

## Wolli Creek Preservation Society Inc.

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The Hon Bob Debus  
Minister for the Environment  
PO Box A290  
SOUTH SYDNEY NSW 1232

Dear Mr Debus

The Society has received a copy of your letter of 16 December 2005 to Linda Burney, MP re revised boundaries for the Wolli Creek Regional Park – your reference Doc 05/20558.

We note that a new draft boundary has been prepared and presented to you. We have to advise you that we were not consulted in any way, and major concerns that we have, set out below, have not been addressed.

Nonetheless, we are pleased to see that some progress is now being made towards the acquisition of lands for the regional park. However, we understand that the M5 road reservation over the Wolli Valley has not yet been lifted, six years after the building of the M5E tunnel and government undertakings re the park. This alarms us, as land acquisition alone may not protect the vital Wolli bushland if the reservation is not lifted. We urge you to take this matter up with your colleague the Minister for Roads.

The map provided with your letter identifies with numbered flags the various changes to the original boundary proposed, but does not explain the reasons for them. Despite this, we believe we can recognise the reasons for the majority of the changes, many of which are understandable and acceptable. We also appreciate the need for funds to be obtained to fund the acquisition of some portions of private land falling within the park boundaries.

Our immediate concerns relate to four areas.

1. (Flag 12 on the map) – the exclusion of the large triangle of railway land on the southern side of the creek, earlier the site of plantings by the former Friends of Wolli Creek. We would like to be given the reasons for this. It is the only significant area of the southern bank which has vegetation reasonably compatible with the bushland of the regional park. We have always regretted the Government's decision to exclude the creek itself and, now, the whole of the southern bank from the protection afforded by regional park status.

2. (Flags 10 & 11) – the exclusion of land south of Unwin Street and west of the SWOOS. While this is land currently of a lower ecological value, containing several residences, its exclusion precludes any broad linking of the regional park to Waterworth Park, which itself has significant habitat values, open to improvement. The protection of the creek itself by the retention within the revised boundaries of the narrow strip fronting the creek is welcomed. However, any developments on the blocks now excluded could create overwhelming pressure on this narrow strip. At the very least, suitable covenants should be placed on these blocks, at present largely owned by State agencies, to restrict the height and intensity of any development.

3. (Flag 9) More concerning still is the exclusion of the block (owned by Sydney Water – Lot 29 DP 4709) surrounding the tunnel entrance for the SWOOS. There may be security issues involved for Sydney Water with the existing passage immediately outside their current security fence, but these would not apply to this particular block, which is both excellent heath bushland and a vital all-weather access route into the regional park from the east. Its exclusion appears to leave access at this end only via the creekside strip below Unwin Street and thence under the SWOOS itself.

This route is entirely within the riparian zone and subject to flooding, with many weed species present, raising the prospect of seed transmission further into the regional park. Because it passes close to the SWOOS pipes and support pillars, it could also raise security issues for Sydney Water.

4. Lots 17 and 18 DP 4709 are not within the original, or the revised boundaries. These blocks, currently owned by the Department of Planning, include a striking sandstone bluff, containing outstanding heath bushland, almost unique in the whole Cooks River catchment. It is cited as a rare remnant fragment of the original bushland in the authoritative *Missing Jigsaw Pieces* (Benson, Ondinea and Bear, Royal Botanic Gardens, 1999). The inclusion of these blocks is extremely important, both for biodiversity reasons and because they provide, together with Lot 29 (see 3, above), an all-weather access to the eastern end of the regional park that avoids the creekside, while also avoiding any close approach to the SWOOS tunnel entrance. The bluff also provides a very fine lookout point over the junction of the Cooks River and Wolli Creek Valleys.

It should also be noted that this bluff was independently reported to the National Parks and Wildlife Service in 1996 as an Aboriginal site (open campsite) with minor stone artefacts present (Site 45-6-2547). It is close to a known Aboriginal cave site (hand paintings).

We ask that these three matters be given further careful consideration in determining the final boundaries of the regional park. We would appreciate the opportunity to put the case for these areas directly to you; the continued exclusion of areas 3 and 4 above would be of especial concern to us. A delegation of Society members could meet with you at your early convenience. Our contact for these matters is our Vice-President Peter Stevens on 9554 3176 or via [info@wollicreek.org.au](mailto:info@wollicreek.org.au).

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Druce  
President