

# colong bulletin

No. 240 | May 2011

## NSW supports World Heritage listing for the Alps

DR GEOFF MOSLEY

THE year 2010 was not notable for good environmental news but there was one bright spot near the end – the news that the NSW Government had at long last agreed to support the inclusion of the Australian Alps on Australia's official World Heritage Tentative List. This had been called for in correspondence with the Premier by both the Nature Conservation Council of NSW and the Australian Conservation Foundation.

The NSW Government's decision to join with Victoria and the ACT in supporting the nomination came just before a development which underlined potential weaknesses in national heritage listing and highlighted just how overdue the decision on World



Watsons Crags on the Main Range, Kosciuszko National Park. Photo: H. Gold.

Heritage was. That event was the Victorian Government's action in sending cattle back onto the alpine meadows of the Alpine National Park in January 2011.

Federal Environment

Minister Tony Burke has told the public that he has asked for advice from his Department on how to amend the Commonwealth law to

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### New website debunks the myths about wilderness

THE website [www.wildernesstruths.com](http://www.wildernesstruths.com) has been set up to debunk the myths about wilderness. It is based on the PhD research of Dr Haydn Washington (member of Colong Board) whose PhD 'The Wilderness Knot' looked at the confusion and tangled meanings around wilderness.

The website examines 21 myths about wilderness, and replies to each one. It also contains 'mind maps' that summarise the issues around wilderness, references and a wilderness forum for discussion. The site was set up with the pro bono assistance of John Robens, a website expert, who deserves

great thanks for his fine work.

Haydn noted: 'Such a website was needed because wilderness has come under sustained attack on philosophical, cultural, political and 'justice' grounds over the last 20 years. Yet when you look at the IUCN

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### General Meetings

Will be held at our office on level 2, Fortuna House, 332 Pitt Street, at 2.00pm on Thursday June 9th, July 14th, August 11th and September 8th. Members and visitors welcome.

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give him the power to stop acts of this kind. If the Alpine and Forest National Parks, proposed for World Heritage listing by the Victorian Government since 1987, were along with the adjacent parks in the other States given World Heritage status, there would be absolutely no doubt about the federal government's power to deal with recalcitrant State Governments as was clearly demonstrated by the stopping of the Gordon below Franklin dam in 1983. ■

## New website debunks myths about wilderness

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definition, wilderness is a large natural area, and only a few percent of the state remains in this condition. System science and biogeography show we must protect our last large natural areas, and also link them up. It is time to cut through the confusion about 'wilderness' and accept it is something we need to keep for the future. This site aims to debunk many of the myths that have developed about wilderness'.

The site is a first on the Internet. The message it gives goes beyond Australia and is relevant to the world. I hope it will assist in bringing people together to accept the truth that wilderness is something we must keep, something of great value, something we must always be vigilant to protect. ■

# Images of the Wild

**an exhibition of wilderness photographs by Henry Gold at the Bondi Pavilion Gallery, Queen Elizabeth Drive on Bondi Beach from Tuesday May 31 to Sunday June 12.**

Gallery hours are 10am - 5pm daily

Henry will be featuring his colour images of wilderness, including colour panoramas for the first time, as well as his stunning black and white photography.

Since 1967, countless numbers of Henry Gold photographs have been used to publicise nature conservation. This is your chance to secure some precious Gold, from the movement's best loved honorary photographer.

The exhibition will be officially opened by Bob Carr at 6pm Wednesday June 1st.

Everyone is welcome to attend the launch.

All proceeds will go towards the Colong Foundation to assist with its wilderness conservation work.



## Colong Donors

The following 2010 donors were accidentally omitted from the donor list published in the last edition.

