



Council Matters by Cr Paula Flack

World Rally 2015 is on again in the Coffs Coast Region but this year with greater use of Nambucca's rural roads and night racing. Council discussed aspects of the event following questions put by Cr Flack regarding night racing, consultation, fauna impact assessment and NSC's contribution to the event. Council will allocate \$10,000 to build an access road to Taylors Arm Reserve and intends to ask World Rally Australia (WRA) and Taylors Arm Reserve Committee of Management for contribution to the cost. Council also donates significant staff time to the event. Cr Flack is seeking more information re fauna assessment which has apparently been undertaken by WRA. NSC continues to support this event despite negative environmental impacts (fossil fuel energy use, fauna strikes, noise and air pollution) and significant disruption to affected local landholders and no evidence of economic benefit to the shire.

Engineering company WMA Water is to prepare the shire's **Flood Risk Management Plan**. WMA Water advise they are identifying properties requiring survey and reviewing the RMS's Pacific Highway upgrade flood modelling for application to the flood risk study. Public consultation has now commenced. Council is awaiting the completion of the floodplain risk management matrix which will forecast climate change induced sea level rise of 900mm by 2100, before finalising its **Climate Change Adaptation Policy**.

Many reports, reviews, and projects have been deferred (some for years!) due to numerous organisational structure reviews and cost saving staff reductions over recent years. The **Pesticides Use Notification Policy and Noxious Weed Policy reviews** and the **draft Plan of Management for Community Land on Link Road** at northern entrance to Nambucca Heads have both been further deferred until September 2015.

An Office of Environment and Heritage Estuary Grant application for \$20,000 has been submitted for the preparation of a **Plan of Management for Dawkins Lake and Hughes Creek** which drains the 'lake' into the Nambucca River. In reality the 'lake' is a polluted storm water retention pond and pollution control is desperately needed to reduce impacts on the Nambucca River Estuary environment and odour problems for nearby residents.

Still no news regarding the proposal to reclassify **community land at Valla Beach**. This proposal (by the General Manger) started off in late 2014 without any community consultation and sought to reclassify and sell forested community land to raise revenue. Due to strong community objections, the proposal somehow morphed instead into reclassification of the Valla Beach Hall, Pre-School and car park. NSC awaits feedback from the Valla Beach Preschool Committee. Council is yet to hear from State Government regarding its application for a Gateway Assessment to reclassify **Kingsworth Lake Reserve** community land to 'operation land'. If successful, it is intended to sell this wonderful ecological hot spot for private development, despite strong community opposition.

Cr Flack successfully moved that Council receive a report regarding the possibility of funding a **part-time Natural Resources Officer**/Volunteer Supervisor from the next round of the Environmental Levy.

Local Government NSW has said that the Local Government review **Fit for the Future Program** timeline makes a mockery of fair process which will determine the future grassroots representation of local communities. The program assessment methodology was finally released on 5 June leaving just 15 working days for Councils to complete submissions that will be instrumental in determining their future existence by 30 June. There will be no time for Councils to consult their communities to ensure submissions reflect their wishes and meet methodology requirements, thus risking the likelihood of achieving reform which genuinely benefits residents and ratepayers. The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of NSW (IPART) is required to judge each submission against complex criteria and advise Government by 16 October whether or not individual Councils are 'Fit for the Future'. This leaves IPART on average, less than one day per Council to make assessments. Communities deserve a voice in their own future, and they deserve more than a single day consideration of its Council's submission.

The **Draft Cycleway Plan 2015** is on public exhibition for comment at on Council's website at http://www.nambucca.nsw.gov.au/cp_themes/default/page.asp?p=DOC-YKJ-28-50-82

- Opinions expressed are those of Cr Paula Flack and not necessarily those of Nambucca Shire Council

The Great Koala National Park and why we need it

By National Parks Association of NSW Inc.

Koala numbers have plummeted by a third in just 20 years. That is only three koala generations.

