

Newsletter No 165
March 2015

WEPA



Willoughby Environmental Protection Association

Next Meeting

Tuesday 17 March 2015

Glenaeon School Hall, 121 Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag
(between Charles and Edith Streets and opposite The Parapet)

8 pm

AGM and Election of Office Bearers 2015

with Guest Speaker

Dr Leigh Martin

'Living Landscapes under Threat'

Dr Leigh Martin will discuss several aspects of biodiversity - what biodiversity is and why it is important, causes of biodiversity loss and what is being done to protect it.

Leigh is an ecologist and seasoned campaigner, who has worked with the Total Environment Centre to restore the Snowy River, protect Sydney's drinking water catchments, reduce air pollution and prevent the damming of the Williams River in the Hunter Valley.

Our meeting is free and open to all interested persons. Please join us for supper and a chat after Leigh's talk.

For further information, please phone Gay on 99588569, or Christina on 9438 4073

Annual Subscriptions It's that time again. Your continued support is much appreciated and helps WEPA to advocate for the environment. Please provide your details on the enclosed pink slip and either pay by cheque, by bank transfer - details are on the slip - or at the meeting.

Meet the Candidates 7pm Thursday 19 March Dougherty Centre, Chatswood
Don't miss this opportunity to quiz candidates on their policies. See p2 for details.

Inside: Diary Dates - p2; Stop the Chop, Tree Cover in Willoughby - 3; Vanishing trees impact on wildlife; NSW Govt track record; Optional preferential voting - p4; Container deposit legislation; Waste and tyres; Biodiversity protection at risk; Cane toad - p5; Coal Seam Gas and Coal Mining - p6; Environmental cost of a petrol car; Electric car for Willoughby Council; Passing of Imre Gahl - p8.

Willoughby Environmental Protection Association (WEPA) Inc., PO Box 4263, Castlecrag,
NSW, 2068

A member of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW

Diary Dates

Saturday-Sunday 14-15 March, 2015

University of Western Sydney

IDEA 2015 A Prescription for Action

Annual conference of Doctors for the Environment Australia on protecting the environment and our health. Community members very welcome.

Topics include Climate Change as a health, environment and security issue; and new directions for protecting health and environment for ourselves and future generations.

Speakers include Dr John Hewson, Professor Admiral Chris Barrie (Former Chief of Defence Force), Dr Alessandro DeMaio (Harvard Fellow), Dr John Collee (screenwriter), Professor Lesley Hughes and Amanda McKenzie (Climate Council), Nick Watts (Global Climate and Health Alliance) and more.

For more information and to register, go to www.idea15.net and see also <http://www.facebook.com/IDEANationalConference?fref=n/f>

Tuesday 17 March 2015 12 noon - 3pm

Parliament Theatre
Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney

BPN Planning Forum

A free invitation event to BPN members, affiliate groups and supporters.

Speakers and special guests will consider how we can change the planning system. Major political parties are also invited to share their vision on planning policy for NSW.

www.betterplanningnetwork.good.do

see also www.facebook.com/BetterPlanningNetwork

Register by Friday 13 March.

Tuesday 17 March, 2015 5.30 - 7.00pm

Parliament Theatre,
Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney

The Environment Forum

Sponsored by 9 major environment groups including the Nature Conservation Council of NSW, Total Environment Centre, National Parks Association, The Wilderness Society, The Colong Foundation for Wilderness.

Speakers: NSW Environment Minister Rob Stokes, Leader of the Opposition and Labor Environment Spokesperson, Luke Foley, and the Greens Environment Spokesperson, Mehreen Faruqi.

RSVP essential at www.nature.org.au/environment-forum

Questions can be submitted by emailing policy@nature.org.au

Yes! This is just before WEPA's AGM and Dr Leigh Martin's talk, but you can do it!

It will be OK to come a bit late to the WEPA meeting.

Thursday 19 March, 2015 7.00pm for 7.30pm

Dougherty Centre, Victor Street, Chatswood

NSW State Election Meet the Candidates for the Willoughby electorate.

The meeting is organised by the Willoughby Federation of Progress Associations and hosted by Chatswood West

Ward Progress Association. Federation Chair Mr Don Swonnell will chair the meeting.

Each candidate will address the meeting for 6 minutes and have 2 minutes to respond to questions. They will have a further 2 minutes to sum up.

