

# WENDY'S GARDEN DRAMA

**Revealed:** Doubts over lease clause

**Andrea McCullagh**

THERE are weeds in Wendy Whiteley's secret garden, according to resident activists who want the 30-year-lease over the land examined for a get-out clause.

Last October, the State Government announced with much fanfare that the beautiful garden created by Whiteley on a disused rail corridor over 20 years would be preserved.

The deal between the State Government and North Sydney Council ensures the garden will flourish for at least 30 years.

But Lavender Bay activist Ian Mutton now fears the garden lease could be "terminated at any time".

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Premier Mike Baird visits Wendy Whiteley's garden last October.

## LAVENDER BAY

# Garden future may soon wilt

Suspicion over 30-year lease for Wendy Whiteley's beloved park

**Andrea McCullagh**

COMMUNITY leaders are throwing doubt on the future of Wendy Whiteley's Secret Garden.

Despite a 30-year lease announced by the State Government, local residents are claiming the lease may provide no protection and the garden could be

this week that future plans for nearby railway land on the Lavender Bay foreshore "will not impact the garden".

But neighbours Ian Mutton and Ian Curdie want to see the fine print before the council signs off on the lease.

"Although the headline is the term of 30 years with an option to renew I suspect there is a clause allowing it to be terminated at any time," said Mr Mutton.

"I was told that this lease is a standard beautification lease (as is the lease being replaced) and the only changes

are to the description of the land and the term.

"If my information is correct the lease affords no protection."

Mr Mutton is a local campaigner from Milsons Point and he is joined in his call by Mr Curdie, the secretary of Lavender Bay Precinct.

Mr Mutton is concerned that the park could be merged into a major development of railway land along the water's edge at Lavender Bay.

"For the life of me I can't see why it's not made a park

unless there is an intention to deal with it at a later date, as part of a major development of the Lavender Bay rail siding," he said.

A spokesman for Sydney Trains said "the lease contains standard termination clauses and requires the land to only be used for beautification and passive recreation purposes".

The spokesman said Sydney Trains was working with North Sydney Council to execute the lease.

"Our future rail plans do not impact the garden,

which is why we are confident to extend the lease to 30 years with an additional 30-year rollover clause," the spokesman said.

Wendy Whiteley would not comment on the issue. A spokesman for North Sydney Council said the lease is "is currently with our solicitors for review."

The garden, which attracts tourists from around the world, has been transformed from an overgrown railway dump by Ms Whiteley and her helpers over the past 20 years.