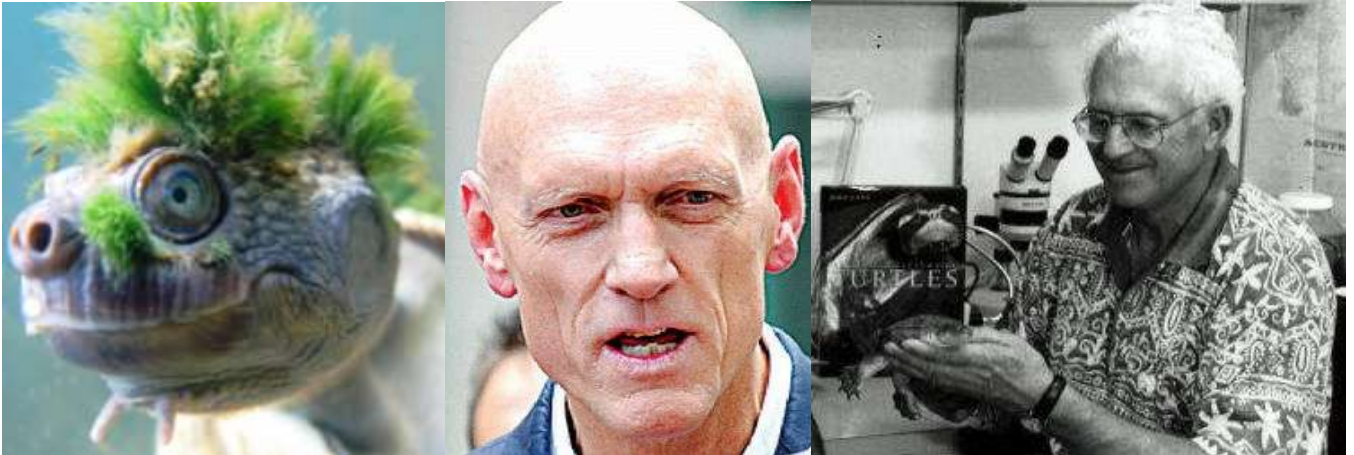


ENVIRONMENTALLY SPEAKING 22

Summer 2009/2010 Kooloora Environment News

SAVING THE MARY- OUR LOCAL CONNECTION

THE TURTLE, THE MINISTER, THE RESEARCHER



Two of our prominent citizens were instrumental in stopping the construction of the controversial Traveston Dam. Environment Minister Peter Garrett used his power under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC) and John Cann, the La Perouse Snakeman, provided the research identifying the Mary River Turtle.

A refusal under the EPBC is rare.ⁱ Since it came into operation in 1999 there have been over 3000 referrals to the Act with only 9 projects disapproved outright. In overruling the Queensland Government Peter Garrett stated: "In making this proposed decision, I have also considered the social and economic impacts of this project. An independent expert review conducted by the Centre for International Economics creates serious doubt about the economic benefits of the dam." (Media Release, 11/11/09)

Peter Beattie's proposal to dam the Mary was seriously flawed from the beginning. It was typical of the approach taken during the Joh Bjelke-Petersen years.ⁱⁱ Prime farmland was to be collateral damage along with threatened species living in the Mary, and communities in the valley. Opponents argued that there were better solutions for addressing growing demands for water in SE Queensland. The dam was highly unpopular in the region and earlier this year the Queensland Environment Minister, Andrew McNamara, lost his seat of Hervey Bay. McNamara, was no environmental slouch. He was one of the first politicians in Australia to speak out about Peak Oil, has been a strong opponent of whaling, and a proponent for a population policy for Australia.

As testament to the environmental problems, the Queensland Government had put 1200 conditions on the construction of the Traveston Dam in October. The dam directly threatened species protected under the EPBC Act – the Mary River Cod, the Lungfish and the photogenic Mary River Turtle discovered by John Cannⁱⁱⁱ.

The story from the Noosa Journal, 19/11/09, acknowledges John Cann's contribution:

*.....establishing the origins of this mysterious critter had become something of a personal mission for one man. Sydney-based freshwater turtle enthusiast turned researcher, John Cann, spent much of the 1970s searching Australia's river systems for the real identity of the penny turtle. He even travelled to Papua New Guinea to investigate possibilities there. Indeed a labour of love, it took him until 1987 to establish his biggest lead the name of the supplier, a fisherman from Maryborough. The man was not altogether obliging, however, sending John to Cape York, the Gulf, south-western Queensland and New South Wales in his quest. Two years later, though, the man admitted it was the Mary River and in 1990, John found his turtle, our turtle, Mary River's turtle, on the banks of its rightful habitat. Four years later, it was formally recognised as the *Elusor macrurus*, or Mary River turtle. Fifteen years later again, many more people work to protect the special species and this past week can take great heart in Peter Garrett's courageous verdict. (from the Noosa Journal, 19th November 2009, photo of Peter Garrett courtesy Gympie Times)*

of CO2 in the atmosphere, were last seen 15-20million years ago.