Residents can submit questions from 7pm on the night, or they may be submitted by email by 17 March to kaine.johnson@wilderness.org.au

Don't miss this important opportunity to quiz the candidates on their party's policies, particularly as there is very little information on party websites. There are no environmental policies on the Liberal and National websites. The Labor website includes only the creation of a Great Koala National Park and a permanent ban on unconventional and coal seam gas in the Northern Rivers region. There are a number of environmental policies on The Greens website.

So to know what policies you are voting for, you will have to do the work yourself.

Monday 23 March, 2015 6.00pm - 8.00pm

Mona Vale Memorial Hall, 1606 Pittwater Road, Mona Vale (next to Mona Vale Library)

Sustainability Expert

Architects, tradies and designers will be providing free advice on solar, water re-use, green roofs, native bees and more. Bring along your sketches, plans and photographs on your tablet, laptop or good old hard copies. Light refreshments provided. Format: On arrival you can book 10 minute consultations with your preferred expert

Bookings preferred: Online - pittwater.nsw.gov.au/sustainability_events; In person - at Coast Environment Centre, Lake Park Road, North Narrabeen; Phone 1300 000 232 (Reception - Option 1)

Saturday 28 March, 2015 9.00am - 11.30am

Living with Big Trees

Trees are a significant natural asset to your property and neighbourhood. Join Tree expert, Margot Blues, to find out more about these gentle giants and when they could be dangerous.

Bookings: DiaryDates@willoughby.nsw.gov.au or 9777 1000.

Sunday 12 April, 2015 9.00am - 4.00pm

Common Myna Trap Building

Join the Bushland Project Officer to construct your very own trap to help control common mynas.

Bookings: www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/greenevents or 9936 8100.

Sunday 15 March, 6pm at Hoyts Cinema, Warringah Mall, Brookvale, and Wednesday 25 March, 7pm, at the Dendy, Newtown.

Frackman These dates are the only opportunities for Sydneysiders to see this film which is touring NSW. It is the story of Dayne Pratzky who moved from the city to Tara in Queensland in search of a quiet life and instead got a coal seam gas company knocking at his door. The film is the story of his mission to protect his community from coal seam gas mining.

STOP THE CHOP - tree slaughter continues

The NSW Government has made only weak responses to community opposition to the 10/50 legislation, which was introduced in a knee-jerk response to the Blue Mountain bushfires in October 2013. Ostensibly, by removing 'red tape', residents could take responsibility for protecting themselves from bushfire by removing from their property trees and other vegetation that they, and not trained professionals from the Rural Fire Service, assessed as a bushfire hazard. Never mind that there was no scientific basis for such a proposal.

The result has been an orgy of tree clearing facilitated by an explosion of inexperienced cowboy tree-loppers, offering cheap deals if a whole street signed up.

After a huge outcry from residents and local councils, particularly in the 'leafy' areas of the North Shore, Hills District and Northern Beaches, the Government in September 2014 announced minimal changes to the 'entitlement areas' in which clearing was allowed. They also announced an inquiry into the 10/50 code which accompanies the legislation. The inquiry is ongoing and is not likely to be finished before mid-2015.

Willoughby Council has sent three submissions opposing the legislation and the Code and requesting an exemption. It has received no reply.

Since the introduction of the Code hundreds of trees have been removed. Willoughby, where an exact count has not been possible, has lost over 350 trees, many of them huge old Blue Gums, Blackbutts and Angophoras, some over 100 years old. West Chatswood has been particularly badly affected. Hundreds more have been removed in Lane Cove and Ku-ring-gai. In the vast majority of cases, bushfire risk has not been cited as a reason for removal. Reasons are as trivial as disliking leaves on the grass, but commonly are to improve views or to allow for development.

But the onus remains on the property owner, with no training in recognition of threatened species, assessment of slope of the land or of Occupational Health and Safety Regulations. Importantly, the requirement for assessment of bushfire hazard by professionals from the Rural Fire Service, a system that worked well before the introduction of the legislation or the Code, has not been reinstated.

The state-wide inquiry announced by the government has already identified at least 12 aspects of the legislation and the Code that need to be amended or clarified. Surely this is reason enough to declare a moratorium!

In the meantime, the ambience which attracted so many people to live where they do, is being lost, along with habitat for birds, animals and insects, the wildlife corridors which allow movement of fauna. The shade provided by large trees is much needed on hot summer days, as is the lowering of the temperature to which they contribute. The hollows in the very old trees, which provide homes for possums, kookaburras, lorikeets and many other fauna, are irreplaceable.

