

# ENVIRONMENTALLY SPEAKING 18

Summer 2008/9 North Botany Bay Environment News [www.laperouse.info](http://www.laperouse.info)  
Social Change not Climate Change

## ORICAS 100 YEARS OF TOXIC LEGACIES

*"They have to do something big, a major project, something vast and fabulous to redress this permanent nightmare they've put us in."*

In 1770 Joseph Banks walked the northern shores of Botany Bay. He was so enthusiastic about the plants and marine life he saw that he lobbied the English Parliament and his friend King George for a settlement to be established at Botany Bay. His botanical mentor, Linnaeus, even suggested that Australia should be named Banksia in his honour. Locally he is recognized in the naming of the suburb Banksmeadow.

But would Joseph Banks be so excited about his 'meadow' now? Banksmeadow today is one of the most heavily impacted and modified suburbs in Australia.



In the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was a significant recreational destination for the citizens of Sydney's CBD, a pleasure ground by the Bay. Women promenaded around the grounds of the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel. It was a popular meeting place for sports enthusiasts and holiday makers and by 1850, a zoo had been established. Visitors danced, picnicked, went horse riding, and played cricket and football. And they came to see international athletes challenge the locals in the Sir Joseph Banks Handicap, first run over 100 yards on a cinder track. The winners collected cash prizes, and competition and betting were fierce.

Sir Joseph Banks park still survives including this statue of Banks 'botanising'. A shopping strip boasting first class cafes does too but the suburb is dwarfed by industrial giants like Orica, the cranes of Port Botany dominate the horizon and monster trucks dominate the roads.

Similar stories have been played out on Sydney Harbour but Harbourside the talk is of restoration not more destruction. Paul Keating has suggested that Patrick's former East Darling Harbour container terminal be taken back to its 1836 shoreline. The irony is not lost - this proposal comes as Foreshore Beach and Penrhyn Spit are being destroyed to make way for containers displaced from the same East Darling Harbour.

Callan Park is to be saved for the people of Leichardt municipality. In late 2005 the State Government pledged more than \$16million to restore Ballast Point as a park. The list goes on. Both State and Federal governments are busy restoring Sydney Harbour while approving destructive developments around Botany Bay.

The primary containment line for Orica's toxic groundwater plumes is located on its Southlands site in Banksmeadow.

Frog surveys conducted in the 1990s confirm the previous occurrence of the Threatened Green and Golden Bellfrog. The area is part of a wetlands systems and as such should not be capped. In fact, a groundwater expert was reported to have said to community members at an Orica meeting – "don't let them cap it".



In an article published late November in the Sydney Morning Herald and syndicated papers, Orica confirmed that the Botany Aquifer could not be cleaned up for at least 100 years. It was an alarming admission and drew this response from one community member:

"They have to do something big, a major project, something vast and fabulous to redress this permanent nightmare they've put us in."

**There is something fabulous they could do. It is something which would earn Orica significant 'green credits'.**

**Instead of filling and capping Southlands and giving the local community more noisy polluting dangerous trucks ORICA could provide a significant environmental offset.**



The Botanic Gardens in Sydney is in search of a new home for a large population of Grey Headed Flying Fox (GHFF). Orica's Southlands fulfils the criteria for an alternative site –

1. It is close to the Botanic Gardens CBD site and to major foraging sites in the Eastern Suburbs.
2. It is not in a residential area.
3. There is water.
4. The area is 18ha which is large enough to allow a diversity of trees and shrubs to be planted along with a roosting site of fast-growth Casurina glaucas or similar trees. The right micro-climate has to be achieved to encourage the GHFF to roost.

The area could be fenced with a viewing boardwalk available for guided walks in the future. Cameras could be installed to provide virtual tours on the Orica Website. Rehabilitation of the site over a longer period could facilitate the entry of many other species, such as the Green and Golden Bellfrog. The site also connects to a rail corridor, a pathway for native fauna.

**And Orica could retain access for future monitoring and future efforts to remove the pollutants in the aquifer.**

**The GHFF is a highly threatened species and a very important pollinator. These animals are also very intelligent creatures 'ranked' just below primates.**

## **MONSTER TRUCKS IN MATRAVILLE'S TOWN CENTRE**

This truck was carrying 3 x 20 foot containers and had space for more. The cabin is out of the photograph and it dwarfs the 4-wheel drive beside it. The photograph was taken of the truck in a school zone, during school zone hours.



## **ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION ACT (EPBC)**

The EPBC Act is administered by our local member Peter Garrett. It is currently under review – see <http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/review/> and closes for comments on 19<sup>th</sup> December.

In launching this particular review of the ACT, Peter was quoted in the Sydney Morning Herald (1/11/08) as saying that *the laws were "potentially a very powerful tool for the protection of the Australian environment" but had not always been used as much they could have been.... although the laws were good for rejecting individual projects they did not protect the environment from "death by a thousand cuts" or a series of developments, none of which were*

*individually threatening but collectively posed danger to a particular environmental characteristic.*

We have many examples on North Botany Bay of the failure of the EPBC Act. The following is just one. It concerns 2 stands of Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub (ESBS) at Prince Henry. The removal of the ESBS was supported by National Parks and in compensation Landcom was to pay for the restoration of Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub in Botany Bay National Park (La Perouse). When I enquired of the National Parks Threatened Species Unit a few years ago I was told that although no money had come the five years was not up. Time's up now and there should be a report on how the \$100,000 was spent. A letter went to Peter Garrett on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2008 asking for a report. In the meantime James Woodford's comments in 2003 are provided:

**Rare banksia facing destruction, Sydney Morning Herald , By James Woodford  
July 14 2003**

*For \$100,000, Landcom, the NSW Government development arm, has bought the right to destroy a patch of one of the rarest ecological communities in the nation. The disputed 0.15-hectare stand of eastern suburbs banksia scrub is at the site of the former Prince Henry Hospital and is regarded as highly degraded. Such scrub once covered 5300 hectares of Sydney's coastline. The scrub is dominated by four different banksias and also contains four wattle species, grass trees, hakeas and paperbarks. But it has mostly been replaced by the city's most expensive suburbs, with 138 hectares remaining.*



*Last year the NSW Government's scientific committee declared eastern suburbs banksia scrub an endangered ecological community. One of the scrub's most significant remaining sites is at the site of the former Prince Henry Hospital at Little Bay. More than a hectare of the scrub survives in the old grounds, and when Landcom originally put forward a masterplan for the redevelopment of the 84-hectare hospital site all of the endangered plants were to be protected. But Randwick City Council has required Landcom to widen the roads in the development site, which means that one of Prince Henry's six stands of the scrub needs to be cleared.*

*Landcom offered to pay the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service \$100,000 over five years to destroy the 0.15-hectare stand in the way of the 800-dwelling development. The money is compensation and is to be spent on banksia scrub inside Botany Bay National Park. Landcom has also agreed to spend \$30,000 a year helping to manage the scrub at the site that is earmarked for protection. Landcom's environmental manager, Armineh Mardirossian, says the decision to destroy the stand was taken as part of a juggling act between building homes, a new school of management and a golf course. She said that some of the scrub had to go because of the city council's requirement for wider roads.*

*A spokesman for the National Parks Association said the scrub was priceless.*

The NSW Court of Appeal has recently ruled that it is not strictly mandatory to consider the principles of ecologically sustainable development (including climate change flood risk) when considering development approvals. On October 22, 2008, The Environmental Defenders Office applied to the High Court of Australia for leave to appeal this decision.

## **WHAT IS A MASTERPLAN WORTH?**



### **PRINCE HENRY'S DEATH BY A THOUSAND CUTS**

This photo was taken around 9.20am, 10<sup>th</sup> December at the Prince Henry site. It shows the crowd gathering for the Land and Environment Court hearing. It was an awkward time for most people and some took leave from work to attend. After the Commissioner arrived the objectors and their supporters were

squeezed into Stockland's office where a model of the site is on display. There were four objectors from the Community including a resident from Prince Henry. All spoke about the Masterplan and the expectation that the developer would be required to honour the commitments made in that plan. The community had put in thousands of hours of consultation to arrive at that Masterplan and people who had bought into Prince Henry had done so on the understanding that the facilities and services outlined in the Masterplan would become available.

Basic shopping and medical facilities, detailed in the Masterplan, will now be cut, resulting in trips off site for the basics. Randwick Council has won countless awards in Sustainability but what are they worth if it has failed to deliver basic sustainability in this development.



## PRINCE HENRY'S HERITAGE

In 1992 a number of sites within Prince Henry were listed on the Commonwealth's Register of the National Estate. These sites were to be protected under the Prince Henry Masterplan.

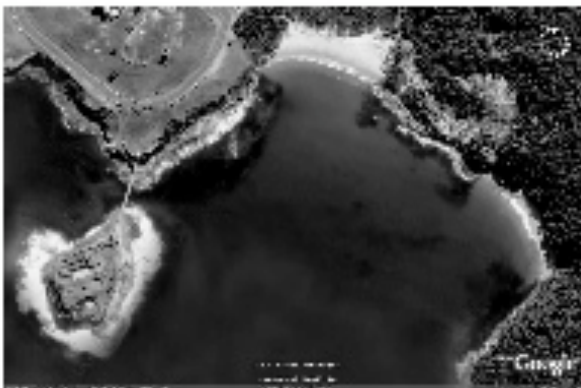
Included among them, was the Sewing Room. It is described in the Heritage listing as being formerly a *Superintendent's Cottage*. *A rusticated weatherboard former residence, built c 1915, with shingled sunhoods and fascia, timber verandah and balustrade and a later Marseilles tiled roof. There is a garage of similar date adjacent and a trellis survives, sheltering the rear entrance.*

A few years ago this little cottage burnt down. In its place Landcom has erected a sculpture representing a sewing machine (photo left). Engraved on the sculpture are the words:

*This was the site of the sewing machine cottage, a non-discript (sic) little building where sewing of nurses uniforms and general mending of clothing took place in the late 1800s and early 1900s.*

## LITTLE CONGWONG YOUTH LEGENDS

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE LITTLE BAY CUBS FOR ACHIEVING A HIGHLY COMMENDED YOUNG LEGENDS AWARD FOR LITTLE CONGWONG BEACH AT THE RECENT CLEAN BEACHES CHALLENGE AWARDS



## CALENDAR Summer 2009

January 12: Epiphany Greek celebrations at Yarra Bay – food, dancing, Blessing of the Waters

January 18: Anniversary of Phillip's first landing in Australia at Yarra Bay

February 2: 7pm La Perouse Precinct Committee, La Perouse School Hall

February 9: 7pm Matraville Precinct Committee, Matraville RSL

February 10: 12noon Seminar on Orica's HCB Waste followed by HCB Waste Community Meeting, venue UNSW

February 15: Receveur Mass Laperouse Museum – special 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Franciscan Order (Receveur was a Franciscan friar)

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