

Nuclear Update

*The “contract” is signed...
but the project is still very much in doubt.*

On Thursday 13 July there was lots of activity. The Mayor of Sutherland Shire Council had received an invitation by fax the day before to attend a ceremony at the ANSTO Lucas Heights site. It contained a vague reference to “the completion of the [pre-contract negotiations] commercial step”. What it really meant was to witness the signing of the contract with the successful tenderer, INVAP of Argentina. Mayor McDonnell declined the invitation and instead called his own press conference at the Council chambers.

A quick demonstration was arranged for 10.30am outside the gates of ANSTO. Lots of media were present. On TV the ANSTO CEO maintained that the new reactor would cost \$270 million, conveniently forgetting that this was a 1997 figure. The current guess by the Science Minister is \$326 million but at the last hearing of the Senate Estimates Committee a bureaucrat admitted that the contract would contain “the usual rise and fall clauses”. What these were he could not or would not say.

Bulletin suggests costs could go to \$500 million

A recent article in the *Bulletin* suggested that the true cost could be closer to half a billion and that the reactor project could turn out to be another “Collins Class” affair, overpriced and unworkable. The Minister has said that the choice of the Argentine vendor was the best economically. One wonders if it was actually the cheapest. Which raises the question, if the government holds the vendor to the quoted price will there be any sacrifice of safety or of high tech equipment?

If the former, how would it get past the safety assessment, which must be carried out by the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) before a licence to construct is given? If the latter, Professor White, a strong advocate of the new reactor, has said that it would be a “toy”.

Minister Nick Minchin and the ANSTO Board have been keen to get a contract

signed as quickly as possible. Maybe they feel an election coming on and are not confident of the getting the numbers next time. This may be the reason for an unusually bold statement by the CEO of ANSTO, Professor Garnett, at the contract ceremony. Our local newspaper, the *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader* reported her as saying it was unlikely any potential Labor Government would or could back out on the deal if elected next year, despite a campaign of opposition from Sutherland Shire Council and public condemnation from the Federal Labor Party, Democrats and Greens.

“A contract is a legal document. If any plug was pulled there would be very significant issues,” Professor Garnett said. “If you look at the history of Australia, regardless of whether people necessarily support a project or not, I am not aware of any precedent where people have pulled the plug for political reasons once a commercially enforceable and legally binding contract is in place.” The professor showed no concern whether the local community supported the project.

Anyway, to cheer us up, the *Daily Telegraph* quoted Senator Nick Bolkus, Shadow Minister for the Environment, as saying that the contract signing represented an abuse of process and power and said that Labor might be able to block construction if elected to government. “We’re taking legal advice,” he said. “There are powers available to any incoming Minister under the legislation to make it almost impossible for the reactor to proceed.”

We hope he is correct.

The examination of the specification by ARPANSA.

The next stage of the long process is the appearance, sometime next year – to selected officials – of the detailed engineering specification. (I hear you ask, how can a contract be signed for a \$300 million nuclear reactor without seeing the specification? There is no obvious answer.) When it arrives it will be examined in detail by the Australian Radiation

Continued page 4



The Challenges of the New Millennium

Our community must find a balance between social, economic and environmental needs if it is to meet the challenges of the new millennium. The Sutherland Shire Environment Centre needs your help as we prepare to meet these challenges.

Some of the Challenges we have targeted in the coming decade are:

- Stopping unsustainable development and population growth in the Shire
- Promoting sustainable transport usage
- Preserving remaining bushland and regenerating degraded bushland.
- Restoring the quality of waterways
- Recognising and promoting the Shire's cultural heritage and its value to current and future generations
- Encouraging sustainable consumption and waste avoidance
- Demanding safety of consumer goods and services
- Banishing activities producing radioactive waste and opting for non-reactor high technology

On behalf of the Management Committee, I invite each of you to join us in our friendly and proactive Environment Centre as we all work together to find acceptable solutions to the challenges facing us.

SSEC Environmental Education Program

The Centre has responded to a need for more environmental education in our community by developing a strategy, which will give it a key role in educating the Shire community about protecting our environment.

