

Truth in Gold Coast Council

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Next Thursday 26th October at 6.30pm at the Albert Waterways Hall, Broadbeach
Gecko Environment Council has called together representatives and supporters of community groups from one end of the Gold Coast to the other. They will gather to discuss the **crisis of truth in Gold Coast Council** at the **Gold Coast Community Voice meeting**. The initial public meeting last Sunday was cancelled due to heavy rain.

For years community organisations have been calling for more accountability of Councillors in their dealings with developer applications, alienation of public open space, manipulation of the City Plan and conflict of interest voting in Council. These concerns and others were documented in the *All That Glitters* 4 Corners Report in September and confirmed in the recently released Crime and Corruption Commission's Belcarra report on investigations into offenses under the Local Government Act and the Local Government Electoral Act.

Lois Levy, Gecko Campaign Coordinator said, "Fears that these revelations would be conveniently forgotten and "business as usual" would prevail has prompted Gecko Environment Council to hold this public gathering at which representatives of community organisations will voice their concerns at the way our City is run."

In addition to the opportunity to voice concerns there will be two petitions circulating directed to the State Government and the Gold Coast Council. While it may appear that the offenses listed in the Belcarra Report will not be prosecuted due to time limits, the Chair, Alan MacSporran has stated publicly that he considers Mayor Tate's actions as appalling. Since due process is apparently impossible it is now up to the community to hold our Councillors to account and to demand that State Government take action.

Lois said "Gold Coasters deserve better than a Council in which they have no confidence. The promise of banning developer donations is only the beginning of what is necessary to clean up this Council. The people will speak next Sunday and Gecko urges all residents to come along and show their support for truth in Council."

Some 17 community groups have come together for this event and representatives of most of the groups will speak for 2 minutes outlining their major issues. These include:-

- The undue influence of the development industry,
- the trashing of our new city plan without regard to community amenity,
- Using our parklands as some sort of land bank for developers,
- Failure to provide additional public open space for our growing population and to protect our wildlife
- Failure of many Councillors to represent their constituents properly.
- The impact of light rail on koala habitat and community amenity
- The failure to protect dwindling koala populations from land-clearing
- Secret meetings and large blacked out sections of reports paid for by ratepayers

- Failure to leave the chamber for votes on matters declared a conflict of interest

The State Government petition reflects many of these issues and calls on Parliament to enact * a ban on donations to candidates for elections from property developers and corporations; * a cap on political donations to individual and party candidates; * a mandate that elected representatives with a declared conflict of interest must remove themselves from discussion and vote of that interest; * a mandate that delegated authority decisions on property developments are published on government websites within 48 hours of decision and can be subject to review by full council; * a mandate that all mayoral directives to the chief executive officer and senior staff are recorded; * that the changes to the Local Government Act and Other Legislation Amendment Act S 12(4) (b) be rescinded so that the power of the mayor in respect of the budget reverts back to proposing the budget rather than preparing the budget.

The Petition to the Gold Coast City Council demands that Councillors immediately introduce procedural rules that * require elected representatives with a declared conflict of interest to remove themselves from discussion and vote of that interest; * which mandate that delegated authority decisions on property developments are published on Council website within 48 hours of decision and can be subjected to review by full council at the request of one Councillor; * which mandate that all mayoral directives to the chief executive officer and senior staff are recorded; * that the Mayoral Technical Advisory Committee is disbanded; * that public open space cannot be sold, leased or gifted for the purpose of commercial enterprise; * that the purpose of the Open Space Preservation Levy is restored to its original intent to purchase land for conservation; * that the integrity of the City Plan is restored and development applications are approved only if they adhere to City Plan requirements.

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