
PROPOSAL FOR THE COMMUNITY
PURCHASE OF “THE BOY SCOUTS’ CAMP”
LOT 3 DP 213924
60-70 BOURNEMOUTH STREET, BUNDEENA
FOR DONATION AND ADDITION TO THE
ROYAL NATIONAL PARK

The Spring Gully Protection Group
in partnership with
The Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife

June 2013



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THE CASE FOR CONSERVATION

The community recognises that the Boy Scouts' Camp land is pristine undisturbed natural bushland. It contains:

- Sydney freshwater wetland.
- Sydney sandstone gully forest.
- A large, beautiful meadow of sedge grasses.
- Tall stands of cabbage tree palms.
- Spring fed tributary gullies with mossy rocks and water pools.
- A magnificent woodland of large angophoras forming an uninterrupted tree canopy over a substantial understory of banksia trees.

The land contains the headwaters of Spring Creek and a freshwater wetland, vital to the water quality and flood mitigation control of Bundeena Creek and the Bundeena catchment area.

The land is steep sloping and comprises fragile sandy soils. It is highly bushfire prone land and lies wholly within the NPWS Spring Gully strategic fire advantage zone.

The land is habitat to a large number of protected species and migratory birds.

The community understands that any development of the land, regardless of how small and "eco-friendly", would require clearing a large area of the tree canopy and undergrowth (a minimum of approx. one hectare) due to the steep westward facing sloping aspect (the most likely direction of flame attack) requiring large asset protection zones under the bushfire building code as well as the requirements to provide satisfactory access and water for fire fighting and evacuation needs. Clearing of large sections of the intact and uninterrupted forest canopy and undergrowth would be a very negative outcome for the local environment and would visually impact on the surrounding national park.

The land is surrounded to the West, South and East by the Royal National Park, Australia's premier national park and is strategically located at the entrance to the world famous Coast Walk. A world heritage listing nomination for the Royal National Park is currently under preparation.

THE COMMUNITY OFFER

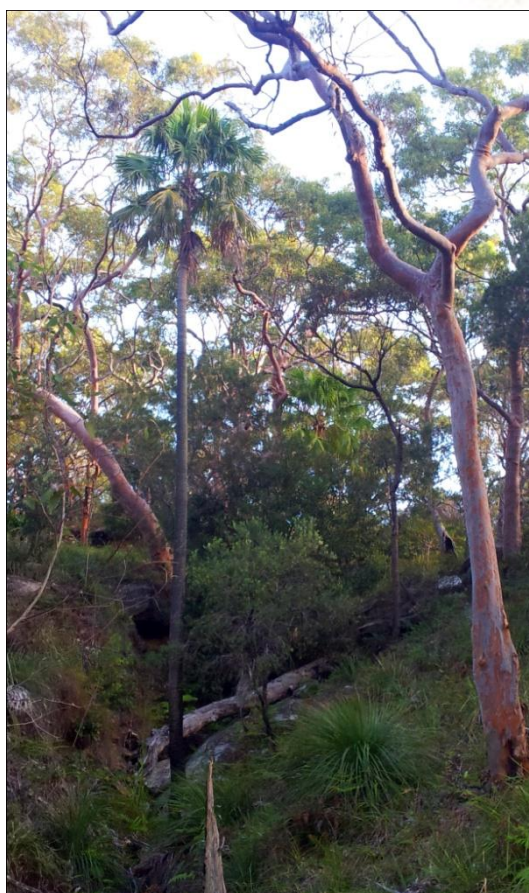
The community has partnered with the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife to purchase the land so that it can be donated and added to the adjoining Royal National Park.

In March 2013 both the Spring Gully Protection Group and the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife wrote to Scouts NSW and Ray White Bundeena offering to purchase the land and seeking to negotiate an acceptable price and terms of purchase.

In May 2013 the Scouts' real estate agent contacted the Spring Gully Protection Group asking if it could match a competing bid and for our proposed settlement timeframe.

