

# The Clarence Environment Centre's



## Land for wildlife efforts

### front and foremost at Sydney conference

16<sup>th</sup> August 2013

As the New South Wales star performer for the 2012 – 2013 financial year, the Clarence Environment Centre was invited to speak at the biannual conference that was held on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2013 at the Waverton Coal Loader conference facility, which is now part of North Sydney Council's Centre for Sustainability.

The site of the Coal Loading facility, which was still operating as late as 1991, was part of the Sydney foreshores 'hand back to the people' program initiated by the Carr Government in the mid 1990s, and this now historic site is being transformed into a public educational facility, with practical working examples of sustainable living from solar powered central heating to worm farms.

The conference was addressed by a number of speakers from various government agencies, covering conservation related issues.

The first speaker explained the functions of the newly formed Local Land Services (LLS), as far as it was possible, bearing in mind that the new entity will not become operative until the new year. LLS is an amalgamation of the previous Catchment Management Authority, the Livestock Health and Pest Authority, and various service divisions of the former Department of Agriculture.



**Part of the historic Waverton Coal loading site. Coal was stockpiled on the platform above, and loaded as fuel for steam-driven ships from the wharf pictured below.**



Another speaker from the Office of Environment and Heritage explained the operation of the long-running program of Voluntary Conservation Agreements, whereby private landowners can place an in-perpetuity conservation covenant on their land

Unfortunately he was unable to give any assurance that there would be changes to current laws that allow mining companies to access minerals on land protected by conservation agreements, meaning VCAs give no absolute protection against any type of mining (other than opal mining!). A VCA also offers no protection against a “state significant” project, such as a highway upgrade, an airport, dam or other development deemed to be critical infrastructure.

Several of the speakers talked about the need to protect threatened species, endangered communities and vital habitat such as hollow-bearing trees, but none explained why the current State Government has changed the Native Vegetation Act to allow paddock trees to be destroyed without the need for permits, why laws restricting steep land (protected land) from logging had been relaxed, or why private native forestry operators are not required to undertake surveys for threatened species, and can now undertake logging in endangered ecological communities.

A third speaker ran through the progress of the Great Eastern Ranges Project, if it can in fact be called 'progress', given that this one time government-initiative has now been relegated to NGO run status. However, some significant partnerships have been formed in recent times, so the concept of a contiguous wildlife corridor along the Great Dividing Range from the tip of Cape York to the Grampians in Victoria, is still alive, and giving hope for the future.



**Patricia Edwards, the Clarence Environment Centre's Land for Wildlife co-ordinator, addresses the conference.**

The Clarence Environment Centre's involvement with the Land for Wildlife program was explained by local program co-ordinator Patricia Edwards, who explained in graphic detail its significance to local members and the Clarence Valley in general.

Not only is Land for Wildlife helping to expand CEC's knowledge of local flora species by an increasing number of surveys across the Valley's varying landscape types, but it is enabling vegetation



mapping and increasing the general understanding of local vegetation communities, and accordingly the various wildlife habitat types, by lodgement of survey finds with the NSW Wildlife Atlas.

*Two vegetation types (above & rt), equals two different wildlife habitat types*



**NC Wet Sclerophyll, tall flooded gum forests**

Patricia pointed out other benefits of Land for Wildlife, such as its attraction for funding from both State and Federal governments, by which the CEC's own trained and equipped bush regeneration team is now planting trees and removing lantana, camphor laurel and privet from members' properties.

