



### OUR 59<sup>th</sup> AGM HELD ON 2<sup>nd</sup> FEBRUARY

Congratulations to Graham Lalchere re-elected President, and to our elected committee members. Vicki Bolling and Peter de Beuzeville were elected to the committee. Chris Tyler was appointed Auditor and Sue de Beuzeville joined the Welcome & Hospitality team.

The Presidential address and the Secretary's Report can be found on our website. The quotes below seek only to summarise the highlights of the two addresses.

#### PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Graham Lalchere talked about indirect effects on environmental issues, particularly emission and climate issues, citing the Chinese quest for clean air, financial imperatives, and advances in battery storage technology.

He noted that the use of coal has gone down substantially recently, and the conjecture about whether this reduction is cyclical or structural. The coal companies say it is cyclical, but Chinese demand for thermal coal generation falling while their electricity demand is rising would indicate otherwise.

Studies of coal companies in Australia show many are showing signs of financial distress and may soon face bankruptcy, also exacerbating the problem of mine-site remediation, which already sees tens of thousands of abandoned mine sites left for taxpayers to clean up. There is "an urgent need for federal and state government planning to prepare for the economic and social impacts of the structural decline of coal."

Australian electricity companies are also parties to the story of coal. They deny that electricity demand is dropping, and, until recently, were still forecasting increasing use, more expenditure on the grid and subsequent higher prices.

Increasing penetration of solar and wind, and efficiency improvements have contributed to the reduction in coal use. Other technological developments, including electric cars and improved battery performance will also have a significant impact.

While these are positive signs, Graham called on us to keep on campaigning and to remember the logo on our banners – Think Globally, Act Locally.

He then stressed the need to focus locally on:

a) **Lime Kiln Bay Wetlands:** Council is now regularly cleaning out the GPT, and has recently cleaned out the ponds, but should not dump it in Oatley Park.

b) **Sewage problems:** Sydney Water has just completed the raising of the weir in Dairy Creek, and we need to monitor the effect of these changes, particularly on Myles Dunphy Creek.

c) **Street trees:** Council is currently preparing a street-tree management plan, and we will lobby council to be consulted on the new plan.

d) **Oatley Park PoM and bushcare:** We will continue to work with council on the implementation of this plan

e) **Membership:** Our initiative of linking membership with our calendar at the Oatley Village Festival and other events has resulted in a number of new members joining up. He welcomed these new members and hoped they gain from their association with us.

"It looks like we will have another busy year in 2015, but I am sure that in its 60th year OFF is up to the task. We must continue to fight for the causes that we believe in.

As members of one of the oldest environment organisations in the State, I invite you to join in the activities that our committee has put together for your education and enjoyment, and celebrate our anniversary in a suitable manner."

#### SECRETARY'S REPORT

Liz Cameron outlined OFF activities in 2014, in accord with its objectives focussing on the natural environment.

1. **Impact of mining on water catchments:** OFF spoke to State and Federal MPs, made submissions on changes to legislation, addressed an inquiry into expansion of coal mining in a catchment, and promoted a Stop CSG meeting in Mortdale. Nell Schofield's address and films on coal mining and CSG extraction had an audience of 80.

2. **Local Area:** Members acted to improve the health of Georges River by monitoring local water quality and reducing pollution in Lime Kiln Bay Wetlands. They did monthly Streamwatch surveys and **rubbish audits**, liaised with Sydney Water to report and reduce sewer overflows, and recommended changes in sewerage licences to the EPA. The Wetlands was OFF's site for Clean Up Australia, we recommended priorities for the Green Army project there, and lobbied Hurstville City Council to increase maintenance funding in its Delivery Program and Operational Plan (DPOP) re stormwater in Dairy Creek.

We urged Hurstville Council to include Oatley Park in its DPOP and complete its 2004 Action Plan for the Park and we pressed Council for more accountability regarding tree removals. We maintain good relations with our local Members of Parliament and appreciate their ongoing support for some of our priorities.

3. **The 2015 calendar *Oatley – Nature in the suburbs*** was financially successful. The calendars and Oatley Park brochures were popular at our four stalls in 2014. David Coleman's office translated the membership brochures into Chinese in time for *St George Migrant Information Day*.

