

PROPOSED WESTGATE STRATEGIC PLAN

Response from the Centenary Riverfront Advisory Committee Inc (Centenary and District Environmental Action)

21 December 2005

To: Westgate Project Director
The Coordinator General
P O Box 15009
City East Qld 4002

strategicdevelopment@coordinatorgeneral.qld.gov.au

From: Shealagh Savage, President, on behalf of the Centenary Riverfront
Advisory Committee Inc (Centenary and District Environmental Action)
P O Box 515, Mount Ommaney, 4074
A/H 07 3376 1287 W 07 3810 6570
shealagh@optusnet.com.au

The Centenary Riverfront Advisory Committee Incorporated is a community environmental group which focuses on protection of the natural environment, public parkland and recreational areas and the mitigation of urban development impacts within the Centenary and adjoining suburbs.

The Centenary Riverfront Advisory Committee was formed in 1996 as an advisory committee to the local councillor.

The group is in the process of changing its constitution in which it has expanded the area of concern. It will shortly change its name to **Centenary and District Environmental Action** to reflect this.

We have divided our comments on the proposed Westgate Strategic Plan into four parts:

- **Part One considers the community consultation process**
- **Part Two sets out the context of this submission**
- **Part Three contains our comments on the proposals**
- **Part Four lists our suggestions for preferred uses of the site.**

PART ONE: THE COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PROCESS

1. Community Consultation should commence at the start of the project

The planning for this project was started in May 2003 according to the Westgate web site. The first CRAC/CDEA found out about it was from a small inconspicuous notice in the public notices section of the South West News dated 16 November 2005. The South West News is a local **weekly** newspaper in the area. In the notice, two community **information** days were advertised for 26 November and 30 November 2005 for four hours each. There was also a web address for the proposals. Subsequently a small article appeared in the SW News.

In the first case, a project of this nature on **public** land should have included community consultation **right from the start** in the formation of a planning strategy. Instead, two and a half years after planning was begun, the community has been presented with four advanced proposals on an **information** basis.

It would appear from the media, that other major stakeholders were also left out of the consultation and planning process.

While the State Government may not be legally required to undertake community consultation, it is widely recognised that it is a necessary and desirable process in Australia's democratic society where accountability and inclusiveness are considered essential.

2. Timing of public comment period

The final date for written submissions is 22 December 2005. This gives **37 days, inclusive**, to lodge a written submission on a project that has been **two and a half years** in the planning and covers over 600 hectares (our estimation). There are four proposals to consider, each involving a large number of existing and proposed land uses, major infrastructure elements, socially sensitive institutions, waterways and flood prone land.

37 days, including **10 non-business** days, is an unreasonably short amount of time for disparate community groups whose members can only formulate their submissions in non-working hours, on a voluntary basis, without the benefit of the finances, technology and mapping capabilities of the organisation that produced the proposals.

In addition to this, those 37 days are during the Christmas and school holiday period which covers the busiest part of the year for most people. It also includes a period when many people are away on holiday.

These factors are recognised by the Integrated Planning Act 1997 which does not allow public notification to include any business days between **20 December** and 5 January of the following year.

The choice of the consultation period by the Queensland Government is well recognised by the community as a conscious government/developer strategy to get proposals through. **The general populace holds this strategy in very low regard.**

The Westgate proposals come hot on the heels of the Pooh Corner debacle where public land on the other side of Wacol Station Road from Westgate was considered to be surplus and was put up for sale with no community consultation.

3. Public access to information

The Westgate 'Newsletter' (newsletter?) had very limited distribution considering the far-reaching impacts of the proposals. Many people in the immediate area report they did not get 'newsletters'.

The Westgate web page is difficult to find unless you have the exact address **and know that it exists**. It contains very limited information, the maps are too small to read and the legends are blurred and illegible.

