

25 June 2009

ADJOURNMENT

Lindsay Electorate: Air Services Cranebrook Site

Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay) — (4:45 PM) —It is with great pride that I rise this evening to acknowledge an announcement that was made by the Hon. Peter Garrett and the Hon. Carmel Tebbutt, the federal and state environment ministers, on 13 June 2009. In a joint statement released by those two ministers, it was announced that the federal and state governments jointly would be securing—buying back—the former Air Services Cranebrook site, which is 181-hectare site located in Cranebrook in my electorate. This was first and foremost the delivery of an election commitment. But I think it is important to put on the public record some of the history behind that announcement. This is not just about reclaiming into public ownership a significant parcel of land that contains key environmental values; it is also about righting a wrong that was perpetrated by the previous government.

To put this into context, my position in relation to the disposal of Commonwealth lands has been made crystal clear. As far back as January 2001, as the Mayor of Penrith, I made a submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade inquiry into the disposal of Defence lands. My position in relation to the disposal of Commonwealth lands remains as it was back in 2001. I also happened to be the Labor candidate at the 2001 election. I was unsuccessful on that occasion, but one of the key issues that I campaigned on was to try and secure the preservation of the heritage listed areas of the former ADI site. I must say that, as part of a persistent and coordinated community campaign, we were able to secure, in the final days of the 2001 election campaign, a commitment from the then government to, firstly, preserve the heritage listed parts of that site and, secondly, undertake a comprehensive review of Commonwealth owned lands in Western Sydney to ensure that the debacle of the ADI site would never happen again.

After the 2001 election I recall well, as a councillor, that the council considered the future land use of the Air Services site, which at that time was zoned special uses—wireless. I recall that the council officers had proposed to rezone that land to allow rural residential one-hectare subdivision. I rose on the floor of the meeting and moved an amendment to the recommendation, to retain the existing zoning on that site, special uses—wireless. I could not see any justification for allowing subdivision on those parcels but not rural residential subdivision on other parcels in areas such as Orchard Hills, owned by mums and dads in that area. Subsequent to that we found out, in the dying days of the 2004 election campaign, that the Air Services site at Cranebrook had been secretly sold to a private developer. There was no community consultation; it was sold for \$15 million in the final days of the election campaign. I campaigned to no avail at that point to try and stop the sale. Contracts had already been exchanged. The then member for Lindsay allowed on her watch what I think was a criminal act to be perpetrated on the people of our electorate. Subsequent to that it emerged that the so-called review of Western Sydney Commonwealth lands did not even include this site. I continued to campaign to bring this site back into public ownership.

But it was not until the 2007 election campaign that things started to happen. I want to pay particular mention to the Western Sydney Conservation Alliance. They ran a concerted campaign through that election campaign. I acknowledge Geoff Brown, Lisa Harold and Wayne Olling. They ran a concerted campaign and, as a result of that, they secured a commitment from both the Labor opposition and the then government to provide \$15 million to a Cumberland conservation corridor. It is with that \$15 million that the Commonwealth government, in partnership with the state government, has bought back that land and returned it to public ownership so that the threatened species on that site can be protected and that parcel can form part of a key network of bushland corridors throughout Western Sydney.

This is righting a wrong. I wish to acknowledge those people who participated and contributed to that process. I acknowledged the Hon. Peter Garrett and the Deputy Premier of New South Wales, the Hon. Carmel Tebbutt. I also acknowledge the member for Londonderry, Mr Allan Shearan, and the Penrith City Council, in particular the mayor and his councillors, for their support.