4. **Field outings** organised by Alison Gilroy and overseen by Graham Fry had an average of 15 participants (70% were OFF members). Best attended were Sydney Observatory (28) and Blue Track walk in Lucas Heights (33).

5. **Speakers:** Matt Allison engaged entertaining speakers whose topics ranged from the Platypus to rainwater harvesting in Oatley; average attendance was 46.

6. **Annual Dinner:** After a lapse of 18 months a very convivial Annual Dinner and raffle was organised by Sue Howard at *Gardens of Forest* on June 13<sup>th</sup>. This will also be the venue for our 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary Dinner on May 14<sup>th</sup> 2015.

7. **Membership:** Robin Dickson has looked after our membership well; 28 new members in 2014 bring the total close to 300. Sadly, she had to report the deaths of three members during the year - Bill Monaghan, Sheila Sansom and Val Boyan. Two former long-term members, the late Graham Austin and Harry Whaite, were honoured by a **tree-planting ceremony** in November.



Walk4Water says no to coal mining and CSG. On 21<sup>st</sup> Feb a walk will commence at Cataract Dam and finish in Hyde Park on 28<sup>th</sup> Feb. Join other

OFF members who will be taking part at 10am to launch walk4water; or consider attending wherever you can along the route over the next 7 days. Contact Kim Wagstaff ☎ 0437 791 988 for latest information on OFF Member Participation.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Feb 23<sup>rd</sup> (Mon) 7.45pm meeting with Dr Cameron Webb**, Medical Entomology, University of Sydney, and Pathology Westmead Hospital, speaking on mozzies and mosquito-borne disease. <http://cameronwebb.wordpress.com>

**Feb 28<sup>th</sup> (Sat) Field Day: Dharawal NP - Stokes and O'Hares Creeks**, led by **Sharyn Cullis**. Medium to good fitness required; trails are steep and rough in sections but with cool clear streams at the end. Bring walking poles, drinks, morning tea, lunch, and swimmers. Finish about 2 PM. Meet 9.30 AM [around 45 mins driving time] at western entrance to Dharawal National Park, end of Victoria Rd, [Wedderburn](#). [For more details, car-pooling etc. contact Sharyn, [go\\_river@hotmail.com](mailto:go_river@hotmail.com) ☎ 9579 1262, ☎ 0421 714 391]

**Mar 1<sup>st</sup> (Sun) Clean Up Australia Day** OFF's site this year will be Poulton Park (Kogarah LGA). Alison Gilroy will be the site co-ordinator; more details at February meeting.

**Mar 2<sup>nd</sup> (Mon) Liverpool Waste Water Treatment Plant Guided Tour** by Sydney Water for OFF. Starts at 10am for 1.5 hours showing how the sewage collected from Georges River catchment is treated and recycled. Meet at the Plant, 32-40 Scrivener St, Warwick Farm by 9.45. Wear long pants, long sleeve shirt, and flat, closed toe shoes, well-fitting hat and sunglasses. Other protective equipment will be provided. Walking is on uneven surfaces and stairs. Children over 12 welcome but must be accompanied by an adult. **Transport** best by car (35-40 mins from Oatley); train would require changes and 20min walk. Car-pooling can be arranged. **Leader:** Kim Wagstaff ☎ 0437 791 988.

## OATLEY FROGS HOLLOW

OFF has expressed concern to Council over some five years about the dumping of silt at Frogs Hollow in [Oatley Park](#). The grassy basin was so named because it had been a breeding site for native frogs. The continuing dumping has made the area quite unsuitable for frogs, and the weeds on the silt dumps are spreading to surrounding areas and degrading the park.

The area is a well-known landmark for walkers, cyclists, and pet owners. Oatley Park has been proudly described as "one of Hurstville Council's most popular parks – with its tranquil setting and hectares of natural bushland." However, the continuing silt dumping at Frogs Hollow presents a significant threat to the grassy basin, and to the Park as a whole.

## SAVING THE KOALA

The number of koalas on the east coast of Australia plummeted by more than 40% from 1990 to 2010. [Surveys](#) conducted by ecologists in 2013 in the Pilliga forest, once a stronghold for the species, found that there could be as few as 50 Koalas left in the area, and they are "highly endangered."

