

## Bob's Botany Buggerup?

Bob Walshe

### Why does Bob Carr so often do things by half?

He's doing it again, this time spoiling his splendid Botany Bay Management proposal with a mad mad Port Botany Expansion scheme. The "Expansion" will mean greatly upping the size of Sydney's already huge container terminal, Port Botany – which will ruin (by massive sand-dredging) what's left of Botany Bay's irreplaceable ecology; will stuff up the already congested road traffic from Botany through a dozen suburbs to Enfield-Strathfield; and will stop stone dead the enthusiastic upgrading of suburban Botany that has been proceeding for a decade.

Why this, when Carr's government is promising nobly to install the single management for Botany Bay that all previous governments have avoided as too hard?

Carr would enter the history books as saviour of historic Botany Bay – but not if he gives the "Expansion" the nod, for people will say, "He had it half right. We rose to applaud. Then he blew it at Port Botany. It's a tragedy."

### Avoidable tragedy

Everyone who's looked into the "Expansion" concludes that it's ridiculous.

Ridiculous because both Port Kembla and Newcastle have wharves aplenty that can take any container ships Port Botany can't handle.

Kembla-Wollongong and Newcastle are crying out for increased business and increased employment – the very "regional development" that Bob Carr says he favours and blames Howard for not encouraging.

The two under-utilised ports could be readied swiftly to handle the containers. A little later, with completion in a year of the Alice-to-Darwin railway, Darwin would shape up as Australia's major entry port, from which containers would be railed (less costly than by sea) to the States.

No wonder all the Councils around Botany Bay and along the Georges are worried about the "Expansion". And no wonder they are backed by all community groups that have environmental interests.

Worried too are many industries located near Botany, not least the rapidly expanding Airport, which has more than enough congestion problems already.

So why doesn't Carr say, "Don't be silly!" to the Sydney Ports Corporation which is virtually alone in pushing the "Expansion"?

Why, indeed, at this very time when he has ordered the biggest study ever of Botany Bay/ Georges River/ Kurnell – a study that promises to lead to a single Bay Management that would end two centuries of fragmenting and degrading of the Bay by profit-hungry interests?

Half good, half not. In the coming election Carr's half-

good, half-not-so-good policies are coming under the spotlight. He wants a third term victory that will outdo Neville Wran's record. But what, apart from more years in office, will history say of him?

- Yes, great, he's dedicated many national parks throughout the state; but no, he hasn't resourced them sufficiently to enable National Parks rangers to control the ferals that raid into surrounding farmlands.

- Yes, he's promoted "urban consolidation" to prevent urban sprawl into the green areas around outer metropolitan Sydney; but, no, he hasn't saved those areas, and "consolidation" has instead imposed overdevelopment on the middle- and inner-ring suburbs, especially around rail stations.

- Yes, he's thundered against the awful design of buildings, especially of flats; but, no, he's ignored pleas to address the urban densities, that are an even more crucial issue than design.

- Yes, he's periodically denounced the Federal Government for allowing population/immigration to swamp the cities; but, no, he's done nothing to organise state government and community forces to seriously challenge Howard-Ruddock policies.

It goes on.... If further proof were needed of the contradictory character of Bob Carr's yes/no policy stumbling, suburban Botany makes the point starkly.

### Botany residents in revolt

Perhaps more strikingly than in any other Sydney suburb, residents of Botany have set about remodelling the old suburb, transforming imaginatively the factories/tanneries/fisheries of its pioneer origins. A wave of new pioneering!

Praise has followed: "It's Paddingtonisation in the South.... A sort of gentrification.... Shows how people can achieve quality housing in order to locate only 15 minutes from the CBD."

