



Comberton Grange Quarry p.4 | Proposed Community Coop p.5

Garrett Missing in Action

Patrick Thompson

THE National Parks Association has written to federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett calling for his urgent intervention to halt further work on a controversial residential development at Narrawallee.

A spokesperson for the association, Mr Gary Schoer, told the *Bush Tele* that the NSW government failed to alert the Minister that, the Commonwealth listed, vulnerable Giant Burrowing Frog is a confirmed foraging species in the land in question. Under provisions of the Commonwealth EP&BCA Act, Mr Garrett is required to intervene when evidence is presented to support a threat to a Commonwealth listed species.

The Association has also

"This is a typical action from a state government that has systematically eroded community input, and ridden roughshod over local sensitivities"
Greens Councillor, Amanda Findley

written to Mr Kelly, the NSW Minister for Planning, asking that current land clearing be halted due to documented breaches of development consent, and the under-reporting of this vulnerable species under both state and Commonwealth legislation.

NPA questions how any environmental assessment of such a beautiful forested area identified only a few years ago, in the Narrawallee Inlet Study, as having a "high priority" for conservation, is now being decimated.

The controversial Hazcorp

development leaves too many unanswered questions, and according to the NPA warrants a full public inquiry. How is it that the Department of Planning's major project assessment states that "(Shoalhaven) Council did not raise any objections to the proposal" when there were hundreds of public submissions opposing it? What has happened to those submissions, which according to reports Council has mysteriously lost, and in any case apparently did not convey to the Department? What of the Department's own investigations? How is it that they

can recommend to the Minister a project that in their words "largely demonstrated compliance with existing environmental planning instruments" and that "the project is in the public interest"?

Public interest in the controversial issue appears not to be waning. *The Milton-Ulladulla Times* has reported extensively on growing resident concerns. According to various stakeholders, it reports: "The bigger underlying issue in all this is the apparent ease with which state government can choose to bypass local input – from council or community".

According to Greens Councillor Amanda Findley: "This is a typical action from a state government that has systematically eroded community input, and ridden roughshod over local sensitivities".

High school students, who know the pristine wonders of Narrawallee Inlet, where they waded as toddlers and have grown to understand the ecological significance of its wetlands and forest corridor, are appalled at what they see happening. Lily Richardson, an Ulladulla High School student told the *Bush Tele* that she has banded together with other students to form a group called "The Future is in Our Hands".

The students have lost no time in voicing their concerns and recently organised a successful public event that included a panel of thinkers who led a discussion on ways Milton-Ulladulla can become a more sustainable community. In the words of the students: "A new way of thinking needs to be adopted if we are to achieve a sustainable future." ♦

Best Season on Record

The South Coast Shorebird Recovery Program began a decade ago to monitor, protect and recover three species of threatened beach nesting birds – the Hooded Plover (Critically Endangered), Little Tern (endangered) and Pied Oystercatcher (Endangered) – with the assistance of local community volunteers.

THE South Coast Shorebird Recovery Program began a decade ago to monitor, protect and recover three species of threatened beach nesting birds – the Hooded Plover (Critically Endangered), Little Tern (endangered) and Pied Oystercatcher (Endangered) – with the assistance of local community volunteers. This is achieved by surveying the beaches for nesting shorebirds, fencing off these nesting areas to protect eggs and chicks and installing signage to educate beach goers and dog walkers. Predator control such as fox baiting is also carried out in surrounding National Parks.

This summer breeding season

has been the best on record for the threatened shorebirds of the Ulladulla area. Increased community support and a new influx of dedicated volunteers means that the birds are being very well looked after. The 'Hoodies' have fledged more than double their usual number of chicks – seventeen so far between Jervis Bay and Batemans Bay. With less than fifty adults of this species remaining in NSW, this is an excellent result. Furthermore the Lake Conjola Little Tern Colony was the biggest on record with at least 60 breeding pairs, 84 nests and a total of 72 fledglings.

Considering the entire NSW



coast population was down to only 110 breeding pairs in the mid 1980's, it is amazing to now

have so many birds at just one colony.

For more information please

contact the NPWS Shorebird Recovery Coordinator on 44549516. ♦

letters

BARGAIN PRICE!

The "For Sale" sign near Falls Creek Bridge says it all: 80 acres water frontage: \$1.1M.

This property, with direct creek frontage, a four-bedroom house, dams, sheds and tennis court, is an indicator of land value in the Comberton Grange area.

Allowing for the improvements and attractive water frontage, the land is worth approximately \$800,000, or \$10,000 per acre.

Shoalhaven Council sold 3,000 acres of Comberton Grange to the Shaolin Foundation for the Temple development for \$5M, or approx. \$1,700 per acre.

To allow for poorer quality of some of the site, let's settle for half value – say \$5,000 per acre or \$15M for 3,000 acres.

But wait – there's more. The Foundation hadn't paid for the land. They paid \$250,000 up front, and you and I generous ratepayers lent them \$4,750,000 at 3.75% interest – half the current mortgage rate, with payments under the contract paid 3 months in areas.

A saving to the Foundation, and a cost to us, of \$160,000 per year.

But wait – there's more! The site included a Council-owned quarry, the only publicly owned hard rock quarry between Bombo and Batemans Bay. The quarry valuation is at least \$3M. The environmental licence to operate the quarry is now in Chinese hands.

Former Mayor Watson and the then Shoalhaven City Council, with the enthusiastic support of Matt Brown, were very generous with our money.

The Foundation paid \$5M for an asset conservatively valued now at \$16M. In foregone interest, we pay of \$160,000 per year for the privilege.

The then Mayor Watson sure drove a hard bargain. And as he keeps telling us, he paid his own fare to China to clinch the deal.

If Council had received real value, the money would have done wonders for the Ulladulla Civic Centre and other improvements in Shoalhaven.

John Hatton. Huskisson

STILL WAITING

People of the Bay & Basin are starting to wonder what happened to the passed and DA approved shopping centre/police station at the JB round-about. Was it just another con for the housing developers to get land by stealth, as the land for housing is being cleared at a large rate next to the shopping centre,

Wal Bourke, Sanctuary Point

Shaolin Development: Threat to water quality

Judy Gjedsted

FOLLOWING the recent report by the 'South Coast Register' of an \$8 million private donation by "a wealthy Chinese businessman known as Mr Huen" to the previously (apparently) cash strapped Shaolin Foundation, former Mayor and now Councillor, Greg Watson, an enthusiastic sponsor of the Shaolin development, stated that, following consultancies and finalisation of plans, construction for proposed tourist, residential and commercial development in Jervis Bay's hinterland (on a property known as Comberton Grange) could begin mid 2010.

MINISTERIAL CAUTION

In 1995 a previous Labor Government Minister, Craig Knowles, decided a proposed amendment to the Shoalhaven LEP 1985 should not proceed. The rejected amendment would have allowed the erection of dwellings on just eleven urban lots in Woollamia (across and downstream from the proposed Shaolin development site on Currumbene Creek). Minister Knowles had concluded that "the development was likely to significantly affect water quality... was in conflict with the water quality objectives proposed for the Jervis Bay Marine Reserve... was likely to result in the degradation of a SEPP 14 wetland... valuable fauna, bird life and fish habitat would be threatened... and a precedent could be set."