If you hear any chainsaws in your area, immediately call Willoughby Council on 9777 1000 and ask for the Ranger. Continue to lobby your local member and press for a moratorium followed by repeal of this appalling 10/50 legislation at pre-election Meet the Candidates meetings.

Trees as nature's air conditioners

In *High Bake*, (habitat Australia, March 2015) Dr Paul Sinclair, Director of Campaigns for ACF, discusses the role of trees in modifying temperature.

Cities are becoming hotter as a result of global pollution from burning of fossil fuels. The number of hot days per year has doubled in the last 50 years. Heat waves are becoming more frequent and in fact kill more people than any other natural disasters. A 2014 Productivity Commission Report on how governments will fund responses to natural disasters excluded heatwaves from its terms of reference.

Dr Sinclair notes 'Like a giant electric blanket, at night the city's hectares of concrete release heat stored during the day. Yet research shows a single tree has the same cooling effect as ten air conditioners.'

Removing parks and trees and increasing the amount of concrete and bitumen raises temperatures. Trees are even more important in the absence of policies and actions to prevent climate change.

Tree cover in Willoughby

2020vision is a collaborative plan to increase the amount of green space in our urban areas by 20% by 2020. The plan has analysed tree canopy cover in 139 local governments across Australia. The top local government areas by tree canopy in NSW are Pittwater (59%), Hornsby Shire (59%) and Warringah Council (58%).

In May 2014, results for Willoughby Council were: Hard surfaces - 42.6% Tree cover - 37.0% Shrub cover - 7.0% With houses becoming larger and covering more of a residential allotment, and increasing density, hard surfaces will only increase and opportunities for increasing tree cover decrease.



Sustained pressure for a moratorium on clearing in urban areas lead to a further backdown, on 26 November 2014, in which the 'entitlement areas' reverted back to the old rules - almost:

Within 100 metres of Category 1 Bushfire Prone Vegetation, and

Within 30 metres of Category 2 Bushfire Prone vegetation, as defined on existing Bushfire Prone Land Maps.

Vanishing big trees puts Australia's urban wildlife in peril

Australian cities must work harder to preserve their large, old trees if we want to keep our native animals, environmental scientists have warned.

Across Australia - and the world - the future of large old trees is bleak and yet large trees support many species such as birds and small mammals, says Mr Darren Le Roux, a PhD student at the ARC Centre of Excellence for Environmental Decisions (CEED) and the Australian National University.

As cities lose their large old trees, native wildlife that depends on large trees for food and shelter will also be in jeopardy. This calls for urgent intervention to stop declines, including reducing the potential risks posed by large trees to people and property, he says.

"Studies based in Canberra - the 'Bush Capital' - show that Australia could lose 87 per cent of its hollow-bearing trees in the urban landscape over the next 300 years. Under the worst case scenario, we could lose all large, hollow-bearing trees within the next 115 years."

This is cause for alarm, because iconic urban wildlife such as parrots and kookaburras as well as animals such as bats and some species of possum and insects and even certain plants may follow the decline of big trees, says co-researcher Dr Karen Ikin of CEED and ANU.

Mr Le Roux explains that the loss of old trees, as well as other critical habitat structures, in urban landscapes is largely due to 'tidy-up' practices that are driven by negative public attitudes.

"Large old trees, dead trees and branches, woody debris and shrubs that support native wildlife are often removed because of fears that branches might injure people or damage property, or because structures appear untidy or pose a bushfire risk," he says.

"We are far too quick to remove habitat like old trees without first considering alternative ways to retain these structures that won't risk people's lives and property."

In a recent study, CEED researchers surveyed 55 bird species across Canberra and found that a quarter of all species were recorded only at large trees, which are typically hundreds of years old. These species include hollow-nesters, insect- and nectar-eaters and woodland specialists such as mistletoe birds, honeyeaters and superb parrots.

The study "The future of large old trees in urban landscapes" by Le Roux DS, Ikin, K, DB Lindenmayer, AD Manning and P Gibbons is published in PLoS. See: <http://bit.ly/1390ZCq>

WEPA Committee and Office Bearers 2014

President	Gay Spies
Vice President	Cotter Erickson
Secretary	Vacant
Treasure and Public Officer	Diana Jones
Publicity Officer	Christina Pender
Committee	Geoff Osborne, Harold Spies

NSW State Government Elections

In "OUR ENVIRONMENT, OUR FUTURE" the 9 major state environment groups have set out Policies for the 2015 NSW Election and Beyond.