Until recent decades carbon levels varied between 180-300ppm.

The Garnaut Report recommended action to contain levels at below 450ppm.

Around 20 million years ago, south eastern Australia was becoming drier as the continent floated north into drier latitudes. Bushfires became more frequent. Fire-adapted Eucalyptus forests (were evolving and beginning to replace major forest populations of species like the Wollemi Pine (pollen of which is found in the Geological Dig at Little Bay).

SYDNEY SAVING WATER

A recent report from Sydney Water shows that business water savings have overtaken residential. Business accounts for 33% of total consumption.

In 2009 Sydney uses the same amount of water that it did in 1974 despite a population increase of over 30% since.

WASTING FOOD

The Australia Institute reports that Australian dump \$5.2billion worth of food annually. This sum would be enough to meet the shortfall in the UN Emergency Relief Fund. Queenslanders were the highest wasters at \$262 per head and South Australians the lowest at \$213.

NSW SOLAR BONUS

Household that install solar panels and other microgeneration systems (eg. wind turbines) will be paid \$0.60 for every kWh of per they generate. An average 2,500kWh/year system would earn around \$1,496 annually.

PETROL'S LAST HURRAH



Below, extract from the Refusal:



Refusal of Approval

Traveston Crossing Dam, Mary River, Queensland, (EPBC: 2006/3150)

This decision is made under sections 130(1) and 133 of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (the EPBC Act).

Proposed action

Person who proposed to take the action Queensland Water Infrastructure Pty Limited

Proponent's ACN and ABN (if applicable) ACN 119 634 427

Proposed action The construction and operation of Traveston Crossing Dam on the Mary River, South-East Queensland, and the construction of associated infrastructure, as described in the referral received under the EPBC Act on 15 November 2006 and the request for variation received under the EPBC Act on 29 January 2009.

The consequence of refusing to approve the action against the controlling provision listed threatened species and communities (sections 18 and 18A) is that the proposed action cannot proceed. This is because the proposed action would have unacceptable impacts on matters protected by Part 3 of the EPBC Act.

Decision-maker

name and position The Hon. Peter Garrett AM MP Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

signature

date of decision

2/12/09

The EPBC did not stop the dredging of Port Phillip Bay, the recent Victorian desalination plant, nor has it been used to control the various developments occurring in Botany Bay.

BIOFUELS

Latest research suggests that biofuels could be worse than petrol in terms of carbon emissions. This is based on projections that over a 30 year period the farmland required for the fast-growing plants would drive deforestation, plus displace food crops.

In 2007 the State Government approved biodiesel production at Vopak, Port Botany. Vopak use palm oil from plantations in Malaysia. Despite the fact that rainforests were being cleared and orangutans displaced for the palm oil there were no objections from the State Government's Department of Environment.

CLIMATE CHANGE

According to research conducted at the University of California, Los Angeles, our current levels of 387ppm

13 October 2009, New York Times:

“Saudi Arabia is trying to enlist other oil-producing countries to support a provocative idea: if wealthy countries reduce their oil consumption to combat global warming, they should pay compensation to oil producers.

The oil-rich kingdom has pushed this position for years in earlier climate-treaty negotiations. While it has not succeeded, its efforts have sometimes delayed or disrupted discussions. The kingdom is once again gearing up to take a hard line on the issue at international negotiations scheduled for Copenhagen in December.

The chief Saudi negotiator, Mohammad al-Sabban, described the position as a “make or break” provision for the Saudis, as nations stake out their stance before the global climate summit scheduled for the end of the year.

“Assisting us as oil-exporting countries in achieving economic diversification is very crucial for us through foreign direct investments, technology transfer, insurance and funding,” Mr. Sabban said in an e-mail message.

This Saudi position has emerged periodically as a source of dispute since the earliest global climate talks, in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It is surfacing again as Saudi Arabia tries to build a coalition of producers to extract concessions in Copenhagen.

Petroleum exporters have long used delaying tactics during climate talks. They view any attempt to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by developed countries as a menace to their economies.....”

