

News and views from our member organisations

Is the development of Kurilpa and South Brisbane proposed by the BCC and the development lobby right for our city?

Elizabeth Handley (BRU) and Ross Hanson (BRU)

Brisbane is a city of hills where creeks, some long hidden, meander through our suburbs down to the river. It's a subtropical city whose unique undulating topography determines its unique characteristics. The city centre backdrop is the Taylor range to the West, with Mount Coot-tha the most prominent feature.

It is a vista that Architect Robyn Gibson sought to celebrate when he designed the Brisbane South Bank Cultural Precinct. Gibson's wife Jane, responding to the Newman Government Queensland Cultural Precinct Draft Master Plan, in an interview with the [ABC](#), said, "Part of the ideology of the building was to have a low-rise set with the mountain ranges behind – well, that will be completely obliterated."

At Kurilpa and South Brisbane, the development lobby and BCC proposed high-density development of apartments, no doubt euphemistically referred to as affordable housing, will destroy those important geographical references. The Taylor range, including Mt Coot-tha, will be completely obscured from many vantage points.

Below is the change already seen between Feb 2017 and Feb 2023, taken from the same location on Kangaroo Point. What might it look like as early as 2025? It is symptomatic of what is happening along many ridge lines in Brisbane, like Dornoch Tce, that are becoming symmetrically built canyons, obscuring everything in the distance as you travel through them.





In 2014, philosopher Alain de Botton caused an outcry when he criticised the city of Brisbane saying:

People who have no interest whatsoever in making any city even remotely beautiful or dignified can get away with some truly terrible construction projects free of any fear of being criticised.

In an interview with *The Courier Mail*, de Botton said certain vistas of Brisbane, such as those in central Brisbane on the waterfront, might qualify as ugly,...“That part of Brisbane has been taken over by property developers who have been allowed to run riot for the sake of money,”.

Famed Architect Robyn Gibson would turn in his grave if he saw what has become of his vision for his city. Brisbane is a city be-devilled by shocking planning and the approval, by BCC, of buildings with very little to commend them.

Greening the Gold Coast Forum, June 2023

Lois Levy, GECKO

GECKO's *Greening the Gold Coast Forum* was held at Broadbeach, Gold Coast, on 10th June. This event attracted 150 people to hear a range of expert speakers on the need to green and cool our city.



promote active transport.

The concept for the forum arose from a recognition that many urban parts of the city suffered from the urban heat island effect in summer. This is in part due to low tree canopy cover e.g. Paradise Waters had 13 % while Currumbin Valley had 63 % and that tree canopy cover was reported to average less than 6% near education, transport hubs, medical and shopping centres. (*Urban Tree Canopy Study, 2020 p34*). As global warming continues, tree coverage in urban areas is one method which can assist in reducing temperatures in homes and streets for residents and workers alike and

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Speakers at the forum were very diverse ranging from Justine Dillon, Kombumerri woman, speaking on the regeneration of Indigenous land at Guanaba and the importance of retaining areas of remnant habitat throughout the city to Professor Catherine Pickering, from Griffith University, with expertise on urban biodiversity and nature-based solutions. A number of not-for-profit organisations shared their valuable insights with us. Speakers included Dr Beau Frigault, representing Doctors for the Environment on the negative health impacts of rising urban heat and the role of plants in containing this; Gayle Dallaston, founder of Shady Lanes, who gave important information on establishing community-based verge planting projects in collaboration with local councils and Natalie Sanderson, co-founder of Backyards for Biodiversity with advice on creating habitat and corridors in our backyards and other spaces.

The final speaker was Desiree Maclean, Coordinator for [Our Natural City Strategy](#), City of Gold Coast. The Strategy aims to acquire land for conservation and restoration in partnerships with the community and other organisations. Included is the formation of an environment advisory committee and reinstatement of the State of the Environment Report.

Visit the conference [website](#) to see a complete list of all our excellent speakers. Following the speakers, the attendees were split into discussion groups with speakers circulating to provide detailed information and answer questions. The forum was filmed for uploading on the Gecko website shortly, gecko.org.au. Follow up activities with Council and pilot projects of urban greening are planned for selected community and school sites.

This high-quality forum was planned and implemented by Sara Hicks, Climate Advocate for Gecko Environment Council, with the help of Gecko volunteers. Our congratulations to all involved in providing such an insightful and enjoyable day. Well done everyone!

Redlands community questions the need for Olympic whitewater stadium at Birkdale

Chris Walker (Redlands 2030)



Redland City's Council's plans for the Birkdale Community Precinct – questioned by the community

Recent news from the USA raises questions about Redland City Council's dream of using other peoples' money to fund a whitewater stadium venue for canoe slalom events at the Brisbane 2032 Olympics.

The local community and the Council have quite different views about future use of the 62-hectare Birkdale Community Precinct which includes two sites listed on the Queensland Heritage Register. Much of the Precinct is zoned conservation and mapped as koala habitat. The local council wants to spend \$300 million developing the site, with its centrepiece a whitewater facility costing an estimate \$100 million. But the community is pushing for any site use to be less impactful, and is concerned about having a 'white elephant' whitewater facility which will be a burden for the Redlands ratepayers for decades. A [petition to Queensland Parliament](#) (which has already gained about 1,500 signatures) is calling for the Brisbane 2032 Olympics to use Australia's existing whitewater stadium at Penrith NSW. This facility was built for the Sydney 2000 Olympics and was recently selected as the venue for the 2025 Canoe Slalom World Championships.

Building an expensive new whitewater facility in Redlands for the 2032 Brisbane Olympics is exactly the sort of project that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) set out to avoid with its New Norm principles, adopted in 2018. These principles support the goal of reducing capital costs by using existing venues. The guidelines for games organizers say:

[F]or the specific case of mono-functional venues (i.e. venues whose main usage is limited to one sport/event) no new permanent construction shall be required. Instead, competitions should be moved to the most suitable existing venue...even if located outside the Host City/Country.

It seems likely that the "New Norms" principles will be followed by organisers of the LA28 Olympics. Los Angeles has no whitewater stadium. But recent news stories suggest that instead of building a new facility, LA28 organisers will hold their canoe slalom events at the existing Riversport venue in Oklahoma City. This would save Olympic organizers from spending \$100 million on facilities for a minor Olympics sport that caters typically for about 100 competitors. **That's a capital spend of a million dollars per competitor.** Flying the 1,910 kilometres from Los Angeles to Oklahoma City takes over three hours, twice as long as flying the 750 kilometres from Brisbane to Sydney. If the LA28 organisers

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follow through with this sensible approach of using an existing venue then it would be most disappointing if the Queensland Government were parochial enough to reject out-sourcing of canoe slalom to NSW in 2032.



Penrith Whitewater Stadium in NSW
