

Bushwalking and access: The Kosciusko Primitive Area debate 1943-6.

Deirdre Slattery

La Trobe University

Abstract

The environmental history episode explored in this paper shows how the growth of a culture of bushwalking in New South Wales from the 1920s to the 1950s created a very particular relationship to land use and access. I suggest that the model of extended bushwalking in wild, remote places that was defined then has since become central to the culture of outdoor education in south-eastern Australia, but that practitioners are largely unaware of its origins and of its implications for their practice. The 1940s clash of visions about rights of access to large tracts of land between two prominent bushwalking leaders, Marie Byles and Myles Dunphy, split the organised bushwalking movement and delayed the planning of wilderness in Kosciusko State Park (as it was then) for a decade. It also still accounts for aspects of land use in the alpine area, and although few today are aware of their history, the issues raised then remain active in recreational land management. Dunphy's view has prevailed that protection of wild places was justified for the use of the fit and hardy few walkers whose tastes and skills could access them. But Byles' argument for voluntary or regulated withdrawal from 'wilderness' areas, for protection of places for nature alone, is perhaps becoming more necessary.

In south-eastern Australia the journeying practice known as 'the bushwalk' depends on the experience of 'unspoiled' or 'wilderness' settings. An extended remote experience is a core feature of most outdoor education programs, and is usually a highlight of courses of study (Martin, 2008). An example is the three week 'long walk' through the alpine and foothill landscape of Kosciuszko National Park in the Bachelor of Arts (Outdoor Education) course at La Trobe University, Bendigo. The subject outline for this trip specifies the walk's purposes and character by stating that students will gain "knowledge and skills required to undertake an extended journey in a remote natural environment and consolidate their outdoor education journey skills, environmental knowledge, and introductory outdoor leadership skills" (La Trobe University Handbook, 2009).

Such a program demands self-reliance and survival skills, personal discipline, fitness and endurance, group formation and identity. However, the assumption that these qualities are pre-eminently desirable has recently attracted critics in outdoor education circles in Australia (Brookes, 2003a, 2003b; Martin, 2007; Payne & Wattchow, 2008; Slattery, 2004; Stewart, 2004, 2006). These authors argue variously that experience of the self and the group tends to dominate participants' experiences and they propose practices that are more responsive to landscape and wider culture. Brookes, Slattery and Stewart suggest that the relationship to land required by the remote area journey is a continuation of colonial frameworks of exploration and conquest, and that its unwitting acceptance can undermine more sympathetic attitudes to land in Australia.

Such concerns are not confined to Australian experiences. Although they may differ in detail, the 'expedition,' 'wilderness travel' or other experiential practices elsewhere share the characteristic described above of preferring distant places where there are few people to everyday ones. In the recent international publication *Nature First* (Henderson & Vikander, 2007), several Canadian, English, American, Swedish and Norwegian authors join Australians in arguing for outdoor education practice to respond specifically to local natural and cultural conditions, places, land history, events, personalities and organizations (Baker, 2007; Innes, 2007; Loynes, 2007; Lund, 2007). These authors typically suggest that standard historically driven responses should not be taken for granted: they propose alternative approaches to the land, such as exploring local places, making return visits, shaping slower paced experiences, or applying diverse historical, indigenous, scientific and artistic cultural frameworks to specific places. Although *Nature First* focuses on the local and international relevance of the Scandinavian practice of *friluftsliv*, curiously most contributors omit consideration of the nature of access to land. Only Sandell (2007) and Vikander (2007) stress a fundamental underpinning of *friluftsliv*—the rights of access to land enjoyed and protected by Scandinavians. Such rights enable the kind of local, inclusive, integrated relationship to the outdoors that is so admired by other cultures.

By contrast, in countries such as Australia, USA and Canada routes of the journey are shaped, not by nature, but by historical and formal processes of land reservation. The resulting land tenure categories shape assumptions and practices of land users (Sandell, 2007,

p. 95). They influence the experience and determine the type of encounters with other human activity in ways that are probably not evident to most participants on long distance trips, but deserve critical attention by their leaders. The aim of this paper is to show how this is so, how the history of 'the bushwalk' in south-eastern Australia has defined certain kinds of use and claim for land, and has helped shape both the physical and 'mental landscape' of bushwalking (Sandell, 2007, p. 90). It is an historian, Melissa Harper (2007) and a conservationist, Geoff Mosley (1999) who have most thoroughly explored these questions through accounts of the development of bushwalking in the 1940s described below, but neither writer refers to the subsequent adoption of that bushwalking culture by outdoor educators.