We promote and support the role of education in protection of the environment. The scope of our commitment to education includes:

- professional development;
- regular communication with other NSW educators through local & regional networks;
- partnerships in education projects with other educators; and

- development of a series of comprehensive learning materials

This table and chart developed by Les Robinson of Social Change Online, helps us to understand the role and purpose of tools used in environmental education

Purpose	Tool
Knowledge	Information (Data, Facts)
Understanding	Stories – "Narratives"
Values	Expressing stories with passion
Desire	Visions
Skills	Experiences
Optimism	Experiencing Success
Leadership	Facilitation

The SSEC sees its role in environmental education as an innovator that is trying to get the attention of the early and late majority. The early adaptors are that most important component of the community, the callers who come to us for information on the environment, often referred to by us as community ambassadors for the environment.

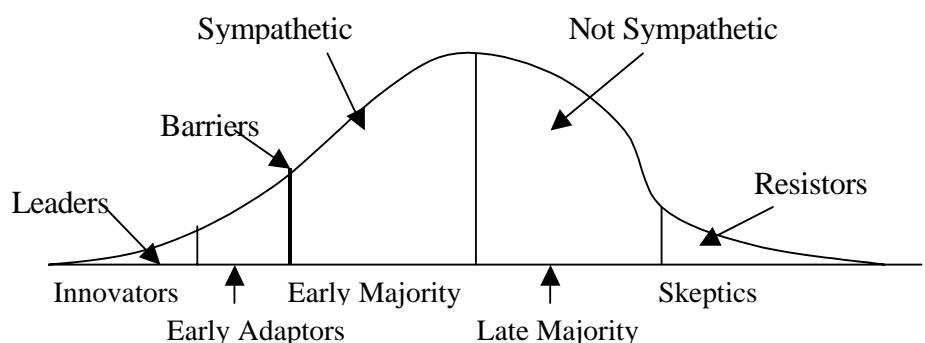
Another component of the SSEC environmental education strategy is the development of a suite of learning tools built to a set of educational and environmental competencies. To this end, over the next five years, the Centre plans to have a complete set of teaching kits on a broad range of environmental issues (for example waste minimisation, climate, air quality, water quality etc.). We will integrate both local and global perspectives and show how they relate to our bioregions.

A further component of our strategy is an in depth reference library available to community, schools and business. The Centre is currently acquiring and cataloguing books, reports, studies, newsclippings, videos etc. on a broad range of topics. This library will also eventually have an online computer available to users for researching environmental topics on the Internet.

The SSEC will attempt to utilise a broad range of media to reach the community, booklets, newsletters, fact sheets, books, Seminars, workshops, conferences, TAFE courses, school programs, community projects etc, to name a few.

See you at the AGM on the 8th!

Figure 1 (below) is a bell curve, which charts the progress of environmental issues within a community. For example in NSW home composting is found in 65% of homes, putting it into the late majority category, while recycling is in 95% of homes, leaving only a portion of skeptics still resisting change.



- Innovators (0-5% of community) – the leaders, trend setters or pace setters.
- Early Adaptors (5-15%) – those who search out the innovators.
- Early Majority (15-50%) – the early half of the community that adopts change.
- Late Majority (50-85%) – the late half of the community that adopts change.
- Skeptics or Laggards (85-100%) – those who work hard to avoid change.

Just \$60 billion will fix it!

THIS IS INDEED the best of times and the worst of times.

Never has environmental awareness been greater; never has destruction of earth's natural resources been greater.

In every country, and particularly in affluent ones like ours, most people know we should be repairing the soils-forests-fisheries-air ravaged by commercial exploitation in the twentieth century. Yet the UN's Millennium Forum – "for the twenty-first century" – had to issue a May warning that: "A single-minded focus on economic growth through uncontrolled free markets [is crippling] many national economies, exacerbating poverty, eroding human values and destroying the natural environment."

True enough for Australia: massive land-clearing in Queensland, our rivers all in trouble, little help for the ailing Great Barrier Reef, the salting of soils worse than ever...a Federal Government that has put the environment on the backburner, an Opposition that barely mentioned it at its Hobart conference.

"We live in a destitute time," said a speaker at the funeral of Judith Wright, the poet-conservationist who put aside poetry to organise against the environmental vandalism she saw all around her.

Yes, BUT... At what appears to be the worst of times, many positives can be found, giving hope that a turning point could be possible early in the new millennium. *Here are some of them:*

- "The green movement generally is thriving in Australia" (*SMH*, 15.7.00). For instance, the Australian Conservation Movement has 60,000 members, its highest ever, far in excess of the membership of the Labor and Coalition parties combined – at a time when numbers in nearly all community groups have declined.

