

Permit granted Koala trees to be kept

By **Marcus Power**

FOR the second time in a month, koala habitat has shaped a Ballarat planning decision.

The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal has granted planning approval for a 12-lot subdivision in Richards St, Canadian.

But the residential-one zoned development, which was originally planned to include 18 lots, must now retain koala habitat trees as a condition of the permit.

The decision came two weeks after a Mt Helen subdivision was rejected by the tribunal because it did not comply with the koala management provisions in the city's planning scheme.

Last December the Ballarat City Council knocked back the development in a split vote, despite an officer's report which supported a 15-lot version of the plans.

The developer, Moama-based Alistair Morrison, appealed the decision to VCAT. He said he was happy with the decision, but questioned the compatibility of koala overlays with residential one zoned land.

"This argument that objectors are having with me should have been had with council when the council zoned the land residential one," Mr Morrison said.

Ballarat City Council statutory planning and building manager Ver-



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onica Schilling said the finding, and the previous Mt Helen decision, were wins for the council.

"This is a fairly new area, we're in a bit of a test landscape with it," Ms Schilling said. "I think it sends a clear message to the whole community that the controls we've developed with the community over 15 years are important and are working."

A local environmental group, Friends of Sparrow Ground had opposed the proposal.

Spokesman Jeff Rootes said the decision was vindication of the group's position and would set an important precedent for development in the area.

"I think it says blocks in that Canadian forest corridor, if you've got native vegetation on it, you've got to look after it very carefully and work around it. The days of bulldozing it are over," Mr Rootes said.



TALENT: Maeve Barlow from Ballarat Grammar in performance. Picture: **Jeremy Bannister**

Praise for standard of pianists

By **Emma Brown**

EVEN by the high standards of Royal South Street Society, this year's piano competitors are some of the most talented yet.

According to Royal South Street Society president and chairman of pianoforte Barb Dunlop this has been an exciting year due to the high standard of competitors.

Lewis Plumridge from Melbourne has been adjudicating the event and has compli-

mented the standard of teaching in Ballarat.

Ms Dunlop said RSSS competitions provided a wonderful opportunity for the students.

"It is the chance for performance and all it means in preparation, courtesy of the stage and experience," Ms Dunlop said.

She said the competitions provided a forum for students to learn by listening and watching their peers perform as well as the opportunity to gain ex-

perience from a qualified and encouraging adjudicator.

Royal South Street Society marketing manager Emma Sbardella said competitions were running smoothly.

This year an influx in the number of dance competitors has meant an extra day of competition and with two-and-a-half months left to run there is still plenty of South Street to come.

"We are always looking for volunteers," Ms Sbardella said.

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