

ENVIRONMENTALLY SPEAKING 1

Twenty Thirty Six Sydney's Cinderella

Chifley, Hillsdale, La Perouse, Little Bay, Malabar, Matraville, Phillip Bay, Port Botany - Peninsular People

"For all those readers like John Howarth (Letters, November 28) who lament the decline of commercial activity on our harbour, I'll let you in on a little secret. There's a place in Sydney where there is shipping and commercial activity in abundance. It's called Botany Bay and not only is it a ship spotter's dream but it also has an international airport. So how about it, John? Why don't you move to Port Botany and leave the harbour for those of us who would like it as a place for people." And so wrote Llewellyn Mead, Mosman, to the Sydney Morning Herald, on November 28, 2003. Sydney Harbour for people who enjoy container loads of imported goods; Sydney Harbour for the people who enjoy air travel; Sydney Harbour for the people and Botany Bay for the 'non-people'. But Llewellyn is not alone in this assessment. Tucked away in Appendix U of the 17kg Environmental Impact Statement for the Port Botany Expansion is the telling line: "The social profile indicates that the proposed expansion would not impact significantly on people in the Randwick and Botany LGAs due to their socio-demographic status."

People of our social profile, the non-people of Botany Bay, apparently don't have the same needs as Harbour people. Where are the ferries, the public spaces like theatres, even a fish market. Stingrays Harbour was Cook's first name for Botany Bay and the Bay was a veritable food basket, boasting more marine biodiversity than Jervis Bay. The harsh irony now is that most of our fish comes in cans carried in container ships while more than 50% of the Bay's seagrasses have been destroyed by dredging and exotic species and the famous Georges River Oyster Industry is gone.

We do have more of something that Llewellyn and other Mosman dwellers do not. Postcode 2036 leads the way in substances emitted into air and water. We are in front on Ammonia, Acetone, Benzene, Arsenic, Chlorine, Chromium, Mercury - in fact we have 54 monitored substances compared to 26 at Mosman, Vaucluse and Maroubra (details at www.npi.gov.au). Orica plan to destroy the world's largest stockpile of HCB waste at their Botany plant. If approved this will continue 24hours a day, 7 days a week for 5 years and could add Dioxin to the list of emissions (details at www.oztoxics.org). Orica also need to dispose of EDC waste which has contaminated the Botany Aquifer and is expected to enter Botany Bay within 3 years.

While harbour people are witnessing the return of Ballast Point, the recovery of Little Penguins, the re-development of the fish markets, iconic development at Millers Point and general 'revitalisation', Botany Bay will lose the equivalent of 2 Botanic Gardens to the Port Expansion, see a doubling of semi-trailers on the access roads and experience greater noise and air pollution and congestion impacts from an expanded airport.

But the Bay has two sides. The seat of Cronulla, which includes the southern shores was once held by Michael Egan but since 1984 has been Liberal. It is in fact the only Liberal held seat in Southern Sydney and it appears that Labour seeks its return. When offsets/tradeoffs for the Port Botany expansion are mentioned, it is Kurnell and the Georges River that figure, not those most affected in the north and northwest of the Bay. When rare and threatened Little Terns nested at Molineaux Point, Port Botany, in 2002, they were driven away with the help of National Parks. It was claimed that they belonged on the South in Towra Point Reserve under the care of a Little Tern Warden. Not long after Molineaux was re-developed.

Botany Bay National Park is administered in two halves. On the South at Kurnell the Parks Service will spend \$5 million in renovations.

Those who remember the road to Botany in years gone by are not surprised at the name given by the first discoverer (James Cook)... We know most of the wild flower regions of the colony, but none to compare in variety and richness with Botany, as it was. From An Illustrated Guide to Sydney 1882, appearing in Taken for Granted, by Benson & Howell.

There are more than 400,000 visitors annually to the northern park section at La Perouse, but the Parks Service provides no basic facilities - no toilets, no dressing sheds for visitors to Congwong Bay beaches. This section is managed from Vaucluse. There in Neilsen Park the toilet and dressing shed facilities were recently renovated and the European gardens at Greycliffe House were restored with finance provided by the Westfield Foundation. At a time when lavenders were blooming at Greycliffe House, the Parks service was signing off on the destruction of part of the last 1% of rare and threatened Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub. This was located in the grounds of Prince Henry hospital and presented an impediment to the billion dollar development. NSW Health received \$40 million for Prince Henry, National Parks received \$100,000 for 'allowing' the destruction of the Banksia Scrub.

The former Prince Henry - based Helicopter service, which operates with staff from St George Hospital, is to be relocated to Cape Banks. National Park was revoked in May, district scouts have been displaced, WWII military sites have been compromised, the aeronautical constraints listed in the Botany Bay National Park Plan of Management have been ignored and the rugged peace of the Cape for walkers, bird-watchers and whale-watchers will make way for the chopper take off, landings, and training exercises on the National Heritage listed Cape itself. Joseph Banks, Father of a Nation, how well-honoured now?

Are the politicians and bureaucrats of the upper

levels of Macquarie Tower suffering the ultimate in cultural cringe? So blind to the basic needs of ordinary citizens, so ignorant of their heritage, so unimaginative. British author Geoffrey Moorhouse sees a very different Botany Bay from Llewellyn, Sydney Ports Corporation, Sydney Airport Corporation and the power elite in Macquarie Tower. He wrote in 1999: **"Botany Bay, handled with imagination, might have been an unspoilt sanctuary, a healing place where two races could have been clearly and gratefully and generously reconciled. As things are, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the people who thought up the port extension, and those who want both it and the airport to be even bigger than they already are, have spat upon their own past, and upon all Australian ancestry."** (in "Sydney, The Story of a City")

Lynda Newnam, September, 2004

Myself in the afternoon ashore on the NW side of the bay, where we went a good way into the country....our 2nd lieutenant...observd that the large sting rays of which there are abundance in the bay followd the flowing tide into very shallow water; he therefore took the opportunity of flood and struck several in not more than 2 or 3 feet water; one that was larger than the rest weigh'd when his gutts were taken out 239 pounds. 4/5/1770, Joseph Banks