

August 18 2006

Air Services Australia sale ignores community needs

The sale of the former Air Services Australia land at Cranebrook is yet another example of the Federal Government ignoring the needs of the local community when they sell public land.

Penrith City Mayor John Thain said the Government sale of public land to private enterprise, before the community had taken a decision on the use of that land, had a familiar ring.

"With the fire sale of the former Air Services Australia land, the Federal Government has shown that it's holding to its pattern of selling off our local lands before the public have decided what they want to do with them," Councillor Thain said.

"The public, through Council, now has to deal with a private company to try and get an outcome for land that was recently theirs.

"Council, on behalf of the community, has for many years pleaded with the Government to consult the community on what should be done with surplus commonwealth lands before they sell them. The Government decided to ignore the people and take the money and run.

"The community and Council are left to negotiate with a private owner on the site's future uses, including any conservation outcomes.

"This was public land. The government didn't own it; they were only custodians of it. It's like going on vacation and returning to find that the house sitter has sold your house.

"Council now has a rezoning application before it from the site's owners so that they can develop the site. Council must, and will, make a decision taking the needs of residents, the site's owners and other interested parties into account.

"In an effort to make a quick dollar on the former Air Services Australia site, the Federal Government has taken flight of its responsibilities and left the community to carry some very heavy excess baggage."