165,202
Woodside Energy Limited	\$108,350	\$82,000	\$0	\$42,000	\$0	\$232,350
Grand Total	\$473,854	\$440,745	\$109,415	\$123,991	\$0	\$1,148,005

Declarations to Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) reveal fossil fuel companies donated more than \$1,148,005 to the Liberal, Labor and National parties – see <https://reneweconomy.com.au/labor-and-coalition-enjoyed-more-than-1-15-million-of-fossil-fuel-donations-last-year/>

No renewable energy companies, or clean energy groups, made reportable political donations in the year.

An Example of How it Works: a \$65,000 investment

Last year, Empire Energy donated \$40,000 to the LNP, \$25,000 to the ALP. This proved to be a very lucrative investment, as they received **\$50 million** of public money from the Liberal Government to frack the Beetaloo basin in the Northern Territory. And Labor supported it.

The cost to all of us is not only the \$50 million, but also the environmental damage both locally and on a world climate scale.

Postscript:

Recently the Australian Government sought to contribute \$21 million to Empire Energy to fast-track this development, but it was blocked by a court injunction brought by the Environment Centre – Northern Territory (ECNT) and upheld by Justice Griffiths who deemed this invalid, because of the federal government's "unreasonable" move to quietly award the money while a court challenge was underway. But he also rejected the ECNT's challenge to the validity of the grants program as a whole, meaning the grants can be remade and further funding awarded.

**UNMASKING THE PROBLEM OF COVID LITTER - from Ellen Phiddian: *Cosmos*, 10 December 2021.
*Study finds an over 80-fold increase in littered masks during the pandemic.***

An international team of researchers including Dr Jasper de Brie, a research fellow at Griffith University's Coastal and Marine Research Centre, confirming what has been obvious to the eye – around the world, disposable masks have been turning up more in litter during the pandemic.

They published findings in *Nature Sustainability* that masks, gloves and other personal protective equipment (PPE) form a higher proportion of global litter since the onset of COVID-19, from October 2019 to October 2020.

The researchers used data from the citizen science app [Litterati](#) to determine whether personal protective equipment (PPE) was showing up more. Litterati is a litter-collection application, one of the largest databases of tagged litter that is openly available. Users upload a geotagged image of a piece of litter they collect, and this is categorised by the app and confirmed by the user.

By number of items, masks – previously less than 0.01% of global litter – jumped to more than 0.8% of global litter, representing an over 80-fold increase. Gloves and wipes doubled from roughly 0.2% of litter to 0.4% in early to mid-2020, then dropped down to pre-pandemic levels.

These proportions differed by country: in Australia and New Zealand, mask litter peaked at less than 0.2% in 2020, whereas in the UK it topped out at 6%.

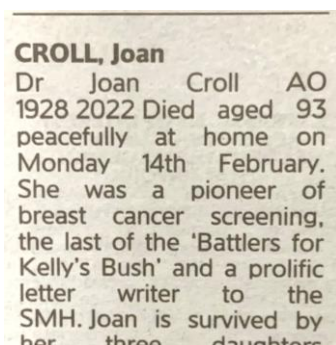
In addition to the environmental impacts of this increase in PPE litter (such as choking hazards for animals and microplastic pollution), there are health effects for people, too – these discarded items can still be infectious; the COVID virus survives several days on a discarded mask.

Factors including provision of enough bins, bin collections, street cleaning and public behaviour influence how much litter ends up in the environment.

Australia's relatively low level of mask litter provides the country with an advantage. According to Dr de Brie, "We have a good opportunity here to start doing things right and prevent such a surge as the UK has seen. After all, there is a good possibility of continued mask recommendations [and] policies as new variants of COVID emerge."

We will be interested to see whether there is a change unmasked in this year's Clean Up Australia Day results!

LAST OF THE ORIGINAL BATTLERS FOR KELLY'S BUSH



Following the formation of our Society and successful rescue of the Field of Mars from almost certain total destruction back in 1966, residents of Hunters Hill (including some of our members) went on to become the "Battlers for Kelly's Bush", whose campaign made history as the genesis of the Green Bans. These eventually saved much of Sydney's heritage from being destroyed by developers.

