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Wednesday, 21 September 2005

Hon Frank Sartor  
Planning Minister  
Level 31 Governor Macquarie Tower  
1 Farrer Place  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

RE: Growth Centres dispute with affected small landowners  
Alternative options to resolve issues

Dear Minister,

As you would be aware aspects of the Metro Strategy, specifically, the North West and South West Growth Centres, have been met with anger and outrage by many residents in these areas. The Landscape and Rural Lifestyle Zoning (LRLZ) appears to be opposed by the majority of small land owners outside of the dedicated growth areas but within the SEPP boundaries.

I attended a recent public meeting at the Berkshire Park Hall and was astounded to see over 400 people in attendance eager and willing to oppose the LRLZ imposed on the majority of their properties in the Berkshire Pk, Shanes Pk and Llandilo areas. These residents have formed an incorporated community group and have joined many other similar resident groups under the umbrella of Stop Taking Our Properties STOP. They appear to be in for a long fight.

I approached the organisers of the Berkshire Pk meeting and there are similarities in our respective campaigns in that the State Governments planning policies are disenfranchising large numbers of western Sydney residents and are failing to address the protection of important remnants and corridors of Cumberland Plain vegetation.

The residents opposed to the LRLZ are outraged at the hypocrisy of the State Government that it wants them to become deputies of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, protect vegetation on their land that has little or no conservation value, whilst at the same time they are aware that the State has zonings in adjacent areas, such as the ADI Site, that allows one land owner, Delfin Lend Lease, to bulldoze hundreds of hectares of the endangered Cumberland Plain Woodland.

The majority of residents of Berkshire Pk, Shanes Pk and Llandilo want to be included in the growth centres so that they can one day profit from the development of their land for mass housing. Most of these properties contain scattered vegetation with little or no conservation

values. An expansion of the Nth West Growth Centre to include these landowners should not be seen as an environmental loss as DIPNR can offset the total of these small losses by rezoning large remnants of nearby conservation value land that many western Sydney residents do not want developed.

There are numerous practical options that DIPNR can take to achieve a win win situation for residents and the environment.

I have suggested several strategies to the organisers of the Berkshire Pk meeting that will result in gains in total green space in this part of Sydney. They now realise that the State can rezone for conservation purposes large parcels of Cumberland Plain vegetation owned by just two developers and at no cost to the State. These lands have no development consent. The areas are the 230 ha Western Precinct of the ADI Site, one continuous remnant of Cumberland Plain Woodland, owned by Delfin Lend Lease, and the former Air Services Australia land at The Northern Rd Cranebrook, 180 ha, containing vast numbers of endangered species and ecological communities, owned by Infracorp.

These areas and the possible acquisition of some adjacent private land (to be revegetated) will create viable biodiversity corridors all the way from the Sth Creek Valley through to Agnes Banks.

Similarly, the acquisition of some private land by the Growth Centres Commission in an expanded Growth Centre can create similar corridors linking the ADI Site to the Shanes Park Air Services land across South Creek to large bushland remnants at Government and Spence Rd which connect with the Castlereagh demonstration forest and then beyond.

Your recent statement flagging the possible lifting of the LRLZ from the SEPP and Growth Centre areas “The department will now investigate new ways of meeting conservation and environmental targets in the areas” are encouraging and are definitely achievable with the above outlined options.

DIPNR is currently working on amending SREP 30, the EPI, zoning the ADI Site. This appears an opportune time for DIPNR to take an holistic approach to the planning issues in the broader region. The NSW Nature Conservation Council is meeting with myself this week to discuss these options. I’m confident they will take a practical approach to lifting the LRLZ if alternative options achieve a far superior conservation outcome

I urge DIPNR to consider the issues raised in this letter. I urge you to contact me so that a meeting with myself and the NCC NSW can be held to flesh out some of the options we have. I can be contacted on 0431 222602.

Kind regards,

Geoff Brown  
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ADI Residents Action Group