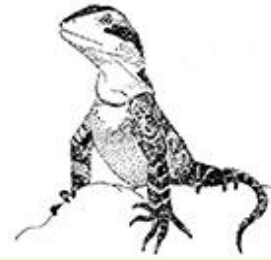


WEPA NEWS

Willoughby Environmental Protection Association



No. 178 MAY/JULY 2019



School children taking to the streets to call for climate action. The Guardian, AAP

Welcome to the WEPA News! It seems a long time coming but this issue reflects on the groundswell of climate and environmental awareness which finally seems to be spreading across different generations and varied electorates across Australia. More muted during the NSW election, the call for climate action has encouraged a number of federal politicians and their parties to differentiate themselves from the woeful inaction in Australia to date on these issues. See our summary report cards on the various major party environmental and climate change policies below and learn why you need to harness all your preferences. We also have updates on the campaigns to stop the flooding of Blue Mountains world heritage areas and, closer to home, to stop the tunnels and save Flat Rock Gully from the bulldozers.

WEPA is its Members!

Thanks everyone who responded to the call to renew their Membership for 2019. Don't forget [you can renew online here](#) or [download the form if you'd prefer to mail in your renewal](#). We need

your help more than ever – we have important environmental battles to fight in our neighbourhoods and further afield.

It was great to see so many members join us at the WEPA Annual General Meeting in March. For those who couldn't make it, we have some new members on the [Executive Committee](#) (welcome Sue-Ellen Smith and John Pryde) and you can catch up on [our activities over the past 12 months here](#).

Murder on the Reef

No matter the outcome of the Federal election on 18 May, and despite the [recent claims of the federal coalition](#), the Great Barrier Reef is still in dire straits. Join us next Tuesday for a showing of the award-winning documentary *Murder on the Reef* (2018) which shines a light on degradation and decline on the Great Barrier Reef.

Murder on the Reef is an important reminder of the ongoing battle to save the reef from the catastrophic impacts of large-scale resource extraction, overdevelopment, coastal sediment dredging, and poor governance. Director, Alex Dobrovolsky interviews the major players and looks at how we can turn the tide and save a global icon.

When: 7 pm on Tuesday, 21 May 2019

Where: the School Hall, Glenaeon Primary School, 121 Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag.

Entry by gold coin donation. All welcome. Stay after the film for refreshments and some invigorating chat.



Extinction is forever



The critically endangered Regent Honeyeater. Photo: Meredith Foley

Depressing though it is, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge that today we are witnessing the loss of biodiversity at rates never seen in human history. According to the UN IPBES report released last week [over a million species are at risk of extinction](#).

The rate of extinctions is hardly news to many of us in Australia. We already know that one out of three mammal extinctions globally over the last 400 years have been in Australia. More than 1,700 species of animals and plants are listed currently by the Australia Government as being at risk of extinction. The recent release of the [first national review of threatened species monitoring](#) shows Australia is a world leader in causing species extinctions, in part because Australia's system for conserving natural heritage is grossly inadequate at federal and state levels of government.

Both the IPBES report and the [Senate's Interim Report on Australia's Faunal Extinction Crisis](#) are calling for transformative change in the way we position ourselves in relation to nature as well as the need to fundamentally rework our environmental legislative frameworks.

Current biodiversity laws and policies don't adequately address the threats to the natural world. We need to include biodiversity considerations across all sectors and jurisdictions to prevent further degradation of natural systems. All of us have an important role in rallying our governments to ensure this occurs.

National environment organisations are already well advanced on the development of new environmental laws, based on empirical science, which will address the crisis of extinction. The Australian Conservation Foundation as well as many other similar groups are championing the [Blueprint For The Next Generation Of Environmental Law](#) developed by the Australian Panel of Experts on Environmental Law. The ALP and the Greens have accepted this need in their policies.

Australia has an opportunity to lead with new environmental laws at the federal level. We will know next week whether we have the maturity and cohesion of purpose to move forward on this urgent path.

The Climate Change election



Climate change is well known as one of the major levers for species extinction as well as having many other catastrophic impacts in Australia and around the globe.

