

**Friends of Narrabeen Lagoon Catchment
President's Report
August 2009**

This is my third annual report to you as President of Friends of Narrabeen Lagoon Catchment. Our mission is to see the remaining bushland in the catchment of Narrabeen Lagoon permanently protected and remediation occur where necessary. As land values continue to increase, there are constant pressures to replace this bushland with urban development. If this occurs, it will have a catastrophic impact on the catchment and the lagoon itself, with ecosystems collapsing and the lagoon becoming a swamp.

The previous Minister for the Environment Bob Debus promised that 446 hectares of Crown Land in the catchment would be protected forever, but so far only 305 hectares has been gazetted for environmental protection. Our suspicion is that the balance – 141 hectares or one third of the area – is slated for sale by the Department of Lands for housing and commercial development.

This must not happen.

In the past year, our organisation has grown stronger and we have become better resourced. We have focused particularly on establishing contact and having significant dialogue with relevant politicians at local, State and Federal levels. We also carefully monitor the plans and actions of Pittwater and Warringah Councils.

We had a significant victory in May, when Planning Minister Kristina Keneally placed a 10-year moratorium on the development of four crucial sites - Red Hill, Lizard Rock, Cromer Golf Club and Oxford Falls west. We are now firmly on the Minister's radar. So far this year your committee has written submissions or lobbied decision makers on 15 issues – that's two a month on average!

The most logical way to protect the remaining land would be to extend Garigal National Park. The difficulty here is that National Parks & Wildlife Service see the conservation values as too low and the management issues as being too problematic.

Friends believes the next best option would be to turn the area into a Regional Park - also under the National Parks and Wildlife Act and as secure as a national park, but with broader management principles that focus more on recreation.

This solution has the support of a crucial arm of State Government, with whom we have had lengthy discussions. These discussions continue. I am not in a position to elaborate right now as they are at a sensitive stage.

Friends is also heavily involved in the remediation of the catchment and we chair and have three representatives on the Project Reference Group, set up by the two councils to ensure the objectives of the \$1.9m Urban Sustainability Grant are met in a timely fashion. The grant expires in April next year and we need to access additional funding to enable the work to continue. There has been a dramatic transformation of the bush in the Middle Creek area. Slow down and take a look next time you travel along the Wakehurst Parkway.

We held four public forums over the past 12 months exploring different issues related to the catchment. All have attracted large crowds.

Friends activities programme continues. Our bushwalks, tag along tours and kayak trips, all run by committee members, are in enormous demand and have significantly improved community awareness of the issues.

Our comparatively small group achieves much, thanks to the quality of people we have on our committee and the time they are prepared to devote to the cause.

Committee, please stand so that you can be recognised and thanked for your efforts – Judith Bennett, Ian Hehir, Jenny Wilson, Mary Armstrong, Jacqui Marlow, Christine Hauptstein, Phyl & Barry Morris, Ann Sharp, Anthony Harris, Angus Gordon and David Palmer.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the enthusiasm and strong support of you, our members and supporters. 12 months ago we set ourselves the objective of nearly doubling financial members to 200 – and this morning we enrolled our 200th member!

So we head into our 5th year in a very robust position, with clear objectives and strategies and an even stronger determination to achieve total environmental protection for Narrabeen Lagoon Catchment.

Tony Carr
August 24, 2009