- Federal Treasury Secretary, Ted Evans, respected on both sides of politics, says it will take \$60 billion over ten years to fix Australia's land, water and air problems (*Sun-Herald*, 9.7.00). He was addressing a conference of economists!

- Evans had picked up that figure of \$60 billion from the 10-point plan of Landcare architects Phillip Toyne and Rick Farley, a plan to redeem the 1990 Landcare program which, despite millions of dollars and thousands of volunteers, has not yet succeeded in reversing continent-wide degradation.

- *SMH* senior economist, Ross Gittins, excited by reports of major firms now showing concern for the environmental effects of their operations – e.g. oil-giant BP, claiming to be "the world's leading producer of solar power" – prophesies an imminent new era "when the economic rationalists jump on the greenies' bandwagon" and, indeed, want to take it over (*SMH*, 12.7.00). May that come true soon!

- Prince Charles, in May, calls on the world to "rediscover a reverence for the natural world [by employing] both the intuitive and rational halves of our own nature...bridging the gap between cynical secularism and the timelessness of traditional religion."

So there are growing signs that some powerful interests are working from the *top-down*. They will be greeted by the environment movement, which has been working since about 1970 from the *bottom-up* – the task of both ends being to win over the large uncommitted *middle*.

In Sutherland Shire, the Environment Centre's stocks have never been higher. We are positioned to make advances. We reach out to everyone who is seeking a way to help.

Individuals who can give a degree of leadership are so valuable, the kinds of people who are leading campaigns for Port Hacking, Kurnell, the preserving of greenspace, rejection of a new reactor, of overdevelopment, and much more.

Let's try to bring such caring people to our AGM on September 8th, where a comprehensive report will look at past achievements and the future's possibilities.

Bob Walshe

You are invited to the Year 2000 General Meeting of Sutherland Shire Environment Centre

where you will hear

- ✓ an account of the past year's many activities
- ✓ what's happening to our green-marine-urban environment

where you will meet

- ✓ convenors of our numerous committees
- ✓ other members, and executives of the Centre

where you will see

- ✓ displays of some of the Shire's environmental problem areas

At 7.30pm, Friday 8 September

(please try to arrive on time), supper too

Sutherland School of Arts Hall,

beside station, on west side

ph 9545 3077 fax 9521 1477

Minister intervenes

The situation on the Kurnell Peninsula has taken a dramatic turn since our last edition.

In late July came the news that the State Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, Andrew Refshauge, was to 'strip' Sutherland Shire Council of its consent authority in regard to the contentious Australand residential development proposal and move to rezone the site (marked on the map) to facilitate the development.

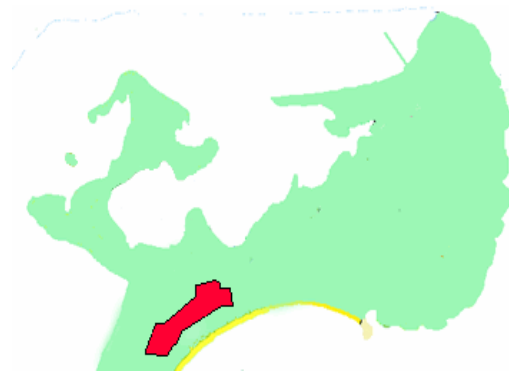
Many will contend that this State Government intervention is a measure designed to counter recent moves by the new Council to bring a halt to inappropriate development, moves which many believe would have contributed to a sound environmental future for much of the Peninsula. More specifically, these moves included a Council vote in February to reject Australand's proposal to construct 500 dwellings on their former sandmining site, and a concurrent rezoning of all sandmining sites to open space (private recreation).

The Minister has now rejected both Coun-

cil moves and in his 'take over' as consent authority may well have set a precedent for other future developments on the rest of the Kurnell Peninsula.

The Minister's move will necessitate significant amendments to the Peninsula's Regional Environmental Plan which the State Government has, in recent times, consistently baulked at. In response to regular calls by the community and Council for a review of the REP on environmental grounds, the State Government had previously insisted that the REP was adequate and that a review, with associated large scale amendments, was unnecessary. A change in the consent authority and a rezoning to facilitate the Australand development as announced by the Minister represent *large scale amendments*, and therefore could be seen as a perplexing about-face.

