

OCU location breaches proposed planning principles

The Explanation of Intended Effect that accompanies a draft new State Environmental Planning Policy ('Design and Place') sets out five principles supposed to guide planning of public spaces:

1. Design places with beauty and character that people feel proud to belong to.
2. Design inviting public spaces to support engaged communities.
3. Design productive and connected places for the wellbeing of people and the environment
4. Design sustainable and greener places to enable thriving communities.
5. Design resilient and diverse places for enduring communities."

Sydney Water's proposed location for its Odour Control Unit (OCU) stands in stark contrast to these indications of what is sought.

1. It is hard to feel proud to belong to a space desecrated by an industrial plant destructively inserted into bushland – it has no beauty and the wrong kind of character, out of keeping with the 1890s engineering heritage of the State and Commonwealth heritage-listed South-West Ocean Outfall Sewer aqueduct it is to serve.
2. Far from inviting people into a fine space designed by nature, the OCU will deter and even repel people from entering the Wollie Creek Regional Park at its narrow eastern entrance point. It will also be a menacing industrial plant, suggesting a chemical-handling unit, and with the necessary strong protection, probably a barbed-wire topped cyclone fence, it will suggest that something dangerous is at hand. It does not support the engaged community of nature and passive recreation lovers, which is widespread, and is absolutely opposed to it in the proposed location.
3. Usage of Wollie Creek Regional Park has more than doubled in the past year as more people discover a fine stretch of local bushland and seek to connect to nature. Sydney Water's proposal damages the environment (destruction of bush and impressive rock face) and prevents the connection of two parts of the WCRP (exclusion of the land in question from the Park). Both aspects will actively detract from community wellbeing.
4. Wollie Bluff, a striking local landmark, will be less green as bushland will be removed and its rockface quarried. The sustainability of the plant on the proposed site is in question, given the difficulties in adequately protecting the OCU without further damage to the adjacent bushland.
5. There is an enduring community connected to the Wollie Creek Regional Park, a community represented over decades by the Wollie Creek Preservation Society; the resilience of the bushland has been well established by the Society's Bushcare work. Wollie Creek Regional Park has a huge diversity of ecosystems and also a diverse range of opportunities for ongoing community involvement. The resilience of both the ecosystems and the community will be damaged by the OCU proposal.