

## Question & Answer Transcript – Environment CRG meeting (03/09/2020)

### **1. Are there any plans for council to buy local core koala habitat to protect it from development?**

Charlie Dill:

We're currently reviewing our policy and direction around conservation, as well as remapping the critical habitat areas. We're looking at additional measures in terms of protecting those, and in terms of development and expansion, including where there is an excessive amount of loss of koalas.

Cr Andrew Fechner:

And that will formulate part of the new planning scheme as well. We will make hard commitments around that. We were recently briefed this week on the state of play when it comes to protecting koala habitat in Ipswich. We look forward to people making submissions, as its part of the bigger picture of the planning scheme.

Mayor:

The Queensland Government also has its koala protection policies and strategies, and we're working on updating our policies. There are parts of Ipswich, which 20 or 30 years ago were zoned for residential development and at the moment they're still bushland. They have not been turned into residential areas. But knowing the growth that's happening here in Ipswich, especially in Springfield and the Ripley areas, those bushland areas are going to go ahead and change. That's what's triggered council to look further into this issue, because the owner of that land has a legal right to develop it into residential blocks.

Cr Andrew Fechner:

Council made a formal submission to the Department of Environment and Science, regarding the koala conservation strategy that the State Government's implemented from now until 2024. This issue will become 'louder' as we get closer to making commitments again through the planning scheme.

### **2. How will we deal with the state overriding the people and Ipswich City Council? For example, resource recovery areas, issuing environmental authorities before council has made its decision on a development application?**

Mayor:

There is a process under state government (a co-ordinated project). Remondis have proposed a Waste to Energy Facility / Incinerator at Swanbank. Council only gets a say right at the end when it comes to planning. The state government and Remondis have to do all the environmental impact studies, as well as all the community consultation. Only if the state government approve impact studies and the community consultation, then it comes to council for assessment against the planning scheme. The proposal is located in landfill zoning, so legally we don't have many avenues for refusal. That's why we're encouraging people to let their state MPs know of their views. Council is also lobbying the state government to ensure community consultation is done really well, so the views of residents are heard. When the community consultation happens, which I think is happening at the end of the year, please make your voices heard.

Advice from Development Planning:

Council officers are seeking to work closer with State Government staff with an objective of better integration and sharing of information regarding Resource Recovery Areas and related issues.

In respect to the issuing of Environmental Authorities, this practice is consistent with the current legislative process.

**3. Are there any plans to measure the air in areas around the landfills where the lung cancer rate is 48% higher than the average of Australia?**

Mayor:

Again, that is a state government responsibility. We've been asking the Department of Environment and Science (DES) to have regulators on site. There was the fire recently at Cleanaway. We spoke with the local member for Bundamba Sunday night, and he had environmental regulators out there the next morning. Council is continuing that dialog with DES.

Cr Andrew Fechner:

I understand the frustration in that question. We went to the Riverview Neighbourhood Watch meeting a couple of weeks ago, and the Odour Abatement team were there. They submitted a report (available online) about what happened regarding the fire. There was a lack of detail in there about the air quality which I raised. So I definitely understand where these questions are coming from. We need to use our voices and start asking the right questions of the right people. However, there are wonderful people in our community who have been out there for a long time with a loud voice, and this is our opportunity to stand beside you, and make sure that your voice is amplified. We will be doing everything within our power to make sure that our people are heard and that we get good environmental and health outcomes for the community.

Mayor:

We need our residents help in our fight. We've been using the media quite bit. I was on ABC News on Tuesday night again talking about the area Restricted Resource Area with Cleanaway, where they obviously don't pay any waste levy and there was a fire there. And, again, none of the people in Ipswich and the council are not compensated in any way. And yet we have to put up with that. That's why we set up the waste and mining working group, to get the state government to sit up and listen to us.

Advice from Development Planning:

QLD Health monitor health conditions and where trends are identified, they seek to undertake monitoring and action to identify sources and prevent health issues. An example of this is the occurrence of Q Fever near abattoirs and cattle facilities / transport routes. Air quality monitoring data is available through the Department of Environment and Science:

<https://apps.des.qld.gov.au/air-quality/>

**4. Will you make the environmental survey stronger? Because, at the moment, the developers get their own surveyors, and this is open to not being thorough; for example, they can do linear surveys, no nocturnal surveys, and a developer can choose their own surveyors. Will council implement an independent fauna/flora surveyor?**

Advice from Environment & Sustainability:

Council is currently developing a flora and fauna survey guideline with the aim of this being included in the new Ipswich Planning Scheme. This will greatly improve the quality of reports being provided, however we are still required to remain within state assessment guidelines and the planning act. For this reason it is unlikely that an independent environmental survey will be possible. However Council can still do a lot in terms of improving and holding to account the quality of information being received.

**5. Are you aware of the extent of damage to bird life/wildlife in Ipswich? Are you using the best in information from Birds Australia at the moment?**

Advice from Environment & Sustainability:

Council collects environmental data from a variety of sources including Birds Australia, and is an active participant in a number of proactive programs such as the Powerful Owl Project (Birdlife Australia) and Yellow bellied glider project (Wildlife Queensland). Council regularly provides data to these programs, relevant state databases and vice versa.

**6. State members refused to answer our questions because we were not in the state or electorate (regarding the proposed waste incinerator)**

Mayor:

That should go to all the state MPs - write to all of them. Because it's a Coordinated Project you can write to any of your state MPs.

Cr Andrew Fechner:

We've got a great e-mail resource that I've been sending it to a few of my constituents. It points specifically at the addresses that you can pen your mail to. It's also got some information about coordinated projects.

Mayor:

I've mentioned the mining and waste working group - we'll be running a public EOI. I invite CRG members to be a part of that.

**7. What plans if any is council going to have in response to the Koala Conservation e.g. if Council had any plans to buy local core Koala Habitat to protect it from development?**

Advice from Environment & Sustainability:

Relevant Council officers sit on the local government working group for the implementation of the State Koala Conservation Strategy. Council has also shared its own Koala Conservation and Habitat Management Plan with the state and it has been heavily considered during the development of the regional koala strategy. Council is now working in partnership with the State to deliver the state strategy, however it is understandably early days given it is only recently adopted. There is currently no need to review and update Councils Koala Plan as it aligns well with the state strategy and should work in tandem. Strategic properties are considered for voluntary acquisition based on criteria such as protection of significant species, habitats or landscapes, consolidation within council's conservation estates, enhancing water quality and catchments and supporting nature-based recreation. Koala habitat is clearly considered in this however is only one aspect required to be considered when using the EnviroPlan levy to acquire land.