

ADI Residents Action Group
PO Box 4134
WERRINGTON NSW 2747
cwmalis@mpx.com.au
0431 222602

Friday, 6 August 2004

Letter by fax
Lisa Corbyn
Director General
Department of Environment and Conservation

Cc. Bob Debus

Re: DEC inaction to investigate the existence of Koalas at ADI Site St Marys/Western Sydney

Dear Lisa,

On Friday, the 30th July 2004, Officers of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service accompanied, myself, another member of the ADI Residents Action Group and representatives of Lend Lease to investigate our claims that there are errors with the identification and mapping of threatened species on the ADI Site. These concerns had been continually expressed to the Threatened Species Unit at NPWS for several years and Friday was the first time they were investigated.

One of the issues investigated on Friday was the presence of Koalas. In November 2003 ADI RAG members, whilst accessing the site illegally, found what was believed to be Koala scats. It was sent to Associate professor Rob Close at UWS Campbelltown for verification, he confirmed the scat belonged to a Koala, he sent it to Dan Lunny at NPWS and again it was confirmed. On the back of this expert confirmation ADI RAG called for NPWS to investigate the existence of Koalas by conducting a survey and our communications with Jonathon Sanders, Cumberland North Area Manager, led us to believe that this would occur. On Friday we took Jonathon and Threatened Species Officer, Ray Giddins, to the area where the November scat was found and Ray Giddins collected more samples of possible Koala scat. Mr Giddins picked the scat up himself after searching through leaf litter on the ground. I witnessed this.

The NPWS officers present commented on the extent of Forest Red Gums in the area stating that this was ideal Koala habitat. I asked the question in the presence of others that day if there would be a search by NPWS for Koalas on the strength of the habitat and that further assumed Koala scat had been found. Jonathon Sanders stated it would. I left convinced that NPWS were going to facilitate an immediate Koala search/survey of the ADI site and surrounding bushland corridors.

However, it appears that the situation has changed from Friday and a survey of a remnant Koala population in the St Marys South Creek region is not going to happen. This was communicated to me on Wednesday the 4th of August 2004 by Anne Louise Ewin, the Manager of the Conservation Programs and Planning Division of DEC. Ms Ewin stated that no NPWS Officers had stated that a Koala survey would be done. Ms Ewin said it was considered that the Koala scat found by Threatened Species Officer, Ray Giddins, belonged to ... "an isolated Koala or one that had been released in the area...and that... on that basis there was not strong enough evidence to justify any Koala search."

Ms Ewin went on to denigrate the integrity of ADI RAG with an assumption that we were anti-development and would do anything to stop the development implying that ADI RAG had planted the Koala scat found by Ray Giddins. Ms Ewin went on to express support for the development of the

ADI Site, claiming that ADI RAG had no idea about urban planning and the benefits of developer contributions to infrastructure in the area. She claimed to be responsible for the \$6.9 million dollar funding by Lend Lease as outlined in the St Marys Development Agreement and argued that this funding to NPWS had set a precedent for all conservation management in the future. She claimed she was not interested in how much Lend Lease paid for the ADI Site or that it was considered undervalued.

The comments of Ms Ewin, a Senior State Government Bureaucrat, are deeply offensive to ADI RAG. The decision not to proceed with a thorough investigation for Koalas appears to be at odds with the aims of the NPWS and related legislation. The deduction by NPWS that the Koala scat found on Friday belongs to that of an isolated Koala or from one that has been released in the area has no scientific basis or merit. That deduction can only be determined by a proper study.

It appears that the \$6.9 million funding by Lend Lease has influenced DEC decision makers. They appear satisfied that all matters relating to the protection of threatened species has been addressed by the developer and the creation of the 850-hectare Regional Park. This despite only 90% of Core Habitat being within the Regional Park

All that is asked is proper process from NPWS. NPWS could commission Dr Robert Close to conduct a Koala survey of the ADI Site and surrounding areas at no cost to NPWS.

ADI RAG ask that these matters be considered urgently as it is intended to commence action with the NSW ombudsman if this matter is not satisfactorily resolved. Please contact me directly on 0431 222602 for further discussion if needed.

Yours truly,



Geoff Brown
Convenor
ADI Residents Action Group