



Will there be a Shaolin Temple?

Dennis Argall

AS *New Bush Telegraph* goes to press, we do not know what will become of the proposal for a Shaolin Temple at the 1,250-hectare Comberton Grange site, approximately 12 kilometres south of Nowra and east of the highway. It is an intriguing proposal and we invited the Shaolin Temple's manager for this project Patrick Pang, to set out their concept in the adjoining article.

This is a major project and the position of the State Government was set out in a press release mid-year which we also set out so the situation is clear.

It may be that the land has been sold by Shoalhaven City Council as we go to press, settlement having been delayed.

Some controversy surrounds the selling of the Comberton Grange property by the council. Some have expressed concern about the council's management of environment and heritage assets while owning the property. The property contains a deposit of bluemetals which means there could be a valuable quarry there. And there have been some who have questioned how the deal was done and price set for the Shaolin Temple.

These are separate issues, local issues, separate from the

merits of the Shaolin Temple's proposal.

The new Shoalhaven Mayor, Paul Green, with his background as Fred Nile Christian Democrat federal and state candidate expressed during the elections his reservations about having people of different faith come here and alter the character of the Shoalhaven. He has not spoken in such terms,

though saying there needs to be a Social Impact study, since the elections. It is worth noting that the Local Government Act contains at Section 8 a Charter for Councils which includes this:

8 The council's charter
(1) A council has the following charter:

- [third point] to exercise its functions in a manner that is consistent

...this project is of immense potential importance to the economic future of the Shoalhaven and the business of engaging us better with multiculturalism and modern Australia.

with and actively promotes the principles of multiculturalism

As the Planning Department's release makes clear, there are many steps to be taken before approval.

This is clearly a major investment proposal for the Shoalhaven, coming from a country weathering the global economic crisis well (though China, as the chief financier of American government and private borrowing in recent years is impacted by that as well as by the general weakness of the American market).

My experience in working with China in the past, as ambassador and in close contact with commercial negotiations, makes me very conscious that there is a tendency on the Australian side of negotiations to present an uncoordinated position and to try to rush, while Chinese approaching large long term commitments will be concerned to establish an understanding of details, potential flaws, everything to their commercial advantage and whether indeed there is a real human and organisational basis for long term collaboration. The Chinese approach makes more sense.

It is my view that this project is of immense potential importance to the economic future of the Shoalhaven and the business of engaging us better with multiculturalism and modern Australia. I indicated to the Abbot in conversation in July, speaking as former Ambassador (an institutional not personal status regarded seriously in China, not here) that if they come here, I believed it important that the Shaolin be involved with social and cultural issues 'in town' as part of our community, not stuck out there in isolation in the bush. ■

Read more (on page 2):

► Shaolin Temple: The Ancient Order of Monks, by Patrick Pang, Director, Shaolin Temple Foundation (Australia) Ltd
► Department of Planning Media Release: Comberton Grange Assessment Underway

Pagoda Forest, Henan, China



Shaolin Temple: The Ancient Order of Monks

by Patrick Pang, Director,
Shaolin Temple Foundation
(Australia) Ltd

THE Shoalhaven community has been buzzing with excitement at the proposed tourist development project by the famed Shaolin Temple. The Shaolin Temple located in Dengfeng, Henan province in China is the birthplace of Chan Buddhism (known in Japan as Zen Buddhism) and Kung-Fu. It attracts more than 3 million paying tourists annually.

The current Abbot (like the Pope appointed for life) Shi Yongxin has a vision of introducing the Shaolin culture to the world. Why he chose Australia as his first overseas choice is not a secret. Australia complements China in many ways and China has a lot to learn from Australia in how we take care of the environment. Australia has a very stable government and is China's best friend among the western nations. Australia geographically is located along the same time zone as Asia and China, being the most populated country in Asia is well placed to extend a hand. The Abbot hopes to assist in the development of the tourist industry in Australia, creating jobs, opportunities and prosperity by attracting local and international tourists through many international activities and conferences that the Shaolin Temple will initiate.

A brief introduction of the Shaolin Temple is in order here. The Shaolin Temple was founded in 493 AD and its belief system is the combination of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. Its brand of Buddhism is called Chan (Zen) Buddhism.

The Shaolin monks in the early days developed a set of physical exercises (later to be known as Kung-Fu for which they are famous and feared) to defend themselves against wild animals and strengthen the body for meditation. These physical exercises were believed to be a way of achieving spirituality. This practice distinguishes them from the other Buddhist temples.

It must be emphasized that the Shaolin Temple was a result of a cultural intercourse between two of the world's greatest civilizations: India and China. Throughout the dynasties, the Shaolin Temple was always made the Imperial Temple and played an important role in advising state affairs to the Emperors of China.

In history, the Shaolin Temple has been a great influence on Chinese culture. It has been the friend of the good and righteous, helping the poor and always called to be the arbitrator of differences. The discipline, wisdom and value system of the Shaolin Temple is passed down from master to pupil. The pupil started as early as 4 years old. The Master will teach his pupil everything he knows only if he is convinced that his disciple believes and abides by the strict code of conduct of the Shaolin order. In contrast to other martial art forms today, Shaolin Kung-Fu does not have a grading system. The monks practice Kung-Fu as a form of discipline in achieving their spiritual goal. One philosophy underlines Shaolin Kung-Fu: to defend oneself in a hostile situation and at the same time not to harm the attacker.

The Shaolin Temple has recently been listed by UNESCO



as a world heritage. The Temple in Dengfeng, Henan province had been destroyed and parts of it reduced to ruins. Under the leadership of Abbot Shi Yongxin, much of the Temple has been restored and a new wing (Meditation Hall) added. However, the confines of the present Temple are too small for the many activities that the Shaolin Temple is involved in... which brings us to Australia.

The Abbot's vision is to build the Temple as originally intended but on a larger scale that will fulfill our proper requirement. He has engaged China's foremost architect on ancient buildings who is also an expert in feng shui (Chinese geomancy, the business of

selecting the best possible location, orientation and building design). Doing this here will be quite a novelty as Australia is on the other side of the equator. It will be a challenge and perhaps create a new perception in the area of geomancy to Australia.

The world is excited with the planned Shaolin project in Shoalhaven as it will be a huge undertaking by Shaolin Temple to transplant its 1,500 years of culture to a western country. Though Kung-Fu is synonymous with the Shaolin Temple, the Abbot wants the world to know about Shaolin's meditation, philosophy and medicine which can help everyday persons in their own lives in a very practicable way.

The Shaolin Temple is a transparent religious order that is highly sympathetic with the environment and strictly vegetarian. They value good health, high personal ethics, peace and harmony among fellow men.

The proposed Shaolin style tourism project will be a long term investment that will create jobs and attract new investment to Shoalhaven as the opportunities unfold. It is hoped that the project will enrich the multiculturalism that exists in Australia today and help in the understanding and tolerance between people of different races and religions. Above all, for the project to succeed, it'll need the overwhelming support of the local community.



THE NEW BUSH TELEGRAPH
EDITION 102

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Editor.

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Layout Bungoona Technologies Pty Ltd, Grays Point NSW

Printer: Weston Print, Kiama NSW
Send your letters, comments,

pictures or contributions to The Editor, New Bush Telegraph, PO Box 2205, TOMERONG NSW 2540
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Media Release
Department of Planning
Sydney: 24 June 2008

COMBERTON GRANGE ASSESSMENT UNDERWAY

A proposed \$370 million tourist and residential development at Comberton Grange has been declared a major project by the State Government.

The Minister for Planning has authorised the lodgement of a concept plan for the site, which is the first step in the assessment process for the project. There are many other steps still to take place, including public exhibition of the proposal, before a determination is made.

Director-General's requirements for the content to be included in the proponent's Environmental Assessment report will be issued shortly.

The Shaolin Temple Foundation – which represents an ancient Chinese order of Buddhist monks – lodged a revised ap-

plication with the Department of Planning on 4 June, which satisfied the recommendations made by the South Coast Sensitive Urban Lands Review.

In 2006, this independent review identified that, due to the environmentally sensitive nature of the site, the residential component of any proposal at Comberton Grange should be limited and be truly integrated with the tourist facility.

Department of Planning Director-General Sam Haddad said that previous versions of the Shaolin proposal had failed to satisfy these provisions, but that the most recent request received just this month could now be assessed by the Department.

The 1,250-hectare Comberton

Grange site, approximately 12 kilometres south of the Nowra CBD, requires careful planning as it is in an isolated location and has a number of environmentally sensitive features.

For instance, it includes large tracts of native vegetation, a number of important wetlands and forms part of an important local habitat corridor.

Currambene Creek, which adjoins the site, has been declared a Sanctuary Zone within the Jervis Bay Marine Park and is listed on the Commonwealth Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia.

The area also contains a number of sites of important Aboriginal archaeological and cultural heritage significance.

The proposal qualifies as a major

project under the State's major projects assessment system for two reasons – being a tourist facility with a capital investment value of more than \$100 million; and being a tourist facility that employs over 100 people.

The proposal comprises:

- Buddhist temple sanctuary complex (including residential accommodation for the Abbot and monks);
- Kung-fu academy;
- 500-bed 4-star hotel;
- 27-hole golf course and club house;
- Permanent residential development (including 300 self-contained villas for adaptive housing); and
- Commercial shopping and community centre.

Democracy... truly ? The Huskisson community versus Shoalhaven City Council.

The story continues...

DEMOCRACY can be defined as action taken in accordance with the collective will of the majority of the people. At the recent Local Government elections the majority of people in the Shoalhaven voted to elect representatives who would listen to their views and put in place planning, social and environmental policies and plans that protect and enhance our way of life.

We want to live in villages and towns that maintain tourism and are still liveable for residents. The community supports increased economic potential in Huskisson and are not against development – we'd just like to see strong planning controls that are sympathetic to the scale, natural surrounds and current coastal village character as well as buildings of high quality design.

Many communities across the Shoalhaven have worked

hard to get Development Control Plans that will enhance the vibrant and progressive nature of our communities. By example, if we look at polling in the local government elections on 13 September, in Huskisson 79% of votes were in opposition of the continued overdevelopment strategy being carried out by the previous council, (82% in Vincentia/Hyams beach).

However, in the period since the election it would appear some Councillors have been swayed to take pro-developer decisions totally in opposition to the sentiment expressed by the community at the elections.

DCP54 (the development control plan for the commercial centre of Huskisson) and the lack of a DCP for most of the 3(g) foreshore areas of Huskisson have been the two most contentious issues in the Jervis Bay area. The outcome will leave an indelible mark on the future of Huskisson and be a precedent

for future development on the shores of Jervis Bay in general.

We all know that big ugly buildings are a perpetual reminder of bad planning decisions.

A motion to bring a non-conforming Development Application in Owen Street back to Council so that its variation from DCP54 could be considered by the new Council was lost 7 to 5. The determination of the DA will be made by staff, subsequent to a non-advertised variation to DCP54 adopted by Councillors on 22 July.

