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QUEENSLAND NEWS

Gambaro caves in to Pooh's friends

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SENSITIVE bushland at Wacol, known as Pooh Corner, will become a nature reserve after the Department of Defence backed down on plans to sell it to developers.

After significant controversy surrounding the sale, Defence Parliamentary Secretary Teresa Gambaro yesterday announced Pooh Corner would be given to the Brisbane City Council for a nominal sum.

The move comes just days after Ms Gambaro resisted calls for the sale to be halted and frustrated environmentalists called on Defence Minister Robert Hill to intervene.

But two other nearby Defence properties will be sold, despite concerns over extra congestion on the Ipswich Motorway from planned industrial developments.

Sources confirmed the Government had sought \$40 million for the three-property package but this may have to be revised after the 138ha bushland was withdrawn from sale.

Friends of Pooh Corner campaigner Nikki Parker, who led the charge against the sale, said the decision was a major win but the controversy needed to call off the sale was unnecessary.

"It is a good announcement but it should have happened before it went up for sale," he said.

Ms Parker slammed the Defence Department, which she said had a growing reputation for poor consultation during its land dealings.

Federal Opposition infrastructure spokesman Bernie Ripoll said the saga could have been avoided if the Government had consulted with residents instead of trying to bully them.

The Courier-Mail revealed last week the Defence Department was seeking to overturn bans on clearing some of the Pooh Corner site, which is listed as endangered remnant vegetation.

It was also revealed Liberal Member for Ryan Michael Johnson had written to Ms Gambaro with a list of community concerns, arguing the need for greater community consultation about the land's future.

Ms Gambaro was criticised after Defence officials forced the Pooh Corner group to sign legal documents to obtain material distributed to developers.

The Defence Department's traffic assessment report estimates 4000 vehicles a day will be added to Ipswich Motorway from the proposed development.