Those of you who attended the WEPA Annual General Meeting in March would have heard Professor Lesley Hughes speak with passion and commitment about the damaging impacts of climate change on our lives and environment. She also noted the difficulty of getting many people to engage with such dismal news.

By contrast, new polling (from the Lowy Institute) has made the point that 2019 is the climate change election, with [64% of adult Australians saying global warming is a critical threat](#); a jump of 18 points since 2014.

With the federal election looming this Saturday, the simplest and most powerful action we can take to reverse the extinction crisis and to address climate change is to use our vote to this end.

As a non-party, neutral organisation WEPA is not going to tell you who to vote for in the election. Instead, we have pulled together a series of report cards dealing with environmental issues which might assist you in your deliberations:

- the Climate Council has produced [‘Factsheet: Climate Policies of Major Australian Political Parties’](#);
- the Australian Conservation Foundation’s seeks to help voters confused by the political spin on nature and climate change policies. The ACF’s [election scorecard is available here](#);

- [Willoughby Living](#) has posed a range of questions to **North Sydney candidates** including the priority they place on climate change and environmental issues and their position on the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link projects;
- the Australian Marine Conservation Society asked the main parties to make 6 important policy commitments to protect our oceans. You can [download their scorecard here](#);
- the Wilderness Society has released [Where do the parties stand?](#) which assesses the response of key political parties to the Society's core election policy asks.

The Boomerang Alliance also compares the major parties on [recycling and the management of plastic waste](#).

Make your vote count

If you think voting has become ever more complex (and exhausting) you are probably right. The most important thing, apart from reading the ballot paper and following its instructions, is to **consider the importance of properly allocating your preferences**.

On Saturday, to make your vote count in the **House of Representatives** (lower house) election you will need to **number every box** on the ballot sheet. That is pretty clear.

Things are a bit more complex in the **Senate** (upper house) where, in NSW, there are 35 parties seeking the 6 available Senate seats and you have the choice of **voting above** or **below the line**. If you vote above the line (for a party) you need to number **at least** 6 boxes for your vote to be valid. If you vote below the line (for individual candidates) you need to number **at least** 12 boxes for your vote to be counted.

This is a **change to the group voting system** which applied previously in the Senate. Under the previous system you could simply vote '1' above the line and preferences would then flow to all the other candidates on the ballot in accordance with the ticket registered by the party you voted '1' for. Now when you vote above the line the party you vote for **only controls preferences for their own list of candidates** – preferences do not flow to other parties. You would only need to vote below the line, say, if you wanted to vote for a particular party but you preferred the person at the bottom of their Senate ticket to the person at the top.

Also, the Senate voting system is now **optional preferential**. This means that if eg you vote above the line, you only need to state 6 preferences (12 if voting below the line) but **you can state more if you wish**. If, for example, you only number 6 above the line, your vote is then exhausted after those 6 and preferences will not flow to the candidates of parties you haven't specifically voted for. Don't make the mistake of, say, listing your least-liked party sixth above the line, because this would mean that you are preferring them to the remaining parties on the ballot. If, say, there are more than 6 parties you prefer to Fraser Anning or One Nation you should list all those parties in order of preference, above the line. If you don't you are not counteracting the votes of Fraser Anning or One Nation supporters who place them first or second.

There is often a close race for Senate seats and it often goes to preferences – so make sure your vote counts not only about who you put in the Senate but who you keep out – number as many squares as you can whether you decide to vote above or below the line. And put those parties or people last who you don't wish to see in Parliament.

If you wish to find out more about some of the micro parties running, this [guide to the micro parties in the Senate](#), provided by *The Guardian*, might be useful. The ABC News has also provided a [useful pocket guide to voting](#) which allows you to record your own long list of preferences to take with you in print form or on your phone to the booth.

NSW State election outcomes



Carolyn Corrigan addresses the WEPA/NPA/NCC state Election Forum on the Environment, 19 February 2019

Prior to the state election earlier in the year, WEPA collaborated with the National Parks Association of NSW and the NSW Nature Conservation Council to host local candidates in an open discussion of environmental issues. The turn-out of over 100 participants to hear the 6 candidates attending provides proof that Willoughby and North Shore residents are serious about environmental concerns. The absence, despite early invitations, of the Premier and other Liberal candidates indicated their priorities.

