

our green National Trust

Climate change and sustainability are now perhaps the defining issues of our age. Yet as the following article shows, the Trust has from its inception been concerned with the natural environment, beginning as a group of ecologically minded citizens – the Tree Lovers Civic League – considerably before their time.

This is quite extraordinary when one thinks about it. We are talking about the years of the post WWII boom, when the public and political mindset was geared to development and industrialisation, and emphatically not toward conservation.

As I noted in my Message earlier in this issue, still today, the Trust understands environmental heritage as underpinning all the other forms of heritage that we treasure, including built and cultural. Trust supporters share the belief that we are custodians of our precious natural landscapes and resources on behalf of those who come after us.

This is a solemn responsibility. Now, at the beginning of the 21st century, after more than a century of growth and often rapacious disregard for our

natural world, we face the music. We have benefited enormously from the untold wealth that our industrial and economic development has brought. But on the other side of the equation we are confronted with the bill. Those of us who live now are under an imperative to deliver future generations not only economic but ecological security – the most meaningful legacy of all. Some of the Trust's work in this regard, both historical and current, is outlined in what follows.

This does not mean the Trust's (or this magazine's) focus is shifting away from the areas that it is perhaps more widely identified with: our commitment to protecting built and cultural heritage continues unabated, as the magazine's coverage will attest. But complementing this,

we plan to offer in these pages more concerted attention to sustainability as it applies to our natural, built and cultural heritage. For example, we have invited three key federal politicians with environmental portfolios – Malcolm Turnbull, Peter Garrett and Bob Brown – to provide policy statements, and we hope they will do so for the next issue. We have other interesting articles on climate change, energy efficiency, and sustainability and heritage planned for down the track.

In the meantime, I would like to invite your comments and feedback on sustainability and heritage and can be reached on tjackson@nsw.nationaltrust.org.au

Tina Jackson
Executive Director

A long 'green' history

The National Trust of Australia (NSW) was established in 1945 by a Sydney woman, Annie Wyatt, and members of a local environmental group, the Tree Lovers Civic League of Kuringai.

This small but determined group was moved to act against the 'senseless destruction' of natural and built heritage they saw all around at that time.

The roots of the Trust's strong commitment to environmentalism stretch back to Annie's early life at the turn of the 20th century. Her childhood had been an idyllic one in the verdant and biodiverse Rooty Hill of that era. In her memoir, Annie

writes of what was then a heavily timbered area, inhabited by thousands of native birds of all kinds, with deep rich soil, paddocks waving knee high in wildflowers, and clear pools and small creeks under canopies of wattle and casuarina winding their way between the hills to join the Hawkesbury River.

Annie's activist epiphany came with the 'appearance of two sawmills.... Every day straining bullock teams fed them the forest trees which had held the soil, kept the streams deep and clear and nourished the good earth with their leaves'.

'I would lie awake at night wondering desperately what could be done to stop the destruction'.

Throughout its 60-year history the Trust has worked to honour Annie's prescient concern with ecological sustainability. It has developed policy on a broad range of natural heritage issues, campaigned assiduously for the protection of endangered landscapes, delivered school education programs, undertaken extensive native bush regeneration and cared for the natural heritage estates and substantial gardens which it holds in trust for future generations.

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SOME HIGHLIGHTS OF THE TRUST'S LONG RECORD AS A 'GREEN' GROUP TO THE 1980s:

