

ENVIRONMENTALLY SPEAKING 19

North Botany Bay Environment News Autumn 2009

BOTANY BAY AND THE ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION ACT (EPBC)

The latest **Botany Bay Cable Project** Newsletter – distributed Friday 13th March – makes reference to a ‘proposed amendment to works in Botany Bay’. Energy Australia now intend to include **dredging** as part of this project. The details of the amendment are at http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=3041



The project (without dredging) was referred, under the EPBC Act, to Peter Garrett’s department and in December 2007 his staff deemed the environmental impacts of this development NOT WORTHY of their scrutiny even though the area impacted includes BARE ISLAND, one of

the top diving sites in Sydney and home to a number of species listed as protected under the EPBC Act. By way of comparison, the Botanic Gardens attempts to control Flying Fox numbers is deemed a controlled action and subject to scrutiny by Peter Garrett’s department.

Link to the original referral: http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/epbc/epbc_ap.pl?name=current_referral_detail&proposal_id=3552 You will note that impacts to marine creatures are downplayed. Divers have since written to Peter Garrett saying they have observed listed marine species in areas where the Energy Australia consultant has not.

The EPBC is currently the subject of a Federal Senate review and the first report was released earlier this month: <http://>

www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/eca_ctte/epbc_act/report/report.pdf When the review was launched the Minister made reference to the inadequacies in the EPBC with regard to cumulative impact and if you read the report you will find this has been taken up in submissions and in discussion by the Committee. There has also been discussion concerning Bi-lateral agreements: eg:

4.14 The committee heard claims that this 'largely unfettered discretion with respect to preparing environmental impacts assessment requirements, and determining the adequacy of environmental assessments undertaken', coupled with exemptions from other state approval processes, has meant that **some actions in NSW may have avoided rigorous environmental impact assessment.**

Now that the Developer (a State owned corporation) is seeking approval from the Consent Authority (a State Government Department) to dredge, **Peter Garrett could take another look.**



CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY MARCH 1 with Local Cubs doing their bit to clean up after a ‘Rave Party’ at Little Congwong Beach held there the previous night.

THE ORICA LEGACY



"The Orica Community Liaison Committee celebrates the clean up of the Botany Aquifer"

“and I do agree with hundreds of years” to treat the contamination... “there is no magic we can do to make it better”

At Orica’s special workshop on Tuesday, 31 March, the experts were unanimous in their opinion that there is no appropriate technology available to completely rid the Botany Aquifer of Orica’s toxic pollution. At this point in time it is estimated to take hundreds of years but there were assurances that Orica is **“committed to looking for the silver bullet”**....and **“would continue to seek the wisdom of the experts”** and from the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) representative that **“it is not the end of the issue”**.

For hundreds of years Botany and Banksmeadow will be tainted by a contaminated aquifer. In the early months of operation of the Groundwater Treatment Plant there were many occasions when dioxins emitted from the stack were over the recommended limit.....for hundreds of years residents will be hoping that there will be no further non-compliance, and no breakdowns.

Over the coming years Orica will be cleaning up its carpark waste and yet another Treatment Plant will be constructed to handle the toxic material. Already the DECC have given a special exemption to allow Mercury emissions through the stack to be higher than the regulated standard. The Government has also allowed Orica to sell treated groundwater so it can recover some of the costs of the cleanup.

But what about the local environment and the people who live nearby. What are they getting.

MORE BAD NEWS!

Orica propose to fill and cap their 18ha Southlands site and hardstand for warehousing. That means more trucks on the surrounding roads and more diesel pollution in the air. After taking so much from the area, Orica’s development - if approved by the government - will be taking even more.

THE SOLUTION

QUARANTINE SOUTHLANDS ‘TIL THE AQUIFER IS CLEAN



Southlands is a heavily polluted site containing the primary containment line for the toxic plumes.

This land could be quarantined until after the Botany Aquifer has been cleaned of its contamination. During the quarantine period Orica could develop phytoremediation strategies for dealing with the pollution contained in the soil and groundwater. This would mean planting selected species of indigenous trees and monitoring them as well as the soil and groundwater to establish what impact the trees have on the soil and water and what impact the soil and water have on the trees. A mix of species could be used such as Casuarinas and Melaleucas. The Phytoremediation Technology developed could be applied at other Orica sites and marketed throughout the growing Remediation Industry.

