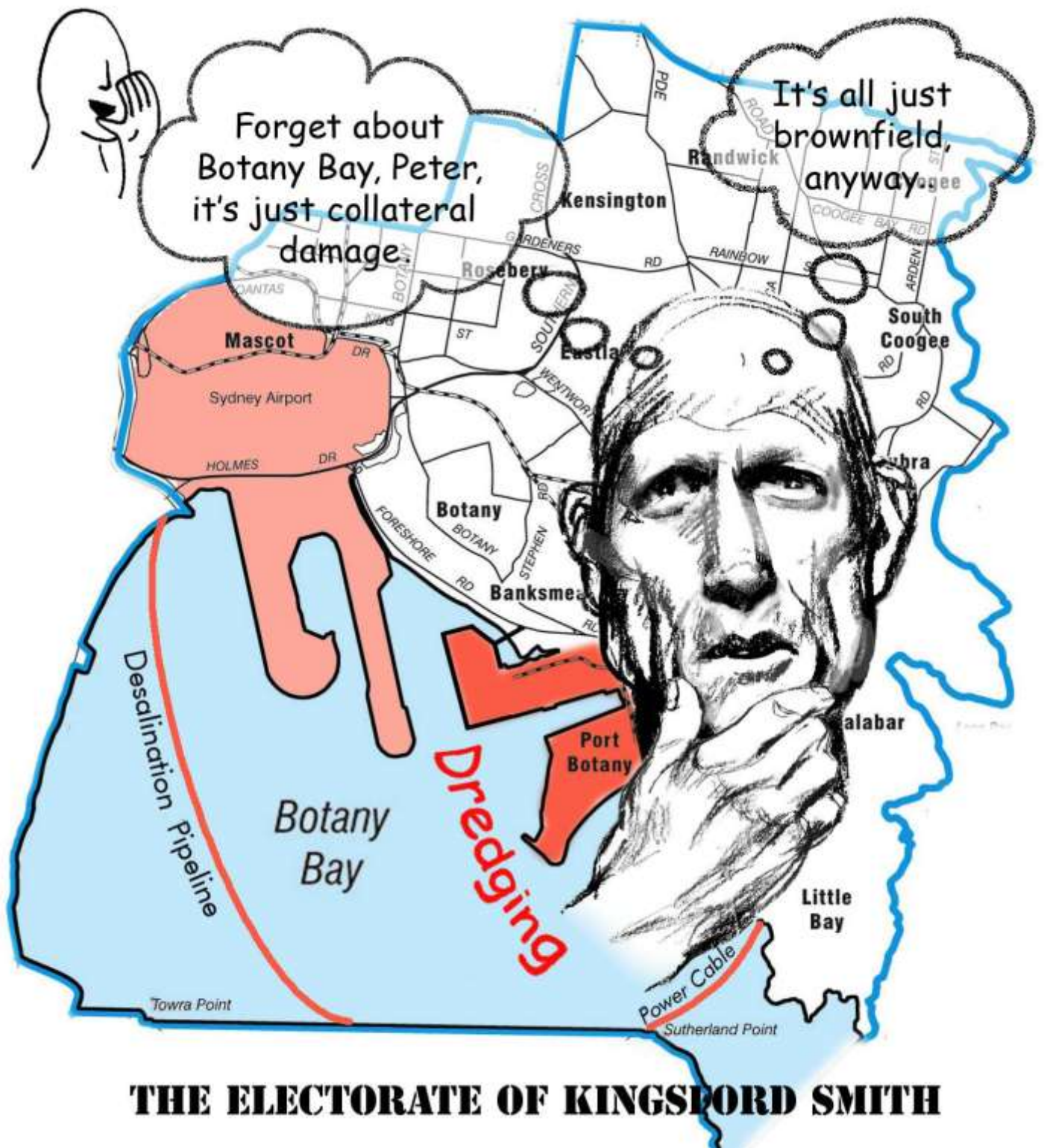


ENVIRONMENTALLY SPEAKING 24

Winter 2010 South Ward Environment News



The forgotten Bay, and its forgotten People

“One way and another, Botany Bay is becoming an environmental disaster, already so dreadful a mess that even a local mayor has been moved to describe it, with a very Australian sense of propriety, as ‘the anus of Sydney’. It is almost as if, in sparing the Harbour from the worst excesses of our progressive world, Someone In Authority had decided to compensate by taking it out on this poor neglected reminder of what might have been....”

from *“Sydney, The Story of a City”* G. Moorhouse

When Geoffrey Moorhouse wrote these words in 1999 the representative for Kingsford Smith was Laurie Brereton and one of the disasters that Moorhouse was referring to was the construction of the third runway. Not only was this a tragedy for the Bay – loss of seagrasses, destruction of habitat for threatened Little Terns, consequent erosion of beaches – but also a loss of recreational amenity and a long-term planning disaster for Sydney.

In 2004 Peter Garrett succeeded Laurie Brereton and it appeared that finally the fortunes of Botany Bay had turned for the better. Peter Garrett had served as president of the Australian Conservation Foundation for 10 years and spent a term on the international board of Greenpeace. If there was to be a champion for Botany Bay surely he would be it!