The Woolgoolga to Ballina upgrading of the Pacific Highway has been on the drawing board for years; the proposed route would devastate a nationally significant Koala population. Community members are [joining forces](#) to have the route moved from the area occupied by koalas. As Nature Conservation Council CEO Kate Smolski stated, "We must do everything we can to ensure extinction does not happen. Given the koala's status as a national icon, we hope that all parties will support the koala national park proposal." [www.nature.org.au/news/](http://www.nature.org.au/news/)



## NORTH HEAD WILDLIFE

Due to its geography and history, North Head is relatively isolated despite its proximity to Sydney. The North Head Sanctuary is home to a diverse array of flora and fauna. Notable species include the Long-nosed Bandicoot (*Perameles nasuta*), the Eastern Bentwing-bat (*Miniopterus schreibersii oceanensis*), Grey-headed Flying-fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*), Powerful Owl (*Ninox strenua*) and Barking Owl (*Ninox connivens*).

However, like the rest of Australia, North Head has suffered local extinction of a suite of species since European settlement. The reintroduction of locally extinct species, and the resumption of ecological processes in which these species participate (e.g. seed and spore dispersal, pollination, herbivory, predation) is an important component of the ecological restoration of North Head. Click here for more at North Head: [Mammals List](#) | [Birds List](#) | [Reptiles List](#) | [Amphibians List](#) | [Threatened species List](#) & <http://www.australianwildlife.org/>

## MORE WATER THREATS

Anti-fracking advocates want AGL Energy's licence for its Gloucester gas project revoked after the detection of dangerous chemicals in a water storage tank. Testing work at the project near Gloucester has been suspended after [benzene, toluene, ethyl benzene and xylene \(BTEX\)](#) were detected in flow backwater from four drilling wells and in a water storage tank. The chemicals can have harmful effects on the central nervous system, and benzene is a known carcinogen.



Steve Phillips of LTG commented, "AGL's alarming pollution monitoring results in Gloucester highlight the risks fracking poses to our precious water resources. Chief scientist Mary O'Kane warned that many unanswered questions remain about the risks to our land, water, and communities. But the government allowed drilling to continue in Camden, Gloucester and

Narrabri, and pushed ahead with a flawed Gas Plan that failed to implement many of the O'Kane [recommendations](#)." <http://www.echo.net.au/>

## THINK AND ACT LOCALLY

**Street Lights left on / left off** – Ring Ausgrid ☎ 131388 with the pole number and cross street reference.

**Plastic bags etc.** *Clean Up Australia* notes that we dump 7,150 recyclable plastic bags into landfills every minute or 429,000 bags every hour. Plastic bags and many types of plastic packaging are recyclable, but are not being recovered through conventional recycling channels.

**Coles** with recycler [REDGroup](#) and manufacturer [Replas](#) have developed a [program](#) to give customers a responsible way to dispose of household soft plastics, many types of food packaging and reusable shopping bags.

[More at: <http://redcycle.net.au/redcycle/how-to-redcycle> & [redcycle program-partners](http://redcycle.net.au/redcycle-program-partners)]

## FOR NOTING

**Anniversary Dinner - OFF's 60<sup>th</sup>** You are invited to attend Thurs May 14<sup>th</sup> at *Gardens on Forest* 7-10pm \$65pp. Menu choices at Feb to April meetings. [Contact Sue Howard ☎ 9579 1718]

**Clean Up Australia Day 1<sup>st</sup> March.** OFF's site this year will be Poulton Park (Kogarah LGA). Alison Gilroy is the site co-ordinator; more details at next meeting. [www.cleanupaustrialiaday.org.au/](http://www.cleanupaustrialiaday.org.au/)

**Earth Hour** on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March between 8.30 and 9.30 pm local time. [www.timeanddate.com/earth-hour](http://www.timeanddate.com/earth-hour)

**Knitting Nannas** [Echonetdaily](#) reports that on 1<sup>st</sup> Feb the gas industry was "needed" by a group of activist nannas who knit as part of their fight against unconventional gas mining on the north coast. <http://www.echo.net.au/> & <http://www.echo.net.au/tag/knitting-nannas/>

**Myles Dunphy Streamwatch**, next meets at 9am on Tues Feb 24<sup>th</sup>. Details: Sharyn ☎ 9579 1262, Heather ☎ 0425 291 879.

**Renew membership - Welcome New Members** Details of OFF Membership are on our website at <http://off.oatleypark.com/>