

AUSTRALIAN CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

Annual Report 1988-89

From the President

It is hard to believe that the Gaia hypothesis has been part of modern human thinking for over a decade; that Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* is twenty years and numerous reprints old; that President Carter's *World 2000* report was gathering dust on the shelves before the advent of Ronald Reagan.

White Australians were already noticing their impact on this country as long ago as 1882 when Samuel Dixon, in a paper read to the Royal Society of South Australia, wrote:

The outlook for succeeding generations is indeed dismal should the destruction of the forests continue as in the past; our watersheds will become bare, bald hills from which torrential floods will devastate the alluvial plains the preservation of our indigenous flora, whilst looked upon as a fad by the ignorant and unthinking, is really in its cumulative effects, one of great national importance.

It is hard to believe that there has been so much written about the fate of the world and much of it from an era when the conservation movement was a fledgling association of concerned folk who were awake to the diminution of nature and the inevitable consequences that would follow should no positive steps be taken to turn back the tide.

It is still hard to believe that the *Turn Back the Tide* concert held in Sydney early this year gathered 200,000 people at Bondi Beach to protest the fouling of the seas; that thousands have made their way down to the southeast forests of NSW to protect the great eucalypts, giving their time and their liberty for the wilderness; or that the Green Independents have become a credible political force in Tasmania. The conservation movement has come in from the fringes and is now making its claim - which cannot be ignored - to have its values and concerns reflected in the political and social policies of the nation.

The term "green" in all its connotations and through all its misuses, still constitutes an attitude which recognises that our current way of doing things ultimately serves neither us nor our co-habiting species very well. The simple fact of recognition that we breathe as the earth breathes, when thrown up against scientific scenarios of a muggy, leaking atmosphere, accelerates our now chosen path to move towards a more benign way of living. It is apparent that if we don't replace conquering with co-operation then we are all at risk.

In the face of mounting and continuous ecological threat, it may seem that the tasks ahead are too hard. Nothing could be further from the truth. People everywhere are now questioning the old ways. They are reaffirming the need to respect and protect nature and are conscious of the great urgency of the moment. Everywhere people are extending themselves by education and action to make their passage through life a positive and healthy one.

We are faced here with a contradiction of sorts, for just as we come to recognise the necessity for interdependence and co-operation as stewards of this fragile earth, we can also see clearly that there are those who still simply seek to exploit the planet to secure short term gains. The Foundation's role in this critical survival battle of values is a vital one.

ACF is now a highly regarded and influential body. The quality of our research and policies, the commitment and prodigious skills of our staff, and the unstinting support of our members, explains why we have achieved so much and gives me confidence when thinking about tomorrow.

Our goal, as defined in our new Forward Plan, is to create a conservator society. A society that is based upon ecologically sustainable values. I encourage you to embrace this goal and to give it your support. I commend this Annual Report to your reading.

Peter Garrett



THE AUSTRALIAN CONSERVATION FOUNDATION is a non-profit organisation established to ensure an ecologically sustainable future. It is made up of nineteen thousand members across Australia, 60 staff and many volunteer workers. The organisation is governed nationally by a Council of 35 elected representatives from each state who meet at least every six months under the leadership of a President and Executive Committee. Both staff and volunteers work together to actively promote ecologically sustainable values.

- The ACF's vision of an ecologically sustainable future is one in which
- the integrity of the biosphere is maintained;
 - a full natural range of genetic, species and environmental diversity is maintained;
 - human population numbers are stabilised;
 - environmental and economic planning are integrated;
 - the planet's resources are managed in a manner which maximises options for future generations;
 - every individual, group, corporation and government recognises the value of human and non human entities and that balance and harmony in the biosphere are essential to survival of the planet; and
 - there is equity and social justice for all.



From the Director

THE enormous upsurge of interest in the environment and in conservation caught even the most optimistic of us by surprise in 1989. In response to the growing public concern about such issues as global warming and ozone depletion, the Foundation and our fellow conservationists in other organisations, conducted highly effective campaigns which resulted in remarkable membership growth and a noticeable 'greening' of Government, the media and industry.

Three profoundly important successes were achieved this year.

