



INTERVIEW WITH BRYAN PRATT

(Government official involved in creation of Namadji National Park in 1984)

MATTHEW:- This is a tape of an interview with Bryan Pratt by Matthew Higgins for the National Parks Association of the ACT Oral History Project taking place at Bryan's home in Canberra on the 17th January 2000.

Bryan, thanks very much for making this evening available and I'm looking forward very much to hearing some of your memories of how Namadji came to be, and I'd like to start by asking you how you came to get the job of Director of Conservation and Agriculture which was, I think, in about 1974?

BRYAN:- Yes, my background unbelievably is as a pathologist, a plant pathologist, mostly with plants anyway. A fairly unlikely background you might think for someone involved in conservation and agriculture and associated things but, I think I have a great love for things natural and the mix of things natural with suburbia. I'd been teaching and doing research work at ANU and was invited by the then Commonwealth Government to join a thing called the Bureau of Environmental Studies which was an utter disaster. The basic idea was they would grab a whole heap of people they described as intellectuals and broad thinkers, lock them in a room and shove questions through a crack in the door, and we'd shove answers back at appropriate times. After less than a year of that it was obvious this was doomed for failure.

Prior to that the then Department of Capital Territory, which I think was Interior in those days, had been asking me for some time if there was a way which they could upgrade their agricultural services and their fledgling conservation services. They asked me if I knew anybody who could put together a package of ideas for them. I did that and they said who do you think could put this into practice and I said, perhaps I could, so they offered me the job. I knocked it back a few times but finally, having seen this disaster with the Bureau, I thought it was a good chance to try. One of the things that attracted me most to it was the opportunity of trying to marry agriculture and conservation in a very genuine way. Those opportunities had been lost in the other States and Territories because of the divisive natures; agriculture was confrontational with conservation, that's the way it was; forestry was confrontational with anybody, and the conservationists at times were strident but not very practical. So I thought, well there has got to be a happy marriage between all of these particular disciplines; and I thought what a glorious opportunity for one man wearing all of these hats to do it. So they offered me a job which involved then and in subsequent years agriculture, horticulture, soil conservation, environment, animal conservation, national parks and wildlife, botanic gardens, city parks, parts of forestry; all sorts of things were offered to me as one great big jumble to try and put together as a package and that is what I did, that was my portfolio. For the first year or so it was enormously difficult convincing people that they really had to start thinking outside their own discipline. To tell a person for example who has to round up sheep and cattle after a late night semi-trailer accident on Majura Lane that the next day he might also have to assist with kangaroo counts on a property to show the impact on sheep viability, that took a lot of doing.

It was fascinating, that was the job anyway and that was why I took it, it was a massive challenge. I think for the first time in Australia somebody got the chance to wear 15 hats and swap them one by one by one and try and make it work. I used to drive home arguing with myself and saying, "Well OK, this cockie has a property to run but the kangaroos need somewhere to graze but he wants to shoot a certain amount, how many can he shoot?", and I would resolve this sort of thing driving home. In those days it was pretty crude conservation.

My very first day on the job, I might add, was I reported for work in the North Building of Civic Offices and I was collared and told of a senior officers' meeting Monday morning in Lou Engel-



dow's office, the then Secretary of the Department. I thought, "What the hell is a senior officers' meeting?" It was the senior officers of the Department met every Monday morning and you introduced new topics or you thrashed out programs for the whole Department. My very first day was to introduce a thing called the Canberra Nature Park, a concept based on the German nature parks; it was my first job, first one hour of the very first day to introduce the theme of a nature park, so all of the hills and valleys and streams and open spaces of the ACT could be unified under one form of management, one philosophy of management.

MATTHEW:- Even though they were geographically separated?

BRYAN:- That's right. Of course I wanted the concept not only of the little land and water units but I wanted corridors between them, I wanted a corridor between, for example, Majura and Ainslie and then down to Lake Burley Griffin. They said no, Defence owns all that land, well not let's worry about that just for the moment. Each time I put forward the concept there was a rock-solid developmental argument in the way, and I had to find some answers pretty quick. I came away from that meeting thinking, that was surprising, I thought very well on my feet with concepts that even then I'd only been rounding out for the last four or five years in my mind. The Department apparently warmed to the idea and I got the go-ahead from the others, I think there were 22 of us senior officers. I got the go-ahead at the end of hour one on day one of my new career with the Department of the Interior, so something went well. That was before they knew I was actually a pathologist and not an administrator. I went from a staff of one at the ANU to about 550 in the Department, and that grew to about 3200 in succeeding years. Whatever we were doing we were touching a nerve for people who thought, "Sure, that sounds like a good idea and if this bloke knows how to put it into practice, well we will back him for now and see how long he goes before he stumbles". That was about the attitude I started with. Good staff; very, very supportive staff, right from the word go, and I started with some very open ideas of mine and they fleshed out the rest as we went along.

MATTHEW:- Just briefly in regard to staff, of course today environmental science as a tertiary subject is well established and, in fact, you have to have it if you want to work in the Parks Service virtually, but at that time, I imagine, that there wasn't that sort of academic training available, was there?

BRYAN:- No, there wasn't. In fact it was funny because apart from my research work at university, at ANU, I was asked to teach a little bit of conservation. Nobody was even sure what the word meant in those days and I was asked to teach, literally, a couple of lectures.

Now, you can imagine I was in the Forestry Department, and despite the enthusiasm of some of the students and staff for it, some of their masters and a lot of forestry students were tied to Forestry Departments in their home States. You can imagine what a lead balloon it was to hear some boofhead in there lecturing about conservation to people who were production foresters. But that was the genesis of what we were doing: I argued that the natural resource was there and the developed natural resource was there to be used. It was to be used for production forestry, for animal production, just for the sheer well being of it existing but, more importantly, it was there for people to use.

I envisioned one of those happy societies of the ACT where people lived in the suburbs, had a garden to walk around in or, at least, open space to walk around in when they got home from work in the afternoon and on weekends, but when they wanted to explore further they didn't have to make a dramatic journey to a national park somewhere, the nature reserves were their backyards. So Majura, Ainslie, Red Hill, Aranda Bushland, Mt Rogers and a hundred and one other sites were there, available for them so that they simply progressed from their house to their lawn, to their gardens, adjacent laneways, footpaths, local creeks into the bushland. Just the sheer enjoyment and freedom of that would lead to the appreciation that when anybody threatened it, they were the best protectors, they weren't called community groups or anything like



that they were just ordinary citizens, and that was what nature parks were all about in my mind, to let people have the freedom of an extension of their yard.

After that we started the formal bigger nature reserves like Tidbinbilla and Gudgenby as it was. That was the long-term ambition to generate a national park of a large size to service the ACT to give us some status, some breathing room, some lungs for the ACT. That was the whole idea and you can imagine, if I had launched that idea on day one it would have been a lead balloon job because of the concepts, the phrasing that we were using, the terminology we were using; and if we had used all formal things it wouldn't have gone down very well at all because people didn't know what those words meant. The word conservation; I can recall many years ago saying to colleagues of mine, "This word conservation, you are going to hear a lot more about it in years to come", "Oh well, what the bloody hell is it, Bryan?" and I said, "Well, just bear with it because you'll learn bit by bit what it means to you". If I'd have suggested back in those days that it was going to be a tertiary education project with terminology and involvement, people would have laughed their heads off.

You go to university to learn a lot about mathematics and physics and science and arts and things like that, but what they didn't realise was that the population of the world was getting bigger, the population of Australia was getting bigger, the very things that we enjoyed and wanted to utilise were becoming in shorter supply. Everybody thought that meant coal and gas and gold and silver and lead and zinc and things like that, but I was trying to make people realise that those values were important but they were ephemeral. Once you find silver and gold and lead and zinc that's it, it's gone, it's smashed up into rings or whatever. The enduring values that I was seeking were the ones that I could use, my kids could use, their kids could use and it would go on in perpetuity. When I suggested this, people used to sit back and laugh and rub their stomach and say, "Yeah, yeah, where are people going to live". The basic idea that I started with there was that we set areas aside not to be developed for urban and city purposes. The average person's attitude in those days was to continually expand outwards non-stop. My biggest enemy there was NCDC [*National Capital Development Commission*] whose role was develop, expand, expand and expand.

Those first few weeks, few months were very trying, but I had colossal staff, in many cases they were way ahead of me in their ideas. I had the broad framework but they filled in the nitty gritty. I had Geoff O'Mara who was head of agriculture and Frank Knogg who was head of environment. Frank was a blow-out from Cyclone Tracy, had been pushed out of Darwin by Tracy. Frank is still around, terrific worker, Geoff has gone to Victoria somewhere. I had two amenable people there as assistant directors who didn't have closed minds, they were wide open to, as I say, the broad framework of what I had in mind. I had the broad framework, but they had the genius of filling in the bits, they knew how to make it work and between them they did.

I remember once when I first sat down and faced the concept of kangaroos when I came into the job; I think this is symptomatic of the whole process of what I had to go through to make things work. When I came into the job we had the developed suburbs, rural properties and then some damned bushland out there, and if kangaroos came onto your rural property you shot them. Of course you did, they eat grass and kangaroos were an enemy, they were competition for your sheep. I mean, your land was to contain sheep and if things put a foot in it you shot them. So I said to the cockies, "I'm not happy about shooting kangaroos just for the sake of shooting kangaroos, I want to know why we are doing it. Is it worthwhile, do you achieve anything?" "Oh yes, we shot them, they're dead", but I said, "But what are we achieving?" "Oh, our sheep get plenty of grass." "But maybe your sheep get plenty of grass now?" "Oh no, no, no, if we don't shoot the kangaroos". As it turned out, none of them knew why they were shooting kangaroos other than you had to shoot kangaroos, that's the way it was done; my father shot kangaroos and his father shot kangaroos. So I got my two senior officers together and said, what about if we stopped shooting kangaroos, what would be the outcome? And instead of the usual dumb-founded silence



they said, "Well, some pretty good things, we would have kangaroos in the rural and urban areas for people to see and become involved with".