In response, the Spring Gully Protection Group and the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife agreed to offer Scouts \$300,000 to match their other offer and we are seeking a six month option to purchase to allow the time required to raise the additional funds.

The community has raised \$120,000 towards the purchase and both the community and the Foundation are very confident there is sufficient community support to reach our target of \$300,000 within the time frame offered.



BENEFITS TO SCOUTS OF A COMMUNITY PURCHASE FOR CONSERVATION

We are mindful that the community at large holds several conceptions about the land and expectations about the role and value of the Scouting movement in our society.

Many members of society have been a part of the Scouting movement during their youth, including many members of the local Bundeena community and indeed the Spring Gully Protection Group.

The community is aware that the land was donated to Scouts by Mr Eric Mobbs in the early 1960s and that it was created from the family estate for the purpose of providing Scouts with a bushland property neighbouring the Royal National Park to use as a camping ground. Some older locals personally knew Eric Mobbs and purchased their land from him.

The community has an expectation that the Scouts stewardship of the land will include the conservation of its natural values in alignment with the Scouting movement's values and traditions and the intentions of the benefactor.

The Community purchase of this land for donation and addition to the adjoining Royal National Park will allow Scouts to responsibly hand on stewardship and conservation of this land while raising the much needed funds required by Scouts to continue their community activities.

A community purchase for donation to National Parks avoids the risk of a negative association between the Scouts and any subsequent development proposals and land management issues which would inevitably arise into the foreseeable future should the land pass into private hands.

A community purchase will reinforce the Scouts standing in the community, uphold its values and meet the expectations the community holds of the Scouting movement and its role of fostering leadership in our society.

Seeing this land handed into the national estate will create a conservation legacy in alignment with the Scouting movement's values, in perpetuity, that all Scouts past, present and future will be able to look upon with pride.

FOUNDATION FOR NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE



The Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife provides a living legacy by transferring privately owned land with high conservation values into public ownership for protection and ongoing management. In its 43 year history the Foundation has acquired over half a million hectares of land for the national reserve system in New South Wales. These acquisitions are the result of direct bequest, land donation or purchase from fundraising efforts.

The Foundation is a non-government, non-controversial, independent not for profit organisation. It works with the wider community, engaging them in conservation and providing a platform to support conservation projects.

The Foundation supports the local community in their efforts to fundraise to purchase the Scouts' land at Bundeena for permanent protection.

The NSW Office of Environment & Heritage has advised the Foundation that they see the land as a suitable and beneficial addition to Australia's first national park, the Royal National Park.

SPRING GULLY PROTECTION GROUP

In February 2013, at the suggestion of the Scouts' real estate agent, Shellie Boswell, the local community was canvassed for people interested in joining a community purchase of the Boy Scouts' Camp property with the primary aim of conserving the land. News of the intended sale of the property initially caused some anger and anxiety in the community. Many were not aware that the bushland was not already under conservation and had assumed it was part of the adjoining national park.

After several community meetings it was decided that the community would approach the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife with the aim of purchasing the land so that it could be added to the Royal National Park.

A core group of volunteers formed a working committee informally named the "Spring Gully Protection Group". This group has been liaising with the Scouts' real estate agent, the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife, raising community support and financial pledges and is lobbying both state and local governments to financially support the proposed community purchase.

The group has published a blog www.springgully.org to inform the public about the land, its sale and the goal of purchasing the land for conservation.

- In March and April 2013 over six hundred residents signed a petition to the NSW Minister for Environment and Heritage asking the minister to assist in the acquisition.
- One hundred and forty internet users have signed an online version of the petition.
- Two hundred and sixty community members have joined our mailing list to receive updates.
- The National Parks Association and the Friends of the Royal have publicly supported our proposal.