The Kingsford Smith electorate encompasses all the Bay excluding Towra Point and the southern and western shoreline.

Since Peter Garrett's election in 2004 we have witnessed the dredging of over 8million cubic metres for the construction of the 63ha Port Botany Expansion. A desalination plant has been constructed with a pipeline from the south east of the Bay to the west - Kurnell to Kyeemagh. There were many who argued that if a plant were to be built the most logical position would be alongside Sydney Water facilities at Malabar Headland but instead the far longer, more expensive route compromising the marine environment of Botany Bay was chosen. The announcement was made in Dubai by the then Premier and Member for Maroubra, Bob Carr.

One of the first developments that Peter Garrett signed off as the new Minister for Environment in 2007 was the Energy Australia Cable. Randwick Council were ignored by the NSW Department of Planning when they recommended a route that took the cable away from Bare Island, Botany Bay National Park and residents in La Perouse and Phillip Bay.

And although Energy Australia were later to replace trenching with the more invasive dredging there were no conditions put on the development by Peter Garrett. Nor were conditions put on the Desalination pipeline in 2008 or for the additional dredging for the Port Expansion in 2009.

On his website Peter Garrett explains his role under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act(EPBC). While he has never imposed any conditions on developments in Botany Bay he has, he says *“imposed stringent conditions on a number of recent significant projects in order to ensure that environmental impacts would be acceptable, including the Gorgon Gas project in Western Australia, the Wyaralong Dam in Queensland, the Four-Mile uranium mine in South Australia and the Fiona Stanley Hospital in Perth..... In cases where I don't believe the environmental impacts of a proposal can be sufficiently avoided, mitigated or offset I have refused to approve those projects. Recent examples of such refusals include proposed coal facilities in Shoalwater Bay in*

Queensland, a proposed release of irrigation water from Lake Crescent in Tasmania, and a proposed housing development in critical Cassowary habitat near Mission Beach. “ Since this statement he has also refused permission for the Traveston Dam in Queensland and put stringent conditions on a proposal to discourage tree destroying Flying Fox from roosting at the Botanic Gardens. The conditions for the Gardens were so stringent that the project was recently postponed for another year.

Not only has there been no action against the impacts but there has been a disturbing silence, and what appears a reluctance to even acknowledge the value of the Bay. In March 2005 there was an expression of ‘concern’ about Orica’s groundwater plumes but nothing since then. The electorate contains the largest airport in Australia, the second largest container port, big industries like Elgas, Orica, Vopak, Amcor, but we hear nothing about their impacts. The Draft of the Federal Government’s National Ports Strategy was recently on exhibition but there is nothing on Peter Garrett’s website about it and no comments in the media.

Under the Caring for our Country program which he administers \$1.5 million was allocated to improving water quality in the Botany Bay ‘Hot Spot’ project. The money given to the NSW State Government’s Sydney Catchment Management Authority is being used to fund projects throughout the catchment of Botany Bay. Around 7% of Australians live in the Botany Bay catchment but the allocation is less than .04% of the Caring for our Country funding. In the July 2009 media release on the program Peter Garrett refers to the importance of Towra Point, the one area of Botany Bay not in his electorate.

In September 2004 the then member for Cook, Bruce Baird, was successful in getting Kurnell listed on the National Heritage Register. Heritage Listing for Botany Bay has been passionately promoted by Botany environmental campaigner, Nancy Hillier, but there is no evidence of support for this from Peter Garrett. Within the first few months of taking office as the Minister for Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Peter Garrett had listed Bonegilla Migrant Camp Block 19 and Bondi Beach on the National Register.

It is instructive to visit Peter Garrett’s website – www.petergarrett.com.au On the page for Schools there is information about the Great Barrier Reef and the World Heritage List but nothing on what local school children can see in their own backyard.

In 2008 Scott Morrison, the Member for Cook – which includes Kurnell and Towra Point - distributed a brochure titled “Treasures of Botany Bay” to all his constituents. Most of the photographs in that brochure were of creatures found around Bare Island.

Perhaps the sad truth is that the representative for Botany Bay actually does consider the Bay as little more than ‘the anus of Sydney’. Perhaps he does take a narrow view of the environment and our place within it and has decided the area is just a ‘brownfield’ unworthy of celebration and rehabilitation.

BOORALEE - SYDNEY'S FIRST FISHING VILLAGE IN BOTANY WHERE FISHING IS NOW BANNED

Fisherman's Village was Sydney's first commercial fishing town. It existed as a closely knit collection of fishing families that emerged into a village in the first two decades of the 19th Century, and was a functional community for well over one hundred years. It began as a series of shacks and temporary dwellings but by the 1840's was a site containing substantial cottages and a series of linking cart tracks that eventually became Booralee and Luland Streets. The area facilitated the development of a thriving fishing community because of the abundance of fish in Botany Bay and the availability of extensive shallows for mooring boats between the original mouth of the Cooks River and the bottom of Booralee Street.