CURRUMBENE CREEK

The southern boundary of the proposed site for the Shaolin development on Comberton Grange runs along some 4 to 7 kms of Currumbene Creek. (Different assessments of length are recorded). Currumbene Creek is the major watercourse entering Jervis Bay and forms some 72% of the Bay's total catchment. The Creek is a declared Sanctuary Zone within the Jervis Bay Marine Park and contains a significant proportion of designated wetlands. The high water quality of Jervis Bay is attributed to largely undeveloped catchments which, as a consequence, spared the waters of Jervis Bay from the sediments, nutrients and other

Currumbene Creek and its associated wetlands ... contribute significantly to the unique environment of Jervis Bay itself.

pollutants normally exported from developed and developing catchments.

In 1973, a special issue of the Australian Littoral Society journal *Opereulum* published the results of a two year survey of Jervis Bay's fish species. Its author, Dr David Pollard, maintained that Currumbene Creek, specifically, (and other inflowing streams) provide most of the organic detritus which form the base of the food upon which much of the Bay's fish fauna depends.

In evaluating a proposed Currumbene Creek crossing downstream from Comberton Grange in 1990, J.A. Broadbent stated "Currumbene Creek contains an estuarine component very much in need of comprehensive management." Broadbent believed "it should be clear that Currumbene Creek and its associated wetlands represent an outstanding ecological and important economic resource in their own right and, equally importantly, contribute significantly to the unique environment of Jervis Bay itself."

WATER QUALITY

A collection of specialist articles was published in 1995 by the Australian Nature Conservation Agency in consideration of Jervis Bay as "a place of cultural, scientific and educational value." An article on 'Water Quality' by T. Ward, CSIRO Division of Fisheries, states "the effectiveness of planning policies with regard to water quality can only be verified by a reliable and scientifically valid program. This was recommended (for Jervis Bay) by the CSIRO in 1993." Ward's article advises that (by 1995) "agreement to implement such a program had not been reached amongst the various government agencies with direct interest in the management of the Bay."

Ward's article also noted that "suspended material carried into the Bay by Currumbene Creek can be detected over 1 km from the mouth creek" and "in extreme events plumes

have been observed to extend a distance of over 10 kms."

The 2000 Currumbene Creek Catchment Management Plan proposal again indicated a need for comprehensive management i.e. "A Currumbene Impact Monitoring Program (CIMP) should be adopted by all participating agencies as an on-going operation to establish baseline studies of water quality... cumulative impact... assessment of water quality objectives... improve environmental management."

ALGAL BLOOM

In 1992 a spectacular and disturbing algal bloom occurred in Jervis Bay. Milky water was first reported on the 16th December 1992. It had dissipated by the 22nd January 1993. In his report on this phenomenon, Dr Charles Jacoby, CSIRO, included the possibility "that creeks may (also) have been significant sources of some macronutrients near the time of the bloom". In stating that the bloom was unlikely to cause any long term damage to the ecology of Jervis Bay, Jacoby suggests that this "does not mean a similar event in the future will not cause long term damage or that actions should not be taken to better understand the causes and consequences of future blooms and other environmental impacts."

In his investigation of the bloom, Jacoby found identification of causes hampered by a lack of reliable data. Jacoby also recommended improvement in the management of Jervis Bay with "the development of a monitoring program with well-designed sampling schemes, clear interpretive models, sets of response criteria based on management objectives and agreed sets of management and emergency responses." The report considers these measures would have "significantly reduced the (public) confusion and anxiety associated with the algal bloom."

For many years reputable voices have noted, warned and



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Editor: Patrick Thompson
pat@envirobook.com.au
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sought to redress a perceived lack of comprehensive planning, management and monitoring for Jervis Bay generally and Currumbene Creek and wetlands specifically. Broadbent (1990); Jacoby (1992); CSIRO (1993); Ward and Minister Knowles (1995); Shoalhaven Catchment Management (2000). None appear to have been heeded.

CONFUSION AND ANXIETY?

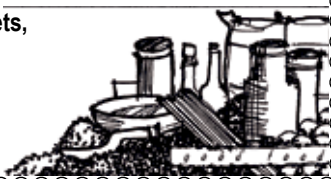
With regard to ecological factors and environmental measures, Shaolin's Part 3A Project Application for large scale clearing, construction and occupation on Comberton Grange states that the Government (NSW) would consider development acceptable if 'adequate' measures are taken to ensure no 'significant' local disturbance. Jacoby noted that all guidelines require modification for specific situations. This then begs the question, against what tested and established local criteria are the ambiguities of Shaolin's assertions of adequate measures and insignificant disturbances to be assessed?

The State of NSW is charged with the protection of significant aquatic habitats. Currumbene Creek is listed on the Commonwealth Directory of Important Wetlands and the Commonwealth claim 900 hectares of Jervis Bay waters. Comberton Grange is being sold on easy terms to Shaolin by Shoalhaven's Local Government. Now might be a very good time to remind any, or all, of these Governments of former Minister Knowles application of the precautionary principle to a far more modest development proposal for what seemed then (and seems now) to have been very good reasons. ♦

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Nowra CCTV

Adam Bonner

SHOALHAVEN City Council has decided to install 18 high definition closed circuit television cameras (CCTV) in Nowra CBD with most coverage given to Junction Street and Junction Court. Reception and monitoring equipment will be housed in a control room at Nowra Police Station. The cameras will be passively monitored to begin with, meaning that police can access the monitors but will not have anybody watching continuously. The video footage will be retained for up to 60 days and then destroyed unless it is part of a police investigation.

The funding for the cameras has come from the National Community Crime Prevention Program. This program has ceased and there is no recurrent funding available for ongoing maintenance, repair, monitoring or expansion.

How Is It Being Sold

Shoalhaven Council's Code of Practice for Nowra CBD CCTV Project states the primary and secondary purpose is to assist in the prevention of crime against the person and property respectively. Assisting with the detection and prosecution of offenders is also an objective.

The local media also talk about these cameras reducing 'anti-social behaviour'. Such behaviours may or may not be illegal depending on what you mean by this phrase.

Does it Reduce Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour

You don't have to re-invent the wheel when it comes to the installation of CCTV. England and Wales have more than 4.2 million surveillance cameras, up from 40,000 in 2002. As a result there have been many independent and reputable studies looking at this question.

Beware of those who claim

A study conducted by Norris and Armstrong for Hull University found 40 per cent of people were targeted for "no obvious reason" mainly on the basis of belonging to a sub cultural group.

miraculous cures! It is easy to fall under the spell of believing these cameras provide a means of reducing crime and anti-social behaviour. We all want to reduce these problems in our society. Local Government is no different, but you can't make claims without providing evidence, otherwise you risk wasting large amounts of ratepayer's money and building expectations that can't be met.

Shoalhaven City Council has not adequately researched the issue. Instead it has been driven by those seeking to 'do something' to address local crime and vandalism. In a recent conversation with one prominent Councillor I was informed he was sick and tired of meetings with Nowra shopkeepers who had suffered property damage. "We had to do something." When I reminded him that 'doing something' which didn't alleviate the problem was a waste of money, I received no reply.

Shoalhaven Council staff have also fallen for the myth. Their Community Development Co-ordinator informed me "since the installation of CCTV anti-social behaviour in the CBD area of Toowoomba (Qld) has dropped by two thirds." The problem with collecting evidence from other Councils is that they have neither the resources nor the knowledge to assess whether CCTV has been successful.