The election result in Willoughby, far from being the 'Glad-slide' described by some in the media, saw significant swings against the Government particularly along the proposed routes for the Western Harbour and Beaches Link tunnels. In the seat of Willoughby, over 43% of first preference votes went to candidates other than the Premier.

Given that it had not been canvassed during the election, the Premier's action after the election of abolishing the Office of the Environment and Heritage (OEH) and transferring its functions to the new Minister for Planning and Public Spaces (Rob Stokes) worries many in the environment movement and wider community. In particular, there is concern that OEH submissions and assessments will now go to internal managers rather than into the public domain.

Environment functions will sit within a junior Ministry under the oversight of the mega-agency, Planning, Industry and Environment (PIE). Certainly, the newly appointed junior Minister for Energy and Environment, Hornsby MP Matt Kean, has made promising statements in his earliest outings emphasising the importance of national parks and the need for new action on climate change and threatened species. The proof of this PIE, however, will definitely be in the resources it brings to the table.

Saving wild rivers



Wild Blue Mountains Rivers. Photo: Give a Dam Alliance

In early April WEPA and the National Parks Association of NSW hosted a night in support of the [Give a Dam Alliance](#). The Alliance has been set up to oppose NSW Government plans to raise the Warragamba Dam wall to allow further housing development on the western Sydney floodplains. The raising of the dam wall risks destroying 65 kilometres of NSW wilderness rivers, pristine bushland and important Indigenous sites in a designated world heritage area. Many thanks to the participants on the night who donated to this important campaign. Those attending were treated to an excellent short documentary framing the issues and had an opportunity to further explore the reasons for the campaign and alternatives which might be taken with Harry Burkitt from the Alliance. If you couldn't come on the night we recommend you [watch the documentary online here](#).

The campaign continues despite the outcome of the State election; the Alliance will now take its campaign to the national level. If the NSW Government want to flood a world heritage site, they must (by law) get the permission of the Federal Environment Minister under the Commonwealth EPBC Act. The Federal Environment Minister has international obligations to protect world heritage sites and will have the ultimate say on whether the dam raising goes ahead or not. Importantly, the Federal Environment Minister is yet to sign-off on the dam project - and won't be asked to until after the May federal election.

The Alliance is asking its supporters to pressure the federal political parties to oppose the dam wall raising which will lead to the destruction of world heritage wild rivers, bushland, and Indigenous sites. For further details visit the [Give a Dam website](#).

Saving Flat Rock Gully

Regardless of the outcomes of the recent State election, the campaign to save Flat Rock Gully and other affected areas from the harmful impacts of the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link projects is regrouping with renewed vigour.

A big thank you to all the WEPA members who volunteered their time and energies before the election to help get information about the projects out to the communities most affected. Congratulations are also due to Larissa Penn (a founding member of Stop the Tunnels - STT) who ran as an Independent for Willoughby, in the process bringing the issue before many more people and managing to wrest 10% of the primary vote away from the Premier.

The STT held a community forum last week to allow an opportunity to decide on the next steps. The groups involved, including WEPA, have agreed on the need to:

- write to your Federal candidates as these projects cannot get up without some level of Federal funding;
- help STT gather the 10,000 signatures for a Parliamentary Inquiry. [The petition can be found here](#) – please note that to be accepted by Parliament the petition sheets need to be presented in hard copy so you will need to download them, collect signatures and return the sheets to: PO Box 417 Cammeray NSW 2062;
- keep up the pressure on social media; write to your local papers and try to get media attention; and
- stay up-to-date with community action by following [WEPA](#), [Stop the Tunnels](#) and the [Northern Residents Tunnels Action Group](#) on Facebook.

The Environmental Impact Statements for the projects will be released soon and the community forum also set up a number of groups so that we can hit the ground running in response. If you have expertise or interest in the following areas consider volunteering – we need your ideas and input. The groups are Legal; Environmental and Health; Air Quality; Traffic and Alternative Transport; Marketing and Communication; and Community Action.

Where is the Tunnels' business case?

