

Western Sydney Parklands Trust has become noxious to Conservationists in Western Sydney.

When former Premier Bob Carr announced establishment of the 5,500ha area to be Western Sydney Parklands in 2004 he uttered the words "**open space, never to be developed, a great part of our environment.**"

In the lead up to that announcement the NSW Government had been resuming land for the parkland. The 300ha former OTC site at Eastern Creek/Doonside (previously known as Bungarribee Estate) was included in the acquisitions.

Conservationists had high hopes the 300ha former OTC site would provide an important flora and fauna habitat near the centre of the City of Blacktown. Our hopes were quickly dashed when personnel within the Department of Planning soon told us that 90ha of the site (and another area near Cecil Hills) would be set aside for housing development to pay for Western Sydney Parklands.

Since then, the Board of Western Sydney Parklands Trust has developed a voracious appetite, cannibalising land which had earlier been said to be conserved, particularly in Blacktown LGA. To satisfy self interest, the Board of Western Sydney Parklands Trust has systematically sold off or leased land for financial gain which former Premier Carr said was "**open space, never to be developed, a great part of our environment.**" Also, what of those people who were forced off their land by the government under the pretence it was to become parkland yet today they see their former land holding sold off or leased for development - something previous land owners were denied?

The latest and by no means last act of self serving by the Board of Western Sydney Parklands Trust is the leasing of land for the Sydney Zoo enterprise.

The 16.5ha of land proposed for the Sydney Zoo enterprise forms part of an area free ranged by a mob of Eastern Grey Kangaroos - part of of natural heritage. It comprises an area in which Greening Australia (with the approval of the Department of Planning) brought in community volunteers to do native vegetation planting in past years. It is another excision of land from the former OTC site land for commercial gain and, when finished its parasiting, the Board of Western Sydney Parklands Trust will have set aside from the former 300ha only a skinny margin of Eastern Creek floodplain for flora and fauna conservation purposes.

Indeed, the question is asked just how much land is conserved for flora and fauna conservation in Blacktown LGA which is not associated with the riparian margins or floodplain of Eastern Creek? Exclude Prospect Nature Reserve from that consideration because it was already conserved before Western Sydney Parklands Trust could get its 'teeth' into it.

But not even that skinny margin of conserved land from the former OTC site will be protected from the 'dead hand' of Western Sydney Parklands Trust's self interest. The plan for Sydney Zoo includes removal of part of the riparian

margin and, in other areas, landscaping with overseas plants and grasses e.g. African grasses. It is not enough that a wealth of NSW Government grants over decades have been expended through agencies and community volunteer groups to reduce the adverse effects of African Lovegrass in the Sydney Region and now Western Sydney Parklands Trust, with the intended approval of the Department of Planning, is proposing to accommodate a landscape of African grasses alongside Eastern Creek.

It is well known that creek lines are the most difficult and expensive areas to restore and maintain in natural state. Every rain inundation brings seeds from exotic plants and grasses into creek lines from surrounding development. After the 'wash-in' and depositing somewhere downstream the seeds germinate to produce weeds which are the bane of bush regenerators.

Yet here it is, the NSW Government backing the self interest of Western Sydney Parklands Trust, about to approve an expansive source of introduced seeds alongside the riparian margin of Eastern Creek. Whether wind borne or carried through drainage into Eastern Creek these introduced seeds will be carried into Eastern Creek, potentially downstream into South Creek and potentially the Hawkesbury River. Somewhere along that route they will be deposited and produce unwanted plant species. This is a disastrous regression in the administration of weed management in New South Wales.

Is not Eastern Creek at least a Class 4 stream in terms of the Water Management Act? How close is development permitted to such a stream? How close can a development which is the active progenitor of weed species be to such a significant stream that is Eastern Creek which feeds into major agricultural and conservation areas of Blacktown and Hawkesbury LGA's?

What an abominable monster the Western Sydney Parklands Trust has become to the natural environment of the City of Blacktown.

How could a semi-government agency become so far removed from the intention of the former Carr Government when announcing establishment of Western Sydney Parklands in year 2004?

This is an indictment on the exigencies of government today. Environmental protection was better a decade and half ago than it is today.

The Sydney Zoo proposal should not be permitted within the former OTC (Bungarribee) site, Doonside. The land should be conserved to honour the statement made to the public by former Premier Bob Carr when he said this land was "**open space, never to be developed, a great part of our environment**" when announcing establishment of Western Sydney Parklands.

Can government be trusted?