Origins of bushwalking in NSW

Bushwalking as a practice was defined by leading bushwalkers in NSW in the period 1920-50 (Harper, 2007; Mosley, 1999). In contrast with other traditions of walking, it embraced natural rather than cultural landscapes, accentuating unpeopled places and bypassing settled or 'developed' ones. Bushwalking came to implicitly exclude consideration of public use of private land. Instead, bushwalkers used public land, which is generally more difficult, rugged terrain, unsuited to other development. By the 1930s experienced and adventurous walkers in remote places had observed and deplored the destructiveness of other, long-standing bush users. Bushwalking organisations came to accept, even pursue, social and political responsibility for protection of the bush in a bushwalking conservation movement. They began to call for land protection, for limits to the destruction of undeveloped places caused by growth and progress (Harper, 2007).

Pioneering bushwalking leaders Marie Byles (1900-1979) and Myles Dunphy (1891-1985), were early supporters of 'primitive areas' or 'wilderness.' Dunphy in particular looked to America, where large areas were protected in National Parks (Meredith, 1999; Thompson, 1986; Worster, 1994). Both influenced local walking clubs to lobby for significant areas to be declared National Parks and Primitive Areas. Both of these designations were for nature conservation, but the former were to provide access for tourists (including day walkers), whereas the latter were the forerunners of wilderness zones (Harper, 2007; Mosley, 1999; Thompson, 1986). Bushwalkers wanted restrictions on access to primitive places for protection from resource exploitation, for ecological values such as flora and fauna. But they also argued for their specific interest in a home grown aesthetic, physical and social style of being in the bush.

In 1943-5 Byles and Dunphy disagreed over land use in the new Kosciusko State Park (later Kosciuszko National Park), in areas that are now the landscape used by La Trobe University's long walk. Byles argued for strict nature reserves, for leaving places for nature alone. Because walkers had impacts just as other visitors did, they should be prepared to forgo some access. This idea outraged Dunphy for whom bushwalkers were "the natural custodians of the bush" (Harper, 2007, p. 203), whose vigilant presence was a form of protection. Further, the hardy, skilful few who could access wild places had earned the right to experience them. That two people with similar ideals could take opposite positions about the importance of bushwalking in wild places can be better understood by looking at the background and development of each of them.

The dispute: Bushwalkers and wilderness

Since the early 1900s both Byles and Dunphy and their friends in newly forming bushwalking clubs had 'discovered' and explored the Blue Mountains, the NSW coast and the Snowy Mountains. At that time such places had been the little visited preserve of other pioneering users: loggers, graziers, hunters, miners, scientists (this is not to ignore Aboriginal relationships to land that will be discussed later). Unlike these users, the bushwalkers visited the bush by choice, not through economic necessity. However, Dunphy confidently argued the superior virtues of walkers' claims and was very unsympathetic to many previous users (Thompson, 1986, pp. 19, 177), deploring their often wasteful destruction and calling their occupation and use of Crown land "barefaced theft" (Dunphy, MSS 4457).

Walking was a rapidly growing fashion in outdoor recreation, and most walkers were new urban arrivals in the wilderness. As the growth of the walking movement paralleled the lives of these new bush users, their views shaped walking as a hobby. Byles and Dunphy were both members of a new professional class. Living in Sydney limited their everyday opportunities for adventure and physical engagement with nature, but offered them well-paid employment, which gave them the time, money and desire to go bush in their leisure. Their activity was made more accessible by a growing railway system: Central Station on weekends was often thronged with bushwalkers meeting for club walks (Harper, 2007, pp. 32-35, 197-200). Bushwalking organisations were concerned that the growth in car ownership and road access were rapidly changing the bush, even though these things were part of the same affluence that enabled bushwalking itself.

Both Byles and Dunphy were well qualified to represent bushwalkers' views on land reservation of remote places. Both had strong bushwalking

experience and some understanding of the politics of land use from an early age. Dunphy, born at Kiama in southern NSW in 1891, had roamed the bush and beaches there and returned often after his family moved to Sydney. By his early twenties, with a coterie of friends, he was exploring the Blue Mountains at every opportunity. These young men developed a taste for long walks in unexplored and unmapped country, developing the necessary skills, knowledge and gear through experience. By 1914 they had established the Mountain Trails Club (MTC), the first of several walking organisations to emerge by the early 1920s (Meredith, 1999, pp. 27-56; Thompson, 1986, pp. 3-5).