The bi-partisan support for rejecting Australia's signature to the Antarctic minerals convention was the first. Our long held dream of this great wilderness becoming a World Park rather than being commercially exploited is now a possibility. The Hawke Government has secured strong support for the initiative from France, Belgium and other nations and next year may well see the start of fresh negotiations to create a conservation accord to replace the failed mining one.

This result is especially pleasing to me because of my visit to Antarctica last summer. Seeing that continent was one of the great experiences of my life and I returned, as do most who have visited there, awed by its pristine beauty and intractably opposed to its degradation.

The next conservation high point for the year was the \$320 million commitment to a national land management program over the next decade, the centre piece of the Federal Government's July environment statement. The bi-partisan support for this initiative was largely

brought about by the joint efforts of the ACF and the National Farmers Federation. This influential alliance promises to do much to ensure a vital improvement in the condition of our soils and a substantial reduction of our land degradation problems.

The third great success was the recent Cabinet decision to return 98% of the mining zone of the Kakadu Stage III area to Kakadu National Park and to initiate an inquiry into whether the remaining 2% should be mined. This has been an enormously controversial step, but I am sure history will judge the Hawke Government's decision well and place it on par with the Fraser Government's wise decision not to allow oil drilling on the Great Barrier Reef.

I cannot ignore the extraordinary election result in Tasmania where the Green Independents achieved their outstanding goal of five seats and the balance of power in the Parliament. No-one can doubt that a new era of environmental enlightenment has followed; the extension to the World Heritage listing of the forests of South-West Tasmania is tangible evidence of this.

Inside the Foundation things also reflect the buoyant mood in the community. Our membership has rocketed and will exceed 20,000 before the end of the year. We should achieve a recruiting target of 7,000 new members, a 100% increase over last year.

The Forward Plan, adopted by the Council in October, is a turning point in the history of ACF. It will enable the Foundation to be even more effective in advancing conservation issues in the coming decades.

Under the Plan we will have new programs based around teams of campaigners working in the key theme areas of global change, biodiversity, sustainable futures and natural resources. Our state offices will be properly resourced

with a 'core staff' consisting of a campaign officer, a branches/action group co-ordinator and an administrator/membership officer. We will open a new office in north Australia within the next couple of years.

The primary role of Council will be to develop policy, with the Executive assuming ultimate responsibility for managing the Foundation. Members, action groups and branches will have an increased role in policy development and in active campaigning. They will be full participants in an annual conference of the Foundation.

The key feature of the Forward Plan is a commitment to pro-active thinking: forward planning, not "bushfire fighting". This means we will be reaching out to the groups in the Australian community we hope to engage and influence. For example, we will have rural liaison officers in Victoria and Western Australia working with farmers and complementing our work at a national level with the National Farmers Federation, an Aboriginal consultant working with traditional land owning groups and a trade union liaison officer working full time on greening the union movement.

We now have two full time educators working with teachers and children - with dramatic and heartening effect - on environmental issues such as ozone depletion. This is perhaps the most critical of all the areas we are working in because it is the young people of today who will be the conservationists of the future. On their shoulders will fall the task of solving many of the problems now emerging.

So - the Foundation is alive and well and bursting with talent and enthusiasm. I am impatient to see what successes 1990 will bring.

Phillip Toyne

Inside ACF

■ ACF Forward Plan

In July 1988 ACF began a planning process to develop a Forward Plan to guide it towards the year 2020. The process was completed in October 1989 with the adoption of the Plan by Council. The Plan was developed from a series of workshops for members and staff held in Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth in 1988 plus written submissions from members. It includes a new structure for ACF and a clearly defined agenda for the Foundation's environment program.

■ ACF Enterprises

Sales of merchandise increased throughout 1988/89. With improvements to the warehouse and computer facilities in late 1989 as well as the opening of retail outlets, the capacity of ACF Enterprises Pty Ltd to fund the Foundation is expected to improve dramatically. The Foundation's Bookclub is now also part of ACF Enterprises Pty Ltd.

■ Administration

The workload of administration, reception, accounting and data entry staff increased in 1988/89 because of heightened public interest in environmental issues, plus computer and other technical difficulties. All administrative staff gave many hours of their own time to deal with the extra work. In March, the ACF appointed its first Personnel Assistant to develop a comprehensive human resources policy for the Foundation.

