

Attachment 2

Lord Mayors Address

Lord Mayors, Councillors

Thank you for the opportunity and the privilege to come before you and present an issue that has become close to my heart. The issue is the impact of housing development within Brisbane and in particular Fig Tree Pocket.

Lord Mayor and Councillors, my name is <?> and I am not a Greenie. I am also not an Activist. Up until now you could probably have described me as one of the masses. Up until now I would have been quite happy to mind my own business, raising my family in quiet peace in the suburbs of Brisbane.

This all changed for me about six months ago when a newly created company gained approval from Brisbane City Council to develop the parcel of land on the up hill slopes adjacent to my home. At first I was happy to see this land developed. Although the site was environmentally sensitive having mature trees, koalas and other fauna on heavily sloping ground, I was familiar with Brisbane City Council's Fig Tree Pocket Plan and knew that the site could be handled in a responsible way.

Unfortunately this has not been the case and instead I have been witness to the gradual erosion of Council plans and codes to maximize the block yield by the developer.

This has been most evident in the loss of vegetation planned for the site which in the earliest versions of Vegetation Plan required the removal of 39 of the 254 trees and which has been whittled away over time by the developer to more than 100 trees.

Of the 254 trees on the site, the Ecological Report done by the developer noted that there was only one tree that was considered by Brisbane City Council to be a significant landscape tree. This tree was a big eucalypt measuring more than 60cm across its trunk. And would you believe that this tree, the only tree deemed as significant to BCC is planned to be removed. And why is that? Well it's because the developer deemed that it should go. Like another three or four of the larger trees on the site that the council ecologists requested should be retained. Well, guess what! The Developer determined that they should go as well! This didn't seem right to me and when I raised these issues with Council during mediation, they indicated that there was no requirement to preserve these trees. It was kind of just a "Nice to have" tree but nothing more.

Another issue that was of concern to me was the handling of the Koala population on the site. I don't know much about Koala's and to be honest have never seen one in the wild but again from the ecological report provided by the developer there was evidence that Koala's were living in the block next door to me. Now we are not talking about in Redlands or in a National Park but here in the suburbs of Brisbane, not 20k from the CBD. How amazing is that! Not only that but the Koalas are moving back and forth within the tree corridors that are still remaining. However when we talked to the Council people about Koala's it was pointed out to us that the block wasn't zoned for protection. This meant that it wouldn't matter if there is a koala on

the site or one hundred koalas on the site. There was nothing that the Council could do to protect these endangered animals. This also doesn't seem right to me.

So where am I going with all of this? Well I don't really know. Up until this point we have spent thousand of dollars on expert and legal advice. We have spent hundreds of hours preparing for and attending mediation sessions. We have been bullied by legal people and threatened with having to pay expenses for the developer. And for what? For what we thought were issues that any fair and reasonable person could relate to.

And so tomorrow is our last opportunity for mediation and then the day after that we go to court to finalise the details for the hearing. The developer's solicitor has just come to us with an offer of a set back for our house from the development but there is a catch. If we get our set back then they will need to remove the last of the remaining mature trees. This is necessary so that their concession doesn't impact on their yield. I guess they want to be seen as having been reasonable during the mediation process.

In reality what I'd love to do would be to save that landscape tree and perhaps the other trees that the Brisbane City Council ecologists requested be preserved. And if it were possible, then I would like to see some laws that could be used to enforce what Brisbane City Council have created in your various codes because at the moment the codes are not enough. The balance of power is with the developer and not with Brisbane City Council. The developers know it and now more and more, the residents of Brisbane are seeing it.