The first way of becoming involved in conservation is to get some furry cuddlies, but secondly if we can get the cockies involved in nature conservation, make it worth their while not to shoot kangaroos, they will get involved perhaps later with extensions such as koalas, possums and maybe some bushland planting or bushland reserved, and a blurring of the strict agricultural, rural and bushland boundaries. It was good because that's exactly what we did and I had a meeting with the rural lessees association and said, "I want to put something to you that is going to be shock horror, I want you to stop thinking that you have to kill kangaroos and think that maybe you don't have to and maybe you don't want to, and maybe you can tolerate some kangaroos on your properties". A lot of them went for it very quickly, there was a beaut soft spot in our cockies that said "Yeah". The Hawke property out on what is now Mugga Lane, it seems like close suburbia now, but in those days it was quite distant, they were one of the first to say, "Oh yeah, we have a lot of kangaroos there, but they don't do much damage". So kangaroos did damage to fences and they ate grazing grass, but I had a whip hand as I said to the cockies, "How about we work out how much kangaroos on your property are costing, and instead of you shooting them we reduce your land rent and have the kangaroos stay on your property". Dead bloody silence for a minute, then a bloke said, "How much". I loved that, the money thing was good, conditions were pretty tight for rural lessees, you don't make much money on a rural lease in the ACT. So that was good.

MATTHEW:- Could we now shift the focus perhaps down south to Gudgenby Nature Reserve, the Gudgenby Nature Reserve that was to be. Now, the time that you came in was a bit over a decade since the National Parks Association had begun its campaign for a national park for the national capital, and it was still another 5 years to go before Gudgenby Nature Reserve would become a real entity, so what was the state of play there?

BRYAN:- Yes, it was a hard one. Probably one of my greatest quote 'enemies' was the NCDC because of the developmental policies, the other greatest enemy I had were the people that were gung-ho to achieve things overnight, and the National Parks Association were in part like that, they were a terrific mob but they used to say, "Why can't we do it tomorrow". Their heart was in the right place, but the bureaucratic processes, by necessity in those days, I suspect, moved very slowly.

The Gudgenby Nature Reserve sat there as an entity, the bushland was there, the streams and rivers were there, the rocks were there and the few tracks were there; we did have some private freehold land in there and quite a lot of leasehold land. I had a long ongoing fight between our Commonwealth department and a group we called the 'Feds', the Department of Science or whatever they were called in those days, which was the fledgling Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, ANP&WS; they have a new name now, Environment Australia. To give you an idea of the bureaucratic background, they needed status, it was a fledgling Commonwealth department, they needed status, they needed a national park, a nature reserve, anything, they didn't care, no they did care what it was but they wanted something that they could say when they sat in meetings with the States, "well sure, national parks and nature reserves, we have some too", but too, "well, what have you got?" "well, we have some very good ideas". So they got Tower Point in Botany Bay and then they eventually got Uluru and eventually they got Kakadu, and I had a lot of fun being involved with the development processes there but they were always open to the jibe, "well, what have you got in your own home territory, the ACT or Jervis Bay?"

In my portfolio in those days I had the ACT, Jervis Bay Territory, some involvement in the Northern Territory, Norfolk Island and the Antarctic Territories, Ashmore and Cartier Reefs, Christmas and Cocos Islands. The Feds there would have loved to develop some of those but they couldn't do it, so they thought right, Gudgenby, this will be our flagship and they dearly wanted



Gudgenby. But I could see all sorts of problems in the Feds getting Gudgenby because it would have fragmented the ACT programs that I had in mind. I wanted the suburbs to flow into the nature park, the nature park to flow into the nature reserve; the bigger ones, and the reserves to flow into the national park; I had Gudgenby in mind which was to be overall 44% of the ACT. For a number of years we had a terrible lot of silly infighting and bureaucratic brawling over who was going to run it, they wanted to run it, they wanted a national park.

MATTHEW:- This was after Gudgenby was declared as a nature reserve and in the lead up to Namadji National Park?

BRYAN:- That's right. I think the timing was round about late 1975 or early 1976 and it became a bit *cause celebre* as a brawl. You can imagine in a department of the size of the Department of Interior where I was the conservation voice, but a lot of the terminology and practices and attitudes that I was portraying were foreign to the people in there. It was easy for them to say, "Who's this bloody dill". If you were a road engineer or an urban planner or perhaps an economist, then a bloke talking about putting land aside for the people, streams, lakes, river corridors, eucalypts, animals, lizards and corroboree frogs, how much would it mean to you, you'd think what the bloody hell is this jerk about, come on, you can do that anytime. That was always the phrase and attitude; you can do it anytime later on after the important things like designing Aranda and Cook and all these far flung suburbs. The attitude was that if you wanted money or support or things, you can always do it later on.

Then Feds came in and said we will do it now we've got money, power, strength, bureaucracy and we've got the legislation, which we didn't have, to declare a national park. So it was pretty dicey, it finished up as a Cabinet matter. Malcolm Fraser was PM at the time, Tony Staley was the Minister for Interior, Lou Engeldow was the Secretary of our Department and I was the boofhead heading the environmental thrust. So I wanted to go all out and get it for the ACT to keep this coherence. I wrote a Cabinet submission which I put up through Lou Engeldow. It went to Cabinet; the Cabinet secretary looked at it and said, "OK, we will put it on the agenda for a certain day". Tony Staley, as the Minister, had to present this and had to make it forceful and put it through.

On the very day he was supposed to put it up to Cabinet, Lou Engeldow and I drove out to Canberra airport at about 8 something in the morning and there was a damn great fog. Tony Staley, the Minister, flying up from Melbourne couldn't land, and god help us this was to be a disaster. So Lou and I stoged around tearing our hair out, you know. We knew Malcolm Fraser's attitude pretty well, if you are not there to present your Cabinet submission then bad luck, lose, next. The bloody plane droned up and down around Canberra till after 11 when it landed. We grabbed the Minister into the Commonwealth car and headed for Parliament House. I was very rude because I was ruthless and I said to the Minister, listen this is what you are going to do, there will be about 5 bloody questions and these are the answers and that's all you have to do, so listen. The Secretary sat there and looked at me and the Minister looked at me, and I thought that I may have overstepped the mark a fraction but I think, my sincerity came through. He repeated the questions and the answers and we got him to the meeting with, I suspect, minutes to spare.

He pleaded the case in a very forthright manner, Tony Staley was a very bright boy, but basically what he said was this: the ACT is a whole x hectares and it flows out from the suburbs to the nature parks, to the national proposed nature reserve, Gudgenby, we don't want a schism, we don't want different coloured uniforms out there, we don't want rangers operating in two different spheres, we want cohesion. He got all the right words and phrases because I practised them by involving my agriculture, horticulture, soil conservation, nature conservation. I put it all together and he did it beautifully, word for word because he'd been pummelled all the way from the airport to Parliament House. He did it well and won the day, we were given the rights to go ahead, we kept calling it Gudgenby Nature Reserve, and from then on I thought the road was clear and I started the thrust for a national park.



MATTHEW:- Just before we pursue that, Bryan, just looking back at taking the land for Gudgenby Nature Reserve, were there any major problems involved in the resumption during the 1970s and getting enough money to pay for it?

BRYAN:- There were, certainly, getting the money was one thing, bludgeoning the money out of Treasury. We used to go up for it at the Senate Estimates Committee and I'd say I need such and such money for withdrawal of lands for Commonwealth purposes, and there was always some bloody Senator who would ask what purposes. I'd say, "General purposes, Senator", then he'd ask, "But Dr Pratt, what general purposes?" and I'd reply, "We are trying to create a nature reserve, Senator". He would say, "A what, a what, what are you going to grow out there, possums, kangaroos?" and I'd say, "Well amongst other things, yes". He'd go on, "This is another one of these Commonwealth bureaucratic things, who else in Australia does this?" and I'd whip out and say, "Well, Minister, funny you should mention that, but I noticed in Tasmania or Victoria or wherever you were given \$342,000 for resumption of land for government nature conservation purposes. Oh, that was your electorate". We played the card heavy all the way, we researched the background of every one of those Senators in the Senate Estimates Committee, we'd worked out how much they had spent on the same sort of programs for the benefit of their electors and used the same arguments that they had operated with on Treasury and that went well.

But that was only part of the problem. Getting the money was one thing, the second one was the very human problems of asking people to vacate the land that they had lived on, that was a difficult one. There were some beaut cockies out there, had been with us for years and years in the ACT, some of them good cockies, some of them indifferent, but very much in tune with where they lived. To ask those people to leave, even with 3, 4 or 5 years notice, was a bit heart rending. Some of them went willingly and happily and said thanks very much, give us the money, we are moving to the suburbs. Some of them fought to the death not to be removed from their land, and that was some of the more difficult moments I had because I had to sit down with them individually and talk it through with them. Most of them were very enjoyable people with a deep love for where they lived, the location, but they didn't know what the vegetation was called or the land-forms or animal populations, the word ecology would have meant nothing to them, but they had a very deep abiding affection for where they lived, which is exactly what we were trying to transform for a greater part of the population. Buying them out and getting them out was a delicate process of money and, I think, what most of them wanted was a condolence thing, they wanted me to prove to them that we would look after the land after they moved out, at least as good as they had. The Lutons, the Brayshaws, the Curtises, the Cotters and a stack of others, to them this was very important. I am not sure that the average people ever realised the fact that leaving the land where you and your forebears had been for many, many years is a very traumatic thing, and the only palliative gesture is if you can assure them that you will look after it; you will look after the house, the buildings, the fences as long as they are needed and the land itself. Yes, that was important.

