



## **Environment & Planning Committee - 11th March 2024**

### **ENV008-24 - Outcomes of Community Consultation and Preparation of Biodiversity and Character Planning Proposal**

#### **Deputy Mayor Elise Borg - address to Committee**

Firstly I would like to acknowledge the Director of Planning Ms Bishop, Manager of Strategic Planning, Ms McMahon and Ms Qin, Council's Principal Strategic Planner and their teams for the huge amount of work that has been done to bring us to this expert strategic report being brought before the committee tonight.

As we all recall, back in 2020 there was huge community outcry over the proposed reduction in the existing FSPA in the western part of our LGA, with over 400 residents writing submissions at that time.

Council's expert planning team has worked collaboratively with the community and with Councillors to hear their concerns, undertaking extensive and genuine community consultation, whilst also balancing the demands and directions from the Local Planning Panel and the Department of Planning.

I fully support this recommendation before us tonight to prepare the Biodiversity and Character Planning Proposal.

When myself and Councillors Mahoney and Jamieson met with the planning team back in November last year, we wanted to be satisfied and confident that the area covered by the existing FSPA would have the same or better protections as to what is proposed in the 3 new planning controls, being the new Biodiversity control, the new local character control and the amended FSPA control.

The current FSPA in the GRLEP2021 has 6 objectives and I am satisfied that these 3 new controls provide equal or better protections for the area covered by the existing FSPA.

I will outline the 6 objectives now and my reasons why I believe the new controls provide equal or better protection:-

Objectives 1 & 2 & 6 of the existing FSPA in GRLEP2021 relate to protect, maintain and improve the **scenic amenity** of the Georges River foreshore and protect, maintain and improve **significant views** of and from the Georges River and to **enhance existing environmental, cultural and built character values** of the foreshore.

The proposed amended FSPA control focuses on these 3 objectives and is covered in item B3 of tonight's recommendation which is to

'Amend the existing Foreshore Scenic Protection Area (FSPA) planning provision and mapped extent to ensure the role of the FSPA focuses on foreshore scenic character'.

Objective 3 of the existing FSPA in GRLEP2021 is to **protect, maintain and improve the diversity and condition of native vegetation and habitat.**

Objective 5 is to **encourage the recovery of threatened species and their communities, populations and habitats.**

The proposed new biodiversity controls have objectives to preserve and protect areas of moderate and high terrestrial biodiversity values and this control outlines objectives for these areas which is to;

- a) protecting native plants and animals, and
- b) protecting the ecological processes necessary for their continued existence, and
- c) encouraging the recovery of native plants and animals.

However, the biodiversity control, as we know does not cover the whole area of the existing FSPA. However, this Biodiversity and Character Planning Proposal does include equal or better protections for the existing FSPA area that Objectives 3 & 5 cover, by including the following controls:-

- a. Increasing the minimum landscaped area by 5% in the existing FSPA area, as outlined in item B8 of tonight's recommendation
- b. Further, this planning proposal strengthens the landscaped area planning provisions for the whole LEP, as outlined in B7 of the recommendation, which will benefit the whole LGA by including objectives relating to;
  - i. protect, maintain and improve the diversity and condition of native vegetation and habitats across the Local Government Area (LGA),
  - ii. Encourage the recovery of threatened species and their communities, populations and habitats across the LGA, and
  - iii. Retain and strengthen the green and leafy character of the LGA, including trees in the private domain that contribute to local character and visual amenity
- c. In addition, the proposed new green corridors that will apply across the whole LGA will aim to protect existing habitat corridors and to facilitate more opportunities for greening where there is little vegetation now.

Objective 4 of the existing FSPA in GRLEP2021 is to **reinforce and improve the dominance of landscape over built form, hard surfaces and cut and fill.**

The proposed controls in the Biodiversity and Character Planning Proposal for areas removed from the existing FSPA and in the areas proposed to be added to the FSPA and

UCA satisfy this objective by proposing to;

- a. Retain existing lot size requirements for Subdivision (700sqm) and Dual occupancy (1,000sqm)
- b. Reduce the maximum permissible FSR for R2-zoned land located within these areas meaning that the overall bulk and size of a building in these areas is reduced

These 2 controls, along with the increased landscaped controls outlined in B7 and B8 covered earlier, all contribute to satisfying objective 4, to improve the dominance of landscape over built form and hard surfaces in the existing FSPA area.

Looking at some of the properties that have recently been built on the foreshore areas, some people may question the success of enforcing Objective 4, to improve the dominance of landscape over built form and hard surfaces.

This Biodiversity and Character Planning Proposal does have one important control that I haven't mentioned yet, and possibly one of the most important controls. Development in the Biodiversity area will prohibit development by Complying Development Certificates (CDCs). This means that any proposed development in the new Biodiversity area will need to be by a Development Application assessed by Council and not by private certifiers.

I appreciate this is very complex information to digest and understand, however hopefully what I have articulated here tonight explains why I will be supporting the recommendation from Council officers tonight, and why I believe these controls provide equal or better protections to those provided in the current FSPA.