A small section of the document summarises the NSW Government Track Record so far:

"For decades, people across NSW have been working hard to protect and improve our environment. We have made many gains in protecting our clean water, forests and world-renowned national parks. We have strived to reduce waste, live more sustainably and reduce our contribution to climate change. Yet since coming to office in 2011 the NSW Government has declared war on our environment.

Since its election, the current government has:

- Weakened and abandoned forest and woodland protections.
- Slashed funding for energy efficiency and catchment.
- Rolled back marine sanctuaries and allowed recreational fishing in coastal sanctuaries.
- Reduced environment water allocations and cut funding for native fish conservation
- Failed to present a credible plan for responding to climate change and, specifically, reducing carbon emissions in NSW.
- Changed the state mining policy to place the economic significance as the primary consideration for approving mining projects, above the environment and communities.
- Cut funding for important public interest environmental services including EDO NSW and Legal Aid.

"We can no longer allow the government to place vested interests and political deals above clean air, water and iconic natural places. Together we must tell the government that enough is enough: we will not stand by and watch our environment be destroyed.

We challenge all political parties and candidates to adopt our call to action on the 25 policies in "Our Environment, Our Future" so that the next NSW government, working with the community, can make a difference."

To see the policy details and background material, you can download a copy of the full document Our Environment, Our Future, Policies for the NSW 2015 Election and Beyond at www.nature.org.au/electionpolicies2015 Also learn more by attending The Environment Forum on Tuesday 17 March (see Diary Dates, p2, for details. Note, RSVP is required.) and ask local candidates to support 'Our Environment, Our Future.'

For a more detailed month by month record of the government's major environmental legislation and proposals, prepared by the Blue Mountains Conservation Society, see www.bluemountainsconservationsociety.org.au/election15-summary.shtml

Be careful who you vote for!

In NSW State elections, **Optional Preferential** voting applies. This means that you only need to put the number '1' in one square. Numbering more squares is optional.

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This applies to voting in the Lower House, and to voting above the line in the Upper House.

However the risk is that if you have only numbered one square, your vote may be put aside when the count gets down to the last few candidates. Your vote is said to be 'exhausted'. These exhausted votes may have been decisive in determining which candidate is elected.

Upper House (the whole state)

Candidates for the NSW Upper House do not lodge preferences, so if you do not allocate preferences yourself - by numbering more than one square - you run the risk of your vote being exhausted.

This differs from a Federal Senate Election, where political parties lodge preferences, so a vote '1' above the line is automatically distributed according to that party's preferences.

To make your vote count

- Read the ballot paper carefully
- Number most, if not all squares in the Lower House.
- If voting above the line in the Upper House, number most, if not all squares.

Micro parties

The SMH reports (11/3/15) that the so-called 'preference whisperer', Glenn Druery, has advised candidates for micro parties not to direct preferences to the Coalition or the Greens, on the grounds that this is their only chance of securing a seat in the Upper House. This would be at the expense of a ninth candidate on the Coalition's ticket, or a third Greens candidate.

It is understood that Mr Druery has advised Micro parties to join with the Shooters and Fishers, in their own self-interest.

Candidates for Willoughby

Nominations do not close until noon on 12/3/15. So far, the candidates for Willoughby are:

- Gladys Berejiklian, Liberal
- Peter Cavanagh, Labor
- Alison Haines, The Greens
- Edward Re, Australian Cyclist Party

Container Deposit Legislation - at last!

Congratulations to the NSW Government for standing up to the beverage industry which has had to be dragged kicking and screaming to the party on this one.

The Total Environment Centre has been leading the campaign for Container Deposit Legislation (CDS) for 12 years. So far a national scheme has not been able to be achieved.

NSW will bring in a Container Deposit Scheme by 1 July 2017. Community support for a CDS is 84% and there has been bi-partisan support for its introduction. The scheme will virtually eliminate drink container litter and be a massive boon to recycling.

Waste and Tyres

Waste is something that always revs up Total Environment Centre's (TEC) boilers.

TEC is the leader of the Boomerang Alliance, now comprising 30 groups, which have focussed on Container Deposit Legislation, e-waste and other forms of waste.

