

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Economics and Governance Committee](#)
Subject: Belcarra 2 -Submission -Wildlife Q'ld Gold Coast & Hinterland Branch
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Submission- Belcarra Report (2) - Wildlife Q'ld, Gold Coast & Hinterland Branch

Thank you for the Opportunity for Commentary with Regard to the Belcarra Report.

Our Incorporated Organization, Wildlife Queensland, Gold Coast & Hinterland, is a Southern Branch of the State Organization. As a Conservation Group we have served in the Region for more than half a century.

We base our Submission on the Tenet that transparency and accountability to the whole of City is essential for sustainable Governance and that the decisions made by City Council have a direct effect, with regard to preservation or loss of environmental assets.

The perception, and the demonstrable reality, that decision making is accountable by obligation the Inter Governmental Agreement with regard to Sustainable Governance and the Duty of Elected Members to the Whole of City, is fundamental.

Our area of responsibility is the most biodiverse City in Australia, subject to enormous incoming population pressure, with a population far in excess of the Northern Territory and ACT, wherein Governments, not Councils, have responsibility.

Critical duty of care exists, via Gold Coast Local Council, for a massive budget, exponential growth, inter-generational equity and infrastructure.

As a result, the overview and empowerment of the State Department of Local Government and the legislated insurance of transparency and accountability re Candidature, is essential for democracy and the separation of powers therein.

Therefore our Association supports the recommended Reforms in the Belcarra Report, as being in accord with the above.

Recommended improvements in tracking of, and responsibility for, donations to Council Candidates, is supported (21, 8, 10, 12, 14/15) . Also, additional to the exclusion of development industry donations to candidates, our Association recommends exclusion of donations via mining and tobacco industry.

Additionally, capping of candidate funding, as in NSW and a "betterment Tax" on benefit of development industry, via zoning changes is recommended.

Real Time Disclosure and Transparency of Election Candidate Funding is fully endorsed (as in Recommendations 3.4, 5, 6, 18, 19, 29/3)0. This is essential, so the Community, as a whole, may benefit via knowledge of the correct information re intent and possible "obligation" of candidates and promulgation of these details is available to be promulgated via the fourth estate.

State Intervention, in accord with Legislation and State Intervention in the Public Interest, including revocation of decisions as outlined is supported.

Also supported is recall of the power of Mayors to direct Senior Executives and open records of mayoral directives, plus disallowing of mayoral directives not in accord with

resolutions of Local Government.

Centrist" or autocratic control, actual or perceived, plus the real or possible exclusion of some or all of the divisional Councillors from input, knowledge, promulgation, participation, critiquing or obtaining community endorsement or feedback on policy and proposals, obviously negates the Whole of City avowed obligation of full Council and undercuts the duty to State Legislation.

Extension of the time frame re prosecution for breaches is essential to obviate the current difficulty of continued representation and empowerment of Councillors, who may, had the exposure and origins of their donations and donors been available, not have remained.

The interests and input of the Local Government Association, with its emphasis on unfavourable stance re the new Recommendations, must be weighed against the fact that this Association is largely formed by input from Mayors themselves.

Many have acceded to power under the Legislation which gave unprecedented authority to the mayoral role, in an unusual departure from traditional Queensland Local Government tradition, and some have had substantial funding from exclusively focussed vested interests. The latter is now the subject of this promulgated reform

it is also fair to state that such opposition from the Association tends not only to overlook the fact that its leadership mode of participation, in spite of its Association title, is not proactively inclusive of the wider spectrum of elected local governance representation. Also, gravely the body in its somewhat negative response to the reform agenda, appears not to give consideration to or reflection upon the causal factors, wherein there has been recently an unprecedented dismissal of a Council representation due to findings of corruption.

Ignoring wide ranging need for reform, in the above situation. akin on a smaller scale, to the corruption and misuse of the privilege of empowerment, placed under the spotlight in Queensland during a former Fitzgerald Inquiry, is a gross neglect of the title and the implications it carries as a self designated Local Government Association.

There has been an observable, historically traceable and direct relationship, in our Gold Coast City, between the loss of habitat, including the precipitous slide towards extinction of the genetically valuable local koala population, a flagship for so many other species co-dwelling.

Professor Hugh Possingham has stated that South East Queensland's biodiversity, planetary terms can all be considered rare and threatened. This highlights the obligation of Local Authorities to have direct and absolutely unimpeded responsibility for natural resources that are often irreplaceable.

An independent mechanism of State review or reportage process, to ensure the independence in Westminster impartiality of the Advisory Role of the Chief Executive Officer, contractual arrangements existing re the post and directives given, is strongly supported.

The Gold Coast Council has membership that in many cases has and has had very extensive development funding for Council candidature

Our Society's concern is sustainability.

In an unprecedented fashion Council has made no purchase of Open Space for the past eight years, has to our knowledge abandoned the past practice of a State of the Environment Report and has collapsed the Environment interest into the overarching Development and Economic Committee.

It has failed to re-instate the formerly present position of Committee Chair For Sustainability and has no Environment Advisory Committee as formerly existing which same was constituted by local University Experts in the Field and NGO.s.

Gold Coast City Council has sold approximately twenty public properties, including one site with known koala habitat adjoining larger range.

The Mayor is advised by a technical advisory committee, which to our knowledge has no minuted records.

Large amounts public funds have enabled studies with regard a cruise terminal investigation, in spite of the fact that a state of the art facility, enabled by public funds exists immediately to the North. Swift usage of this facility from this tourism City is impeded, on occasion by non sequential development exacerbating traffic movement , occurring as it does prior to, rather than after adequate planning re roads.

Funds are directed to studies in a harbourless City. Bayside excavations would imperil one of the most valuable marine life hotspots and the oceanside presence, apart from other impediments in terms of safety, would engage the loss for proposed port side facilities of the botanically valuable Philip Park. This along with other public property such as Carey Park, the former Black Swan Lake is felt to be considered open to usage by commercial interests not public interest by this regime.

This tendency towards plutocracy imperil three estates of governance and we respectfully support the consideration being given by State Government to the support of our democratic heritage, through consideration of these reforms.

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