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Can't trust Gay on Wolli bushland

“Commitments about Wolli Valley bushland by Minister for Roads, Duncan Gay are not worth the paper they were printed on or even the air they are spoken with,” said Peter Stevens, BushCare Co-ordinator with the Wolli Creek Preservation Society. “His record of saying one thing and doing another, and backtracking even on what he has said has been appalling.”

In June 2015 the Minister made a point of announcing that the western entry point for the ‘New’ M5 had been settled and that “we can reassure the community that the Wolli Creek bushland will not be affected.” This was just plain false, whether deliberately or not, as the subsequent EIS (November 2015) showed that the 1.87 ha remnant of Cooks River/Castlereagh Ironbark Forest at Beverly Grove in the middle reaches of Wolli creek, would be gutted.

In early September, despite submissions and determined protests, 1.4 ha was levelled and will be paved over for WestConnex. “This was the most easterly occurrence of a Critically Endangered Ecological Community and the only one in the Wolli Valley, so no small matter and a major loss of biodiversity in the region. That it was to be preserved in perpetuity, as a condition of consent for the earlier M5 East, just adds to the vandalism and makes a nonsense of Government ‘protections’,” Mr Stevens stressed.

And now we find that further bushland at Bexley Road, owned by Roads and Maritime Services (RMS), is also under threat. In Parliament on 13 September 2016, Gay said “With the new and existing roads connecting at [Beverly Grove], impact on the Wolli Creek bushland area further east has been avoided..... The Government agrees with those who fought for this outcome in the past and has attempted to avoid all contact. Sadly, there had to be a small area of impact. I am advised the temporary construction site area will be in the grass parkland to the east of the treed area and will be largely reinstated and landscaped post construction.”

“This is incredibly muddled and leaves wide open the prospect that the area at Bexley Road or at Illoura Reserve could be the target of further destruction for WestConnex. That would fit with the Minister’s failure to transfer the RMS land to NPWS for the Wolli Creek Regional Park, as long promised, with the claim that the land may be held for “future transport needs”, including WestConnex,” Mr Stevens said.

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