

President's Report 2005– 06

It is with pleasure that I present the President's Report for the year to October 2005.

Maps

This year has seen the launch of STEP's two new maps *Walking Tracks of the Middle Harbour Valley and Northern Sydney Harbour Foreshore*. The maps were launched at Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Gardens last November which was a great event. The speaker (Rob Lang, CEO of the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority), the food (wonderfully provided by Jocelyn Chenu) and the venue were all much enjoyed.

The committee has been busy with the publicity and sales of the maps – the end-of-financial year sales are 741 (north map) and 625 (south map), which exceeds our expectations out of a print run of 2000. The new maps have had an added bonus of boosting sales of the Lane Cove map and Field Guide as well as attracting new members from a wide range of suburbs.

Blue Gum High Forest

Another major focus of activity has been the Blue Gum High Forest Group, which is energetically run by Nancy Pallin and Neroli Lock.

After a year of sustained lobbying and hard work, the group has had a major victory – a determination of the Blue Gum High Forest as a critically endangered ecological community under the Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. This puts another steep hurdle in front of developers.

In more good news, half of the privately owned Blue Gum High Forest at Rosedale Road, St Ives (adjacent to Dalrymple Hay Nature Reserve) has now been purchased by the State Government for conservation purposes.

Well done Nancy and Neroli.

Walks and Talks

We have undertaken a range of activities this year. We have hosted two talks (Dr Mariella Herberstein, Macquarie University, on spiders, and Michelle Leishman, Macquarie University, on exotic plant invasion on Hawkesbury Sandstone soils), plus of course tonight's guest speaker (Peter Davies and Mary-Lou Lewis, Ku-ring-gai Council).

We had three organised walks: Dalrymple Hay Nature Reserve, Pennant Hills Fire Trail and West Head.

Environmental Education

We have continued to support the Young Scientist Environment Award, which was presented at Parliament House by STEP member and judge Syd Smith to Laura Woollacott for her project *An investigation into the pollution stopper and its effects on the water quality of Moores Creek*.

STEP will be increasing its environmental education program in the coming year. Jane Gye has agreed to be our Environmental Education Officer and she will be responsible for both the Young Scientist award and for a new award to be offered to local schools to implement environmental projects under the new School Environment Management Management Plan program. We will be offering \$750 per year for three years to help schools implement their plan.

Newsletters

We published five newsletters (numbers 127 to 131) thanks to Bruno Krockenberger (editor) and Helen Wortham (design and layout).

Representation

STEP is represented by Neroli Lock on Ku-ring-gai Council's Bushland Catchments and Natural Areas Advisory Reference Group. John Burke has represented STEP on the University of Technology Sydney Consultative Committee.

Committee

The committee has seen a few changes this year.

Our treasurer, Thérèse Carew, resigned suddenly but we have been most fortunate to secure the help of Jim Wells to help get our finances back in order. Jim's help has been invaluable and he has instituted a few changes to make our operations more efficient as well as finding us a new auditor. I am very pleased that Jim has agreed to take on the role of STEP's treasurer.

Long-time committee member Jenny Schwarz resigned in August as she has now moved to Hobart – we miss her and wish her all the best.

Ron Howlett also resigned during the year.

I have agreed to continue as president in the short-term but will be resigning in April when I start a new job. John Burke will be joining the committee after an absence of more than a decade.

Thanks to all other continuing committee members and other helpers for their contribution through the year.

The Coming Year

The challenge for STEP in the next year will be to recruit additional committee members – the current committee members are stretched too thinly and we need some new ideas and energy.

We are in the fortunate position of being in a healthy financial state due to the sales of our maps and field guides and in the coming year we will be developing new environmental initiatives that use these resources.

Any members with good ideas please come and see me!