The Westgate information sessions at Anderson House were only four hours each. Only two out of four sessions were advertised initially. Anderson House is difficult to find and not accessible by public transport. Some information providers were not familiar with the proposals.

Security guards posted outside Anderson House were an affront to many community members.

The Feedback Form is strongly biased towards acceptance of the proposals. It skims over the environmental issues and does not mention kangaroos or wildlife at all.

Access to the site. The community does not have free access to most of the site and no visits have been arranged and carried out. This makes it doubly difficult to comment on the proposals put forward.

Newspapers in Ipswich carried limited information. If the Brisbane daily newspapers were used, we did not see the notices.

PART TWO: CONTEXT OF THIS SUBMISSION

1. General lack of information

No base data has been provided against which to assess the planning proposals. Such data would include information on the elements set out below.

Existing characteristics of the site showing contours, flood-prone areas, vegetation types, soils, geology, fauna, waterway corridors and view sheds.

Other planning instruments that apply to the site should be provided such as the Brisbane City Local Plan for the area and the SEQ Regional Plan. These should be seriously considered.

The regional context of the site should be provided taking into consideration factors including transport infrastructure, traffic routes, demographics, economics, government institutions, green space corridors and faunal use.

Information on the immediate context of the site needs to be provided considering the opposite side of the Brisbane River, the Ipswich Motorway precinct, Pooh Corner and Wolston Creek natural environmental areas, the crematorium and cemetery, adjoining residential and industrial areas.

Existing uses of the site need to be mapped and analysed: Kangaroo and other faunal use, vegetation types and their Regional Ecosystem classifications, prisons, hospitals, water treatment plant, golf courses, and recreation areas.

Heritage values of the site need to be ascertained including those of the hospital and Wolston House.

2. Timeframe of the proposal

There is no timeframe for the implementation of the proposals nor for the expected/proposed life spans of the existing land uses and proposed developments. We therefore assume that the proposals are all long term, say 50 to 100 years.

3. Context of this response

The comments made in this submission should be considered in relation to the lack of information provided about the site and its context. This submission has been made relying on local knowledge.

The information on the proposals is skeletal, maps are at a very small scale showing little detail and there is no indication of the characteristics of surrounding areas.

It is within this context that we are commenting on the proposals presented by the Queensland Government at this time. We regard this submission as a 'first pass' and the initial step in an inclusive and full consultation process involving all stakeholders and with full information provided on all aspects of all proposals.

PART THREE: COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSALS

1. Four options

These really comprise one option with variations. All comments made in this response apply to all four options.

We make note that the subtitle of Option 1, 'Minimal Intervention', is misleading. The addition of a bridge over the Brisbane River, major through roads, a large Police Academy, 124 ha of residential area, 434 ha of Mixed Business, a school and a few other proposed land uses could never be called 'minimal intervention'. These additions, in fact, constitute major intervention on the site.

2. Area of the proposals

The recently sold Wacol Army Barracks should be included in the Westgate Proposal area as they adjoin the site, remain undeveloped and were government owned until earlier this year.

3. Compliance with the Brisbane City Plan, the Western Gateway Local Plan and the South East Queensland Regional Plan

The Westgate proposal area falls under the Brisbane City Plan and is more specifically dealt with in the Western Gateway Local Plan. Under these BCC designates this area as follows.

- The majority of the area as open space with 'rural, semi-rural, semi-natural and open landscape values'.
- A portion of land which appears to be noted on the Westgate proposals as 'significant vegetation' is designated open space with 'biodiversity values'.
- All along the Brisbane River is classified as an area with 'natural scenic value'.
- Wolston Creek and the Brisbane River are shown as 'regional green space links'.

These vary enormously from the Westgate proposals. We firmly believe the proposals should address the requirements of the Brisbane City Plan, including the Western Gateway Local Plan.

The Westgate proposal area also falls under the **SEQ Regional Plan** and should address its requirements as well. It is not clear from the publicly available booklet on the regional plan, exactly what these are.

