

ENVIRONMENTALLY SPEAKING 3

SYDNEY ON EMPTY

"I was an Australian manufacturer/wholesaler and never wanted to bring in any OS products. Over the last few years my product/concept has been copied & brought in from China at prices I cannot compete with. Last year we employed 16 people, this year we only employ 4 as a direct result from imports. I now have no choice but to have my product made in China and I have my first container coming in a few months." (Mark Goodall, Sydney Morning Herald, online, 2/3/05)

Autumn in Sydney has brought with it news that we are as a nation spending well beyond our means - \$107 for every \$100 earned. Along with this, we are told that one of the most serious health problems facing our children is obesity. Our children need healthy food. Our children need to have access to healthy activities. Yet in Sydney our State Government's response to the unsustainable growth in imports is to sacrifice the very recreational spaces that our children need. They are doing this to 'accommodate' even further growth in imports.



Victim of developers, Max Reid, 10, of Matraville, a keen angler since the age of three, fishes from the Penrhyn Street jetty. Photo: Robert Pearce, Sydney Morning Herald, 23/9/2002

Sydney Ports Corporation plans to reclaim 57 ha of Botany Bay. Only the brave hearted in motorized craft will venture into the narrow channel, which will separate the third runway from the ships at the proposed new berths. Forget the windsurfers, the kite surfers, the canoeists and rowers and forget the children who learned to fish from the only jetty on the north side of Botany Bay. Penrhyn Jetty will be destroyed and a fishing exclusion zone will operate between the third runway and Foreshores Beach, the very area which informed this diary entry: Sir Joseph Banks, 4th May, 1770:

"While we were employd in this walk the people hawld the Seine upon a sandy beach and caught a great plenty of small fish. On our return to the ship we found also that our 2nd lieutenant who had gone out striking had met with great success: he had obsrvd 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."

Two hundred and thirty-three years later and we hear the words of our local member, PREMIER BOB CARR, at the NSW ALP STATE CONFERENCE, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2003.

"Yes, we will expand Port Botany, but strictly in line with the environmental constraints laid down by a Commission of Inquiry."

According to Mr Tim Blood, the Managing Director, P&O Ports, ANZ, Port Botany is expanding notwithstanding the proposed reclamation of Botany Bay: "As we demonstrated in our October presentation we believe the existing facilities at Port Botany have a potential capacity of over 3 million TEU, two and half times current demand. By the same measure, SPC's proposed expansion would have a capacity of over 6 million TEU," Commission of Inquiry, Tuesday 15 February 2005.

Patrick Corporation has already started work on it's own Port Botany Terminal Expansion which was approved in late 2003. This expansion, in property terms increased the lease holding from 44 to 46.5 ha but increased capacity from 600,000 to 1.3 million TEU.

5 % increase in land will deliver over 100% increase in capacity!

And at the Commission of Inquiry, Thursday 17 February, 2005, Mr Corrigan, CEO, stated that he intended to bring the automated straddle technology to Port Botany "to improve on the 1.3 million." Mr Corrigan also stated that he might be prepared to invest in the reclamation:

"if the State would sell it to a private operator yes I would put up my hand."

Because "to a terminal operator, additional space in which to operate is like fresh air or clean water. You can never have enough of it."

Following Mr Corrigan at the Commission came the representative of the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources. He stated: "The Department supports the need for an increase in throughput capacity to 3.2 million TEUs per annum. The Department notes that beyond 2025 throughput capacity at Port Botany may further increase to meet Sydney and NSW's expected growth. Such further increase should, however, be the subject of further assessment, particularly with regard to broader infrastructure implications." He then went on to endorse Option 8, which would reclaim and then add 47ha to the Patrick terminal as well as the Alcatel site and adjacent 10.3 ha to the P&O terminal. Option 8 would be, he said, recommended on a "staged development basis".

Anzac Day 2004, and the MSC Fabienne, almost 3 football fields in length and 54 metres high from its keel to the top of its mast, sailed past Cook's landing place loaded with more than 5000 empty containers. It sailed into Sydney Harbour, there to be "admired by holiday crowds and visited by members of the Australian shipping industry." (Southern Courier, 27/4/2004) Mr Clarke, the Australian Managing Director of MSC, Fabienne's owner, commented "this will help reduce the mountains of empties which have built up at Port Botany over the past 18 months".



Empty containers at ONE THOUSAND A DAY are Sydney's biggest export. This has become the Australia our Anzacs fought for!