We gratefully acknowledge their generous support:

Martin Bowman, Peter Cook, Adrian Cooper, Ross Coster, Graham Cox, Ian Cox, Graham Daly, Rosie Doyle, Mike & Fanny Ellwood, Margaret Esson, Valerie Figgis, Richard Gates, Bill Gillooly, Judith Greening, John Haydon, Jocelyn Howell, Graeme Jessup, Geoffrey Jones, Anthony Kay, Agnes Keen, Peter Krinks, James Lawler, A. Leathlean, George Masterman, Boaz Magal, Hugh Patterson & Françoise Matter, Keith Muir, Lynne Saville, Ian Sefton, Jim Somerville, SPAN Outdoors, Richard Stiles, Ian Tanner, Gerry Watt, Ian Williamson, Susan Stevens.

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# Genowlan Mountain and Mount Airly reserved after a 30 year campaign

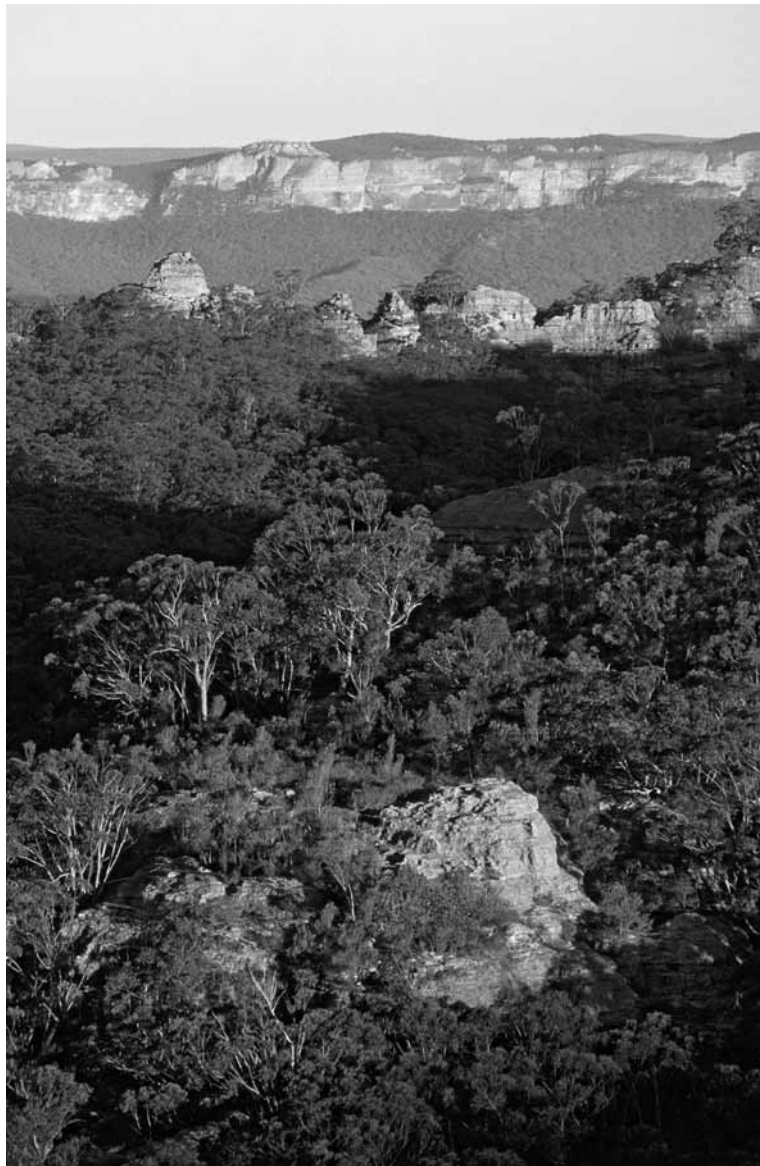
**A**FTER a 30 year campaign, two dramatic plateaus (Genowlan Mtn and Mt Airly) in the Capertee Valley have been reserved as the 3,650 hectare Mugii Murum-ban State Conservation Area. This scenic and biologically diverse area was initially proposed for intensive coal mining that would have caused the ground to collapse 1.8 metres, but the mining intensity has been wound back.

