

Wolli Creek Update

FROM THE WOLLI CREEK PRESERVATION SOCIETY INC.

FEBRUARY 1996

M5 East environmental impact statement delayed yet again!

THE LATEST news from the freeway front is that the RTA and the road lobby are in disarray following the Federal Government's announcement that the tax rebate for investors in private road infrastructure is over. Discussions with the RTA and Manidis Roberts, the consultants handling the M5E supplementary environmental impact statement, indicate that everything is on hold until after the elections.

Why did the Federal Government end the tax breaks for private infrastructure? On the one hand the government had grasped that there was a potential electoral windfall to be gained from opposition to the Victorian Government's giant City Link project. On the other hand, Canberra's commitment to reconstruction of the 750 km Pacific Highway on the basis of equal federal and state commitments could only be achieved if the Carr government could be prevented from contributing nearly a billion dollars to two privately-owned tollways: the M5E and the Eastern Distributor. These two roads total just 12 km. Importantly, the Coalition has matched the government's Pacific Highway commitment so that the road lobby's prob-

Please do your bit to clean up Wolli Creek!

If you can spare an hour or three, we'd love to see you on **Sunday 3 March** for the annual Clean Up Australia effort in the valley. We are assembling in front of the last house in picturesque Jackson Place, Undercliffe, at 8.30 am. Bring your gloves and put in a few hours for the valley. You can make a difference.

lem's won't end if Howard is elected.

The federal announcement has, in fact, created a massive crisis for the RTA and the road lobby. They were forced into the private toll roads strategy ten years ago because freeways were becoming prohibitively expensive. It will now be extremely difficult for them to turn the clock back to the days of straight-out tax revenue funding—especially in the face of the fact that alternative public

transport proposals (especially light rail) are something like one tenth of the cost of freeways per kilometre and have built-in cost recovery advantages and other tremendous advantages for society.

In the meantime governments are being swamped with sobering evidence of the appalling effects of road traffic on all our lives, and the futility of expecting new roads to do anything but exacerbate the problem.

In spite of these facts it is likely that the Carr Government will proceed with the M5E EIS soon after the elections. The Society, together with the Transport Action Group Against Motorways (TAGAM) will be urging residents of southern Sydney to make submissions against the proposal.

We will not be alone! A powerful new coalition of urban and environment groups, the Sustainable Transport Coalition has issued a federal election manifesto titled *Towards a just, sustainable & participatory transport policy* to which the M5E experience is central.

COPIES of *Towards a just, sustainable & participatory transport policy* are available by phoning 567 8502.

The Wolli Valley: a history of survival

YOU ARE INVITED to a very special event at Turrella Reserve on ~~Saturday~~ ^{Sunday} 5 May. The Society will be launching a book which will be of great interest to all our members. Written by local historians Brian Madden and Lesley Muir, the book is a colourful history of the Wolli Valley. It includes a preface by David Kirby, who will also be launching the history. Meanwhile, we're still on the lookout for historical photographs (or other memorabilia) of the valley. Please contact Justin Cahill on 567 1697 or Lee Hoffmann on 567 8502 if you have any old photographs of the valley—as soon as possible.

PICTURE: A view of 'Willowdene', the Bucknell residence—near the present location of the Fontana Films premises—in 1900. One of the many fascinating photos which will appear in the forthcoming history of the valley.



Remember the first Wednesday of the month

We invite you to attend our meetings which are held at the Community Resource Centre, 11-13 Hartill-Law Avenue, Bardwell Park, just opposite the pizza parlour. Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of every month. Our Annual Meeting is to be held on October 16 at the Bardwell Park RSL Club, and our Annual Dinner on October 18.

New birds seen in valley

Over the last six months, several native birds rarely observed in the Wolli Creek Valley have been recorded. In July 1995, two White-headed Pigeons were observed in Girrahween Park near the Hartill-Law Ave Bridge. In September, a Boobook Owl was observed in Girrahween Park near Sutton Ave. A number of pellets regurgitated by the owl were recovered and found to contain the remains of insects and bone fragments, possibly from small birds. In February 1996, the first confirmed record of a Channel-billed Cuckoo was made by local ornithologists Neil Rankin and Rolf Lossin.

Support light rail!

Fortunately, the tide has started to turn against the RTA, the NRMA, and the road lobby in general. The dying days of the Fahey Government saw the signing of the contract for the New Southern Railway, certainly the most significant extension to Sydney's rail network in forty years. Work has now begun on this project, which arose as a direct result of your Society's long battle to stop the M5 East going through the Wolli Creek Valley.

Now, thirty-five years after the last tram ran in Sydney, light rail is about to be reborn in the form of a line from Central station to Pyrmont and Ultimo, and the battle is on to have this line extended from Central to Circular Quay in the City, and from Ultimo to Leichhardt via Glebe. Leichhardt Council and the light rail consortium are right behind the extension but the State government is still dragging its heels.

If you'd like to support the light rail extension please phone 567 8502 and we'll send you a copy of the *Glebe-Leichhardt Light Rail Update* which features details of the plan and a specimen letter to the Premier which you can copy and send in.

The oil is running out

The really big picture news is that the black stuff that runs the world is disappear-



This is the Variotram, the modern light rail vehicle chosen for the Pyrmont/Ultimo line. The extension of the line to Leichhardt would be a big step forward for Sydney's public transport.

ing fast. The world is using oil at the rate of 23 billion barrels a year (and increasing) but the stuff is only being found at the rate of only 7 billion barrels per year (and declining).

Oh yeah? who says? Over the last year three separate and reputable international researchers have reached the same conclusion. They all conclude that in the next five years oil supplies will start to rapidly decline, with far reaching impacts on the world's economy. One of the three researchers, Petroconsultants, have their report on sale for A\$23,000. At that price we doubt you'll be sending out for a copy. Fortunately, *The Decline of the Age of Oil* by Brian J Fleay, a retired civil engineer from WA, has just hit the bookstores and is priced at only \$14.95. (ISBN 186403). If you have any trouble getting a copy from your bookshop, call the publishers, Pluto Press on 02 519 3299. This is stuff you need to know.

Never give up

The fight against the M2 motorway isn't over. The Coalition of Transport Action Groups (CTAG), has launched an appeal for funds to launch a legal challenge to the validity of the M2 Motorway in the Federal Court under the Trade Practices legislation. They have excellent legal opinion—from the experts who sunk the NRMA float—that the public float of the Hills Motorway company is pretty dubious and that

the company is technically insolvent. If the float sank so would the motorway, and that would be a big blow struck in favour of a liveable Sydney! Please call 567 8502 to find out how you can contribute.

Think of us next time you've got the cheque-book out

Donations to the WCPS are now tax deductible. Please send something to help us with our ongoing expenses for printing, mailing, stationary, phone calls, and all the big and small outgoings that support our fight to make the Wolli Valley clean and green for ourselves and the next generations. Make all cheques payable to Wolli Creek Preservation Society, and send to PO Box 270, Earlwood NSW 2206.



Wolli Creek Preservation Society Inc.
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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

Name

Address.....

Postcode..... Phone No.....

PLEASE TICK

Family \$10 Concession \$5

Individual \$7 Donation \$ _____

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