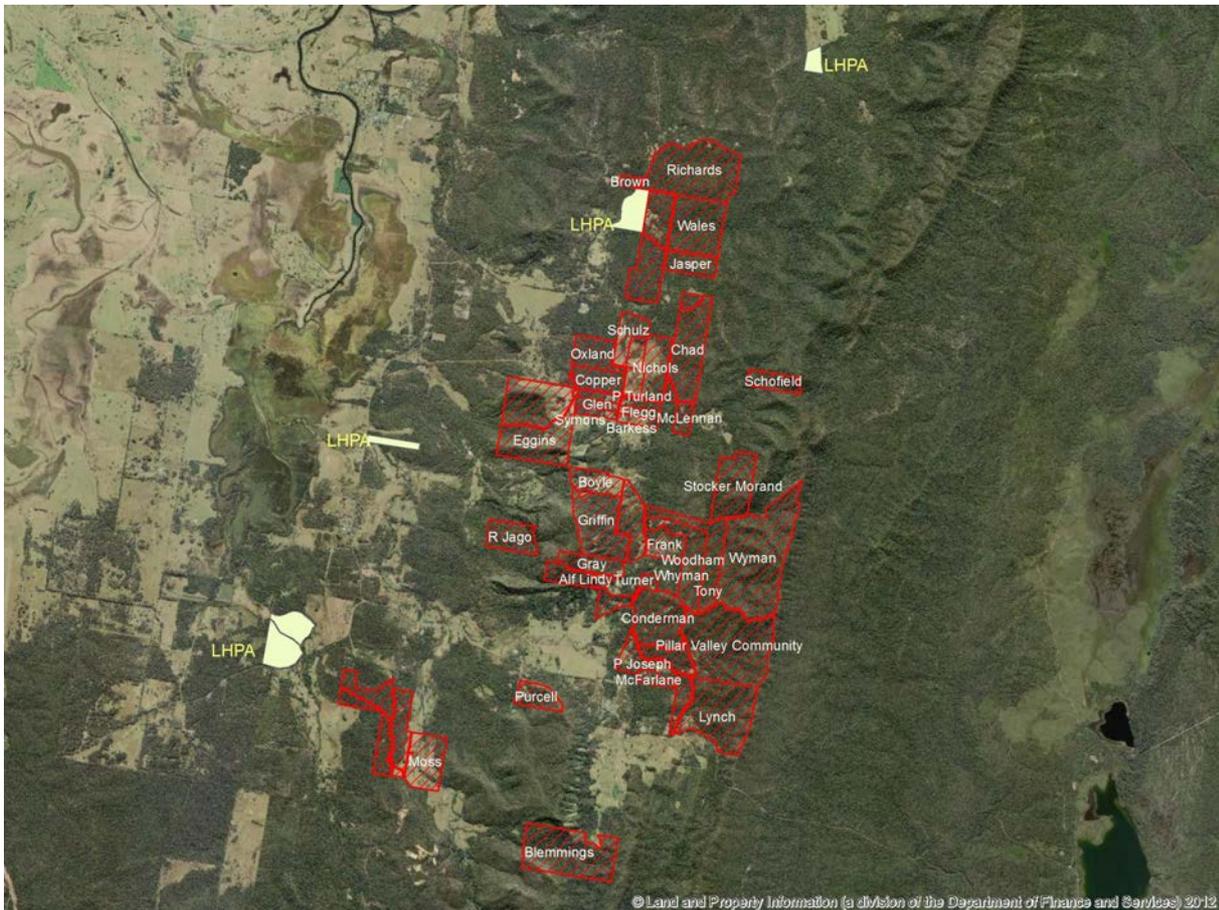


*Bush regeneration team pilot project site, Clarence River B & B, before work*

*Four months later, including winter*



Patricia finished with a map of Pillar Valley (below), showing the Land for Wildlife and associated lands, which this year were brought together in an application by the NSW Nature Conservation Council to gain funding under the Federal government's Biodiversity initiative. If successful this major project will go a long way towards eradicating lantana, feral pigs, dogs and foxes from the area, with the intention of protecting the seriously endangered population of Coastal Emu



"For the most part all the positive things we are gaining, learning and achieving are entirely thanks to Land for Wildlife, " Patricia ended by saying.

"To be in a position to help landowners; to provide actual solutions to sometimes very large problems, and to make such a difference to our wildlife as well as to so many people, is just awesome, and quite humbling.

"Now, with governments at all levels recognising the value of private land conservation, we should all be working with Land for Wildlife to its full capacity, because it is such an important program.

"In my view it can only grow and take flight."

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