Councils that spend hundreds of thousands or even millions of ratepayers' dollars on CCTV have a vested interest in justifying their expenditure. This creates a credibility problem for the data they collect. However, if this were the only problem they could rebut such criticism by denying it. What they can't deny is that their data collection is fundamentally flawed by confounding variables and displacement.

Let me explain. Councils that have implemented CCTV collect data on incidents (crimes and anti-social behaviours) that have been recorded on video. They look at this data over time to see if there has been a reduction in the number of incidents. There are a number of problems with this approach. Firstly it doesn't take account of other factors that may have caused the reduction. For example if better street lighting or more security patrols are implemented at the same time as CCTV, these may be the cause of any reduction in the incident count.

Councils rarely, if at all, conduct studies with a control area. So if area A has had CCTV installed and a similar area is chosen as a control without the installation of these cameras, a comparison can be made. Without doing this one can't say that any reduction in crime wasn't just an aberration.

Displacement is another problem. If CCTV is installed in a Council area how do we know any reduction in crime or anti-social behaviour hasn't been pushed to surrounding areas or other softer targets? Its not much use claiming there has been a reduction in assaults and property crime if only a few hundred metres away there has been an increase. Shifting the problem doesn't make it any less prevalent.

These problems have rendered much of the local government data in Australia and elsewhere unreliable. In Great Britain, however, there has been much more extensive research that has attempted to address some of the above-mentioned shortfalls.

In 2002 the British Home Office commissioned a study by Welsh and Farrington.

They looked at 18 studies where control areas were included. Of the 18 half showed some reduction in crime. A

quarter showed an increase and the rest showed no effect. When Welsh and Farrington combined the results of all 18 studies they found the reduction in crime was statistically insignificant. In other words the areas with cameras didn't do any better than those without.

In 2005 the Home Office commissioned another study by Gill and Spriggs. They analysed the data from 14 different sites in the UK. In seven of the sites there was a reduction in vehicle crime but in three sites there was an increase in violence against the person. When crime was viewed collectively they found no overall effect from CCTV. They also found that fear of being victimized by crime did not change before and after the installation of CCTV.

In 2006 Wells, Allard and Wilson from Bond University looked at the effectiveness of CCTV as a crime prevention tool in Gold Coast public spaces and on the Queensland City Rail network. They concluded "CCTV as a crime prevention tool is questionable...CCTV is effective at detecting crime and/or may result in increased reporting as opposed to preventing any type of crime."

It isn't surprising therefore that the NSW Attorney General's Department doesn't support the inclusion of CCTV in local government's Community Safety and Crime Prevention Plans.

Shoalhaven City Council's Assessment

Shoalhaven City Council only looked at other Councils that have installed CCTV. They didn't go to Wagga Wagga or Albury City Council where these cameras have been rejected. Nor, during any of their deliberations, did they ask for expert advice from either Privacy NSW or specialist input on the risks to civil liberties. No privacy impact assessment was carried out and when I requested an internal review they rejected it on the basis that the cameras had not been switched on yet.

During 2006 numerous petitions were submitted to Council by Councillor Ward expressing concerns about crime, vandalism and anti-social behaviour. Some of these requested Council "provide appropriate security measures in the Nowra CBD." None of them specifically mentioned the installation of CCTV in public places.

Shoalhaven City Council's decision to install CCTV has been driven by ideology over common sense. There has not been a thorough assessment of their efficacy or any cost benefit analysis, and the way it is being sold to the public is misleading.

Privacy/Civil Liberty Concerns

Shoalhaven City Council claims copyright over the images they record despite not

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asking the individuals who are the subject of the recordings. It is a breach of privacy for Council to record the image of individuals who are doing nothing more than going about their daily business. In my opinion it also breaches the Information Protection Principles in the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW).

The first of these principles states that the agency must collect the personal information for a lawful purpose and it must be directly related to the agency's activities. Shoalhaven City Council is recording the image of all who walk the CBD. Only a very small percentage of those are offenders, the rest are 'collateral damage'. There is no purpose in collecting their image. Nor is it Council's role to collect evidence on behalf of the police.

The common claim from supporters of CCTV is that if you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear. The evidence suggests otherwise. The fact that images will be retained at Nowra Police Station for 60 days with a range of people being able to access them is disturbing enough.

A study conducted by Norris and Armstrong for Hull University found 40 per cent of people were targeted for "no obvious reason" mainly on the basis of belonging to a sub cultural group. Black people were much more likely to be under surveillance than their presence in the population suggested. 30 per cent of targeted surveillances of black people were protracted as compared with only 10 per cent of white people. Young males and young black males were particularly targeted. Those deemed to be "out of time and out of place" with the commercial image of the city were subjected to prolonged surveillance. One in ten women were targeted for entirely voyeuristic reasons by male operators.

Another grave concern about the installation of CCTV cameras is that once they are in place the momentum for expansion is unrelenting. By this I mean both the expansion in the number of cameras and the intensity of monitoring. The number of categories of anti-social behaviour also increases. Behaviours we would have turned a blind eye to become grist for the mill. People we would have previously classified as less fortunate (beggars, drunks and the homeless) receive undue attention.

There is the very real possibility these cameras will be

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Comberton Grange Quarry

Judy Gjedsted

IN 1989 the Sydney Total Environment Centre (TEC) were applicants in an appeal against the establishment, by Shoalhaven Council, of a quarry on Comberton Grange. The Court dismissed the TEC's appeal and granted consent for the quarry to Council "in accordance with conditions annexed hereto".

In 1990 the "Shoalhaven and Nowra News" reported on Council's proposal to start site works for development of the quarry. In opposing this development Alderman Watson (former and future Mayor) is reported as stating "if the quarry development goes ahead it effectively sterilises Comberton Grange for higher purposes".

Despite Alderman Watson's opposition the Comberton Grange Quarry, licensed to produce 35,000 tonnes p/a, was established by 1990/91 and, although reported as having virtually ceased production in 2001 for unspecified reasons, quarry license conditions were increased, in 2004, to allow production of 55,000 tonnes p/a.

THE SALE

In August 2004, Council proposed the sale of the original Comberton Grange site of three lots and resolved to exclude the quarry and quarry access road from sale. By October, 2004,

Nowra CCTV ◀3

used to monitor political rallies and demonstrations. Law abiding citizens exercising their democratic rights could be kept under surveillance. Shoalhaven City Council's Code of Practice allows for the provision of temporary cameras for major or special events. In China these cameras were used during the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests to identify thousands. Their images were broadcast on television with rewards for information.

Financial Costs

The cost of installing, maintenance, repairs and monitoring of CCTV cameras in public places is very high. It is one of the major reasons why Wagga Wagga and Albury City Councils have rejected the proposal in favour of other cost effective ways of addressing crime and anti-social behaviour.

I have been unable, despite repeated requests, to obtain projected costings from Shoalhaven City Council for the Nowra CCTV system. The capital costs will presumably be met out of the National Community Crime Prevention Program grant of \$150,000. Recurrent ongoing costs for maintenance, repair and monitoring will have to be paid for by the ratepayer.

