

Media Release

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Sale of Commonwealth land puts more bushland under threat

The controversial sale of a Commonwealth owned property, the 181 ha Airservices Australia (ASA) site at Cranebrook, was settled last Friday despite a last ditch attempt to stop the sale.

The site was nominated for an Emergency Commonwealth Heritage listing by local residents but the sale went through before the Federal Government's Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH) assessed the nomination.

"This site is a hidden environmental treasure and although it has fallen out of public ownership there are still opportunities to ensure its fantastic conservation values will be recognised and protected." Said Geoff Brown, Cranebrook resident and Convenor of the ADI Residents Action Group.

"The number of endangered plant species this site contains is amazing. The site contains populations of the endangered plants; *Persoonia nutans*, *Dillwynia tenuifolia*, *Pultenaea parviflora* and possibly the largest known numbers of *Micromyrtus minutiflora*. This land truly deserves some level of formal protection and we will be pursuing this at a Federal, State and Local Government level."

"The processes involved in the disposal of this public asset almost mirrors that of the ADI site in that vegetation data and mapping held by DEH and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) appears erroneous and underestimates the site's conservation significance."

"Vegetation mapping, sourced from NPWS, included in DEH's internal report/audit into the environmental significance of surplus Commonwealth properties in Western Sydney (John Howard's 2001 election commitment), claims the Cranebrook site had no remnants of important vegetation. NPWS disturbance mapping, also relied upon by DEH, shows that 66% of the site has been cleared of native vegetation."

"The 66% of so-called cleared/disturbed land as mapped by NPWS is where the majority of the endangered species are thriving. This is not good, as the purchaser of the site, Infracorp, will be expecting to develop these areas."

"The commitment from the Federal Government in 2001 to review these surplus Commonwealth sites for their conservation significance was supposed to stop another ADI site debacle from occurring again. When the government gave that commitment to ADI RAG they led us to believe that the reviews would consist of actual ecological studies of these sites not desktop reviews of existing NPWS data."

"North Ward Penrith Councillors will be lobbied to help rectify this situation and with ensuring that the new owners, Infracorp, put in place a

management plan for the property. A proper security fence around the entire property is a must to protect the sites conservation values as it is accessible to the public and is a haven for illegal rubbish dumpers, stolen cars and arsonists."

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