The conservation versus coal struggle resulted in Centennial Coal opting to mine in a less intensive manner that does not cause ground subsidence damage in the new reserve. The area's outstanding sandstone features - its hundreds of pagodas, deep gorges, slot canyons and tall sheer cliffs are safe at last. The Colong Foundation, in association with the Blue Mountains Conservation Society and the Colo Committee, had worked to protect this part of the Gardens of Stone since 1985.

Tara Cameron of the Blue Mountains Conservation Society believes that the new Government should build on this decision. "We hope that the Coalition will advance the Gardens of Stone reserve proposal by supporting further reservation priorities in the Ben Bullen/Wolgan State Forests, as well as the Wollangambe River catchment and the other parts of the Gardens of Stone proposal".

"The new Mugii Murum-ban State Conservation Area has the 'full kit' of heritage features packed into a relatively small area, there is really nothing else quite like it. Notable features of the new reserve include the stone dwellings of New Hartley oil shale ruins near Airly Gap, amazing rock formations like the 'Citadel' and the 20 metre Brown Barrel eucalypt trees downstream of the 'Grotto'.

"The area contains more than 340 different plant species,



*The spectacular Valley of the Kings on Genowlan Mountain is now reserved.  
Photo. J. Plaza*

including the federally listed and endangered Genowlan Point Dwarf Sheoak heathland which is unique to this reserve and the only living examples of the critically endangered *Pultenaea sp. Genowlan Point*", said Ms Cameron.

Reservation of this area was by no means certain and was only secured at the last moment by Frank Sartor (after *Bulletin* 239 was published in March). In 2011 the former Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water had referred this proposal to the Department of Industry and Investment for a second time in order to confirm the

operational requirements for coal mining, slowing the gazettal process.

The reservation approach adopted was first suggested in *Colong Bulletin* 131 (March 1992) which reported "The unique Airly Plateau can be protected. Fifty per cent extraction would prevent damaging subsidence and still provide 35 million tonnes of coal. ... Retention of coal pillars to support Mt Airly would be an insignificant loss to the vast coal resources of NSW."

This argument, expertly developed by our honorary coal geologist Mike Atkinson for the Foundation's 1993

reserve proposal, has now been accepted and acted upon. The Colong Foundation would like to thank Mike and Minister Sartor for the park.

Dr Haydn Washington of the Colo Committee is also pleased with the new reserve. "The Colo Committee started working to conserve this area around 1980" he said, "So it has taken decades to get to this point. This is a wonderland of biodiversity and geodiversity, so it is simply fantastic it has finally been gazetted!"

The Office of Environment and Heritage has already stated that Ben Bullen/Wolgan State Forests are next in line for reservation. Unfortunately a section of this forest area is now under major threat from a new open cut coal mine proposal that could turn an area equivalent in size to 2,176 football fields into a waste rock heap.

How this mega-mine will be handled under the NSW Government's new approach to Planning was raised by the Colong Foundation at its first meeting with the new Environment Minister, Robyn Parker at the end of April. Rejection of this destructive open cut proposal would demonstrate that the NSW Government is serious about reining in the increasing environmental abuse of the coal industry. ■

## **Help Protect the Gardens of Stone!**

Join supporters, discover the area and take action at 1.00pm on Saturday 14 May 2011 to help protect the Gardens of Stone from exclusive occupation and destruction by open cut coal mining.

You haven't seen such a wonderful landscape in NSW as the Gardens' sandstone turrets known as 'pagodas'. For info and maps go to: <http://bitly.com/hmyp3f>

# Quarrying New South Wales must stop

BY KEITH MUIR

**I**N February the Department of Planning released a coal and gas strategy paper for NSW. Far from responding to community concern and curbing mining exploitation, the paper proposed measures to facilitate development.

Shortly after this paper was launched, the Liberal and National Parties released their *Strategic Regional Land Use Policy*. This policy limits mining impacts on groundwater resources and protects agricultural and other sensitive areas from coal and gas extraction. Current proposals for gas extraction in the Pilliga East State Conservation Area and for open-cut coal mining in State Forests will establish just how this policy will be applied to sensitive natural areas.

