

We don't need gro

Country couldn't cope with 35 million

CARYN METCALFE

WHILE Prime Minister Kevin Rudd is trying to raise support for population growth, a Penrith conservation group is going to actively oppose it.

Geoff Brown, of the Western Sydney Conservation Alliance, said it would actively oppose population growth because it believed Australia could not cope with a projected population figure of 35 million by 2050.

"If you take the climate change argument, how are we going to combat it with 35 million people living in Australia?" Mr Brown said.

"One of the reasons we're using so much land to feed ourselves is because of population growth.

"With an extra 15 million people, we'd have to clear more land, which means clearing more habitat for species other than humans and destroying the habitat of native species."

Mr Brown said he could see Australia heading in the direction of vast population growth based on planning policies such as those in Penrith.

"Penrith Council is a pro-development council," he said.

"The council claims it's doing more for the environment, but for years we've been looking at Penrith Council and thinking it's a joke, we're going backwards.

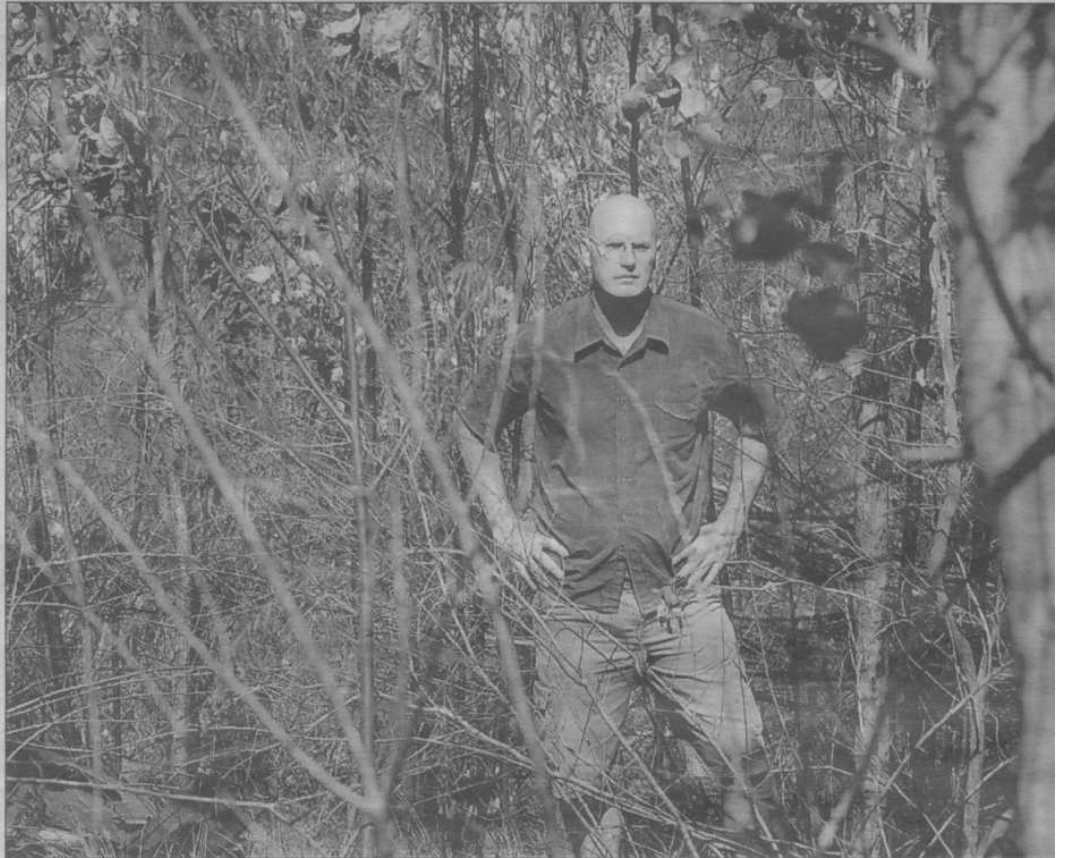
"We're getting rhetoric from the council that we're protecting the environment, but we see examples where it's not happening."

One example Mr Brown gave was of council-managed bushland at Cranebrook, which had been the victim of dumping.

"The flowers growing there were once in someone's garden, now they're thriving in the bush," he said.

"Bushland remnants surrounded by urban development are most at risk."

A council spokeswoman said



Conservationist Geoff Brown is opposing population growth, claiming Penrith Council is unable to care for b

"the council considers illegal dumping to be a very serious issue and is successfully combating the problem".

"The council has hosted the Regional Illegal Dumping Squad since its inception in 1999," she said.

"Penrith Council hosts and coordinates the squad on behalf of six local councils and has substantially invested in the squad."

The spokeswoman said the council had a good track record in conserving important bushland and boosting the city's rich biodiversity.

"There are about 2250ha of bushland reserve within the city, which is an increase of almost 200ha of reserve in the past 18 months," she said.

"We have developed a biodiversity strategy and in the past three years have engaged the resources of a full-time natural resources management officer to implement our biodiversity action plan."

Help save our

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He says it's up to the public to help protect the environment.

He appealed to the people of Penrith to not get "sucked in" by council spin promising that it was looking after sectors of bushland.

"We want people to come forward and say, 'we're going to put our hand up to help protect the environment'," Mr Brown said.

"I think it's un-Australian not to care for the environment. Bush and animals need to have a voice too."

The Western Sydney Conservation Alliance is co-ordinating the formation of new bushcare groups in Penrith to work on areas such as the old Air Services Australia site at Cranebrook and bushland at the University of Western Sydney's Penrith campus.

Mr Brown said the Penrith area was at war against exotic and introduced weed species.

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Mr Brown sa group lets you m learn new skill positive.

To join a b information con info@wsca.org.au wsca.org.au.

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Mr Brown said the Penrith area was at war against exotic and introduced weed species.

"If we were in a war we would all be doing something about it," he said.

"We all say we love the bush, but let's prove it. To me, wanting to destroy, wanting to clear it, is un-Australian.

"There should be a focus in our community that protecting the bush is something admirable to do. There should be funding going into educating people about the significance of their bushland and how it plays a part in their everyday life.

"I couldn't imagine a day where I didn't drive past a patch of bushland."

Mr Brown says volunteering for a bushcare group lets you meet new people, get exercise and learn new skills, all while doing something positive.

To join a bushcare group or for more information contact the alliance by emailing info@wsca.org.au or by visiting its website, wsca.org.au.