- ✓ The Trust's first property was Montague Island off the NSW coast at Narooma, a sanctuary for seals and fairy penguins acquired in 1953, which it retains to this day.
- ✓ In the 1950s, the Trust commenced its long campaign for controls on development around the Hawkesbury, and for the conservation of various wilderness areas including the Blue Mountains and what was to become Bouddi National Park on Broken Bay (the State's first marine park), and pressed for legislation to protect coastal lands and foreshores.
- ✓ The Trust was integral in the formation of the Nature Conservation Council in 1955.
- ✓ The Trust acquired the 3.5 acre native bushland estate the Ludovic Blackwood Memorial Sanctuary in 1961, in Pennant Hills, Sydney; and Wirrimbirra Sanctuary, a 200 acre fauna and flora reserve and education centre in Bargo, in 1965. It still holds these sanctuaries today.
- ✓ In the 1960s the Trust commenced its long campaign for a Sydney Harbour National Park, and joined with other green groups in successfully campaigning for the establishment of the 69,000 acre Myall Lakes National Park, saving the area from mining.
- ✓ The Trust was instrumental in the establishment of the National Parks and Wildlife Act and Service in the late 60s and early 70s, the development of heritage legislation and the formation of the NSW Heritage Office.
- ✓ In the early 1970s the Trust successfully opposed the construction of a steelworks, port and nuclear power station at Jervis Bay.
- ✓ In 1970 the Trust acquired the 3.5 acre native bushland property Ahimsa, in Cheltenham, which it still holds in trust today.
- ✓ In the early to mid-1970s the Trust successfully agitated to stop major environmental destruction including coal industry developments on the Illawarra escarpment; the building of gas pipelines through the Blue Mountains National Park and from Sydney to Newcastle; and the establishment of pine plantations in the pristine Kanangra-Boyd National Park near Oberon. It opposed clear felling and woodchipping operations in the Eden and Coffs Harbour areas.
- ✓ The Trust worked successfully in the 1970s to promote the regeneration of the degraded Parramatta River, and successfully lobbied against the building of a 40,000 seat stadium on the 200 acre Parramatta Park.
- ✓ In 1974, the Trust began allocating Classified listing to landscape conservation areas of outstanding value such as Hawkesbury Reserve, Kosciusko Alpine Area, Lord Howe Island, and Port Stephens.
- ✓ The Trust commenced, in 1976, a native bush regeneration pilot program that still flourishes today and is the largest bush regeneration service in the State.
- ✓ In the late 1970s and into the early 1980s, the Trust led the fight with other green organisations to preserve from logging the State's pristine old growth rainforests, such as Terania creek near Lismore and the Washpool Wilderness near Grafton, the largest undisturbed tract of rainforest in the State. In June 1980 it produced and widely published its *Rainforest Preservation Policy*, urging that the most important area be acquired by the NPWS. Under intense pressure, the government decided to phase out logging and 93% of the disputed areas were preserved – a milestone in the history of conservation in NSW.

Annemarie Jonson
National Trust

Conserving environmental heritage in a fast changing world

The National Trust in NSW was formed at a time when post Second World War redevelopment threatened to indiscriminately wipe away much of our built and natural heritage in the name of 'progress'.

1980s heritage and environmental legislation was intended to balance essential development with conservation of our historical, scenic and naturally significant places but in recent years this legislation has been increasingly overridden to permit over-development in places which should have been protected and conserved.

In most recent times we have seen increasing public concern at the predicted impacts of global warming, anticipated sea level rises and water shortages. There has also been a nationwide lack of investment in necessary infrastructure which has left our public transport systems in a parlous state unable to cope with the pressures placed upon them.

The Trust has drawn together much of its earlier work and sought the advice of a range of scientists in preparing its own Climate Change Policy which will essentially remain a 'work in progress' able to absorb new information, ideas and strategies as they emerge.

The limited resources available to the Trust require it to concentrate on the specific areas of greatest relevance and concern. One such obvious area is the continuing use of buildings for their original purposes (eg historic cinemas, post offices, churches) rather than demolition and redevelopment. Progressive adaptive re-use rather than massive re-development conserves materials, energy, historical and social significance and that 'sense of place' that is so important to a community.

Massive redevelopment plans for places such as Redfern-Waterloo are as inappropriate now as were the plans for redevelopment of The Rocks, Glebe and Woolloomooloo in the 1960s – 1970s.

