

MEDIA RELEASE

Peter Garrett MP

Shadow Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Heritage

David Bradbury

Labor candidate for Lindsay

LABOR TO HELP PROTECT WESTERN SYDNEY'S CUMBERLAND PLAIN WOODLAND

A Rudd Labor Government will work with the NSW Government, local Councils, private land-owners and community groups to protect the threatened Cumberland Plain woodland areas of Western Sydney and invest up to **\$15 million to help secure a new conservation corridor**.

Shadow Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Heritage, Peter Garrett and Labor candidate for Lindsay, David Bradbury made the announcement today.

"A Rudd Labor Government will invest up to \$15 million of National Reserve System funding to create a new conservation corridor for Western Sydney through possible land acquisitions and proper management and preservation of the heritage listed areas of the Commonwealth land at Orchard Hills and Shane's Park" Mr Garrett said.

"It's great to see these sites finally getting the protection they deserve." said Mr Bradbury.

"Today's commitment will give these threatened ecological communities a better chance of survival. These woodlands have a special place in the hearts of the local community. We should be protecting them for our children and grandchildren."

Federal Labor will implement a four point plan to better protect the remaining Cumberland Plain Woodland in Western Sydney. A Rudd Labor Government will:

- Protect and manage the Orchard Hills Defence Establishment and Shane's Park sites as conservation reserves.
- Work with the NSW Government and the Western Sydney community to identify opportunities to secure a Western Sydney 'Conservation Corridor' to protect the remaining tracts of threatened Cumberland Plain Woodland. This will include: consultation with key stakeholders and the local community; investigating further land acquisitions and voluntary partnerships with private land owners; and co-operative arrangements with the NSW government and local Councils.
- Fast-track the development of a recovery plan for the remaining Cumberland Plain Woodland under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act in line with their status as a threatened community.

- Seek scientific assessment to determine whether the Orchard Hills and Shane's Park sites should be listed as Critical Habitat under the EPBC Act to provide greater protection under the EPBC Act.

Cumberland Plain Woodland is listed as a Threatened Community under the EPBC Act and the 2002 Australian Terrestrial Biodiversity Assessment made it clear that: "*the threatened communities [of Western Sydney] are inadequately reserved.*"

At the time of European settlement, Cumberland Plain Woodland covered 107,000 hectares of the Sydney Basin. Today, only about six per cent of the woodlands remain, scattered in small fragments on the plains west of Sydney.

The Orchard Hills Defence Establishment has been described as "*the least disturbed and largest remaining remnant of Cumberland Plain Woodland*".

"David Bradbury has been a tireless campaigner for the environment in Western Sydney," said Mr Garrett. "He has been campaigning for the protection of the Orchard Hills site since 2000, particularly in his role as the Mayor of Penrith.

"He should be congratulated for securing these funds and a commitment to ongoing protection for the remaining precious Cumberland Plain woodland."

"If elected, I look forward to working with the local community and all levels of government to develop a network of protected areas within the Conservation Corridor," Mr Bradbury said.

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