The landholders by and large were a great bunch. I find it hard to define effective comparisons around Australia, they were deeply involved with the land, psychologically as well as physically. They really were, they weren't just people who sat out there and ran a few sheep. They loved where they lived, they enjoyed looking after it. We had very few people you would term bad landholders, agriculturally or ecologically. As I was saying, not just in the far flung areas but on the suburban edges also, where there were more problems than elsewhere.

Going to the Tullys at the top of what is now William Hovell Drive for scones and cream and strawberry jam was lovely. Bill and Jean Bootes out at Gudgenby Station, Bill had put his fences in with a theodolite and thought along superb lines. These people were the real heroes of what is our nature park and national park system. They kept the land at a reasonable level, ready for development as a national park nature reserve. They were good. The ones I feared most in terms of "on behalf of the taxpayers" were the Johnnie-come-lately, the people with money who saw



land as power and land as a toy, and we had a few of those who were buying land on the fringes of the ACT urban development. They were very difficult as they neither knew nor cared of what we were trying to portray. But the traditional ones, they were great; they greatly didn't want to move, but they recognised that we had a value that still involved their heritage, looked after the land and they could come back anytime they liked; that was great.

We had a few intrusions, the tracking stations up there which was funny stuck in the middle of a proposed national park. You know the biggest problem I had was I started calling it national park, lower case, and people started to get uptight and say, "But you don't have a National Park, I mean National Park in upper case"; and I'd say, "Ok I'll just call it 'national park'"; "Oh, but you have to have legislation"; and I'd say, "Why, I mean why do we have legislation to call something a national park"; "Oh, well everybody else does"; so I said "Well bad luck" and we deliberately kept referring to it as a 'national park', we started with Gudgenby, then we brought in Namadgi. We kept deliberately portraying it in print, started to produce a few brochures, calling it 'national park' etc, etc and it really was a con job. The National Parks Association went on this, they went along with it tacitly and started calling it national park and it became a national park in concept in mind's eye; that was good and that's the way national parks ought to be developed. Once the people accept it as national park in terms of ecological values in vegetation and wildlife values, then indeed it is a national park. It doesn't matter whether you declare it quite frankly, historically or bureaucratically, or whether there is a law which says I now name you national park. I don't think that matters.

I used to use as an example of how people become involved with things, when the Tuggeranong Parkway was put in, this is going back a few years now, it went through the pine forest near Scrivener Dam and there were letters to the editor of the *Canberra Times* saying, "look, I know pine trees, *Pinus radiata*, are not natural, but do we really have to put a road through the middle of them, that was a beaut set of it" and you can recall all you like about pine plantings or pine forests, but the sentiment was there that we had something there that was worthy of peoples' involvement and understanding, and they objected to it being abused and knocked around. That was good and we kept that concept alive, we kept saying it's a national park, it's a national park, it's a national park and, quite frankly, national park and nature reserve there is no real distinction between them legally, bureaucratically or environmentally. We built the idea in peoples' minds that we did have a national park, then we finally produced the Nature Conservation Ordinance which gave me a bit more leeway to put names on things.

I had a succession of Ministers, about 17 Ministers over the years, Tom Uren was one of the Ministers, Tom loved grandstands in life, Tom was a boxer in his youth and he always loved that final bell to decide who was the winner. So I said, you could be the final winner. Let's go and announce Namadgi National Park. The National Parks Association were giving me hell at this stage, they were hammering me, "Come and get on with it, you know, you are holding back, you are not doing this, you are not doing what we asked of you, you are not supporting us". I was copping hell from one particular fellow, Neville somebody.

MATTHEW:- Neville Esau possibly?

BRYAN:- No. Neville Esau was OK, there was another bloke there, I've forgotten his name. I was at the National Parks Association one night, and he said, "I don't think Dr Pratt is telling us the real truth", and at this stage I was all set to go. So I stopped because, well, if this bloke is questioning my integrity, I might as well stop now and go home, I'm tired, it's been a long day. "No, no please, Bryan" he said. I thought, "Does this bloke know or doesn't he". I had to keep it secret because if the press had got hold of it the Feds and NCDC would have obliterated us, they would have stopped us; in the nicest possible bureaucratic way they would have found a reason for us not to do it.

I got onto the RAAF, I think it was the number 5 Iroquois squadron as we had been using their



copters a bit as training exercises, you know, and we lined up Tom Uren and his entourage, and my staff and we flew up onto the top of Mt Bimberi, 6300ft or something like that, about a 1000ft less than Kosciuszko. It was World Environment Day, the 5th of June. I said to Tom, "Stand on top of this damn mountain, hold your arms up and I'll get up in this `copter and take your photograph". I flew round and round and there was Tom with his arms akimbo, like that statue of Christ at Rio de Janeiro, it was lovely, fantastic shots, I used a big format 6 x 6 camera, got some wonderful shots and we declared it to be a bloody national park, one of the great triumphs of my life.

Years of chicanery, obfuscation, bureaucratic manoeuvring, marrying the National Parks Association who were champions of the whole thing, but without realising when they were trampling on the very process they were trying to generate, it came into being. If that sounds too convoluted, these days declaring a national park is much more of an easy process, people expect you to declare it as a national park, call an election, then bingo six new national parks! Great, but in those days we didn't have the confidence of the people or the knowledge or the expectation that you would do it. It was going to be greatly open to question and for those people who had never been in the public service, imagine that all these years my job was on the line. Every one of these momentous type decisions I was pushing, people could have suddenly said, "Listen this fellow Pratt is a bit of a dickhead, why don't you get rid of him" you know. And you see these days that does happen, simple as that, out they go and anytime during that period the Minister could have simply said to the head of our Department, "This fellow Pratt is a bit of a dickhead, get rid of him" and out you go, end of all the process.

So while you are trying to marry all of these thoughts, all of the pressure groups, National Parks Association and all of the others, the Bushwalkers, etc, they are all lobbying to get their own agenda through, not realising how much you have got to stitch together. It was pioneering stuff for the ACT, it sounds old hat now, but it was very important to try and convince people who were citizens of the ACT that there was some value in preserving it, in the sense of making it available for people to use in perpetuity. That was the hardest concept as people in those days, raising young families and things, did not have to or want to think that far ahead. I was practising the same philosophy in urban ACT as I was in more distant parts. I kept arguing, Lake Ginninderra for example which was being developed, as I wanted a huge buffer zone around Lake Ginninderra, NCDC said we are going to build houses right down almost to the water line, as they have done at Gungahlin and at Tuggeranong and have greatly degraded and devalued the resource they developed. So I fought tooth and nail, NCDC wanted to go across the Murrumbidgee River to Castle Hill along there and I fought tooth and nail, the Jerrabomberra Wetlands I wanted it kept free of development, one thing I lost was on the power lines which went straight across it, but I kept the cycle track out of it and I kept the main roads out of it and left a buffer zone there. I wanted some buffer zones on the Molonglo River, a buffer zone on Googong foreshores for people to utilise. I wanted a Murrumbidgee River corridor, a corridor that shoved back into the rural land and allowed ecological development to have equal status as sheep and cattle production. Now, all of these thoughts were the reverse in many cases of what had already been developed.

Now, you can go at it like a bull at a gate and tell people I've got the power, I'm the big tough bureaucrat, I'm going to do it whether you like it or not, that would have gone down like a lead balloon. What we needed was the agreement firstly of the cockies, the landholders, we wanted not only their agreement to do it, we wanted their support for developing the idea and we got it. It was tremendous, the landholders in the ACT, the significant landholders and even the small landholders, once we explained what we were all about, in other words we weren't taking the land off them to sell to somebody else, to develop by somebody else, the land was being taken out of their care and control to be put into the care and control of a sensitive and caring Department for everybody to use, including them. Over the years that went down well with Bill Bootes and Granville Crawford and Peter Buckmaster and a hundred others that we worked with. A lot of them now have moved back into the suburbs or moved interstate or bought rural properties else-



where in Australia, but they were the people who deserve a lot of the credit for what we have done now because they did agree, they agreed possums and kangaroos and wallabies and snakes and lizards and regrowth shrubbery and vegetation was important. That left forestry and my colleague Mark Edgeley, Mark and I were the great colleagues who fought like Kilkenny cats because forestry was going to be the only saviour the ACT got in terms of economic production.

MATTHEW:- Our only cash crop or the Government's only cash crop?

BRYAN:- It's the only cash crop outside of marijuana which various people decided to grow in our national parks. Mark Edgeley and I were great colleagues, in fact Mark was as instrumental as anybody in getting me to take that damn job as director in 1975, but Mark was firm, "there is the boundary, there's my pine trees, bloody well stay out". I'd say, "Well, what if I sneak in here through a few creek corridors and over the years we married the agriculture and conservation ethic and the pine forest ethic?" Then, in 1986, they asked me whether I'd take over as Director of Forests, switch hats which was pretty funny, which I did and Forestry responded like the landholders did, very effectively, had a great feel for expanding the forest planted empire into a forest ecological empire, they were good allies. They deserve a lot more credit than they have been given over the years, they were good. We developed gentle philosophies that allowed people to relax their traditional hostility to things. Out at Kowen Forest there were some graves out there.

MATTHEW:- The Colverwell graves?