■ Equal Opportunity & Affirmative Action

Council adopted a draft policy expressing its opposition to discrimination on the basis of gender, race, age, disability, religious beliefs, and marital or parental status. Council particularly encouraged women to stand for nomination for elected positions.

■ Fundraising

All major fundraising events exceeded their targets in 1988/89 and the net income of the fundraising department increased substantially above budget. Computer software was developed to provide a detailed analysis of appeals and fundraising activities and this revealed that part of the substantial growth of fundraising income was due to the expansion of ACF's supporter file.

■ Industrial Agreement

An industrial agreement to cover working conditions and salaries of staff is being negotiated between ACF and the Federated Clerks Union.

■ Library & Information Service

Demand for information on environmental issues from the general public, schools and industry increased dramatically during 1988/89.

■ Membership & Branches

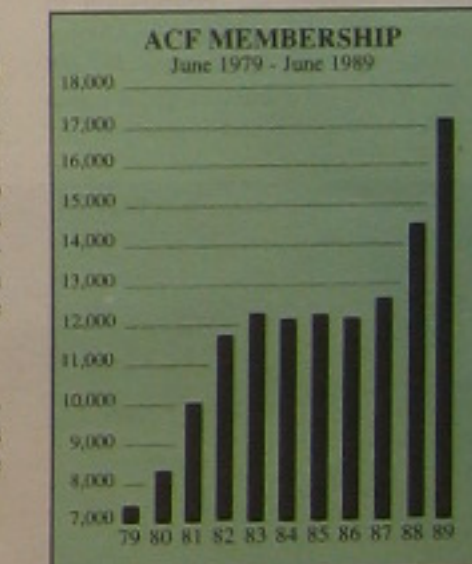
Membership numbers increased substantially in 1988/89 and this was linked to the greener political climate and general rise in media and public concern about environmental issues. Membership at 31 October 1989 was 19,336. Several new ACF Branches were established during the year and there are now 23 active branches around the country. Increased involvement of branches and action groups in ACF's activities is a feature of the new Forward Plan.

■ National Conference

ACF's conference at Sydney's University of Technology in October 1988 presented a range of ideas about leading Australia towards a sustainable future. The conference established an important precedent by accepting extensive sponsorship from major companies sympathetic to the environmental cause.

■ New Building

The Foundation's Melbourne office will move to refurbished premises in the inner city suburb of Fitzroy in December 1989. All staff will be accommodated in



good working conditions with adequate room for volunteers. A major priority for 1990 will be to find expanded space for the Sydney office.

■ Publications

After a successful re-launch in February 1989, ACF's national full colour magazine *Habitat Australia* raised its circulation by 8%. Design and editorial improvements ensured *Habitat's* continued success in promoting public awareness of environment issues. From December 1989 the Foundation's newsletter *Conservation News* will be printed on recycled paper. ACF produced a joint Australian edition of the successful British *Green Consumer Guide* with Penguin Books and the Australian Consumers' Association.

■ Volunteers

Volunteers play a fundamental role in the success of ACF. Their contribution cannot be underestimated when considering the Foundation's achievements.

■ Financial Statements

See accompanying document *ACF Financial Statements 1988/89*.

This Report contains information on ACF's activities up to 31 October 1989. The Financial Statements are for the year ended 30 June 1989.
Photographs
Far right: Distinct Rainforest, By Leo Meier.
Opposite: Coolangubra forest, South East NSW
By Wayne Lawler.

"It is apparent that if we do not replace conquering with co-operation then we are all at risk."

- Peter Garrett

Campaigns

Aboriginal Landcare

A national Aboriginal Landcare consultant was appointed in 1989 to involve traditional land owners in land degradation control programs and develop with them management programs that combine traditional knowledge with scientific methods to protect endangered species.

Antarctica

The ACF campaigned strongly against the signing of the Antarctic Minerals Convention (CRAMRA) during the last twelve months and can claim significant credit for the Australian Government's initiatives in both refusing to sign the Convention and in calling for the whole Antarctic continent to be declared a World Park. The threat to the Antarctic ecosystem from current development is of on-going concern.