A major campaign by the Alliance focussed on evicting rogue waste tyre collectors from the market. Only 25% of used tyres from our vehicles are recycled. The rest are either dumped or exported overseas and often illegally smuggled into China. These collectors offered cheaper rates well below the cost of recycling by either stockpiling, illegal dumps, arson or export. The campaign focussed on the retailers who sent their tyres to the rogues, working with legitimate recyclers and improved regulation.

Legitimate recycling has now trebled as key brands recognised the need to act and state governments, in particular NSW and Victoria, saw the need to stop the dumps and fires with forceful regulation and prosecutions.

Biodiversity Protection - at risk?

Early in 2014 the Shooters and Fishers Party introduced legislation to dismantle controls on land clearing, with strong support from farmer groups and the National Party. It seemed that the prohibition on broad scale land clearing would be a casualty.

However on 11 November 2014 the Shooter's Bill was lost, 35 votes to 3.

However it is now expected that the NSW Coalition government will announce an election policy to abolish the Native Vegetation Act which has been a key law in curbing broad scale land clearing. This may be part of a ploy to dilute biodiversity laws under the guise of trying to cut 'green tape.'

NSW Environment Minister Rob Stokes claims the Native Vegetation Act's replacement will be as good, if not better. Sounds like a tall story. If the government's record on 'tape cutting' (think the 10/50 Code) is anything to go by, then we should all be worried.

Some biodiversity we could do without

A Cane Toad has been identified recently in a Castlecrag backyard. Although a resident managed to trap it, the toad escaped.

If you think you have seen a Cane Toad, Willoughby Council is asking you to:

- Check your identification on this website: www.environment.nsw.gov.au/pestsweeds/identifyingACaneToad
- Notify Willoughby Council by calling Bushland Officer Megan Covey on 9777 7710.
- Check any ponds and mulch, particularly if you have had a delivery of sugarcane mulch. The Cane Toad may have hitched a ride in such mulch or in a box of bananas from Queensland.

Coal Seam Gas and Coal Mining

CSG and coal mining are possibly the most contentious issues for the forthcoming election, with both the major parties trying to neutralise them by announcing no-go zones or cancelling licences.

CSG

Giant survey in Manly electorate

On Sunday 1st March 2015 over 250 volunteers from GetUp and Our Land Our Water Our Future Campaign door-knocked in Premier Mike Baird's electorate of Manly to find out residents attitudes to coal seam gas and coal mining. A report on the findings of the survey was delivered to Mr Baird.

80000+ households reached

1808 - surveys collected

What the community said:

96% are concerned about the impacts of expanding coal and gas mining

96% believe the NSW Government should do more to protect farmlands, forests and water

90% believe coal and gas companies have too much influence over Government

Licence cancelled

Later that week, on 6 March, the NSW Government announced that it had cancelled the CSG exploration licence covering part of the Sydney Basin, including most of metropolitan Sydney. Petroleum Licence 463, formerly held by Dart Energy, extended from Bundeena on Sydney's southern edge up to Palm Beach and Gosford to the north and west to Rooty Hill. PEL 463 was originally issued by the former ALP government and renewed by the Coalition. It was due to expire in October.

The campaign to get the licence cancelled began in July 2014 when residents discovered that Dart Energy was intending to sell the licence to a UK company IGas Inc. The NSW government approved this sale in October 2014. Cancellation of the licence has resulted in a compensation payment of \$200,000 to IGas.

Cancellation of the licence has been a great victory for community action.

In the same week, Labor announced that it would place a permanent ban in the Northern Rivers and set 'no-go' areas in key water catchments.

AGL in Gloucester

Meanwhile there is a question mark over AGL's Waukivory CSG project in Gloucester.

Local groups - Groundswell Gloucester, Lock the Gate, Our Land Our Water Our Future - together with GetUp, collected 20,000 signatures urging AGL to get out of Gloucester. This petition, which was presented to AGL's new CEO, Andrew Vesey, on his first day in the job, included 6004 AGL customers

515 shareholders, and 156 AGL employees.

Three weeks earlier AGL's fracking operations were suspended due to the detection of dangerous chemicals in flowback water from four drilling wells and a storage tank. These chemicals included benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and xylene (BTEX) which can have harmful effects on the central nervous system.

AGL has launched a review of its gas exploration and production operations.

Reminder - Don't miss the chance to see *Frackman*. See *Diary Dates p2*.