The cost to Shoalhaven ratepayers will grow significantly

Council's collective mind had changed and the quarry was advertised for sale "as having (at) 1991, a supply of 990,000 tonnes of sandstone and 328,000 tonnes of dolerite" and (at the maximum extraction rate) "a life of approximately 18 years". By March, 2005, the proposed Comberton Grange land sale parcel also included three additional lots which had been purchased by Council in 1995 for \$192,000 and were known as the Pine Forest.

MONEY

In 1985 Shoalhaven City Council purchased "land known as Comberton Grange" for an amount of \$1.3 million, in part, to secure the Currumbene Dome (the potential quarry) as a hard rock source for the future development of the city.

In 1990, in his reported opposition to the quarry development, Alderman Watson stated his belief that "future sale of residential blocks on Comberton Grange would be worth \$240 million". He also estimated the sale of other land "for tourist related activities" to be worth \$50 million. In 1990, Alderman Watson's expectations for Council's 1084 ha land holding totalled some \$290 million.

MONEY?

In June 2006, a contract for Sale of the Comberton Grange property (now six lots totalling 1,248.36 ha) to the Shaolin

if the system is moved from passive to active monitoring, as Shoalhaven City Council's Code of Practice suggests might be the case in accordance with the objectives of the program. Employing staff to watch cameras is expensive. It begs the question why aren't these funds being used to employ staff/contractors to do security patrols during peak periods? Also why is Council taking on the financial responsibility for the police? It isn't Council's role to be an evidence collector. Crime is primarily the responsibility of the State Government.

In Toowoomba (Qld), which has had CCTV for 15 years, the recurrent annual costs have soared to \$150,000 and the number of cameras has grown to 43. In Ipswich (Qld) the number of cameras has grown to 185 and the cost of maintenance, repair and monitoring is now \$800,000 annually.

The Real Reason For These Cameras?

If CCTV doesn't reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, what other justification is there? The answer is surveillance. So the police have access to footage that 'may' assist with an investigation/prosecution. That's a big 'may' though because if the image is poor or the alleged offender disguises his or her identity, the footage may be useless.

Temple Foundation (Aust) was signed by (now) Mayor Watson at Dengfeng, Shaolin's China base. The sale price was confirmed as \$5 million with Shaolin securing the contract on a down payment of just \$250 thousand. The value put on the quarry expressed as a percentage of the sale price was less than 10%.

In March, 2009, after missing several settlement deadlines, Shaolin were able to take advantage of the fortuitous Clause (45) in the original contract which allowed the sale to proceed as a three year mortgage, financed by the City of Shoalhaven and with interest payable six (6) monthly in arrears at the applicable (90) day Bank Bill Swap Rate. This interest rate appears to be approximately 3.5%.

The Comberton Grange Quarry license was transferred by Shoalhaven City Council to the Shaolin Temple Foundation on the 1st September, 2009.

MONEY!

In November, 2009, a Mr Huen, described by (now) Councillor Watson as a "wealthy Chinese businessman" made a private donation to Shaolin of \$8 million to "fund consultancy and finalisation of the master plans".

CONDITIONS OF CONSENT

The 2009 late Spring edition of the New Bush Telegraph published a letter I had written to Council regarding Council's

It's a limited justification that needs to be weighed against the privacy, civil liberty and financial costs. The pool of ratepayer money is limited. Would it not be better to put limited funds into programs that address the causes of crime or provide a more direct level of deterrence? Shoalhaven City Council didn't do a cost benefit analysis.

There is also something very unsavoury about a society that puts more value on seeking retribution and revenge from the 4-5 per cent who offend, than on protecting the privacy and civil liberties of the 95-96 per cent who do not.

What Can Be Done?

At the time of writing Nowra's CCTV cameras had not been switched on due to Shoalhaven City Council carrying out a review into whether they breach privacy laws.

You can write to Shoalhaven City Council's General Manager or to your elected Councillor asking him/her to move a motion in Council to remove CCTV cameras from public places in Nowra. There is a petition circulating calling for the removal. If you would like a copy or would like to help with its circulation you can contact Adam Bonner on (02) 4448 6133.

Privacy isn't a dirty word and your liberty is worth fighting for! ♦

admitted failure to comply with some consent conditions imposed by the Land and Environment Court in 1989 and, with the quarry license transfer, the prospect that Shaolin would be beneficiaries of Council's omissions. In most respects Council's responses to me have only served to raise greater concerns and more questions.

The Court's Condition (8) which was for "the creation of a contingency fund" to "safeguard against potential environmental damage and for progressive rehabilitation" was never complied with by Council.

As Council had earlier said it "specially accounts for restoration in its accounting system", I had asked if the changed license circumstances would require Shaolin to create a fund to make financial provision for contingencies.

Council replied, "development consent is an issue which relates to the development consent (sic) and therefore transfers with the ownership of the land to the new owner". However I am advised by the NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) that Shoalhaven Council remains the consent authority under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979 and that the ball for this, and other matters, is still in Shoalhaven Council's court.

Regarding the Court's provision for royalties to be paid by the quarry to Council's Cultural Fund, Council report that, during its ownership and operation, \$250,739 was paid of which \$100 thousand went to repayments for the quarry and that "this funding would be difficult to sustain now that ownership has been transferred". Council further advise that "there are no funds currently available for quarry rehabilitation" and that "the conditions of Quarry rehabilitation have been transferred with the ownership".

In 1989, a condition to which Council was subjected by the Court was that:

Condition 28a) "The applicant shall enter into a Conservation Agreement with the National Parks and Wildlife Service in respect of:

- i) Red Gum communities on dolerite;
- ii) The Bid Bid Creek Catchment;
- iii) Eucalyptus Robusta";

and Condition 28b) "The applicant shall enter into negotiations with the National Parks and Wildlife Service in respect of other conservation values on the Comberton Grange property".

This agreement was never signed. My question to Council was, why?

STALEMATE

In 1992 "a draft Conservation Agreement was forwarded to the National Parks and Wildlife Service" (by Council). Council

subsequently "looked at a modification of the original development approval and it appears that the original agreement was not entered into".

The pace of the parties to this agreement seems unhurried. Council says that, in 1996, four years after the draft was forwarded, the National Parks and Wildlife Service wrote back suggesting "a larger area of land additional to that identified in the 1989 Land and Environment Court".

It "appears to Council that the Parks Service wanted to put 28a) and 28b) in one agreement therefore the matter was never resolved". As? Because? Also? "condition 28b) did not require an agreement but 'negotiations' and no common position was achieved".

It otherwise 'appears' the Court had failed to realise the incapacity of a local Government and a State Government department to cope with the negotiation required to produce an outcome in Condition 28b). Because 28b) didn't happen 28a) didn't happen. The baby went out with the bathwater.

I can find no references in Council's material, beyond 1989, to the preservation of the species identified in the Court's condition and, for the answer to my questions,

■ are the Red Gum communities on dolerite and the Eucalyptus Robusta still extant? and,

■ if still extant, will these plant communities remain protected? your guess is as good as mine.

Many people have been employed and exercised by these matters over the years and the present situation has come at a cost. Of those involved, it appears Land and Environment Court pronouncements can be feather light.

The Total Environment Centre has moved on.