Committee Members (current)

Mark Da Silva, Spokesperson
Gail Edwards
Michelle Clark
Jo Keohan
Georgia Wallace Crabbe
Steve Partridge
Walter Bienz
Brett Barlee

HISTORY OF THE BOY SCOUTS' CAMP LAND

The first formal European settlement of Bundeena, by land grant, was in 1832. In 1879 the Royal National Park was formed ensuring that Bundeena would be forever surrounded by its bushland setting.

It was not until the sealed road into Bundeena was completed in 1961 that the "Mobbs Estate" also known as "The New Estate" was subdivided by the Mobbs family and sold as residential blocks. It was around this time that George "Eric" Reginald Mobbs had the vision to preserve a large portion of Spring Gully and give something back to the broader community and he gifted a large part of the southern end of Mobbs Estate, bordering the Royal National Park, to the Boy Scouts Association of NSW. These 14 acres of land became known locally as "The Boy Scouts' Camp". The local scout troop and the girl guides had hoped to build halls on the land but they could not secure access from National Parks. The Water Board gave permission for the Scouts to access the land via their property but this was not seen as practical and the land has remained in its natural, undisturbed state to this day.

George "Eric" Mobbs (1899-1991) was a horticulturalist who specialised in growing carnation flowers at Castle Hill. He supplied cut flowers to Coles. He served as a councillor on the Hills Shire Council from 1956-1977. The George Eric Mobbs Award for Excellence in Gardening continues to be awarded annually at the Hills Shire Orange Blossom Festival. Eric Street, Bundeena is named after him.

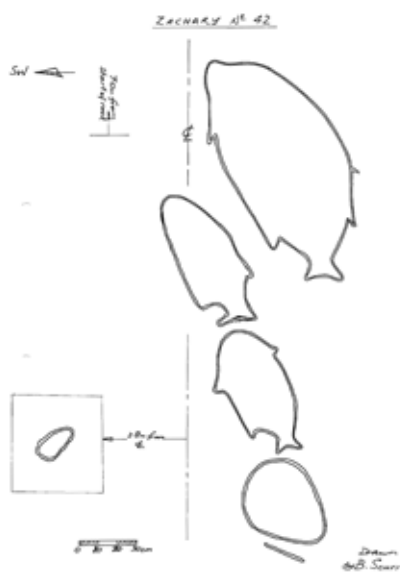


George "Eric" Mobbs (left) presenting the prize named in his honour at the 1985 Hills Shire Orange Blossom Festival

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE

“Noise Like Thunder”

“Bundeena” is a Dharawal name meaning “Noise Like Thunder”. Despite Spring Gully being a protected gully, tucked away from the Port Hacking and the coast, sounds carry along the gully and on most nights the sounds of the waves crashing on the shore can be heard loud and clear from within the gully. Depending on the direction of the swell these thunderous sounds are either the waves crashing onto Hordens Beach to the north or waves crashing onto the coastal cliffs to the east.



Rock engravings, Spring Gully.
Illustration by Bruce Scurr.



“Spring Gully contains two of the most significant habitation sites found anywhere in the Port Hacking area containing ochre artwork that demonstrates the connection of the local Dharawal people to the maritime environment and their relationship to the aquatic life of the Port Hacking.”