BRYAN:- That's right, yes. We treated them sensitively, made a small reserve type arrangement for them which I think gave people confidence that we cared. Outside Tharwa there were a number of graves which we found, fenced off, kept the stock out and started to get some historical interest in those. You [Matthew] have been involved with those. Somewhere out there, there is a Chinese chap buried facing the Murrumbidgee, we cared about it and we researched it and we tried to prove our point that we were sensitive. We were sensitive on behalf of a lot of people who cared in Canberra, and the more we showed that we cared, the more they got involved. It was obvious that the Canberra community is quite happy to get involved and show their commitment to looking after things, the De Salis graves at Cuppacumbalong and a whole range of other things, the old dingo fences up on Mt Tennent. The old dingo fences, Laurie Tong took me up there and showed me where his father had ridden through there and the things that they did and some of the old brumby yards.

One of the hardest decisions I ever made, all the decisions were made with a thought, "What will people think about this decision, and if I have to make a decision that I know will be unfavourable or unfashionable, how do I explain that to people". One of the tough decisions was to take out the last of the so-called brumbies, the feral horses, in the mountains. That was a tough one, but there were lots of other tough ones. When I first gave the order to stop trapping dingoes and stop poisoning dingoes, you can imagine the recoil I got there. The point I was making was that they were mostly feral dogs, we were after feral dogs, but we didn't want to kill dingoes. I wanted kangaroos to be allowed to roam on urban properties. The fact that dingoes were in the suburbs of the ACT now is taken for granted, but when I first embarked on developing that program I was Satan, I tell you. The thing that carried all of these programs forward was we introduced the idea rather gently, gave what I hope was some pretty easily understandable explanations of what we wanted to do and why we wanted to do it.

The support from the people in the ACT, landholders and just ordinary suburban citizens was fantastic, far more so than I think we would have got anywhere else in Australia. People wanted us to have open space, they wanted river and creek corridors, they wanted open lands for the kids to roam around in, they wanted a place where you could let the dog run free – people will recoil and say bloody dogs don't run free, OK, but there were shades of all of these things. I remember I wrote a paper for a conference years ago, and I said I envisage (a very pompous thing) children in Tuggeranong suburbs after school playing in the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve and the Namadji



National Park to come. Well, I tell you what, we are not all that far from that, you think about it now how far we have come, they can roam the Murrumbidgee, you can ride your bike from the far suburbs now of Tuggeranong into Namadgi National Park and that's an achievement, I tell you I'll sit happy with that one. The NCDC blokes, I know we were mortal enemies in meetings, that's probably a very extreme and pompous sounding thing but we were knock down, drag them out things in meetings, it was purely because of the leads we had been given for our particular job. NCDC's job was to develop suburbs outwards, outwards, outwards and make them good suburbs, that was great, I have no worries about that because I live in one but I wanted a buffering zone within the suburbs, between suburbs, I wanted green corridors between the suburbs and linking wildlife corridors, vegetation corridors, places for people to relax and unwind, and I wanted that to spread out. I wanted fierce protection for rivers and lakes and I wanted, in the long term, wilderness areas where things could develop untrammelled and in some sense almost unmanaged. Now, the barrier between that one and where NCDC wanted to go was pretty severe and we fought tooth and nail.

Hammering me all the time in the background was the forces of destiny, the National Parks Association who say, "What are you doing about such and such" and they kept up relentless pressure. They had bushwalkers, they had ecologists, they had damn good people, the brains of the ACT belonged to the National Parks Association, half of CSIRO and ANU and other people. You couldn't fool them, you couldn't tell them a load of rubbish, they knew rubbish straight away, they'd say, "OK, what are you going to do about such and such" and if you didn't have your information or your staff ready to answer they'd call your bluff straight away, they were good. I guess their problem was that they had waited so long to get things done, they were getting impatient and occasionally they pushed a button at the wrong time.

MATTHEW:- Well, it was a long gestation period when you look at, say, 1963 when they put in the first proposal, they were pretty patient, I think.

BRYAN:- Yes, but having said that, that gestation period was exactly that, the ideas developed. If we had have gone in maybe too early, too fast, too hard, too big or too small we may have missed out, we might have got a 19,000 hectare reserve, I was after 44,000 hectares, that was my minimum stopping point. People used to ask me in meetings, "Dr Pratt, how much land are you looking for?" I'd say, "Well, not too much you know". If I'd have told them that it was something in the order of 44% of the ACT they would have recoiled. I never ever, ever gave that figure away; a bit of land here, a bit of land there. If I'd have said 44% of the ACT, in those days, I think, NSW was proud of the fact that they had 1.4% set aside for ecological purposes, Tasmania had 2.8%, I think Queensland 0.3% and so it went on. Now, in those days we were very conscious of the fact that we weren't to take a lead in anything in Australia, we had to sit back and let the States take a lead, and we could always follow suit. That was the way the ACT and Commonwealth government was, we couldn't be seen to be upstarts, and if I had ever let on about that 44% I'd have been challenged tooth and nail. I wanted it, I had it in mind, I had the borders drawn for years and years. The National Parks Association would say, "Well, what do you think about a border here?" and I'd say, "Well, mumble, mumble" and sometimes they were stunningly close to the border I had in mind, that I knew we could achieve bureaucratically. There were times they used to sit there stony faced and I'd think, "Bastards, they do know, they have read the files, how did they get the files". Of course a lot of them in there they knew, they knew.

MATTHEW:- They could see the logical boundaries, too.

BRYAN:- They could see good environmental and topographical boundaries, good vegetation boundaries, but what I was trying to get them to realise, and that's the hard thing unless you were in there day by day, the bureaucratic boundaries. Go too hard and someone will knock you on the head and say no, no let's call it off, wait another year, wait another year, and so it went on. I can imagine their frustration, but they were very astute. They used to come in with glowing,



who was the big tall bloke who lived up Ainslie way somewhere, big tall fellow, light coloured hair, lovely bloke, used to lead walks, big strong looking man?

MATTHEW:- Reg Alder.

BRYAN:- Reg Alder, yes. Reg was leader of walks and he was a very understanding bloke, he understood I think. There was Neville Esau, Robert Story, gee, the names are coming back to me.

MATTHEW:- Fiona Brand?

BRYAN:- That's right. These people, they were good, they were great allies, they knew how to go about it in the long term and they were good. So they kept the pressure on me, they kept the pressure on government and a lot of other public servants, some of whom didn't even know they were under pressure, did a good job.

MATTHEW:- Just going back to one earlier point where you were talking about caring for the landscape after the people had moved off, you mentioned the graves as an example, a number of the homes did go, like the old Glendale house, Mt Clear house for example, so, you know, for the Curtises eventually losing that house, having lost the property there would have been some heartache there?

BRYAN:- There was, I have to admit I was on difficult ground, there was a problem that we had that if you left a dwelling anywhere available in the ACT people either moved in or government put them there, and you perpetuated the very thing you were trying to overcome.

Our tactical problem was to get people to ease out of their traditional home and move somewhere else, to the suburbs or interstate, and give up the land they had nurtured for many years, and that was quite a tear jerking exercise in the very real sense of the word. I guess it is what people go through in a bushfire when they lose everything and are not insured, they have to walk away, turn their back and say, we have lost everything we own. Now, when you ask a landholder to vacate their home and vacate their land where they have perhaps been born, brought up, walk away and not look back, that's very difficult.

Even more difficult was the problem I had with government; if there was a vacant house anywhere government would say to some people in the ACT, "oh, yes, we have a house for you. Beauty, it's out in 'Boofheadville', two bob a week". These people had no empathy whatsoever with the land. We had one particular group outside Tharwa, the kids' daily activity was to take an axe and cut down nature park or nature reserve signs. When they weren't doing that, they were trapping and killing magpies, currawongs, eagles, ravens, kookaburras, parrots. The house was an absolute pigsty, just a litter of broken bottles and broken cans; there seemed to be a new baby every week and how that happened is an ecological wonderland there, and more and more people seemed to be moving in. I finally one day said to my staff, "I've talked with the various groups involved, that house to them has no historical value and no particular value as an ongoing entity, knock it down". Now that was a very, very tough decision to make, I knew I stood the opportunity to be pilloried by people who thought it had heritage value, but I had to put a stop to that problem, they were dotted all over the ACT. In humanitarian terms I couldn't stop it, people would go to the Department and say we are dispossessed, we don't have any money, we can't pay electricity, we can't do this and that and government officials would say, we have just the house for you out the middle of nowhere, that's it. Governments saw it as a way of getting rid of a problem, they simply introduced to our nature reserves and national park the worst possible problem, the feral suburbanites. Now, here's a tree, it's in the way so I'll cut it down, I want some firewood, I'll cut this fence down, more firewood, I'll tear up the floorboards or pull a plank off the shed and so it went on. Very, very difficult, so we tried to allocate a value to certain things like Tuggeranong homestead, Tuggeranong schoolhouse, and a hundred and one other places. I used to put ranger staff or staff who were sympathetic or a cocky's worker, Rolly Gregory and the Gregorys out along the river there and say, "Listen, you know, do you want a good house to live



in and your job is to look after it", they protected it and they were terrific tenants. It put paid to part of the problem, but reluctantly, with great reluctance, I thought there is only one way to resolve this problem of the urban ferals going out there. I regret that at times we lost some heritage value, it was a toss up at the time, we tried at the same time to restore things, Tin Hut and Brayshaw's Hut and a number of others. We were looking for expertise and the Kosciuszko Huts Association were very valuable with their input; we found people who could use an adze and do lintels for a fireplace and things like that. In retrospect, I'm not sure how much we lost, we certainly gained by beating that problem with the ferals because I didn't know any other way to beat it, and quite frankly we would still have it right now; we would have 200 hippies living in a three-roomed, you know, board shack out there. Iona was a classic example, Iona Homestead, it was full of white ants and falling down anyway, it was the classic.

