

Geoff Brown

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Sent: Wednesday, 12 September 2007 12:03 PM
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Subject: Minister for DECC correspondence- Penrith LEP process
Attachments: 5th Sep 2007 - Phil Koperberg letter Penrith LEP.pdf

Geoff Brown
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Penrith Councillors and Planners

RE: NSW Minister for Environment and Climate Change advice to Penrith Council - citywide Draft LEP

Dear Councillors and Planners,

I have attached recent correspondence to WSCA from Phil Koperberg which once again states that DECC has provided consistent advice to Penrith Council over the last few years that the LEP amendment process is an opportunity to protect significant areas of Penrith's Bushland from development and in the process help create viable biodiversity corridors across the Penrith LGA.

DECC's prior advice to Council - which you all should sight - urges that all 181 ha of the old Air Services Site at Cranebrook and the conservation component of the Orchard Hills Defence Establishment (minimum 1370 ha being the National Estate listed area) be rezoned by Council from Special Uses (Defence) to an adequate conservation zoning that will protect the conservation values of these sites.

You may be aware that the Western Sydney Conservation Alliance (WSCA) has been lobbying all levels of government for support so that the Cumberland Conservation Corridor (CCC) can be created. The CCC if established would create a 30 kilometre network of managed conservation and open space areas. It would stretch from Mulgoa Nature Reserve to Orchard Hills Defence Establishment via South and Ropes Creeks into ADI then north through various sites such as the former Air Services Site at Cranebrook, the current Air Services site at Shanes Park, the Castlereagh Nature Reserve, John Moroney Correctional Centre, Windsor Downs Nature Reserve, the massive Deerubbin Land Council owned bushland at Castlereagh through to the Agnes Banks Nature Reserve. The CCC also links to the wilderness areas of the Blue Mountains along the Nepean River.

The point is that DECC's advice to Council to use the LEP process to create corridors in effect replicates the CCC. Penrith Councils 1997 Flora and Fauna Corridors Study replicates the CCC. So Council can play a major role in ensuring this fantastic environmental outcome if DECC's advice is followed.

WSCA recently met with the Growth Centres Commission and DECC planners and there is in principle support to use some funding from the Growth Centres Commission Conservation Offset Program - touted as \$530 million - for the purposes of acquisition and ongoing management (which includes paying land owners to conserve bush on their properties) of conservation lands outside the Growth Centres in LGA's such as Penrith. Penrith by the way has something like 17% of all remnant Cumberland Plain vegetation. This funding

is not yet available as it is tied to development within the Growth Centres. It was stated at the meeting with GCC and DECC that an alternative could be that the NSW Government forward fund the acquisition of certain priority sites on the basis of being reimbursed by the GCC at a later stage.

Note: You may have read in the media recently that the NSW Urban Taskforce was going to lobby the NSW Government to scrap the \$530 Conservation fund so their constituents, developers, could make more profit. You may want to factor what this may mean for conservation if this future funding is scrapped.

WSCA will be calling on both the Labor and Liberal parties to commit to the CCC before the 2007 Federal Election. We will be asking for a written commitment that ownership of the conservation component of Orchard Hills and the entire 558 ha Air Services Australia Site Llandilo (also called Shanes Park) be handed over to the NSW Government so that it can become part of the NSW National Parks Reserve System. Transferring ownership of these lands to NSW costs the Federal Government nothing as these areas cannot be developed. DECC is keen to take on these sites. A Council rezoning of Orchard Hills ensures its protection until ownership can be transferred to DECC. The commitment will also be that the Federal Government contribute significant funds towards a Conservation Fund to assist in the acquisition and ongoing management of Western Sydney's endangered bushland. This fund should have no strings attached and be available to DECC or even Councils.

So funding streams could be derived from the GCC funding, temporary NSW Government funding and the Federal Government if they commit to it at the 2007 Election.

I urge you to consider the points raised in this correspondence. I urge you to try to help get some outcomes for Penrith's environment prior to the Federal Election and above all that the LEP process delivers a lasting environmental legacy for the people of Penrith.

I request a formal response stating Councils position on the establishment of the CCC, the handing over of Federal owned sites to the NSW Government, the establishment of funding sources and any other matters raised in this correspondence.

Regards,



Geoff Brown
President
WSCA