Cape York Peninsula

ACF and Aboriginal communities promoted the significance of the biodiversity, wilderness and cultural values of the Peninsula's National Estate areas. Meanwhile the Queensland Government targeted Cape York as an "Enterprise Zone". The sustainable management of the Cape will become one of the Foundation's major natural environment campaigns.

Commonwealth Constitutional Reform

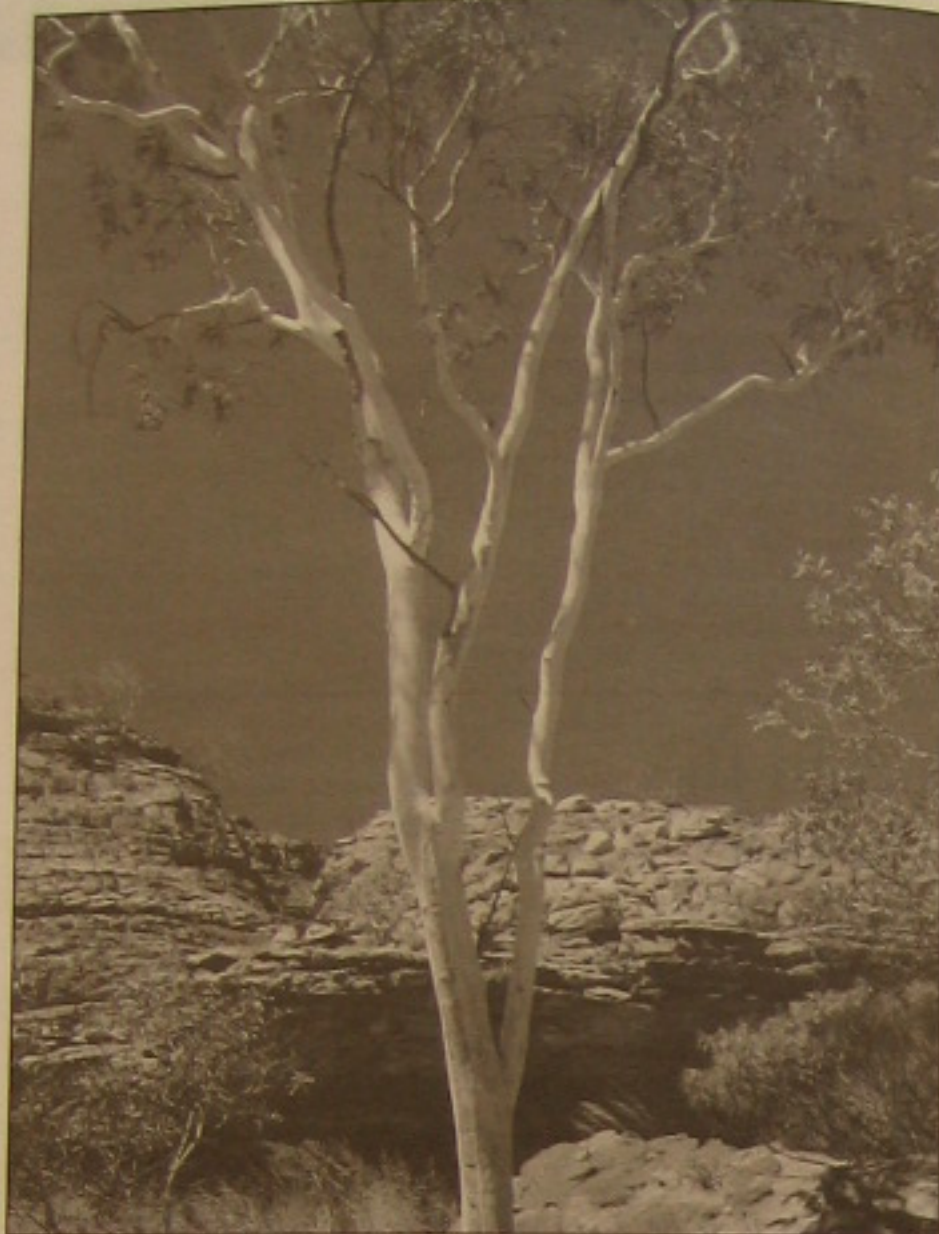
The Foundation lobbied for constitutional reform that would allow the Commonwealth to over-ride state governments and corporations acting against the national interest. ACF also campaigned to encourage the Commonwealth to use its existing constitutional and legal powers to act on issues of climate change, biodiversity, forests management and the management of the oceans and coastal zones.