Sadly, all the original battlers have now passed on, as shown in this notice which was published in February.

Fortunately, current Society member Margaret Shaw (a later member of the Battlers group) conducted much thorough research and drew on her personal experiences to publish her book "The History of the Battle to Save Kelly's Bush" in 1996. It gives a great insight into the campaign. A copy of this book may be viewed at the Field of Mars Visitor Centre, where we also have on display a newspaper article about Trude Kallir, another original Battler who was also an active member of our Society.

MORE ON SYNTHETIC TURF

From a report by George Roberts, ABC, 1 March 2022

Brisbane sporting clubs face massive repair bills and months of disruption after flood events...



Damaged artificial turf soccer fields at Mitchelton Football Club, in Everton Park. (Facebook: Mitchelton Football Club)

During Brisbane's flood emergency, water washed over local sporting clubs. They have the massive task of cleaning up, and competitions are disrupted as clubs repair infrastructure.

The Mitchelton Football Club was engulfed by flood waters from Kedron Brook in Everton Park. In addition to leaving behind a sticky, muddy mess in the clubhouse, the floodwaters all but destroyed the club's new synthetic pitch.

According to Club President Gary Green, the synthetic pitch will be expensive to fix – best guess is up to a half a million dollars. It cost 1.5 million dollars to put it in in the first place.

And news from Sustaining Gladesville Reserve:

On Tuesday, 22 February Hunter's Hill Council hosted a workshop at Henley Community Centre. Council opened the workshop and presented options that are being considered for the upgrade of the sporting facilities at Gladesville Reserve. Sustaining Gladesville Reserve was invited to present first, and strongly presented all the reasons against synthetic surface, and benefits of natural turf. They highlighted that synthetic surface is at odds with several of Council's governance documents and for at least that reason must be removed as an option to upgrade Gladesville Reserve.

All Saints football club spoke next and they stated that their preferred option remains synthetic surface, however provided they gain increased playing capacity they do not mind if the surface is natural or synthetic. The football club claimed that they use the field for 36 hours a week during the football season already (4-9pm Tue-Fri and 9-5 Sat and Sun), so there are not any more hours in the day to use the Reserve anyway, irrespective of playing surface. They proposed to enlarge the playing field area at Gladesville Reserve, which would increase the capacity of the field by 50%. This would require demolition of the existing amenities block, construction of a new amenities block, and relocation of the playground. All this, including removal of trees, will need to be scrutinised, but it appears that the push for synthetic is substantially weaker.

The President of the Pirates Cricket Club confirmed that the cricket club prefers natural turf; however, their main requirement is improved cricket practice nets so they would be satisfied with any surface. They requested a merit-based analysis for the upgrade of Gladesville Reserve.

The Vice President of Riverside Girls High P&C also spoke passionately, confirming that the school does not support a synthetic surface, and that All Saints incorrectly represented that the school supported synthetic on their website.

In finishing the workshop, Council assured that further consultation will occur and that the feedback from the workshop will be incorporated into any future proposals or business cases for upgrading the Reserve. Councillor Krassoi advised that a new Sports and Recreation Committee will be formed to determine the needs of the community for sport and recreation, and to make recommendations to Council management on these issues.

SCHOOL STRIKE FOR CLIMATE - AUSTRALIA



On Tuesday 15 March 2022, the Federal Court overturned the 2021 ruling that the Federal Environment Minister, Sussan Ley, has a duty of care to protect young people from the effects of climate change when making decisions.

Last year's ruling was a world first, setting a precedent for cases all over the world, and it was also finally some common sense! This could be used to stop dangerous fossil fuel projects.

But the Federal Court overturned this decision. How could it not be the Government's duty to protect us from the effects of climate change and keep this country safe for future generations?

Class Action 4 Climate have given Sussan Ley a fight and a half and they are still working on their next steps, but all of the students have vowed to keep fighting for climate justice.

On Friday March 25th, Australian school students were striking to send a clear message to the Environment Minister and the whole Federal Government, that we want climate action now, and we will not stop fighting until we see the action that is needed to achieve climate justice.

