

ENVIRONMENTALLY SPEAKING 20

Winter 2009 North Botany Bay Environment News – The 5-year retrospective



It is 5 years since the first issue of this environment supplement for the Kooloora Newsletter was published. The subsequent years have been marked by environmental and amenity losses around North Botany Bay. Processes have been interesting to say the least! The biggest of these losses has resulted from the **Port Botany Expansion**. In 2005 a Commission of Inquiry recommended against a discrete third terminal expansion. The Commission was subsequently overruled and disbanded and in 2008 construction commenced on the 63ha, State government-funded \$1billion project. The photograph, above, was taken in 2007. Around 80% of the shoreline in this area will no longer be available for general public access.

By 2004 the story on Orica's chemical spill into the Botany Aquifer had broken nationwide and the EPA had issued a Clean Up Notice.

The Commission of Inquiry recommendation to allow the destruction of Hexachlorobenzene (HCB) waste stored at Botany was also under review. At that time the public was not aware that Orica proposed to develop 18ha of open space in Banksmeadow (Southland) or that the liner containing waste buried under the Orica carpark, opposite Hensley playing fields, had deteriorated. Since 2004 the Groundwater Treatment Plant has been constructed and within a year another plant will be built to deal with the toxic carpark waste. The HCB has remained at Botany pending approval to export it to Denmark for treatment. Residents in Botany and Banksmeadow have lost access to borewater and were recently told that the groundwater treatment plant could be operating for hundreds of years. Orica are about to submit their Development Application (DA) for Southlands—currently 18ha of open space. This development which will add more traffic, congestion and air pollution into the local area. The State Government is the consent authority and it can, if it chooses, insist that Orica provides open space as an Environmental Offset. Orica are the world's leading manufacturer of explosives and they manufacture chemicals in Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Papua New Guinea. They own gardening supplier, Yates, and companies that produce paints and associated products: Berger, British Paints, Cabots, Dulux, Feast Watson, Intergrain and Enviropro. At Kooragang Island they manufacture ammonium nitrate for use in the

mining industry, and ammonia and nitric acid for use in industrial and agricultural applications. Orica Watercare is Australia's largest manufacturer and marketer of Chlor-Alkali products including Chlorine, Caustic Soda, Sodium Hypochlorite and Hydrochloric Acid. Landguard, a product which breaks down organophosphates, is another of their brands.



Greenex Aqua is a natural water clarifier that works by using the digestive power of beneficial bacteria. Miex Water Treatment is used for the removal of contaminants from water/wastewater. Orica even own a company that supplies ingredients that “assist with the stimulation and motivation of our senses” – Bronson and Jacobs. Surely there is sufficient capacity in this multi-national corporation ‘to do the right thing’ by the people and environment of Botany and Banksmeadow.

In 1965 the first Kidney transplant operation in NSW was performed at Prince Henry Hospital. In 2003 work commenced on the demolition of the nurses quarters.



On May 27th 2003 Randwick Council adopted an amended masterplan for the Prince Henry site. According to the Southern Courier (3/6/03) 'key changes in the amended plan include fewer dwellings, increased road widths, more parking, a reduction in remnant bushland, a reduction in the size of the proposed community centre and the conversion of two additional Flowers Wards to residential buildings....A total of 2692 square metres will be commercial/retail floor space for future retail, professional and consulting rooms and other commercial uses....Deputy mayor Michael Daley moved that the masterplan be adopted, with an amendment that a minimum of 2500 square metres be provided for the community centre. The council adopted the masterplan with Cr Daley's amendment."

Five years on and we have witnessed the handover of the 1500 sq.metre, not 2500 sq metre, Community Centre. But as yet there is no certainty that the promised medical and commercial facilities will be built.



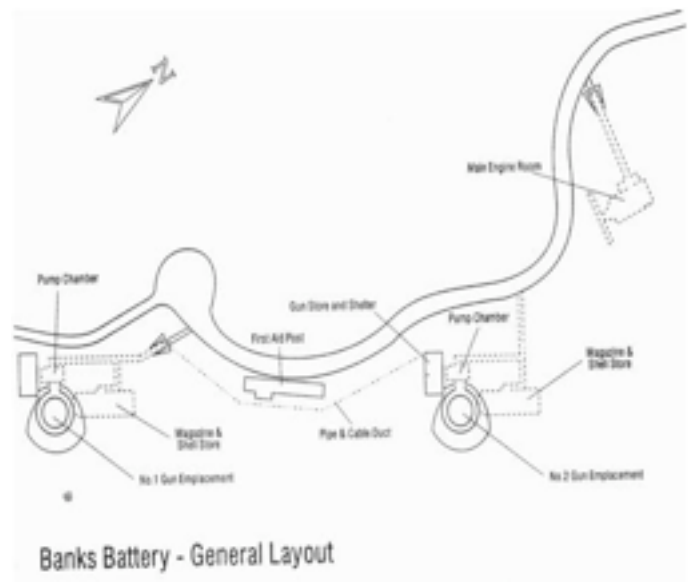
The Westpac Helicopter Service that serviced Prince Henry Hospital did not move with the other medical facilities. Instead, an \$8million home was built for it in Botany Bay National Park. In 2004 National Park was excised and the Scout Camp was taken over for the helibase. Five years later, after South Ward has been stripped of hospital services and threatened with the closure of the local Fire Station

and Police Station, and the State's hospital and ambulance services are in crisis for lack of funding, we have an emergency helicopter service at Cape Banks. Helicopters are big fuel guzzlers and each mission costs around \$2000. The NSW Department of Lands issued a 20 year lease over the Cape Banks property to Surf Life Saving(SLS) only days before the contracts with NSW Ambulance closed. SLS was unsuccessful in gaining a contract. The only local rescue(of a survivor) that has been made since the Helicopter Service was established at Cape Banks was made on 14 April 2007 by the NRMA Careflight. Careflight is based at Westmead Hospital.

