

# SUSTAINABILITY SPEAKING

## MADE IN AUSTRALIA

No 3 Autumn 2011



**The stockpile of Orica's Hexachlorobenze (HCB) waste is packaged up and ready to go but the question is where and when.**

In 2002 a NSW Commission of Inquiry recommended to the then Planning Minister Andrew Refshauge that the HCB stockpile be destroyed on the Orica site in Banksmeadow using the Geomelt process. This recommendation was supported by the NSW Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Planning. Residents and environment groups opposed to this argued that Geomelt had not previously been used to destroy a HCB stockpile and it was too high a risk to experiment so close to a residential population, particularly given the numerous environmental challenges already in play. These included the aquifer contamination, the carpark waste and the expansion of Port Botany. Andrew Refshauge failed to make a decision. When Craig Knowles took over as Planning Minister in 2003 he appointed an Independent Panel, consisting of Dr Garry Smith, Mr John Court and Mr Tony Wright (the current Deputy Chair of the EPA Board) to review the Commission of Inquiry recommendation. The panel made its recommendations in July 2004 and the key findings were as follows:

- "The Panel feels that a persuasive case for export could not be mounted and sustained in the light of **local potential availability of suitable technology options.**"
- "Weighing all the factors, and especially cognisant of the land-use conflict, the feedstock scale and concentration, and potential technology operating issues, the Panel Recommends that the **project should be undertaken in a more remote NSW location.** In view of the State significance of the project, it is further Recommended that relevant State agencies be directed to assist Orica to locate expeditiously a site that offers suitably compatible land-use characteristics." (page x)..... "...the State significance of the project warrants active leadership and assistance by relevant State government agencies in locating and securing a suitable site."
- "Risk and hazard analyses indicate that **continued storage poses a greater risk than on-site treatment of the HCB waste.**" (page vii)

Orica staff then toured NSW in search of a suitable site but although the Panel had recommended leadership from the State government there was no evidence that this occurred. Communities were not offered offsets or long-term incentives, so it was hardly surprising that a site in NSW could not be found. There was no attempt to find a site elsewhere in Australia. The Panel reconvened and in its second report recommended export as the only option. Germany was the first choice and after failure there, the chosen destination was Denmark.

In the NSW Parliament, 16 September 2004, the then local member Kristina Keneally declared: *"The waste has to be disposed of in an area that is not environmentally sensitive and that is not populated."* Given such criteria why did anyone believe that the ancient Danish city of Nyborg - 16,054 km from Sydney - would be suitable. Citizens in Nyborg and elsewhere in Denmark didn't think so and after pressure was brought to bear their Environment Minister Karen Ellemann withdrew her support for the importation. But even in her media release of June 2010 when she supported the import of a portion of the HCB stockpile, Minister Ellemann hinted that Australia should be doing better - *This case shows that we must look again at global preparedness for dealing with depots of hazardous waste. I intend raising this matter with my colleagues at the EU. We need to focus on how we can solve the problem of destroying depots of environmentally-dangerous waste in a manner that is least harmful to the environment, without having to freight it around the globe.*



Professor Ian Rae advises governments on HCBs and other Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). In an ABC Radio science program last June he said he was "disappointed" about the export. *"I think it would have been good for us to have developed the*

*technology on the scale that was needed and to have done it here,"* says Rae. He said the reasons for Australia's lack of capacity to destroy POPs are "mainly political not technical". with a lack of trust in those attempting to build waste management facilities a major barrier to finding a solution. Australia generates about 106,000 tonnes per year of e-waste in the form of old televisions and computers. This is expected to increase to 181,000 tonnes per year by 2027-28. Professor Rae, has been Australia's expert representative at Stockholm Convention discussions. He says the "clock is ticking" for the government to develop a plan to deal with the new generation of POPs. *"I'd like to know what the timescale is and what sort of technical solution they've got."* (Cartoon by Jon Kudelka – see [www.kudelka.com.au](http://www.kudelka.com.au))

## LESSONS FROM THE FLOODS

From Richard Collins' editorial in WME (Water Materials Energy): *"The lessons for planning and disaster recovery will take sometime to evolve. Beyond the obvious issues there are deeper systemic questions to be considered. Supermarkets ran out of food in two or three days, the power was down for a few days ..... There's no 'collective memory' for producing the essentials from within communities and often few options within walking distance. Our efficiency-optimised, highly-centralised, just-in-time economy means there is no redundancy of services or supply, no resilience to shock. These questions run deep. I hope we address them."*

## BIOLOGICAL CONTROL OF BITOU IN BOTANY BAY NATIONAL PARK



La Perouse has the most important populations of the four biological agents used to control Bitou Bush. Paul Sullivan and Lesley Postle from the Department Primary Industries will present an overview of biological control of Bitou Bush, covering identification, collection and redistribution of the agents.