By not addressing City Plan and the SEQ Regional Plan, the State Government questions their credibility and integrity as well as those of the Brisbane City Council and State Government's Office of Urban Management.

We believe the Westgate proposal should address the planning instruments that apply to the area.

4. Local Public Open Space

There is a great shortage of Public Open Space in the suburbs between the northern boundary of the Westgate area and the Brisbane River adjacent to Jindalee and to the east of the site in Wacol, Gailes and Centenary Village. This review of government land is an ideal opportunity to rectify the situation to a large degree. The proposed increased population for the greater area will worsen the situation.

If the Transit Oriented Developments proposed around Wacol and Gailes stations go ahead, the general site open space will be substantially more important as people will have smaller backyards or will live in units with little or no private outdoor areas.

5. Regional Public Open Space

Areas of parklands and bushland are vital in providing 'escape' for people who work in dense urban complexes and need to relax, regenerate and get exercise. With the projected increase in population in SEQ, Public Open Space will be even more important.

The Westgate area, with its varied characteristics and large area, will be ideal to develop on a regional level for its recreational and natural values.

It could provide walking and biking, canoeing, Kangaroo watching, bird watching, to name a few recreational activities.

Westgate presents a wonderful opportunity to have a really worthwhile park with unique recreational and natural environmental areas. Where else can you 'get away from it all' to a natural area, view Kangaroos and local wildlife and still be within the city boundaries?

6. River corridor

The Brisbane River is a wonderful asset for the whole population and should be accessible. The multiple use pathway along the river is supported by CRAC/CDEA. However it should continue all along the river with no absolute frontage as shown for the Police Academy.

CRAC/CDEA supports the proposal of a walking track along Wolston Creek connecting to the Brisbane River and through to Darra.

7. Kangaroos and other fauna

Fauna, in particular Kangaroos, constitute a major element of the site. However it is not mentioned at all in the proposals. There are believed to be approximately 3000 Kangaroos in the area. This should be recognised as a major asset. It must be the only area within the Brisbane City Council area where free-roaming wild Kangaroos are easily accessible to be seen and enjoyed by the public.

Wacol is the last bastion for Eastern Grey Kangaroos in the western suburbs. Westgate proposals do not include Kangaroos and this is totally unacceptable to CRAC/CDEA.

As was demonstrated earlier this year when a large number of Kangaroos were trapped inside a BCC facility without food or water, it is extremely difficult to relocate Kangaroos. To attempt to relocate 3000 Kangaroos would be an impossibility. The option of killing all the Kangaroos, however humanely, is completely abhorrent to CRAC/CDEA.

Earlier this year Pooh Corner was handed over to BCC as a significant natural environmental area. It supports a large number of Kangaroos. The Westgate proposals make no provision for corridors for these Kangaroos to reach other open space areas in the site, nor more importantly, to reach the Brisbane River corridor with its accessibility to a much greater area. At present the Kangaroos hop over fences, crawl through culverts and under bridges and cross roads to access other areas. This is particularly important for the groups of young male Kangaroos that go off to find new mobs every year. This is to maintain genetic diversity. The proposals make Pooh Corner into an environmental island where the Kangaroos will quickly become inbred. They will then become ill and will all die. CRAC/CDEA's opinion is that there needs to be ample land to support the Kangaroos and meaningful and safe environmental corridors to allow faunal movement.

In the Centenary and district region there is a rich diversity of wildlife living along the river corridor and in various Bushland remnants. Wildlife includes Swamp and Red-necked Wallabies, Eastern Grey Kangaroos, Koalas, Echidnas, Platypus, Squirrel Gliders, Brushtail and Ringtail Possums, Northern Brown Bandicoots, several species of Flying Foxes and Microbats, Water Rats, Lace Monitors, over 100 species of birds and several species of frogs, lizards, snakes and fish. Earlier this year it was reported that a dead Spotted Quoll was found on the Ipswich Motorway near the Arthur Gorrie Prison.

