

WEPA PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT

April 2018 – March 2019

The last twelve months – which saw the release of the proposal for the Beaches Link car tunnel in Flat Rock Gully and the run-up to this week's State elections have been an extremely busy time for the Executive Committee and to members of WEPA – many thanks to all who have contributed their time to these campaigns.

Administration:

Meetings & Representation

- Business meetings were held bi-monthly during the year and we were delighted to have local lawyer John Moratelli join us on the Committee mid-year.
- Every second month public meetings were held:
 - in March we had a showing of 'Coal. Is It Worth It?' which exposed the environmental damage wrought by coal mines
 - in May we co-hosted a launch with the National Parks Association of NSW and Nature Conservation Council of NSW of a series of public forums to stop the disastrous logging in NSW state forests
 - in July Suzanne Milthorpe from the Wilderness Society spoke to members about the need for a dramatic overhaul of nature laws
 - in September we watched the uplifting documentary 'The Bentley Effect'
 - in November we discussed the tunnel proposal in an open public meeting
 - in February we co-hosted the Electoral Forum on Environmental Issues
 - tonight we have Prof Hughes on Climate Change

Heads up for members: on Monday 8 April we will be collaborating with the National Parks Association of NSW to show a new documentary by the Give a Dam Alliance which is opposing the State Government's plans to flood around 4,700 hectares of the Blue Mountains World Heritage area. The documentary will be shown at 7pm in the Chowne Hall,

Willoughby Park Centre (cnr of Warrane Road and McClelland Street).
Gold coin donation at the door going towards the campaign so we would love to see as many members and their friends as possible.

Stalls

- We didn't participate this year in the Chatswood Spring Fair partly due to some volunteers being unavailable but also because the native plant stall has become less successful with attendees. We have been rethinking our stall policy and will let you know soon whether we will have native plant stalls at other locations this year.

Collaborations

- WEPA is now a member of the Powerful Owl Coalition
- Continued with its membership of the Better Planning Network
- Have undertaken several successful collaborations on public meetings and the electoral forum with the National Parks Association of NSW and the Nature Conservation Council of NSW.
- Continued providing regular funding support for the Australian Conservation Foundation, the NCC NSW, the EDO and the TEC.

WEPA Online

We managed to get a couple of editions of WEPA News out to you during 2018 but in recent times, with the press of other activities, we have had to rely on quick emails and Bulletins. You can always see updates of our activities and copies of submissions and reports from www.wepa.org.au or from our WEPA Facebook site. Many thanks to Kathryn Foley who helps us with the news, our WEPA Facebook and website. Don't forget to 'like' and 'follow' us on Facebook so that our posts make their way to you.

Issues and Advocacy:

NORTHERN BEACHES TUNNEL

- Much work by the committee and members has gone into the campaign to oppose the State Government proposal to create a dive site for the Beaches Link car tunnel into the bushland at Flat Rock Gully, Naremburn, under Northbridge and then across Middle Harbour to Seaforth.
- From October 2018 WEPA has collaborated with the Stop the Tunnels campaign, organising rosters for a series of stalls to inform the local community about the proposed tunnel. Stalls were held across a number of months at the Henry Lawson Cave at Flat Rock and in front of the Willoughby Leisure Centre nearby. Some members assisted with letterbox drops and with stalls and handing out flyers in other suburbs; many 'pinned' their concerns on the RMS community map and wrote to the Premier on the issue and much information was disseminated online about the tunnel proposal.
- An initial attempt by WEPA and the STT to have Willoughby City Council explore the impact of the proposed tunnel on local residents was rebuffed.
- Committee member, John Moratelli, prepared detailed and compelling research on the traffic growth predictions prepared by the RMS in favour of the tunnel proposal and worked with STT campaigners to lobby North Sydney Council to change their position and oppose the tunnel.
- In November 2018 a WEPA meeting on the Tunnel proposals, organised in association with Stop the Tunnels, was attended by over 60 people. Following the meeting a resolution was passed asking WCC to relay our opposition to the NSW Government and calling on it to halt planning for the project until the business case – and in particular, any public transport options, had been released for public consultation.
- Following vigorous lobbying and an email and letter-writing campaign, Councillors agreed to do a review of impacts which has now been completed.

- In December 2018 WEPA made a lengthy submission to the RMS public consultation on our concerns about the environmental impacts and inefficiencies of the proposed tunnel.
- WEPA, with the assistance of funding from the STT campaign, has also put in a formal request for the Government to release its Business Case for the Beaches Link and Western Harbour tunnels proposal. This will be considered by the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal in April/May of this year.
- Most recently, in February, members held a stall at the Henry Lawson cave to coincide with the annual poetry reading and Meredith and I provided a talk to the Bay Precinct Committee on the impact of the proposal on Tunks Park.
- The State Government has indicated that an EIS will be issued in December this year.

LOGGING NATIVE FORESTS

- As noted above, we helped to launch the NPA NSW and NCC NSW campaign to stop logging of native trees in State Public Forests. We also wrote to the Premier opposing logging and suggesting alternative uses of these forests in June 2018.

PROTECTING GREEN SPACES

- I continue to represent WEPA on the Bushland Management Committee – although this committee, like all other voluntary advisory committees at WCC, is under threat after the next Council election
- WEPA is keeping a watching brief on WCC's review of native trees and vegetation policy. It is anticipated that this new policy will be released for public consultation shortly.
- WEPA has provided advice and support to the community near O.H.Reid Reserve who are opposing the installation of floodlights at this park which is on the edge of important local native habitat.

- We have also written on behalf of members of the community who have objected to the removal of large numbers of trees to make way for densification.
- Earlier in the month WEPA provided detailed comments to the WCC on its draft Green City Plan 2028. We drew attention to the importance of Council acknowledging the environmental impacts of the tunnel proposal – as it will touch on many strategies already in the draft plan. We were also surprised that the draft lacked any reference to the ‘Urban Tree Canopy’ and ‘Open Recreation Space’ (the latter having been rolled into bushland management). A full copy of WEPA’s comments can be found on our website under ‘Resources’

COAL AND ALTERNATIVE ENERGY

- WEPA participated in *Time2Choose Rally* on Saturday March 24 2018 to demand that NSW be saved from unconventional gas and coal exploration. The rally was organised by the NCC NSW and others environmental groups.
- Showed the documentaries ‘Coal is it worth it?’ and ‘The Bentley Effect’
- We continue to publicise the Stop Adani and other coal and alternative energy campaigns.

ELECTORAL FORUM

- WEPA held an election forum on environmental issues on 19 February this year. It was co-hosted by the National Parks Association of NSW and the NCC NSW. Over a hundred residents joined us to hear 7 candidates respond to questions put to them before the meeting and from the floor. Unfortunately, despite an early invitation, the sitting member and local member for North Shore declined to attend and sent written responses to our questions which were distributed at the meeting. The meeting was also addressed by Larissa Penn, a leading coordinator of the local Stop the Tunnel group, who is now standing as an Independent candidate for Willoughby.

WEPA FOCUS 2019

- More of the same! Fighting inefficient and environmentally damaging infrastructure, lobbying for public transport alternatives, commenting on overdevelopment, fighting to maintain our urban tree canopy and local bushland and open, green space protection will no doubt be the centre of our focus in coming months.
- We are still considering whether we should hold a forum for Federal candidates in the lead up to the May election.
- We will need even more hands to the deck in the months to come and would encourage you all to volunteer when you can for some of these campaigns. Encourage your friends and neighbours and particularly young families living locally to join us in working together for a cleaner, greener, healthier environment for all.

Gay Spies

President, WEPA

March 2019