- Bruce Howell, Illawarra Prehistory Society

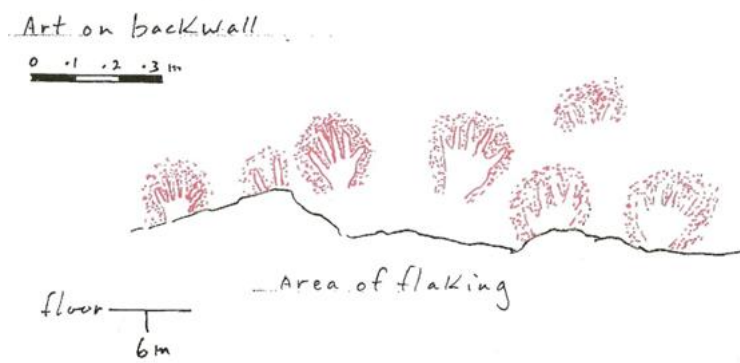
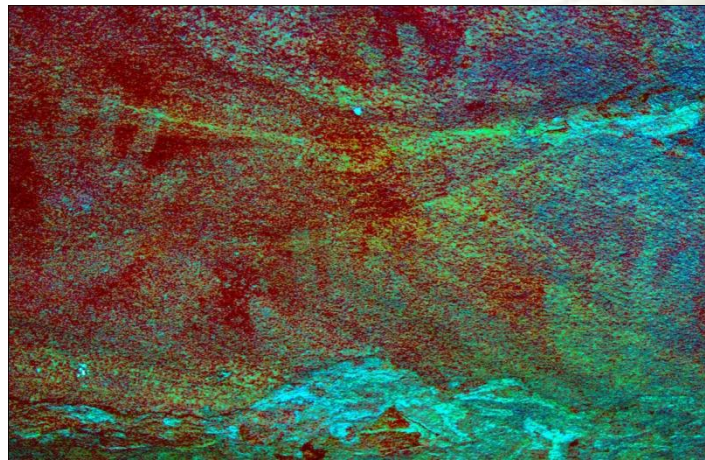
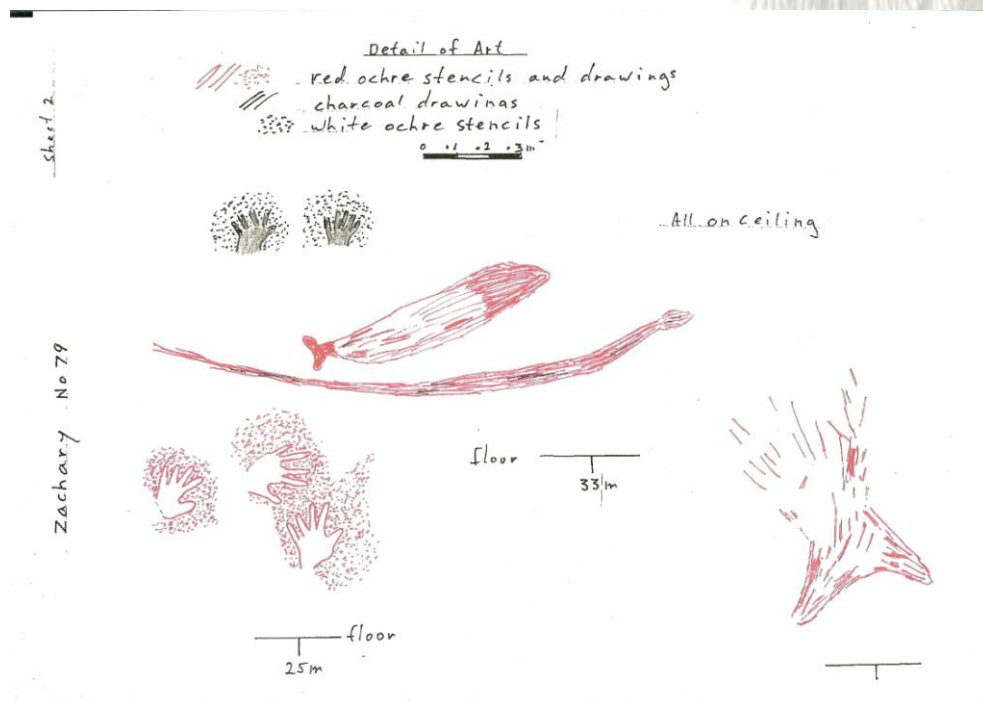


Illustration of hand stencils, Spring Gully, by Ken Kort



Enhanced photo of hand stencils, Spring Gully, by Martin Webb.



Rock art, Spring Gully. Illustrations by Ken Kort.