The DA seeks a bonus fourth storey but fails to comply with DCP54 Huskisson Town Centre in regard to a high degree of architectural merit and a high degree of articulation as well as DCP18 Car Parking Code in that the DA fails to provide sufficient on-site parking for residential units.

Approval of this bonus fourth floor to a non-conforming DA

will make the task of having DCP54 changed to meet community expectations extremely difficult. Future developers will be able to claim that a precedent exists.

In 1985 the Shoalhaven City Council created three Planning Statements to cover the 3(g) Foreshore areas of Huskisson. These statements set the development at medium density and also stated that higher density developments would be considered. While DCP99, medium density tourist development, was adopted for a fourth 3(g) foreshore zone, no other DCPs have been created for the remaining three 3(g) zones in the ensuing 23 years. DAs for 4 storey residential flat designs in prominent locations in each of the three 3(g) Foreshore zones have been approved contrary to community outcry and the community sentiment evident in the recent election.

The most recent approval

in a 3(g) zone was given by our newly elected Councillors contrary to the will of the people of Huskisson and the Bay and Basin area who were very influential in electing the new Mayor and changing the Councillor grouping that existed in the previous Council. Getting development plans right is a great opportunity for the new elected council to raise the bar from the previous Council's decisions – a chance to work with the whole community in an effort to keep Huskisson and Jervis Bay truly unique by protecting and enhancing its qualities for residents, holiday-home owners and tourists. This also means that Council can provide a level playing field and certainty for a vibrant and progressive future.

**Alan Burrows & Leslie Lockwood,
Co-Chairs Huskisson
Woollamia Community Voice**

Let us liberate those elephants!

by Geoff Mosley

NOTICED any elephants recently? Your Government hopes you haven't, or, at least not those of the 'elephant in the room' variety. The Wikipedia Encyclopedia defines 'elephant in the room' as an idiomatic expression for "an obvious truth that is being ignored or goes unaddressed" and goes on to say that it "involves a value judgement that the issue ought to be addressed openly".

They are, in other words, the big issues which government and its advisors are not addressing and hope they never will have to, such as unsustainable population and economic growth and the environmental impact of our coal exports. 'Sacred cows' is perhaps another way of describing them, or, you could say, it involves 'the ostrich factor' – there is a veritable menagerie of possible metaphors. What it all adds up to is that population growth, for instance, is taken as a given. You do not touch it. You do not go there.

To bring these issues into the realm of public policy discussion, would, involve some really hard thinking, undermine core beliefs and perhaps in the eyes of government open up a Pandora's box. So they remain in the too hard basket. Surprisingly, the media and the main environment groups are generally not too keen on fostering debate on these

fundamental matters either. Is this because they think there is no real chance of change, or would such matters take the players into realms outside their comfort zones? Or, maybe, in the case of the media, it is so embedded in the status quo that it cannot see the blindingly obvious. The reasons for this phenomenon are crying out for research.

As things stand at present there is plenty of reference in government discourse to measures for reducing carbon emissions and the likely effect of these on the economy and on everyday life but very little reference to the underlying causes of the continuously increasing emissions, namely the ever growing levels of population and consumption. The Garnaut reports ignored both population stabilisation and reducing Australian coal exports as part solutions to global warming..

Each of these unmentionables deserves a thorough probing, particularly with regard to their connectedness to each other and to local and worldwide environmental degradation. They deserve a place in the national debate alongside such issues as greenhouse gas control, water conservation and indigenous rights.

If these elephants the room are going to have real chance of being liberated the focus will need to be on solutions. Taking the issues I have identified one

by one, it should be manifestly obvious that having too many people results in excessive demands on resources including energy and water and causes a deteriorating environment. The answer lies in population stabilisation based on the principle of 'living within our means'. In other words we need to aim at matching the demands we make on the environment to what is locally available and can be used sustainably. We should not, for instance, steal someone else's water. The main factor in population growth today in the countries where growth through natural increase has stabilised is immigration. The Australian Conservation Foundation has since the late 1970s advocated a nil net migration approach. The current version of this policy calls on Australian Governments "to progressively reduce immigration so that the annual target for immigration will be equal to the permanent emigration of the previous year and will take account of a humanitarian commitment to accept refugees".

Perpetual economic growth in the sense of an continuing increase in the production and consumption of goods and services is closely interwoven with population growth. The term is of course an oxymoron because the earth and its resources are finite but just ask a politician when he believes economic growth might end. An ever increasing throughput

of material resources to feed the increased number of mouths and the demand for more and more 'stuff' inevitably places unbearable pressures on the environment. The answer lies in nothing less than the development of an alternative way of life in which the relationship with the environment as a whole is stabilised. Several decades ago the economist Herman Daly termed this 'the steady state economy'. Far from being an end to development, by freeing us from the constraints of resource depletion, this new way would allow for a higher level of creativity based on a closer relationship with the environment – something the Aboriginal people can teach us much about. Many aspects of life would change including food production, energy use and governance. Military based security would be made redundant by environmental security.

I mentioned Australia's coal exports as a third elephant in the room because our coal is a prime example of something which is helping to increase global carbon emissions and economic growth but whose environmental effects are ignored by government. Australia is the World's largest exporter of coal and the resulting emissions are greater than our domestic emissions but we do nothing about it. The federal Government has

the constitutional power to eliminate this trade. Between 1938 and 1960 it banned the export of iron ore initially to avoid providing raw materials to Japan for weapon manufacture. Today the case for phasing out coal exports is even stronger – they are helping fuel a war on the global environment. Again the policy of the Australian Conservation Foundation shows a way forward. It involves "pressing for a timetable for the phasing out of coal exports and opposing the expansion of coal exports". The notion that if we give up exporting coal some other supplier will simply take our place is a nonsense. Being responsible for a third of the World's exports Australian coal is not readily replaceable.

What hope is there for change? I suggest there are two preconditions: leadership and an informed community. Significantly, the letters columns of the daily press demonstrate that an increasing number of people are baffled by the way these major issues are ignored by government, but it is far easier to identify problems than it is to devise solutions and the solution must be comprehensive and this is where leadership comes in.

Geoff Mosley is a former CEO of the Australian Conservation Foundation and present member of ACF Council. He is also Australian Director of the Center for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy.

Affluence from effluent

Peter Hudson

THE commissioning of the Conjola Regional Sewerage System (CRSS) heralded a new era for the small villages of Manyana, Bendalong, Cunjurong and Berringer. An era with some unexpected consequences, at least for the locals.

With the sure knowledge that the CRSS was to be built starting in 2004, several large developer consortiums quickly moved in to stake a claim on land zoned for urban use and in some cases that which was only zoned for rural purposes.

The current village size is about 920 houses comprising some 830 permanent residents. The proposals by Kylor P/L, Malbec P/L, Vacenta P/L and others would see an increase of a possible 2475 lots.

The residents of these villages fought for and won the transfer of Conjola State Forest to Conjola National Park in January 2001 and with this buffer it was thought that any growth would be both moderate and commensurate with building on a rare and beautiful coastline. However, this pipe dream appears to be far from the truth.

The CRSS has limited

capacity, utilizing technology which is well over 100 years old. It uses in that sand dune exfiltration: it 'dumps' highly treated effluent into sand behind to Conjola Beach. This area is a known flood plain, has a high water table, and is immediately adjacent to sand dunes - just the very sort of spot one would choose to have millions of litres of waste water dispersed to the nearby lake, lagoon and sea. All of the specifications for CRSS fail to consider any form of allowance for climate change. This was not a problem for the previous administration which eagerly encouraged developers to submit their plans; who wouldn't with a System that started at \$27m and has now cost \$68m. The State provided some of the funding but Council was left holding the can to determine how it was to make up the additional costs.

Both Kylor and Malbec, the developers, are seeking to dramatically increase lot density. Kylor was a beneficiary to Mayor Watson's 2008 campaign with a generous donation of \$8000 reported to the state government for the period to June 2008 - donations after 1 July not reportable till February 2009. Kylor is seeking to rezone its land to increase lot density

from 162 houses to well in excess of 500 lots. Malbec for its part, having already been granted 182 lots on an area already zoned urban saw fit to purchase rural zoned land for the express purpose of creating a large subdivision. Malbec provided Council with a comprehensive plan for the "New Manyana Township" comprising some 330 lots. Not content with this the same Company lodged an application to have a 75 lot caravan park approved for the same land. The caravan park of course isn't one but a subdivision in disguise using manufactured homes for the site - sound familiar?

Only recently has the Director of Shoalhaven Water, Carmel Krogh, been successful in putting a measurable cap on CRSS capacity and therefore the amount of development that would be commensurate with this capacity. Unfortunately the same administration has approved sewerage/water supply capability to developers whose proposals sit outside the framework for designed capacity; wherefore the concern for public interest in that action?

There is indeed much affluence to be made from effluent!

Peter Hudson is president of the Community Consultative Body for Bendalong, Manyana and Cunjurong Point. Since writing this article, the community has had a significant victory. Malbec's plans for a 75 lot caravan park have been rejected by Shoalhaven City Council.

The Milton Ulladulla Times on 19 November 2008 reported that "A composed Mr Hudson told the [development committee of council] that Manyana had no schools, limited public transport and already had "sufficient urban-zoned land for development, which the community will accept." He told the committee Malbec had originally purchased the land with the proposal for "one home on a rural lot". "This is an ill-conceived plan..." Council received a total of 126 written submissions objecting to the proposed Malbec development. Manyana has 360 permanent residents. Power and wisdom of community prevails.



A small spill over Tallowa Dam. An increase in small and medium spills are critical to the health of downstream fresh and saline reaches of the river.

A win at last for the Shoalhaven River! Best news since the Government backed down on Tallowa Dam

Terry Barratt, Shoalhaven River Alliance

THE recently appointed Minister for Water, Phillip Costa, has surprised and delighted the local community with his announcement on 7 November 2008 of a three year moratorium on water transfers to Sydney from the Shoalhaven River.

This followed a meeting the previous week between the Minister and locals representing the Shoalhaven River Alliance, Shoalhaven Riverwatch and the Kangaroo Valley community. Terry Barratt, Rob Thorne, Patricia Mason and Peter Stanton discussed with the Minister the issues of water transfers, environmental flows and progress on completion of a water sharing plan.

We pointed out to the Minister that the Premier had got it wrong in his recent statement about Sydneysiders having to drink mud if the water from the Shoalhaven had not been available last year. We also took the opportunity to point out the impacts of the extractions on the river estuary. Rob Thorne was able to demonstrate with his detailed and cleverly illustrated diagrams the way in which the extractions have intensified the recent intensive period of drought.

The Minister promised to make an announcement about the water transfers before Christmas, but gave no inkling at the meeting of the groundbreaking decision he was going to come to.

Given that Sydney dam levels are hovering at 65% and that we appear to be going into an El Niño weather pattern (ie, reduced rainfall) one would wonder what motivated the Minister to arrive at his decision.