There is a degree of community concern as to these recent moves by the Minister which have been announced with no consultation with either the community or Council. The Australand site has been under intense scrutiny, discussion and negotiation for a long time and particularly in the past two years. The Centre



and other community groups are well informed on the subject but the Minister, prior to his announcement, chose not to engage these groups in any discussions. The extent of future community consultation and planning processes is one of numerous other uncertainties that are of concern. In response to the announcement, Sutherland Shire Council on 31 July passed a motion to, among other things, condemn the actions of the Minister in regard to the Australand site, resolve to pursue their open space rezoning, and make representations to the Federal Government to seek a whole-of-government approach to planning on the Peninsula.

In light of recent events, some would argue this final goal is still somewhat distant.

Simon Kimberley

Nuclear Update from page 1

Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) and we have been told that its inspection will take a further nine months. When ARPANSA is satisfied that it conforms to its safety standards, whatever they are, ANSTO will be able to apply for a licence to construct. This could be early in 2002.

Waste storage or disposal?

Is the licence certain to be approved? So far there has been nothing in the performance of ARPANSA in its 18 month life for us to have any confidence of it being rejected, but who knows? In the *Leader*, 3 August, the CEO of ARPANSA, Dr John Loy who makes the decisions, was

quoted as saying that he was prepared to apply the brakes if the government failed to convince him that an appropriate nuclear waste storage facility would be in place by the time the reprocessed spent fuel was returned to Australia.

However, this is a step back from the conditions of the licence approval given to ANSTO for the Lucas Heights site in September last year.

In the Safety Evaluation Report, page 12, it states that "A licence to operate the [new] reactor would not be issued by ARPANSA without there being clear and definite means available for the ultimate disposal of radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel" The key words are 'ultimate disposal' and what exactly is meant by them.

The wastes returning from the

UK and France following spent fuel reprocessing have very long lives spanning some thousands of years. The store, to which Dr Loy refers is merely an interim measure. For several years I have asked the Department of Resources, which is responsible for the waste store, how long the waste will remain radioactive and need protection and how long the proposed store will last. The department will not commit itself on the former and the best that I can get (verbally) about the store was "about 50 years".

Unless ARPANSA explains exactly what it means by 'ultimate disposal' and quantifies the life of the waste to be stored and what it expects from the store the public will remain uncertain. If it sees 50 years being long term then it should have a closer look at its

responsibilities under the ARPANSA Act. Meanwhile the Minister for Science was forced to give a press conference promising to announce the site for a store during 2002.

Such a long campaign has its toll of participants. It should be realised that most are or were newcomers to taking on the Federal Government and one of its strongest scientific arms. Whilst they are now battle hardened, we still need more active troops. If you feel that you can help, please contact the Nuclear Desk at the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre, telephone number 02 9545 3077. Email panr@ssec.org.au

Michael Priceman

RECYCLED ART COMPETITION

On Saturday 21 October an Awards presentation will be held at Hazelhurst Regional Gallery to recognise winners in our Recycled Art Competition.

The students of the Shire have been invited to submit entries, made from recycled materials, in this Art Competition, jointly sponsored by Sutherland Shire Council. Our first Recycled Art Competition was held in 1991 and held over the ensuing four years, being revived this year.



made from discarded materials. 'The portable radio activated by an old phone handset and washing machine agitator (with battery) sticks in my memory as the most ingenious entry ever received in previous years, Ruth Zeibots recalls, reflecting on past years' successes. This competition is really a challenge to students to use their imagination to re-use, reduce and recycle. All Shire residents are asked to up-turn their kerbside recycling content. Some people may not be aware of the cans, tetrapacs, and many plastics (except 5) including 4L Oil packs, that can now be recycled.

We look forward to another success in recycling.

Many creative entries were submitted in previous years so we look forward to some interesting Year 2000 Gizmos this year. The purpose of this exercise is to stress the importance of recycling and what can be

Next Street Stall

Saturday 2 September

in front of

**Tuckerbag
supermarket**

**Gymea Shopping
Centre**

A 'DECADES of the CENTURY' DINNER

Friday 27 October 2000

On Friday 27 October 2000 we will be holding our Annual Dinner at

**Sutherland District Trade Union Club, Gymea
(Bass & Flinders Room).**

Our Trivia contest will be a team effort this year, table by table, with an ultimate prize of a double-pass to a city theatre, along with many heat prizes. Dancing, along with an excellent Buffet meal, will make the evening a totally enjoyable occasion.

Our theme this year is 'Decades of the Last Century' To coincide with the launch of our "2000 and Beyond" Prospectus, we are looking for some really tremendous costumes. So attack the wardrobes once again! Prizes for most original and 'interesting' dress.

