

ADI Residents Action Group

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Parramatta Bishop and Sports Minister implicated in breach of Environmental Laws

The ADI Residents Action Group (ADI RAG) opposing development of the ADI Site St Marys claims that an official announcement of plans to build a new Catholic school on the ADI Site by Bishop Manning of the Parramatta Diocese and Federal Sports Minister, Jackie Kelly led to the slashing of the Endangered Ecological Community, Cumberland Plain Woodland. An investigation by Environment Australia is underway following complaints by ADI RAG, and they have indicated that it appears several laws protecting endangered species have been broken.

Despite huge community opposition to any development of the ADI Site, the Catholic Education Office (CEO) has been given the green light by the Federal Government to purchase 6.4 ha of the Site to build a new secondary school. On Friday 22nd of June, Bishop Manning and Jackie Kelly plus an entourage of CEO staff drove onto the ADI site through a removed panel of fencing to announce the CEO's proposed new school. The proposed school site was first slashed to the ground by staff of Comland (managers of the St Marys site) to remove vegetation so as make it presentable for the Bishops and Ms Kelly's announcement.

“What occurred on that day is nothing short of environmental vandalism. It is unknown who directed Comland to slash the site. We have contacted Environment Australia and they have indicated that a breach of the EPBC (Environment Protection Biodiversity and Conservation) Act appears to have occurred.” Said Geoff Brown, spokesperson for the ADI Residents Action Group.

“The fact that they drove their cars through the fence and not through the Sites main gates shows a disturbing amount of arrogance and a lack of concern for the fragile environment of the ADI site. Rare shrubs such as the *Grevillea juniperina* and *Dillwynia tenuifolia* were destroyed in the process of preparing the site for Bishop Manning and Minister Kelly.”

“The ADI RAG have recently met with the CEO to voice community concerns about their proposed development. We asked to meet directly with Bishop Manning which has been denied, we requested to know how much the land was being purchased for this was denied, we asked to see the CEO's direct submission to Andrew Refshauge to build their school, this was also denied. The CEO appears to have no understanding of the wider implications of their school development. They admitted at the meeting they are only concerned about building schools. We expressed our disappointment that this seems to override all other social and environmental considerations”.

“I have spoken to Environment Australia and have expressed extreme concern over breaches of the EPBC Act and the Australian Heritage Commission Act. They will be contacting all relevant parties and have indicated that if any breaches have occurred appropriate action will be take place.”

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