In any circumstance it is a wise decision: we are delighted

and hopeful that this will lead to a permanent change in government attitude. The Shoalhaven River Alliance has, since its inception four years ago, argued strongly for Sydney to get itself onto a water sustainable basis through water recycling to drinking water standards and to cease all pumping from the Shoalhaven.

A promise to increase environmental flow releases from Tallowa Dam next year following completion of a fish lift and other modifications comes none too soon.

There is one serious shortcoming in the current situation. The formalisation of the pumping and environmental release rules has to be achieved through a water sharing plan in accordance with the provisions of the Water Act. We have been promised the release of a draft of the plan for public comment for the past two years with no result so far. We expressed our concern about this to the Minister at the meeting, but he has failed to make any reference to it in his public announcement.

Let's hope that this is a thing of the past and that the community is going to be taken more fully into the decision-making process. We can assure the government that a better consultative profile will make things a lot easier for them. We have certainly experienced a positive shift.

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This paper is an entirely volunteer effort, depending on readers to come up with good material. In this issue we have views on the environment, on nature, politics and society, written and art. We are very open to new directions and contributions.

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Are we prepared for the coming boom?

By Chris Gilbey

ARE we prepared for the coming boom in the Shoalhaven?

"The coming boom", I hear you say. "You must be kidding. We are right in the middle of the most incredible financial melt down in history. And on top of that we have a state government that has driven the state to the edge of bankruptcy and are so inept that, frankly they should all be thrown out on their ears, and you are talking about a boom?"

OK, so hear me out. It's a boom born from adversity, but you take what you can get these days.

Don't think about what is happening in Sydney or in New York. Just think about the unintended consequences of all the mayhem on Wall Street and the confusion in Macquarie St and the results for the Shoalhaven area.

Sometimes it is good to step back and consider the contrarian point of view rather than be brought down by only looking at the conventional wisdoms...

Hurricane Katrina was a disaster, but afterwards there was a boom in New Orleans and the surrounding states – as there is after any disaster.

So let's think of the benefits for the local area that are going to accrue from the ineptitude of the politicians in Sydney, from Climate Change, and from the relentless march toward peak oil.

Here are a few of the data points that are worth considering as part of the fabric that will govern a net positive for the Shoalhaven:

■ **Rail:** The state government is shelving its plans to build new rail links to as fast as it can go. That means more pressure put on a road system that is already a nightmare.

■ **Water:** The Sydney desalination plant has years to go before it will be able to provide water for Sydney. Sydney water infrastructure is badly broken and there are more people coming in to the city looking for employment so demand is continuing to outstrip supply.

■ **Real Estate:** House prices have fallen across Sydney, but that hasn't stopped those people, often baby boomers, who have owned their houses for ten or more years from taking healthy profits as and when they sell.

■ **Petrol Prices:** Though the

price of oil has come down over the last few weeks it shouldn't be confused with an increase in supply. The price drop is a by-product of the big investment banks selling out of everything that they can to get cash through the door. Peak oil hasn't gone away and before long oil will go up again, next time to even more dizzying heights.

■ **Climate Change:** While politicians round the world fiddle, Rome burns. It will continue to get warmer and weather patterns will get wilder.

I could list an endless litany of other factors that are part of the evolving scenario, but I won't. We are witnessing the decline and fall of the Suburban Dream – much of which we have imported from America into Australia. New US President or not, the reality is that the whole model of modern civilization is going to require us all to make changes to how we live.

We need to replace our consumerist vision splendid with another newer and more sustainable model. Its time for us to look at trends, and work with them creating communal advantage – rather than being observers of an emerging train wreck.

After all it is really about people. How they respond to the varying motivational forces in their lives is the key. And the major demographic sector in this country, the baby boomers, will be the significant driver. They are influenced by what they read in the papers and watch on TV; and more particularly what they read online.

Those cashed up baby boomers are already poised to act. As they sell their places in Sydney they are focusing on tree/sea change.

They are considering the impact of climate change; thinking about peak oil. They are looking at what will drive real estate values, because they don't want to make a bad investment. It all becomes clear pretty quickly... The best place to be is one where there is good rainfall (tick), one where there is an existing rail link (tick), and one where there is a good local community (tick).

The results are in: The more upmarket areas of the Shoalhaven – all within easy reach of Sydney.

This has to be really good news for the Shoalhaven economy and all the people who live in the area.

It will mean continuing growth of population in the area, with the major benefit from a growth in older demographic retirees being that it won't bring a parallel increase in competition for jobs. Instead there will be an increase in demand for local products and services. I believe that this will translate into a reverse trend in Shoalhaven to the rest of the country in terms of unemployment.

There are a number of existing and announced infrastructure programs in the area that are already expected to generate demand for tradespeople. The incoming grey population will ensure much bigger growth in demand for tradespeople as a result of housing renovations and building work. It will also probably mean that there will be positive impact on real estate prices at the top end of the market, which should help stabilise prices at the bottom end of the market as more skilled tradespeople move into the area following jobs.

There will be demand for general household goods too,

and while the national economy slows in response to the almost certain prospect of global recession, grey buying power will bring a lot of good for this part of the world.

Unfortunately every boom has within it the seeds of a bust too.

This influx of older people is going to put significant pressure on health and medical services, which are already suffering from the state government's inability to run a chook raffle, let alone a health service.

The Shoalhaven hospital is reportedly already under stress financially. We have to start operating as a community to fix the problem.

We need a strategy and an action plan that will enable us to head off what will otherwise be an inevitable failure of our local health service to deliver what the community needs – whether it be young or old.

We need to engage in discussions with all the people in the area who are at the coalface and work to generate a solution. We

need the council to focus on this and to arrange for community input. We need to lobby our state and federal members to get them to focus on this too. We need to really take action as a community because like it or not, we are all in this together. Maybe we are going to have to raise money from within the community to achieve this.

It takes a long time to recognize how all the pieces of the change puzzle fit together. Once you can see the key ingredients for change it then takes time to build understanding within communities. We need to celebrate the opportunity that we have as a result of living in this area including the coming boom, but we also have to act to meet head on the challenges that we are about to be faced with.

Chris Gilbey is a full time resident of Berry. He has run companies in the music and the technology businesses and now consults to companies on strategy. He has written two books and was awarded the OAM in 1992 for his services to charity and the music industry.

Butterflies

by Chris Gilbey

MY wife and I moved out of the big smoke and into Berry at the beginning of this year. But we weren't total newbies to the concept of a tree change. We had owned a substantial farming property in Mudgee for a while (during the recession that Paul Keating said we had to have, and a drought that perhaps God said we had to have). So we felt that we knew what we were getting ourselves into.

Even though both of us are originally from city roots (me from London, and my wife from Geelong) we have a deep love for the Australian countryside. We also have an appreciation for some of the things that you have to face when moving out of the city – in particular whether there is going to be enough rainfall to grow things.

We were very fortunate and found a house in an almost undiscovered part of Berry on the ocean side of the village adjacent to the Moyean Hill Reserve. Most days, along with the dog, we walk along the bush track that leads over the hill. It's one of the most delightful bush walks imaginable.

A couple of weeks ago as we were walking we quite suddenly found ourselves walking through a swarm of butterflies.

One day there were none – the next day, and each day since there have been literally hundreds of gently fluttering insects – which I believe, thanks to Google, are "forest browns".

When I was a young boy in London, fifty years ago the air in summer was full of red

admirals. In London nowadays, just as in Sydney, butterflies are a rarity. The industrialization of agriculture has seen the amount of insect life, and hence bird life, diminish by an order of magnitude.

It is a real pity because the presence of insect life is part of what attracts birds, and the bird species on Moyean Hill are many and varied. You realize how Australia must have been to the first settlers hundreds of years ago. In fact the area is prime real estate for a huge amount of wild life: wombats, rabbits and hares, echidnas, roos, wallabies, the odd diamond python, and a peacock have all made their presence known in our back yard.

But it was the sight of the butterflies, together with the fact that I haven't seen that many since I was a boy, that made me think about the way that incremental change creeps up on us while we are busy doing the stuff we associate with modern life.

These days there is a preoccupation by a lot of people with climate change. Some are climate change sceptics and some are what I think of as realists. The point is that while the arguments go back and forth incremental change continues to take place. Change that we find hard to discern over the space of one or two years, but which is very clear when you look at it through the lens of age.

Climate experts generally couch all their reports in language that sets a time frame for noticeable change in 20 or 30 years time. But then we so often read a follow up report adjusting the time frame of the big change from 20 years to 10 and suddenly

we realize that it will affect us in our own lifetimes.

The effect of framing time lines in numbers of decades is that it calms us down, but keeps us informed. That is the way that bureaucrats like to plan things. We are in the knowledge but we are calm and comfortable in the knowledge that it is outside of our own life time, so we stop feeling the need to do anything. But none of us can complain in the future that we weren't warned.

It is only when something happens like seeing the swarms of butterflies on Moyean hill that we realise the fact something that was there is no longer there. Something is missing in our lives.

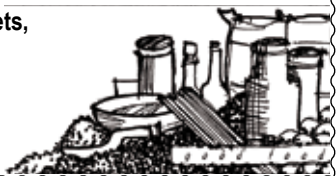
We can't stop progress, but I believe that it is useful to reflect on the realities of the time dimension that we exist in. If we want our children and grandchildren to experience the things that we are inspired by in reality and not just on YouTube, we need to be aware of the impact over time of incremental change to our natural environment.

Wouldn't it be great if our children and grandchildren in the cities could see butterflies every summer?

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Vindication

AT elections on 13 September, there was a significant change in the Shoalhaven City Council's elected council, with the sweeping from power of the party calling itself Shoalhaven Independents. The community voted for change. Mr Greg Watson, leader of the Shoalhaven Independents, lost the direct ballot for mayor, his third time out of such office. Once President, three times Mayor, three times Deputy Mayor, since 1977, Mr Watson still sits on the council.

In our last issue, New Bush Telegraph 101, we set out the history of the concerns of many about the way the former council leadership did business in a number of areas, particularly its dealings in relation to a 'gateway site' at the entrance to Nowra, where contrary to widespread public opinion, it was proposed to build a high-rise hotel. We reproduced a letter from the Department of Local Government about council's dealings with a business called Huscorp... This company does have some development interests in Huskisson but is not the only proponent of development there (see more news in the Huskisson saga in this issue).

Our last issue excited much public interest and a measure of fury that we present together the public concerns about the council.

As we go to press, the Department of Local Government has set out its considered position on the Huscorp proposal in a nine page letter. We are reproducing the whole of the department's letter here, so readers can make up their own minds about this matter. The DLG letter speaks for itself. For ease of reading, this is a scanned text. For authoritative text ask the council for the Assistant General Manager's report to council for its meeting on 25 November.

