

14 December, 2016

Antony LEWIS

Secretary – Blacktown & District Environment Group

Commissioners,

I wish to start by acknowledging Wayne Olling who is also a member of BDEG and has been working on conservation of this land for a number of years and this particular proposal for the last year.

I also wish to acknowledge that the proponents for this zoo have taken on board some of the feedback from the original EIA and made some modifications.

Given this, I would like to say we still consider the proposal deficient and should be rejected under the precautionary principle.

1. Western Sydney Parklands as a parklands and for conservation

The land that this zoo is proposed for is meant for preservation in its natural state. The Western Sydney Parklands Trust states they need this land developed to create financial security for the remaining lands and yet I could not find the amount of payment for use of this land in any of the Socio-economic documents. We believe this a critical part of the justification by the proponents and the trust for developing this land at all and do not believe this has been addressed.

2. EIS: Risk of financial failure of the zoo.

It remains a significant possibility that this zoo may fail as a financial enterprise of the long term (5-10 years). At this stage, I find no plans to allow for this. As an individual, Antony Lewis, I proposed that part of this proposal should provide a clause for financial failure and to 'make good' the site. This would require an environmental bond or lien placed on the development and added to as development work occurs. This land owned by the public needs to be able to be returned to its original environmental condition on the termination of this financial contract. There needs to be additional clauses that if this land is disturbed it will always remain as a parcel of land for public use.

I have previously stated as Antony Lewis, and repeat, having contacts from international zoos check the financials for this zoo both the capital cost and running cost of the zoo seems to be under estimated by at least 10%.

3. Biodiversity risk:

Although the proponents have put more effort into detailing their plans around biodiversity risk, the proposal remains without significant detail. If the proponents at this stage cannot give full details of how they will manage this, then a requirement for frequent, specific and stringent auditing of the surrounding lands and waterways needs to occur. This should be at the cost of the proponent but managed independently.

4. Riparian Corridor:

This proposed zoo is adjacent to Eastern Creek which then flows north through Narraginy Reserve and continues until it joins the Hawkesbury River. The impact of any poor management of the waters themselves, the output from the zoos water or the migration by transitory animal or wind will have significant impacts in a very long waterway.

To end I wish to quote from some written work I developed last month as part of a sustainability leadership program I did as an individual.

Antony's Vision

I hope through this story people understand that the environment is an important place to care for. We need nature to survive, for us to survive. Trees represent lives much longer than a single human and I am personally inspired by the trees that have lived longer than European settlement in the Sydney basin.

Trees can be big and majestic; many people are scared because of this. They are concerned they will drop branches or fall and crash into their car or building. This unfortunate fear is misplaced due to the number of solitary trees that are preserved and cannot rely on their community for resilience. Presently trees are seen as the saviour for urban heat island effect and planners talk of tree lined roads and green grids. This will help improve the perception of trees but does nothing for me in preserving the ancient trees and developing a space for pristine Cumberland Plain woodland.

When I think about trees, I think of their root structures. How the roots intertwine when trees grow close or in groups. I think of the subterranean ecosystem including the fungi and microbes that help transfer nutrients between plants. To me a group of trees shows how resilience works, as example the shorter trees break the wind for the larger trees. The larger trees have broken the soil over a greater area and depth. When limbs fall, they effectively return their nutrients to the soil around them for reuse. Trees also support transitory communities in symbiotic relationships like birds and insects. All these networks of life have high energy.

Where trees have lived for centuries, they have found a location of balance with regular water and nutrient supply. Ultimate examples in sustainability and closed loop systems. They have to as they cannot move.

I choose to live and fight for the environment of western Sydney in the same spirit as the local trees which cannot move on or walk away. Part of this fight and my vision is to ensure a significant section of Cumberland Plain woodland is preserved with as little human influence as possible. The Western Sydney Parklands were originally set up as a green belt in the Cumberland Plains for preservation of this local ecosystem.

Once some lands are preserved there needs to be the opportunity to go deep and experience nature in its purest form – right in your backyard. I think it is important for everyone to experience nature as they grow – nature in its wild form, not 'tamed' by humans like petting zoos or botanical gardens. Nature is inspiring and energising. If sections of the Cumberland Plan woodlands can be preserved, with a primary focus for local aboriginal youth and then the wider community I think the western Sydney community may live to appreciate the land they have chosen as home.

Eastern & Doonside

Gum – south of Bungaribee Road: approx. 250 years old.
(as reference – termite mound is 1.2 metres high)



The Witness

I want you to pause,

take a deep breath

and then imagine it is 250 years ago ...

I saw you but you did not see me. You and your fellas landed on a boat, there were three boats. I was about 50 back then – we had seen people before and thought we can share this space. In the early days you explored the area but left in peace.

As the years went on, we shared our resources. You shaded under us, you used our wood to build shelters and fences. You burned our wood to stay warm and cook. We do not mind sharing; we are a renewable resource but special to this area. Your shelters were growing, there were much more of you.

As you multiplied, you took more space. Although we shared, you did not. You would take lands, chop down trees for more space, for shelters. Sometimes you would leave a tree here or there. For those trees - it is like solitary confinement.

You know trees live best in groups; small groves, a copse here or there, a forest where possible. The Cumberland Plain left spaces for grasslands and us trees clumped around the rivers and where the soil quality was good.

As I turn 300, you continue to multiply. Your shelters grow - more of them and bigger. We are desperate now. We do not ask for all our space back- that is not anyone's right. We do ask for space, some space. Please give us some space! We plead that you leave a resilient area of Cumberland Plain – for nature and humans to share, and appreciate, our past and our journey.

For me, I hope you give me the respect to continue my living and die naturally as I get old, not at the hands of a steel blade.