COAL

Coal in Sydney's Drinking Water catchment

The cancellation of PEL 463 removes one threat from the catchment. However active longwall mining under Sydney's drinking water catchment by Wollongong Coal has resulted in cracking of riverbeds, drying of upland swamps, which function as a filter, and the loss of 4 billion litres of water. Riverbeds and swamps can't be remediated, so are permanently damaged.

Maules Creek is another instance where coal mining has seriously impacted water quality. In the Blue Mountains, Clarence colliery is licensed by the EPA to discharge polluted water into the beautiful Wollangambe River.

However governments of all persuasions prefer to look the other way, disregarding the elephant in the room, and forging ahead with coal mines.

New mines in the Upper Hunter

As our trading partners cut down on coal imports and countries around the world take action on climate change, and we hurtle toward an unknown future, the NSW government thinks it's OK to embark as many as 16 new or expanded open-cut mines in the Upper Hunter over the next 25 years.

The Office of Environment and Heritage is currently working with 11 major mining companies to assess the cumulative impacts on biodiversity if the mines go ahead.

The area stretches from the Singleton Army Base to Aberdeen and could cover as much as 45,000 hectares.

According to the leaked biodiversity study, seven species including the regent honeyeater, diamond foretell and brush tailed phascogale, face being wiped out in the region. Endangered communities at risk include the Hunter Valley Weeping Myall Woodland and the Warkworth Sands Woodland (see the item on Bulga below)

Environment Minister Rob Stokes said the government "is committed to comprehensive independent assessment of the ecological sustainability of new development", with the UN's hierarchy convention of "avoid, minimise, offset" applied.

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However the draft biodiversity report raised doubts about the granting of offsets for future mine rehabilitation as compensation for ecosystem destruction, saying the ecological results could not be reliably predicted.

Mr Stokes also said “The intent of the strategic assessment is, in part, to identify species that are more vulnerable to loss of habitat. This will provide mining companies the opportunity to avoid impacts on sensitive areas, up-front in the mine-planning process.”

The Office of Environment and Heritage study did not cover other cumulative aspects of the mining process such as impacts on water, air quality and noise levels. Nor does it cover health impacts. Burning coal for electricity generation in the Hunter Valley is already costing hundreds of millions of dollars annually, according to a recent report, by the Climate and Health Alliance.

The CEO of the NSW Minerals Council commented, in Orwellian speak, “The purpose of identifying species at risk of extinction is to ensure that additional measures are put in place to protect them”.

Greens mining spokesman Jeremy Buckingham gave a more realistic assessment of the coal mining plans, saying they amount to ‘a blueprint for the death of the Hunter Valley and a climate suicide note’.

It is planned to make the reports public by the second half of this year. However legislation passed by the NSW government now makes the economic significance of the resource the prime factor for consideration, before any environmental or other effects

(Peter Hannam, SM 28/2 - 1/3/2015)

Relocate the village of Bulga!

The NSW government, Planning and Assessment Commission has recommended that the extension of Rio Tinto’s Mount Thorley-Warkworth mine should go ahead.

It found the expansion would have a range of adverse impacts on the nearby village of Bulga, home to 350 people. the enlarged mine would come within 3km of Bulga.

Astonishingly, it recommends that relocation of the entire village of Bulga should be given ‘serious consideration’ and would be funded by taxpayers.

Bulga is currently protected from the mine by Saddle Ridge and the Warkworth Sands, which support woodlands and wildlife that are disappearing from the Hunter Valley due to open cut coal mining. The expansion of the mine would include 459 hectares of endangered habitat. It would also account for 10% of NSW’s total volume of export coal.

The mine expansion has been refused twice by the Land and Environment Court. Immediately after the last refusal, the government moved to move the goal posts, by making the economic value of the resource the prime factor for

for consideration in determining whether such a development should proceed.

In the parallel universe inhabited by the mining industry, a Rio Tinto spokesman said “ We have followed due process at all times. We are committed to working with the people of Bulga and believe the village has a strong future”.

(Oliver Milman, The Guardian 6/3/15 and Lock the Gate)

But they all say they follow due process.

Queensland CSG Projects under investigation.

Meanwhile CSG projects in Queensland are the focus of allegations of rushed, incomplete approval process that sidelined possible environmental impacts. A Federal Senate committee into Queensland Government Administration is trying to make public evidence by a Queensland whistleblower, who has contradicted statements by companies Santos and BG Group that their projects were fully compliant..