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Locked Bag 3015 NOWRA NSW 2541
Mr Russell Pigg
General Manager
Shoalhaven City Council
PO Box 42
NOWRA NSW 2541
OUR REFERENCE A 1
58665
YOUR REFERENCE 38389

(DO811451 10)
CONTACT David Rolls
0244284210
19 NOV 2008
Dear Mr Pigg

I refer to your letter of 12 September 2008 enclosing a copy of Gadens' advice to Council of 29 August 2008 regarding the proposed sale of the 'Nowra Hotel Site' at Bridge Road Nowra to Huscorp Group Pty Limited ('Huscorp').

I also acknowledge receipt of a copy of Phillip Clay's advice of 8 August 2008 to Council that was emailed to me on 30 September 2008.

As you are aware, during the course of the Promoting Better Practice Review of Shoalhaven City Council undertaken earlier this year, the Department formed concerns regarding the proposed sale of the Nowra Hotel Site to Huscorp. Those concerns centred on Council's capacity to effect the proposed sale and the process Council followed in selecting Huscorp as the preferred purchaser.

The Department's concerns were detailed in my letter to Council of 22 July 2008.

In that letter Council was asked not to sell or otherwise alienate the Nowra Hotel site until it had been reclassified as operational land.

The Department has now completed its preliminary enquiries into this matter.

In undertaking its preliminary enquiries the Department has considered:

- the documents supplied by Council to the Department in response to the Department's request of 26 June 2008
- your letter of 22 August 2008
- the matters raised by yourself, the former Mayor, Mr Watson, and other Council representatives at our meeting on 26 August 2008
- the legal advice obtained by Council referred to above.

I will turn first to Council's capacity to effect the Proposed sale of the Nowra Hotel site.

Having regard to the matters raised in your letter and to the legal advice, the Department is now satisfied that none of the land that forms the Nowra Hotel Site can conclusively be said to be community land. I note Phillip Clay's view that, like the other lands that comprise the Nowra Hotel Site, the land known as 28 Bridge Street Nowra more likely

"In summary, Gadens' [lawyers] advice was sought and provided in the context of a selection process that had become wanton in regard to fairness, probity and transparency. The advice provided Council with an opportunity of restoring probity and transparency, yet Council chose not to avail itself of that opportunity

"The Department considers that Council's failure to heed Gadens' advice fell well below the standard of what is expected of a responsible council in conducting its affairs."

than not is not subject to a trust for a public purpose.

This being the case the Department withdraws its request that Council not sell or otherwise alienate the land until the land has been reclassified as operational land.

I must point out, however, that although withdrawing its request the Department is nevertheless concerned that Council is prepared to sell the land despite having obtained legal advice to the effect that it is not beyond doubt that the land is community land. The Department is concerned that Council is prepared to disregard legal advice recommending that Council make a local environment plan to change the classification to operational land before selling to avoid the risk of breaching section 45(1) of the Local Government Act 1993.

The Department recognises that councils are autonomous bodies with rights and powers conferred by law. They are ultimately accountable to their electors for their actions. The Department also recognises that certain decisions will be attendant with degrees of risk. Risk management is an extremely important factor in many decision making processes. However, the Department considers that Council's reliance on the principle of indefeasibility of title, as enunciated by the NSW Court of Appeal in the *City of Canada Bay Council v F & D Bonaccorso Pty Ltd and Others* [2007] NSWSC 351, as grounds for either making or justifying its decision to sell the land falls below the standard of what the Department would expect of a

responsible and community-minded council when dealing with public assets of this nature. Indefeasibility of title should not be seen as a tool to remedy poor or inadequate processes.

I turn now to the Department's concerns relating to the process Council followed in selecting Huscorp as the preferred purchaser of the land. I will refer to those concerns in the order in which they were listed in my letter to Council of 22 July 2008.

First Concern

The lack of a documented account as to why Council invited Huscorp to present its proposal when it did not lodge an expression of interest by the advertised deadline

The Department accepts that the proposed sale was not a matter that fell within the ambit of section 55 of the Act and therefore Council was not bound to follow the tendering requirements set out in Part 7 of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005.

Nevertheless, Council could, as a matter of good practice, have adopted those requirements, particularly given the scale, prominence, and likely public interest in the development.

It is noted that in your report to Council on 29 June 2004 (headed "Development and/or Disposal of Council Lands") you recommended to Council that it adopt a particular model for the future development, and, or, disposal of the site. That model involved calling for expressions of interest and, in the event that expressions of interest were received, followed by a formal tender process. The report stated that the model was based on what ICAC considered to be the best course of action from a probity perspective in this type of situation. It is of concern that Council chose not to adopt that recommendation.

There was nothing in Council's "Expressions of Interest" documentation to indicate that Council would accept expressions of interest after the specified closing time of 3pm on 2 November 2005. It was reported to the Council Property Steering Committee ("the Committee") on 23 November 2005 that other late submissions had been received and would be submitted for consideration. It was also reported that Macquarie Bank was preparing a submission which was expected to be received by the end of the month (November 2006).

The information supplied to the Department appears to contain no record of the

telephone conversation of 5 December 2005 that led to Council inviting Huscorp, by way of letter dated 7 December 2005, to present a development concept and proposal to the Committee early in 2006. Further, there appears to be no documented reasons as to why Huscorp was extended such an invitation. This is particularly unsatisfactory having regard to the fact that the telephone conversation appears to have occurred more than one month after the specified closing date for expressions of interest.

This course of action, at the very least, lacked transparency. It was certainly not in keeping with the advice given in your report to Council on 29 June 2004 that Council must ensure "openness" with any decision to develop the site.

It is of concern that Council appears to have commenced a process and then arbitrarily resiled from it.

Second Concern

There does not appear to be any documented account of the basis upon which Council selected Huscorp as the preferred purchaser of the site

It is evident that the Committee did not have delegated authority to select the purchaser of the land. It is apparent that its role was to hear the presentations and then make a recommendation to Council as to which developer it considered Council should enter into a contract with for the sale and development of the land. The decision as to who was to be the successful purchaser and developer rested with Council itself.

After hearing the presentations, the Committee made two recommendations to Council. They were considered by Council at its meeting on 28 February 2006. The Council adopted those recommendations.

The Committee provided Council with no documented account of the basis upon which it arrived at those recommendations.

It is accepted practice for a council to authorise a committee to hear and consider presentations of this nature and to make a recommendation to council as to which of the presenters council should enter into contractual relations with. However, in doing so the committee must in submitting its recommendation to council, provide council with a summary of the presentations received and give the reasons why it recommended a particular presenter over the others.

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Vindication ◀ 6

Good governance requires that the committee also provide reasons for any other recommendation that it may wish to make.

It is quite unacceptable for a council to simply adopt or "rubber stamp" the recommendations of a committee without being provided with the reasons upon which those recommendations were made.

It makes no difference that either all or a majority of councillors were present at the meeting when the presentations were made, either as members of the Committee or as observers.

Again I refer to your report to Council of 29 June 2004. It recorded general advice given by ICAC to the effect that whatever course of action a government agency took in such circumstances

"...it should ensure that it had clearly documented the reasons for its decisions and the process followed"

It is the Department's view that Council's decision making process in this regard was flawed.

Third Concern

There does not appear to be any documented account as to why Council is prepared to sell Council owned land at a substantial discount to market valuation

The Department notes the response given in your letter of 22 August 2008.

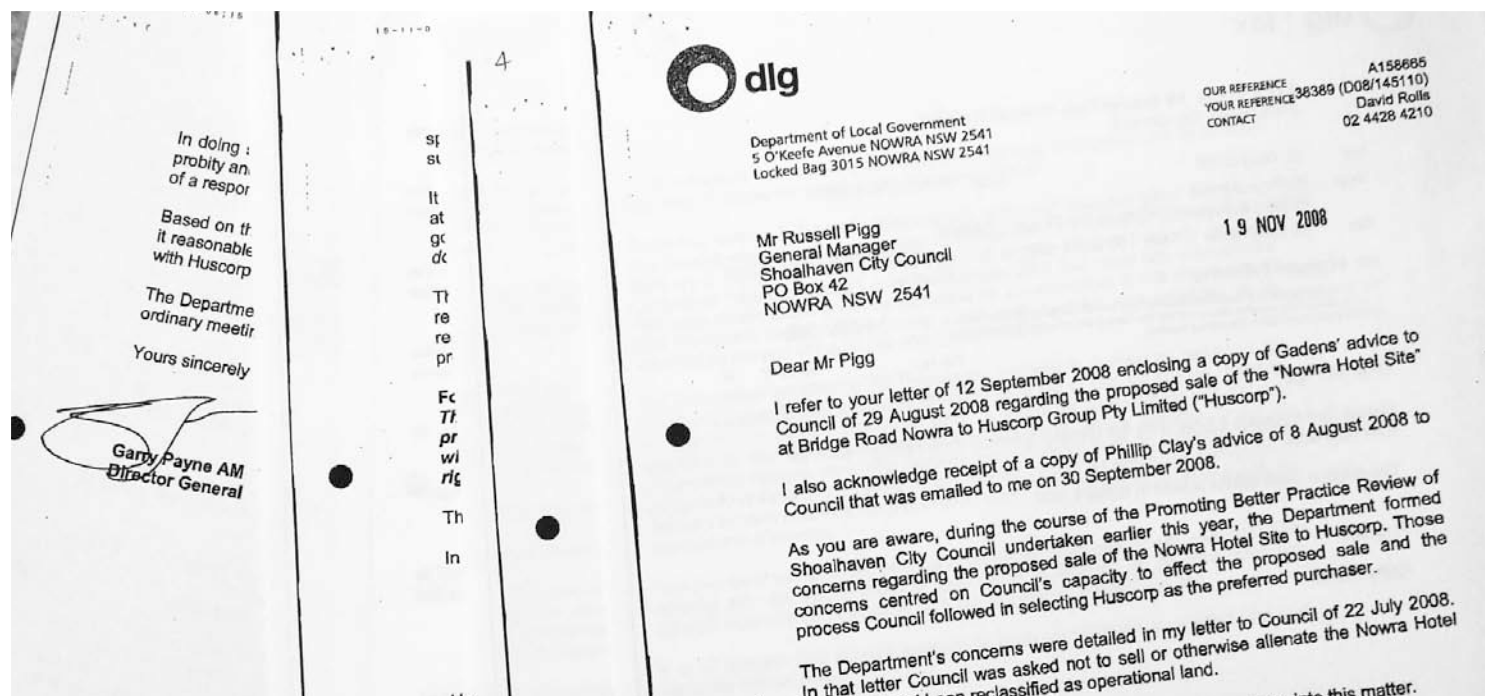
It notes your advice that the price was influenced by conditions in the proposed contract and that this was evident from the reports to the Committee.

You also said that the report to the extraordinary meeting of Council on 11 March 2008 sets out the reasoning as to why Council is prepared to sell the land at a discount price and that this was linked to the original aim of achieving a hotel development on the land. The only reason that can be discerned from the relevant documentation supplied by Council is the statement contained in the report to the Committee of 3 March 2008 that:

"Council resolved in February 2007 to accept the discounted sale contract price of \$900,000 to ensure a hotel was built and to Council's standard - viz a minimum four star hotel".

This is, to say the least, rather scant reasoning to justify such a discount to the market value of the land as assessed by Walsh and Monaghan.

It is also noted that that market value centred upon the particular development that Huscorp proposed for the site. One of the assumptions upon which the valuation was based was, as you have noted, that "a staged development may take many years to sell" The "staged development" no doubt referred to the apartment complex not the hotel. Consequently the valuation may not necessarily have specific relevance to the proposals put forward by the other persons who submitted expressions of interest.



It is noted that the General Manager's report of 29 June 2004 had drawn Council's attention to advice provided by ICAC to the effect that whatever course of action a government agency took in projects of this type "it should ensure that it had clearly documented the reasons for its decisions and the process followed."

The Department considers that Council has failed to adequately document the reasons for its decision to sell the land to Huscorp for the price agreed. In this regard it considers that Council has failed to ensure transparency in the sale process.

Fourth Concern

There does not appear to be any documented account as to why Council is prepared to grant Huscorp an easement over the city administrative centre without payment despite a valuation report indicating that the value of the right of way is substantial

The Department notes the response given in your letter of 22 August 2008.

In Council's response it is said:

"A perusal of documentation could not find evidence that ever 'contemplated

that the successful proponent, - whom ever that may be -- would need to purchase the right of way or other means of access, as this was a core and fundamental requirement of the project"

However, this appears somewhat at odds with the statement in your report to the extraordinary meeting of Council on 11 March 2008 that:

"To establish the current market value of the site, regard needs to be taken not only of the area (9,517 square metres) and zoning, but also the proposed access arrangements over Council land. Council staff will arrange for this valuation"

In the following paragraph of that report it is stated:

"... Council needs to be clear on the reasons for its decisions."

On 27 May 2008 Council resolved:

"a) Not seek compensation for the Right of Carriageway

(Access Road) from Bridge Road to Graham Street, Nowra;".

In passing this resolution Council has not provided any reasons to support it.

It appears that Council never obtained a valuation for the access road.

Having regard to the valuation obtained for the service way, it would appear that the value of the access road would be substantial.

Despite what is said in the response, the Department still retains this concern.

Fifth Concern

Council appears to have failed to heed its legal advice to consider obtaining further valuation advice, inviting those who had lodged an expression of interest to consider lodging an amendment to their proposals in light of Council's decision to expand the site area, and to appoint a probity manager to oversee the selection process

The Department acknowledges that Council was not legally bound to follow any of the recommendations provided by Gadens in their letter of 9 July 2007.

In regard to Gadens' first recommendation that Council should consider commissioning at least one independent valuer to provide an assessment of the fair price for the site, the Department acknowledges that Council had obtained a valuation from Walsh and Monaghan on 16 November 2006. That report should, however, have included the value of the proposed access over Council land given that, as you have said, it was a key element of the proposed development since inception of the project.

Gadens' second recommendation was that Council should consider inviting those who had submitted the initial proposals to consider lodging amendments to those proposals in light of Council's decision to expand the development area so as to afford all participants the opportunity to address Council on this alteration.

The Department considers that there are compelling reasons why council should have

adopted this recommendation.

Council had indicated to Huscorp its willingness to Increase the site area from 4,515m² to 9,517m². this was more than a twofold increase. It was a major departure from the concept described by Council in its invitation for expressions of interest. In the interests of fairness, Council should have given the other submitters the opportunity to alter their proposals in light of this change.

This approach would also have assisted in ensuring that Council received the best proposal for the site. In exercising its functions, Council is required to pursue its charter in accordance with section 8 of the Act. One of the principals of the charter is:

"to bear in mind that it is the custodian and trustee of public assets and to effectively account for and manage the assets for which it is responsible"

Gadens' third recommendation was that Council should consider whether or not it was appropriate to apply Part 7 of the Regulations and appoint a probity manager to govern the tender process to ensure that the process was perceived by the public to be at arms length.

The Department considers that there were compelling reasons for Council to have adopted this recommendation. First and foremost, the project was a major undertaking involving, what is acknowledged by Council, a substantial public asset. Secondly, the method by

which Council selected Huscorp as the preferred developer lacked integrity in that Council had:

- accepted an expression of interest from Huscorp despite it being notified to Council over a month after the advertised closing date, and

- continued to negotiate with Huscorp despite Huscorp, in making its presentation to the Committee on 10 February 2008, having failed to address the key issues specified in the invitations sent to the submitters on 7 December 2007, and

- further continued to negotiate With Huscorp despite the concerns expressed by Council's Director of City Services in his internal memorandum of 16 May 2005.

In the Department's view the process adopted by Council in selecting Huscorp as the

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Vindication ◀ 7

preferred developer lacked transparency and the appearance of being at arms length.

In summary, Gadens' advice was sought and provided in the context of a selection process that had become wanton in regard to fairness, probity and transparency. The advice provided Council with an opportunity of restoring probity and transparency, yet Council chose not to avail itself of that opportunity.

The Department considers that Council's failure to heed Gadens' advice fell well below the standard of what is expected of a responsible council in conducting its affairs.

Sixth Concern

Council appears to have Ignored its Community Consultation Strategy in that the development that is now proposed by Council and Huscorp bears little resemblance to that described in the advertisement for expressions of Interest

In your report to Council on 29 June 2004, the Bridge Road site was identified as being "strategically important and valuable".

It was noted in that report that Council had broadly defined its use for a future 4 or 4-1/2 star hotel development.

The Information Memorandum, which formed part of the "Expressions of Interest" documentation, referred to the development of "an architecturally significant Hotel" on the "hotel site" which comprised 4,515 square metres of land. That land was described as being at "The Gateway to the City" in that it fronted Bridge Road and the Princes Highway.

It is acknowledged that the Memorandum did state that the site area of 4,515 m2 could be increased depending on the final Precinct Master Plan and that there could be provision for some permanent residents. However, these references were ancillary to the overall concept of a significant hotel development on a 4,515 m2 site.

The development that is now proposed by Council and Huscorp is something quite different from that which the community was advised that Council intended for the site. The site area has increased to 9,517 m2. It appears that approximately half of the development proposed will comprise residential apartments. It also appears that the apartment complexes will be the most visible feature of the development when viewed from Bridge Road and the Princes Highway.

Clause 3.1.3 of Council's Community Consultation Strategy ("the Strategy") provides that Council will consult with relevant sections of the community where there could potentially be a significant impact from a proposed development or action on an area.

The Departments concern is that Council does not appear to have considered the Strategy before deciding to depart from its original publicly declared proposal to sell or lease a certain

portion of public land for a significant hotel development and instead sell a much greater portion of public land for a significant hotel and significant residential development.

In your letter of 22 August 2008, you stated that public consultation occurred when Council undertook the process of rezoning the land and also during the course of Huscorp's development application for the project.

The nature of the consultation undertaken during these processes is entirely different to that which would be expected to be undertaken by a council when contemplating exercising a general power in its role as a body corporate.

Consultation of the former type is a statutory requirement which is attendant upon the exercise by a council of certain regulatory functions. The ambit of consultation in these circumstances is both determined and restricted by the statutory provisions that govern those functions. Considerations such as whether or not Council, as owner of the land, should sell - or lease the land, or any part of it, for a particular development have no relevance in consultation processes of this type.

Conclusion

On the basis of the information Council has provided, the Department does not propose to take any further action in respect of this matter. However, the Department is disappointed that Council, in its handling of the proposed sale, has failed to adopt best practice in that it:

■ failed to follow the advice of its legal advisors to reclassify the land

■ failed to adopt the procedure recommended by ICAC as being the best course of action in the circumstances from a probity perspective

■ failed to clearly document reasons for its decisions

■ failed to heed the advice of its legal advisors to invite the other persons who had submitted proposals to alter proposals once it had been decided to expand the development area

■ failed to consider its own Community Consultation Strategy when deciding to change its original publicly notified proposal to sell or lease 4,515 m2 of public land for a hotel development to sell 9,517 m2 of such land for a combined hotel and apartment development.

In doing so, Council compromised transparency, fairness and the appearance of probity and has thereby fallen below the standard the public has the right to expect of a responsible and community minded Council.

Based on the concerns and comments outlined earlier, the Department considers it reasonable that Council reconsider its decision to enter into contractual relations with Huscorp for the sale of the site.

The Department also requires that this letter be tabled in open session at the next ordinary meeting of Council.

Yours sincerely
Garry Payne AM



A different kind of election, in Central Australia

**Liam O'Sullivan, Yuendumu
25 October 2008**

Its 6am we are driving 300 kilometres West of Alice Springs to the rural town of Yuendumu. Local Shire elections are being held all over the Northern Territory. We are driving out to remote towns to assist Electoral officials and the community as they vote in the first Council elections.

At Yuendumu 60% of the community turn out to vote, some have voted in Alice Springs. Others, a group of 6 women aged between 80 and 4 and representing 4 generations of the same family, drive 70km on dirt roads in 35 degree heat to register a vote.

The people are serious about voting for their chosen candidate. After all this election is the first Council elections the people have had. This Council will be their Council.

Most communities have local boards and all Councillors will have to consult through these boards when making decisions that affect community.

No one complains about the heat or the foreign western process of democracy, there are no candidates handing out how to vote forms, no posters, no signs erected on trees, everyone knows who they'll be voting for.

Potential Councillors have had to knock on doors, organise community meetings in order to be considered by local people worthy enough to be voted for. Elders have given approval to young people to stand as potential leaders. The whole process

is done respectfully acknowledging both the communities traditions and our Western traditions.

The next day at Yuelamu, its 8:30 am and the locals are waiting at the community centre for us to arrive. The Electoral Commission people weren't expecting such a strong turn out and have to open the booths half an hour early. Old people wait patiently in line for their turn to vote. The mood of the people is extremely cooperative; mothers holding children pass them back along the line to Aunties and neighbours, there is no intimidation or bullying by candidates as people move into the community building to vote. Instead harmony and respect are the order of the day.

I reflect on our recent Council elections in the Shoalhaven. There were polling booths in every town, the furthest people would have travelled would have been 10 km on tarred road in comfortable conditions. Sausage sandwiches and drinks were available.


As I handed out how to vote sheets on the day of our election in the Shoalhaven I was surprised by the number of people who said they did not know who they would be voting for. Most commented that they did not know the candidates. I guess if we want a thriving democracy sometimes we have to make the effort to find out who is standing up to represent our communities.

I'm inspired by the way the people out here have gone about selecting their leaders. They

organised meetings to hear their candidates talk, they have local boards that will advise the representative what the community wants. Elders and the young, women and children participate and are heard. Most of all the community participates to hold their representatives accountable.

We are really very lucky on the South Coast and maybe we take our Councillors and Council for granted, demanding a lot from Council staff while not taking responsibility to provide the staff with quality leadership. We get what we work for. Freedom and peace comes only through hard work.

Liam O'Sullivan has taken a year's leave from youth work for the NSW Department of Housing on the South Coast to work on community capacity building in communities in the western Desert, in the Northern Territory. Liam has also provided the accompanying press release 'Lifting Regional Australia out of Dependency' which, while focused on remote Aboriginal communities seems quite relevant to life in the forty nine towns and villages of the Shoalhaven.