The Department of Environment and Climate Change confirmed its transfer of Environment Protection License No.3935 from Council to Shaolin, referred me back to Council as the consent authority and invited me to ring the Departments Environment Line "if you'd like to make a report in relation to the license". Not heard from, and hidden away somewhere in Environment and Climate Change, is what used to be the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

I am told the system has a little egalitarian chink in its armour which, conditionally, allows those with access to the necessary means, and enough resolve, to go back to the Land and Environment Court and ask that the Court's conditions be maintained.

As a scenario, the little battler against the odds makes for good movies but it doesn't say much for public policy and administration. ♦

Progress on a Proposed Community Food Co-op

Background

Perhaps you are one of the many who completed a survey some years ago about a proposed Community Food Co-op in the Ulladulla/Milton area. The project is still alive, but needs help. The Co-op will aim to be a contributing force for transformation towards greater sustainability. It wants to provide access to affordable bulk whole foods with minimal packaging, in an environment that fosters participation and cooperation. As far as it is able, it will seek to source local organic and bio-dynamic food. Amongst other things, the hope is to generate employment and provide opportunities for training through its volunteer program.

In summary the objects of the co-operative are to:

- ❑ source organic, bio-dynamic and local produce first;
- ❑ provide affordability through fairly priced food for all;
- ❑ minimize transportation impacts, energy consumption and waste;
- ❑ promote caring for the land and sustainable living;
- ❑ foster community participation through accessible and inclusive actions;
- ❑ educate about and provide healthy eating options;
- ❑ encourage local cottage industries;
- ❑ strive for ethical business practices and return profit to the community

The interim board and its supporters pay tribute to Marilyn Puschak the Co-Op's founding Coordinator, who died on November 11, 2009, following a period of illness. It is largely the vision and dedication of Marilyn that has brought the Food Co-op to the point where we hope we can open doors for trading in 2010. We acknowledge Marilyn's contribution. Amongst other things she researched and built a number of the processes and systems which have guided our own efforts.

Our Progress

We have secured a Community Building Partnerships grant of over \$90,000 for the design and fit-out of the retail premises. We also have a very good business plan and a strong action plan, and recently submitted a Development Application (DA) to Council for a great location in Ulladulla.

As a condition of our Community Building Partnerships grant we also

need to secure membership fees upfront and donations and/or loans from members, to be held in trust, to cover pre-sale costs while the Co-op builds its sales. That's why we need you to demonstrate your commitment, soon.

Your involvement and assistance

Amongst other things Co-operatives are built on membership and volunteerism. We will soon be conducting a membership drive and need expressions of interest from prospective members, now. Membership will attract purchase discount benefits and other entitlements, when the shop is open for business.

1. To become a member it is expected that you will simply pay a once only joining fee of \$55 and an annual subscription fee of \$30 (Total \$85 in year one, and \$30 only, thereafter). We will be offering a 50% discount for people who are unwaged. A single membership can be used at the shop for all residents in a household.

2. Please also consider making a donation and indicate your desire to do this by sending us an expression of interest in reply to this article.

Note: All funds will be held in trust. If we are unable to raise the Community interest necessary to fund our start-up, then all monies will be returned in full.

Expressions of interest for membership and making a donation can be made to: membership@communityfoodcoop.org.au or media@communityfoodcoop.org.au

At last we are very close to having a Food Co-op in the Ulladulla -Milton community, and your demonstrated commitment to make this happen has now become very critical to the process. We hope you can respond in the first instance by making an expression of interest for membership and/or a donation.

The proposed Co-op produces a newsletter 'The Happy Carrot Chronicle'. If you would like to receive regular copies of the newsletter and keep up-to-date with developments of the Co-op, you can do so by contacting:

media@communityfoodcoop.org.au and providing your name and email address.

On behalf of the proposed Community Food Co-op,

Rose & Mike
(Newsletter Editors)

The first national park

The recent documentary on ABC television – "Yellowstone" – has spurred **Geoff Mosley*** to set the record straight about the world's first national park...

AUSTRALIANS should be really proud that our Royal National Park was in fact the very first protected area anywhere in the world to be officially named as a national park. This moment in history is significant.

The gazettal of what was initially named 'The National Park' (the name was changed to 'Royal National Park' in 1954) took place on 26th April, 1879. It recorded that 18,000 acres had been dedicated for "the purpose of a national park". In 1880, the park was increased in size to 35,000 acres and later to 36,320 acres in 1887.

The initial gazettal – a move which had been anticipated for some time – was welcomed with pride, and the press reports of the time make interesting reading. A report in *The Sydney Morning Herald* of 29th March, 1879 headed 'A National Park' said "a better name could not

be given". On the 2nd April the same paper said that the area "for extent and beauty will hardly find its parallel within the same distance of any metropolis in the world".

While proximity to Sydney and to a proposed new railway was clearly important, the new park was seen as having a wider significance, affording as the newspaper said, "to the people of the whole colony (a) means of sport and recreation not to be surpassed anywhere in the world".

As for Yellowstone, it was named The Yellowstone Public Park and was established on United States Federal land by means of the Yellowstone Act of 1st March, 1872.

Its purpose was stated as being a "public park or pleasuring ground for the enjoyment of the people". Although very much larger than Australia's

The National Park, both shared public recreation and reservation as their main focus and both were linked to the building of a nearby railway.

Not that a debate exists as those closest to the history of Yellowstone National Park know that the Royal was first. In fact, when Yellowstone celebrated its centenary in 1972 the Yellowstone Library and Museum Association produced a commemorative book for the occasion entitled *Yellowstone a centenary of the wilderness idea*. In the book, authors Ann and Myron Sutton state:

"...but the first time the words "national park" were used in the body of a public act was in the establishment of Royal National Park near Sydney, Australia in 1879. It was then simply called "the National Park" (the first legislative reference to Yellowstone as a national park occurred in 1883 in a bill relating to appropriations)".

**Dr Geoff Mosley has had a life-long association with research and work in national parks and wilderness areas.*

Milton Meadows. A Hollow Victory, Land Zoned for Aged Care

Amanda Findley

At long last the saga of Milton Meadows @ Milton (farm land just North of the caravan park) has been resolved.

The community fought long and hard to have the land retained in the scenic zone that helps protect the village identity of Milton and stop sprawl from connecting Milton to Ulladulla.

Last year a move from some Councillors would have meant that the land could be used as a rural subdivision and carved in 2000m2 blocks.

This was against the position that after much debate the community had arrived at- that if the land was to be built upon that it had to be for the greatest good- a retirement complex that included a high care facility.

The community came out in force and with much pressure got Cllrs Ward and Guile to reverse their position and support the community.

Council then advised the Depart-

ment of Planning that it did not support a change of zoning that allowed rural residential but requested the Department place an allowance clause that supported an aged care facility.

This week the Dept released a memo that supported the recommendation that ultimately came from the community- no development other than aged care. It feels like a hollow victory – the land will ultimately be developed in an aged care fashion but must have the support of the Roads and Traffic Authority. A small amount of remnant rain forest vegetation will be retained as a watercourse buffer- but the all important ridge line will be lost as an undeveloped part of Milton's rural setting.

So now we wait and hope that an architect sympathetic to sustainable living and the rural landscape is engaged to produce a plan that creates a place for the aged that we can all be proud of and feel that it was worth compromising for.



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Orchid threatens development!

Alan Stephenson

WOULD you believe it – this was part of a recent South Coast Register headline. And just when we were beginning to believe that our local rag was entering a more enlightened era.