MATTHEW:- I know there are some things you would like to talk about particularly, but I would like to ask you to tell that story about the helicopter trip to Namadgi Park and the rather interesting departure you had.

BRYAN:- As Director, one of the things I always insisted on was I wanted to go out and feel what my staff had to feel, I wanted to see and feel their problems in the field, meet the people they worked with and go out in the same clothes as they wore, the same time of day, the same environmental conditions, the same long working hours 6 or 7 or 8 days a week, whatever it was. I wanted to experience that and I insisted repeatedly that I do this. On one occasion the staff said they were doing some survey work on vegetation and topographic mapping between Tidbinbilla and Bendora, and I said, "OK, is it a long trip", they said, "Not bad, not far, boss"; "What if I come along?"; "Sure". They took us up by 'copter and dropped us off on some bloody remote peak and, for god's sake, for about 18 hours we slogged it out. It was hard terrain, but at the end of that trip the staff were still taking notes and still working actively hard things that the suburban population wouldn't even understand because they hadn't been exposed to it. The staff and the 'copters came in and, as I said, dropped us off and the 'copters went away again, we had to walk out to vehicles or otherwise you didn't get out. That was the sort of philosophy I was up against. My staff took this for granted, but that was their job, so if it took 13 or 15 or 16 or 18 hours to do the work, OK; the thought of an 8 hour day was foreign to them.

I wanted to look at a variety of mountains. As I'd always seen the view from the suburbs, I wanted to see the view from the other end. Well, if these are the mountains and the terrain that we are putting aside for posterity, what's the value in it. For some people the value is the view so right, let's go and look at the view. We'll walk up there, take about a day and a half to this one; we went to Yankee Hat and we went here and there, and it was biting into my bureaucratic time walking up these darn mountains. I'd walked up a fair few of them so finally said, let's get a 'copter. We went up onto Namadgi which has the big aboriginal stone arrangements on it, and there was myself, Dave Kerr, Frank Noland. Dave Kerr was a brilliant bloke, he was worth a million dollars to me as an adviser and as an officer, mostly unwittingly. Dave never grandstanded, he knew the land like the back of his hand, he and Neville from ANPWS, Neville Gare.....

MATTHEW:- NSW National Parks?

BRYAN:- Yes. Dave Kerr was officially something in charge of Gudgenby, but the titles didn't mean much, he was a good adviser. So we got a 'copter on hire. I think the pilot's name was Trapper, James Trapper, I think I know that name because a bloke of the same name later flew a 'copter under the Sydney Harbour Bridge and got arrested for it, but maybe that wasn't him. We got this darn 'copter and we flew up and down the Murrumbidgee River Corridor and we got some photographs, we got the terrain and got the balance right between the lower terrain and the mountains, and we flew up onto Namadgi. Our 'copter was going chomp, chomp, chomp really grinding its way up, it's a darn long way up. When we hit on Namadgi there is some big exposed rock faces, that was a fair sort of a landing like spot to down it. I've seen better landings, but of



course in those days we always flew with the doors off the 'copter, so you had one foot out on the skid to accommodate three or four people in the 'copter.

We mooched around, I photographed all those aboriginal stone arrangements, and I was faced with a dilemma. The stone arrangements consist of a number of half or part circles and then some corridors, two parallel lines of stones right down the rock face, but over the years the frost creep had moved the rocks and you could see visibly where they had moved down the rock face over the years. The first instinct was to pick it up and put it back where it came from. I thought, well is that really the right thing to do irrespective of aboriginal tradition in terms of interpretation for this important monument, but I thought, no we leave the rocks right where they are. Well anyway, we photographed all this and had a long discussion about it and I took advice from the staff on a number of matters, and I said, "OK. I've got to get back to the office", etc so we got back in the 'copter.

The pilot took off and we got about 7 or 8 foot in the air and bang back down we went again, so he revved up the motor, got 8 or 10 feet in the air and crashed back down onto the rock. After about 3 or 4 attempts the pilot said, "Well, I've got news for you, in effect we are not going to get off with this load on because we are pretty high up etc, etc". His suggestion was bloody brilliant, I tell you, it was a new one on me. The idea was that he would put some of us on and we would fly over the trees and we would hang on the lintel of the mountain (the drop from Namadgi is pretty awesome way down into the valley). The idea was we would hold there on the skids with the motor going, and the remaining team member would come through the scrub, climb into the 'copter and we would fall off the edge and that was what we did. So Dave Kerr was elected to do that and, I think, Dave must have done this a few times before; he came through the scrub and got up into the 'copter and off we went down the valley. I guess we pick up wind speed or something as you go down a hell of a drop, but a wonderful view. We flew back to Canberra airport as I had to get back to the office, and the staff decided if the boss is going back they will go and do other things. Got back to Canberra airport, unloaded and my Commonwealth car was there so I went back to the office. The electricity authority blokes had a use for the 'copter later that day, so they came out and jumped on board to go and do some power line inspections. They only got to Hall and bang the 'copter crashed out of the sky out of fuel or something and down it went. Terrible crash, \$40,000 of rotor, carbon fibre rotor blades destroyed, but I think they all got out of it safely, except for one back injury.

If I understand 'copters correctly, there are two things that you learn to know, one is that when the fuel cuts out you reach out and press a thing and the other fuel comes in, but secondly if you are high enough you can press a thing that de-feathers the prop and you auto-glide to the ground, but you have to be above 120 feet or something like that in order to do that. I think to this day how close we must have come, coming out of that big mountain sortie that day.

Lyle Gillespie later used the photographs of Namadgi in his book about the ACT which was beautiful and I thought, well if the 'copter had gone down, maybe the film would be the only thing that survived.

But I'll tell you that in all of these ventures every time the staff wanted to do something or see something or explain something, I used to move heaven and earth to get out of that office, often in a public service suit, many times. It seems ludicrous but there were always field clothes available that I'd often switch clothes like superman. I wanted to go and see what the hell they were talking about, I wanted to experience it, I wanted to go and talk with the cockies, drive around their fences, drive around their dog problems, and drive around their borders. Look at the fences busted by kangaroos, pushed up by pigs and streams, and things dug up by pigs. I wanted to somehow get in behind them and see it through their eyes, so I got a good understanding of it because I thought if I couldn't do that, then I couldn't make a decision that was involving them.

It took a long while to get to know all the cockies in the ACT, and some of them would probably



bitterly hate that bastard Pratt. I can understand that quite happily because some of the decisions that had to be made on behalf of the populace were pretty tough and some of the cockies were quite uncompromising about it. The great majority of them, and I have to give them full credit for this, said, "What are you going to do if you kick us off of our land and take our flaming house, what are you going to do with the land". I'd say, "Well, this is what we are going to do chung-chung-chung", and when they understood what you wanted to do, it was amazing how they softened. I remember Bill Bootes had a staircase in his house out at Gudgenby Station that came from the old Queanbeyan Post Office. I was talking to Bill one day and he said, "You might as well take the place anyway, Bryan" because Bill was losing his eyesight at this stage. He said, "I rang up a bloke today to get a fridge fixed but he wanted \$40 to come out here and just look at the darn thing". It was time for many of the older cockies and their wives and families to move anyway, it was time for the land to be enveloped into a broader thing, available to the whole populace, but it had to be done in a nice way, we had to take over the cockies' management of the land and envelope it with our own management. It had to be sensitive, it had to be caring, it had to be genuinely on behalf of the users, it wasn't just a bureaucratic take-over or lock-up; that would have been a disaster. You had to take it over and make it available to the people who really were the owners and the users.

Back in those days that was an immense task because that thought was completely foreign to many people in authority, many public servants, many landholders and many people who wanted to be developers. Namadgi National Park - we want a place to put a prison, hey, Namadgi there's a good place, we'll stick the prison out there; we want a home for runaway children, Namadgi will do. The first thought was these nature reserves and national parks, because the philosophy in those days was that it was unused or at least under-utilised. Above all, they never understood that it was a managed resource, even today it's very difficult to convince people that all of that so-called open land in the ACT is actually managed, it's managed as carefully as your backyard vegetable garden.

One of the classic examples of that, or two examples, that come to mind: There was one of my staff on patrol one day, a female ranger, and she saw wheel tracks off the main road, this is deep in Namadgi National Park, so she followed the wheel tracks through a variety of areas including several locked gates. She trailed the bloke endlessly till she finally caught up with him, he's an assistant bank manager from the ACT who still to this day deeply regrets being caught. He was pig hunting, and he had inappropriately acquired keys to several of the locked fire gates. She got him, she caught him and to this day he is still wondering how he got tumbled. I said to him, don't you understand that in the ACT these areas, without being policed to the terrible nth degree of interrupting peoples' privacy, if a staff member sees something out of kilter in their patch they want to know what's going on, it's their responsibility to manage it on behalf of everybody.

Secondly, there was a group of people who went up this side of the Brindabellas years ago, this was screamingly funny in the ecological sense. They were of an ethnic background, Yugoslavian in general terms, their understanding of the Australian bush was that outside of the suburbs nobody cared, nobody was there, nobody noticed, nobody did anything. So they went out into the Brindabellas, and they started digging out a marijuana plantation and on day one, one of the staff noticed wheel tracks and investigated. Our policy in those days was always the same, pull back, report to head office and we would refer it to the ACT Federal Police as they were in those days, they would tell us then what they wanted us to do. We were very much subject to their direction which is the right thing to do, and so for something like 13 weeks those people were kept under observation, they had all the labourers up there, chipping and hoeing and digging, and for 13 weeks they were all photographed, catalogued, identified, their vehicles were noted. A lot of them came from NSW, one particular street. At the end of 13 weeks the police had a complete catalogue of all the people involved, then they moved in and arrested everyone in one hit. Those people were astounded that anybody knew they were there.