Spring Gully was a major site of aboriginal settlement. It provided many benefits for the traditional owners.

- Several substantial rock overhangs along the southern and northern sides offered shelter in different prevailing weather conditions.
- A reliable, permanent source of fresh water.
 - One stream forms a waterfall that flows over the entrance to the largest rock overhang habitation site on the southern side of the gully.
 - On the northern side, a permanent spring emerges from between the rocks in the cliff and flows next to another substantial rock overhang and site of habitation.
- The freshwater wetland would have been a major source of food and an open hunting ground for wallaby, echidna and reptiles.
- Spring Gully was a thoroughfare for the original owners who could move from the Port Hacking estuary, along Bundeena Creek, through Spring Gully and beyond into the Marley escarpment. It connected what is now known as Hordens Beach (Bundeena Bay) and Bonnie Vale (Simpson's Bay) to the Marley escarpment and the Marley basin.
 - Marley Head is a large and extensive engravings site and was also an important site (along with Jibbon head) for the local people for the "coming of the law" which arrived each year with the whale migration.
 - An old walking track, used by early European settlers, now overgrown, climbs up along the southern side of Spring Gully, past a site of rock engravings, to join up with the Marley track. This track was very likely originally an Aboriginal track used by the traditional owners to access Marley.

The aboriginal habitation of Spring Gully has left a substantial legacy of archaeological sites and a large amount of aboriginal art – most significantly, a large amount of ochre and charcoal drawings which have survived in several rock overhangs. These include excellent examples of less common white ochre hand stencils and one known example of a very rare yellow ochre hand stencil. A rare ochre drawing of a sea turtle is found in one rock overhang. Substantial middens along with rock tools are also found in several of the rock overhangs in Spring Gully.

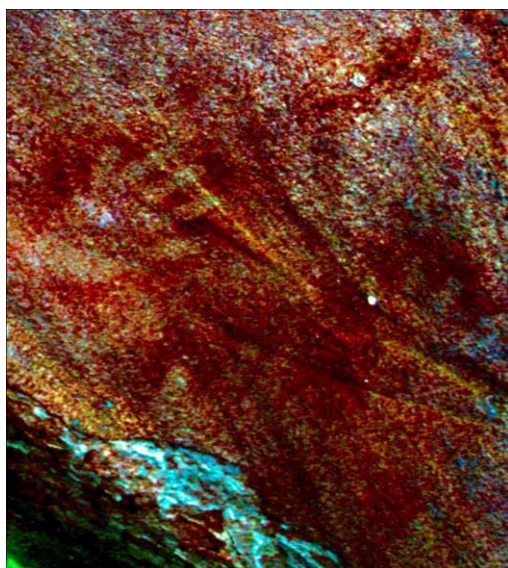
NPWS Aboriginal Sites Register, Spring Gully Sites

There are eight catalogued archaeological sites of significance in Spring Gully containing rock engravings, hand stencils, ochre and charcoal drawings, middens and stone tool remnants. More sites may be waiting to be discovered yet.

Site References:

- Zachary No. xx
- Zachary No. xx
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NB: Due to the sensitivity of these sites and the need to protect them from harm the site references have been removed from the publicly distributed version of this document.



Enhanced photo of hand stencils, Spring Gully, by Martin Webb.

ECOLOGICAL & ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES

Freshwater Wetland and the Bundeena Catchment Area



The Boy Scouts' Camp property covers a substantial area of Spring Gully which forms a large part of the flood prone Bundeena catchment area.

The Scouts' land contains the headwaters of Spring Creek which flows into the wetland that subsequently drains into Bundeena Creek to flow into the Port Hacking at Hordens Beach.

The land contains Sydney Freshwater Wetland – a rare and endangered ecological community.

The two greatest challenges facing the Bundeena catchment are:

- Flooding, especially of the low lying residential areas and community infrastructure such as roads, sports fields, bowling club, community centre.
- The water quality of Bundeena Creek and Bundeena Bay.



