



Conserving the NATURE of the Moreton Bay Region



MEDIA RELEASE 26 NOV 2013

MORETON BAY ECO-ALLIANCE APPEALS TO STATE AND COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENTS TO BLOCK MORETON BAY REGIONAL COUNCIL'S WEST PETRIE BYPASS

"The only hope now to stop Moreton Bay Council from pressing ahead with this ill-conceived \$100 million four lane road through a prime Koala and heritage area is for the State and Commonwealth governments to step in and assert their powers, as well as blocking funding" Mr Bell said.

Ian Bell is a core member and researcher of the Moreton Bay Eco-Alliance, an alliance of 12 voluntary community groups right across the Moreton Bay Council region. This group is opposing Moreton Bay Regional Council's decision to bulldoze a major arterial road, known as West Petrie Bypass Option G, through the middle of a large and vitally important area of bushland that includes three reserves: Lawrie Smith Gardens, Dave Burton Park and Kurwongbah Park. The project involves a road and bridges to connect Young's Crossing to Torrens Road which runs beside Lake Kurwongbah.

Mr Bell says this area is a significant habitat for Koalas, which are facing possible extinction in this region, and is also home to 150 species of birds, several native animals and some significant cultural and historical sites. "This major road will probably be the final blow for several special and at-risk species including Koalas, Platypus and Glider Possums. The Square-Tailed Kite, Grey Goshawk and Green Thighed Frog, which are all classified in Queensland as near threatened, have been recorded in this area. There have also been recently verified sightings of a Powerful Owl family including two juveniles which were bred here. Like the Koala, Powerful Owls are officially listed in Queensland as a threatened species – vulnerable category. This rare evidence of a Powerful Owl family, including breeding, is of extreme importance, just as it is for the Koala" he said.

"Similarly there are a number of species which have been sited within this area that are mentioned in one of council's consultant's reports (GHD) as being relevant under the Commonwealth's *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999*. These include the Koala, Grey-headed Flying-fox, Red Goshawk and Black-faced Monarch."

Mr Bell said "Council employed two reputable firms of consultants – GHD and ARUP - to undertake preliminary investigations into 10 route options. GHD highlighted several ecological and community issues of concern with the Option G route. ARUP warned council about the impacts that would result from the Option G route. Their report stated '*It is recommended that the preferred option avoids the large area of bushland south of Lake Kurwongbah due to its environmental and community significance*' and on that basis they recommended route Option A. But in their final assessment, which includes consideration of all aspects including traffic, civil works, costs etc. ARUP recommended route Option B, which also avoids the three park areas. However council has rejected all this advice and voted unanimously to press ahead with the route having the highest impact - Option G. There has been no community consultation, and council appears to have taken no notice of the thousands of concerned members of the community who have signed petitions calling on council not to proceed with Option G."

The Moreton Bay Eco-Alliance claims that their research has revealed that council, in rushing through their approval, which is subject to state and federal approval and funding, may have failed to carry out proper indigenous heritage studies which are required by law prior for any such development. "We have consulted a reputable archaeologist about the Option G route and were advised, following database searches, that this route is located in an area with high indigenous cultural significance and requires by law, a detailed assessment in consultation with the Turrbal, who are the Native Title and cultural heritage body. The *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003* requires consultation when a Category 5 assessment is involved. Sites of major significance

MEDIA RELEASE 26 NOV 2013

exist in the vicinity of council's chosen road route." Mr Bell said. "Council's consultant's reports reveal that there are several important non-indigenous sites and structures of historical and community value that will be impacted. Some of these sites are included on the National and State Heritage Lists."

"What does it say about the future security of our special areas" Mr Bell said, "that Moreton Bay Council, in making decisions about major developments, continually fails to carry out thorough investigations, ignores their communities, and places such little value on our irreplaceable cultural and natural heritage? The same questionable investigation, evaluation and decision process, in the absence of community consultation, is being seen right across this council region. I believe that Councillors are making decisions 'on the run' and are not making themselves properly aware of all the issues. This is causing alarm to our member groups and communities and is what initially led to calls for the formation of our region-wide alliance, which currently consists of 12 groups and growing." he said.

"If council proceeds with this project there will be immense consequences that will send a clear signal that none of our precious areas right across this entire council region is safe. Where is the balance when the environment, cultural heritage and natural amenity always give away to infrastructure? It's no surprise that Moreton Bay Regional Council has one of the worst vegetation and habitat destruction records in South East Queensland. We call upon the Commonwealth and State governments to stand beside our communities in stopping this unthinkable four lane Option G route and any other route through this precious area." Mr Bell said.



Strolling through Dave Burton Park

MEDIA RELEASE 26 NOV 2013



Juvenile Powerful Owl in Dave Burton Park



Koala and joey in Dave Burton Park

ENDS

(Contact: Ian Bell 0409 622 294)