Court Actions

ACF challenged a number of government decisions in state and federal courts in 1988/89. These included planning approval for the Wilpena tourist development in South Australia's Flinders Ranges national park and the Federal Minister of Resources' role in issuing woodchip export licences to Harris Daishowa for their operations in the southeast forests of NSW. The Foundation is also preparing action in the High Court to test the constitutional validity of the Coastal Waters State Powers Act.

Education

The Victorian Ministry for Education seconded a full time teacher to ACF to encourage environmental education and promote the Foundation's educational resources in 1989. The proceeds of ACF's Ozone Project Kit, now being used by seventy percent of Australian schools, allowed the Foundation to employ an education officer. An Antarctic education kit, *Beyond the Frozen Edge*, a tropical rainforest kit, a video *It's Not All Rubbish*, and a variety of fact



torium on further live releases pending a national public enquiry to establish a universal system of regulation.

Greenhouse Effect and Climate Change

ACF liaised with a range of organisations, both nationally and internationally, on climate change. The Foundation briefed both state and federal government departments throughout the year. ACF's policy proposals on energy efficiency and the role of renewable energy sources in ameliorating the greenhouse effect have attracted significant attention.

International Networking

ACF increased its international profile in 1988/89 and liaised with scientists, government policy makers and environmentalists in the Soviet Union, Japan, West Germany, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, France and Great Britain on a range of issues. These included paper pulp mill pollution problems, acid rain, energy policy for climate change, tropical forest destruction, Antarctica, Third World development, the UN's Brundtland Report, environmental politics and international NGO cooperation. This networking had a significant impact on the development of the Foundation's policies and campaigns.

Jervis Bay

The Department of Defence's decision to relocate its Australian naval facilities to Jervis Bay prompted the formation of the Jervis Bay Protection Committee to save the Bay from naval incursions. ACF became actively involved with this committee and joined local Aboriginal groups in establishing the National Save Jervis Bay Campaign which calls on the Federal Government to proclaim the threatened area as a national park and marine reserve.

Kakadu

Kakadu's World Heritage wetlands and the region's general biodiversity and cultural significance were threatened this year by plans for an open cut gold mine at Coronation Hill in the Alligator River catchment area. ACF can claim some credit for the Government's decision to delay mining at Coronation Hill and to return 98% of the mining zone of Kakadu Stage III to the National Park.

Land Degradation

The degradation of Australia's pastoral and agricultural land was recognised nationally in 1989 as a major ecological and economic crisis. With the National Farmers Federation, the ACF developed a joint National Land Management Program and made a significant contribu-

tion to the land degradation component of the Prime Minister's July Environment Statement. Ongoing research, lobbying and community liaison is being conducted at both state and national levels by the Foundation's Land Degradation Unit.

Mining

Many areas of natural and cultural significance, including World Heritage areas and national parks, were threatened during the year by the mining industry. Areas of particular concern to ACF include the Western Australia coast where sand mining threatens fragile ecosystems; Mellwraith Range on Cape York, where the Queensland Government called for mining lease applications in unprotected rainforest; Pinjarra in WA, where the French Company Rhone Poulenc wants to establish a rare earths processing plant and dispose of radium waste by deep well injection into saline aquifers and thorium waste by burial; and Mt Lesueur, an area of international botanic significance in WA, where CRA plans to open cut coal and build a coal fired power station. ACF was represented at the public hearings of the ALP's Uranium Policy Review and supported the Ruddall River Aboriginal groups opposed to uranium mining.

National Agenda

ACF's lobbying success over the past year on issues like land degradation, climate change, Antarctica, Tasmanian Wilderness and Kakadu is a reflection of the Foundation's growing influence in Canberra and its determination to work with other organisations to ensure that environmental concerns remain high on the national agenda.

Ozone Depletion

The Foundation worked throughout the year to influence state and federal policies on phasing out chlorofluorocarbons and halon gases. Community education was an important part of this campaign. The major political success was the Australian and New Zealand Environment Council's agreement to a near total phaseout of ozone depleting chemicals by 1995.