**Free Workshop 10.00am to 3.00pm 11 May 2011**  
**Venue - Cape Banks, Helicopter Base, La Perouse**

Bookings: Lesley Postle  
[lesley.postle@industry.nsw.gov.au](mailto:lesley.postle@industry.nsw.gov.au)

## THE GREEN THING



Pictured: Bernard Hughes Electric Bread delivery van, 1948, in the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Northern Ireland. There were also electric milk vans.

Each night the batteries were recharged at the depot for the next day's round. The maximum speed was 30 mph (48 km/h). They could travel up to 40 miles (64 km) before the batteries needed recharging.

Modern day equivalents could be powered by renewable energy sources.

## *The Green Thing continued (from the 'Green'blogs)*

In the line at the store, the cashier told the older woman that plastic bags weren't good for the environment. The woman apologized to her and explained, "We didn't have the green thing back in my day."

That's right, they didn't have the green thing in her day. Back then, they returned their milk bottles, Coke bottles and beer bottles to the store. The store sent them back to the plant to be washed and sterilized and refilled, using the same bottles over and over. So they really were recycled.

In her day, they walked up stairs, because they didn't have an escalator in every store and office building. They walked to the grocery store and didn't climb into a 300-horsepower machine every time they had to go two blocks.

Back then, they washed the baby's nappies because they didn't have the throw-away kind. They dried clothes on a line, not in an energy gobbling machine burning up 220 volts - wind and solar power really did dry the clothes. Kids got hand-me-down clothes from their brothers or sisters, not always brand-new clothing.

Back then, they had one TV, or radio, in the house - not a TV in every room. And the TV had a small screen the size of a pizza dish, not a screen the size of the state of Queensland. In the kitchen, they blended and stirred by hand because they didn't have electric machines to do everything for you.

Back then, they didn't fire up an engine and burn petrol just to cut the lawn. They used a push mower that ran on human power. They exercised by working so they didn't need to go to a health club to run on treadmills that operate on electricity.

They drank from a bubbler when they were thirsty, instead of using a cup or a plastic bottle every time they had a drink of water. They refilled pens with ink, instead of buying a new pen, and they replaced the razor blades in a razor instead of throwing away the whole razor just because the blade got dull. When they packaged a fragile item to send in the mail, they used wadded up newspaper to cushion it, not Styrofoam or plastic bubble wrap.

They had one electrical outlet in a room, not an entire bank of sockets to power a dozen appliances. And they didn't need a computerized gadget to receive a signal beamed from satellites 2,000 miles out in space in order to find the nearest pizza joint.

**But that old lady is right. They didn't have the green thing back in her day.**



## **BOTANY BAY NATIONAL PARK**

**weeds  
ferals &  
fire hazards**

Fox midday on the roadside

## **FREIGHT CHALLENGES**

The Federal Government's, Infrastructure Australia, issued a National Freight Strategy Discussion Paper in February. It was interesting to read that data on freight is inadequate for planning purposes : *Accurate and reliable freight data is critical to ascertain freight infrastructure needs and to inform policy development. Currently, freight data is inadequate, or is descriptive rather than analytic. Consequently, the ability to produce forecasts and scenarios is limited. There also are differences in the freight forecasts presented to Infrastructure Australia* (page 22); and there is lack of clarity on planning for climate change: *Freight and freight generating activities, such as manufacturing and warehousing, may also be affected by climate change. It is unclear to what extent freight planning documents consider scenarios of climate change impacts on physical infrastructure or on demand patterns* (page 27). Negative freight externalities were raised as a significant issue but the National Transport Commission uses a very 'conservative' approach when relating the impacts of container and other heavy vehicles. They are equated to only double or treble an ordinary sedan.

**Urban encroachment is listed as one of the most substantial constraints to freight.** The authors argue that it leads to community sentiment against freight activities.

