
I.0 INTRODUCTION

I.1 PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

Wolli Creek Regional Park provides an important bushland open space in the urban environment of Sydney. The Park is a vital recreational and educational resource for local and regional users as it contains important flora and fauna habitat and has cultural and historical significance.

The site has been identified for establishment as a Regional Park for the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The impacts of both current and past landuses on the enduring qualities of Wolli Creek as well as the lack of any park infrastructure require that a planning and design phase will be essential to the Park's development as a Regional identity.

In order to examine and resolve the many issues facing the Park the Wolli Creek Regional Park Plan of Management was commissioned by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

The Plan of Management and Masterplan is an important first step in revitalising the recreational opportunities, cultural and natural resources for the enjoyment and appreciation of the community and future generations.

I.2 THE NEED FOR A PLAN OF MANAGEMENT

The area designated for the Wolli Creek Regional Park is approximately a 60 hectare linear corridor of bushland and open space. It currently has little formal open space or recreational development. The Park is bordered by Wolli Creek and a major rail line running east west and comprises remnant but unmanaged bushland, open reserves and numerous cultural and environmental heritage items. A co-ordinated approach is required to integrate these elements in the creation of a Regional Park.

A Plan of Management is the appropriate mechanism for such an approach, determining the values of the site and bringing together the substantial body of information and local knowledge that already exists on the natural systems, historical and cultural background, such a Plan can also assess the inter-relationship of contributing impacts and recreation opportunities, evaluating community attitudes and setting out clearly enunciated strategies and priorities for action, identifying their implicit costs.

In undertaking this Study and preparing the Plan, the specific objectives

set by NPWS have been central considerations. The objectives summarised in the brief require the Plan of Management process

- To identify and understand how the community values Wolli Creek.
- To establish management objectives that identify: a vision for the park, values of the park, issues associated with the park.
- Investigate the history and analyse the natural attributes of the site.
- Investigate the aboriginal significance of the site.
- Prepare a Masterplan for Wolli Creek which strategically positions the park within the regional open space network, creating a unique and identifiable image for the park.
- Develop a masterplan that responds to the multi-cultural context of the park within the regional area.
- To increase the public's awareness, enjoyment and participation, cultural and social dimensions and to ensure the park is accessible to all users equally.
- To provide environmental sustainable park design, facilities and surface treatments.
- To develop management strategies for bushland areas.
- To provide durable and safe facilities and features which can be economically and effectively maintained.
- Enhance the aesthetic qualities of Wolli Creek.

This Plan of Management provides a practical working tool for the future planning within the site by NPWS. It also provides guidelines for community involvement and the approaches to be adopted in implementing strategies within the study area.

This document is accompanied by an illustrative Masterplan.

1.3 SITE DESCRIPTION

Wolli Creek Regional Park is a large linear area of land within the Canterbury Local Government Area situated on the north side of Wolli Creek (see Fig 1).

Occupying approximately 60 hectares, Wolli Creek Regional Park is bounded by Wolli Creek, in the south (the creek is not included in the Park) and residential area in the north. The topography is steep in much of the Park, characterised by a steep south facing sandstone escarpment. The Park runs from Bexley Road North at its western end to Unwins Street to the east.

The majority of the Park comprises remnant bushland with sandstone plant communities including Sydney Sandstone Gully Complex and Closed-forest. Mangroves and associated saltmarshes fringe the creek in the estuarine stretch of the creek up to the Henderson Street weir. Off-stream wetlands adjoin the creek close to Henderson Street and west at Hartill-Law avenue. The site is well known locally for its rich and diverse birdlife.

The East Hills Railway line runs parallel to the site immediately south of Wolli Creek. Few formal walking paths or tracks exist in the Park. The principal recreational focus of the Park is found at Girrahween Park which provides an amenities block, picnic tables and BBQs in a bushland setting. Small local playgrounds exist at several locations on the edge of the Park. A number of infrastructure services cross parts of the site including:

- sewer pipeline
- AGL gas line
- stormwater pipelines

Allied to the virtues of the history of the site is the remnant urban bushland that provides a substantial contrast to the developed urban nature of its surroundings.



I.4 A SHORT HISTORY OF THE SITE

I.4.1 Aboriginal Occupation of the Wollli Valley

Wollli Creek Valley lies within the country of the Darug and Kameygal clans. There is little written historical documentation about Aboriginal culture and occupation of the area, however the presence of middens at the north-eastern end of Wollli Creek suggests the area was occupied by Aborigines.