Phone Pat or Ruth at the SSEC Office on 9545 3077 to make a booking. We have managed to keep the price down to \$30 per person (*includes GST*). Drinks at club prices. We look forward to seeing our old and new friends, at what has become our annual get together.

Bushland at Menai

Our disagreement with Council over the best siting of an indoor sporting complex in bushland at Allison Crescent Menai came to an abrupt halt on 10 August 2000 when Council surrendered its development application.

Council had given itself consent to build an indoor sporting complex on a bushland site on Allison Crescent behind Menai marketplace. The bushland has been classified as an endangered ecological community. The National Parks and Wildlife Service have noted that the bushland is one of the best examples of Shale Sandstone Transition Forest (SSTF) in the Shire. Much of the Menai area was covered in this type of vegetation. Very little of this bushland now exists.

We argued that building the indoor sporting complex on the proposed site will endanger the sustainability of this already small patch of bushland. Council maintained that as long as a good management plan is in place, the remaining bushland would remain sustainable. Unfortunately, only time could tell whether Council is correct or not.

The bushland area is only four hectares. According to experts, this is at the margin of sustainability. Around Menai, indeed around Sydney, we have lost so much bushland that people are protesting everywhere that governments should take measures to protect the bush. In fact, Sutherland Shire Council's own marketing and policies has emphasised the importance of bushland. In the light of these sentiments, Council's insistence on an indoor sporting complex on this patch of bushland—and only this patch of bushland—is especially puzzling.

The Centre's initial attempt to have Council rethink its development proposal was rejected by Council. The Centre sought the advice of an independent expert to verify whether he thought the bushland would be adversely affected. He agreed with our assessment. Some of Council's own staff were against development on the bushland area. After taking advice from the Environmental Defender's

Office about whether, legally, Council had followed the proper procedure in making an assessment for development on the bushland, the Centre began a court case in the Land and Environment Court challenging the Council's procedure.

As the Council knows, the Centre would have been happier not to go to court if its concerns could be met another way. The Centre's position has been consistently straightforward:

1. We wanted an outcome that would give the highest chance to ensure the sustainability of the bushland site.
2. We wanted an outcome that would protect the residential amenity of the area.

There were at least three different ways we thought this could be achieved:

1. Locate the indoor sporting complex on another, non-sensitive site in the Menai area.
2. Put a plan in place for the management of the bushland with targets to measure success of the management regimes. When targets had been

reached, reconsider the viability of the bushland under the management plan and whatever development proposals might be envisaged.

3. Submit a fresh development application and do another species impact statement and traffic impact study using up-to-date data and a consultant both the Centre and Sutherland Shire Council have faith in.

It would appear from Council's media release that they have opted for the third option rather than continue with the court case. According to their media release Council "(wants) to be absolutely certain that the community has been given the optimum opportunity to comment on the proposal and raise concerns with us."

This is good news.

The Centre will certainly do all it can to cooperate by providing Council with input on its proposal while safeguarding the environment for current and future generations.

Miriam Verbeek

We the Peoples' Declaration -- Millennium Forum 2000

VISION - Our vision is of a world that is human-centered and genuinely democratic, where all human beings are full participants and determine their own destinies. In our vision we are one human family, in all our diversity, living on one common homeland and sharing a just, sustainable and peaceful world, guided by universal principles of democracy, equality, inclusion, voluntarism, non-discrimination and participation by all persons, men and women, young and old, regardless of race, faith, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity or nationality. It is a world where peace and human security, as envisioned in the principles of the United Nations Charter, replace armaments, violent conflict and wars. It is a world where everyone lives in a clean environment with a fair distribution of the earth's resources. Our vision includes a special role for the dynamism of young people and the experience of the elderly and reaffirms the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights – civil, political, economic, social and cultural.

CHALLENGES - We begin the new millennium facing grave and interconnected challenges. As actors in the struggle for peace, justice and the eradication of poverty, NGOs encounter daily the human impact of rising violence and armed conflicts, widespread violations of human rights, and unacceptably large numbers of people who are denied the means of a minimal human existence. At the same time, new and emerging diseases such as HIV/AIDS threaten to devastate entire societies.