The new Government's policy is without doubt better than the previous administration's proposals. Labor did belatedly release a coal and gas policy just before the election, but it was too

late and lacked the strength necessary to influence the political debate over mining.

The NSW Minerals Council responded to these policies and released a paper calling for more accelerated mineral development. The paper threatened the loss of 6,721 jobs and the loss of \$0.9 billion in royalties if more restrictive mining policies were adopted (ACIL Tasman, 2011, *Economic Contribution of NSW Mining Sector*). Such assertions from mining experts put the major political parties in a very difficult place, as the community at large expects decision-makers to press on regardless with the announced reform measures.

### A new paradigm is needed

*"We can no longer continue to develop mining at all costs. We can no longer continue to allow these industries to self-regulate, no more than we would allow users of the roads to self-regulate. We can no longer allow coal mining to proceed without appropriate checks and balances. We can no longer pursue coal seam gas mining in light of the evidence and science that so clearly*

*highlight the environmental and ecological disasters we now face. We can no longer sacrifice our water, our food and our environment to rapacious greed. We can no longer race after royalties as if that were the only thing that mattered. There is a better way forward.*

*"The goals of the Lock the Gate Alliance are simple. We need to restore balance. We need to reassert our obligations of custodianship of this country. We need to remember that what we do today affects the many generations yet to come. We need to restore priorities that put the land, the people and the environment of Australia first (the outgoing President of the Lock the Gate Alliance, John C Thomson, April, 2011).*

### A solution to the Government's dilemma

As has happened with economic growth, coal and gas resource development can and has been overheated. The correct executive response is effective regulation, not deregulation, and development approvals of limited scope to assist the coal and coal seam gas industry to adapt to changing circumstances.

If every nation state fully exploited its coal and gas reserves, it would be an absolute certainty that life on earth as we know it would not survive into next century. Despite political considerations, humanity shall find better alternatives than burning all fossil fuels and causing a climate catastrophe.

Given climate change, a large proportion of the coal and gas resources in NSW will never be mined. Society will instead keep carbon sequestered in untapped coal or gas deposits. That being the case, society can and indeed should 'sterilise coal resources' for environmental protection and social welfare measures because there are ample alternative coal and gas deposits to exploit before society must transition to more environmentally sustainable energy resources. Indeed, sterilising coal resources will actually assist with this transition.

At least half of NSW's coal and gas resources could be permanently sequestered to protect the environment, without any harm occurring to our economy. These fossil fuels should never be needed by future generations.

The need to terminate fossil fuel production to address climate change well before all of NSW's considerable coal and coal seam gas resources are consumed, permits considerable flexibility in the pattern of development. The flexibility of surplus resources creates far greater opportunities to protect the environment.

For example, bord and pillar underground coal mining is a form of lower intensity mining. When undertaken with partial pillar extraction it far more compatible with other land uses. This form of mining is being undertaken under the Mugii Murrumbidgee State Conservation Area.

David Burgess inspects cliff fall damage at the Dendrobium Colliery in the Metropolitan drinking water supply catchment near Lake Cordeaux storage. Photo: K. Muir.



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# Yerranderie donated to the public

**T**HE Colong Foundation is extremely pleased that Ms Val Lhuedé has donated Yerranderie, her 467-hectare property to the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. It will become a Regional Park. The handover celebration took place at Yerranderie over the Easter long weekend.

Ms Lhuedé made her donation through the Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife, a philanthropic institution, that ensured her wishes were complied with. The Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife worked for five years to facilitate Ms Lhuedé's land donation. It will ensure that that the town's unique historical and ecological values are protected.

Located just 45km west of Camden, and just west of the

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Mining intensity directly affects how much damage occurs with coal extraction. In Pennsylvania between 2003 and 2008 coal was mined from about 15,000 hectares. Although half the area was mined by the longwall method and the other half by bord and pillar, longwall mining was responsible for almost all of the property and structural damage (University of Pittsburgh, 2010 for the Department of Environmental Protection).

