

# ENVIRONMENTALLY SPEAKING 11

Autumn 2007 Randwick South Ward Enviro News from Botany Bay and Catchment Alliance [www.botanybay.info](http://www.botanybay.info)

**Protecting environment = Protecting people**



**EARTH HOUR 31 March 2007.....business as usual at Port Botany.....but for how much longer!**

The commonsense adages *WASTE NOT WANT NOT* and *DON'T LIVE BEYOND YOUR MEANS* are making inroads into the *Shop 'til you drop* culture. Suddenly the 'secret' is out that our future is under threat from a combination of Climate Change, Peak Oil and Pandemics. Talk about the latest jetsetter holiday and watch the room divide. Op-shops are 'in' and opulence is 'out'.

**We need far less of this:**



Fully loaded Port Botany, 3/3/07



18million tonnes to landfill each year

**And far more of this:**



\*\*Fishing and playing at Penrhyn Spit, Port Botany, 3/07

**But so far we are getting more of the same.....plus 20%**

When the expansion of the Port Botany footprint was approved in 2005 the Minister for Planning, Frank Sartor, set a cap on containers at **3.2 million (TEUs)**. Now the State Government is referring to a volume of **3.9 million** in the Terms of Reference given to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART). In February, IPART was asked by



Minister Tripodi to review the interface between the road transport industry, rail operations and the stevedores at Port Botany. Community groups and Councils will be asking IPART to factor in the negative externalities that are borne by individuals,

businesses, communities, local government and state government in our area. IPART can establish the real costs of moving containers in and out of Port Botany.

Port congestion is also a concern of the Australian government and in 2005 the Parliamentary Committee for Transport and Regional Services (TRS) was tasked to investigate the rail and road interface with ports in Australia. To date there have been 192 submissions and from June 2005 to February 2007 there have been 30 public hearings.

At one of the hearings in Sydney, 21 November 2005, Mr Tim Blood, then Managing Director P&O Australia & New Zealand and now Chairman of DP World,

Australia had this to say: *We think there has been too much focus on the capacity of the container terminals themselves; it is not the limiting factor. The container terminals have sufficient land allocated to them to continue developing and extending the capacity of the facilities through more equipment—that is a progression driven by demand. **The limiting factor in almost all ports is ultimately the road-rail interface.** If there is not a significant change in the way in which, for example, the road transport sector works, I believe the communities around the ports are going to reach the point of not accepting the level of truck movements—and that becomes the limiting factor.* (page 25, transcript)



## 20,000 more dwellings for Woollahra, Waverley, Randwick and Botany Bay

The Sub-regional Plan under the Metro strategy ([www.metrostrategy.nsw.gov.au](http://www.metrostrategy.nsw.gov.au)) calls for an additional 20,000 new dwellings in the Eastern Sub-region. The Sub-region includes the municipalities of Woollahra, Waverley, Randwick and Botany Bay. There is not much space left in the north and central wards of Randwick and even less in Woollahra and Waverley so the obvious sites for consolidation will be in Randwick's South Ward and Botany. **Botany**, located so close to the CBD and the Sydney aerotropolis is ripe for further urban consolidation.

**Mr John Kenrick Hirst is the Executive Director of the Association of Australian Ports and Marine Authorities (AAPMA).** At the same TRS hearing in

Sydney, he had this to say about urbanisation and port development:

*I think the damage has been done, so to speak. Once land has become urbanised it is not going to be returned to industrial use. You have very vocal people sitting there and saying, 'There is noise, there is dust. Do something about it.' So, effectively, ports in urban areas are being neutralised by the effect of urbanisation and you have to look at other areas where you can expand the port. **Luckily in Botany, for example, there is really no urbanisation around that area.** The effect of urbanisation is one of the reasons why we have seen the demise of the Balmain wharves in Sydney—similarly in Darling Harbour, to an extent, where blocks of apartments have been built on wharves and people complain about ships. Probably you have to accept that over years and years there will be this urbanisation: people want water views, they want to be closer to the city, and we have to learn to live with it. But it should be done in a more orderly process and as part of an overall plan, not just changed almost overnight.*(page 19)

Can the Government have it both ways. There are very high population growth projections for the suburbs in and around Green Square in addition to the growth for Botany and Randwick's South Ward. Removing most of the recreational amenity around Penrhyn and Foreshore Beach – the closest beach to **Green Square** – and doubling road congestion around the Port and radiating roads is not compatible with population growth predictions AND measures to tackle obesity and other health problems as well as lifestyle adaptations in response to climate change and peak oil. If people like Mr Hirst and others can be so ignorant of the present population around Port Botany and the impacts they already suffer it is little wonder we have the current mess which IPART is supposed to disentangle.

## BOTANY'S CHRISTMAS PRESENT



**\*\***One of the State's rarest birds, the Little Tern, enjoyed a bumper breeding season at Port Botany over the Christmas/New Year period this year. Little Tern expert, Darryl

McKay, banded 18 chicks and recorded 9 fledglings. "This was an outstanding result for the colony," said Mr McKay, "It is very rare to get near a 50% success rate anywhere in the state."