The major issue and one which wasn't raised concerns the centralization of freight activities. Do we as a nation pursue a distributed system or 'put all the eggs in one basket'. While some argue that bigger is always better, others suggest that when diseconomies of scale and negative externalities are accounted for decentralization becomes more attractive. They also argue that the big basket approach is high risk and to avoid catastrophic loss of infrastructure assets due to climate events, terrorism or human error there needs to be a degree of redundancy in the system.

Of immediate concern in our area of Sydney is the Port and Airport complex. With the third terminal(T3) at Port Botany nearing completion it is time to ask whether the approved cap of 3.2 million containers(TEU) will be maintained and whether Newcastle, as promised under the 2003 Ports Growth Plan, will become the next major container port. If Port Botany is allowed to expand to its real capacity then we are likely to see container numbers well above 7 million TEU. This has consequences for other areas of Sydney such as Enfield and Moorebank.

Laurie Brereton in his 2005 *Railing Port Botany Containers* report recommended 500,000 containers(TEU) for an intermodal at Moorebank but that figure was doubled last year by the current Federal Infrastructure Minister Anthony Albanese. If the ports of Kembla and Newcastle are expanded for container trade and the inland

rail constructed, there would be a greater distribution of intermodals to the Southern Highlands, Hunter, Parkes and other centres. But if the 'big basket' view prevails then the mega port at Banksmeadow will be complemented by mega intermodal terminals at Enfield and particularly Moorebank.



Residents at Enfield and Strathfield Council fought this for over 12 years and in the last couple of years opposition has been mounting around Moorebank. Here are some of reasons given against the Moorebank development.

- there is no seamless entry available to the motorway network and the existing ramps are not capable and there is no room to expand them; entering trucks now have to immediately cross two lanes of 100kms traffic to forge westwards. The Moorebank site is too close to the river, the expensive existing triple lane bridges and the Hume Highway is within a few hundred metres - too much already in a confined space. It will cost bucketloads to engineer a solution.
- the sites are ex defence and will require extensive remediation with an undetermined expense and timeframe required to execute.
- access via the Southern Sydney Freight Line (SSFL) is very difficult. There is a rubbish tip full of methane gas and a river to cross and develop alongside without destroying as it is the feedwater zone. The Georges River and the SSFL ramping up at that point to crosses the passenger lines whilst a mid air turn on elevated tracks would be apparently required straining locomotive resources to maximum levels. This is opposite established housing.
- Liverpool is just above sea level and the river is tidal right up to the CBD. The lands to the south rise up about 400m, trapping air pollution in the vicinity. The area has higher than average respiratory related diseases.
- the main Holsworthy military facilities and training area remains alongside. Pollution of a Commonwealth facility via emissions is a matter also for consideration as the Federal Government has 20,000ha of habitat containing dozens of species listed as national and state significant as well as indigenous heritage and important pristine areas.

## ***“Clean air is fundamental to our health and the health of the environment”***

On the 21<sup>st</sup> March 2011 the Environment Protection Authority(EPA)issued a media release concerning Huntsman at Banksmeadow:



*A chemicals company with a plant at Matraville has pleaded guilty to a breach of its environment protection licence which resulted in 685 kg of ethylene oxide being released into the air. This had a low potential to cause harm to residents of Matraville and the environment. The company – Huntsman Corporation Australia Pty Ltd – was prosecuted by the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) and was penalised \$28,000 and ordered to pay court costs of \$40,000....The \$28,000 penalty is payable to Randwick City Council for use in its stormwater harvesting project at Chifley sports reserve. .... Ms Corbyn said DECCW expects companies who are using chemicals with the potential to pollute the atmosphere to take every measure possible to prevent this happening. **“Clean air is fundamental to our health and the health of the environment.”** she said. “In this case, the factory is only a few hundred metres from houses and the community has a right to expect companies to operate in a way that is safe for their health and the environment.”*

### **COMING EVENTS**

May 9 – 15 **National Volunteer Week**  
"Volunteering: Now, more than ever"  
[www.volunteeringaustralia.org](http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org)

June 5 **World Environment Day**  
United Nations Environment Program  
[www.unep.org/wed/2009/english](http://www.unep.org/wed/2009/english)

June 8 **World Oceans Day**  
[www.theoceanproject.org/wod](http://www.theoceanproject.org/wod)

June 15 **Global Wind Day**  
[www.globalwindday.org](http://www.globalwindday.org)

Lynda Newnam, May 2011 [www.laperouse.info](http://www.laperouse.info)  
*Social Change NOT Climate Change*