The health of the Spring Gully headwaters and wetland is vital for both flood mitigation (absorbing and slowing water runoff) and water quality (filtering water runoff). Any degradation of the pristine natural state of the Scouts' land would negatively impact on the Bundeena catchment.

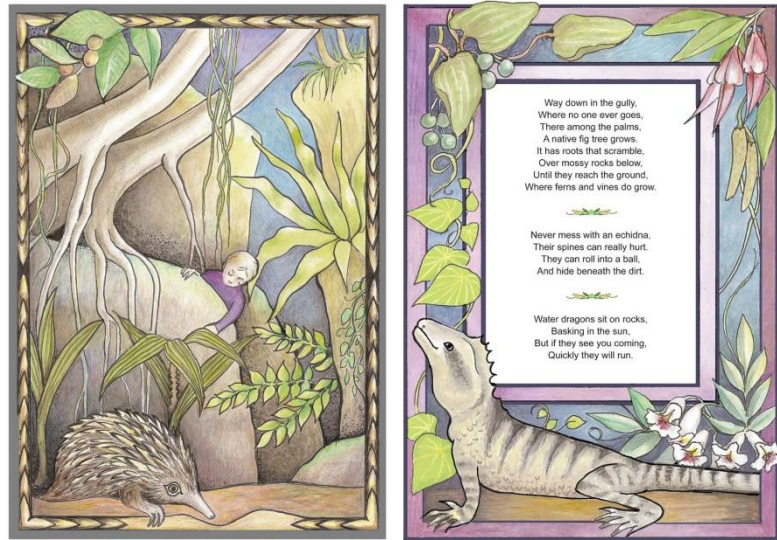
Within the freshwater wetland on the property lies a beautiful meadow of sedge grasses through which the water gurgles as it percolates downstream.

Along the floodplain, at the sides of the meadow, are tall stands of cabbage tree palms. The cabbage tree palm was an important food and resource for the local Dharawal people. It is their totem and it is also believed that the name Dharawal could mean "cabbage tree people" (Source, Les Bursill – Dharawal elder and anthropologist).

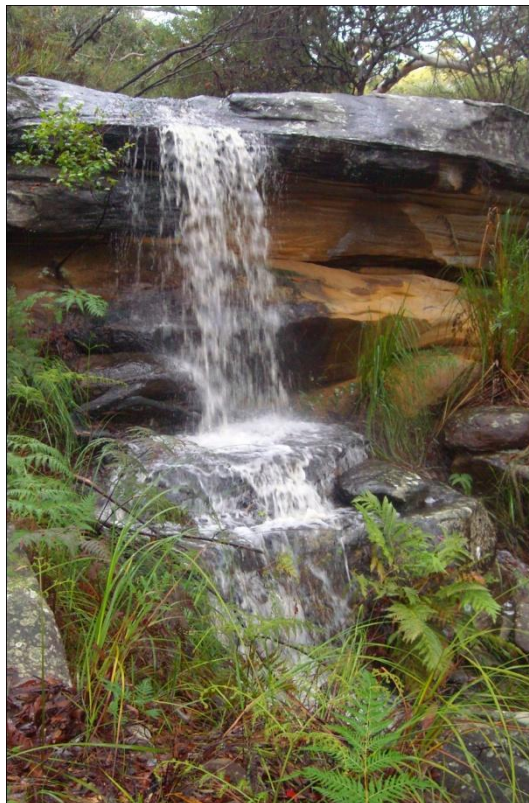


Sydney Sandstone Gully Forest

Sydney Sandstone Gully Forest runs along the northern slope of Spring Gully including the north-western side of the Scouts' land. This forest itself contains small pockets of remnant littoral rainforest – a protected vegetation in the Sydney region. One such pocket of remnant littoral rainforest exists along a spring that runs just next to the Scout land. This scene was illustrated along with an accompanying poem about Spring Gully in a much loved children's book about the flora and fauna of Bundeena.