Dunphy certainly deserves recognition as a pioneer of bushwalking and the father of wilderness in Australia. However, aspects of his personal style may have helped establish his reputation disproportionately to that of Byles (Cadzow, 2007, pp. 11, 17-20; Harper, 2007, p. 262). His consciousness of his place in history stands out in reading his voluminous papers. From early on, he began to define *his* idea of bushwalking as *the* idea from early on, a vital quality of which was enjoyment in adversity (Dunphy, 1945, p. 4; Harper, 2007, p. 208-9). In his recording of every detail of every place, experience and idea, he often moved from personal reminiscence to history-making by referring to himself in the third person: 'Dunphy thought the Scheme needed more investigation....' (Thompson, 1986, p. 170). He recorded his experiences as a 'first' at every opportunity. He rejected earlier or alternative groups and models of bushwalking such as track, or speed walking and defined 'real bushwalking.' In Dunphy's terms a real walker is

A walker who seeks social recreation and education in roadless wilderness or primitive areas or rugged country, and carries his or her own personal gear, food rations, and share of camp gear, who uses a tent for accommodation in order to stay in the bushland environment for as long as possible, and who practices bushcraft. (Dunphy in Thompson, 1986, p. 16)

Byles, born in England in 1900, came from a family with strong dissenting political ideas and keen outdoor interests. She describes her socialist father's reaction when the local vicar bought a small coppice and closed the public footpath through it.

Father took us for a walk where the public footpath had been, cut the wire of the newly made fence and made us tread over the newly made garden. He then had a leaflets printed and circulated, in which he condemned private property denial of access as 'iniquitous stealing away of public rights.' (Byles, n.d., Ch 2, *Many Lives*)

Once her family moved to the outskirts of Sydney in 1911 she and her brother Baldur became keen walkers and campers around the northern beaches and the Blue Mountains, and later took long, intrepid walks in the Snowy Mountains. In 1928 she took a highly adventurous year-long journey, travelling by cargo boat, walking and climbing in remote places in Scotland and England, Norway, Canada and New Zealand. In 1938 she organised and led a challenging expedition to climb Mount Sansato in remote western China. She was a feminist, having become committed to equal opportunity through her mother. This perspective gave her the incentive to become the first woman solicitor in NSW, and to run a successful practice for many years (Byles, n.d. *Many Lives*). No doubt it also gave her the confidence to take on leadership in bushwalking and other pursuits, maybe even to challenge Dunphy's dominance of the politics of bushwalking.

As young adults Dunphy and Byles both loved hard, physically testing adventurous bushwalking in spectacular places, engaging in it not with foolhardiness but learning techniques that contained and minimised risk. Both believed in the character building possibilities of engagement with the elements. Dunphy was moralistic about style, disapproving of those who went fast and long, or who didn't pay enough attention to detail in their gear, or who were sloppy in making fires, pitching tents or other aspects of bushcraft. Bushwalking was a serious activity, legitimised through skill, hard work and efficiency. However, both also practised various refinements. Dunphy had particular skill in drawing detailed topographic maps of the country they explored, working from memory and notes. Through these he 'captured' the bush for walkers, enabling them to access previously uncharted places, many of which he named. By contrast, Byles wrote and read poetry while bushwalking, but both of them kept detailed journals. The spiritual experience of being in nature was important to both: an exalted relationship with nature was the reward of effort and skill (Harper, 2007, p. 209; Thompson, 1986, pp. 204-7). Byles wrote:

There is something in the contact between the human being and nature which is very hard to explain, but as you lie on Mother Earth and look up at the stars, the life force seems to bring a new health to your tired limbs and worried mind. ... I only know that if you love it, then whatever the pains, and however tired you may be in the office the next day, you will do it again and again. (Byles, n.d. Ch. 5, *Many Lives*)

Dunphy experimented with specialised gear for long distance walking, devising the 'Dungal' swag and light weight Japara tents, but usually carrying

heavy loads as part of the challenge to combine efficiency with endurance. Baldur Byles, Marie's brother, may have been speaking for her too when he ridiculed Dunphy's obsessive attitudes and his preparation for every eventuality. A typewritten scrap of paper amongst Marie's cuttings outlines Baldur's plans for a book about the mountains. He refers to the "He-men bushwalkers and skiers including Myles J Dunphy who took two axes bushwalking, one to mend the other" (Byles, n.d., Box 12, MSS 3833). The lightly built Byles was more flexible on questions of gear, preferring to sleep out where possible to save weight. She also discarded the guns that she and her companions initially carried, on the grounds of their weight. But the young Byles and several of her female bushwalking friends would have had no argument with Dunphy on the virtue of endurance and effort. Byles too referred to bushwalkers who were overly preoccupied with comfort or food as 'sissies' (Byles, 1947, p. 5).