The koala is a globally recognised symbol of Australia and the second most recognised animal in the world after the Giant Panda, yet populations of our national icon are declining rapidly. Currently over 80% of koalas in NSW live outside of protected areas and there is no national conservation reserve set aside to ensure the species long-term survival. By contrast, China has established a national park covering one million hectares of bamboo forest to protect their Pandas.

Why we need the Great Koala National Park

Habitat loss and fragmentation in NSW, due to land clearing and urban development, has already resulted in koalas disappearing from 75% of their former range. Most of the remaining high quality koala habitat lies in State Forests and on private land where clearing of native vegetation and logging is leading to the removal of vital food and habitat trees. If nothing is done to protect and reconnect koala habitat, population declines will continue unabated and extinction is sadly inevitable.

The Great Koala National Park plan

Large and well-managed protected areas remain the single most effective tool to conserving species and their habitat. The Great Koala National Park, which forms part of a strategic koala reserve plan, is the best chance for our koalas to have a secure future in NSW.

This significant new national park would encompass 315,000 ha of public land in the Coffs Harbour region. This biodiversity hotspot includes two nationally recognised koala meta-populations, estimated to contain almost 20% of NSW's remaining wild koalas. The Great Koala National Park would be made up of 175,000 ha of state forests added to 140,000 ha of existing protected areas.

Benefits to other threatened species

It's not just koalas that would benefit from a Great Koala National Park. This spectacular landscape hosts lush World Heritage rainforests, some of the world's most diverse towering eucalypt forests, and an array of threatened species, such as the Hastings River Mouse and Spotted-tailed Quoll.

Benefits to the community

Despite koalas having contributed billions of dollars to Australia's economy through tourism, little of this money has been directed back into koala conservation. We are at serious risk of killing the golden goose through inaction and complacency.

To ensure that the GKNP delivers the best possible outcomes for regional employment and visitor opportunities, the Coffs Harbour/Bellingen Branch of NPA and the Bellingen Environment Centre has commissioned the design of a koala visitor centre to complement the Great Koala National Park proposal. The Koala Centre will be situated on a forested ridge directly accessible from an existing exit on the Pacific Highway just south of Coffs Harbour. The site is highly visible, scenic, and less than one minute from the highway. No parent will be able to resist calls from the back seat to stop and look at koalas!

A central breezeway will form the entrance to the centre and give access onto a koala information and media centre and a café.

A forest viewing deck will allow for birdwatching and for indoor and outdoor eating in a natural setting. And maybe even the odd sighting of koalas!

The information and media centre will provide tourists with maps and walking routes of the Great Koala National Park and Bongil Bongil National Park, as well as offer advertising opportunities for local businesses.

The breezeway will also open onto an education and research centre, courtyard and outdoor classroom. A koala hospital with rehabilitation enclosures will be incorporated which will enable treatment of sick and injured animals, helping efforts to halt population declines. In addition, the hospital will providing the public with opportunities both to view koalas and learn about threats and efforts to conserve the species.

The courtyard will be used as a start point for walking tracks into Bongil Bongil National Park. The Koala Centre will therefore attract not only passing motorists looking for refreshments and a break, but also tourists and locals in the area who are keen to explore Bongil Bongil National Park.

We need to act now to save our national icon

Pledge your Support

In an effort to build a groundswell of support for the Great Koala National Park we are taking our campaign to the masses through Pozible, a major crowdfunding platform. The money we raise will be used to fund our campaign work which will include holding meetings with key politicians, commissioning an economic analysis of the park, and raising awareness about the plight of koalas through education and citizen science initiatives.

For more information visit www.koalapark.org.au To Donate <http://www.pozible.com/project/196390>

Crown Land Management: Public Lands under Threat

The NSW state government is reviewing the administration of Crown land in NSW and proposes to:

- Establish a Crown Lands Division as part of a public trading enterprise
- Promote economic growth over social, cultural, local and environment concerns
- Overhaul the ownership of Crown lands that could result in their widespread sale or commercialisation by the government and/or transfer to local councils
- Replace eight existing Acts applying to Crown lands with a single Act.