There is a far broader range of mining intensity options than what is actually considered by determining authorities at the development application stage. The Government's strategic land use policy needs to consider these lower intensity options. Adoption of industry strategies that seek maximum production at each coal mine and maximum growth in resource exploitation are a recipe for needless community conflict and accelerated climate change. ■



*Yerranderie historic site's former post office and now accomodation house. Photo Leonie Gale.jpg*

Blue Mountains National Park, Yerranderie has operated as a low scale tourist destination, with camping and heritage accommodation for up to 60 people.

"Yerranderie is an important part of Sydney's cultural heritage," said Ms Leonie Gale, CEO of the Foundation. "A visit to the place immerses you in the area's rich silver mining history, and its intriguing European and Indigenous stories."

"Val's property also contains hundreds of hectares of wildlife habitat. Yellow-Bellied gliders, Sugar gliders, Eastern Grey kangaroos, wallabies, wombats, possums and numerous bird species live on the property." Ms Gale said.

Yerranderie, once stripped of native grasses by cattle and partially deforested, was encouraged to return to a wildlife sanctuary under Ms Lhuedé's care. "I let all the trees grow back and got rid of the nasties that had come in. I'd go out in the evening and chop the weeds, and by slow degrees I had the area around the Private Town back to the original tall trees and grassland underneath," Ms Lhuedé said.

Ms Lhuedé's vision for Yerranderie's future is simple. She wants the public to enjoy it and all it has to offer. "I'd like

to see Yerranderie as the centre of a special tourist group and get young people out into the mountains especially," she said. "I feel they should be given the chance to see the bush and feel the earth under their feet instead of concrete."

This vision is fine, but under the NPW Act, two aspects of regional parks are of concern. Regional parks:

- provide for sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment compatible with conservation of natural and cultural values; and

- provide for sustainable use (including adaptive reuse) of any buildings or structures or modified natural areas having regard to conservation of natural and cultural values.

The Colong Foundation believes that Yerranderie should be added to Blue Mountains National Park. Access to Yerranderie has in the last 30 years been from Oberon and this should continue as remoteness not only is part of the charm of the place, it is essential to the preservation of water quality and wilderness values.

On-going commercial viability may put under pressure the current low scale accommodation arrangements. Any area deemed a 'modified natural landscape' in the regional park could be targeted for eco-resort development and when combined with a push for more rapid access from Sydney, could put the entire southern flank of the Blue Mountains wilderness at risk.

None of these worrying concerns detract from Ms Val Lhuedé's generosity and must be worked through the reserve plan of management process. Had Yerranderie instead remained private land it would have been open to development risks of another order altogether. Due to Val's generous gift, her vision can be preserved in a way that is compatible with the surrounding wilderness. ■

*Below: (L to R) NPWS Area Manager, Kim de Govrik, Val Lhuede, National Parks boss, Sally Barnes, and Regional Director, Alistair Henchman. Photo: Leonie Gale.*



# A new threat to forests – open-cut coal mining

BY KEITH MUIR

NOW there's something worse than clearfelling native forests - open-cut coal mining. Over the Christmas holiday period several open-cut coal mines were proposed in NSW state forests of high conservation value. One group of proposals threaten the Leard State Forest near Gunnedah and another group of coal companies want to open-cut the Ben Bullen State Forest in the Gardens of Stone, near Lithgow.

Only a limited amount of open-cut coal mining in state forests has occurred. If the NSW Government approves these open-cut coal mining proposals, it would set a terrible precedent of state forest destruction.

## From forest to wasteland

To understand how bad open-cut coal mining is, you must appreciate the process. First, bulldozers scalp all the biodiversity from the forest or woodland. Then all the soil and underlying geology (called 'overburden') is torn away. In the Ben Bullen State Forest this 'overburden' is the scientifically significant geodiversity of the Gardens of Stone. The wasted ecology and geodiversity is then heaped up into piles on the rim of the open mine pit.

The creation of a pit drastically lowers the local water table, which then acts as a sump starving streams of freshwater. The waste piles of 'overburden' then exude salts and metals after rain for decades with harmful consequences downstream. The eco-toxic runoff from the waste piles is not diluted as the previous natural inflows are now captured by the mine pit, so that stream ecology is destroyed for many kilometres downstream.