There is every reason to believe that all these species of wildlife also live in the Westgate area. This is a tremendous public and environmental asset which needs to be protected and supported.

8. Residential areas adjacent prisons

The land between the prisons and Riverhills was originally meant to be a buffer between the two. It makes no sense to now locate housing within that buffer zone. In addition, it is probably unacceptable to prisons to have residential areas so close to them for security reasons. It is most unlikely that anyone would want to live next door to a prison zone for reasons of security, visual amenity and probable poor property values.

From one of the maps displayed at Anderson House, it would seem that a large area of that land is susceptible to flooding which would render it unsuitable for residential and most other developments.

In addition there is a sewage works immediately south of the proposed residential area. This can already be smelt by the Riverhills residents and they are much further away. It would be most unpleasant to live right next door to the sewage works.

The proximity to the Crematorium is also undesirable.

The area between Wolston Creek and the prisons and the sewage works is open land at the moment and CRAC/CDEA would like it to stay that way, especially for the Kangaroos and wildlife. It would be even better if the land was opened to the public for recreational purposes as well, especially the Wolston Creek and Brisbane River corridors.

Federal, State and Local governments need to be confident of reliable water provision before bringing in more people to this site and SEQ in general. At present the whole region is in a water crisis with the only solution being the advent of good rains in the future.

9. Mixed development adjacent Wacol and Gailes stations

The concept of Transit Oriented Development makes sense around the stations but separate consultation needs to be carried out with the Wacol and Gailes communities as well.

Any industrial development is unacceptable to CRAC/CDEA. City Plan states there should be no more industrial development north of the Ipswich Motorway and we support this.

Industrial areas tend to be noisy/ugly/dirty and we understandably do not want these close to suburbs. It took years before the malodorous QCL cement works was removed from Darra, we do not want a repeat of this.

CRAC/CDEA supports the concept of Transport Orientated Development areas which could contain residential, commercial, entertainment, recreational and community uses but not industrial uses.

10. Ipswich Motorway

The Goodna Bypass to the Ipswich Motorway is proposed to be located through the Wolston Park and Gailes Golf Clubs. This is completely unacceptable to CRAC/CDEA. We realise this is not part of the Westgate proposal but it would like to state that this would have a huge negative impact on the area and needs to be considered.

11. Golf course

The location of a golf course in the open area south of Wolston Creek is unacceptable to CRAC/CDEA as this would lock up the land up from the Kangaroos and other fauna and the general public, as golf courses are now required to have high fences around them to keep the public out for insurance reasons. In addition, a golf course, with its high use of water and fertilisers, is unacceptable next to a waterway corridor.

12. Roads, bridges and traffic

It would appear that the area is going to be used to reduce traffic from the Centenary Highway and the Ipswich Motorway by upgrading Wacol Station Road and by building an east-west road across the site connecting to a new bridge across the Brisbane River. The amount of traffic that would potentially use these roads is enormous. The

noise, air pollution and propensity for roads to form ecological barriers make these traffic proposals completely unacceptable to CRAC/CDEA.

Current roads are already overloaded by traffic trying to avoid the congestion on the Ipswich Motorway. The prospect of traffic generated by the proposed 10 000 extra houses with at least 5 000 cars in the Westgate proposal is daunting.

13. Cockatoo Island

At present this is a refuge for wildlife, bats in particular. CRAC/CDEA rejects the proposal for putting two pedestrian bridges over to the island for human access and would recommend the island be retained as a wildlife refuge, they are few and far between.

If the Goodna Bypass goes ahead the viewpoints on the proposal would look over motorway and houses. There are many other excellent viewing areas available along the river.

14. Heritage precincts

CRAC/CDEA supports meaningful protection of heritage buildings in the hospital area.

Wolston House needs to be included in a heritage precinct as it is of great historical importance to the general suburban area north of it.