Both Byles and Dunphy had impressive long-lasting records as leaders of bushwalking in NSW, not only through establishing and nurturing clubs, but also in defining and leading the style of walking in them. Both led the bushwalking movement in developing and protecting the reputation of bushwalkers as caring bush users, emphasizing education and interpersonal control within the clubs as a means of ensuring this (Craft, 1939, pp. 34-6; Roberts, 1938, p. 36). However on the matter of style their divergence can be seen from the kinds of experiences they encouraged in overlapping but separate bushwalking circles.

Dunphy's Mountain Trails Club was one of several with requirements of test entry walks, frequent attendance and compulsory overnight camping. Dunphy's views about women walkers excluded Byles from being a member of some clubs¹. She was humorous but resentful of this attitude, writing of the MTC:

This is a very venerable club, it never admitted mere females and not too many mere males. People, who are jealous because they can't join, say it's dying of natural decay. Anyhow, one must not jest about such an august society, even though it only numbers 28 or so. It takes both life and itself very seriously. (Byles, n.d., Box 5, MSS 3833)

Dunphy responded to this kind of criticism by establishing the Sydney Bush Walkers in 1927 to offer opportunity to a broader range of people. By 1933 he had helped set up the NSW Federation of Bushwalking

Clubs ('the Federation') to represent the interests of all bushwalkers, with the particular goal of conservation of land suitable for walkers.

Byles joined the Sydney Bush Walkers (SBW) in 1929 after her return from overseas. She was a close friend of Paddy Pallin, who was then setting up commercial production of gear of his own devising (Harper, 2007, p. 220). An editorial in *The Sydney Bushwalker Annual*, of which Dunphy and Byles were co-editors, claimed that the club had coined the term 'bushwalker' and helped to make it a distinctive activity as opposed to mere 'walking in the bush' or its overseas counterparts, hiking, rambling, trekking or tramping (*The Sydney Bushwalker*, 1935, p. 4). In this magazine, bushwalkers were sometimes quite superior in their self-definition. Hiking was for:

picnickers in gaudy slacks, who litter the bush with their tins and rubbish, and who are in no way akin to the serious members of the SBW, with large packs on their backs and provisions for a fortnight's sojourning away from civilisation. (*The Sydney Bushwalker*, 1935, p. 4)

Byles formed the Highbrow Bushwalkers, many of whose members were European refugees and migrants, older, educated, keener on day walks and nature observation than on endurance and adventure². Rejecting Dunphy's exclusivity on gender and other grounds, in 1939 Pallin and Byles established The Bush Club. It catered for newcomers to bushwalking, especially bush lovers who did not want to go camping. It had neither entry tests nor overnight camping requirements, taking its distance from the older, more stringent clubs (Harper, 2007; Pallin, 1952). The Bush Club minutes show the club's diverse political engagement with issues such as fire management, land purchase, sale of wildflowers, development near various reserves and sanctuaries, and the reservation, declaration and management of Bouddi National Park, on the north-central coast of NSW (The Bush Club, 1939-88.) Byles was given credit for this by Dunphy (Harper, 2007; Mosley, 1999).

From 1941-4 Byles was secretary of the Federation, and editor of *The Sydney Bushwalker*. But by then she was changing her focus from adventure to conservation, a decision made partly by a permanent injury to her foot in her early forties, but one that also showed a changing spiritual orientation. Her autobiographical account of her trek through Burma to China shows how this experience had already led her to revise her relationship with wild places. Her failure

1. The MTC only ever had 57 members in its 67-year history (Harper, 2007, p. 210).

2. A significant social factor in this membership emphasis was the reporting requirements for 'enemy aliens' during the war. This prohibited members from camping out.

to climb Mount Sansato, the group's original goal, was the start of her sense of the inward life. 'What I had striven for and desired above all lay dead.' She realised that Chinese people she observed had a very different relationship to the mountains from that of her group, apparently not needing to 'deflower virgin peaks' (Byles, n. d., Ch. 1, *Many Lives*) maybe even preferring to leave them to the gods. But this loss was a positive, she concluded, as rocks, mountains and sun all remained for her to appreciate, and her study of geology gave her a sense of her own unimportance in time and place.

Thus her Chinese experience began a choice to pursue the life of the spirit rather than that of physical conquest and adventure. In early 1941, she spent a week alone above Blue Lake, practising the pursuit of solitude and detachment through a different kind of engagement with nature (Byles, 1942). She made note of small things: plants, animals, the weather, and thought about what she was learning from such immersion. She concluded that solitude in nature was a means to deeper knowledge, but could not be knowledge in itself, observing in her journal:

There is a deeper life behind where god is and life found – darkness of sense. But God is the silence of the soul and god is nearly meaningless without the bitter music of humanity. Nature will always be my friend but the way to god (sic) is in my heart only. She cannot help me except by giving silence. (Byles, n.d., Picture Account 4911)

Such ideas took her towards an increasing commitment to Buddhism, which she connected with recognition that the self was a small part of all life. She built Ahimsa, a simple small cottage set in bushland north of Sydney, where she lived alone but encouraged the property's use as a centre for Buddhism and land restoration. Her recognition of the Buddha as the first great conservationist brought these two themes together at Ahimsa (Byles, n.d. *Scrapbook*). She eventually left the property to the National Trust of NSW and it remains as a place for meditation and retreat today.

Dunphy too had reduced his bushwalking activity in his early 40s after a heart problem on a walk in 1934. But he responded by tightening his grip as a guardian of correct bushwalking techniques, and by political activity for land reservations for bushwalking. The National Parks and Primitive Areas Council (NPPAC), which he described as a coterie, was set up in 1932. The intention was to represent the interests of bushwalkers in developing cases and lobbying for land reservation. Although the twelve councillors were nominally three from each of the four main NSW bushwalking clubs, in fact seven of them

were also members of the MTC (Thompson, 1986, p. 172). Their work was a voluntary public service, and the members were "very carefully selected with a view to the perfect harmony of its members, as well as securing a group of enthusiasts which is both highly trained and available for duty at a moment's notice" (Bull, 1934, p. 10).

This account of the NPPAC's ethic evokes a kind of commitment reminiscent of involvement in a paramilitary organization or religious orders. And indeed the NPPAC's strength came from the typical Dunphy virtues: allegiance to a tightly defined purpose, dedication to systematic hard work and persistence, highly credible detailed knowledge of the bush and presentation of reasoned, plausible schemes to the right people in peak bodies, administration and government. As early as 1930-31 Dunphy had carefully explored the NSW-Victorian border area of the Snowy Mountains and developed and displayed his customary meticulously drawn plans of a 'Snowy-Indi Primitive Area.' This was a vision for a vast interstate wilderness between the Cobberas mountains in Victoria and the Grey Mare Range north of Kosciusko and the Indi (upper Murray) and Snowy in the west and east (Merritt, 2007, pp. 40-1; Mosley, 1999, pp. 48-56)³.

Political attitudes to land reservation

The grand opportunity to realise this bushwalking haven was provided in 1944 by the radical declaration of Kosciusko State Park (KSP) of 518,000 hectares, a move in which Dunphy was highly influential. The State Park Act set up a Trust that was charged with the 'care, control and management' of the park. Included in these broad powers was the proviso that the Trust could declare a primitive area of up to ten per cent of the park. Dunphy's arguments for this had influenced McKell, the Premier, as had his insistence on ensuring walking access to all parts of the park. Certainly the park, the size of which had 'agreeably surprised' Dunphy was, he thought, big and rugged enough to ensure that a primitive zone need not conflict with other uses (Dunphy, 1945). The NPPAC seemed to have the inside running on issues affecting the park's future management, although surprisingly Dunphy was not named as one of the trustees, a point noted by *The Sydney Bush Walker* (1944).

Perhaps Dunphy, with his intense detailed personal commitment and vision, had underestimated both the strength and extent of others' interest in the new park. His political grip on the matter seemed to slide from the planning stages, as the National Fitness Council (NFC) took the lead in organising the

3. *It is uncertain where the northern boundary lay, owing to the loss of some maps and Dunphy's several revisions of the scheme* (Mosley, 1999, p. 25).

recreation sector (Dunphy, 1945). In a later account of events, Dunphy hints cryptically that a plot to undermine him had bypassed the NPPAC, claiming that a lengthy outline of the NPPAC's plan submitted to the *Sydney Morning Herald* had been withdrawn from publication owing to the influence of unnamed parties in August 1943 (Dunphy, 1945).

After the park was declared in June 1944, the interest groups clustered around the newly formed and very tentative Trust. The strongest contenders were the scientists, led by geologist W. R. Browne. They claimed primitive area status for their own valued sites: wilderness could protect scientific values by holding a line against the ravages of human activity (Mosley, 1999, pp. 57-60). They particularly focused on the Pleistocene glaciation features in the Main Range area: cirques, lakes, moraines and soil formations. Like Dunphy, they worked through tightly overlapping networks of interest. Dunphy was well connected with the Lands Department through his work on the NPPAC, and had already lobbied the Parks and Playground Movement, as well as bushwalking clubs and the Federation, but Browne could command the Royal Zoological Society (RZS), the Linnean Society and the Wildlife Protection Society (Mosley, 1999, pp. 57-8).

In the Park's first year both scientists and recreationists tried to get quick action on the Primitive Area: both Dunphy, through the Federation, and Browne through the RZS and Linnaean Society making representation to the Trust. In response the Trust requested feedback and in late 1944, peak bodies of both scientists and recreationists met to clarify their goals and plans and develop a proposal for the Trust.

Outright disagreement broke out between scientists and Dunphy over the style and location of the Primitive Area. The scientists adopted a very tight definition of a primitive area, a Strict Reserve category for scientific values⁴ in which access was to be limited to permitted users only. In his notes of the meeting, Dunphy indignantly underlines his view: he had gained the public's right to access all parts of the Park. He opposed the scientists' preferred site, the Main Range, arguing that access to it was too easy: it was bound to become the front door of the park, open to tourism as well as continued grazing. There was little overlap between Dunphy's vision and the scientists'. Dunphy had a bushwalker's view: it related to extensive, rugged terrain in unused areas. He appreciated the scenic grandeur of the Snowy and Murray gorges and the brumbies, which, he thought, did little harm to the landscape and were an exciting sight. The scientists were interested in the international significance, the uniqueness of the glacial

sites, flora and fauna, and opportunities for geological and ecological research of the specialised values of the alpine zone, and a bit appalled by Dunphy's casual attitude to feral animals (Dunphy, 1945).

Until an NFC led meeting of 51 representatives of 28 recreational groups in December, the bushwalking Federation had supported Dunphy, but a new view was emerging. Marie Byles became Convenor of a co-ordinating Committee, set up to continue to develop the work of the meeting. By January, it was clear that she concurred with the scientists on access: Dunphy notes their 'difference in interpretation' on a phone call to her in January (Dunphy, 1945). In March, Byles and Dunphy both addressed the AGM of the Sydney Bush Walkers, raising questions about which the minute taker cryptically records that members would need to give much consideration. Dunphy then tried a direct appeal to Byles, seeking solidarity as noted in the following: "[The] main purpose should be to get a large primitive area for conservation purposes and bushwalking uses. The two purposes are not incompatible, despite what scientists say" (Dunphy to Byles, MSS 4457).

In May he wrote an unpublished article for *The Sydney Bushwalker* arguing that bushwalkers were the 'real' guardians of the bush, capable of a level of appreciation 'far better than most people,' engendered by their particular skills and efforts (Dunphy, 1945). Bushwalkers acted as an educational influence for the community at large on the value of unspoiled natural places. In several articles in bushwalking journals, Byles developed counter arguments for places where nature should be supreme, partly as compensation for the ravages elsewhere, partly because humans needed to acknowledge the intrinsic rights of non-human life (Byles, 1945, 1948).

In June the Federation told the Trust that it was opposed to a primitive area for walkers. Thus isolated, Dunphy was left to prepare a minority report from the MTC, the NPPAC and the Sydney Technical College Bushwalkers (Dunphy, 1945).

Although Dunphy continued to make representation to the Trust until the end of 1945, after that he withdrew from pro-active involvement with KSP and concentrated on other issues. Mosley, who knew Dunphy well, suggests that he was deeply hurt by the whole matter. He certainly seems not to have understood what happened or why, as his description of the Federation's views as 'strange and incomprehensible' indicates (Dunphy, 1945). Mosley comments that it is unlikely that it had ever occurred to Dunphy that bushwalking and nature conservation could be incompatible (Mosley, 1999, p. 62).

4. Established at the 1933 London Convention for the Protection of African Flora and Fauna (Mosley, 1999, pp. 57-8).

The Primitive Area concept today

In 1945, the extent of disagreement discouraged the Trust, which shelved a decision for nearly ten years. Scientists from the Academy of Science successfully campaigned from 1958 to have a primitive area declared: this happened in early 1963 in *their* preferred area, the Main Range. This was a significant victory in 1963 as ski industry plans for more intense use for recreational development were stopped. It enabled the relatively uncluttered landscape of today, and allowed for the current high degree of public acceptance that this landscape is important and should be maintained as 'wild' (Dickson, 2007).

However ease of access to the Main Range has led to the pressures from use that Dunphy predicted, so that it is now managed as an area of 'exceptional natural and cultural significance,' not wilderness (Department of Environment and Climate Change, 2006, p. 149). The perception of wilderness is one that satisfies many day visitors to the Kosciuszko summit (Dickson, 2007), but a bushwalking perspective in the Dunphy tradition offers a different idea of the place. On the La Trobe 'long walk,' group-leader Brendon Munge reports that for about 20 kilometres through the Main Range, the experience of bushwalking is dominated by daily visitors and associated infrastructure, and by the structures of the Snowy Scheme (B. Munge, personal communication, April 2009).

An impaired version of Dunphy's scheme can be seen in the maintenance of rights of access to KNP, and in its eventual zoning (Bardwell, 1979). Nine zoned Wilderness areas now make up nearly 50% of the Park. Four of these are sections of Dunphy's proposal (DECC, 2006, p. 29). Adjacent wilderness areas in Victoria are part of Alpine National Park (Department of Conservation and Environment, 1992, p. 41). Wilderness in both parks is managed to promote the capacity for natural ecological processes and systems to evolve in the absence of significant human interference, whilst allowing opportunities for solitude, isolation, inspiration and appropriate self-reliant recreation (DCE, 1992, p. 45).

However, the wilderness integrity of the land in Dunphy's Snowy-Indi proposal is 'diluted' by roads that subsequently dissected it in two directions, from east to west by the Alpine Way, and from south to north by the Barry Way. Apart from this obvious loss for Dunphy's vision, today the Byadbo/Pilot/Middle Snowy area is still relatively empty except for spots on the Snowy made accessible by the Barry Way.

Thus limited areas of wilderness now conform to Dunphy's vision rather than Byles' in a kind of victory for his concept, to be applied where there was little contest over the land. We can only speculate on

whether an earlier declaration would have prevented or limited some of the inroads to his primitive area described here.

Access in outdoor education: Discussion

In its choice of style and location for the long walk, outdoor education practice at La Trobe has followed Dunphy's thinking rather than Byles.' Entitlement to remote places is earned through mastery of skills not much different from those defined for bushwalking eighty years ago. The pursuit of inaccessibility is a motivation, a lure, a challenge in its own right. The best places are the best because they are inaccessible, a quality that guarantees an absence of people's impacts that may heighten the personal or spiritual experience. Conversely, evidence of use may detract from the experience (Stewart, 2003).

But these days others also fight strongly for 'rights' to access natural places, just as Dunphy and Byles did three generations before. Both established and emerging recreation groups—four-wheel drivers (FWDs), mountain and trail bikers, skiers, fossickers and prospectors, hunters and most recently, luxury wilderness resorts—make their claims in land-use decision-making processes in which bushwalkers' voices are these days relatively subdued. Such groups often accuse walkers of wanting to 'lock out' other groups to claim large areas of the bush all for themselves. Dunphy's position here was somewhat contradictory. As described earlier, he undoubtedly claimed the wilderness for a brotherhood of those who earned access through merit and allegiance (Harper, 2007, Thompson 1986), an essentially elitist position. But he also saw his idealised relationship between the walker and the bush as an "act of good citizenship and of patriotism" (Harper 2007, p. 270). This claim to national identity is also espoused by other pioneering users as well as newer user groups.

Byles' position was, and remains more obscure in Australian cultural life. In 1943-5 she argued from a Buddhist cultural perspective of the value for voluntary withdrawal from some places. Her argument for limiting access to nature for spiritual reasons has been one less chosen by Australian society at large (Slattery & Slattery, 2005). This idea does not sit easily with people's rationalist, egalitarian assumption that access is a right, as the recent outrage over proposals to ban climbing Uluru illustrates (Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, 2009).

Yet though Byles' position seems to have fallen into history, it may turn out to be more far sighted, as it anticipated an era when bushwalking would not be so tightly controlled by clubs, when conservation campaigning would become separate from mainstream bushwalking, and when access roads and 4WDs would open up ease of access to remote

areas. In the 1940s, Dunphy argued that bushwalkers' use was not exploitative. But today the presence of multiple uses and users of the bush is damaging from sheer weight of numbers at various iconic sites such as Mount Kosciuszko summit area, the lakes circuit on the Main Range, or along the Snowy River. The growth in number and popularity of 'wilderness walks' advertised for their rugged experiences by day and their luxury by night also open up access to previously little used places. These walks also need routes that are relatively 'wild' to maintain the illusion of a privileged place and experience, in this case earned through money rather than physical effort⁵.

Land managers increasingly determine access. Behind this seemingly simple idea—access—is a complex web of mechanisms that address both entitlement to go to a place and the physical capacity to do so. Physical access is determined through provision of tracks and cable cars, wilderness lodges and huts, viewing places and car parks. Entitlement is regulated through zoning and permits, entry fees and seasonal restrictions. Managers also organise the psychology of access: these physical and regulatory methods direct the visitor towards solitary or highly sociable experiences, ones that are rugged or gentle, wild or familiar, secure or risky, spiritually exalted or mundane. Most participants are unaware that their experience and enjoyment are shaped by the extent and type of access they are permitted or encouraged to use.

Debates in nature conservation have also changed in the last 20 years. The emphasis has moved from arguing about the purity of landscapes without human presence, wilderness, to arguing about landscapes in which the human presence, both Indigenous and European, is undeniable and problematic. Here, the growing acceptance of Indigenous rights and practices offers a new perspective, one neglected in the debates described above. In 1943-6, neither Dunphy nor Byles acknowledged the longstanding Aboriginal relationship to the wilderness areas they were disputing.

Indigenous traditions commonly have strongly articulated and established ideas and practices to protect nature. Aborigines use limitations on access for practical as well as for spiritual reasons: the two motivations are inextricably intertwined (Bernbaum, 1997; Wild & McLeod, 2008). For traditional owners a wilderness is in fact a neglected landscape, nature

does not thrive in a cultural vacuum (Rose, 1996, p. 19). Traditional management practices involve delineation of special or sacred places where access may be excluded for some people, or for some time or purposes. Such concepts have now emerged as legitimate positions in land use debate: two recreational examples are the Anangu request that people do not climb Uluru, and the Kurnai people's request that walkers do not camp overnight at Tarli Karng in Victoria. And the Victorian public's vigorous rejection of luxury development at the Wilson's Promontory National Park appeared to be at least partly on the grounds that the Prom was 'sacred' to non-indigenous Australians too, to be maintained for particular kinds of experience only (Slattery, 2002). These examples stand as important challenges to the idea of 'right of access.' Moreover, by applying the principles of sacredness to land they undermine the very idea of a human 'right.'

As Byles perceived, the scientists' exclusionary argument was a more logical one from which to resist accusations of special pleading, as access for one should logically involve access for all. Today, scientific knowledge is credible for purposes of land management, as Byles argued in 1943-5 that it should be, but it is often not sufficient to withstand arguments about 'balance' and 'rights.' Acceptance of limitations on access would need to come from a deeper sense of spiritual relationship to land than science can supply. This seems far off from most debate about land use, although the examples above suggest that understanding may be growing.

In all this, the very notion of access has remained largely unexamined, even to those most affected by it. In Australian outdoor education literature there is almost nothing written about access. A wealth of questions remain to be explored.

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5. *The Travel Section of The Age on any Saturday offers a perspective on these new versions of 'wilderness.'* See, for example *Rawnsley Park Station, Flinders Ra, SA: After a 2-hour 4WD tour up a bone-crunching track to one of the highest peaks in the Chace Range... 'they serve good bubbles and tempt you to take a second or third fig stuffed with gorgonzola. Now that's my kind of adventure' (The Age Special Report, April 10-12, 2009, p. 5).*

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About the author

Deirdre Slattery is Adjunct Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Excellence in Outdoor and Environmental Education at La Trobe University, Bendigo. Her recent research, as a Fellow of Manning Clark House, Canberra, is on the history of conflict between nature conservation and resource use and development in Kosciuszko National Park. She is a member of the Victorian Alpine Advisory Committee and is also involved in Connecting Country, a landscape restoration program in the Castlemaine district. Email: d.slattery@latrobe.edu.au

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