The Crown Lands under review make up nearly half of NSW (approx. 33 million ha). Most of this land is in western NSW (30 million ha). In addition, there are 2.5 million ha of Crown reserves across the state. The remainder of the Crown lands include waterways, travelling stock reserves, commons, roads and unallocated land.

More at . . . <http://www.nature.org.au/media/2201/bpn-crown-land-fact-sheet-31-march-2015.pdf>

Aboriginal Elder wins court case to protect environment

The Lismore Council and NSW Department of Planning decision to remove environment protection zones from the environmental plan that will allow the development of the North Lismore Plateau has today been ruled invalid by a court after legal action by Aboriginal elder, Michael Ryan.

EDO NSW, on behalf of Mr Ryan, challenged the validity of the changes made to the Local Environmental Plan in the NSW Land and Environment Court.

More at . . . http://www.edonsw.org.au/aboriginal_elder_wins_court_case_to_protect_environment_at_lismore

Help the EDO protect our environment

One of the most important populations of koalas in NSW is at risk if the NSW Government-approved Shenhua Watermark Coal Project on the Liverpool Plains near Gunnedah goes ahead. That's why the EDO urgently needs assistance to keep the Environmental Defence Fund strong, so they can be there to help communities hold companies and government decision-makers to account. The Environment Defence Fund is more important than ever since the Federal Government recently reinstated funding to all community legal centres except Environmental Defenders Offices. This has significantly impacted the EDO's ability to provide the community with the support they need. To donate to Environmental Defence Fund at <https://www.givenow.com.au/edonsw>

-www.edonsw.org.au

Bhutan goes organic: a lesson for us all?

By banning the sales of pesticides and herbicides Bhutan has outlined a clear path for the future of its agriculture: it will become the first wholly organic country in the world.

The goal is not only to go organic, but to grow more food as well. Bhutan aims to achieve this with a region-by-region and crop-by-crop approach.

Bhutan already has an important record to be proud of: it is a carbon neutral country and food secure while also being able to guarantee water and electricity supplies to more than 95% of its population.

It is now making the next step to become 100% organic, not only for practical reasons to grow more food, but also from philosophical point of view to protect the environment.

The small country in the eastern end of the Himalayas is not new to taking a lead role on issues around the environment and sustainability.

The latest move by Bhutan to ban the sales of pesticides and herbicides is testament to the country's leading environmental stance: these chemicals are petrol based and their residues end up in the food we eat and damage the soil and the water quality.

The move to turn 100% organic is prompted by farmers becoming convinced that they need to work in harmony with nature. This idea that we need to work with nature is a central aspect of farming that we seem to forget and which should be put at the core of agriculture.

Let the world learn from Bhutan ... once again! - greenpeace.org

NSW Police to pay \$100,000 after improper disposal of waste

NSW Police Force will contribute \$100,000 to environmental programs under an enforceable undertaking with the Environmental Protection Agency after disposing of waste at the wrong waste facilities.

The EPA began its investigations following an allegation from a former police officer about the improper storage and disposal of evidence and drugs seized during a case in July 2012. The investigation confirmed that some exhibit wastes had been taken for destruction at facilities that could not lawfully accept the material. Evidence materials can include things like hazardous chemicals or illicit drugs.

NSW Police will contribute \$100,000 to the Environmental Trust to assist in developing projects that address environmental legacies such as hazardous chemical incidents and contaminated soils.