This is a throw-back to the idea that progress is all about more of everything – more people, more consumption, more vegetation clearing, more congestion, more development – more, more, more.

I thought progress meant getting better, improvement, advancement, beneficial etc, not excess and just plain, blind ignorance.

And, would you believe it, this threat to development was over the Spring Tiny Greenhood orchid (*Speculanthia vernalis*) which was recently afforded protection by its listing as Critically Endangered under the Australian threatened species legislation.

This is the highest level of protection that can be given any species growing in the wild. Its population consists of 450-500 plants which are totally restricted to the grounds of the Shoalhaven campus of the Wollongong University and adjacent Crown land to the west of Nowra.

The level of threat to the plants in the university grounds will depend on future plans for expansion of the institution, but the major and immediate threat to the species comes from Shoalhaven City Council's plans for a major urban development of the Crown land adjacent to the university.

The threatened species listing of this greenhood orchid means that the Australian Government will have to be consulted over any development plans. It can be expected that the government will want to be sure that any development proposals do not threaten this extremely rare species. In this context, it is to be hoped that our progress focussed Council will accept this requirement responsibly and ensure that the necessary surveys and conservation assessment of the orchid will be undertaken rigorously and by a reputable orchid specialist. And just in case Council is unaware of it, the necessary surveys will need to be undertaken when the species is visible above ground, and that is only during its spring flowering season.

The Spring Tiny Greenhood grows among islands of white-flowering Kunzea and Nowra Teatree in shallow sandstone soils. There are some interesting differences between the various *Speculanthia* species which differentiate this rare one from all of the others. Spring flowering, the flowering stem emerging from the top of its tuber and the emergence of the leaf rosette before flowering, are the distinguishing features of this threatened one. All other small-flowered greenhoods emerge during autumn to winter and the rosette of leaves emerges after flowering, borne on a lateral growth from the base of the flowering stem.

The Spring Tiny Greenhood along with most other threatened orchids in the Shoalhaven cannot be grown horticulturally due to its reliance on fungus produced by its specialised habitat.

So there we have it, this rarest of species with its highly specialised characteristics is such a giant killer it can bring the dreams and aspirations of human kind crashing down in ruins.

Or is the reality, like many of our native plants and animals, that this special plant is the one under threat? ♦



What Future for the Brittle Midge Orchid?

Alan W Stephenson
National Conservation Officer
Australasian Native Orchid Society (ANOS)

THE Brittle Midge Orchid (*Genoplesium baueri*) is a small terrestrial orchid species restricted to coastal or near coastal areas of New South Wales, in areas between Port Stephens and Ulladulla and was originally discovered and named in 1810, by the colonial Botanist Robert Brown.

What is so interesting and special about this species?

It is a monospecific orchid, ie, it is the only member of the genus *Genoplesium*. Unlike most terrestrial orchids, *G. baueri* does not have paired tubers but a single perennial tuber-like growth which is not replaced annually. It is also a self-pollinating saprophyte totally reliant on a soil borne mycorrhiza (fungus) for survival. These factors indicate pot culture is impossible.

G. baueri is a highly localised species occurring in small areas of open forest, shrubby forest and heathy forest in well-drained sandy or gravelly soil at altitudes from 0-250m. Some small groups of one or two plants occur in small cleared areas of habitat. Such areas can be less than one square metre and clearing can be by natural means (animal trails or fires) or simply on the verge of a fire trail or powerline easement. *G. baueri* relies on the overall habitat and does not use or require a specifically associated (sympatric) species. It does not interbreed with any closely related species and no hybrids have been found.

Plants have from 1-12 flowers but usually 3-5, with flowers appearing from mid-February to mid-April, depending on rainfall. The normal growth pattern is for plants to flower six weeks after good summer to autumn rain. Fire is often associated with increased numbers of many terrestrial species but *G. baueri* is not necessarily enhanced by fire, although this means of natural vegetative clearance allows plants to grow unimpeded by adjacent shrubs, which compete for light and space.

G. baueri enjoys some level of protection as it is listed as



a Vulnerable species in the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act. It is, however, much more threatened than this listing would indicate.

My research into this species has uncovered a total of 210 plants spread across 13 locations between Port Stephens and Ulladulla with two of the largest populations existing in the Shoalhaven.

Almost all plants are under threat from some type of development or another.

Some of the land it occurs on is freehold, crown reserve and crown land with zonings that would permit destructive development and, in one case, is on a powerline easement subject to weed spraying, trail bike riding etc.

Even where it occurs on national parks it is not secure. Due to lack of knowledge in the past, normal fire trail maintenance has destroyed some plants in one park and current trail upgrading plans are threatening some in another park. When this came to my attention I provided the national parks agency with locations and photos which will hopefully avoid any future problems there.

Even then, with one site

within the Bomaderry Creek Regional Park there is no guarantee that *Genoplesium baueri* will be secure. Surveys at Bomaderry Creek this year revealed 28 plants spread across the Park and adjacent crown land. In the case of the crown land, it is zoned for residential development. In the case of the Regional Park, there are plans afoot for a road to be constructed through the park (the North Nowra link road) which would destroy one site if the State Government allowed the road to be built.

Clearly the species is not just vulnerable as indicated by its listing in the State legislation, it is critically endangered!

Its very small population size, its patchy distribution over such a large area, its limited protection within secure reserves and the many development threats it faces require it to be listed as Critically Endangered under both the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act and the Commonwealth Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act.

It is about time we gave this special and unique plant some respite from the threat of development. ♦

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Access Areas for Dogs Policy

Mike Clear

DURING our summer holidays Council resolved to amend its Access Areas for Dogs Policy to allow dog on-leash access to all beaches. In the light of the serious and wide ranging implications of this, I offer this appraisal and recommend a more thorough consideration of the issues before any final decisions are made.

At the outset I make it clear that, I am not opposed to a dog on-leash policy in particular cases or even a dog off-leash policy in carefully selected areas. However, I am deeply concerned that after Council staff has developed a coherent system on dog access areas, following collaboration with a range of community interests and incorporating necessary legal requirements, that this could simply be torn down just to erect a simplistic 'one-size-fits all' policy, without any thorough analysis or reasonable justification. The existing policy may require some fine tuning, however, it needs to be recognized that this policy is already working to produce some good results.

While an important assumption for any form of regulation is that Council will make policy and take effective action to ensure its policy is implemented, the experience of many shorebird volunteers (who monitor beach activity regularly) is that dogs on beaches are rarely under effective control (i.e. leashed) and that rarely if ever is there any means of enforcing Council policy. It is reasonable to ask what effective

responsibility Council is taking for the implementation of its policy? Just who monitors and enforces Council policy and what resources are allocated, so that the duty of care implicit in legislation and policy is actually put into practice?

I draw attention to 3 significant areas of legislation and regulation which require Council's scrupulous consideration before a coherent and legally sound policy can be adopted by Council.

Threatened Species Considerations

A number of threatened species of shorebirds are recognised as significant under the New South Wales Government's Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 (TSC). Some of these threatened species such as the Hooded Plover (*Thinornis rubricollis*), Little Tern (*Sterna albiglans*) and Pied Oystercatcher (*Haematopus longirostris*) and the Sooty Oystercatcher (*Haematopus fuliginosus*) would seem to be directly impacted by Council's proposed changes to the Access Areas for Dogs Policy.