Globalization and advances in technology create significant opportunities for people to connect, share and learn from each other. At the same time, corporate-driven globalization increases inequities between and within countries, undermines local traditions and cultures, and escalates disparities between rich and poor, thereby marginalizing large numbers of people in urban and rural areas. Women, indigenous peoples, youth, boys and girls, and people with disabilities suffer disproportionately from the effects of globalization. Massive debt repayments are still made by the poorest nations to the richest, at the expense of basic healthcare, education and children's lives. Trafficking in women, sexual exploitation, drug trafficking, money laundering, corruption and the flow of small arms promote insecurity. States are becoming weaker, while an unaccountable, transnational private sector grows stronger. A single-minded focus on economic growth through uncontrolled free markets, combined with the adjustment and stabilization policies of international financial institutions controlled by the rich creditor nations are crippling many national economies, exacerbating poverty, eroding human values and destroying the natural environment.

Globalization should be made to work for the benefit of everyone. This can happen only if global corporations, international financial and trade institutions and governments are subject to effective democratic control by the people. We see a strengthened and democratized United Nations and a vibrant civil society as guarantors of this accountability. And we issue a warning: if the architects of globalization are not held to account, this will not simply be unjust; the edifice will crumble with dire consequences for everyone. In the end, the wealthy will find no refuge, as intolerance, disease, environmental devastation, war, social disintegration and political instability spread.

The Centre needs volunteers!

With next year as the United Nations' International Year of Volunteers, the importance of volunteering will become the focus of millions around the globe. This recognition of volunteers is most important to organisations such as ours because without volunteers we would have no chance of meeting the growing concerns over environmental issues within our community.

What is volunteering at SSEC?

As Bob Walshe noted in the last newsletter, volunteering is an army without uniforms or officers; the recruits "enlist" by making an unpaid commitment of energy, time and skill in the not-for-profit sector, either to help others directly, face to face, or to help institutions that are seen to be helping others.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of the Centre's activities; these dedicated good samaritans are what enabled us to meet our many environmental challenges in the 1990s. Volunteering at SSEC can include everything from campaigning organising to letter-writing. They can include: *accounting, attending conferences, seminars, workshops, campaign organising, collating*



mail-outs, computer database work, word processing and webpage work, distributing posters/signs, door-knocking, filing, fundraising, issue convening/co-ordinating, journalistic skills, legal advice, letterbox drops (over 40 suburbs within the Shire), letter writing, media contacts, miscellaneous office work, news-clipping, organising issue meetings, phone-tree contacting, public speaking, reporting on Council meetings, researching, selling raffle tickets, sign writing, helping on street stalls,

submission writing, suppling transportation ...

SSEC would like to you to join its Volunteers Army! – and help to make our home and local environment a better, kinder and less destructive place to live.

Help us to address local environmental issues by *becoming a volunteer for the Environment.*

How to volunteer!

If you are interested, we will do our best to make it constructive, interesting and fun. Look at the list below, and use it to help decide the area(s) at which you might be interested in volunteering, then contact us at 9545-3077.

- √ WEB Work (priority area) – *We have several websites that need regular editing and updating.*
- √ Computers – *Work on our database or type letters, submissions, reports and grant applications.*
- √ Issues _____ – *Do you have an environmental concern on which you would like to take a leadership or participatory role? (eg air, waste, water, climate, bushcare, over development, transport, nuclear, rivers, wildlife)*
- √ Legal Advice
- √ Office Work – *Filing, telephone, Mailouts etc.*
- √ Street Stalls (monthly)
- √ Other Skills _____
- √ Distributing Posters/Signs/Leaflets _____ (area)
- √ Cash Donation \$ _____ – *We are mostly self-funded and depend on donations to pay for rent, electricity and telephone.*

Want to Help or Simply Find Out More?

The Centre has a range of committees dealing with issues in and beyond the Shire. These are listed with the names of their convenors below. If you would like more information about their activities, or would like to help, contact the Centre

Eco-Tourism	John Cox
EMF Radiation	Lyn McLean and John Lincoln
Environmental education.....	Phil Smith
Fundraising.....	Pat Elphinston, Ruth Zeibots, Don Shirley
Hacking River.....	Tim Tapsell
Kurnell.....	Simon Kimberley
Nuclear Issues.....	Michael Priceman
Population.....	Gordon Hocking
Toxic Chemicals.....	John Earl
Transport.....	Michelle Zeibots and Malcolm Cluett
Urban Bushland.....	Miriam Verbeek
Urban Issues.....	Neil deNett
Waste minimisation.....	Jim Sloan

**NB: Fee includes membership for one year plus four issues of "The Centre"
Currently includes GST. Fees to be reviewed at AGM**