The Department of Health received \$40million for Prince Henry while over \$8million was given for the establishment of the new Westpac Base and costs associated with temporary accommodation at St. Peters and Sydney Airport.

The reduction in remnant bushland at Prince Henry required a referral to the Commonwealth Government's Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act. To get backing from the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service **Landcom agreed to pay \$100,000 to enhance Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub** values in Botany Bay National Park at La Perouse. Five years on and we still have no evidence of how the money has been spent. A community group given a grant would be required to provide documentation with before and after photographs and expenditure details. This case is of greater sensitivity given it was an Offset for a Rare and Threatened Community which was never ever supposed to be destroyed.

Five years on and the National Parks managed Cape Banks Military site continues to deteriorate.



Tunnel entries have been deliberately filled in with sand; bitou and other weeds grow in profusion; there is no interpretation of the area even though it ranks in historical value to the Harbour Trust controlled North Head. Although the area boasts a number of attractions such as the Military sites, Cape Banks, the Minmi Wreck, the Coast Cemetery, and vantage points for Whalewatching, the only facilities – toilets – remained locked up.



(Top–Bottom: Wreck of Minmi; Gravestones from Coast Cemetery dumped at Military site; Graves; Black snake at Coast Cemetery)



(the gravestone of 5 year old Ida May Horn “Whiter than snow”)

Five years ago and we hadn’t heard about the Energy Australia Cable nor the Desalination Plant. These were pipeline projects. The logical site for the Desal, in terms of cost and overall environmental impact, was Malabar Headland. Malabar is far closer to Erskiville pumping station and the savings could have been used in remediating part of the Malabar Headland. Instead Kurnell got the Desalination Plant and Botany Bay got the enormous pipeline and the whales and other marine life off the Cape Solander whalewatching station will continue to get the brine.



(Fencing off at La Perouse Winter 2009–Winter 2010 for Botany Bay Cable construction)

The Amendment to the original Botany Bay Project which included dredging (previously only trenching) was approved by NSW Department of Planning on 26/6/09 – see details at <http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/files/36866/Consolidated%20Approval.doc.pdf>

Other projects over the past 5 years have included the expansion of Vopak operations on the DP terminal. Ironical that a third terminal was ‘needed’ at Port Botany yet there was ample space for a second Bulk Liquids Berth and manufacturing of Biodiesel. The latter sounds

green but in fact the industry has been built on clearing rainforest (habitat of Orangs and other threatened species) for palm oil plantations. Orang habitat is also threatened by our voracious appetite for paper products hence for consideration:



OR



UNSW – Decommissioning of Little Bay Biological Sciences site 30/6/09

Apart from losing a prestigious hospital that offered both health care and a range of employment to residents in South Ward, the University of NSW has also sold out. First, the University was paid out for the remainder of the lease on the Institute of Management. The site was developed into prestige housing lots at Prince Henry. Then the University's Ecoliving Centre in Randwick was closed. The Centre was to expand at the UNSW site at Little Bay but plans came to an abrupt halt in 2004. Then Solarch at the Little Bay site burnt down. Very convenient as the University had already decided to remove it from site – a contentious decision given the historical significance of this building, the first to generate green power in NSW. The final act occurred last year when the University sold the Little Bay site for a 450–600 dwelling development. This site had been given to the University on the understanding that it built a Medical School. On the UNSW website on the same page as a smiling Vice Chancellor, Fred Hilmer:

“UNSW has identified environmental sustainability as one of its strategic priorities. In 2007 it established the [UNSW Climate Change Research Centre](#) – bringing together more than 60 researchers from various disciplines across the University, it will be the largest centre of its kind. The University is also walking the talk with initiatives aimed at making the UNSW campus the greenest in Australia.”

Recommended Website for Walks around Sydney: www.wildwalks.com



The Little Bay Solar Energy Research Facility tracker system used to compare module performance over time. The main building at Little Bay can be seen in the background. The building is a showcase of innovative Australian technologies and sustainability in domestic and commercial building design. It was built over a two year period by staff and students.

COMING EVENTS

August

- 2: **National Tree Day** – www.planetark.com/trees
- 15–23: **National Science Week** www.scienceweek.gov.au/

September

- 7: **National Threatened Species Day**
- 7–13: **National Landcare Week** www.landcareonline.com.au
- 18: **World Water Monitoring Day** www.worldwatermonitoringday.org
- 19: **International Coastal Cleanup Day** www.coastalcleanup.org
- 20: **National Neighborhood Day**
- 19–21: **Clean up the World Weekend** www.cleanuptheworld.org
- 28: **Bio Blitz** www.bioblitz.org.au

October

- 5: **World Habitat Day** www.unhabitat.org/
- 18–25: **National Water Week** <http://www.nationalwaterweek.org.au/>
- 16: **World Food Day** www.fao.org

Lynda Newnam: 5 July, 2009 – www.laperouse.info

Social Change NOT Climate Change