These particular shorebirds are recognised as critically endangered (Hooded Plover) or endangered species (Little Tern) or vulnerable (Pied and Sooty Oystercatcher) by the TSC Act, and impacts such as those from domestic dogs are a well documented threat to the survival of these species. Under the supporting literature for the TSC Act, domestic dogs are clearly identified as a significant threat. In fact, priority actions clearly state that a high

priority is to "Declare nesting habitat as wildlife protection areas under Companion Animal Management Plans and exclude uncontrolled dogs, particularly in the breeding season". Similarly, under the Commonwealth Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC) there are nationally listed bird species that are protected under the Act. There is a requirement not to take actions that could have harmful impacts to these listed species. Given Council's demonstrable lack of interest and action in enforcement with this policy it seems that Council's recent decision is therefore at odds with requirements of both existing State and Federal legislation.

Companion Animals Act

Council notes in its current Access Areas for Dogs Policy that "Penalties for non compliance apply under the NSW Companion Animals Act 1998". Of course this is entirely appropriate and as it should be. However, at least two further aspects of the Companion Animals Act are particularly relevant here. Firstly, the Act says that a dog should always be under effective control when off the owner's property. As pointed out above there appears to be little endeavour to achieve effective control or enforcement of Council's policy. Secondly, 14.1(h) of the Act identifies as prohibited dog areas, those areas that are public places for the protection of wildlife. Surely, in the spirit and intent of the Companion Animals Act, there could be few areas more emphatically

demanding a prohibited dog policy, than those identified as shorebird nesting sites.

Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) Requirements

As required by the Local Government Amendment (Ecologically Sustainable Development) Act 1997 and through its own "Guidelines for Integrating the Principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) into Shoalhaven City Council Activities", Shoalhaven City Council is required to implement Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) as best practice. However, in Council's current Access Areas for Dogs Policy (Number: POL08/403) Point 6-Application of ESD Principles, it states, 'None Applicable'. Both this stance and the amendment recently proposed on January 27, 2010 appear to be entirely inconsistent with Council's declared and legislatively required ESD position. This aspect clearly requires clarification because the whole intent and thrust of the ESD guidelines is that they should apply to all Council policy, rather than being used selectively. The relevance and application in this particular policy area is surely all too apparent.

The need for clarification is further emphasised, if one considers that Point 3.3 of the existing policy lists a range of places from which "Dogs are totally prohibited from entering". One such area is: "Within 200m of identified shorebird nesting sites". We know that on many Shoalhaven beaches, dogs are

prohibited down to the mean high tide mark, because this is the extent of National Park (NP) jurisdiction, and dogs are prohibited in NP. This means in effect that under existing Council policy, where shorebird nesting sites exist on Shoalhaven beaches immediately adjacent to National Park land, a "Dogs Prohibited" policy comes into effect.

In the current debate the rights of dog owners have been entirely respected. In fact, those with the most knowledge of locally threatened species have made careful discriminations about exactly which beaches for example, are best served by prohibiting dogs or where a dog on-leash policy is appropriate. Significant effort and ratepayer resources led to the policy of prohibiting dogs on selective beaches. Ensuring that dogs are under effective control where serious issues of species survival and biodiversity are at stake, is hardly a major imposition on dogs or their owners. There are plenty of beaches left for dog owners. They do not need access to every Shoalhaven beach.

Conclusion

In the light of the recent resolution of Council in Access Areas for Dogs Policy, a thorough review should be undertaken so that any changes give proper regard to the complexities and interrelationship of this policy with both Council's stated position and its legal obligations to the whole community, including review of obligations under other relevant NSW State and Commonwealth legislation. ♦

Frogs- population boost

Shoalhaven city is witnessing a once in a generation happening – the incredible breeding event of the threatened Green and Golden Bell Frog.

These endangered frogs are loving the timing of Xmas and Easter rains which has resulted in perfect breeding conditions.

The tadpoles have now grown to froglets and have dispersed in large numbers around the edges of the Shoalhaven floodplain looking for food and habitat.

The Green and Golden Bell frogs are now looking for a cosy spot to spend the winter hibernating.

This mass breeding event suggests that water quality is good and there is suitable habitat for the species to breed, feed and move to areas that haven't before supported a population- a good news story for East Nowra.

Green and Golden Bell Frogs may grow to 10 centimetres, but most of the frogs around at the moment are first year juveniles about 2cm long. Individual frogs vary in colour from bright green to patchy golden/green to almost dark brown. A creamish white stripe extends from behind the eye almost to the groin.

Green and Golden Bell Frog are listed in NSW and nationally as a threatened species and protected by Federal legisla-

tion. There is concern about their future because overall numbers are continuing to decline, mostly due to:

- a debilitating fungus that attacks the frog's skin and is transmitted by human touch
- the destruction and drainage of wetlands
- predation by the introduced mosquito fish
- inappropriate pesticide application
- and feral animals.

The Bell frog is an unusual frog in that it is active during the day.

What can you do to help the Green and Golden Bell Frogs?

- Enjoy the frogs around your home and be aware of their presence so you do not accidentally harm them. They will not harm you.
- Do not handle the frogs unless absolutely necessary and if so handle gently. If you need to move a frog, wear disposable gloves
- Avoid mowing on wetter days or times when frogs are moving over grass; and
- Encourage your children to observe and appreciate wildlife.

Visit the internet site <http://threatened-species.environment.nsw.gov.au/tsprofile/index.aspx> for further information about Green and Golden Bell Frogs. ♦



Picture from the animal pictures archive available at www.animalpicturesarchive.com/

Finding a future to hope in

Patrick Thompson

AT Easter I attended, with my eight-year-old daughter, the National Folk Festival in Canberra. What a delightful experience it was to attend this well organised event. It attracts thousands who spend four to five days and nights enjoying music and dance, whilst living as one community. While there I attended a Quaker service which was a first for me. The Quakers are a broad church and welcome all-comers, no matter what their religious beliefs. For those who have never attended such a gathering, it may be of interest to know that a Quaker service is essentially one conducted in silence, offering the opportunity to find a deeper place of stillness. Not a bad place to go in today's world and especially if you are blessed with an eight year old dynamo!

At the centre of the Quaker way, I learnt that there are some shared understandings that all Quakers recognise as central insights. Their insights, which they call testimonies, centre on four tenants, namely: Truth, Equality, Peace and Simplicity. According to their literature, Quakers do not have a fixed creed, but believe that each individual must find their own understanding of God, and be guided by conscience in finding his or her way to live.

I suppose few Christians, Muslims or Buddhists would quarrel with the idea that Truth, Equality, Peace and Simplicity should be at the core of our lives; nor I suppose would most atheists, humanists or anarchists. What a pity it seems to be, that humans are often incapable of matching theory with practice. So often when confronted directly with tragic circumstance, humans can be remarkably compassionate; say when a loved one is struck down or calamity visits our doorstep. However, if disaster strikes in a distant place, or some impending strife is set to visit us some time off into the future, we seem to have a capacity to ignore the consequences until we feel them directly. We seem to lack the capacity to be moved even by hard evidence about situations that seem distant from us.

