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6 JUL 1999



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Senator the Hon Robert Hill

Leader of the Government in the Senate
Minister for the Environment and Heritage

6 JUL 1999

Mr Bruce Wheatley
Chairman
ADI Residents Action Group
PO Box C146
WERRINGTON COUNTY NSW 2747

Dear Mr Wheatley

Thank you for your letter of 4 June 1999 concerning slashing activities taking place within an area of Cumberland Plains Woodland at the Australian Defence Industries (ADI) St Mary's site.

As you noted, Cumberland Plains Woodland was recently listed as an Endangered Ecological Community under the *Endangered Species Protection Act 1992*, and part of the site is listed on the Register of the National Estate as the Western Sydney Shale Woodlands. Obligations are imposed on Commonwealth agencies under the *Endangered Species Protection Act 1992* and the *Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975* to protect listed ecological communities and listed places respectively.

In early June, my Department received advice from another source that slashing and clearing activities were taking place within Cumberland Plains Woodland at St Mary's. Subsequent enquiries have revealed that this form of activity is a recurrent practice and is part of the ADI management program for bushfire prevention on the site.

My Department has written to the General Manager of ADI Ltd seeking advice on the nature and extent of the clearing and slashing activities, including details of any planned activities of a similar nature. Given the significance of the area, a meeting of the key agencies involved has been requested to discuss management options for the site and resolve legal issues in relation to management activities that have the potential to adversely affect the Cumberland Plains Woodland.

The Natural Heritage Trust provides significant funds for the conservation of threatened ecological communities such as this. Several proposals for funding of activities associated with the conservation of the Cumberland Plains Woodland, including the stands at the St Mary's site, were received in this year's funding round. I hope to be in a position to consider all the proposed Natural Heritage Trust projects on their merits and make my decision as to this year's successful bids, in the coming months.

Thank you for drawing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely

Robert Hill