Their attitude to open bushland was that untouched, unmanaged, unwanted, unadmired and yet for the rest of the populace our pressure was to the fact that this is yours and it's being managed on your behalf. So we do walking trails, camping grounds and sensitive feral animal and plant removal, and it's being delicately managed and balanced to make it available to the world in perpetuity. It was a stunning lesson to me to realise that these people had no idea that there was anybody out there, watching it and caring for it. Caring for it was a significant thing and my staff were enormously caring. Their whole delight in life at the end of each week was saying 'Another week well done'. Fireplaces were controlled and things like that. That's why now I think Namadgi and our associated nature reserves and nature parks are amongst the most beautifully nurtured in Australia.

When I say nurtured, I don't mean little babied things, I mean they are kept in perspective. Australians are tough people, they expect a rudimentary campground, Mt Clear and things like that. I think, they enjoy the challenge of being in these areas where there are no pay toilets and there are no pay gates. I don't object to paying to use a national park, I think, it is perfectly valid, but what you get in a national park is something that should reflect what you are paying for. You want fire control, you want animal investigation and plant investigation, you want people to get some real values out of it. Now they may not necessarily be aware of the values they have got but if they may go for a drive for the day in the Brindabellas, they don't know where they are going to go necessarily, just go for a drive in the Brindabellas, if they come back at the end of the day and the kids say that was beaut, Dad and Mum, that's good, that's one aspect of a national park which I find very satisfying. Then others might go fishing in it, they might go overnight camps, they might go bushwalking in it and they might do short trips or long trips. There are a lot of others who simply know it's out there, the mere fact of knowing it's out there, I tell you, is one of the biggest values we have got. Look at my own patio here, there's my value right up there, I know it's there, I know it's not going to be built on and filled up with houses, it's not going to be riddled with roads, it's not going to be cut down. There is a hundred and one different reasons why I feel at ease and at peace with what I have done, because it is still there and for my kids it's going to be still there, and for their kids it's going to be still there.

Now, these were all the fledgling thoughts that I had when I was first offered the job, and you can imagine the rigmarole that I go through to get those thoughts in some sort of semblance of, not only order, but in an order that could be put into practice. What I had: I was lucky enough to have the staff sitting there waiting who wanted the opportunity to have a go at all of this. Eventually I had 5 assistant directors who were good at certain things, there would be a bloke who would handle money, one who would handle nature conservation, one who would handle the cultural involvement with nature conservation. When I say a bloke I'm talking generically, bloke or a female, it didn't matter two hoots to me, they were interchangeable in the sense of this wealth of knowledge. We attracted some fantastic staff. You know the old adage that the ACT was an experimental playground, it was true in many respects, but, by heavens, we made a great job of that playground.

MATTHEW:- And all of this underlines the tremendous importance of maintaining proper management through proper funding?

BRYAN:- Yes, the dilemma now is how you generate sufficient importance to Government to maintain the staff numbers and the money flow that is needed. The problem, I guess, is if things have been done too well Government say, "Well shit, that's alright, let's find something with a problem in it and allocate the resources there". They don't recognise necessarily, and I've talked to Kate [Carnell] and a stack of others about this many times, the reason things are doing well is because you are allocating at least partially adequate resources to it. The dilemma comes when they say, well a good example I can think of is fish, one of the things dear to my heart, fish stocking, "Bryan, how are they going catching fish in Lake Burley Griffin this year?", "Oh, not bad. Yes, you know we are getting a few"; "Beauty. This fish stocking budget here its only \$3,000, do



we put this off until next year?", "No, we can't", "Ahh, come on"; but, you see, next year's Senate Estimates Committee has the same question, "Can we put it off again?", and you lose the impetus for a program that is working. Because it's working it doesn't necessarily have significance, so they try and reduce it year by year, "Well, we have more important things". There's the problem with nature conservation and national park management and urban park management, because it's going well, they think it doesn't need an input of resources necessarily the next year.

That's the dilemma that modern-day ACT is going to have to face. They take it for granted that it's there or they become so demanding it's almost ludicrous. Six or seven weeks ago I heard a radio talkback thing, in fact, Kate [Carnell], the Chief Minister, was on ABC radio doing the calls, there was a lady rang in quite irate about our urban park in Hughes, "It's not being used at all. Chief Minister, and nobody will ever use it again", "Oh, why's that?", "It used to be mown weekly and now at best it's done fortnightly". I had to chuckle over that, I thought, you know, crickey, the average person doesn't mow their lawn fortnightly. It was an ethic, I think, she had become used to, a practice. Perhaps she had lost sight of the fact that you don't mow urban parks more than 'you know', but that's the problem for national parks and nature reserves. If there are things that are on your day to day agenda more demanding, it's very easy to divert the attention away from something that's already working well.

They don't recognise there is day-to-day management, there is a staff allocation, they have their particular patch, they have their duties, and in the human interest the low side throughout the parks there is a camping ground, somebody has to clean the toilets, they have to supply water and get some firewood there and pick up the litter and maintain the tracks and roads, and even in modern-day society, I'm afraid, pick up syringes and things like that. They have to be there, you have to stop people from stealing rocks, artefacts, timber. The Yankee Hat paintings, our so-called aboriginal paintings, you don't want anybody touching those up with Dulux paint, you also don't want them being defaced in any other way, you don't want people painting graffiti at Booroomba Rocks, and if they do you want to remove it quickly. You want walking trails maintained in a condition that the average person can come out and use and enjoy, you want the roads graded, but you don't necessarily want them upgraded to a super tar road that provides a divisive corridor for wildlife trying to cross it, you don't want dead animals strewn up and down the road sides.

MATTHEW:- Because this is the issue with the road through Shannons Flat?

BRYAN:- That's right, very real values.

The underlying problem is that we now have a professional group of people in Australia who know a lot about national parks and nature reserves, they know a lot about the management requirements because they are professionals and they have developed as such. Their knowledge is still a quantum jump ahead of what the urban population's understanding is, so they desire to get on with their job, and if you cut the staff you don't have people between them and the population to interpret. The interpretive staff is vitally important; "Why is it useful to have these eucalypt trees here, why is it useful to have a koala?" "What do you want a koala for?" "Why don't you shoot those kangaroos, the traffic keep hitting them all the time?" You want people who can say, "We are building a dam over here to tempt the kangaroos to stay in this area here", "We are asking people to slow down". To "Bloody kangaroos shouldn't be there"; "Well yes, they should, it is a national park, this is their environment, you know, you are the intruder"; "Oh bullshit, I'm going fishing at Eucumbene, bugger your national park, this is 68 km from Canberra post office to Aaminaby, the other way is 135 km, tar the bloody road and I can get up there in half the time"; "Yes, but think of the kangaroos and wallabies"; "Ahh, stuff them, I'm going fishing or I'm trying to get up there as I'm a businessman, or a rep on the road". When the tracking stations were in full force up there, it took quite a degree of discussion with the Commonwealth car drivers to slow down and take it easy driving the staff daily up and back from the tracking station.

Their job as they saw it was to get there and back; good, but they had to recognise that actually they were in a national park where different values applied.

I had a landholder out on the Paddy's River Road once, ex-public servant, who gave me hell because he kept saying, "You got to put up more kangaroo warning signs on Paddy's River Road, my family has had 5 accidents since we moved out there". I said, "Look, kangaroos can't read" and for that I was a pompous, bumptious idiot taking the mickey out of him. I said, "What about getting your family to slow down?". "I see kangaroos take precedence over my family, do they?"; I said, "Well, given the circumstances, that may be what we are arguing". Now, that concept for the average person in suburbia is getting dangerously close now to the core of what we are talking about. You try and convince; you go to a person in a suburb of Canberra who lives in a suburban house like this one, and you say to them, "Look, I'm here to tell you there are times when I'm going to equate the value of a eucalypt tree with you, or the values of an ongoing kangaroo family, a koala colony, possum colony or a corroboree frog group with you" and you know the answer to that one. They are going to demand you provide a pretty good explanation right there and then, and you say, "Well, it's not so much just the value of that animal against your value, it's whether we can bridge the values, whether we can hedge your demands a little bit in the world to accommodate the unwitting demands of these animals. Can we perhaps stop a road short of a certain area, from then on you walk or can we instead of you parking a caravan out there with power leads and blaring stereo and floodlights, can we make sure that you do a bush camp experience? If you wanted to camp on a bushwalk somewhere, can you confine your overnight stops to one night in each location, rather than 3 or 4 nights. If you want a rock concert out in the bush somewhere can you, you know."

They are the sort of values we are now starting to compare and contrast, and that's the sort of things we are going to face in the future. We have created a wonderful environment and opportunities out there for people to enjoy, we've got a certain user group in mind, if it's equally attractive to a user group that we hadn't anticipated, so be it. One of the things I've become aware of in recent years is that people involved in the drug culture stand a pretty high risk of being picked up for drug use in the urban environment, so they are now going bush where they feel less observed. So places like Point Hut for example come to mind quickly. Point Hut, a lot of people tell me, is a difficult and dangerous place to go to on Saturday night or a weekend night, that's not what we intended when we built a little block of toilets there, a layup parking area for cars and a leisure ground for people. Equally with the Mt Clear campground and the Cotter Reserve and other places, we intended those for a peaceful interaction between the urban environment and part of the bush environment, but if it now starts to get perverted in different ways we will need new strategies to deal with that. That will mean ongoing staff and staff who can really manage the area given those new demands. That's the challenge we've got coming up for us now, so we need to maintain staff levels and increase them, we need the funding and we need a pat on the back for the people who are still hammering away with the zeal we had 30 - 40 years ago. The job isn't finished by a long shot.