\*\*Darryl McKay at the nesting site on Penrhyn Spit

The nesting site was at the entrance to Penrhyn Estuary, at Port Botany, and was fenced by NPWS and monitored by bird-watchers from around Sydney as well as the local community. The walkers, fishers and boating people who use this area responded very positively when asked to keep clear of the nesting area.

Little Terns often nest at Towra Point, on the southern side of Botany Bay, but were originally recorded at the mouth of the Cooks River. They have shown a preference for north Botany Bay sites and in the 2003 season had to be discouraged from using a port site at Molineux Point. On that occasion contractors were brought in to erect 400 star pickets and 4km of bunting to make the nesting site uninhabitable.



\*\*Little Tern chicks and egg in 'nest' – a barely visible scrape in the sand.

In his book *"The New Nature, Winners and Losers in Wild Australia"*, prominent biologist Tim Low argues for the nature around us: *Nature is sold to us as something separate that lives far away from us in*

*wild places, when really it's all around us, engaging with us more than we guess. **The wilderness begins right here where we live.** The 'new nature' is really the story of animals and plants responding to the latest environmental challenge – us. What a lost opportunity. The major predators for the Little Terns in NSW have been foxes and vandals. The port with its 24 hour high security is uniquely placed – unlike sites such as Towra Point – to provide a secure environment and a birdwatchers lookout at Molineux. Not long after the Little Terns were 'turned out' a warehouse was built on this site.*

## THE CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND PEAK OIL

Over the last three decades we have seen unprecedented growth in the Australian economy. During this period local manufacturing has significantly declined, trade barriers have been removed, credit has been readily obtainable. Imports have been growing at around 4 times the population growth. Our balance of trade figures are severely in the red. We have witnessed dumpings of Australian agricultural products, which could not compete with imports. Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) have made it easier for imported goods to outcompete our local products. 'Made in China' is the most common tag on a range of whitegoods, clothes and even ice-creams. When GST was introduced 'stuff' became cheaper and services, i.e. our local labour, became dearer. The tax on a new car dropped from 22% to 10% while the swimming and choir lessons for our children cost 10% more. It became cheaper to replace rather than repair as GST applied to labour costs for maintenance and repair.

During those decades our leaders were told by scientists that we were reaching peak oil (anywhere from 1970 to 2005), that carbon emissions were escalating at a dangerous rate, and the earth's natural resources – particularly fresh water – were diminishing at an alarming rate. Yet successive governments in Australia have allowed the plundering to continue. When the GST was introduced in 2000 nobody suggested that it was more sustainable and healthier for our children to swim and sing rather than buy computers and other electronic gear cheaper. Nor did anyone suggest that maintaining the goods we already owned was better than buying new because it supported local jobs, reduced landfill, and saved natural resources. We couldn't argue with Free Trade because it too allowed us to buy 'cheap' and it was in the spirit of 'global competition' and 'economic growth'. Now we typically buy food that has travelled thousands of km.

In meeting the challenges ahead we will consume less and conserve more. Discretionary spending will reduce as the price of essentials – water, energy, fuel, food – rise significantly. We will redefine economic growth to favour the ‘good growth’ over the ‘bad’. Our biosecurity will become more important and this and our longer-term need for food security will mean that we turn to local sources that come to market with less carbon embedded. **Sydney Ports Corporation has predicted container volumes of 3.9 million by 2025 while their major competitor the Port of Melbourne Corporation is predicting 7million by 2035.** The growth patterns are predicated on a ‘business as usual’ approach – high consumer discretionary spending, no carbon tax, low fuel prices, low government intervention, economic assessments that ignore externalities.

### Externalities

Goods can be ‘cheap’ because some of the associated costs have been externalized to others. For instance, the loss of Penrhyn and most of Foreshore Beach is a cost that our communities in South Ward and Botany will bear. So too will be the congestion, pollution and other health impacts. Conversely, the residents near the East Darling Harbour site will benefit by the closure of the Patrick terminal. Traditionally externalities are ignored or poorly analysed. In his National Intermodal Terminal Study, February 2006, commissioned by the Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS), Steve Meyrick states (page 94): *Recent announcements of community benefits associated with the Port Botany development also demonstrates the sort of commitment required to impose efficient transport on a community which may come to enjoy its benefits, **but also holds other values and privileges dear.** The development is to come with a three million dollar community facility enhancement fund which will help cover costs associated with the construction of a school hall and gymnasium; a range of new thoroughfares, pedestrian bridges, jetties, boat ramps, car parks and other facilities to accommodate community enjoyment of the environs; commitment to reduce the more unpleasant aspects of transport throughput; and a range of environmental protection plans.*

(A response to Mr Meyrick can be found at - <http://www.botanybay.info/?p=182#more-182> )

\*\*Rowing (Penrhyn)



\*\*Beachcombing (Penrhyn)



Scenes marked with \*\* will disappear under the new Port Botany Terminal.

TREASURES OF BARE ISLAND, BOTANY BAY  
Underwater photographic exhibition celebrating the biodiversity around Bare Island is open 10am to 4pm Monday to Wednesday at La Perouse Museum.  
Further information: Phone 93113379

For further information on any of these items contact: Lynda Newnam, [chairperson@botanybay.info](mailto:chairperson@botanybay.info) April, 2007.