

We The People Program 13



Survivors and growth

We are blessed to live in part of the world where we have clean air, clean water and beautiful forests. I am greeney from way back and I enjoy bush walking and marvel at what nature provides and all the magnificent plants in all their majestic glory. In fact we have some of the best and rarest forests and plants in the world here on our doorstep. About 12 months ago I bought a Wollemi Pine which was thought to be extinct until a small stand was discovered by David Noble a bush walker in the Wollemi State forest near Sydney in 1994. It's a survivor and somehow has lasted in this one little stand for 200,000 years or more. Mine is in a pot and I love to see the new growth as the snow cones form on the branches and crown. For the record it's called *Wollemia Nobilis* and is a great talking point and a perfect gift for young people this Christmas.

In ancient times the very bottom of the earth was a vast forest and through tectonic plate movement the land slowly moved apart into what we now know as the world's continents. Remnants of an ancient Antarctic Beech forest can still be seen on the Springbrook plateau as these eerie moss covered silent sentinels loom from the mist. Some are 3000 years old. They remind me of a scene from the Lord of the Rings movie set and they too are survivors through the eons.

The forest scene is punctuated with tall White Trunked Flooded gums, Blue Mountains Ash, New England Blackbutt and tall Silky oaks along with a myriad of palms and ferns of all types. Our forests are indeed a show of immense worth for the mind and food for the soul. I love to hear the song of the magpie and the lyre bird or the call of the Kookaburra while the Hooded Plover the Swift Parrot and the Red Goshawk fight for survival and soon they may be silent forever.

Many years ago I remember Mum and Dad taking me to Sydney and a highlight was a visit to the marvellous Anthony Hordens department store. Many will remember as I do. Now Anthony Horden was an English man whose family ran a department store in the old country. He moved to Australia and built the Anthony Hordens' department store in 1905 with over 50 acres of floor space. The original store in England had as its symbol a tree representing strength and growth. Horden became aware of a similar very familiar old tree along side the highway near Camden just south of Sydney and he adopted the tree as a store symbol. At that site he erected a large sign that said "While I live I grow" and I have never forgotten that because it is true for trees and people.

So how does all this affect we the people. Simple really, because we essentially go about our business day to day and to a large extent we have forgotten how important nature is for our very survival. Local groups such as Gecko the environmental folk care along with the great staff and volunteers at the Currumbin Wild Life Sanctuary plus a few other groups but they all struggle to fight for our most precious asset. We have the power to demand that the forests and wonderful wild life be properly cared for by government to enjoy and to just exist because they should. Take a moment this week to walk in the bush and to begin to value the absolute majesty of the wondrous natural world around us. Take your family and revel in the wonders of our beautiful forests for we are but the caretakers.

While I live I grow.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley