

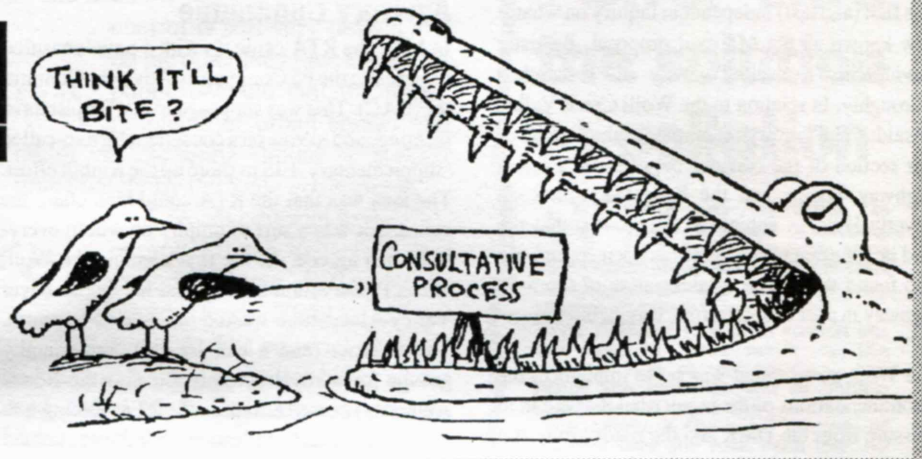
Wolli Creek Update

FROM THE WOLLI CREEK PRESERVATION SOCIETY INC.

Monday 24 May 1993, No. 19

**WE'RE NOT GOING,
YOU SHOULDN'T EITHER**

Boycott the RTA's 'forums'!



The Wolli Creek Preservation Society is boycotting the RTA's so-called 'Community Forum' and the 'Neighbourhood Forums' for the M5 East environmental impact statement (EIS).

We are urging all community organisations and individuals to do likewise. Already a number of key organisations have been invited to attend and have refused. The list will grow longer.

The forums, for which nominations will close at the end of this week, will be part of a new environmental impact statement for the discredited M5 tollroad extension proposal which is designed to increase vehicle movements along the south-west axis threefold—from 20,000 to 60,000 per day—at a cost exceeding \$800 million.

There are three compelling reasons for not taking part in this exercise:

1. The RTA has an appalling record when it comes to consultation—as the recent Botany-West Transport Study shows. To the RTA consultation is simply window dressing—designed to give the appearance of democratic participation. These consultations, 'managed' skillfully enough, result in 'endorsement' of the RTA's preferred plans; if the results is not what the RTA wanted to hear, they resort to outright distortion.

2. The RTA's 'forums' have no legal weight at all. The Preservation Society will not take part in 'legitimising' a process whose outcome has been predetermined. An EIS which fully and thoroughly

documents the fact that the project will have a highly destructive effect on the environment would actually be harder to challenge in the courts than one which is incomplete or slipshod.

3. The 'forums' are designed to narrow the focus of inquiry to local questions and to distract attention from the RTA's main agenda. However the M5 issue goes far beyond the protection of the Wolli Valley or the local traffic question. The M5 extension is part of the RTA's vision: a sprawling Los Angeles-style car-dependent city serviced by a network of massive air-polluting expressways. **The real issue now is that expressway building must be stopped immediately and a crash pro-**

THEY'RE NOT GOING...

As we went to press, this was the list of organisations which had decided they would NOT nominate for the RTA's so-called 'Community Forum'. It should be noted that Geoff Roberts, of Manidis Roberts, the RTA's consultants for the EIS, has been making a special effort—both in writing and by phone—to persuade key environmental and community organisations to nominate for the forums.

**Wolli Creek Preservation Society Inc.
The National Trust of NSW
Total Environment Centre
Coalition for Urban Transport Sanity
Friends of Wolli Creek**

gram of rail and light rail building must begin.

We now have an alternative rail line proposal in an advanced state of planning. There is also now a proposal—backed by every major Australian conservation group and every public transport advocacy group in Sydney—for a Wolli Park. The park would consolidate and protect all publicly-owned open space in the valley.

The AirportLink rail line and Wolli Park are the way to go. The RTA's 'solution' is no solution at all. Their new attempt to impose a Los Angeles-style disaster on Sydney should be shunned.

Join the Wolli Creek Preservation Society—Send in the form on the back page!

A history of duplicity

• 1979-1980 The Kirby inquiry

The first (and last) independent inquiry on what is now known as the M5 road proposal. Barrister David Kirby consulted widely and researched thoroughly. In relation to the Wolli Creek Valley he said: "The inquiry recommends the release of that section of the corridor between the Princes Highway Tempe and the King Georges Road Beverly Hills. ... subject to the proviso that the land be returned to the public as open space". He also found that: "The condemnation of the S-W Freeway in cost benefit terms, was all but universal".

The Wran government was set to implement the recommendations of the inquiry but it caved in to pressure from the DMR and the roads lobby and the report was shelved.

• 1987 The DMR's secret review

In an effort to bypass the authoritative Kirby Report the DMR commissioned Traffic Planning P/L to prepare a confidential review of Kirby's findings. The review provided no joy for the DMR, grudgingly conceding that Kirby was right in all his major judgements on freeways in general and the M5 in particular.

• 1988 The South-West Sydney Road Corridor Study

This study was notoriously shonky. The DMR offered a range of official options which included a tunnel from Bexley North to Tempe. Most respondents preferred this option and the local (Liberal) member Phil White said it would be built but the DMR went ahead a few months later and presented an EIS for an elevated road instead. This was the (unofficial) option put forward by the ERTAG group which had presented the DMR with a pro-freeway petition during the 'consultation'. The ERTAG push was denounced in Parliament as a "fear and anxiety campaign". The petition was discredited after a close analysis of signatures and the discovery that it had included an authorisation on each sheet apparently attributing it to the DMR.

• 1989 The Kinhill EIS

When the EIS finally came out it did not include the promised full study of the long tunnel option. We submitted that it was fundamentally misleading and of low professional standard. It had also ignored special instructions from the Director of Planning and expert opinions by the subconsultants had been editorially altered. There were some 6,400 public submissions, the vast majority opposed to the project. Other government departments were highly critical. The RTA realised it was onto a loser and went to ground till things cooled down. The EIS was never officially 'Determined'.

• 1990 The F5 Community Advisory Committee

In May the RTA came up with a new 'consultation' scam: the F5 Community Advisory Committee (CAC). This was supposed to last for just three meetings and to vote on a consultant for a so-called 'supplementary' EIS to shore up the Kinhill effort. The idea was that the RTA could then claim the consultant was a sort of umpire on whom everybody had agreed. At the first meeting the Wolli Creek Preservation Society and the Cooks River Valley Association walked out—never to return. The walkout (and a call by 200 community groups for a royal commission into the Roads Authority) caused a crisis in the RTA, forcing it to go to great lengths to 'prove' that the committee was a genuine exercise. The CAC dragged on until late 1992 and gave rise to...

• 1991 The Botany-West Transport Study

The RTA's idea was that this would 'justify' the need for the F5 freeway by an elaborate re-examination of all transport issues in the area. They didn't count on a rail proposal—the AirportLink line—suddenly emerging as a serious rival to their pet tollway plan. This disastrous development called for desperate measures...

• 1992 The Botany-West Transport Study Community Consultation

The RTA issued a final summary of the Botany-West Study for public comment. The document was made available in large numbers and included an anonymous submission form which required the respondent to simply tick a box for either a freeway option (Proposal R) or the AirPortLink rail option (Proposal P). The way was wide open for pro-road zealots to tick the boxes and send in thousands of anonymous forms. The Preservation Society publicly warned of the dangers of this procedure and issued its own pro-Proposal P form letter which required signature, name and address.

In the result well over 8,000 pro-rail submissions were received by the RTA compared to 4,500 pro-tollway submissions. Faced with a decisive public endorsement of rail and a rejection of the tollway proposal, RTA Chief Executive Peter Wolfe announced in a letter to the Sydney Morning Herald that "approximately equal" numbers of submissions had supported both proposals.

The RTA then summarily disbanded the Community Advisory Committee (three more community groups had recently pulled out of it) and proceeded to the new EIS for the tollway extension.

Now read on...

The R

The RTA's plan for an expressway through Wolli Valley has never been in greater crisis than today. In fact the new EIS is a desperate move to keep any sort of expressway plan for south-west Sydney on the table in the face of the astronomical cost of the M5 East proposal, the growing opposition to expressways in general, the failure of existing tollways and the threat from a more popular rail solution to south-west Sydney's traffic problems.

Sydney's road transport crisis increased steadily during the years when the influence of the Department of Main Roads, the RTA's predecessor, was unchallenged and unquestioned and while there was plenty of government money available. Put simply, the more big roads the department built, the worse Sydney's traffic became. Today, road building swallows a third of the State's budget and the traffic crisis is worse than ever.

As the State's financial crisis deepened the Unsworth government began looking at 'user-pays' methods of raising extra money to keep the expressway program going. Under Unsworth, a strategy for urban tollways—to be constructed and run by private consortiums—took shape. This plan was eagerly implemented by the Greiner government (Greiner himself is now on the board of the Statewide consortium).

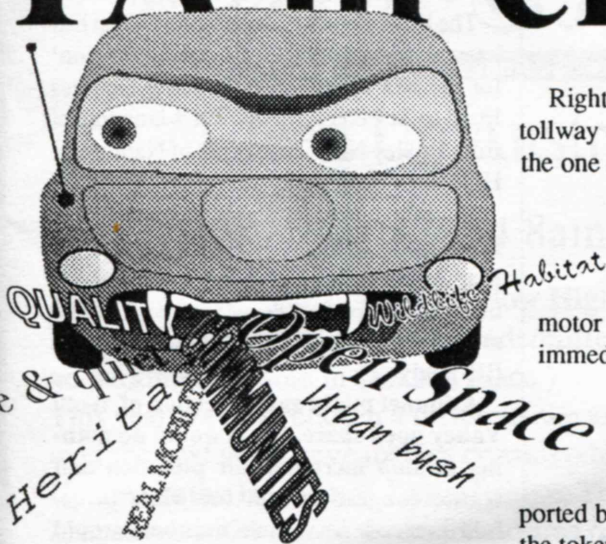
So far, the urban tollways have been a costly failure for the consortiums. Consumer resistance is high and in any case it

A Los Angeles-style futur

Road Transport Future Directions predicts the following outcomes in 25 years time if the current road-building spree continues...

Congestion in Sydney	600% increase
Carbon dioxide emissions	23% increase
Air quality	36% decline
Fuel consumption	23% increase
Accident costs	68% increase
RTA's annual financial performance	Minus \$480 million
State Government's annual transport performance	Minus \$1350 million

TA in crisis



Right now, however, the RTA and the tollway consortiums are in a dilemma: on the one hand the amount of roadway they control is still very limited and on the other they face a growing public demand that the linked problems of urban sprawl and motor vehicle smog should be tackled immediately by the State government.

A recent editorial in the Telegraph-Mirror criticised the upcoming Smog Action Week sponsored by the NRMA and supported by the RTA. The editorial attacked the token anti-smog measures being advocated, called for "a dramatic reduction in the numbers of cars on the road" and noted "In America and Europe it is now clear that the explosion in freeway construction in the 1970s and 1980s was an expensive mistake. Tinkering with our hours of work is no way for us to avoid the same error."

Exactly. The M5 extension proposal is designed to support more big sprawling car-dependent suburbs in Sydney's outer southwest. The aim of the M5 extension is to increase traffic moving through the southwest corridor from below 20,000 vehicle movements per day (the present figure for the section of the M5 up to King Georges Road) to 60,000, (the figure projected for the road if it were completed to St Peters).

This is the last thing Sydney needs. The Wollie Creek Preservation Society has a duty to use all possible means—including if necessary a blockade—to stop any extension of the M5.

ANOTHER REPORT THE RTA WANTS TO FORGET

The RTA has never gone public with the results of its community consultation on the Road Transport Future Directions report.

This study, by leading Sydney consultants Travers Morgan P/L, Sinclair Night and Partners and Booz Allen and Hamilton Inc. was completed in June 1991 and was immediately suppressed by the Greiner government. However copies of the document were obtained by public transport groups and were leaked to the media.

Eventually in July last year the report was released for public comment. the period for submissions closed in mid September 1992. Since then nothing has been heard from the RTA.

This is not surprising. Despite its narrow terms of reference—it dealt only with road transport—the report was a devastating indictment of the government's road-building spree. It showed that a Los Angeles-style disaster awaited Sydney unless there was a dramatic switch to public transport. It even questioned whether the RTA should retain independent planning powers.

THE DAILY

Telegraph Mirror

Tuesday May 11, 1993

Fewer cars the solution to pollution

WHILE any suggestion to tackle Sydney's worsening air pollution deserves close attention, a proposal from the NRMA to stagger starting times for city employees seems fatally flawed.

The NRMA's idea is to stretch out the so-called "peak hours" so the concentration of city traffic — and hence the concentration of vehicle emissions — is less dense.

But surely, if the same number of vehicles uses the road each day, no matter when, the net amount of pollution pumped into the atmosphere will not change.

Surely, what we should be trying to achieve is an actual reduction in measureable pollution, not just a redistribution of its poisonous effects.

Purists may argue that staggering the commencement of the working day would allow for a smoother traffic flow and hence more efficient engine performance, leading to less pollution.

But at best, even in off-peak hours, Sydney motoring is a stop-start affair. To achieve a dramatic improvement in air quality, the necessary step is a dramatic reduction in the number of cars on the road.

It should also be emphasised that there would be a considerable price to pay for the dubious benefits which may or may not be delivered by stretching out the working day.

Business activity is fundamentally interactive. If suppliers and consumers work different hours, the efficiency of that interaction will be damaged.

NSW Chamber of Commerce chief David Taylor expressed his concerns yesterday about the NRMA proposal, warning the idea was "impractical" for city-run businesses.

In reality, the cost in terms of lost efficiency would far outweigh any marginal improvement in air quality.

Correctly, Mr Taylor pinpointed the cause of our increasing levels of air pollution — increasing traffic levels.

The NRMA's suggestion, delivered, no doubt with the best possible intent, is a band-aid solution. The real answer lies in bringing the unarguable benefits of public transport over private car use into sharp focus and in making public transport systems more efficient and attractive.

The State Government should be commended for efforts to improve the commuter rail network, but much more must be done if commuters are to be convinced that public transport is an attractive alternative to cars.

At the moment, suburban parking facilities for rail commuters are less than adequate. Efficiently designed bus-rail interchanges are still uncommon.

In America and in Europe it is now clear that the explosion in freeway construction in the 1970s and 1980s was an expensive mistake. Tinkering with our hours of work is no way for us to avoid the same error.

THANKS, AND STAND BY!

AN OPEN LETTER TO PREMIER JOHN FAHEY

Too precious to pave

Mr Fahey, it's time to stop appeasing the roads lobby.

Permanent preservation of the Wollli Valley greenspace is being obstructed by your Government and the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA).

This unique place contains the only bushland left in inner south-west Sydney. It's also the only large high-quality open space that re-



The view towards the City across the Wollli Valley. Just one section of the four kilometre-long greenspace which should be preserved immediately as a park for the people of Sydney. The valley contains an outstanding array of natural environments including eucalypt forest, heath, reedlands, mangroves, and even a pocket of Sydney rainforest.

Open letter launches Wollli Park campaign

An open letter to Premier John Fahey published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on Monday 3 May has kicked off a campaign for the declaration of a Wollli Park covering all publicly-owned open space in the Wollli Valley.

The open letter, titled *Too precious to pave*, was endorsed and paid for by Australia's peak environment groups, all of Sydney's pro-public transport organisations, a raft of community groups and dozens of individuals.

Included among these were: Dr Bob Brown of Franklin Blockade fame, Associate Professor Peter Newman (he's the guy who's been hired Los Angeles to tell them how to get out of the mess they're in), Aboriginal identity Mum Shirl, WA Senator Cristabell Chamarette, Federal MP Ted Mack, playwright David Williamson, NSW MLC Richard Jones, artist Jeannie Baker and educationist Freda Whitlam.

The open letter resulted in a flood of further donations to the cause and requests for information. We were surprised to receive many coupons from Newcastle, Wollongong and country centres. Our moles tell us that the open letter has had a very unsettling effect on Cabinet, the tollway consortiums and the RTA.

Conservation and public transport groups backed the open letter because they see the Wollli struggle as critical in the fight to stop tollways spreading across Sydney with disastrous effects on the social and natural environment (not to mention the State's finances!).

Our heartfelt thanks to all who endorsed unhesitatingly and donated generously.

The open letter has been reprinted as a leaflet so if you didn't get a copy of the *Herald* that day, ring us and we'll send one out (559 1269).

Stand by for more news on the Wollli Park proposal!

What's behind the tunnel proposal?

The RTA's consultant for the M5 East EIS has announced that the 'primary option' for the M5 extension from King Georges Road to St Peters involves a 4 lane tunnel from Bexley North to the foot of Nannygoat Hill near Turrella station.

No announcement about secondary options has been made but a spokesman for Manidis Roberts told *Update* that other options would be looked at (and still others might be developed) during the course of the EIS study.

A tunnel might save a section of Wollli Valley open space, but it would do nothing to stop increased air pollution and traffic congestion that the M5's three-fold increase in vehicle numbers would bring.

The RTA (and the DMR) have talked about Wollli tunnel options before. They have never been serious about tunnels and invariably such talk has turned out to be a cheap political manoeuvre. This is likely to be the case with the new proposal (See: A history of duplicity, Page 2).

Perhaps the main reason why a tunnel is apparently being considered is that the rival AirportLink rail plan has forced the expressway out of the Wollli Valley, at least between Bexley North and Turrella.

Of course, there will inevitably be a surface road option and the RTA will be hoping they can revive this as the 'primary' option at some time in the future.

Why not join (and send a donation)

If you're not already a member of the Wollli Creek Preservation Society you (or your family) should consider joining. It's the best way to keep in touch with matters Wollli and to do your bit to have the valley's open space preserved as a bush park. We meet monthly and we have lots of activities apart from committee meetings!

If you want to find out more about the Society's activities you could ring Danni on 559 1629 or Lee on 567 8502.

In the meantime... the quickest way to help is to pop a cheque in the mail! the campaign to beat the tollway menace and establish a Wollli Park doesn't come cheap! Send your donation to Wollli Creek Preservation Society, PO Box 270 Earlwood NSW 2206.

Wollli Creek Preservation Society Inc.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Yes, I would like to join the Wollli Creek Preservation Society Inc...

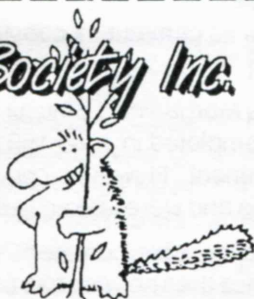
NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

POSTCODE _____

PHONE No/s _____

By mail to: WCPS PO Box 270, Earlwood NSW 2206



PLEASE TICK

- Family \$10
- Individual \$7
- Concession \$5
- Donation \$ _____