MATTHEW:- The 1983 bushfire was a major incident in the history of the then Gudgenby Nature Reserve. What was it like for you and your staff?

BRYAN:- A difficult exercise, the vast majority of people when you mention fire, their quick reaction is, put it out. There is still, despite the amount of publicity we have given it, there is not a recognition that fire is and always was, a natural tool in development of forests in Australia. So when a fire breaks out, put it out. We paid the penalty for advertising the fact that our bushfire control in the ACT consists of two levels, one of quick detection and quick response. So when the big Gudgenby fire started, people didn't realise two things: one it was in extremely difficult terrain where you couldn't get men and machines in on tracks and roads; and secondly, it was a long way away from where all of your resources are based. We were taking people out, I think, for 3 days on and 2 days off, trucking them out day by day, a lot of helicopter work, but the fire



kept on burning and burning. We knew from day one what we were up against. The media were in some sense sympathetic, I had a wonderful cartoon from Geoff Pryor from the *Canberra Times* which I still have here somewhere, it's a wonderful shot of me sitting in my office in either the North or South Building, a lovely shot of me like a little Caesar sitting in this giant bureaucratic chair and I've got the phone in one hand saying, "Is that North Cooma? We have to report a fire" because that's where the fire was headed. I think we went for, I've forgotten, how many days now.

The fire was intensely difficult; it kept burning into gullies and up mountain sides where there were no tracks, no roads and no obvious point of access. Despite the fact we were constantly cutting firebreaks and going in with 'copters, that was a fire we knew we weren't going to stop at all, we could direct it at times, we could change a flank, but there was no way in the world we could put the fire out. It had a good fuel load, and day after day or night after night you could see the glow from Canberra.

The Gudgenby fire became almost a talking point in the press. My job was to try and convince people, without getting a gale of laughter in response, was firstly, we knew what we were doing in terms of controlling or at least staying in touch with the fire, and secondly, that it wasn't all doom and gloom despite the fact that trees were burning and shrubs were burning, animals were dying or having to escape into burrows and hide, but it wasn't all doom and gloom. People have this idea that a fire is bad, and we still have that culture, we have a lot of homework to do because most fires that gain media attention are associated with urban fringe areas and damage to property. In Gudgenby we didn't have damage to human property, that was it. That's a problem I'd like to go back and handle again, we could have handled it better, I guess, we could have offered more prosaic explanations, but we didn't know the words and music to offer to people. I'm not sure the press would have used it anyway, because it went on and on and on.

We are going to have to realise that fire can be a useful weapon. Fire is inevitable in one sense, people will light fires accidentally or deliberately, and lightning will light fires. So after each lightning storm we do a helicopter patrol along the Brindabellas, and most of the populace are totally unaware of that. We do 2 to 4 days of patrols and pick up the latent fires. A lot of the fires are a useful management tool, but we can't always control and direct it the way we want. The biggest bugbear is trying to convince the people that, yes, a fire at times should be left to burn under certain conditions, we are a long way from achieving that aim. Now, people just don't want to hear that; fire is bad, fire must be put out. So if the Gudgenby fire goes on for 19 or 20 or 50 days it must be bad and, therefore, the management itself must be bad. I have some regrets about that because it was enormously punishing on the staff, and I don't think we got through to the public about the nature of that fire.

We are going to get more of these, so we are going to have to find a way to tell people when a fire is destructive in terms of human property, and when a fire is useful in terms of ecological property. That's something we are going to have to put a lot of work into, but the media, as you mentioned in an earlier discussion, want conflict and they want doom and destruction, they are the things of newspaper value. The Gudgenby fire was destructive in certain areas, productive in some other areas, but what we need is a ready set form of words to say to people, "this is what this fire is doing, this is what the effect will be, and this is what we are doing to engineer that particular effect which we think is the most valuable one".

MATTHEW:- That fire was started by lightning, do you recall?

BRYAN:- That was the supposition, but you can't always be sure of course, that was the supposition at the time. It will happen again, and there will be fires of the same magnitude, so people say, put in more fire trails so you can get access, but in doing so you may well diminish the values of the national park which you started with.



I remember years ago apropos tracks and roads: I was teaching at ANU and I think it was one of my students said to me, "Do you realise, Dr Pratt, that in Australia there is no place anywhere in Australia which is more than 5 miles as the crow flies from a man-made track or road". I said, "How sure are you of this", "Positive". I tell you for the next 6 or 8 or 12 months I sat down with maps and pored over them looking for a place that was more than 5 miles, and I haven't yet found it. Now that is an astounding thing, you think surely out on the Gunbarrel Highway no, the Tanami Desert and so it goes on, 5 miles; are we reduced to this in Australia that, no matter where you go, if you walk 5 miles in any direction you are going to hit a road or track, but it's a true story.

I thought, god help us, we have done all this work in Gudgenby in preserving these wonderful values and giving everything a fair go out there for people to come and appreciate, and yet they are never more than 5 miles from a road or track and it's true. I don't want to enhance that value by putting in more roads and tracks unless they are absolutely essential.

Now, the fire control people who are gung-ho on fire controls say, "Put in more tracks, put in more roads". A lot of the cockies say, all fires come out of national parks; it's like all feral animals, all weeds, all fires come out of national parks. They didn't before when it was rural land, they never came out of there, but now they do; that's human nature. So you have to find a balance as to how you provide access for fire crews to do certain things, not unduly risk their lives. That was the dilemma in Gudgenby. Even taking in dozers, we had a stack of bulldozers in there and graders, knocking up fire trails, doing a lot of damage ecologically and topographically, and I had to make a lot of tough decisions during that one, very tough.

MATTHEW:- And, of course, at that time aerial fire fighting wasn't as advanced as we have today, the use of 'copters?

BRYAN:- That's right, and again, too, I'm a little diffident about the progress in that respect, how much value? I mean dropping a bucket of water on a hot spot is very good to save a fire crew, I mean there is no question about that obviously, but in terms of halting a fire or changing the direction of a fire or reducing temporarily the intensity of a fire, how much are we gaining, given the cost of a 'copter so much per hour. Is it a sop to public opinion or are we really achieving something, or in those hot spots that would have burnt out, should we burn them out anyway for ecological reasons, to generate seed growth and suckling growth and ligno-tubers and things like that? They are all the unknown values, and this again exemplifies the reason we need ongoing staff, ongoing financial commitment because we have got to find all these things out, otherwise all we'll do is find the same problems over and over and over again with no necessary gain in knowledge or capability of manipulating.

There is no question in my mind that one of the roles of mankind is to manipulate its environment. I don't suggest that is our major aim in life, but if we are going to survive we are going to have to develop that capability of manipulating our environment. If that means manipulating it for a particular human development in one way then OK. If it also means manipulating it for ecological development we are going to have to do it, and people who have distinct wilderness values in mind will recoil with horror when they hear me say that, but all I mean is you manipulate the fringes to let the core wilderness areas develop in their own pragmatic fashion, that's the important thing. One of those is fire control and the use of fire as a management tool. When you put these provocative thoughts in front of the average urban population I can hear them now recoiling, "Oh yes, this is a bloke who wants bushfires". Well, there are times when under controllable or manageable or manipulative conditions that's the way we are going to shape our environment, because that's the way the environment for the last x million years has been shaped. We now want to understand that.

Black Mountain, for example: many people would be stunned to understand that Black Mountain in 1905, I think, was called Campbell's Paddock and I have a photograph of Black Mountain



somewhere in one of my students' PhD theses that shows Black Mountain as a bared thing, like Mt Taylor today, with a crown of vegetation at the top. All of the vegetation on Black Mountain is regrowth vegetation in our lifetime, it's not the age old thing people think it is, there has been the manipulation of fire in there which has helped develop certain things, and fire helps a lot of seeds to explode and grow, the acacias and dillwynias and those sorts of things. All of those we could have manipulated, perhaps we could have had a bigger and better Black Mountain in a shorter time. So the thing that we are enjoying now, with the right knowledge of how to do it we could have got it quicker. So a bigger and better Namadgi National Park may be open to us if we know how to control fire, amongst other things. That doesn't mean that we have a computer recipe that says 'chung, chung, chung' and gives a totally artificial landscape, it's not that at all, it's enhancing the natural values that we wanted in the first place. The reason we wanted Namadgi National Park in the first instance is a set of wonderful values available to us. We now want to be able to maintain those and enhance those to get our best enjoyment out of it, and maintain those values in perpetuity. Perpetuity is the thing we are looking for, anybody can grow a front garden out here with some annual flowers and things, that's great. One year terrific flowers grow like blazes, "Oh, look at that lady's wonderful garden"; next year the lady dies, the garden dies, what happens, "This old girl's front yard's pretty hopeless". When she went the values went with her, the work energy, the work ethic and the involvement. The national parks have to go on in perpetuity: it's their real value for society.

Now, back in 1975 what I started as ... values people would sit back, stony faced, lips pursed, thinking what the hell's this dickhead all about, is this bloke a boofhead or what because they hadn't heard these sorts of thought being exposed, didn't realise we had the energy, the dedication and perhaps some of the educational values to do it. Now 25 years later, there is a much greater public awareness that we can do it. You have got to put money to it, staff resources, men and machinery, intellectual property has to go in there, and without that you lose the thrust and will go back to the bad old days when, in fact, the so-called national park was a haven for feral animals, feral weeds and fires - we will go back to that.

