Re: Oxley Creek Common and Wetland development

Dear Lord Mayor,

This letter concerns the possible development of wetland and grassland at Oxley Creek Common in the Brisbane City Council area (Rocklea). The area contains habitat for rare and listed bird species. I have raised these issues repeatedly with your council staff and councillors in the past so some of this information will not be news. The letter ends with some very specific requests.

Oxley Creek Common is an important freshwater wetland in the Brisbane City Council area (see map). Over 170 species have been recorded on the site over the past six years since it became open to public access. This makes it one of the most celebrated birding spots in Queensland, and each weekend several bird watching groups visit the site.

Aside from the enormous diversity on the site, several significant bird species occur on the site. In particular the site is habitat for:

- Rare species, like the Black-necked Stork (commonly called a Jabiru, see photo and map) and Glossy Ibis.
- The only known breeding population of the locally very rare Plum-headed Finch in BCC (see photo and map).

While the management of the site has been less than appropriate, and the state government has been unable to develop a plan for the site in the past seven years, those problems can wait. This letter is more specifically about a part of the Common which appears to have been sold to Brisbane Markets Ltd. Furthermore, rumour has it that development on the site has been approved.

On the attached map I show an area of wetlands that the state appears to have sold. This particular area of wetland provides habitat for many species including Glossy Ibis, Latham’s Snipe and breeding Black-winged Stilt (photos 1-2). If there are to be any changes to this area or its small catchment then the Federal government must be informed through a referral to the EPBC Act (see [http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/assessments/referral-form.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/assessments/referral-form.html)). Furthermore the wetland just below the buildings is an area frequented by Jabiru and Latham’s Snipe. Development above it to the east would affect the biodiversity values of this site (even though it has been partially drained – photo 2).
Finally, on the map, I note the location of grassland that may currently contain breeding plum-headed finches. I will be observing this area over the coming months to ensure that its conservation values are in no way compromised.

I am sure your council officers have prepared a report on the site when approvals for sale and development were sought, assuming this may have occurred.

So that we can be clear where we stand, could you send me the following:
1. A map of the public land sold by the state government, if land has been sold.
2. A copy of any proposed development actions, or allowed subdivisions, on the sold land, if they exist, and if they have, or have not, been approved.
3. The reports that your staff, or EPA staff, have written that explains the wetland and biodiversity values of the site to any purchaser or developer of the site and all the biodiversity values that they should be retaining in the community interests.
4. The documents that refer all these controlled actions to the Federal government re the EPBC act.
5. Any other relevant documents.

I consider this letter, and any response, to be public. Naturally I would prefer to not have to write a letter such as this. However my attempts to communicate with your council and the state government over the issue have been entirely unsatisfactory.

Yours sincerely

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Cc: Mr Andrew McNamara, Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation
Mr Andrew McNamara, Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation
Marion Forrest, President, Friends of Oxley Common,
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Birds Australia
Queensland Conservation Council
Brisbane Markets Ltd.
Half-drained wetland that will be affected by development, photo 3

Plum-headed Finch probably breeding

Wetlands sold for development? Photos 1-2
Photos 1 and 2 showing some of the wetlands that appear to have been sold. They are shown by the most easterly green circle on the map above.

Photo 3 – wetland just west of buildings showing the drain. This could be a much better wetland if state government managers did not leave this drain in place. Despite this it still often provides habitat for Latham’s Snipe, Black-necked Stork and Glossy Ibis – all of which are easily disturbed.
Black-necked stork with Birds Australia Atlas records.

Plum-headed Finch with Birds Australia Atlas records.

Note only two records for whole region in the entire ten year database!