As part of the tunnels campaign, WEPA lodged an application with the Roads and Maritime Services under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA)* seeking information in relation to the business cases for the Western Harbour Tunnel and Beaches Link projects. No information was provided in response to this request on the basis that such information was 'Cabinet information' within the meaning of GIPA, but it was revealed that a Strategic Business Case and a Final Business Case have been prepared. We then appealed to the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) against the refusal to provide the information in the business cases. We were provided with heavily redacted affidavits and submissions prepared by the Crown Solicitors Office which maintained that all the information was 'Cabinet information' and that we were not entitled to any of it.

WEPA believes that affected residents are entitled to see the relevant business cases, the analysis of costs and benefits contained therein, know which options have been considered to address identified problems, and why one option (motorways) has been preferred over other options such as improved public transport or congestion pricing.

This week we withdrew our GIPA application for further consideration and have written to the Premier once again seeking the release of the Government's case for the car tunnels. You can [read WEPA's letter to the Premier on our website](#). We will be publishing our letter to the Premier and her response on our website and understand that Stop the Tunnels will do the same.

Willoughby City Council matters

A number of issues have been going the rounds of Willoughby City Council (WCC) which should be of interest to WEPA members:

- [WEPA responded to the draft WCC Green City Plan](#). While we applaud the rationale for the draft plan we were surprised to see that it made no mention of the proposed tunnels project and also that, apart from some pictures of trees, it failed to address the issue of preserving the Urban Tree Canopy. You can read [more of our comments here](#).
- On the issue of **Willoughby's tree canopy**, we are waiting with interest for the release by WCC of the new draft native vegetation/tree policy which was expected in November 2018. The existing policy has long been considered to be close to best practice in dealing with the preservation of our beautiful and environmentally significant native canopy so it will be interesting to see where the new policy will suggest changes.
- WEPA made a [response to the WCC Draft Code of Meeting Conduct](#) stressing in particular that Councillor briefing sessions should be public in the interests of transparency and accountability and that the suggestion to reduce council meetings to once rather than twice per month would not be of benefit to the community.
- The saga over **voluntary advisory committees** continues. It would appear that the current committees will continue to the end of this Council term. Next term WCC plans to move to a system where, apart from a few groups of technical experts, community opinion will be sought only when Council decides it is necessary. WEPA members have spoken at WCC meetings and in submissions against the loss of continuity, community knowledge and informed action which we fear will be the unfortunate impact of the move to ad hoc Reference groups and panels.
- In response to objections raised by the local community to the placement of spotlights in **O.H.Reid Reserve**, which borders on natural bushland along the Lane Cove River, Council resolved to form a Citizens Panel to inform and guide the development of the Reserve masterplan. This was to be noted at Monday's meeting however the local community have raised a number of suggestions relating to membership and the terms of reference which are to be considered and returned to the next meeting.

Upcoming Events

Saturday 18 May: Don't forget to vote in the federal election. You can check local candidates and [your closest polling booth here](#).

Saturday 18 May: Connect with Nature Experience, 1:00pm - 3:00pm, Batten Reserve, Lane Cove. Once you've enjoyed your taste of democracy, you can slow down and engage more deeply with nature during this immersive, sensory experience. Enjoy a slow meditative walk along Stringybark Creek. Reconnect with the natural world around you using all your senses and mindfulness techniques. A lovely nature experience aimed for adults, limited spaces. [Book here with Lane Cove Council](#).

Tuesday 21 May: Murder on the Reef, 7 pm – 8:30 pm. WEPA presents an award-winning documentary on the challenges facing the Great Barrier Reef and how you can help guard its future. School Hall, Glenaeon Primary School, 121 Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag. Gold coin donation. All welcome. Supper follows.

Wednesday 22 May: Backyard biodiversity - The future in little things, 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm, Chatswood Library. Mark World Biodiversity Day with Dr Lizzy Low who will introduce you to the many small creatures, the invertebrates that live in your backyard and local urban bushland. She will share her knowledge of their interesting habits, beneficial behaviours and the importance of their conservation. [Book here with Willoughby Council](#).

Friday 24 May: Rethinking the Urban Forest, 9 am to 5 pm. An inaugural conference bringing together arborists, academics, activists, ecologists, planners, project managers, policymakers and politicians to discuss the benefits of the urban forest and the roadblocks to scaling up and speeding up implementation in the face of the climate crisis, habitat/biodiversity loss and fast-growing urban life. Addison Road Community Centre. Registration required – [book here](#).

