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STARS, POLITICIANS IN BATTLE OVER GIANT TIP

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PLANS for the biggest **rubbish dump** in the southern hemisphere, at Londonderry near Penrith in Sydney's west, have created a nightmare for the Greiner Government.

The **dump** is planned in the Londonderry electorate - one of the safest Labor seats in NSW - held by former footballer Paul Gibson.

But with the re-drawing of electoral boundaries, the site is likely to end up in the Liberal seat of Hawkesbury, bordered by other Liberal-held electorates.

The Government faces a continuing storm of local opposition to the **dump** in the lead-up to the State election.

Last Monday night more than 700 people packed Londonderry Hall and crowded outside at a public meeting calling for the tip to be scrapped.

And two local Liberal MPs broke ranks to join another Liberal MP in rebelling against their own party's plans.

Liberals Kevin Rozzoli (Hawkesbury) and Anne Cohen (Minchinbury) told The Sun-Herald they opposed the controversial new **dump**.

Their comments came as news to Environment Minister Tim Moore, who has been engaged in a bitter slanging match with Guy Matheson, Liberal MP for Penrith, since he went public against the **dump** three weeks ago.

Mr Moore said: "I'm sorry they have chosen to speak about the issue publicly. They are responding to the hypocrisy of Alderman Faye Lo Po (Penrith mayor and State ALP candidate)."

Mr Moore believes the recent strong anti-**dump** stand of Ms Lo Po's council forced the hand of the local Liberals.

But he regards the long-term resident opposition as a classic case of "Not In My Backyard" and is determined to establish the tip before other dumps fill up this year.

Penrith residents believe their backyard already has more than its fair share of "undesirable" elements, including a liquid toxic waste **dump** and two jails - with a third prison (maximum-security) being built at Berkshire Park.

They say the new **dump** will destroy urban bushland containing rare wildlife, create traffic headaches and pollute the nearby Nepean River and farmland.

THE Londonderry **dump** is planned to be the biggest in Australia, covering 290 hectares - or more than 200 football fields.

The site is 3km from the Nepean River, near the giant Penrith Lakes recreation project.

At its highest point the garbage mound will rise 16 metres - claimed to be higher than any buildings in Penrith.

The **dump** will take garbage from Sydney's north and north-west. The EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) says 84 semi-trailers, 20 garbage trucks and other vehicles will **dump** almost 2,000 tonnes of garbage a day.

It would replace tips at Marsden Park and Belrose, which are almost full. Twenty-five hectares at a time would be cleared then covered and rehabilitated over 25 years.

The Londonderry site was ranked number three out of 29 possible sites examined by the Waste Management Authority (WMA). Maroota and **Scheyville** in Sydney's north-west were first and second choices.

These sites were also in Liberal MP Kevin Rozzoli's electorate and the plans raised strong public protest.

State Cabinet's Urban Development Committee decided the **Scheyville** site would be used for housing and conservation and that Maroota would be conserved.

The recently-released Londonderry EIS - prepared for the WMA by Mitchell McCotter - says: "Construction and operation of the depot cannot occur without environmental consequences."

But it adds: "There are no insurmountable environmental issues."

Ways of easing problems would include building a noise barrier and stormwater detention basin.

There would even be benefits to local people including reduced flooding, better fire control, improved road access and fencing for regeneration of bushland.

If Penrith Council knocks back the **dump** proposal the matter will be taken out of aldermen's hands and decided by Planning Minister David Hay.

The Government has said it was prepared to defer setting up the tip for five years to allow research on other long-term disposal options.

However, this is on condition that Penrith Council nominates an alternative tip site in the short-term - which the council says it will not do.

Opponents of the **dump** claim the WMA has done virtually nothing about possible landfill alternatives, such as waste minimisation, recycling, converting **rubbish** into gravel and burning to produce electricity.

John Cook, WMA managing director, said these could only be longer-term solutions to what was an immediate problem.

"Even Germany, which leads the world on recycling, can recycle only 25 per cent of domestic waste," he said.

"The Londonderry site is definitely not virgin bushland - 40pc of it is denuded of vegetation."