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DESERT KNOWLEDGE SYMPOSIUM MEDIA RELEASE

Lifting regional Australia out of dependency

SMALL communities in regional Australia should be cautious of becoming too dependent on governments or they risk becoming unhealthy and ineffective, warned renowned American thinker and writer Meg Wheatley today at the Desert Knowledge Symposium in Alice Springs.

"Worldwide, we have created dependent societies and it can take years, and a lot of patience and effort to pull a community out of this way of thinking.

"People have to be engaged in their own lives and in creating benefits for themselves; otherwise we will continue with dependency."

Ms Wheatley's presentation to over 350 delegates from desert regions across Australia and the world described how we should use our desire to be

in a community as a vehicle to create change.

"We should use community as the leader and the resource rather than waiting for a heroic leader to come in and say 'I'll fix it for you'."

Ms Wheatley, who has worked with Indigenous people from all over the world, cited the Federal Government Intervention as an example of the blanket 'fix it approach'.

"From what I see, the Intervention has been a disaster; you can tell it is going to be disaster when you don't engage with people and it is probably not even working on the right issues, but is simply applying a blanket over the issues.

"The whole issue about no alcohol and no pornography is someone else's idea about what the problem is, and all this creates is opposition, resistance

and disgust.

"You don't really create the amount of change that you obviously believe is necessary when you pass such a strict piece of legislation.

"The wisdom we need to solve our community issues is in us already. When we have a problem, do we first look inside our community expecting to find answers, or do we instantly look outside for best practices?"

"We also need to focus on what has been working and what is possible; not what is wrong."

Ms Wheatley also shared her experience of working with New Orleans residents after Hurricane Katrina and the results of a bureaucracy not responding in time.

"We can learn a lot about community after a natural disaster. It is human nature

for neighbours and strangers to rush in and help each other. Self organisation is a basic human drive, and we should draw on that strength to mobilise our communities in any situation."

Meg Wheatley recommended that audience members consider 12 basic principles when trying to create a healthy community:

1. People support what they create
2. People act most responsibly when they care
3. Conversation is the way humans have always thought together
4. To change the conversation, change who is in the conversation
5. Expect leadership to come from anywhere!
6. Focus on what is working
7. The wisdom we need is in us already

8. Everything is a failure in the middle – change occurs in cycles

9. Learning is the only way we become smarter about what we do

10. Meaningful work is a powerful human motivator

11. Humans can handle anything as long as they're together

12. If someone observed your community, would they see the qualities of generosity, forgiveness and love?

The Desert Knowledge Symposium is being held in Alice Springs from November 3–6, 2008. It is sponsored by Desert Knowledge Australia, the Desert Peoples Centre and the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre. See: <http://www.desertknowledge2008.com/>

To view brief abstracts of each presentation topic go to <http://www.desertknowledge2008.com/abstracts.asp>

A new prospect or not?

Dennis Argall

OBAMA has won. How improbable. A man who gave up his Wall Street job in his twenties to take a tiny wage to go to South Chicago to teach women to be strong, to organise and get social and community improvements, becomes president of the world in his forties.

The earth has shifted. The most expensive political campaign the planet has seen has been funded not by the rich but by vast numbers of ordinary people. And the change in expectations relates to that community connection.

In the end of the 80s we had a global shift: walls coming down and democracy rising; in the 00's we have had, since 9/11, a rush to hatreds and isolation, reinforcing our burgeoning tendency to build larger houses, shut our doors and consume more.

How astonishing if we had now a chance for a global community empowerment movement.

We need it. I know no other direction from which we can begin to face the twin challenges of climate change and the global economic involution. This is not only remarkable it is essential.

In March 2008, in *New Bush Telegraph* issue 99, I reflected on the prospect that if the world changed under Obama and if the Federal Government was serious about its social inclusion policies, the Shoalhaven needed to be careful not to be left behind: the Shoalhaven can go forward and up, or just slump.

"The Shoalhaven can go forward and up, or just slump. We can be a positive community and a great regional centre, or be bogged in social problems.

Too often... blown along by the weekly spray of documents... councillors had no idea of the extent of their capacity to work for change

"What, for example, will we do about the families that will arrive here with the 500 inmates of the new gaol? Run from expanding ghettos or work for social inclusion? Lock up the chooks and put out the dog, or open our hearts and minds? Why is our local government persistently stuck in mucky states, chewing its way through big issues without vision. Where are the younger people with vision, integrity and imagination to sweep all that away and enable us to become a leading, intelligent region which others might follow?"

"We seem stuck in a situation where thrills are secured by pettifoggery and mob-leading. That era is ending in the wider world.

"We will be left behind without leadership that sees broader issues and builds community, rather than working constantly to divide. Do you have the courage to pursue change? Send us ideas for our 100th issue? Can you get people together to consider what is the way to change the [Shoalhaven City] council..."

or so I wrote in March, before I was moved to stand for council myself, spending from my own pocket, assisting change, not myself being elected...

We have had a change of local government, of membership and control of Shoalhaven City Council, though Watson's Shoalhaven Independents are still in the council and on the airwaves, defending their record, attacking critics, waiting for power again.

It is far from clear whether the new team on the council

understands the need for fundamental reform.

I am staying away from council issues for a time for several reasons, including that as an unsuccessful candidate for mayor negative comments from me may simply be seen as sour grapes (though I am more than pleased in fact to have my freedom). And because the new team needs time to show what it can do.

I am concerned that Mayor Green said to me (several times) during the campaign that he did not understand management issues, and Deputy Mayor Gareth Ward, with immense power and as close advisor to Green, seems still more preoccupied with politics of adversarialism and populist issues, building support thus rather than reforming the council's operations and building community collaboratively. I hope I am wrong, I would love to have Gareth prove me entirely wrong, as I would also like to see Paul Green lead a process to open all the doors and windows of this council which as an organisation has been distorted by a way of doing business – from the top – which has diminished morale, impoverished advice and made recruitment difficult.

Let the staff have a major role in reform. The Local Government Act allows councils immense freedom to run themselves with great independence.

As I write, the Department of Local Government, which is based in Nowra, has yet to submit to the Shoalhaven City Council its long awaited Better Practice Review.

Some suggested to me earlier

that this was a review under cover of which the department might be preparing for investigation. It is certainly a report which will have had to be redrafted for a new elected council leadership.

During the election campaign an officer of the local government department said to me privately how important it was that elected councillors really discover what their jobs are and what powers they have.

Too often, he said, four and five years down the track, blown along by the weekly spray of documents coming to the elected council, councillors still had no idea of the extent of their capacity to work for change, too many still did not understand their job.

In the aftermath of the Department of Local Government's letter on the Huscorp affair, reproduced in this issue of *New Bush Telegraph*, the council seems likely to keep to itself (apart from the usual exhibition phase, down the track, when planners and councillors have controlled the dream) to decide what is to be done with the Nowra gateway.

Wrong concept. This is indeed a gateway issue for the new council. Can councillors and planners try to get the point that we are in a new space.

Shoalhaven City Council has to go more openly to community for vision, see itself as part of community, not run home to the mirror with the ribbons from the Easter Show, relegating to itself all the power still. That's the same old style, just new looks, shinier teeth. No real change.

Dennis Argall was a candidate for mayor at the 2008 Shoalhaven elections. Reform proposals still on the web at www.shoalhaven2020.net

4 degrees

David Lockwood

AN August 6th report in *The Guardian* suggested that the UK should prepare for temperature increases of 4°C. Professor Bob Watson, chief scientific advisor to the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, told *The Guardian* that we don't know in detail how to limit greenhouse gas emissions to realize the 2 degrees temperature target set by the EU. We should prepare to adapt to 4 degrees.

According to the Stern Review (under a 4 degree temperature rise) 300 million people would be impacted by coastal flooding each year. South Africa and the Mediterranean would have 30-50% less water. Africa would see a decline of 15-35% in crop yields and 20-50% of animal and plant species could face extinction.

A 4 degree increase in temperature will create a new climate regime according to Professor Neil Adger from the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research.

He suggested that we need to do everything possible to avoid 4 degrees because the impacts are so severe that the only real adaptation strategy is to avoid that level of increase. Such increases would require evacuating some parts on Britain. These areas could not be defended against future sea level rises.

Alluding to the 1960's moon landings, Professor Watson proposes an "Apollo type programme" to build 10-20 Carbon, Capture and Storage pilot projects among OECD countries to develop and prove the technology. He also said that as sulfur pollution is removed from coal fired power stations, warming would accelerate because sulfur aerosols have up until now been retarding some warming. This offset is equivalent to around 100ppm CO2 and will disappear if China and India follow the lead of the US and Europe in limiting sulfur emissions.

One large unknown is the tipping point threshold for the release of methane from permafrost in the Arctic. It is possible that a 4-degree increase in temperature is enough to trigger runaway melting at both poles.

Life Changing, the APHEDA Way

Dallas Hall

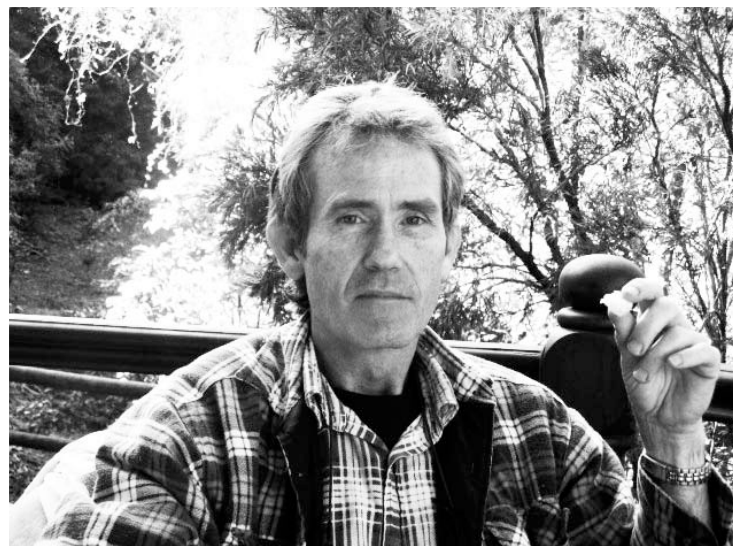
PICTURE if you will, a 40 something bloke, single, self employed and bored with the routine of his life. "Fulfilment", meant too many beers at the end of a hard working week ! Then one day he finds himself working for a couple who are actively enjoying life to the point of being too busy to scratch themselves let alone be bored.

Something to be learnt here I thought.

Well I learnt quite a few things over the years from this dynamic couple , however the activity which they introduced me to that has engaged me now for over four years has been the work of the South Coast Branch of APHEDA.

APHEDA (Australian People for the Health Education and Development Abroad) is the overseas humanitarian aid arm of the Australian Council of Trade Unions.(ACTU) Also more simply know as Union Aid Abroad. Focusing on sustainable assistance, APHEDA works with local aid agencies in twenty countries through out the world.

