

CLIFFS IN CRISIS

By JOHN RIDDELL

In December last year Lord Mayor Cr. George Harrison spoke out in protection of the Illawarra Escarpment. However, recent development applications which infringe on the Escarpment foothills question the integrity of the Lord Mayor.

Picture this - a group of first year film students have to do a video-essay on some of the prominent and beautiful areas for filming in the Illawarra. Their first stop is

North Beach. It is here they shoot about twenty minutes of footage trying to capture the 'essence' of the beach by focussing on breaking waves, the odd surfer and the soft, golden sand. Unfortunately, they won't be able to see or hear anything on the raw footage due to the high ocean winds resulting in a loud 'kssshhh' sound. And as the camera operator is unable to find the focus button, it will all result in an exquisite collage of unrequited blur.

After these rare moments of cinematographic

brilliance, they go to the pub for a liquid lunch to discuss their next location for filming. Some alcohol and idle chatter takes place and they decide that the Escarpment is another great spot to shoot. They soon arrive at the base of Mt. Keira and talk for a while, only to find out the cameraman still can't find the focus button or his long-neck stubby which he brought with him from the pub.

Due to their more important drinking schedule, the students head towards the steel works, Bass point and then Cooneys to finish their project on famed Illawarra landmarks tomorrow.

My point here that when one thinks about any beautiful place both in and around the Illawarra, it is probable that you will think of the Escarpment. The Illawarra Escarpment is most unique due to its vast array of native flora and fauna, ecological value, rainforest qualities, the learning environment it presents for scientists, students and young'uns as well as being quite an astonishing backdrop. Throughout this article, I hope that the information presented will illustrate the invaluable qualities of Illawarra Escarpment to our local, native and indigenous cultures.

Part 1: "The Kakadu of NSW"

Having seen a bit of Kakadu National Park in person, I can definitely agree with Sir David Attenborough's point of the Illawarra Escarpment being the 'Kakadu of NSW' (*Illawarra Mercury*, December 16, 2000)

When I was in year nine I took an unforgettable trip to Central Australia. This entailed three weeks of seeing some of Australia's natural wonders with some of my classmates including Uluru, the Olga's, the Devil's Marbles, UDP Falls, King's Canyon, about

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nine filming locations seen in Crocodile Dundee and yes, you guessed it, Kakadu National Park.

It was at Kakadu when something hit me - and it wasn't just the blistering heat. It was the fact that this was Australia at its most beautiful. Our group took a boat trip that day around a small part of Kakadu, encountering a diversity of native animals and plantlife. We saw salt-water crocodiles, various marsupials, infinite birdlife, fish, rare gum trees, abundant vegetation and an enormous monitor (that's a kind of lizard, for you internet junkies).

What amazed me was the effect this place had on twenty nine obnoxious fifteen-year-olds (myself included). We were absolutely awe-struck by the contents of this place for the entire duration of the tour (except, of course, when my tent-mate threw his sandwich out of the boat to feed the crocodiles. He was assured by the tour guide that he was the next thing to be thrown off the boat. Naturally, my ruffian buddy promptly ended his display of youthful exuberance).

Attenborough's labelling the Illawarra Escarpment the "Kakadu of NSW" is due, I think, to the many similarities they have like endangered Australian wildlife, pristine eco-systems and a striking presence. The Illawarra Escarpment should indeed be given the same attention and care as Kakadu, as like Kakadu, the Escarpment is another example of Australia at its most beautiful. However, I don't think this is reason for Lord Mayor George Harrison and his cohorts whack a uranium mine in the middle of Mt Keira (though it wouldn't surprise me if they had already considered this). The Illawarra Escarpment should be protected from anything that threatens it - such as housing development, gas pipelines and Very Fast Trains. Once something like the Escarpment is gone, you can bet your bottom dollar that it will never return nor could anything resemble or replace it.

Part 2: Why Lord Mayor Harrison will 'Never, never know'.

I'm not a full-blooded environmentalist - I'm an arts student (I would like to know more about the environment

but I failed every science class in high school). I'm not going to use many facts or figures either - again due to the fact that I'm an arts student. However, now that you reassuringly know that I am an arts student, you will no doubt expect a big whinge...which is what you are going to get.

In December last year on the front page of the *Illawarra Mercury*, Cr.Harrison stated that the Escarpment is indeed "the Kakadu of NSW" (*Illawarra Mercury*, December 16, 2000). The article, poignantly entitled 'Lone Ranger', is in relation to Harrison's supposed push to turn the Escarpment into a national park as well as his stances for the safety of our local environment. Such examples of this include his pledge to lead the charge to create a green corridor between the Royal and the Moreton National Parks as well as to ban further residential development west of existing and approved development around Wollongong's northern suburbs. Cr. Harrison also remarks that we have "crystal blue waters and a pristine escarpment. Once you prostitute that with houses you can't replace it" (*Illawarra*

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Mercury, December 16, 2000).