Research & Policy Development

R & D became an increasingly important part of ACF's program in 1988/89. A major research report outlined policies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving energy efficiency and conservation, and introducing renewable energy sources on a widespread scale. In a joint research program, ACF, the Australian Federal Union of Locomotive Engineers and the Australian Metalworkers Union are developing a national rail strategy. Other research projects are being conducted by the ACF's Land Degradation Unit.

Resources, Industry and Employment

In 1988/89 the forestry and agricultural industries received special attention from the Foundation's resources, industry and employment consultant. Hardwood plantations, alternative pulp mill

and sawmill technologies, integration of recycling and secondary paper mills and the role of non-wood fibre pulping, plus chemical-free agriculture and native vegetation retention were examined.

South East Forests of NSW Campaign

ACF's Forest Action Group challenged the NSW Forestry Commission, Harris Daishowa and the Federal Minister for Resources as part of a national campaign to save the southeast forests of NSW. The Foundation, the Environmental Defenders Officer and the Public Interest Advocacy Centre mobilised Sydney lawyers to give voluntary legal representation in the campaign.

Tasmanian Wilderness

Over 600,000 hectares of wilderness were nominated as an addition to the existing World Heritage Area of 750,000 hectares in western Tasmania in 1989. The Foundation and the Wilderness Society represented the environmental movement in negotiating the boundaries of the extension with forest industries, the trade unions, Tasmanian farmers and the State Government.

Trade Union Liaison

Many sectors of the trade union movement showed interest in joint action with ACF in 1988/89. These include the ACTU, the Australian Railways Union, Metal Workers Union, Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Engineers, building industry unions, Waterside Workers Federation, Australian Clerical Officers Association and Gippsland Trades and Labour Council. A trade union liaison officer was appointed in October to foster these relationships.

Tropical Forests

A grant from World Wildlife Fund Aus-

tralia enabled the Foundation to employ a project co-ordinator to produce an education and information kit on preventing the destruction of tropical forests. This involved the Foundation in social as well as environmental issues relating to forest destruction and the rights of indigenous peoples. ACF assisted Sting and the Rainforest Foundation in working to save the Brazilian forests and established a fund to help the people of Savaii, Western Samoa preserve their tropical forests.

Very Fast Train

ACF and the Australian Railways Union called on the Federal Government to establish a full public enquiry into the economic, safety, social and environmental issues relating to the Very Fast Train proposal.

Wildlife

The Foundation campaigned for the protection of endangered species under threat from development and primary industry in 1988/89. Species included Leadbeater's Possum, the Long-footed Potoroo, the Gouldian Finch, the Hooded Parrot, Pig-nosed Turtle, Calaby's Mouse and Kakadu Dunnart. One heartening success for 1989 was the inclusion of the rare Orange-bellied Parrot's breeding ground in the new Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage nomination. On the other hand, the

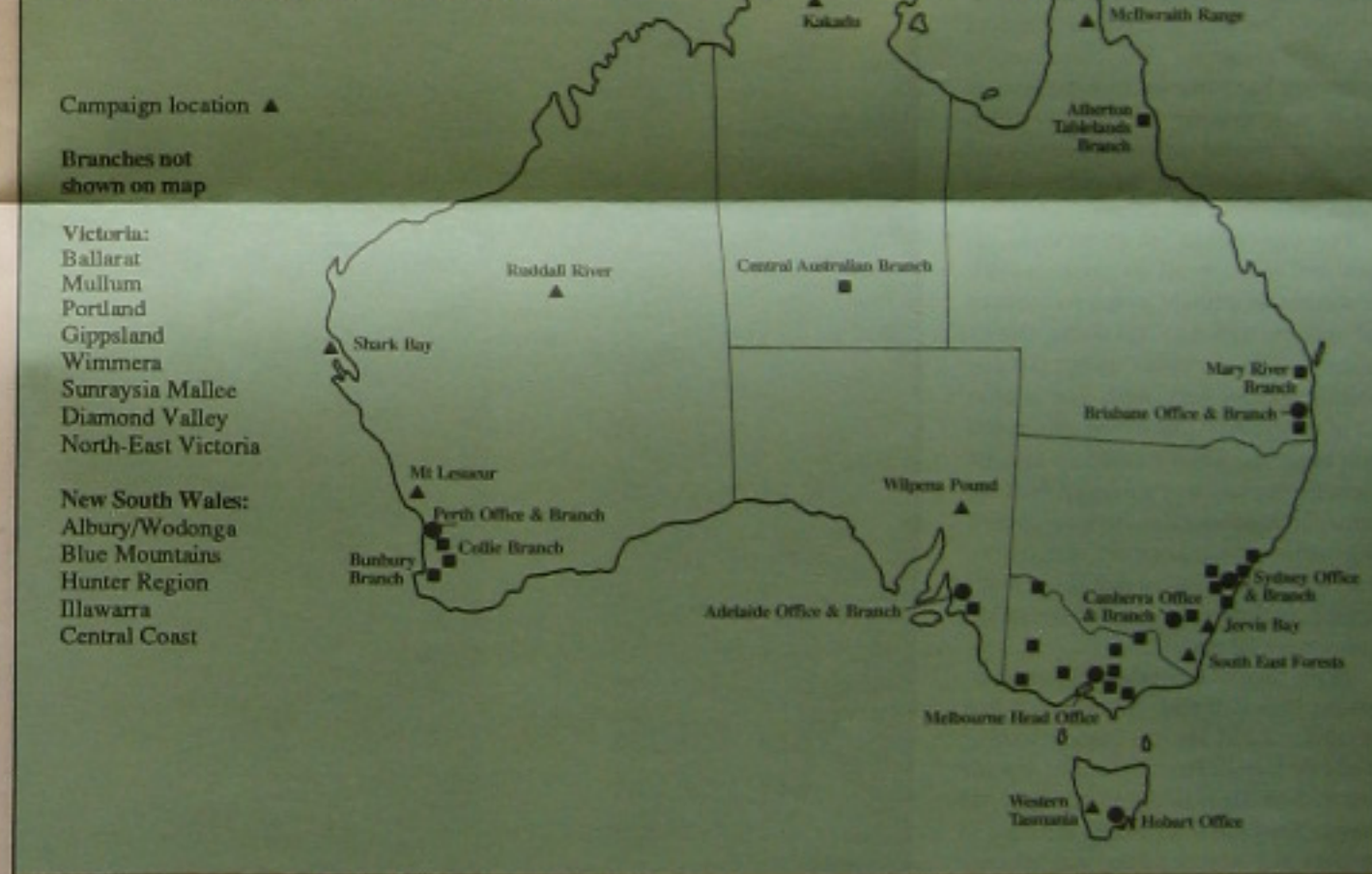


breeding caves of the endangered Ghost Bat were destroyed by Queensland Cement Ltd at Mt Etna, despite a campaign by committed ACF volunteers and staff to save them.

World Heritage

In the last twelve months, UNESCO added the Queensland Tropical Forests to its World Heritage list, agreement was reached on the extension to the Tasmanian World Heritage area, and mining which would have threatened the Kakadu World Heritage area, was delayed. The Foundation watched with deep concern as the Queensland Government failed to co-operate with its federal counterpart in developing an effective management strategy for the World Heritage rainforests. ACF lobbied assertively for the nomination of Shark Bay, the Nullabor and the Australian Alps for future World Heritage listing.

ACF Offices & Branches



State by State

New South Wales

The national campaigns to save the southeast forests and Jervis Bay were supported in 1989 from the Foundation's Sydney office. Other issues of significance to ACF members in this state include the privatisation of beaches, subdivision of coastal lands, the preservation of wetlands, the proposed sale of National Park land, the Harbour Tunnel, the monorail, pollution on Sydney's beaches and the associated issue of waste disposal, and the conservation of Sydney's Regent Theatre and Paddy's Market.

Northern Territory

Land degradation on pastoral leases, Kakadu, *Mimosa pigra* infestation, the destruction of the natural habitat of endangered species, the environmental impact of military exercises, hazardous waste disposal and the Territory connection in an Indonesian pulp mill proposal were primary concerns of Foundation members in the Northern Territory in 1988/89.

