



Gecko - Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council Assn Inc.

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## Gecko Refutes Mayor Tate's Claim that The Spit is only a Port.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> February a story appeared in the Gold Coast Bulletin titled "Port A Sock in It" in which the Gold Coast Mayor Tom Tate claimed that he had unearthed documents "proving" that the Spit was a port and that the community was land grabbing by claiming it was public open space.

The following article was sent as a media release to the Bulletin and other media outlets disproving the Mayor's claims, but as expected this perspective was not published by the Bulletin so that some of the public may still believe the Mayor's inaccurate statement.

Gecko- Gold Coast and Hinterland Environment Council (Gecko) believes that Mayor Tate must be desperate to justify his ill-conceived plans to cover the Broadwater with concrete like Surfers Paradise to prop up an uneconomical cruise ship terminal (GCCC AEC Report). He claimed that he had "unearthed documents showing the tip of The Spit was always intended to be a port." Far from being a secret this information has been in the public domain since the Seaway was constructed in 1986. His interpretation is misconstruction.

The port designation is designed to support the management of the Seaway, not to allow a cruise ship terminal. The port designation also has a sub-purpose of providing park, kiosk and recreation. This is demonstrated in a letter dated 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2009 from then Minister for Natural Resources, Stephen Robertson, which states "*As I stated to you during our meeting the purpose of the reserve is port and harbour with **a sub-purpose of associated park, kiosk and recreation.** These purposes are well suited to the current uses of the park and will ensure continued enjoyment of the park*"

In no way can the port designation to manage the Seaway be a justification for cruise ship terminal nor is it a justification for **donating 75 hectares of public open space to a development company** which must be drooling at the prospect of obtaining literally priceless land for their commercial/residential development free of charge. This would be the only condition under which a developer would even consider such a proposal. Nor would Council be justified in taking adjacent lands to build their own cruise ship terminal, as proposed in recent council documents.

Lois Levy, President of Gecko said "It is hardly surprising that the community believes, correctly, that The Spit has always been a recreational area when they are in the habit of going there to walk, picnic, fish, dive, swim, boat, etc. They do not take kindly to losing this invaluable resource for the unproven "benefits" of a cruise ship terminal. Gold coasters are not land grabbers in using and enjoying The Spit"

Doug Jennings Park at the end of The Spit and adjacent to the Seaway was originally declared parkland in 1988 by the Liberal National Party Government, following the death of Doug Jennings MP in 1987. It was so designated to honour his work for the local Gold Coast community, and to ensure that this area would remain as public open space for community enjoyment.

Further the current Gold Coast City Planning Scheme states:-

*"The primary intent of the Seaway Park Precinct (i.e. the area adjacent to the Seaway including Doug Jennings Park) is to provide for the protection of land in public ownership, for the purposes of landscape preservation and natural hazard management, in association with the Seaway, while **facilitating and controlling opportunities for passive outdoor and active water based recreation usage.***

***This area should be preserved and enhanced as public open space, in view of its environmental significance and due to its role in the maintenance of the Seaway. Within the precinct, action will be taken to maintain and enhance the sand bypass and public safety, in association with the Seaway.***

Lois continued "Community groups have taken a stand to resist the Mayor's efforts to take away this priceless heritage from the community. The groups gain no personal profit from this campaign unlike the developer who will be handed waterfront land worth hundreds of millions of dollars. The Mayor can posture all he likes about Gold Coasters "land grabbing" The Spit, when they want to protect it as public open space used by thousands of locals and tourists every week. In truth he is the one grabbing our land from present and future generations.

Wavebreak Island, is also public land under threat from the cruise ship development proposal. It and The Spit were created in 1985, at great public cost; to protect the western foreshore of the Broadwater and urban Southport from destructive storm surges. It was then planted with 10,000 trees and shrubs to stabilize the sand. To build on Wavebreak Island defeats its original purpose. It puts any attempted development on the island at risk from storms and storm surge damage such as was recently experienced on the Gold Coast over the Australia Day weekend. Whereas Wavebreak Island, in its current state, is already a valuable community asset used extensively for recreation and tourism providing boat anchorage, bait collection sites, and a beginner snorkelling and diving site. Environmentally it provides important seagrass beds as a nursery for fish and forage for dugong. It is recognised as a visual asset to the Gold Coast community, not as a potential development site simply because it is man-made.

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