The mangroves and creek and sandstone outcrops would have provided them sources for food and shelter. It is understood that the word ‘Wollli’ has the Aboriginal meaning of ‘camping place’ (Wollli Creek Preservation Society, 1994, *The Story of Stone*, Wollli Creek Preservation Society Inc, Earlwood). The first major confrontation with the Aboriginal people in the area occurred in December 1790 with European settlement forcing the Aboriginal people from the Valley.

I.4.2 Early European Settlers

It was not until 1804 that the first land in the area was granted to Hannah Laycock which she named ‘King’s Grove’ and used as a grazing property. Between 1812 and 1821 all the productive land along the creek was promised to small farmers.

By 1839 the heights above Wollli Creek had been partially cleared of its timber. In 1840 the dam of Cooks River at Tempe was completed, causing problems in the flow of Cooks River and Wollli Creek but providing a crossing of the River and opening up a new line of road.

From 1850 to 1880 the area around Wollli Creek remained on the fringe of the Sydney suburban area. The area consisted of orchards, market gardens, dairies and poultry and pig farming with the abundant water supply from Wollli and Bardwell Creeks. Many of the market gardeners remained in the area until after the turn of the century, the Chinese market gardens remained as late as 1929. Archeological studies in the area found remnants of the market garden at Turrella Reserve and in a bend of the creek below Jackson Place (Madden and Muir, 1996, *The Wollli Creek Valley, A History of Survival*, Wollli Creek Preservation Society, Earlwood).

I.4.3 Further Development of the Valley

There was little additional subdivision and settlement in the 1850s and 1860s with the opening of new roads west of the Parish of St George. In the 1880s Wollli Creek became the prime site for small industry such as woolwashes and boiling-down works.

The construction of the Illawara railway between 1882 and 1884 altered the flow of Wollli Creek with floodwater now draining into Wollli Creek. In order to manage the drainage of Sydney’s suburbs the government in 1890 commenced construction of a network of sewers which incorporated the Southern and Western Suburbs Ocean Outfall Sewer aqueduct crossing Wollli Creek.

Small scale stone quarrying on the Turrella side of Wolli Creek occurred during the 19th Century and in the early part of the 20th Century with much of the sandstone used for local buildings. It was during this time that the William Jackson quarry was in operation and the sandstone cottages in Jackson Place constructed. The old quarry is located in the bushland below Highcliff Road, east of Turrella Reserve. The last major project on which the stone from this area was used was the runway at Mascot Airport during the 1940s. At one stage a proposal existed to quarry Nanny Goat Hill for that purpose (Madden and Muir, 1996, *The Wolli Creek Valley, A History of Survival*, Wolli Creek Preservation Society, Earlwood).

Railway Line

The Tempe to East Hills railway line was completed and began running in 1931. It was not until 1988 that a train service commenced between Campbelltown and the city with the construction of the new line between Kingsgrove and East Hills. Despite the construction of the rail line, development in the area was slow mainly due to the Depression's adverse effect on home building.

It was during this time that Andrew Bowen erected a small stone building and raised his family. Remnants of the house can be found in the western area of the Park.

The main period of development along the rail line occurred in the early 1940s and 1950s. Development consisted of shopping centres, schools and churches and the road bridge, Hartill-Law Avenue over Wolli Creek. The industrial area in Turrella developed in the 1950s and 1960s (Madden and Muir, 1996, *The Wolli Creek Valley, A History of Survival*, Wolli Creek Preservation Society, Earlwood).

M5 Motorway

There have been several plans for a road through the Valley since the post war period. In 1948 a traffic study provided for six major expressways, ring roads and other major road works. One of these expressways was the South-Western Expressway, through Alexandria and the Wolli Creek Valley.

In the 1970s the road corridor became known as the M5 Motorway. Community opposition to the construction of the M5 Motorway through the Valley finally led to the recent realignment of the road, of tunnelling most of the motorway from Bexley Road to Arncliffe and thereby preserving the entire length of the Wolli Creek Valley (Madden and Muir, 1996, *The Wolli Creek Valley, A History of Survival*, Wolli Creek Preservation Society, Earlwood).

1.4.4 Wollie Creek Today

The linear corridor has been identified for the establishment as a Regional Park by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. Whilst parts of the land, particularly in the east of the site are held by private landholders the NPWS does not have a policy of compulsory acquisition. Where necessary NPWS will seek to agree rights of access across land with the owners.

1.5 THE STATUTORY AND STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The following statutory instruments and documents have practical relevance to this study and have informed the analysis of issues and development of strategies:

- National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974
- SEPP 19 Urban Bushland
- EP and A Act 1979
- Canterbury Planning Scheme Ordinance 1970

For full list of all relevant references refer to Bibliography.