"Well, I now go to Woolworths and find 'Ice creams' Made in China!!" (Krishna Mahida, Sydney Morning Herald, online, 2/3/05)

"In 1964 the Lib/Country government decided there was no future in computing. From that point we have imported all our computing needs. Government remains the biggest single buyer of computing. Computing in Aus now totals some \$15B per annum. Governments are the biggest contributors to the debt as they continue to "downfund" innovation. Will they never learn? If you dont invent it someone else will and you will have to buy it from them." (Roy Ramage, Sydney Morning Herald online, 2/3/05)

"Sydney is already one of the biggest cities you'd find in the developed world – bigger than any of the cities of Germany, except Berlin – and Sydney suburbs are being transformed before our eyes into high or medium density suburbs....we can sustain jobs and economic security by using our brains, by being a smart economy, by adding value to the products we produce here....that's a smart Australia. Giving security to its people by thinking intelligently. It's not a lazy Australia, that depends on job growth simply by driving up population numbers and depending on the growth you get by building houses and shopping malls." (Bob Carr, August 1997)

So why is Mr Carr suggesting the lazy option now. Ports we know are population drivers. At present the growth rate in Sydney (0.8%) is cause for celebration. It is well below Melbourne (1.2%) and a third that of Brisbane (2.3%).It is Brisbane that increases by more than 50,000 a year while Sydney adds around 35,000. The Hastings, the Central Coast, the South Coast, the Tweed, Port Stevens, Riverina are all experiencing higher growth than Sydney. It is time to consolidate this position and drive the growth lower.

Sydney is water-strapped, congested, with ageing infrastructure and a declining livability index. Finance and tourism are major industries to be supported. Complementary freight strategies recognize the growth and significance of airfreight. Kingsford-Smith accounts for over 50% of Australia's total \$ value in airfreight. Newcastle and Brisbane are the preferred ports for exporters and importers in the faster growing north. Bringing the Newcastle site on stream within the next 5 years would create opportunities in areas where on-costs are cheaper for business and living costs cheaper for labour, and where unemployment rates are higher than Sydney. Complementary interstate freight strategies would recognize the strengths of the different State capitals and would value the uniqueness of each. Melbourne is the leading container freight center. Brisbane is positioned, because of extremely strong population growth in Brisbane itself, southeast Queensland and northern NSW to demonstrate rapid expansion in the short term. With lower on-costs – fuel is 10% cheaper and taxes are lower – it is highly attractive to business, particularly exporters. Port Botany is a small concern compared with Port Brisbane. Even including reclamation it is around one quarter the size. It should not try to compete.

Australia's largest city does not need to be Australia's largest port. Los Angeles, for example has less than half the population of New York, yet it is America's largest container port and moves over 60% more containers.

On the Sydney Ports map showing the distribution of container truck movements to and from Port Botany the largest number,23.2%, are destined for suburbs surrounding the Port. This is prime real estate far too expensive in the longer term to accommodate containers, particularly empty ones. The second destination – at 16.8% - is around Clyde. Ironically it is to Clyde, in the heart of Sydney, that the garbage trucks will converge to off-load the remains of the once containerised novelties. Onto trains they go to be railed to their ultimate destination, the Woodlawn coalmine in Goulburn. This is the cycle of what is termed prosperity for our state.

In a little over 10 years the Australia that the original Anzacs returned to entered the Great Depression. South Ward was famous for the Happy Valley, Frog Hollow and Hill 60 Depression Camps. People made do with little and like the original inhabitants of the area they left a lighter footprint. In their proposal to reclaim 57 ha of Botany Bay, Sydney Ports Corporation project a growth of 300% in containers over the coming 20 years, for a predicted population growth of 25% in the same period. That's an extra 2 million containers per annum for the additional 1 million people. What Bigfoots are coming to town?

Nobody would wish a return to Depression times but the 'Consumptive' times we live in are not sustainable either. We are consuming at unsustainable levels – unsustainable in terms of the imbalance in trade, unsustainable in terms of the natural resources consumed, unsustainable in terms of the pollution, congestion and consequent health impacts. In his State of the Union address on January 6, 1942, one month after Pearl Harbour, President Roosevelt announced ambitious arms production goals. The US, he said, was planning to produce 60,000 planes, 45,000 tanks, 20,000 anti-aircraft guns, and 6 million tons of merchant shipping. He added, "Let no man say it cannot be done." In her book "No Ordinary Time", Doris Kearns Goodwin describes how various firms converted. The automobile industry went from producing nearly 4 million cars in 1941 to producing 24,000 tanks and 17,000 armored cars in 1942 – but only 223,000 cars. A rationing program was also introduced.

Today our prosperity is measured by the size of our houses and the novelties they contain. Yet our biodiversity is decreasing at an alarming rate, our waters and air are polluted. And our children are increasingly denied the simpler pleasures that sustain a healthier life. This is No Ordinary Time but perhaps a time to suggest that our prosperity should be measured in terms of how lightly we tread – like those inhabitants of Happy Valley in the 1930s and like the original peoples. Their descendents today – 35% of the population of La Perouse - look out on a landscape of ever increasing cranes, warehouses, bulk liquids containers, in place of their ancestors' fishing grounds once teeming with giant stingrays, fish and crabs. Waters once crystal and clean now polluted.

On January 18, 2005, I attended the launch of "In Search of Sustainability." Mr Carr was to launch the book but he was otherwise occupied with the announcement of Mr Egan's resignation. Dr Refshauge came in his place. In his speech, Dr Refshauge referred to the critical sustainability messages contained in the documentary "The Corporation". Three days later Dr Refshauge became the Treasurer and number 1 shareholder of the Sydney Ports Corporation. One can only hope that a paradigm shift is on the way. That a truly 'whole of government Agenda 21 prevails. Let no-one say it cannot be done.

Lynda Newnam, March 2005