The south coast branch organises fund raising events in the Illawarra. Comprising a diverse range of people, the eight or so active committee members have welcomed me into their midst and by example have shown me just what can be achieved when determined people put a little



time and energy into something worthwhile. For example our recent annual dinner funded the construction of a pre school room for children living on a Manilla rubbish dump. This enabled the parents who earn their living scavenging the dump to have a safe place to leave their children during the day.

Through APHEDA I have found an activity which enables me to feel fulfilled in terms of helping to make the world a slightly better place. I have developed friendships and met some unique and inspiring people, Sekai Holland (Zimbabwe political activist and now member of that government), Tom Uren and Jack Munday to name a few.

I have also volunteered in the Sydney office of APHEDA

(doing mundane but none the less crucial work – stuffing envelopes.... !) and therefore have witnessed myself the activities and dedication of the staff there.

So what does this fifty year old do now when he feels the old twinge of boredom creep in (or is that arthritis?), he volunteers of course !

If you are interested in the work of APHEDA or would like to donate go to www.apheda.org.au

Dallas Hall is a builder and craftsman woodworker and a member of the Illawarra Support Group of APHEDA. We seem to have no APHEDA support group in the Shoalhaven. Easy to correct that! Contact APHEDA and see what can be done. Let us know if you are starting something.



Under a Bushell
ABORIGINALS USED TO HIDE THEIR CHILDREN WHEN AUTHORITIES CAME TO COLLECT THEM. THIS WORK REFERENCE ABORIGINAL CULTURE, THE WHITE SHEET - THE MISSIONARIES WHERE THE CHILDREN WERE REMOVED TO, EFFECTIVELY COVERING OVER THEIR CULTURES & TRADITIONS. PLACED OVER THE LAND, THE SHEET OFFERS NO REAL COMFORT. LIKE OTHER STORIES CREATED BY AUTHORITIES ABOUT THE MISSIONARIES THE SHEETS, TORN OUT FOR VISITING OFFICIALS AND INSPECTORS, WERE PUT AWAY WHEN THEY LEFT.



Caro Coffey

Caro Coffey of Vincentia is a working artist who has been in the Shoalhaven for four years. These paintings represent Caro's concerns about the environment and social justice issues.

"War on the Environment" [oil on paper] with two dolphins and a military aircraft heading across the bay towards Point Perpendicular, speaks of the incongruity of continued bombing of the Beecroft range on the northern headland of Jervis Bay.

"Under a Bushell" [acrylic on oil on paper] was exhibited in a one person show at Laura's Garden Cafe in Sanctuary Point in November 2008. See the artist's explanatory note.

Caro's work will also appear in the "2008-09 Under 500 Exhibition" Group Exhibition of Artworks by Members of Jervis Bay & Basin Arts Inc, December 13th 2008 to January 26th 2009

Venue: Main Gallery, Lady Denman Heritage Complex, Huskisson



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A catchment approach to retaining a quality of life

**Terry Barratt, Chair,
Bomaderry Creek Landcare
Group**

MUCH has been said and done over the years about the Bomaderry Creek Bushland including threats by the Shoalhaven City Council to dissect it with housing and road projects, and the community's fight to stop such insane obscenities.

On the positive side some progress has been made in achieving the Bushland's protection through reservation of a third of its area under the National Parks and Wildlife Act. Conservation works are also underway, principally by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Bomaderry Creek Landcare Group, to control weeds and feral animals, restore habitats and improve recreational facilities.

Previous editions of *The New Bush Telegraph* have documented the Bomaderry Creek saga in a lot more detail.

The Landcare Group has now taken the initiative of promoting a wider range of environmental protection measures throughout the Bomaderry Creek catchment and beyond. In addition to the more traditional focus on the Bushland itself, the Landcare Group has adopted a broader

landscape approach whereby better land management of the rural parts of the catchment and linking of natural habitat along protected and planted corridors is being advocated as the basis for community engagement in a catchment management plan to link the Cambewarra Range to the Shoalhaven River.

This will enhance the biodiversity attributes of the catchment, reduce erosion and improve water quality. By providing corridors for movement of wildlife and native plant life it will enhance the Shoalhaven's level of biological resilience in the face of global warming.

Restoration and revegetation works within the rural lands of the Bomaderry Creek catchment were carried out by the Tapitallee Creek Landcare Group during the 1990s. Even the Shoalhaven City Council has carried out some revegetation work along Bomaderry Creek in recent years. But a great deal more of these undertakings are needed throughout this and adjacent catchments to meet the environmental challenges of the future.

Retention of the natural settings of the Bomaderry Creek Bushland is a crucial part of this landscape planning and management initiative. It is essential that all of the

remaining public and private land within the Bushland be reserved under the National Parks and Wildlife Act and destructive road and housing plans abandoned.

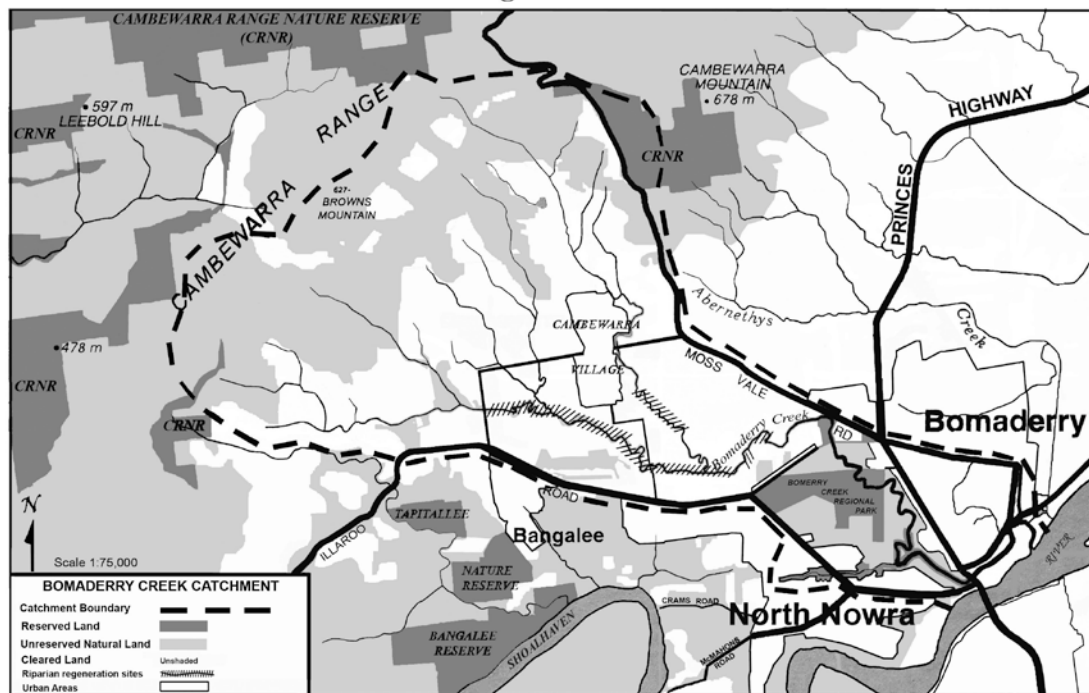
Clearing of the remaining

natural areas earmarked for housing in the North Nowra and Bangalee localities should be avoided and urban growth restricted to cleared lands such as those planned for development adjacent to Moss Vale

Road. Even here, significant areas of land should be set aside as open space for retention of landscape values and for establishment of habitat corridors. Council can bring this about through the development approval process.

The catchment approach to retaining the values of our landscapes and natural areas is a positive approach to retaining quality of life for the community and preferable to the mad rush to develop and destroy our natural heritage in an illusionary dream of "progress".

BOMADERY CREEK CATCHMENT From Cambewarra Range to the Shoalhaven River



*Bomaderry Creek catchment and adjacent landscapes offer the best option for habitat-linking
Cambewarra Range to the Shoalhaven River*

*There is significant potential for habitat-linking via the riparian environments of Bomaderry Creek.
The Regional Park and surrounding bushland form a critical pathway for this initiative.*

ENVIROSCENE

Can we trust the food we eat

Bernie Clarke, Sussex Inlet

ALARM bells rang after recent deaths of four babies and renal failure of 50,000 others after consuming milk products contaminated by melamine, a chemical used in manufacturing plastics, fertilizers and industrial adhesives was added to milk products to produce a protein rich appearance in goods produced with Chinese dairy products.

Six milked-based products, including confectionary and biscuits, have been withdrawn in Australia because of melamine contamination. Eggs produced in these provinces in China were contaminated with melamine. The reports of contaminated dairy products are another serious blow to China's agriculture industry. Hong Kong food officials have begun testing a broader variety of food for melamine, including vegetables, flour and meat products. There are further reports about melamine in animal feed, fish and livestock feed being released.

Canada, the US and Britain have withdrawn melamine contaminated food prod-

ucts. More and more complicated chemical concoctions and increasingly frightening genetic manipulations mean that production is constantly increasing and exceeding by an ever widening margin, the absolute limits. Whether its crops or livestock, growth hormones, milk or wine, honey or herbs, ready meals or canteen food the boundaries of common sense are being left further behind under pressure from farmers, processors, manufacturers, packagers, distributors, everyone involved in this mad race for profit.

Modern medicine is making constant advances and working all kinds of miracles, yet there is more and more illnesses, albeit unseen illnesses. Operating theatres and chemotherapy units are full and the statistics are alarming. An overseas survey has shown in France 595 people die of cancer every day and 675 deaths a day in United Kingdom. There has been an alarming increase in kidney and liver disease and heavy demand by hospitals world-wide for dialysis machines.

The food chain is so contaminated a national ADI, an accept-

able daily intake of chemical substances which we unwittingly consume, measured in milligrams per kilogram of body weight is essential and policed on a regular basis. We are continually being bombarded with new brands and their formulations unscrutinised as in the melamine disaster.

Chinese grown fruit and vegetable imports have been found to contain traces of melamine overseas, but none has tested positive in Australia – yet.

Chemically produced colourings are used because they last longer: they can survive long periods in fridges and freezers, on supermarket shelves or in tins. Citrus red, erythrosine, tartrazine synthetic substances are widely used because of their preservation qualities. Cherries in syrup can be soaked in a cocktail of preservatives so they can withstand a long period of exposure to light or dropped into a sulphite bath. Sulphites (derivatives of sulphur) bleach the fruit before being immersed in another bath of colouring to produce a shiny red fruit.

There is an alarming increase of coloured drinks being sold in shops and school

canteens including a popular brand of slushy. The drink's flavours contain either tartrazine (102), sunset (110), quinoline (104) or carmoisine (122). Following research published in the highly respected medical journal *The Lancet* which concluded that the effects on some children's development from the food colourings could be as detrimental as lead, the British authorities have initiated a gradual ban between now and 2010.