The Park has been identified as one of the Regional Parks throughout Metropolitan Sydney for enhancement over the coming years. These Parks will be managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

1.6 ZONING, OWNERSHIP OF THE PARK

Given the land use of much of the Park is as a road reservation it has not had a formal park zoning.

The proposed zoning of the Park will be an 8(a) zone under Canterbury Council's LEP.

The majority of the proposed Park is zoned County Road with some smaller areas such as Girrahween Park and Turrella Reserve zoned Open Space under the Canterbury Planning Scheme Ordinance. The adjoining land, south of the Creek is zoned Open Space under the Rockdale Planning Scheme Ordinance.

The area has the following landuses:

- Roads and Traffic Authority Open Space Road Reserve
- State Rail Authority Railway Reserve
- Local Government Ownership Open Space Reserves

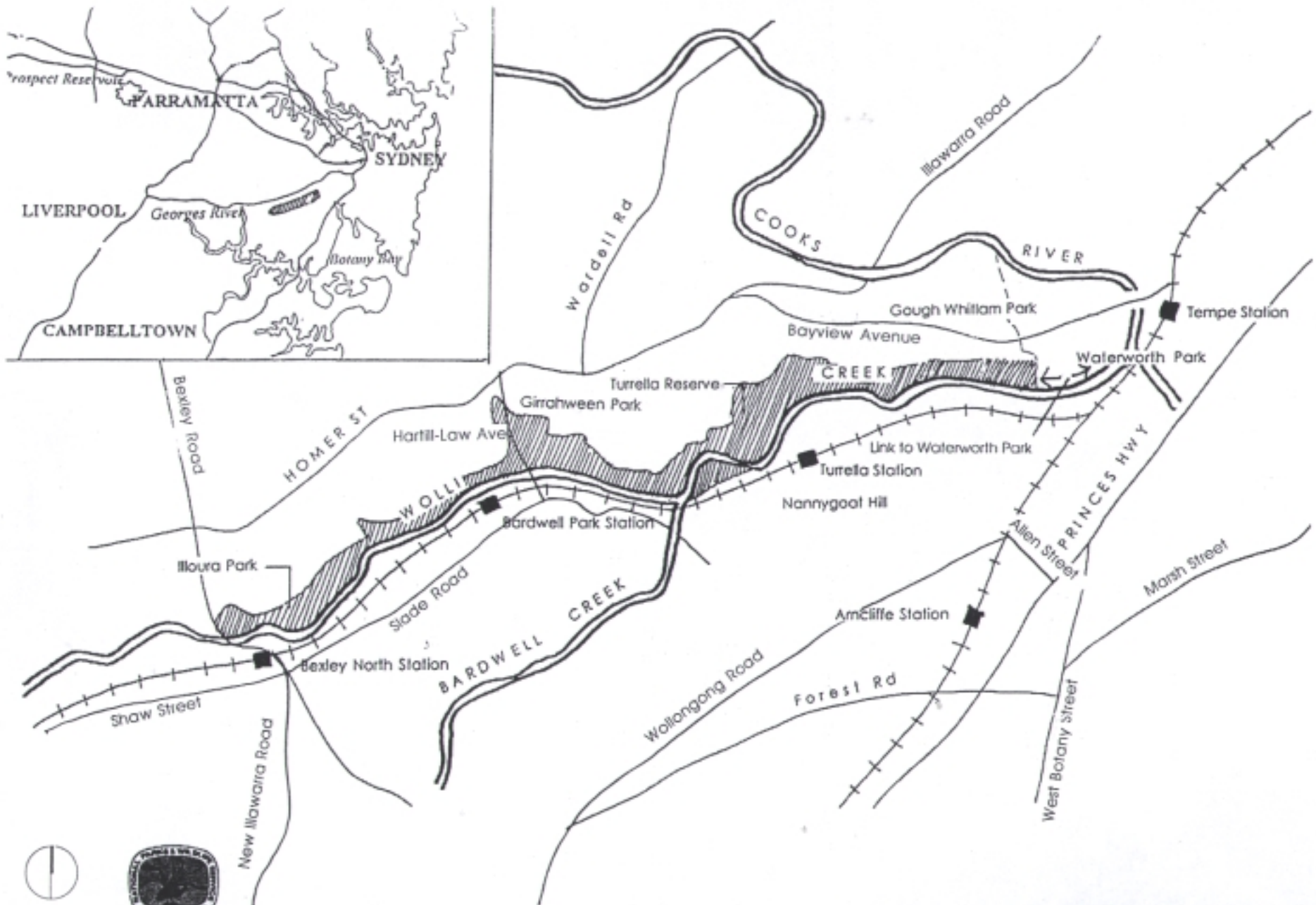
The Park is currently owned by some eight landholders of whom the major landholders are:

- Council
- Roads and Traffic Authority
- Crown
- Department of Urban Affairs and Planning (DUAP)
- State Rail Authority
- Private owners

The care and control of most of the site now designated has rested with Canterbury Council. Members of the community, Friends of Wollie Creek, have been involved in bushland management particularly the section of Park south of the creek. National Parks and Wildlife Service are presently co-ordinating the consolidation of land currently in State government ownership to create a contiguous reserve for the establishment of the Regional Park.

NPWS are currently in preliminary negotiations with Canterbury Council to establish whether parts of the Park may remain in Council's care/control where appropriate.





2.0 METHODOLOGY AND FORMAT

The following brief summary sets out the approach and methodology adopted in achieving the objectives of the Plan and describes the chosen format. This process has involved key stages as follows:

2.1 DATA COLLECTION AND SURVEY

This has involved the consultant team in site specific document research on flora and fauna data, historical development of the area, water quality, landuse practices, service locations, pedestrian, cycle and vehicle traffic and parking management. This information has been supported by field checks and discussions with Council officers, other Government instrumentalities, stakeholders, and local and regional community liaison.

2.2 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

This element is considered by NPWS and the consultant team to be a key component in the development of the Plan of Management and Masterplan. It is a process intended to provide opportunities for information exchange, raising of concerns, opinions and ideas.

The development of the Plan has taken a comprehensive and integrated approach to community consultation with local and regional interest given considerable emphasis.

Key elements in the consultation process have included:

- telephone survey
- community workshops
- steering group of key stakeholders
- one on one interviews
- newsletters, minutes

A full description of the consultation process and outcomes is contained in the Appendices in Volume Two.

2.3 BASIS FOR MANAGEMENT

Following detailed site analysis, document review, consultation and evaluation of key values of the Park the results are summarised in Part A of the Plan of Management and this forms the basis for management.

2.4 STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT AND PREFERRED CONCEPTS

In analysing the numerous issues that affect the site and after evaluation of NPWS objectives and community concerns, the team has reviewed a range of concept options and subsequently defined a series of detailed strategies that address the key issues, providing clear guidelines for the future design, implementation and management of the site. The strategies are provided in a combined written and illustrated form where appropriate.

2.5 PRIORITIES

In arriving at final strategies the Plan will set out and identify priorities for staging the works.

A suite of targets is established for those strategies and performance indicators identified by which implementation progress may be measured.

The Plan provides outline costs for key elements of the strategies proposed.

2.6 FORMAT OF THE REPORT

Section 3 of Part A explores all of the relevant issues raised under 9 major headings. Each issue under these headings is discussed in the following format:

2.6.1 Major Topic (eg. Environment and conservation)

Introduction

An introduction is provided for each of the major headings giving a general background to the principal matter under consideration.

Existing Status

This section provides factual background on the topic at issue.

Community Perceptions and Issues

This section provides a brief summary of the key concerns raised in discussion with stakeholders. The principal source of such material is from the discussions in the community workshops, steering committee meetings, and telephone survey. The issues raised under this heading are not purported to be a quantitative representation of the broader community, but rather identify the range of concerns raised by individuals or groups that may require consideration and further analysis.

Discussion

This section provides a brief discussion of all the implications of the above, concluding where applicable with broad implications as to the options that might be considered in developing strategies to address the issues.

2.6.2 Terms and Definitions

For the purpose of clarity some abbreviations are referred to in the report and are defined as follows:

NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
The Park	Wolli Creek Regional Park
The site or study area	Wolli Creek Regional Park
The Creek	Wolli Creek
Respondents	participants in the telephone survey and community workshops
SEPP	State Environmental Planning Policy
LEP	Local Environment Plan
RTA	Roads and Traffic Authority
DUAP	Department of Urban Affairs and Planning
RIC	Rail Infrastructure Corporation
SR	NSW State Rail

Access terminology as stated in NSW NPWS *Access for All*

Barrier Free	Designed for wheelchair access (including paths, toilets, picnic facilities, benches and tables)
Rough	Surface of paths have potholes, tree roots, rocks and/or similar obstacles
Easy	Access is free of obstacles such as steps, rough terrain or significant slopes, and may have ramps or boardwalks
Medium	Access presents some minor difficulties, such as grassy surface, but is considered negotiable without assistance
Difficult	Access is over rough terrain or via steps or steep slope - help is necessary