

FIVE HERITAGE HEROES

The real frontline for heritage in Wollongong seems to have become that splendid group of souls who make up the Illawarra Escarpment Coalition.

This organization is dedicated to protecting the city's landscape heritage and recognizes that the escarpment foothills are crucial to ensuring that we have an escarpment worth protecting.

There are a whole series of flashpoints where developers are trying to get through inappropriate development on slip-prone, environmentally sensitive land, and the Coalition

has been calling since last year for a moratorium on all such development until a Commission of Inquiry is held to determine appropriate levels of development in such areas.

Wollongong Council publicly supports such an Inquiry but appears to be adopting delaying tactics by trying to narrow the terms of reference as much as possible. As a consequence the paperwork necessary to ensure the Inquiry takes place has been sitting on the Minister's desk awaiting Council's reply.

If they wait long enough all sorts of very environmentally ugly developments will have got the nod from Council and their will be little development land in the foothills worth trying to get a moratorium on.

The immediate flashpoint has proved to be Gooyong Avenue at Keiraville.

To avoid the heat, BHP has sold the land to a private developer who has already brought the bulldozers in.

As a consequence five members of the Escarpment Coalition have been arrested.

I am not going to retail their names in this Bulletin for they should never have been charged in the first place and deserve to have their good names honoured and not demeaned by publication.

Few things annoy me more than developers calling in the police against acts of harmless civil disobedience. I'm sure the police aren't pleased about having to participate in such time-wasting activity.

A demonstration was held on site on Saturday, 15th August and I was sad to see no members of the IHS I could recognize.

It is at demonstrations like this that the real battle for Illawarra's Heritage is being

fought. It's clearly a waste of time attending heritage meetings or writing articles. The Escarpment Committee needs people to help on the picket line roster. The most crucial time is from about 7.30 am to 8.30 a.m when the scab workman arrive to cross the Labour Council endorsed picket. Just drive to the end of Gooyong Road, Keiraville (at the end of the cul-de-sac next to Keiraville Pre-school) if you can help.

It's not just for the young. Indeed, it's an activity ideally suited to our ageing membership. One of those arrested at the site was in his eighties! And you can always plead that you were simply enjoying a morning stroll in the bush.

The Illawarra Escarpment Coalition's postal address is PO box 912, Wollongong East 2500 and phone contact can be made on 42285971.

And if the recent flooding in the Keiraville foothills hasn't convinced planners that perhaps they need to adjust their approval calculations, I don't know what will.