Queensland

ACF in Queensland initiated a public education campaign in 1989 to establish Cape York's cultural and wilderness values in view of threats to the region from mining, a proposed hydro electric scheme, land speculation, tourist devel-

opment and the proposed spaceport. The Foundation also campaigned to ban the use of the chemical herbicide Graslan in land clearing until its toxicity is independently tested and its environmental impact assessed. Staff and volunteers produced and distributed a comprehensive recycling directory and worked to put the environment high on the political agenda for the state elections in December.

South Australia

Staff and volunteers negotiated with unions and Aboriginal groups over the tourist development on Wilpena Station, examined the shortcoming of the new state land conservation bills, government policies on national parks and reserves, and the current Environmental Impact Assessment process. They also initiated a domestic and office waste recycling program. Other South Australian issues dealt with in 1988/89 include the proposal to develop a marine mammal research and rehabilitation centre at Mt Dutton Bay, land degradation on Eyre Peninsula, a proposed residential marina at Sellicks Bay, the new aquaculture industry and tourist development at Mt Lofty.

Tasmania

ACF in Tasmania was closely involved in the nomination process for the extension to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area in 1989 and advised the Green Independents before and after the state election.

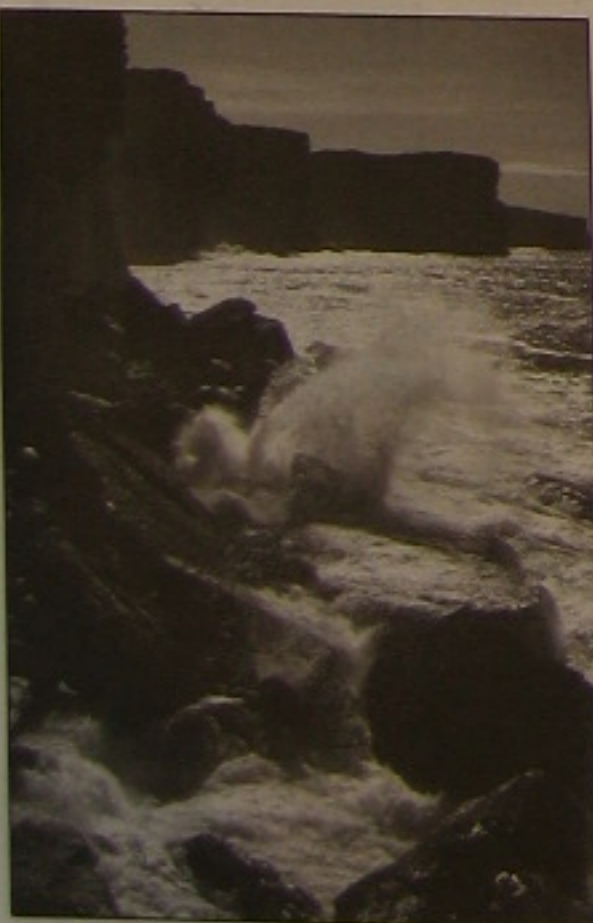
Victoria

ACF's Victorian rural liaison officer, volunteers, farmers and members of rural communities established the Rural Environment Network in 1989. ACF campaigned to protect mallee and desert vegetation in the state and lobbied for the gazetting of the proposed Murray Sunset National Park and a new alpine national park. A significant contribution was also made to the state government's paper recycling policy.

Western Australia

The Foundation supported an action group to investigate the state government's most ecologically unsustainable decisions. ACF also publicly examined the problems associated with clearing old growth native forest to plant Tasmanian blue gums, lobbied for the protection of the Kimberley region of the state, raised the issues of the Bunbury pulp mill proposal, examined the impact of over harvesting and monoculture in the state's forests, and campaigned against mining in national parks.

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Top left: Ghost Gum, Watarka National Park, Northern Territory. By David Tansall.
Bottom left: Jervis Bay, NSW. By Ian Brown.
Top right: Leadbeater's Possum, Victorian Central Highlands. By Greg Scullin/The Herald.
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sheets on environmental issues were produced during the year.

Genetic Engineering

The marketing of Australia's first live genetically engineered organism in 1988 highlighted the limitations of current patent law in dealing with genetic material. Consequently ACF began developing an alternative legislative model for public discussion and argued for a mora-