A brand of slushy sold throughout NSW contain four artificial food colourings which are permitted in Australia are banned in the US, European Union and Scandinavia because of their link to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Drinks promoted as 99 per cent fruit contain synthetic flavouring and preservatives including sodium benzoate, which is associated with ADHD and can affect people with asthma.

In defending the sale of products in school canteens, Jo Gardner manager of NSW School Canteen Association agrees some children might react adversely to some food colourings and preservatives.

The question of what percentage of kids is it ok to harm.

Slushies are sold with no labeling and no warnings. The problem lies with the nation's food ministers who have failed to enforce warnings on all products containing dyes. The regulator and the Minister for Primary Industries, Ian Macdonald, said a ban is unnecessary, arguing that existing labeling of ingredients equips consumers with enough information to make a decision. What is the consumption safety limit, do we fully understand the labelling criterion.

Glutamate, sometimes referred to as "Chinese Restaurant syndrome", an extract from tapioca is considered to be the king of additives: one which will retain water and absorb any flavour and minimises loss during the cooking process. Glutamate is known to cause neurological disorders due to excess glutamate in sauces that nausea and migraine may occur.

Anyone allergic to white wine can suffer the same symptoms (often resembling urticaria nettle rash) caused by the high level of sulphites in this type of wine.

Financial meltdown

by Patrick Thompson

ONE possible outcome of the present world financial crisis is that it may offer a last chance to save the planet. Some leading world scientist have made the point that if world leaders can come together with such resolve to solve financial problems then it gives rise to some hope that they maybe able to do the same with meeting the challenge of Climate Change. Frankly, I doubt it. The current financial crisis is a very different kettle of fish. It goes to the very heart of capitalism. Its threat is immediate and like it or not, capitalism is what makes the world go around – the future of the planet is merely of passing interest to those that rule in Canberra, Washington, Tokyo, Beijing, New York, London, Paris, Hong Kong, etc.

What we have seen in past months may well be the very tip of the iceberg. Unbridled capitalism has ruled now for decades. Commencing in the US under Reagan and Thatcher in the UK and with the end of the Cold War, a new world order in economics held sway. Around the world money markets were free to expand almost exponentially and with this came the opening up of China and India which has led to boom times. Here in Australia the housing, equities and commodities markets, all took off. History might tell us this has all happened before, only arguably, it has never occurred on such a grand scale. History also tells us that what inevitably follows great booms are great busts.

Like most I am just an observer as these great events unfold and like most I have trouble understanding what credit default swaps exactly mean or how USD 450 trillion of derivatives came into existence. I do however have a better understanding of debt and what Australia's foreign debt might mean to the nation. I wrote about it a year ago in the New Bush Telegraph. I suggested it should have been an election issue, but it was not. For what it is worth, it now stands at around 180% of GDP. This puts us in a league all on our own. Still as any economist will tell you, we are nation that has a tremendous future with all our mineral wealth. It's just a pity that the boom is over and commodity prices are falling through the floor. If you wonder why our dollar has fallen so dramatically, then here is a big part of the reason. Don't let anyone tell you this nation is in good shape and we are going to fair well.

So then our next question maybe how is our government responding to this crisis? Like governments around the world, we are searching for solutions. Some good old Keynesian economics has been called for and 10 billion of the surplus has been allocated to cheer us all up. It won't go far once it is

spent and unemployment in the New Year takes hold. The falling tax revenue and the increases in welfare payments will make the ten billion seem like nothing. With the rest of the world going into recession and Australia likely to follow, we are in for a rocky ride. Still we could be worse for they are saying Japan with its export-based economy is facing depression.

The longer term view

The present world financial crisis may yet prove to be the medicine we all need to bring us to our senses and may ultimately save the planet. Capitalism as we know it could be finished. This is still an unlikely scenario this time around, but inevitably one-day it will happen for the problem with capitalism is that it does not suit a finite world. The problem with the free-marketters is that they see no limits to growth and that is plainly illogical.

In the longer view of human experience, the last two centuries are a mere speck in time. Up until about 1850 humankind had already made its mark on the planet but in the equivalent of two lifetimes since we have squandered a much greater proportion of the earth's resources. We have turned much of our planet into desert and reduced fish stocks to a fraction of what they once were. Australia with its low rainfall and poor soils has a dreadful environmental record and what we are witnessing in the Murray-Darling Basin is another example of it. We all know the story but are we willing to face it?

Clearly we are not. Our leaders tell us we need growth. Capitalism as we know it needs growth. Economists are telling us that unless we continue to grow we will all be ruined. Indeed economists are saying if China's growth falls to a mere 8% then it will in effect be in recession. So there we have it. Growth is good, it is what must continue. It is what we all must have.

Now you don't have to be a rocket scientist to be a little concerned with this scenario, when we marry it with the other emerging issue of our times, and that is the little matter of global warming. This is a growing worry for nearly all of us. With the passing of Howard and Bush, there is a new optimism abroad that we may yet be willing to face this issue. Our leaders tell us it is going to be tough but with good will and a determined and coordinated effort, the challenge of global warming can be met. Apparently this can be achieved without undue economic hardship. Some even say, properly managed reducing our carbon emissions by 90% over the next forty years, which is what is needed, could be economically beneficial.

What then is the nexus between economic growth on the one hand and reducing carbon emissions by 90% on the other? It should be pretty

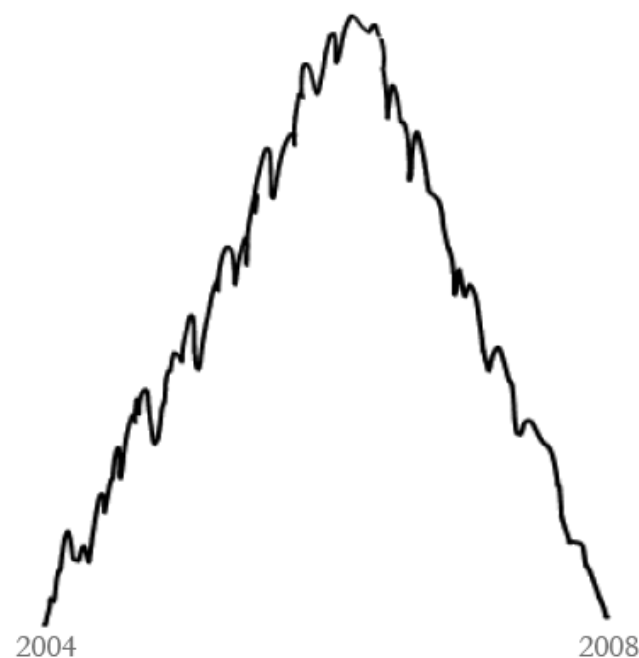
clear. We all need to be put to work reducing our carbon emissions and at the same time we need to keep growing. China and India's economies need to double in size over the next five years and presumably double again in the following five years and this way the rest of the economies of the world should remain healthy. Certainly the Australian economy with its huge foreign debt is depending on it.

Does this all sound 'a little pie in the sky' or does it all seem plausible? Could it be that capitalism or the modern market economy; call it what you will; is in fact on a collision course with global warming? Is there any hope for our planet and our children's future?

We all have a need for optimism, and the way I see it is that the planet will be fine. Although finite its ability to recover is not in question, sadly, this will not be so for many of the creatures of the earth. Probably humans will make it through to the other side. In our short time on earth we have coped with natural disasters, pestilence and dreadful wars before. It is a reasonable proposition that we will survive climate change but not without cost.

One of the extraordinary things to my mind in the present debate is that no one, and I mean none of our leaders, are suggesting that we could all learn to live more simply. This is not an option. Indeed we are told we must go out and spend our money, we must borrow more, we must get the economy going again.

Of course, most people in the world today still live simply. We talk about ecological footprints and it is safe to say that most of



We wish you a Merry Christmas

the world's populations still have meagre ecological footprints. They don't own cars, don't fly in aeroplanes and use little or no electricity. They live on a few dollars a day and they live relatively happy lives. It is these people that the market forces want on board. They too can be led to be consumers like the rest of us. They are the future targets for corporate growth.

In his book "In search of Happiness", John F Schumaker says: "For all the words that are written and spoken it seems little attention is given to developing a critique that can serve as a guiding formula for life. Most are content to strive for happiness; whatever that may mean. If happiness, is the best outcome then we all should have some answers to what it is and how we should go about achieving it."

Schumaker goes on to argue that we were meant to be far more social, spiritual, loving and intellectually engaged than we are being programmed to be by modern consumer culture. Most of us would agree with this sentiment., yet we choose not to do anything about it. We go on working longer and longer hours being encouraged to become more and more productive for what, so that we may have more money to spend and thereby in all likelihood increase our ecological footprint. It is madness – planetary madness, and those that are the worse offenders are our leaders and the executives of corporations with their obscene salary packages, continually exhorting us to increase our productivity and follow their lead. ■

Greenland melt

By David Lockwood

RECENT data from Greenland suggests that the predictions from the most recent IPCC reports may be understated. Greenland has become a barometer for climate change because of its sensitivity to changes in the prevailing climate and because its ice sheet exerts substantial influence on many of the northern hemispheres ecological cycles.

Meltwater from Greenland glaciers (along with the West Antarctic ice-sheet) are the largest potential contributors to sea level rise. What happens there will be a signpost for the fate of the Earth. The speed of melting of the ice sheets has surprised most scientists. They suspect a major polar melt is underway. NASA scientist James Hansen has proposed that the current pace of ice melt may be a self perpetuating positive feedback cycle that disintegrates the Greenland icesheet. Experts

predict that an uncontrolled meltdown of the icesheet will begin if temperatures increase more than 6.8°C in the region.

This meltdown would flood coastal cities around the world. It would also inject large amounts of cold freshwater in the northern oceans which may disrupt the Gulf Stream. This is the ocean current that gives Britain a climate 9°C warmer than it should have at that latitude.

Sea level rises would flood the Nile delta in Africa and the Ganges Brahmaputra delta between Bangladesh and India. Hundreds of millions of people living in Bangladesh, Indonesia and sub-Saharan Africa would need to find somewhere new to live. The global refugee population may reach one billion.

In Greenland, rising air temperatures have brought more fog, snow and spring rain to inhabited coastal regions. This is accelerating ice melt. It is also injecting more freshwater into the surrounding waters. This disrupts ocean

currents and brings more warm water into coastal bays which in turn is disintegrating coastal sea ice. This cycle is gaining momentum and is disrupting traditional patterns of life for indigenous peoples. Another report has highlighted the startling loss of sea ice in the Arctic sea. According to Philip Sutton co-author of Climate Code Red, this will increase temperatures during the arctic summer around 5°C. This regional warming will subject the Greenland icesheet to rapid melting and raise sea level by metres before the end of the century.

This ice loss will have major impacts on the ecology of the northern hemisphere. The region has historically acted as a giant refrigerator. Without its cooling influence weather patterns will change, coastlines will no longer be protected from wave damage by ice and coastal erosion will increase.

What is surprising scientists is their inability to forecast climate changes in the arctic. ■