## Thousands of hectares of public land could be lost

About 1,385 hectares of native woodland in the Leard State Forest could be destroyed by Boggabri Coal's open-cut proposal, significantly reducing one of the largest intact Box-Gum Woodlands left in NSW. An additional 1,500 hectares of Leard State Forest will be targeted in future mining proposals and 500 hectares have already been cleared.

A further 1,250 hectares, containing a different type of Box-Gum Woodland, are at risk in Ben Bullen State Forest from open-cut proposals by the Coalpac and Enhance Place mining companies. This forest situated along the Great Dividing Range is a nationally significant biodiversity hotspot.



*Coalpac's open coal mine encroaches on the edge of Ben Bullen State Forest. Photo: Ian Brown.*

It is also a strategic wildlife corridor which links Turon National Park and the Gardens of Stone National Park in the north with Newnes State Forest and Blue Mountains National Park to the south.

There is too little Box-Gum Woodland habitat remaining to ensure long-term survival and all remnants of this critically endangered ecological community must be retained. Proposals for 'conservation areas', 'offsets' or 'rehabilitation' are inappropriate as substitute areas. Rare ecosystems belong in 'development no go' areas and need to be set aside from so-called "Bio-banking". Woodland birds and bats are declining in the central-west and habitat loss must be reversed.

## Privatisation by stealth

Forests NSW have not objected to these proposals, but merely reminded these mining companies to enter into a compensation agreement before commencement of operations. So destroying these forests is propping up the Forests NSW.

Forests NSW is supposed to manage these woodlands on behalf of the people of NSW. They claim that their guiding philosophy is ecologically sustainable forest management (ESFM), to maintain or enhance flora and fauna biodiversity in State Forests, with particular attention to threatened

species and their habitats, and sustaining these values for all forest users now and into the future.

The purposes of the Forestry Commission are set out in the *Forestry Act 1916*. The Commission (operating under the trading name Forests NSW) is required to:

- ❑ conserve and utilise timber under its management to the best advantage of the State;
- ❑ provide adequate supplies of timber for building, commercial, industrial, agricultural, mining and domestic purposes;
- ❑ preserve and improve, in accordance with good forestry practice, the soil resources and water catchment capabilities of lands under its management;
- ❑ encourage the use of timber derived from trees grown in the State;
- ❑ preserve the native flora, promote and encourage the use of State forests for recreation, and conserve birds and animals, consistent with the use of State forests for the purposes of forestry and of flora reserves;
- ❑ provide natural resource environmental services (whether within or outside New South Wales); and
- ❑ take all practical steps to ensure the preservation and enhancement of the quality of the environment.

Handing public forests over for the exclusive occupation, use and destruction by coal corporations does not fulfil any of the above objectives. Open-cut coal mining is privatising publicly owned native forests by stealth. ■



*Open-cut coal mining would convert the biodiverse Leard State Forest into a waste rock dump. Photo: Rising Tide.*

# SUPPORT THE COLONG FOUNDATION!

To: The Treasurer, Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd., Level 2, 332 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW 2000  
The enclosed remittance or advice covers the item(s) indicated by a tick. (One cheque is sufficient to cover subscription and donation.)

- Membership application (\$30) to 31 December 2011  
(NB Membership application covers Bulletin subscription)
- Colong Bulletin Subscription (\$11) to 31 December 2011 (non members only)
- Membership renewal to 31 December 2011 (\$30)       Life Membership (\$550)
- Tax deductible donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the Colong Wilderness Fund
- PLUS \$\_\_\_\_\_ being for publications as indicated on the reverse side of this form.

NAME (Mr, Ms, Mrs, Miss) .....

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SIGNED..... AMOUNT .....

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Bank: Westpac Mortdale, BSB: 032 268 Account number: 11 7302

Please inform the Colong Foundation by email immediately after you have made a payment. Email foundation@colongwilderness.org.au with your name and address details, so we can mail to you an official tax deductible receipt. We also need notification so as to track all contributions to those who have provided them for our accounting purposes.