'STOP THE HOTCH-POTCH'

ANNE Cohen, Member for Minchinbury, last week said western Sydney was already a "hotch-potch of environmental problems".

"We cannot keep making mistakes," she said. "I cannot support the site because of the vast devastation to the valley."

Kevin Rozzoli said he was not satisfied that the EIS established a clear enough case for the **dump**.

"It may well be that a more remote site serviced by rail is a better option," he said.

"Cheaper short-term initiatives usually end up being much more expensive in the long term.

"Electoral boundaries are immaterial. What occurs in one part of the Hawkesbury eco-system has an inevitable effect on other parts."

Guy Matheson said: "I'm not happy with Tim Moore over the **rubbish** situation. I think it's disgusting.

"Our Minister is following the Labor Party plan of the past in dumps for the West.

"I've really taken a punt in doing this whole thing. I'm getting a lot of abusive phone calls from a lot of my colleagues."

Paul Gibson, who has led the charge against the **dump** for more than a year, said 36,000 letters and petitions with more than 100,000 signatures opposing the **dump** had passed through his office.

He said the effects of the **dump** would be felt in the new and neighbouring electorates and would jeopardise them for the Liberals.

"Every major road out here will be choc-a-bloc with garbage trucks all day," he said.

"All they will be able to see from the mountains is this great mound of **rubbish**. If this tip doesn't smell it will be the first one ever.

"The Government is trying to purify the North Shore at the expense of the West."

Penrith mayor Faye Lo Po described the **dump** as "environmental vandalism".

"They're saying landfilling is cheapest, but they're not looking at it in terms of environmental and social cost," she said.

Environment Minister Tim Moore accused Ald Lo Po of attempting to gain political mileage out of the issue.

He claimed that as a past member of the board of the WMA, she had been "part of starting the process against which she now protests".

Ald Lo Po said she had been attempting to lobby for the West "from the inside".

MR Moore said the Government was prepared to look at longer-term disposal alternatives but these were not available immediately.

"The residents wouldn't be too amused if the Blacktown tip closed and they had nowhere to send their garbage."

He said the WMA would spend up to \$3 million this calendar year on recycling and waste minimisation and its operational structure was being reviewed.

He said it was Labor Party policy to turn the Maroota site into national park, and part of the **Scheyville** site into nature reserve.

Further, there were or had been tips at Belrose, Terrey Hills, St Ives, Willoughby, North Turramurra, Wahroonga, and along Mona Vale Road.

"The North Shore has had its fair share of tips over the years," he said.

Opposition environment spokeswoman, Pam Allan, said the Londonderry tip plan would be abolished under a State Labor Government.

The site of the tip would be added to the already existing Agnes Banks Nature Reserve.

'THERE MUST BE A BETTER WAY'

ACTOR Gordon Piper, who plays plumber Bob Hatfield in A Country Practice and lives at Penrith, said: "Everyone I speak to is against the tip.

"It's rather ridiculous to think that in 1788 they were burying their garbage - and we're still burying it now.

"I haven't had more than a third-year education but I don't think you would ever consider putting dangerous substances on a flood plain."

Media man Mike Willesee and horse trainer Bart Cummings have riverside properties near the tip site.

"The tip is likely to damage surrounding agricultural land," said Mike Willesee. "In 1991, there must be a better way."

Bart Cummings said multi-million dollar industries, including thoroughbred studs, dairies, market gardens and orchards - some of them river-irrigated - could be lost.

"The tip poses an unacceptable risk to the river and surrounding agricultural industries," he said.

"The Government should be looking to reduce pollution in this very fertile and beautiful valley."

Constance Maxwell, secretary of the No Tip For Londonderry umbrella protest group, lives near the site in Spencer Road.

She promises a civil disobedience campaign if the Government goes ahead with the tip.

"A number of people would be prepared to be thrown in jail," she said.

"We're not saying that someone else should have it. It should go where there are no people."

Dr Stephen Codrington, principal of St Paul's Grammar School, said the school was just 1km from the site.

"I'm concerned about the possibility of flies and smells when we have a community of 640 students and 70 teachers," he said. "There's also concern about the noise and heavy vehicles."

Other Londonderry residents interviewed last week were unanimous in their opposition to the tip.

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