Liverpool Plains Watermark Mine

Meanwhile Deputy Nationals Leader, Barnaby Joyce, has found himself in a bit of a spot. Like Tony Abbott - “coal is good for humanity”- Joyce is also a fan of coal mining and has said that without it Australia will go broke.

His constituents are not at all happy about the Chinese-owned proposed Watermark mine on a ridge adjacent to the rich farmland of the Liverpool Plains. They are calling on Mr Joyce to support them in opposition to the mine.

The future on the mine now awaits a decision by Federal Environment Minister, Greg Hunt, who is looking at its potential impacts on water.

Under the Dome

Our climate change denying politicians , and bureaucrats responsible for the Intergenerational Report should be strapped down and forced to watch this documentary on air pollution in China, made by a young woman investigative reporter, Chai Jing. The film has gone viral in China and has been seen by between 100 and 200 million viewers and its impact is being compared to Al Gore’s *Inconvenient Truth* and Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*.

The film is truly shocking. Chai Jing travels to many places in China , including one of the most polluted, Shanxi, where she interviews a little girl, asking her whether she has ever seen the stars. No, the little girl replies. She has seen the sky a little bit blue, but has never seen clouds.

A proud factory owner, with several chimneys belching pollution, demolishes one on the spot to please the film maker, but when she returns at a later date he has built a new one.

Chai Jing talks to bureaucrats responsible for pollution regulations, investigates the quality of the fuel used by motor vehicles, travels to other cities, such as London and Los Angeles, with a previous history of serious pollution and asks why this is happening in China.

She says that the severe pollution has been caused by compromises on environmental protection caused by the fear of officials of economic slowdown and unemployment from closure of illegally polluting enterprises.

A version with good English sub-titles can be found on the net. Search on the RenewEconomy website, 8/3/15. You may have to go into the comments to find it, and you will need to be a speed reader to keep up with the sub-titles, but it is riveting viewing.

After receiving approbation from the new Chinese Environment Minister, the site has been mysteriously taken off Chinese television. However enough people will have seen it to have them thinking and questioning. Air pollution is already a major concern to Chinese residents.

A plug for Renew Economy

If you feel ready for some good news, the free daily newsletter from RenewEconomy is definitely worth signing up for. Here you find all the news, a lot of it good and inspiring, about what is happening in the rest of the world about renewable energy and climate change. All the things that unfortunately don't get a guernsey in our media.

A WEPA member who has recently subscribed says now he is not nearly so depressed, but is scathing that such material is not before the Australian public in our daily papers.

The Climate Spectator website is also worth a look.

The environmental cost of a petrol car

If all the environmental and human health costs of running a petrol car were factored in, it would cost about \$2000 a year, or \$1 a litre, for an average petrol car, a study from Duke University in the US has found.

On the other hand, electric vehicles have a social cost of less than half, even if the car is fired by coal-fired electricity.

For more, see Giles Parkinson, RenewEconomy, 5/3/15.

Willoughby Council to get an electric car

Congratulations to the Mayor Gail Giles-Gidney for using her casting vote to pass a motion that council should purchase an electric car.

Congratulations also to Councillor Lynne Saville who had called for a report.

Council has committed to buy a Nissan Leaf which will be used by council rangers. The Leaf costs \$39,900 and can be charged to 80 per cent in 20 minutes.

This is one more tick for Willoughby Council's excellent work on sustainability.

Sad news

Members who have enjoyed our previous walks in the Blue Mountains will be sad to learn of the recent death of Imre Gahl.

Imre was a past Vice President of WEPA and he also worked for a time on the Sugarloaf Bush Regeneration Project.

Formerly a resident of Castlecrag, Imre and his wife Joan moved to Leura, to a lovely house surrounded by bush a near Sublime Point. He and Joan lead many enjoyable walks for WEPA and shared their hospitality.

Imre was also a passionate musician who played the viola in amateur assemblies wherever he found himself to be.

Imre will be sadly missed.

WEPA Committee

If you have read this far, please give some serious thought to joining the WEPA Committee.

We welcome new members and in particular are looking for a committed person to be our secretary. This position is currently vacant and we could be a much more effective association if we had some help.

If you prefer to be a committee member, that would be great too.

If you would like some more information please phone Gay on 9958 8569, or email gay.spies@icloud.com

WEPA Newsletter

The newsletter is prepared by Gay Spies.

Articles by members are always most welcome. Forthcoming newsletters will be in May, July, September and November and are sent out prior to the speaker meetings in those months.

Send articles or comments to Gay, details above.