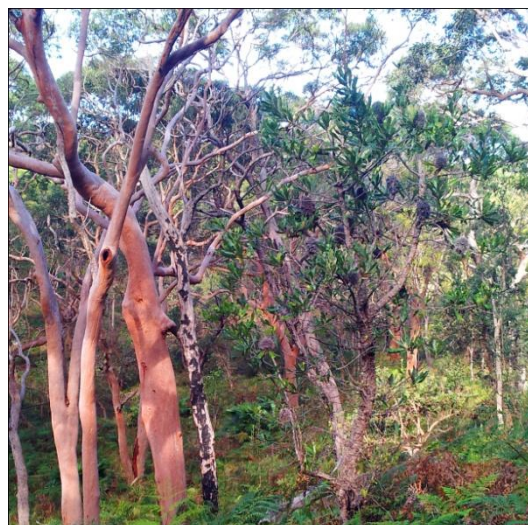
Spring Gully. From the children's' book "Bundeena is a Wild Place" by Leily Da Silva



Angophora Woodland with Banksia Understory

An uninterrupted canopy of majestic Angophora woodland covers most of the property and contains a substantial understory of banksia trees.

Along the southern slope of the property, several tributary streams flow down small gullies, over waterfalls and through rock pools and into the wetland below. Cabbage tree palms dot these gullies.



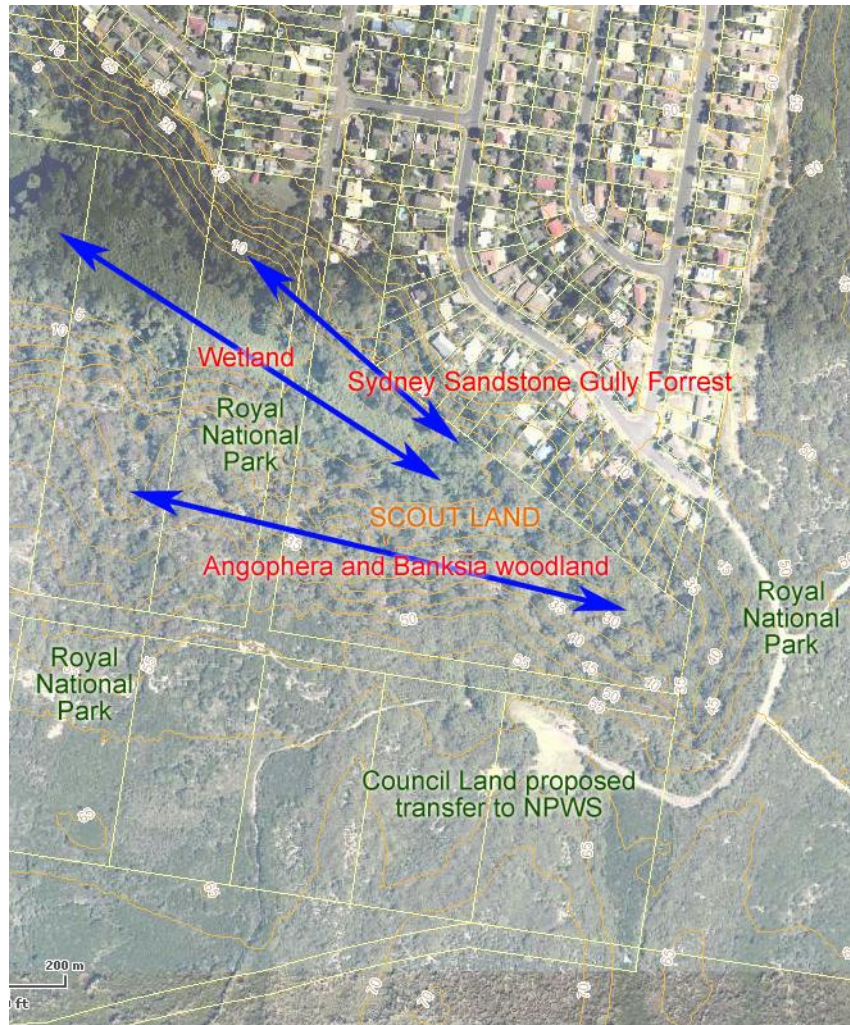
The conservation value of both the intact tree canopy and the understory was recognised in the Sutherland Shire Council's Bundeena and Maianbar Development Control Plan 2006 which, in a section specifically relating to the Scouts' land, states that:

"The environmental qualities of the site shall be maintained in any proposal to provide an appropriate facility on this site. In particular the significant tree canopy is to be conserved together with significant understorey."

Under the current building code, any building on this site would result in a significant loss of the tree canopy and understory due to the requirements for asset protection zones around buildings on bushfire prone land.



Vegetation Map



Fauna

Spring Gully is a known habitat for many protected species including (but by no means limited to):

- Swamp wallaby,
- echidna,
- powerful owl,
- water dragon,
- goanna,
- diamond python,
- grey-headed flying-fox,
- tortoise,
- frogs.

It is an evening roosting site for sulphur crested cockatoos.

It is also a habitat for migratory birds such as

- The Channel Billed Cuckoo,
- Japanese Snipe,
- Koel.



BUSHFIRE PRONE LAND

Spring Gully, including the Scouts' property, is a Strategic Fire Advantage Zone under the Royal National Park fire Management Strategy 2009. It is subject to periodic hazard reduction burns.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service fire management plan 2003 warns that "Spring Gully is dangerous in extreme wildfire conditions".

Spring Gully, including the Scouts' land was extensively burnt out in the 1994 fires.

As stated earlier, the building code for bushfire prone land requires substantial asset protection zones around buildings. As the Scouts' land is primarily steeply sloped, and given that Spring Gully slopes up from the west – the most dangerous and likely source of flame attack during extreme fire conditions - even building a single dwelling on the site would require an asset protection zone of up to one hectare. Within this asset protection zone only 15% of the tree canopy would be allowed to remain. Most of the understory, including the banksia forest would need to be cleared.

Of additional concern is that the soil on these slopes is loose and sandy, due to the rare cliff dune formations on the surrounding ridges – a significant feature of the Marley escarpment. Removal of the understory could cause serious erosion of the fragile sandy soil and siltation of the freshwater wetland below.

Any building on the property can only comply with the bushfire code if suitable road access and access to water can be obtained (via the national park or across another property). Even then, that access might not meet the requirements of the Rural Fire Service and it is possible that no development would be deemed as acceptable by the RFS.

In summary, bushfire building codes make any building on this land incompatible with conserving its significant environmental qualities.

THE ROYAL NATIONAL PARK

The Royal National Park is Australia's premier national park and the second oldest in the world. The size of the park has grown substantially since its founding in 1879. The land around Bundeena was within the original boundaries of the park at its inception.

All non-residential bushland surrounding the Bundeena township has now been placed under environmental conservation. The disused council land (formerly the sanitary depot) to the south of the Scouts' land is currently being transferred to National Parks – an outcome that all stakeholders support. The old caravan park, further down Spring Gully, has also been placed into conservation. This will leave the Scouts' land as the only non-residential bushland in Bundeena that is not within the Royal National Park.

The Scouts' land is the only part of the puzzle still missing from the Royal National Park. Yet, it sits prominently next to the entrance to the world famous Coast Walk.

Most people, including many Bundeena residents, had always assumed that the land was already under conservation and part of the Royal National Park.

Given that a submission for nomination of the Royal National Park as a world heritage site is underway, now is the moment to add this missing piece of the puzzle into the Royal National Park.

LOCATION MAP



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Lionel Baker
- Les Bursill (OAM)
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- Graham Irving
- Christine Hopkins, NPWS
- The Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife

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