They joined hundreds of thousands of people across the globe, all telling our governments that **now is the time to act and put people before profit!** See the website:

<https://www.schoolstrike4climate.com/upcoming-actions>

“CLIMATE ACTION NOW” SIGNS – an offer from the Nature Conservation Council (NCC)



Nationwide, Australians are showing their support for climate action by displaying *Climate Action Now* signs on their houses, in their front yards and on their wheelie bins.

[Click here to order your FREE *Climate Action Now* sign or bin sticker now.](#)

We all know the fossil fuels lobby is in the ear of politicians and spends millions on advertising and on political donations. We need Australians all over the country to show they are fed up with the political games and excuses on climate policies and that we want real *Climate Action Now*.

[Order your FREE sign](#) and NCC will organise a collection point in your neighbourhood or deliver the sign to your home. If you think your friends or neighbours would display a sign in their front yard or on their bin, you can order more or forward this link to them.

Let's create a critical mass that cannot be ignored by displaying these signs everywhere.

CHRISTMAS AND COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS MARINE PARKS

Co-designed with the local communities, the Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands Marine Parks have just been declared by the Australian Government.

With around 739,000 square kilometres of sanctuary protection, it is a globally significant contribution to the health of our oceans. Marine sanctuaries provide a critical safe haven for a wealth of marine life under huge pressure from industrial fishing, climate change and mining.

Christmas and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands are uniquely Australian and globally significant. There are few comparable unspoiled tropical island environments left in the world. These island waters provide crucial stepping stones for migratory ocean giants, hold a large part of the world's only known spawning ground for critically endangered Southern Bluefin Tuna, and are home to marine life found nowhere else on earth.

Healthy oceans and sustainable fishing are central to the Christmas and Cocos Islanders' way of life, their culture and their livelihoods. These island communities worked hard to ensure these marine parks meet their aspirations and protect our marine life for future generations, and the support of environmentalists with letters and submissions helped to make this happen.

TREES IN CHARLES ST PUTNEY

Last month, the City of Ryde Council voted to "investigate the removal of the street trees" at Putney, even though the trees had already been investigated by Council staff and not recommended for removal.

Cr Jerome Laxale, with the support of Ryde Labor colleagues, lodged a rescission motion to overturn this decision, and launched a petition to save the trees. The subject was discussed among members of our Society over lunch before our AGM and Cr Daniel Han (Liberal Party) who was present was also convinced of the importance of saving these trees.



Pamela Reeves represented our Society and addressed the Council meeting on Tuesday 22 February. There was only one other speaker – a neighbour who was calling for the trees to be removed because of the danger of branches falling and damage to the footpath.

The rescission motion won, and the two mature street trees will not be removed.

CITY OF RYDE LOSES MORE TREES THAN ANY OTHER LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA IN SYDNEY

On the same day as our AGM, an article in the Sydney Morning Herald reported that more than half of Sydney's councils have lost urban forest cover since 2013, as experts warn that suburbs lacking sufficient trees may become unliveable. Development pressures, poor planning and a failure to value trees were blamed for the decreased tree canopy even as councils develop urban greening strategies and the state government seeks to plant millions of trees by 2030.

Data from the Centre for Urban Research at RMIT University* and Greener Spaces Better Places found the City of Ryde (-6.9 percentage points) lost the most urban forest cover between 2013 and 2020. RMIT University associate professor Joe Hurley said land values were typically higher in leafy suburbs.

A City of Ryde spokesman said the loss of tree canopy coverage – from 39.8 per cent in 2013 to 32.9 per cent in 2020 – had "serious implications" on long-term liveability. He said the vast majority of tree loss over the past decade was due to increased development pressures. "This includes the increase of medium- to high-density developments and the introduction of private certification which subverts the Council approval process," he said. "This means Council has very little recourse to enforce its own tree retention and replanting policies."