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION Why not join or invite a friend to join?

Yes, I wish to become a member of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd. I subscribe to the Foundation's aim of preserving Australia's wilderness remnants. I accept the liability provided in the Colong Foundation's Articles of Association to guarantee \$20 should it be needed in the event of the winding up of the Foundation. Signed .....



### A BEQUEST

**Please remember us  
in your Will.**

The Law Society of NSW recommends the following wording... "I bequeath the sum of \$... to the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd. for its general purposes and declare that the receipt of the treasurer for the time being of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd. shall be complete discharge to my executors in respect of any sum paid to the Colong Foundation for Wilderness Ltd."



### ABOUT THE COLONG FOUNDATION

The Colong Foundation, the successor to Myles Dunphy's National Parks and Primitive Areas Council, is Australia's longest-serving community advocate for wilderness. Its proposal for a Wilderness Act was accepted in 1987. To supplement this legislation, our Red Index, audits NSW wilderness areas, identifies threats and formulates site specific protection remedies. There are now 1,836,000 ha of protected wilderness in NSW. However, many beautiful and environmentally highly significant wilderness areas are not protected, such as the 13,000 ha Green Gully in the Macleay Gorges, Pilliga and Goonoo on the north west slopes, Yengo in the Blue Mountains, the Deua Valley on the South Coast and the Tabletop and Main Range in the Snowy Mountains.

The Colong Foundation for Wilderness has had a long and successful history. From its foundation in 1968 until 1975 it was the fighting force that prevented limestone mining and the destruction of native forest for pine plantations in the southern Blue Mountains. The Foundation not only played a leading role in realising Myles Dunphy's plan for a Greater Blue Mountains National Park, it pushed for its World Heritage listing, as well as the reservation of a Border Ranges National Park and Kakadu National Park. It has initiated successful campaigns for the protection of over a million hectares of wilderness in NSW.

The realisation of Myles Dunphy's vision of a comprehensive system of national parks with protected wilderness areas remains the primary objective of the Colong Foundation.

Now, more than ever, the Foundation needs your support. Well financed and powerful rural interests, miners, loggers, resort developers, as well as four wheel drive enthusiasts, horse riders and others, have greatly increased the threats facing Australia's wild places.

Only with your help, through continued membership and donations, can the Foundation continue its campaigns for the preservation of the natural environment and effective nature-based national park management, and by concentrating on wilderness, these rare areas can be kept safe from development and misuse.

Bulletin back page, 05/11

# THE COLONG FOUNDATION

SENDER: THE COLONG FOUNDATION FOR  
WILDERNESS  
Level 2, 332 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW 2000

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## PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE FROM THE COLONG FOUNDATION

**WILD PLACES** 27.50

*The meticulously researched, beautifully written book on wilderness by Peter Prineas with photographs by Henry Gold (285pp)*

**BLUE MOUNTAINS WORLD HERITAGE** 50.00

*Alex Colley and Henry Gold's description of the 67 year campaign culminating in World Heritage listing. (136pp)*

**SUSTAINABILITY** 20.00

*Alex Colley provides his vision on a sustainable future. (90pp)*

**THE BAREFOOT BUSHWALKER** 27.50

*by Dorothy Butler, Australian Geographic award winner. A story of a lifetime of adventure in wilderness and high mountains (292pp)*

**THE GARDENS OF STONE VISITORS MAP** 7.50

*A full colour double sided touring map and guide to the attractions of the Gardens of Stone reserve proposal*

**THE BATTLE FOR THE BUSH** 27.50

*Geoff Mosley's account of the genesis of the nature conservation movement and saving of the Blue Mountains environment (174pp)*

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**WILDERNESS RED INDEX – complete** \$110

*The Index describes the land ownership, values, history and threats to NSW wild places*

– Summary brochures \$2.20

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**LIVING WITH THE DINGO** (107pp) 19.00

*by Adam O'Neill*

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