- epa.nsw.gov.au

EPA shown proposed steep land cable logging areas by NVCA

NVCA's field trip conducted by Paula Flack and Lyn Orrego to show Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) officers through the proposed steep land cable logging area in our upper catchment took place in March. The day was successful in terms of them listening to our concerns and our outright rejection of cable logging steep slopes (over 30 degrees which is the current upper limit). They also experienced a practical feel of the incredible steepness and rugged terrain of the country identified for cable logging across thousands of hectares of the headwaters of the Nambucca, Kalang and Bellinger Rivers. The diversity and beauty of this upriver mixed eucalypt and rainforest also did not escape them.

It was a trip into the mist – 8 hours long. Our amazing viewing spots to mountain range after mountain range over the areas of proposed cable logging were whited out but luckily we had photos. At the base of Killiekrankie Mountain I recapped on the history of the 1992 disaster at nearby Catbird Rd where 88,140 tonnes of soil was mobilised and washed down into the Bellinger River following bulldozers putting in tracks and logging the, until then untouched, area. It was a disaster that was instrumental in creating the ban on logging over 30 degree slopes. Incidentally our soil scientist called for a ban over 25 degrees due to the risk of permanent damage to soil and stream systems.

Also highlighted to the EPA officers was Justice Hemming's finding that the logging operations in Mistake State Forest posed a substantial threat to landscape stability in the area in the long term. Incredibly those areas of Mistake SF are included in the proposed cable logging area.

Paula talked of the importance of headwater areas to all landholders in the valleys below dependent on a clean river for stock and domestic water supply. Being a downstream landholder, Paula had legitimacy as being potentially adversely effected by any cable logging upstream of their properties.

Paula also highlighted the impacts current logging rules have on threatened species and their habitat - such as koalas. With only 10% left of koala populations present at European settlement our national icon would be impacted even more by cable logging which inevitably involves clear felling in 50 metre wide adjoining strips. And there are 32 other threatened forest dependent fauna species that would be similarly adversely affected.

It was explained how the areas proposed for the steep land cable logging trial are on geology known as the Nambucca Shale Beds. The rock is composed of fine marine sediment that has been uplifted, compressed, faulted and folded. As the rock weathers the joints are lubricated by clay, mica minerals and water. This makes the rock uniquely prone to landslides particularly on steep slopes where stabilizing vegetation is removed.

Bell Minor Associated Dieback (BMAD), bell birds, lantana and failed regeneration of the forest made it obvious our public native forests are not being managed sustainably as witnessed by there now being approximately 100,000 ha of forest in NSW affected by BMAD - in other words dying.

The EPA people listened to us talk of cables, rigging nightmares and the dangers for workers of working on the ground amidst tree heads and cables on steep slopes with the risk of loosened rock coming down.

The land itself, extremely steep drop offs from the road, misted, diverse, old growth and rainforest remnants, wowed them the most as UNSUITABLE for cable logging. That's what I picked up from their personal response to our day out even if their "official" response may be somewhat different. At the end of the day it is the state government and ministers who will decide whether cable logging proceeds and it is them we will continue to press to abandon this destructive proposal.

- Lyn Orrego, NVCA's Forest Working Group leader.

NVCA Fundraiser in the planning

At the Argents Hill Hall in September/October NVCA is planning to hold a fundraiser. It's in the early stages at the moment but an Up-Market Market and an NVCA Café is definitely on the agenda as well as a Tag-Along-Tour into the forest and a raffle with substantial prizes.

So start putting aside those items around the place which are too good to toss out but which would be appropriate for our Up-Market Market. Any items in very good saleable condition will be appreciated. We'll let you know where to deliver them closer to the event.

NVCA News to transmute to Facebook

With no-one jumping forward to take over producing the NVCA News, the committee has been discussing the idea that NVCA will instead have a bigger/brighter presence on facebook with its own up-to-date informative page making the present newsletter redundant. If there is anyone out there with the skills and time to create this page and keep it relevant please email nvca@nvca.org.au to let us know.

Leading up to this change you'll notice some articles in this newsletter have "More at . . ." plus a link. Most of us are used to this practice on the internet by now . . . it's a way to save space and gives the reader the option of reading more or not.