

**From:** Sally Spain [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, 26 October 2017 1:58 PM  
**To:** Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee <lacsc@parliament.qld.gov.au>  
**Subject:** Fwd: Submission on Belcarra and Councillor Complaints"amendment

Wildlife Queensland's Gold Coast and Hinterland Branch Submission on the Belcarra Report and Councillor Complaints Amendment  
per Sally Spain, President of WQ GD & H, on behalf of the Gold Coast Branch of Wildlife Queensland

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission.

Our Organization, which has endeavoured to serve, in a voluntary and altruistic capacity, the cause of conservation, for more than half a century, fully endorses all the recommendations of the Belcarra Report.

It has become increasingly difficult (and it was never easy) in the past six years, during the term of office of the current Mayor of the Gold Coast and the two Councils which he has chaired, to fulfil our constitutional obligation and our duty towards our members, as an incorporated community association, dedicated to ensuring the survival and sustainability of fauna species in our City.

We attribute this in part to the lack of adherence to, and perhaps even cognisance of the Mayor and Councillors' obligation to govern in accord with their responsibility as signatories to the International Governmental Agreement on Sustainable Governance.,

We endorse in full the tenor of the Belcarra Recommendations, which we understand to be framed to allow for equity, transparency and fully representative local governance.

We perceive in an apparent tendency to prioritise, in Council decision making, the declared need and demands of the development industry, a correlation between electoral funding and Council's dominant policy concerns.

The consequences, according to the belief of our Association, is the decline of koala numbers towards local extinction, koalas being a flagship species whose presence in their chosen habitat signals the presence of a significant range of other species, whose decline is also signalled by habitat loss and associated threats. The exponential, dramatic and unsustainable rise in the number of veterinary hospital admissions of wildlife as recorded by the RSPCA recently, reflects a perceived lack of guardianship of our whole of City natural resources, that is. habitat and fauna. Again a dominance of singular source donors for Council elections, whose fiscal interests are linked with, on many occasions extensive habitat clearing, is a perceptible contributor, as is lack of conditional strength re development approvals and insufficient compliance oversight.

The Mayors Technical Advisory Committee has significant representation, indeed almost sole representation from the development industry and we perceive Council decisions to be subject to this singular range of advice. There is no Environmental Advisory Committee of academics from the faculties associated with this discipline or from the City's Conservation Associations. This Committee was abolished after the 2004 election (investigated by the then CJC) and has never been reinstated.

There has been the collection of a Green or Open Space Levy from citizens until recently but no tracts have been purchased in the past six years. A recently newly instituted levy, replacing the former will now be used, in part to pay Natural Area Management Staff. Again it is our Organization's perception that this, plus the loss of some natural area management staff, the apparent lack of a State of Environment Report, the lack of challenge to developer asserted requirements via the Land and Environment Court, the apparent emphasis on built environment, such as a casino and built environment projects that are in persistent relaxation of the guardian provisions of the town plan and the perceived consistent lack of proactive protection of the diminishing habitat, the existence of which is so crucial to, amongst other factors, the tourism industry, which will be needed even more for economic sustainability when the development industry is mined out, ...all bespeak a need for strong regulatory provisions to bring local government elections back to their original function of providing Councillors capable of representing whole of city.

Our precious but, our Organization believes, insufficiently guarded biodiversity, comparable with Kakadu (M.Kingston Ecograph [pers.com](http://pers.com)) and we endorse in full the recommendations for electoral reform which we see as promoting a more accountable guardianship