By the late 1950s the area that encompassed Fisherman's Village had been zoned as Industrial and was swallowed up by factories and the dredging of Botany Bay for development of airport facilities destroyed the boat mooring.

Up until 2009 you could still fish from the shoreline in Botany Bay municipality but with the expansion of the port there is now a complete ban on fishing along what is left of the Botany/Banksmeadow shoreline.

Ten year old angler from Matraville, fishing from the Penrhyn jetty now destroyed by Port Expansion. Photo: Robert Pearce, Sydney Morning Herald. 23/9/2002

THE GREATEST MORAL CHALLENGE OF OUR TIME

Why was the Emissions Trading Scheme(ETS) put on hold?

In March the media were carrying reports of the effects of the NSW IPART recommendations for electricity prices. Under its determinations, average prices were to increase by an accumulative total of 46 per cent for Integral Energy, 60 per cent for Energy Australia, and 64 per cent for Country Energy customers. Country Energy customers were expected to see a typical annual bill rise by between \$600 and \$918.

IPART's Chairman, Jim Cox, said the price increases had been calculated to take into account the introduction of the Federal Government's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme in 2011. Cox also said if the scheme was not introduced, the price increases would be around half as much.

"I hope we're not scaring people," he said.

The following month Kevin Rudd announced the ETS would be postponed - postponed to after the Federal election and the NSW State Election on 26th March 2011. According to reports the new Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, and Deputy Prime Minister, Wayne Swan, were behind the postponement. The question remains, who stood behind them?

DEATH BY FLYING FOX

In 2007 a grand and beautiful Kauri Pine, *Agathis moorei* had to be removed from the Palm Grove, one of the most significant



landscapes in the Royal Botanic Gardens. This tree was collected as a seedling from New Caledonia and planted by Charles Moore, Director of the Gardens, in 1853. It died prematurely due to the roosting habits of the population of Grey-headed Flying-fox in the Gardens which can number more than 22,000 at their seasonal peak. The timber from the milled tree was distributed to a diversity of designers, woodworkers and artists who have transformed it into special pieces



in commemoration of an *Agathis moorei* which had to be felled well before its natural lifespan. Objects ranging from musical instruments, furniture, carving, turned bowls and boxes, woodcut prints, theatrical sets and sculpture to a small boat will be on exhibition at the Botanic Gardens from August 21 to 29: 10-4 daily,

information 92318182

END OF AN ERA



Taking the snakes home after the final Cann Family Snake Show 18 April 2010.

Michael Daley speaking in NSW Parliament about the significant contribution that the Cann Family have made to the environment and local tourism.....*John will never really retire. He will continue his remarkable research into reptiles, particularly freshwater turtles, and also his role as a much sought-after community educator on interacting with snakes.... Amidst all their achievements and all the things that people will say about John, George, their dad and family, their greatest accolade is the most simple: they were lovely people. The boys were nature's gentlemen and the Canns were a very close-knit and genuine family. We owe them a great debt of gratitude. Once again on behalf of the local people I thank John and his family for the incredible contribution they have made to a very colourful area of La Perouse and to the local and wider community. Many thousands of people from all over the world, particularly in places where there are no snakes, will sit and talk about the day they came to a little, unassuming pit in a place called La Perouse, named after a Frenchman, one of the world's greatest navigators, and saw a bloke called Cann wrangling snakes. They will not forget it and nor should they. We will not forget John Cann. (from Hansard 22 April 2010). For more information - www.cannsoflaperouse.blogspot.com*



1965 Whale at Bare Island



(photo courtesy of Mrs Betty Stubley)

TRUCK NUMBERS DON'T ADD UP

The current throughput at the Port is approaching 2 million TEU per annum. Under the conditions of consent for the Port Expansion the cap is 3.2 million TEU. Regardless of whether the Government achieves its target of doubling the number of containers by rail, we are still going to see a substantial increase in the number being trucked. But the author of the NSW Ministry of Transport's submission to the Draft National Ports Strategy, on exhibition last month, has more disturbing news about container traffic in Sydney:

*The trade forecasts for Sydney are not correct. NSW have agreed or approved the forecasts. At this time the trade simulation that NSW agency, Sydney Ports Corporation, is developing has an average growth rate of just under 6% which puts **container trade in 2029/30 at 5.8 million***

see page 5 of Ministry of Transport document at - http://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/public_submissions/nps/files/NSWTransport.pdf

Under the Ports Growth Plan that was announced in 2003 Newcastle is supposed to be developed as the next container port after Sydney reaches capacity. The capacity for Sydney and Sydney Ports was determined as 3.2 million TEU by Minister Sartor in October 2005. There has been no record of any change so why is Sydney Ports/Ministry of Transport forecasting beyond the cap?



FOR THE DIARY

August

- 1 Port Botany Athletics Annual Race 11-12.30pm
- 21-29 Free Kauri exhibition Botanic Gardens 10-4 daily

September

- 7th National Threatened Species Day
- 18th World Parks Day

June 2010 LYNDIA NEWNAM
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