



COUNTDOWN TO A TRIPLE WIN AT 154 HORIZON DRIVE, WESTLAKE

A concerted effort by the local community, three community environmental groups and Councillor Felicity Farmer has resulted in a triple win at 154 Horizon Drive Westlake.

The Triple Win

The environment has had a win - 3.16 hectares of bushland has been preserved as a place where a local native vegetation community can continue to provide ongoing habitat for wildlife.

The local and wider Brisbane communities have had a win - they now have a bushland park for recreational activities and all the benefits of escaping city stresses and getting back to Nature.

The land-owners have had a win - they have sold their land and will be able to use the funds for pressing projects.

The Count-down.

Back in the 60s when Westlake and the neighbouring suburbs were originally laid out, 3.16 ha of land at 154 Horizon Drive was zoned for a school. However, a couple of years ago, the longtime land owners decided that a school was no longer needed and that they needed funds for other projects. The land was put up for sale.

On 13 March 2006 the potential new owners put up the public notices on the site as part of the Development Approval process. The proposal was to build 90 units on the site.

Centenary and District Environment Action (CDEA) saw this as an opportunity to increase the amount of parkland in this area of the western suburbs. Also back in the 60s, only 4% area was allowed as parkland instead of the now accepted minimum of 10%. Since the late 90s the Centenary Riverfront Advisory Committee, now Centenary and District Environment Action, had been working to obtain tracts of land that would make public parks and preserve the local natural environment.

CDEA trundled into action and started a rather rushed campaign to save the bushland. Under the Integrated Planning Act only three weeks is allowed for community feedback. What's more, it is quite a challenging bureaucratic obstacle course for ordinary community members to put in a submission to Council.

To help get through this, CDEA compiled a proforma submission so that members of the public who supported the campaign could just add their particulars to a standard submission form and send it in to Council. Photocopiers ran hot and people added their own comments to the proformas.

Enter local, Joanne Robertson, who started a petition to Save the Horizon Drive Bushland. A new group was formed – Friends of the Horizon Drive Bushland (FOTHDB). Local businesses had the petition on their counters and the signatures came rolling in

Councillor Felicity Farmer put her shoulder firmly to the wheel and it was all systems GO!

The campaign was to persuade BCC to purchase the land with the Bushland Preservation Levy we all pay for this very purpose.

The local community newspapers entered the fray, publishing photographs, articles and letters.

CDEA had a copy of the petition on its spanking new web page and still the signatures kept rolling in until there were nearly 3000 names on the petition.

In the background, CDEA and Save Our Riverfront Bushland (SORB) were checking the flora and fauna on site and mapping ecological connections to make a case based on hard facts to give to Council. Other community members had their own petitions and many wrote their own letters to Council. CDEA and FOTHDB both wrote letters to the Lord Mayor outlining why this purchase would be such a benefit to the community and to the environment.

Enter Ric Natrass, well-known wildlife expert. He identified koala scratch marks on nearly every smooth-barked Eucalypt he looked at and showed CEDEA, SORB and FOTHDB how to do the same. This was the turning point! CDEA and SORB took GPS readings of koala scratch marked trees, mapped them, photographed them, recorded all the details and submitted them to BCC.

Councillor Farmer bravely went in to Civic Cabinet to put the case for the community.

On 3 July 2006, CDEA was informed that Civic Cabinet had approved the purchase of 154 Horizon Drive for the Brisbane community !!!!!!!

What exhilaration and joy!

Sincere thanks to every one who contributed to this great win!

On a more serious note, this successful campaign shows that the community does have a voice and that the authorities will take heed.