BRING ON THE ELECTRIC CAR

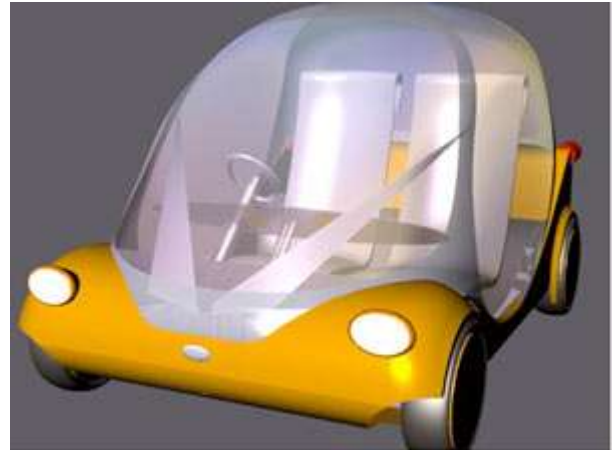
Visit website: www.betterplace.com for a bumper sticker “MY NEXT CAR WILL RUN ON THE WIND”. The first National Electric Car Festival was held in Canberra on October 4. Visit: www.aeva.asn.au



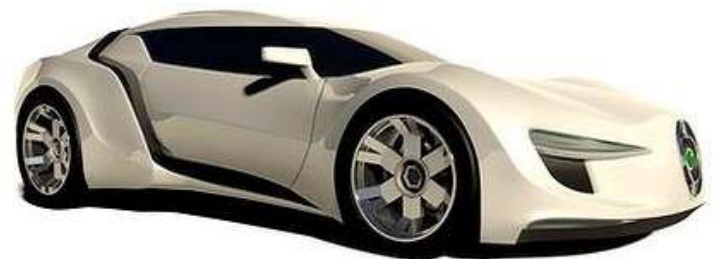
First-year university students have designed and built a groundbreaking electric car that recharges itself and does away with axles and gear boxes.

Fifty students from the University of Sydney's Faculty of Engineering spent five months cobbling together bits of plywood, foam and fibreglass to build the ManGo concept car.

They developed the specifications and hand built the car.



Sydney's David Goy hopes Australia will take a leading role in manufacturing electric vehicles and to get the ball rolling he has come up with an extraordinary plan to build an electric supercar locally. (Sydney Morning Herald, 30 November 2009).



LITTLE CONGWONG BEACH WINS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AWARD FOR LA PEROUSE EXPLORERS



The Keep Australia Beautiful NSW Clean Beaches Challenge Award Ceremony was conducted Friday 4th December and Randwick Council were successful in winning a number of awards for Clovelly, Coogee, Maroubra, Malabar and Yarra Bay.

Local volunteer group, the La Perouse Explorers won the Keep Australia Beautiful Clean Beaches Challenge (Sydney Region) Environmental Protection Award for the work they have done at Little Congwong Beach and surrounding area. The award recognised many years of water quality testing, clean-ups and weeding, as well as guided walks of the area for the CSIRO Double Helix Club.

Over the years La Perouse Explorers has been supported by Kooloora Community Centre, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Randwick Council, the La Perouse Precinct Committee, Little Bay Cubs and Scouts, Sydney Water Streamwatch and Fishcare.

There is a future proposal to construct a walking track from Little Congwong to Henry Head so that the area is more accessible for walkers and fishers. At present there is no return beach track to Henry Head.

DIARY DATES

2010: INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF BIODIVERSITY

January:

10: Epiphany Yarra Bay

11: Randwick Council Summer Activities Start: Bookings 1300722542

February

2: International Wetlands Day

21: Receveur Mass Laperouse Museum

21: Malabar to Little Bay Swim

28: Yarra Bay Fun Run and Walk

March

1-7: National Seaweek – www.mesa.edu.au

7: Clean Up Australia Day



22: World Water Day - www.waterday.org theme: *Communicating Water Quality Challenges and Opportunities*

Lynda Newnam, December 2009

www.laperouse.info

ⁱ An excellent review of the EPBC is at

http://law.anu.edu.au/acer/EPBC_Survey_Report_%20sept09.pdf

ⁱⁱ It is somewhat ironic that the Kingaroy's Gordonbrook Dam all but dried up in 2007 and the Joh Bjelke-Petersen dam between Kingaroy and Gympie is significantly below capacity.

ⁱⁱⁱ 2009 marks the 90th Anniversary of the Cann Family Snake Shows at La Perouse