

Tribes sell land rights

Fears for wildlife in plains sell-off

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Urban Affairs Reporter

A WILDLIFE refuge in the heart of the suburbs will be subdivided and sold off under an Aboriginal Land Council plan to make millions from a land rights claim.

The 504ha of rare Cumberland Plains bushland in Penrith is home to a string of endangered species such as squirrel gliders, quolls, lorikeets and owls.

But the Deerubbin Local Aboriginal Land Council stands to make \$100 million following a decision by Penrith City Council to slash protective zoning, allowing it to be carved up for housing.

Two different tribes, the Deerubbin and the Dharug, are at loggerheads over the proposal.

Traditional landholders, the Dharug people, are rejecting Deerubbin's cash cow in favour of conservation.

"Too much has been lost already. The Dharug community is behind the conservation of the Cumberland Plains," Dharug Tribal Aboriginal Corporation CEO Sandra Lee said.

On Friday, the NSW Government will finalise a recovery plan for the Cumberland Plains, listed as "priority conservation" to save

Sydney's threatened wildlife such as the rare birds and squirrels.

Outraged environmentalists are calling on the State Government to stop the sell-off.

"These are the animals and plants of western Sydney, this is their last home and they don't exist anywhere else," Western Sydney Conservation Alliance spokesman Geoff Brown said.

"This is the last opportunity to leave a legacy. Our green belt, left over from fragmentation and degradation, is being hacked back to its bare bones.

"Biodiversity doesn't stand a chance.

"The Deerubbin claimed from the Crown 1800ha of this forest which must be protected to recover endangered species. The entire 1800ha must be for environmental conservation."

Penrith City Council Mayor Kevin Crameri, who wants the bush protected, said councillors gave up their chance to save the land when they voted down the conservation zoning.

"The State Government zoned this land with a 40ha minimum for a long time," he said.

"That was taken back in the Deerubbin's land claims, and now council has zoned it so they can split it up and sell it."

Deerubbin has refused to respond to repeated requests for comment.



City refuge: Some of the threatened species found on the land

Animals

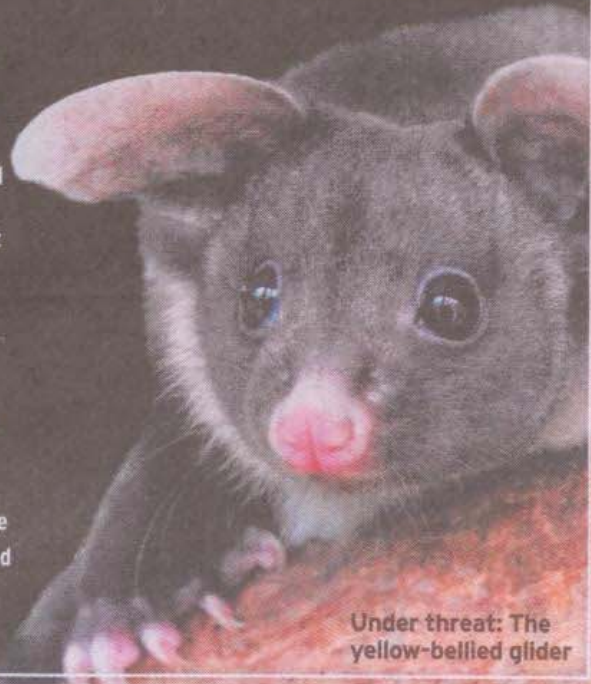
- Yellow-bellied glider
- Squirrel glider
- Koala
- Spotted-tailed quoll
- Eastern freetail-bat
- Grey-headed flying-fox
- Eastern bentwing bat
- Greater broad-nosed bat
- Green and golden bell frog
- Cumberland Plain land snail
- Glossy black-cockatoo
- Black-necked stork
- Black-chinned honeyeater
- Little lorikeet
- Swift parrot
- Barking owl
- Powerful owl
- Masked owl
- Eastern false pipistrelle

Plants

- Bynoe's wattle
- Juniper-leaved grevillea
- Nodding geebung

Birds

- Speckled warbler
- Regent honeyeater
- Square-tailed kite



Under threat: The yellow-bellied glider