I remember years ago one of the most telling things I ever read in my life, I read avidly, was a science fiction story and I forgot who wrote the damn thing, but it's the age old thesis of the man who slept for x hundred years, was revived and he woke up. He was being whisked into town by the current society; the people were all dressed in shiny jumpsuits; the car he was put into had a woosh of flame out the back; it took off with a great roar of noise and the speedo zoomed up to some amazing value; he was roaring along and the speedo said, you know, 570 kph; but after a while the guy started to realise certain things, there were billboards along the highway and they didn't muck around anymore, they were explicit sexual contact interactive videos and radio was full of things like there has been another multiple bus crash out in desert Mohave in quite illiterate way. Then he realised when he looked out the window that the speedo said 570 kph but we were doing about 40 kph. All the values were artificially generated, the conversation, the TV, the radio, the billboards, the activities of the people. Anyway, to cut a long story short, the society that he was revived into he found was a minute society of intellectuals desperately trying to hold together a 'nong' society. You know it's an age old theme and they were working out how long they could preserve the values that they had generated in society over the last x centuries. The reason is they had done a very good job on preserving certain aspects of society to the point where society got so used to it they took it for granted and never realised there was a bad society prior to that. So they relaxed, didn't fund it, didn't provide any resources for it and that particular set of values fell apart and degenerated, nobody went to school anymore, nobody did any trade courses or technical courses, nobody went to university, nobody bothered working for more than a couple of hours a day, and this poor little bunch of intellectuals were left to try and hold society together.

Now, if that sounds suspiciously like what is happening in the ACT there is a warning, once you



cut your resources below a certain level they become non-functional or non-useful. The sort of analogies: if you've got a big log you want to lift up and move, two rangers on patrol can do it but one ranger on patrol can't do it, so it doesn't get done. So he has got to go and get a chainsaw, cut it in half and move half the log himself, but only if there is a chainsaw available. But also the time involved in going to get the chainsaw and come back means more technology, more fuel use, more money for the chainsaw, more of the ranger's time, and he has now destroyed a pretty good long log. He can manipulate it himself on his own, but he has used more resources than he would have otherwise used, and he has destroyed more in doing so. That's the deal we are going to chase now.

People involved with health, welfare, education will need day-to-day activities in preserving their jobs in the face of mass sackings and privatisation. It's very easy to say about those natural values out there, the Tidbinbillas and Gungahlin, Mt Ainslie and Mt Majura, even Namadgi's, we will just leave that for a while, I have some more important things on my plate. If the recognition fails that there are the enduring values out there, then we have real problems, because by the time the people tend to the problems of health, welfare and education, important though they are, if they lose sight again of those real natural values out there we have lost a lot. If we find for example in 10 years time we have forgotten all about people carving up tracks with motor bikes and 4WDs, and cutting down timber and stealing rocks, despoiling watercourses, vandalising landscapes and painting graffiti on rocks, leaving litter around and multiple old campfires sites, we have lost those values. What the heck are we doing keeping a national park out there, you might as well say to the housing developers, "move in fellows, it's all yours". We have to be very careful we don't go down that pathway.

Its very real and in many parts of Australia that's just what is happening. And once you hand the thing over to private development, private development has a conscience called money, I have no worries about this; that's what private development is. I'm involved now in my retirement in private development and money is the driving principle. I couldn't help noticing - I fought some tough battles on Lake Burley Griffin and Lake Ginninderra - but yesterday I happened to be out at Lake Gungahlin and saw bloody houses, huge houses on tiny blocks of land; open the back door and you hit the clothesline; try and walk between two houses and if you are broad-shouldered you won't do it. A colleague of mine who is here from Melbourne, I said, "I want to show you one of our newer lakes, Lake Gungahlin", and he said, "Where is it?" and I said, "Well, it's sort of down behind the houses", and he said, "Oh, come on". There is a good example of what I am talking about, we built a lake which is a beautiful water feature, scarcest value in Australia, then we crowded it full of houses. We are blocking out and degrading the very resource we set up in the first place.

Going back now to the national parks and nature reserves; we have got to protect ourselves against those attitudes. If people get too blasé; I mean years ago there was this enormous excitement, we had created Namadgi National Park, we had come up onto the mountains and taken photographs, I did all the media stuff and I really hammered it for weeks and months and years; we've got Namadgi, we've got a national park, etc and it has national park values, they are all set down in the particular internationally accepted criteria; if we get too blasé about that that will slowly degrade. If people don't think it can happen, take a look at Sydney, look at Redfern, one of the grand old suburbs, the classic example of how a beautiful urban environment can degrade when people start to devalue certain things or fail to appreciate values that we had it will degrade. No reflection on the people that live there now necessarily, it may or may not be their involvement, the fact was we lost sight of a beautiful area which had particular values either heritage or streetscape or tight communal living. After a while we started to take the breakdown as natural. I don't want to see that happen to Namadgi or Tidbinbilla or Majura or Ainslie or others. I don't want people to come in and say, "We don't have enough money to look after the whole precincts of Mt Ainslie, but I tell you what, if we built a big restaurant up there, boy think of the



money we would get and we could put that into nature conservation". That's exactly that political philosophy I told you about earlier tonight when people suggest we sell something to pay for something else, we don't do it.

The community, given enough reasons and enough common sense reasons will agree, I think, to fund nature conservation in perpetuity but we need some other terms for it, people's park, people's conservation, people's values. The original German term I used here, the 'Naturpark', the park of the people, we are going to need to develop some new terminology, some new explanations and this is where people like the National Parks Association will have an ongoing value in providing easily understood explanations to urban orientated people, what the values are for them out there, what is in it for me, all these things.

MATTHEW:- Keeping it relevant?

BRYAN:- Yes, keeping as part of your lifestyle. I like phrases like they're the lungs of the Territory, lungs of the State, the breathing space, the viewing backdrop to your life, I love all those colourful phrases, they're beaut. But they have a value only up to a certain point, then they become as silly as lyrics of modern so-called, music, they have got to be relevant.

You have got to have an opportunity to say to kids, "Let's go for a walk"; "Where Dad, where Mum"; "Out in the bush"; "Yeah, beauty". That's great, I grew up on those sorts of things, they are enduring values but they need support, they are not going to remain there unless there is management, unless there is a backup. You need people who can plan for certain long-term strategic development of these areas or maintenance of these areas, you need day-to-day staff to make sure that it all happens, you need interpretation staff to explain to people why this is interesting, not so much why it is important, but why it is interesting. Take a frog, "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, here's a frog". Well, big deal, there's a frog but then you say, "By the way, have you ever noticed that it's got 4 toes on the front and 5 toes on the back?" "No"; "Have you ever noticed when a frog hangs upside down its backbone sticks out", things that are of interest to all of us. As innocents abroad we love people telling us, you know, these little things, that's what interpretation is. It doesn't have to be some high-powered spiel about in-depth things, ordinary little values are very important to us. This is what national parks and nature reserves are about, very ordinary human values which give us enjoyment, indulgence, they fulfil expectations. But it helps if someone says to you, "Here's a scribbly gum, how do I know it's a scribbly gum, if you want to tell a scribbly gum from a manifera, this one's got scribbles on it" and they all go, "Beauty".

OK, about things like that which are just very ordinary human enjoyment. There doesn't have to be anything deeply involved in national parks for most people, unless they want to become deeply involved but when they do, the opportunity has to be there, that's vitally important. So you provide a national park which is layered to all types of people from the casual, "Yes beauty there's some eucalypt trees and there's a dead owl" or something like that; to the people who want to become deeply involved and look at all sorts of things in much more detail. Unless you maintain an area in that fine detail the opportunities to somebody will be lost, and once you start to lose the values around the fringes the people who lose most are the ordinary everyday suburban dwellers. So it's vitally important to keep up the support, government support, government finance, dedicated staff. The people there want to have a go, but you have to provide the jobs, provide the money and that's it.

To hark back to some earlier conversations we had: you need, in the background, the probers and the pushers, the National Parks Association. They are the driving force behind all of this, you get like people gathering together, common themes and they push and they shove. You think what would have happened, by the way, if the National Parks Association hadn't shoved like all hell long before I came along, and when I came along pushed me unmercifully. You couldn't move without, "god, here's another submission from these people" from Robert [Story], Neville [Esau]



and all those people in the nicest possible way. In many cases you couldn't knock them back because they really meant what they said; they were very sincere about it.

Now, there are stacks of people like that in the ACT now who want to have a go; and they are pressure groups, I suppose, a loose term for them, but they are very committed and they come from such a wide diversity of backgrounds but with a common theme of something that they want to do. Now, you imagine if they hadn't have been there. If they hadn't have been there, there would have been no Gudgenby Nature Reserve, there would have been no Namadji National Park, god know what would have been up there now, probably a mish-mash of properties used for all sorts of things under different freehold and leasehold title, but you wouldn't have had a peoples' park that we have got there now.

Of course, now we have linked up with Kosciuszko National Park and we are getting the tri-State national park concept into more and more development every year.

So if the people that ever want to get together, those sort of associations are worth their weight in gold. At times they were a pain in the butt for me because I had a lot of things on my plate every day, "bloody hell, fellows, give me a break" you know, but it was a constant needling and pushing and development. A hell of a lot of the ideas that are now dominant in national parks management and interpretation are the ideas that those people developed and refined in later years.

MATTHEW:- We are just about at the end of the tape, so we might leave it there; thanks very much, Bryan.