What is missing here is the bigger picture. Everything written in that article glorifies Cr Harrison's position on protecting the Illawarra Escarpment, and the local environment, though this is questionable. Though he emphasises the push for a national park, Wollongong City Council have planned development on land which is part of and vital to its well-being. These developments include Tree Top Glen, Stanwell Park, Armagh Parade and Sandon Point (linking the Escarpment to the ocean).

At the first council meeting this year, 'Stage 1' of the contentious Sandon Point development and TreeTop Glen were approved. Sandon Point is of tremendous ecological importance, there is geotechnical instability for residential development and it is one of the last green corridors linking the Illawarra Escarpment to the Pacific Ocean. Needless to say, the

thought of development in this area is absolutely out of the question.

Hmmm, though it sounds like the Lord Mayor is indeed doing his bit for the well being of the Escarpment and local environment it is questionable. He has pledged to save and preserve green corridors yet he is knocking out a vital one between the Escarpment and the ocean, he is developing in other important areas of Wollongong's northern suburbs and is "prostituting" this land with more houses on Sandon Point and Tree-top Glen than there are staff working at 'Kathy's Angels'. What makes my head spin is that our local press is applauding Cr Harrison and the Wollongong City Council for their supposed pro-environmental actions.

Part 3: What to do? What to do?

If you have taken even a slight interest in what is happening Illawarra Escarpment and other environmental spots in the Illawarra which are under threat, you can do something about it. You can see the friendly lot in the SRC for more information, you can check out the Aboriginal Tent Embassy at Macauley's Beach, you can

write your own opinions and send 'em in and you can even rock one of George Harrison's roofs (he has four houses) then chain yourself to a nice big tree...however I don't encourage you to do that last idea.

It is vital that we preserve these natural treasures in order to know that our community will still be as beautiful today as it will be for the next generations. I know that things like this have been said time and time again, but one cannot urge the fact enough that the Escarpment and local environment are too precious to throw away for a few yuppies wanting a calm ocean view after a hard day at the office and greedy developers letting nothing stand in their way for dollars and sense (or lack of).

And what are our first year students going to do for their Illawarra landmark assignments? A project on the VFT? A report on Robertson's Big Potato? Vox-pops at Crown Central? Yeesh...

THE RATINGS GAME

CHANNEL NINE SUE 10 FOR BREACH OF COPYRIGHT

By SARAH Le BRETON

Two of Australia's largest commercial television stations have taken the competition over ratings to the next level. Channel Nine recently commenced legal proceedings in the Federal Court of Australia against Channel Ten for an alleged breach of television broadcasting copyright under the *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth).

According to Channel Nine's

whether Ten's re-broadcasting had infringed Nine's television broadcast copyrights by taking a "substantial part" of Nine's original television broadcasts. Justice Conti considered the quality and quantity of what had been taken from Nines commercial interest in its programs and decided that Ten had not breached television broadcasting copyright.

Ten was eager to highlight during the proceedings that *The Panel* had used footage



seriously sued

prominent media Lawyers Gilbert & Tobin, the purported breach transpired when Ten's top rating program *The Panel* re-broadcasted excerpts from episodes of certain Nine television programs. Nine assembled twenty examples of re-broadcasting to support their application. Justice Conti was presented with some outstanding evidence during the hearing which included an excerpt of Marlena levitating during her exorcism on *Days of Their Lives*, a Kevin Gosper interview on *Nightlife* and a scuba diving scene from *Crocodile Hunter*. Each of the twenty excerpts pleaded by Nine went for a duration of less than 45 seconds; some went for as little as 8 seconds.

The key issue for consideration by the Federal Court was

from each of Australia's major television stations - but only Nine had commenced litigation. The Executive Producer of *The Panel* adamantly rejected suggestions that the program was only a comedy production electing rather to place in it the genre of current affairs.

Nine are not ready to accept defeat and are currently preparing another action against Ten. On this occasion Nine are alleging that by re-broadcasting the excerpts Ten have breached television broadcast copyright as they have effectively made a cinematograph film of the broadcasted material contravening section 87 (c) of the *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth). This matter is yet to be listed for hearing so stay tuned.

The Panel fact file

The Panel is Australia's consistently highest rating program in the 16 to 39 age demographic;

The preparatory work for the show each week begins on a Tuesday night and ends on Wednesday night - some times as late as 8.45pm;

First broadcast of *The Panel* occurred in 1998;

During the year a total of 42 weekly episodes are produced and broadcasted.