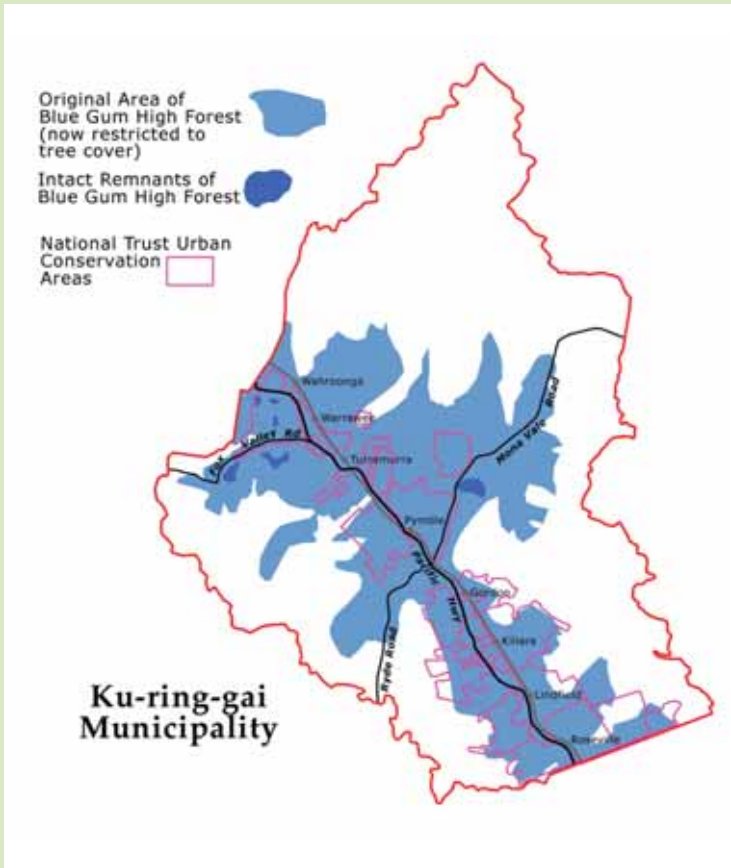
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While new expressways may have initial benefits for improved motor vehicle flow, those in the inner city rapidly clog, transfer traffic jams to other points and can have major adverse effects on bushland, open space, urban conservation areas and the general sense of community. More resources need to be applied to upgrading and promoting public transport in all its forms if the environmental heritage of our urban landscape is not to be further damaged. Then there is the problem of large-scale damage to distinctive scenic landscapes when urban renewal/consolidation policies are forced on local councils without a balancing system for recognising and protecting the environmental heritage.

Wins and losses

In 1990, the Trust carried out a detailed study of the trees in the Sydney suburb of Lugarno on the Georges River and, in 1993, the town of Mudgee in central NSW. Both studies sought to identify individual trees, their location and the vital contribution they made to the local landscape,

The Lugarno Tree Study noted 44 native tree species including the Sydney Peppermints on the sandstone soils of southern Lugarno, the Sydney Red Gums and Grey Gums throughout the area, the Turpentines and Grey Ironbarks on the shale soils in the north and the rare Forest Red Gums on volcanic soils near Evatt Park. This study and Scenic Area Protection zoning has



contributed to retaining the character of this suburb despite the major redevelopment of other areas in Hurstville Municipality.

However, in Ku-ring-gai, Urban Conservation Areas listed by the National Trust and put forward by the local council for heritage listing have not been accepted by the State Government, which is permitting major redevelopment to occur.

Ku-ring-gai has its own distinctive and very rare tree communities (Blue Gum High Forest and Turpentine-Ironbark Forest). Some very small samples of these communities occur in tiny reserves in the Sydney Region, for example, the National Trust's Ludovic Blackwood Memorial Sanctuary at Beecroft. But major redevelopment across the Ku-ring-gai

Municipality threatens to remove many of the surviving mature (old-growth) trees of these rare plant communities. These are the very trees which give places such as Ku-ring-gai and Lugarno their distinctive landscape character.

The foreword to the Lugarno Tree Study noted 'the concept of a "land ethic", although highly developed with more primitive civilizations is yet to be accepted in today's Australia'.

However, with growing public concern at problems such as climate change, over-development and lack of planning and provision for necessary infrastructure perhaps now is the time for developing such a 'land ethic'.

*Jacqui Goddard and Graham Quint
National Trust*