



MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

The Hon W Truss MP
Minister for Transport and Regional Services
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

I have recently been advised of plans by Air Services Australia (ASA) to commence the sale and disposal process for land it owns at Shanes Park (also referred to as Llandilo) in the Blacktown local government area in western Sydney.

I am deeply concerned about this proposal and the implications it may have for the future protection of this highly significant bushland in western Sydney. The values of this land have been identified in a number of public reports, including the "Review of the Conservation Values of Commonwealth Land in Western Sydney" released by the Commonwealth in 2004. That review concluded that the "place is one of the few substantial remnants of largely unmodified natural vegetation on the Cumberland Plain".

Rather than sell the site on the private market, there is now an opportunity for ASA and the Commonwealth to work with the NSW Government to achieve a significant conservation outcome for the people of western Sydney.

While I understand that ASA may be negotiating a conservation agreement for the site with the Department of Environment and Heritage, I am advised that such an agreement may only cover existing vegetated areas (based on desktop assessments). This ignores the fact that the entire site has a high potential for natural regeneration once management activities (such as mowing) associated with the current communications facility cease. This was the case for another former ASA property nearby at Cranebrook (Penrith LGA), where significant conservation values over virtually the whole property have only been found to be present following detailed assessments undertaken after the property was sold.

Given the outstanding conservation values of the bushland on this site, I therefore consider that it is a major candidate for inclusion in the NSW protected areas system.

Before any plans to dispose of the site are finalised, I would therefore request that all options for protection of the entire site be fully and openly considered by the Commonwealth, in consultation with the NSW Government. This should include the option of transferring the land at no cost to NSW to enable the establishment of a major conservation reserve in western Sydney. This has recently occurred with land adjacent to the Georges River. The Shanes Park site, in conjunction with the new regional park that will soon be established at the immediately adjoining former Australian Defence Industries site, would make an important contribution to the development of a viable regional conservation network across the Cumberland Plain.

Conservation opportunities of this significance and scale are rare in highly urbanised area like western Sydney. As such I would strongly encourage you to take the opportunity to work with the NSW Government to leave a lasting conservation legacy for the people of western Sydney.

I believe there is an opportunity to apply a bipartisan approach to improving the environmental and lifestyle quality enjoyed by the people of western Sydney, comparable to that already provided in

other parts of the metropolitan area. Protection of the entire Shanes Park ASA site for the benefit of existing and future generations will further that commitment.

I look forward to your early reply on this important issue. I have also written to your colleague, the Minister for the Environment and Heritage on this matter.

Yours sincerely


Bob Debus

7/3/06

Original as received by fax



MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

In reply please quote: DOCOS/19172

The Hon W Truss MP
Minister for Transport and Regional Services
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2800

- Dept of Env
- Hon W Truss
Winton

by whom it is being disposed of

Dear Minister

I have recently been advised of plans by Air Services Australia (ASA) to commence the sale and disposal process for land it owns at Shanes Park (also referred to as Liandilo) in the Blackdown local government area in western Sydney.

I am deeply concerned about this proposal and the implications it may have for the future protection of this highly significant bushland in western Sydney. The value of this land have been identified in a number of public reports, including the "Review of the Conservation Values of Commonwealth land in Western Sydney" released by the Commonwealth in 2004. That review concluded that the "place is one of the few substantial remnants of largely unmodified natural vegetation on the Cumberland Plain".

Rather than sell the site on the private market, there is now an opportunity for ASA and the Commonwealth to work with the NSW Government to achieve a significant conservation benefit for the people of western Sydney.

While I understand that ASA may be negotiating a conservation agreement for the site with the Department of Environment and Heritage, I am advised that such an agreement may only cover existing vegetated areas (based on desktop assessments). This ignores the fact that the entire site has a high potential for natural regeneration once management activities (such as mowing) associated with the current communications facility cease. This was the case for another former ASA property nearby at Cranebrook (Parrish LGA), where significant conservation values over virtually the whole property have only been found to be present following detailed site assessments undertaken after the property was sold.

Given the outstanding conservation values of the bushland on the site, I therefore consider that it is a major candidate for inclusion in the NSW protected area system.

Before any plans to dispose of the site are finalised, I would therefore request that all options for protection of the entire site be fully and openly considered by the Commonwealth, in consultation with the NSW Government. This should include the option of transferring the land at no cost to NSW to enable the establishment of a major conservation reserve in western Sydney. This has recently occurred with land adjacent to the Georges River. The Stanes Park site, in conjunction with the new regional park that will soon be established at the immediately adjoining former Australian Defence Industries site, would make an important contribution to the development of a viable regional conservation network across the Cumberland Plain.

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I believe there is an opportunity to apply a bipartisan approach to improving the environmental and lifestyle quality enjoyed by the people of western Sydney, comparable to that already provided in other parts of the metropolitan area. Protection of the entire Stanes Park ASA site for the benefit of existing and future generations will further that commitment.

I look forward to your early reply on this important issue. I have also written to your colleague, the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, on this matter.

Yours sincerely



Bob Debus

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