* RMIT University, officially the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, is a public university.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE FIELD OF MARS

Wildlife

Shrubs, vines and grasses of all kinds relished the inundation of this year's weather events – trees too, although some with very wet feet fell over. All is not lost, though, as they enhance the habitat for nearby plants and animals. Some fell into or across the creek, making an ideal place for water dragons and turtles to bask in the sun. One water dragon decided to venture outside the Reserve to the end of Kennedy Street where it was seen sunning itself:

Along with the usual fauna we have also seen the snowy-white Eastern Great Egret, and had reliable reports of sightings of an Azure Kingfisher.

On the last Saturday of January a Powerful Owl landed in the swampy area beside Buffalo Creek near the Education Centre, and was apparently unable to take flight. Some visitors contacted WIRES. With help from others who happened by, the rescuer put the owl in the rescue cage and took it away for care, hopefully to be released back home when ready. Unfortunately we do not know the outcome, but the owl seemed to be alert and healthy as it was taken away. We hope it was a fledgling.



And Buffalo Creek treated us to some more flooding events, especially on days when we were having meetings! This one was on the morning before our special events on 19 March (see below). A new family of Pacific Black ducklings enjoyed swimming over the submerged roadway.

Bushcare

Work has been going well at most sites, but the wet weather forced cancellation of several sessions in March. Weeds have relished the wet conditions too, but the wet ground makes them easy to remove. Council staff treated outbreaks of *Anredera cordifolia* (Madeira Vine) with herbicide; this being the only effective control other than total removal.

Visitor Centre – open when weather allows!

With the easing of restrictions we have seen fewer bushwalkers, but proportionately more visitors to the centre. As happened in March last year, floodwaters occasionally prevented walkers entering the Reserve near Buffalo Creek so the centre was not opened on those days.

INVITATION: JOIN OUR VISITOR CENTRE TEAM! We recently welcomed Karen to our rostered team of members on 4-hour shifts to open the Visitor Centre 9am-5pm on weekends and public holidays. If you are interested in joining our team you are very welcome. Frequency and times of shifts are

negotiated individually according to your preferences and availability. No specialised skills are required, but we need to be fully vaccinated. Alfred happily provides the small amount of training needed. Most visitors' questions are answered in the maps and range of free leaflets we have available. Our service enhances community education and appreciation of Field of Mars Reserve.

COMING EVENTS:

Clean Up Australia Day – Our event postponed



Heavy rain earlier in the morning made the area unsafe for this event to proceed; however, the public site at Magdala Park and Lane Cove River Walk did go ahead, with rain ending half an hour before the scheduled start. Attendance was considerably less than usual, but 21 members of East Ryde Scout Group and the Australian Conservation

Foundation took part, collecting a dozen bags of rubbish. Interestingly, no Covid masks were found.

If you are interested in taking part in our Field of Mars site (for members only) on whichever day it is rescheduled, please contact our site coordinator Alfred on 02 9879 6067.

Other exciting events are planned for the coming months, and we will notify you of these by separate email when arrangements are finalised.

PAST EVENTS: Saturday, 19 March 2022

Prof. George Paxinos Talk - A River Divided: Brain Power and the Environment

23 members and friends of the Society attended this very interesting talk, in which Prof. Paxinos explained some of his research and findings, and how these became the source material for his recent novel, A River Divided. If you missed this talk, see: <https://www.georgepaxinos.com.au/>

We enjoyed lunch provided at the Visitor Centre. It was pleasing to see and chat with City of Ryde Councillors Han and Laxale, who joined us there.

Then we held our Society's Annual General Meeting, with several annual reports and elections for our new Management Committee.

The YarnKnit rug raffle was won by a local bushwalker who was delighted to receive it!

NEW MEMBERS WELCOME!	
Please pay by direct transfer to our Commonwealth Bank account: RHHFF PS INC GENERAL ACCOUNT 062171 - 0090 1574. Include your name in the transaction description; and email your name, address and phone number to rhffps@gmail.com	
Alternatively, you may pay by cash or cheque: Complete and hand in this form with payment in a sealed envelope at the Field of Mars Visitor Centre or post to: RHHFFPS, PO Box 552, Gladesville 1675.	
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Annual Membership (add \$10 for newsletter to be sent via Australia Post):	
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