

Environment

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Developer tries again with amended plans

A DEVELOPER has new plans for a subdivision in remnant rainforest at Mission Beach, one-and-a-half years after the federal Environment Minister intervened to stop the initial proposal.

Willmatt Holdings has drastically reduced the amount of lots in its second subdivision concept for a 24ha block of land at Rockingham Close.

But conservationists are still up in arms, saying any subdivision on the land will place endangered southern cassowaries further at risk.

They say the block is a corridor for cassowaries between the coast and World Heritage rainforest bordering the property. The new proposal by Willmatt Holdings

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is for 26 residential blocks, each with building envelopes of about 600sq m, and for conservation areas.

The original plans, which were knocked back by Environment Minister Peter Garrett, detailed a 40-lot residential subdivision.

The company's Matthew Manton yesterday said it was a "very different proposal" with a scaled-down access road and changes to conservation areas on top of the reduced amount of lots.

"Part of the problem in the eyes of Federal Government and scientists was with the (wildlife) corri-

dors so we've addressed that," Mr Manton said.

"There are now different corridors - one major one going east to west and two more running off that."

Willmatt Holdings was also keeping its access road to a minimum and attempting to close parts of Rockingham Close, he said.

Mr Garrett intervened in July 2008, exercising little-used powers under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and saying he was taking the "unusual step" to protect a vital cassowary corridor and an already endangered bird.

His landmark determination did not rule out future development concepts.

Yesterday C4 spokesperson Liz Gallie said she believed the 24ha block could only sustain one home.

Her group has been calling for government land buy-backs at Mission Beach.

Willmatt Holdings must now produce another environmental report on the property for the Federal Government.

Draft guidelines for the public report have been released for public comment with a deadline of January 22.

Mr Gallie said her group was happy with the guidelines and would await the draft report which will also be available for public comment before being considered by the Government.