RISING SEA LEVELS “When will barrages be needed at Port Philip or Botany Bay?.. When will the very low runway at Sydney Airport need to be elevated? “

The following has been extracted from the Australian Government Publication “ABOUT THE HOUSE”, September 2008. http://www.aph.gov.au/house/house_news/magazine/ath_34Coastal%20retreat.pdf

In 2006, the Insurance Council of Australia assessed the number of Australian addresses within three kilometres of the coast and with baseline elevations below four, five and six metres. It estimated that more than 425,000 Australian addresses are below four metres above mean sea level and within three kilometres of the current shoreline. “The potential impacts on the Australian community arising from sea level rise when combined with the current exposures to inland flooding are therefore likely to be significant,” the Insurance Council states in its submission to the inquiry. “It is in this context that the general insurance industry considers that **urgent adaptive measures are required**. We submit that the significant implications for the Australian economy that flow from this hazard require significant consideration and treatment.”..... Professor Thom raises a series of pertinent questions in his submission, pointing to low-lying areas in Australia he believes could be at risk. “When will barrages be needed at Port Philip or Botany Bay? When will the very low runway at Sydney Airport need to be elevated?”

CONSIDERING THE IMPACT OF THE ENVIRONMENT ON CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENTS

In 2006 the Principal Scientist for URS , Matt Coetzee, who oversaw the Sydney Ports Corporation EIS for the expansion had this to say at a conference titled: **Critical Transportation Infrastructure in a Global Warming Future:Protecting NSW Seaports and their Hinterland,Working Paper 2,Report on Workshop Held 25th May, 2006, The University of Sydney**



“Matt spoke specifically on the EIS process for the expansion of Port Botany seaport. He noted that for the purposes of the EIS, spatial and temporal boundaries were tightly defined around the physical infrastructure and less on deeper connections with other structures. The alternatives considered are most often at the scale of the development (ie alternative structural solutions), and if other scales were examined other alternatives might come into play. This was certainly the case with assessing the alternative to develop Newcastle Port instead of augmenting Port Botany. This was rejected because of unsatisfactory transportation links between Newcastle and Sydney, given that the majority of container trade was sourced from or

destined to the Sydney Basin*. **However from a climate change perspective, the Newcastle option might have more weight.** Impacts that are well defined, quantified and certain are most easy to define mitigation measures for and are therefore the ones that are prioritised for attention. Consequently impacts of Climate Change are not usually considered in the EIS process. **The EIS process focussed on assessing the impact of a development on the environment, not that of the peculiarities of the environment on the development** (that is seen as project feasibility and although part of the process is still not the focus). (Photo of Leonardo da Vinci dredge currently at work in Botany Bay)

PRINCE HENRY

“I note that the absence of a supermarket and a medical centre was not an issue embraced by the council.”

In his judgement handed down on 11/2/09, Commissioner Roseth:



“I note that the absence of a supermarket and a medical centre was not an issue embraced by the council. While I understand the residents’ disappointment that these facilities were promised to them and will now not be realised, the

Court can do nothing about it.” (Photo: Bob a Day in Bob a Day Park with Aboriginal Health College in background.)

WHAT WAS STATED IN THE PRINCE HENRY MASTERPLAN

“The multi-purpose community centre will provide a range of activities and uses for various age groups. The centre will contain three tennis courts; a hall(400 people); café and kitchen; meeting rooms small library; and a gymnasium....The neighbourhood centre will contain a medical centre (500sqm); retail shops; and commercial premises.”

COMING EVENTS

April 2009

12th April – Free Walk La Perouse Monuments – bookings 0409698321 – this is part of 4th – 19th **National Trust Heritage Festival** "Our Place in space: under the Southern Cross" National Trust of Australia (NSW) (02) 9258 0123

www.nsw.nationaltrust.org.au

22nd – Earth Day

"The Green Generation"

www.earthday.net/

May :

3rd – 9th

International Composting Awareness Week
"Compost to Combat Climate Change"

www.compostweek.com.au/

11th – 17th

National Volunteer Week

"Volunteers: Everyday people, extraordinary contribution"

www.volunteeringaustralia.org

22nd

International Biodiversity Day

"Invasive Alien Species"

www.cbd.int/ibd/2009/

23rd

World Turtle Day

http://www.hsus.org/wildlife/a_closer_look_at_wildlife/turtles_and_tortoises/celebrate_world_turtle_day.html

June

5th

World Environment Day

United Nations Environment Program

www.unep.org/wed/2008/english/

8th

World Ocean Day

"Helping our climate/helping our ocean"

www.theoceanproject.org/wod/

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

19:56 Port Botany 28/3/09



20:44 Earth Hour Port Botany



Lynda Newnam, April 2009

www.laperouse.info

Social Change **NOT** Climate Change