Take for example two matters of great moment, namely the latest round in the global financial crisis and catastrophic climate change. Both would seem to threaten our very existence, yet most people seem to show little or no serious interest in addressing the causes, and taking the action needed to address these critical issues. Indeed, we are worse than the proverbial ostrich, because it appears that we humans are collectively further stoking the greenhouse fire, and speculating once more on the money markets. I would argue we are in for serious trouble.

As you simplify your life, the laws of the universe will be simpler; solitude will not be solitude, poverty will not be poverty, nor weakness weakness. ~Henry David Thoreau

On the matter of the global financial crisis, there has been some attempt to find those to blame, and naturally the banks have come in for some well deserved attention. Banks however are merely the instruments, whilst human greed is the root cause. Certainly, banks are at the centre of the issue; they don't even know the extent of their individual exposure. According to the Bank for International Settlements, the "total notional amounts" of derivatives as at December 2008 for the G10 countries and Switzerland, stood at a huge US\$592 trillion. That is nearly nine times the total GDP of the entire world (US\$69.49 trillion). Source: CIA World Fact Book GDP figures for 2008).

We all know the story. Governments were forced to step in last year and "save" the banks. Whom may we ask is going to "save" the governments! Japan, USA, Britain are heavily in debt, whilst countries like Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Ireland are close to bankrupt. The social consequences are profound and are in reality yet to be felt.

As I write, the US dollar is rapidly appreciating because of the uncertainties surrounding the Euro. Commodity and stock prices are once again falling sharply, following the recent recovery and many investors are set to take serious losses. The problem was that while the US and the global economy had begun a modest recovery, asset prices climbed much too quickly. Interestingly, what lay behind this bubble, undoubtedly, were those who had been borrowing heavily on a falling US dollar, in the hope of making easy money. They have now been caught short.

Then there is the matter of the coming climate catastrophe. Actions speak louder than words. Whilst many governments are signing up to large emission reduction targets, there is, in the words of Dr James Hansen, NASA's climate scientist, "absolutely no way that the world can meet the kind of targets that they're talking about for future decades". He cites two examples; a recently signed agreement between the US and Canada, to make a pipeline to carry oil from tar sands to the US; and Australia's expanding its port facilities to export more coal, as examples of governments either lying or kidding themselves.

Canadians and Australians are the world's worst per capita emitters of greenhouse gases and this does not take into account the future emissions, which ultimately will come from the coal and oil they export. Australia is the world's

largest producer of coal and it may come as a surprise to some that Canada is now the world's second largest producer of oil after Saudi Arabia.

What has brought Canada to the fore in oil production is that as we approach "peak oil", the big oil companies like BP and Shell are turning to tar sands. The problem here is that tapping into tar sands is not like sinking an oil well. With it there comes a horrible environmental cost. Not only are vast areas of natural forests, peat lands and grasslands being mined to excavate shallow bitumen deposits, but also the process needed to extract oil from the bitumen has a huge carbon footprint. Just how much extra carbon ends up being released compared to traditional oil production is anyone's guess, but it is fair to say that, on average, tar sands will be up there with dirty brown coal or even worse. All this is enough to make one turn to religion!

Environmentalism is sometimes seen as being like a religion. Many of its devotees are thought of as being zealots to their cause. I tend to agree with the pioneering conservationist Myles Dunphy, who once wrote prophetically that: "For a knowledge of God, study Nature". Surely ecology provides a better basis for modern theology than the Old Testament's directive exhorting humankind to hold dominion over the Earth and its creatures.

Any rational analysis of the way we are choosing to live would point to it being grossly unsustainable. The market economy as we know it has failed us, because it is based on greed, endless growth and over-

consumption. The problems cannot be fixed in the manner our politicians and leaders advocate – more growth.

It is plain for all to see that global growth has been built in past decades on unsustainable debt, but just as the debt cannot continue to grow, the unsustainable growth can not last. The earth's resources are finite, yet we fail to take this basic fact into account. Scientists tell us that not only are there dangerous consequences from our actions affecting the climate, but they also tell us that we are headed for a future world of scarcity.

The problems cannot be fixed in this society and yet I remain an optimist, as I look forward to living in a world where material living standards as we know them will be much less affluent. Not that this will be achieved without great social upheaval. People will fight to hold on to their material well being. An economist colleague of mine once used to say that people would be willing to pay \$10 a litre for petrol and still not give up on their cars.

Governments, in answer to the dictates of their corporate masters, will continue to exhort us to work longer and harder for the illusion that "growth" still is the panacea required for the growing social dislocation and falling material standards that are now inevitable.

And just as they go on doing this, their exhortations will become more and more irrelevant for the vast majority of citizens, who will in growing numbers begin to find their own solutions.

We still live in a lucky country, and not because there remain vast quantities of minerals to extract. The minerals are a curse! No, we are a lucky country because we have space, and some freedoms left to us to live the way we choose. Nature is benevolent and there are signs

that more of us are beginning to embrace a simpler way of living. There are great opportunities that lie ahead to build more self-sufficient communities. People will not be able to afford much of what they currently take for granted. A very different overall economic system will emerge; one that is under social control, rather than one dictated by market forces. It will be a society not fixated by growth. It will be a society based on needs rather than wants.

In many ways, I think our Shoalhaven community is well placed to lead. We have a wonderful older population who bring wisdom to our way of thinking. The abundance of rich agricultural lands, still remaining, provides a resource of inestimable future value. The infusion of "sea changers", many of whom will be future refugees from Sydney's urban pressures, will bring new vitality. Unemployment is high, especially among our youth currently, but in a radically changed economy they will be needed. In a less competitive world there will be more time for fishing! ♦

ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Unfortunately, we have already passed a point of no return in terms of staving off massive disruptions. It is time to begin talking about how to preserve a coherent human community without a retreat into mass survivalism. It is time to start planning how we can endure in a world that will be far less stable and far more threatening than the one we grew up in.

Ross Gelbspan, from a book review : Joe Romm's *Straight Up. Rommrodding America's Climate Complacency*

Tomerong Tip – too dangerous to tolerate

THE Greens have added their voice to concerns about a proposed major new tip at Tomerong. Sylvia Hale, Greens MP and spokesperson for Planning, has put questions about the tip to the Ministers for Planning and the Environment.

"Locating an enormous tip in the Shoalhaven area at Tomerong simply doesn't make sense," said Ms Hale's press release.

"Using an old quarry site that has been the subject of blasting, and fracturing of the rocks over many years must surely call into question whether a proposed dam to control leachate could operate safely.

"Added to that, there are concerns about the effect of a tip on local bushland and fauna and the impact of a massive increase in heavy truck movements along the Princes Highway.

"The development of a major tip in the catchment of Jervis Bay is hardly likely to improve the image of the South Coast.

"One of the region's greatest attractions is its clean, green image, its temperate rainforests, tall trees, clean rivers and streams, and pristine white sandy beaches. That asset must be protected both for its own natural values and for the economic benefit and quality of life it brings to residents of the Shoalhaven.

"Everyone should be disturbed that the Minister for Planning has taken the decision on this major proposal out of the hands of the local council and given to a Joint Regional Planning Panel. The majority of the Panel's members, including chair Pam Allen, a former Labor Government Minister, are the Minister for Planning's appointees.

"Elected local councillors, who are answerable to their community, should make decisions that will impact on the local community. Those decisions should be governed by strong planning laws that protect the local environment and ensure that any development actually improves the quality of life for the community into the future. ♦