



The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, MP  
NSW Premier  
PO Box 5341  
Sydney NSW 2001

5 July 2017

cc Minister Roberts and Minister Upton

Dear Premier

**With Sydney's population projected to grow to 6.4 Million by 2036 and the worsening climate change-related urban heat island effect, we write to urge you to ensure that adequate levels of green space are provided to all Sydney-siders and Sydney's unique bushland and wildlife is protected.**

Sydney-siders highly value access to a range of formal and informal green spaces – trees, bushland, parks and sporting fields. This is borne out in previous public surveys and the strong community reaction whenever public green space is sold-off or alienated for development.

Extensive research, both in Australia and overseas, clearly shows that the environmental, social, spiritual and economic benefits of green spaces are irrefutable<sup>1</sup>. Green spaces cool our city, reduce energy costs, increase property values, promote healthy lifestyles, improve air and water quality, reduce net carbon emissions, prevent stormwater runoff and provide important wildlife habitat.

Sydney's green spaces also play a key role in the health of Sydney's iconic blue spaces. For example, the revitalisation and resilience of Greater Sydney's six major river systems – Hacking, Georges, Cooks, Parramatta, Nepean and Hawkesbury, as well as Botany Bay and Sydney Harbour depends on the health and connectivity of the surrounding vegetation.

Despite these benefits, current NSW Government policy and legislation is failing to protect Sydney's green spaces as these are actively being depleted by clearing and alienation for grey urban and industrial infrastructure development. The Total Environment Centre's SOS Green Spaces map highlights over 70 green spaces currently at risk of destruction<sup>2</sup>. This includes peri-urban areas undergoing rapid development and the impacts of major transport infrastructure projects such as the South East Light Rail and WestConnex. This deteriorating situation must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

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<sup>1</sup> For a summary of key research relating to the benefits of urban green spaces, see pp 19-25 in the attached *Environment Panel Advisory Paper* produced for the Greater Sydney Commission.

<sup>2</sup> Total Environment Centre's SOS Green Spaces Map, [www.tec.org.au/sos\\_green\\_spaces](http://www.tec.org.au/sos_green_spaces)

A Plan for Growing Sydney Direction 3.2 aims 'To create a network of interlinked, multi-purpose open and green spaces across Sydney' also known as the Green Grid. This concept is also supported by the work of the Greater Sydney Commission. However, specific actions, policies, legislative changes and funding are required to shift this concept from rhetoric to reality.

As key stakeholders representing a wide range of interests and expertise about urban green spaces, we urge you to:

- Assign responsibility for planning, implementing and monitoring Sydney's green spaces to an independent body with the mandate, skills, funding and resources to achieve a comprehensive network of formal and informal green spaces designed to maximise benefits to Sydney-siders *and* protect Sydney's unique bushland and wildlife in the long-term.
- Prevent the clearing of bushland in the Greater Sydney area unless strict like-for-like offsets can be located and protected in perpetuity within the close vicinity of the bushland being cleared (note: under the Government's current draft *Biodiversity Conservation Regulation 2017*, the proposed Biodiversity Offsets Scheme will lead to widespread clearing of Sydney's remnant bushland, including threatened species habitat, particularly in Western Sydney).
- Prevent the alienation of community and Crown land, as well as removal of the tree canopy, from Sydney's green space network.

Sydney's green spaces are a vital component of its liveability and resilience as a city. Your positive action in protecting and enhancing our green spaces would strengthen your leadership in Australia's much-loved and admired iconic first city, for current and future generations.

We, the sixteen signatories to this open letter look forward to an opportunity to discuss this important issue further with you.

Yours sincerely,

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Executive Director

Total Environment Centre

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## Signatories to the Open Letter to the Premier

Dr Peter Sainsbury

Public Health Physician

Australian Institute of Landscape Architects



Australian Institute of Landscape Architects

Better Planning Network



Columban Mission Institute



Cooks River Alliance



Faith Ecology Network



Institute for Sustainable Futures



Keep Sydney Beautiful



National Heart Foundation – NSW Division



National Parks Association NSW



National Trust



Nature Conservation Council of NSW



**Signatories to the Open Letter to the Premier**

NSW Wildlife Information Rescue & Education Service



Stormwater NSW



Sydney Wildlife