Saturday 25 May: Groovin Grassroots: Celebrating Enviro Volunteering in Greater Sydney. Join, meet, listen to bands, eat, network and relax with environmental volunteers from across the Greater Sydney Region from 8:30 am to 2 pm at Bedlam Bay Oval, Gladesville. Free but bookings requested. [More information and bookings](#).

26 May – 14 July 2019: Gai-mariagal Festival A celebration of Aboriginal heritage and culture in northern Sydney. The festival starts on Sorry Day, Sunday 26 May and goes through to the end of NAIDOC Week; the second week in July each year. The festival involves Councils and numerous reconciliation and community groups. Events include workshops, art exhibitions, performances, films, talks and more. The theme for this year's Gai-mariagal Festival is: *Voice. Treaty. Truth*. To see and book into these wonderful indigenous events, view the festival brochure: <https://gai-mariagal-festival.com.au/gai-mariagal-festival-20198-brochure/>

Saturday 1 June: Organic Garden Workshop – Session 4, 1:30 pm – 4 pm. Join WCC officers to learn about the wonderful insects that can be found in your garden. Learn about what they do, how they can benefit your plants and about organic pest control. Warners Park Centre, Northbridge. Free. [Book now](#).

Saturday 1 June: Weaving Habitat, 10:30 am – 2:30 pm. Community members are welcome to join craft practitioner, Lisse de Saille and the North Sydney Council Bushland Team to learn basketry skills to make a possum drey habitat from natural materials. Cost \$20 per person, all proceeds to be donated to Sydney Wildlife. The Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability, 2 Balls Head Drive, Waverton. [Registration required](#).

Wednesday 5 June: Science in the Bar: Surviving the Climate Change apocalypse, 7 pm – 9 pm. Join WCC on World Environment Day to discuss the weird warmer world of our future and the solutions to surviving it. Venue TBC. Free. [Find out more here](#).

Friday 7: June Waste Resurrection 11 am - 12 pm, Discover how eco-chemist Prof Veena Sahajwalla has revolutionised e-waste recycling creating the world's first micro-factory. Chatswood Chase. [More information](#).

Saturday 8 June: Ask a Sustainability Expert, 10:30 am – 12:30 pm. Don't have time to sit in on a two-hour workshop but have a pressing sustainability-related question? Then come along to talk with Margaret Moss, founder of Moss House and passionate advocate for healthy, natural living. Questions will be answered on a first-come-first-served basis. Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability, Waverton. [Bookings essential](#).

Sunday 9 June: B and B highway - future proofing diversity presented by WCC. 11 am – 12 pm. 'B and B' stands for 'Bed and Breakfasts for Birds, Bees, and Biodiversity' and responds to the alarming decline of insects and other pollinators due to our urbanising environment. Join Judy Friedlander, academic, journalist and the founder of FoodFaith: Planting Seeds, as she lifts the lid on the new BandB Highway initiative. Chatswood Chase. Free. [More information](#)

Saturday 15 June: Nest Box Building Workshop, 10 am – 1 pm. Learn about the diversity of wildlife that depends on tree hollows and the features that make them suitable for habitation. Construct your very own nest box. Venue TBC. Free. More information and [to book](#).

Saturday 23 June: STEP Walk in Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden, 9 am – 11 am. [For further details](#).

Tuesday 23 July: STEP Talk: Native Bees, 8 pm. Discover how you can help the environment while simultaneously harvesting delicious native bee honey, also known as sugarbag. This talk will detail how to obtain and look after native bees (specifically the species *Tetragonula carbonaria*). St Andrews cnr Veron Street and Chisholm Street, Turrumurra. [More information here](#).

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A member of the [Nature Conservation Council of NSW](#).

WEPA acknowledges the traditional owners of this land, the Gamaraygal people, their spirits and ancestors and we pay our respects to Elders past and present.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in the articles above are not necessarily those of the publisher or editor.

Contributions from WEPA members are welcome.

The WEPA logo above was created by Adrienne Kabos.