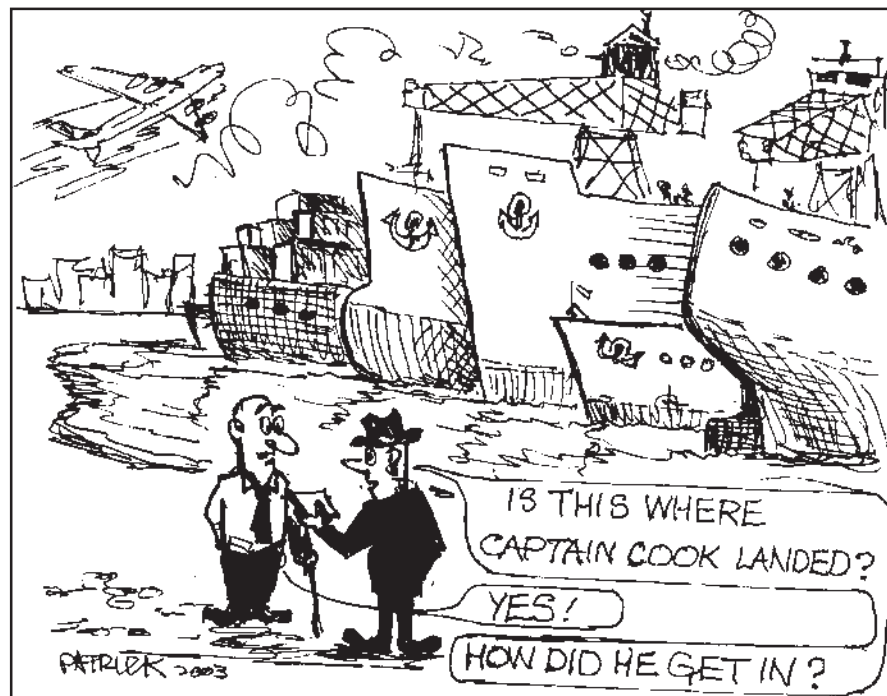
Carr might have claimed the praise as one vindication of his "urban consolidation" policy. Instead he has shattered the dream of the new pioneers.

Over 300 of them poured into Botany RSL on the night of 20 November to vote unanimously against the ludicrous Port "Expansion" and to shout "Save Our Suburb". Of all people, Bob Carr should have got the message: his own electorate is next door. He offered no comment. His urban half-and-half policy had turned to bite him.

Why, why, why? Perhaps it's unfair to lay all the contradictions of NSW Government policy at Carr's door. He'd probably say with Abraham Lincoln whom he greatly admires: "I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me."

That wouldn't satisfy those who will suffer from Port Botany's Expansion. They would more likely ask, "Is he a good man frustrated among the troglodytes and terrigals of Labor's Far Right party machine, a bunch as dreary and reactionary as he is creative and progressive – or can he yet rise to an historic opportunity as the saviour of Botany Bay?"

*Editors note: Bob Walshe is credited with founding the Total Environment Centre in 1972; Chair of Sutherland Shire Environment Centre 1991-2001; he was awarded an OAM in 1998 for "services to education and the environment".*



### It's a raid!

Monica Wangmann

You would think that the State Government would support attempts to restore Sydney's creeks to their former beauty.

But no – the Government is taking away Ashfield Council's right to decide whether a factory should be allowed to straddle Long Cove Creek (Hawthorne Canal).

The proposal at the centre of the dispute, for Graphic World printing factory in McGill Street Lewisham, is for a new 4-storey factory (including 2 floors of carpark).

Community group Residents Against Inappropriate Development (RAID) is demanding a halt to this over-expansion. RAID says this rezoning proposal, next to Summer Hill and Lewisham residential streets and opposite turn-of-the-century workers cottages, has neither community benefit nor positive sustainability outcomes. McGill Street is less than half the average roadwidth – 9.15 metres (30 feet) with a carriageway of only 6.1 metres (20 feet).

Ashfield Council unanimously objected to the proposed rezoning and expansion of the print factory over the creek.

However, to the great concern of residents, the Minister for Planning, Dr Refshauge, has overridden Ashfield Council by taking the authority to decide the issue himself. Ashfield Council has unanimously resolved that should the Minister approve the development, Council will commence legal action against the Minister's decision.

RAID newsletter, The Hawthorne, declares that "by approving this over-development the Minister will be condemning us to more noise, pollution and hazardous traffic in order to benefit those in big business."

The proposed factory extension would set a precedent as the first private structure over the creek. Hawthorne Canal must not be allowed to end up like the Tank Stream – yet more green space buried under tons of concrete and bricks.

*Editors note: Monica Wangmann is an Ashfield Councillor.*

## Loss of an Aussie Icon ...the backyard

The Government's 'Urban consolidation' is producing a significant loss of intergenerational equity – the next generation won't be able to enjoy a suburban backyard which their parents' generation took for granted.

Streets in residential areas are no longer safe places for children to play, making the loss of the backyard a serious issue.

Backyards provide many quality-of-life opportunities: space for growing fresh vegetables; large pervious areas that improve water quality; tree and shrub habitat for other species; energy-saving sunny areas for clothes drying; space for a backyard shed and hobby activities; and space for a sand pit and play area for children.

ON MARCH 22  
**VOTE 1**  
*Save Our Suburbs*

**SEND AN SOS TO PARLIAMENT**