John Oxley landed along these reaches of the Brisbane River so this should also be commemorated formally.

15. Police Academy

CRAC/CDEA would not reject the construction of a Police Academy with the proviso that it is on land already used for institutions, such as the old site of the old Moreton A and B prisons. However, it would seem that such a facility would be better located further away from residential areas.

16. Water body

There is a water body in the southwest of the site. It is unacceptable to lock this up in the Police Academy, it should be available to wildlife and restricted recreational use such as bird watching.

17. Private school

The location of a private school between an industrial area and bushland areas is questionable. Why a private school? What does this say about the State Government's opinion of its own school system? CRAC/CDEA cannot support this on the information provided.

18. Sandstone quarry

A quarry located in a significant vegetation area is unacceptable.

19. Sustainability centre

What is a sustainability centre? Any development that involves any bushland clearing on the Pooh Corner site is unacceptable.

20. Design for Sustainability

Any design should have sustainability as a major component. Australia lags seriously behind the western world in this regard.

21. Aquatic precinct

What is involved in an aquatic precinct? If it involves minimum impact activities such as canoeing, this could be acceptable. If it involves any form of motorised boating, then it is definitely not. Motorised boating is noisy, polluting and will disturb the peace and quiet of an environmental area.

22. Significant vegetation

What is the nature of the significant vegetation and why is some of it proposed to be cleared for the Police Academy?

23. Community Use

What is the proposal for community use? The proportion is very small varying from 0 to 14 ha.

24. Centenary Village

What is proposed for Centenary Village? It is in need of upgrading. It has been in the area for a long time and needs to be included in planning considerations.

25. Contaminated land

We have heard that there is contaminated land in the area. There needs to be more information provided about this. There could also be Q fever present from livestock and maybe Kangaroos.

SUMMARY OF RESONSE

- 1. The Centenary Riverfront Advisory Committee Incorporated (Centenary and District Environment Action) considers all four proposals to be unacceptable.**
- 2. Some components of the proposals such as an aquatic centre may be acceptable. However there is not enough information provided at this stage to make meaningful assessments on these.**
- 3. We request a more robust and comprehensive planning process which would include meaningful consultation of all stakeholders.**

PART FOUR: PREFERRED USES OF THE SITE

The group would prefer to have an area which would include the following attributes.

- **A focus on the natural and environmental values and the recreational values of the site. These are unique in the Brisbane area and CRAC/CDEA does not want them subsumed into more faceless urban sprawl.**
- **Special consideration to be made for the site's wildlife, in particular the 3000 kangaroos. The presence of an urban mob of Kangaroos is very special and its benefits to all should be maximized.**
- **Ample land to support the wildlife and connections to other areas to maintain genetic diversity. Centenary and district is most fortunate to still have a wide variety of wildlife which among other benefits, enhances its Australian identity.**

- **Fauna crossings and reduced traffic speed on Wacol Station Road which would remain as one lane in each direction. Increased traffic would destroy the values of the site and there would be more vehicle accidents with probable harm/death to kangaroos and motorists. At present there is a current average of three Kangaroo deaths a week on the road.**
- **As much parkland as possible. The suburbs immediately north of the area are seriously deprived of Public Open Space. People need to get out into the open and away from the daily stresses of life to maintain balance.**
- **Low environmental walking trails along Wolston Creek and the Brisbane River. People need to have areas where they can go for recreation and exercise. Walking is the most popular form of exercise in Australia today.**
- **Full public access to the entire Brisbane River corridor on the site with connections north to the City and south to Ipswich. The Brisbane community should have the right of access to all parts of the city's river.**
- **Retain the hospital precinct with its emphasis on caring for people in need.**
- **Retain the heritage precincts of the hospital and Wolston House as essential elements of the area's history.**
- **Commemorate the landings of John Oxley along the local reaches of the Brisbane River as another important part of local history.**