



Passion to preserve remnant bushland... Ms Helen Latham in Manly Dam park, which she hopes will become national parkland.

Photograph by PATRICK CUMMINS

Wish list pressure for city greenery

By MURRAY HOGARTH
Environment Editor

Holsworthy Army Base, a huge old munitions factory site in Western Sydney and prime harbour foreshore land, are included in a 165,000-hectare national parks "wish list" to be unveiled tomorrow.

The list of 70 sites is contained in a major report prepared by the National Parks Association (NPA) to put pre-election pressure on State politicians to consolidate a greenbelt around the city.

This would mark the new millennium and the Olympics by restricting urban sprawl, protecting water catchments and helping to save endangered bushland eco-systems, as well as the fauna and flora which live in them.

The report details development threats to some sites stretching back 30 years, and includes a dozen additions to the national park estate which it says were promised by the Carr Government but have not been gazetted.

The pitch for more parks includes 100,000 hectares of Sydney's vital water catchments, important habitat for rare koala colonies and an endangered forest community at Newington, in the heart of the Olympics site.

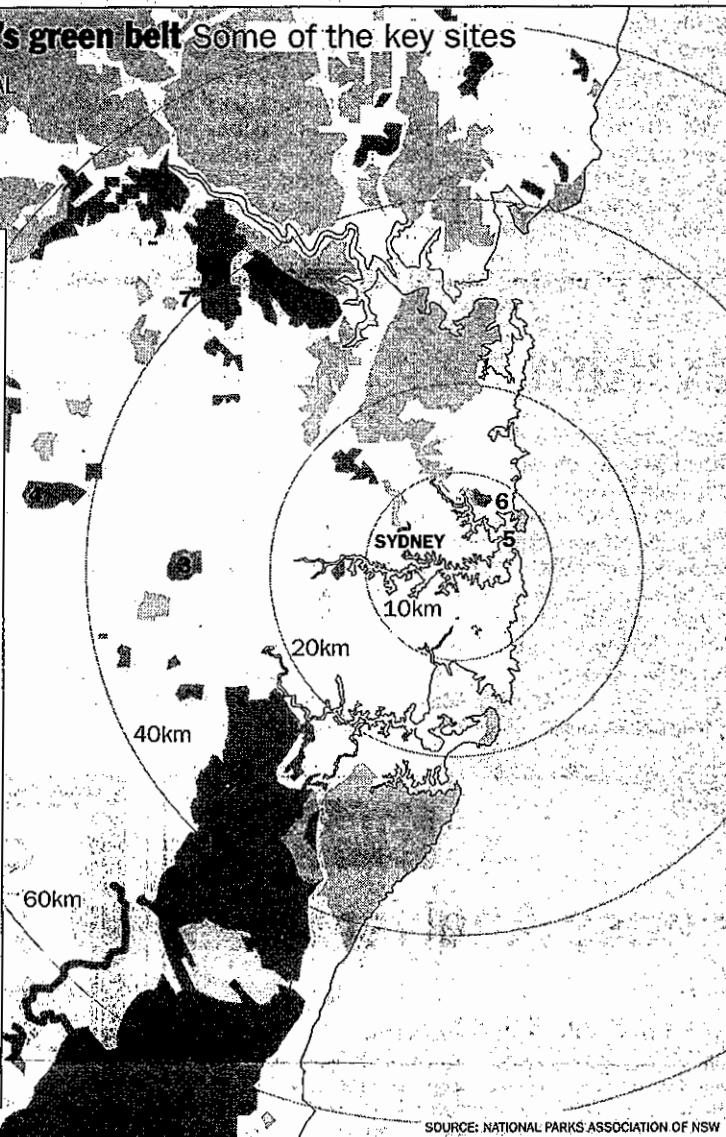
Some of the key sites, such as harbour lands, Holsworthy and the former Australian Defence Industries (ADI) site at St Marys, are Commonwealth-owned. But the State Government holds crucial planning powers.

The 350-page report says: "The NPA is very concerned

Filling in Sydney's green belt Some of the key sites

EXISTING NATIONAL PARK ESTATE
PROPOSED ADDITIONS

1. Woronora Plateau. 100,000 ha. Held by Sydney Water Corp since 1887.
2. Holsworthy Military Base. 20,000 ha. "No" campaign in 1997 killed off \$5bn international airport proposal; future uncertain.
3. Prospect Reservoir. 1,350 ha. Part of Government's "greening of Sydney" election promise in 1995.
4. ADI St Marys. 1,535 ha. Community fighting huge 10,000-home development bid.
5. Sydney Harbour. Sites at North Head, Mosman, Woolwich and others.
6. Manly Dam. 300 ha. Regional park proposal threatened by development plans.
7. Proposed Maroota national park. 4,500 ha. Not gazetted pending finalisation of Aboriginal claim.



SOURCE: NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF NSW

about the status of major areas of government-owned bushland, and potential threats to their continued existence and integrity posed by their sale and possible development."

The author, Ms Helen Latham, a landscape architect, said there was a strong community passion to preserve remnant bushland, although people needed information to back them up.

"I think you cannot really fight governments on moral grounds, or from the heart," she said. "People really do need to have facts behind them to force governments to listen."

The report is to be launched tomorrow at the 1,500-hectare ADI St Marys site by the Environment Minister, Ms Allan.

The ADI land — most of which has been interim-listed on the Register of the National Estate because it is rare Cumberland woodlands — is one of the Government's toughest planning tasks.

A vocal residents' action group and Penrith Council want it to become a new regional park in its entirety, while the powerful Lend Lease Corporation and ADI want to build 10,000 homes.

The NPA report says the

ADI site with its Cumberland woodlands is one of its first priorities, and should become the South Creek Regional Park, under the management of the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Other new parks and reserves for Sydney's environmentally pressured urban frontiers in the west, north-west and south also are high priorities. For example, the report wants Prospect Reservoir dedicated as a nature reserve.

A key aim is to protect bushland types other than Hawkesbury sandstone country.

Raising a mountain profile

A three-member international team will fly into Sydney this weekend to assess Australia's nomination of a million hectares in the Blue Mountains for World Heritage listing.

The visit follows a decade-long campaign by environmentalists and the Blue Mountains community, with the State Government eager to win World Heritage status in time for the Olympics.

A final recommendation will go to World Heritage authorities in July, following the inspection report and scientific peer reviews of the nomination document.

The team's schedule includes meeting the Premier on Monday, a helicopter flight over the secret home of the unique Wollemi pine and a stay at Jenolan Caves.

However, the crucial week-long field inspection in natural and cultural heritage could not have come at a worse time.

The Commonwealth Government, which made the nomination last June, has since become embroiled in a bitter row with World Heritage authorities over the Jabiluka uranium mine.

Earlier this week leaked documents were tabled in the Federal Parliament by the Opposition, revealing an alleged \$1 million "dirty tricks" campaign of diplomatic lobbying around the world.

This was aimed at stopping Kakadu National Park from being placed on the World Heritage "in danger" list because of fears about impacts from Jabiluka.

A decision on Kakadu will be made at a meeting of the 21-nation World Heritage Committee in Paris on July 12 after the Blue Mountains nomination is considered.

Murray Hogarth