

# TRANSCRIPT

## INTERVIEW WITH SAVE OUR SPIT VICE PRESIDENT DARREN CRAWFORD

**Following Gold Coast Community Group Meeting at Albert Waterways Community Centre, 26 October 2017, 6.30pm – 8.30pm**

**Independent Australia (Dave Donovan):** I'm speaking to Darren Crawford, who is from Save Our Spit, who helped organise this event here at the Albert Park. Darren, what is this place?

**Darren Crawford:** Albert Waterways Hall.

**IA:** It's just in there behind the Broadbeach Library. So, Darren I hear that you are an unemployed bum? Well, allegedly according to Tom Tate. Can you tell me, why did you help organise this event here today, with I think 17 different community groups?

**Darren Crawford:** 17 different community groups. Basically, Lois from GECKO, we are one of her soldiers. Once Lois says go, we mobilise, and we go.

**IA:** So, what do you think of the situation here on the Gold Coast? How would you sum it up?

**Darren Crawford:** I've never seen it this bad. I've never seen so many spotfires created by a self-centred leadership team in City Council, that have links to developers, links to individual donors, that the city is not only open for sale, but it's open for sale in a way that we are losing our public parks. Nothing's sacred — beaches, public parks, koala habitat. It's all on the chopping block.

**IA:** What would you say is the most concerning thing that is going on in the Gold Coast at the moment?

**Darren Crawford:** I would say the lack of transparency and lack of accountability. You can ring up the Council and you won't get an answer for days on the most basic of questions. Let alone the fact that we are constantly seeing reports that the rate payers have paid for, that are being hidden from public, redacted versions being put out in public. We are seeing secretive meetings taking place, we have a town plan that is less than 12 months old, that is already up for review, to slip unlimited height density in on the spit. That shouldn't be happening.

**IA:** So, I mean, tell me how they get away with redacting all these documents that come in. I mean, you have mentioned a few things there. You know, there was some of the speakers who spoke about a koala report — you mentioned koalas — where one of the reports was completely redacted I believe.

**Darren Crawford:** Basically, it all goes back to Newman. Newman takes power in 2012, one of his first acts is to change the legal requirements for both budgeting and reporting in the mayors' office Queensland wide. So, basically it comes down to now, if you have a complaint against Council, then the Council — the mayor himself — will oversee that complaint. If you want to do business with Council, then the mayor himself will oversee that business.

So, what we are seeing is direct links, thanks to Newman, where it's legally possible for this to happen. Now, at the same time, he also gave the mayors, through a legal statute, financial control of all budgets. So, what that means is, he can actually – the mayor in any region in Australia – can say to a councillor: you will vote the way I want you to vote or I will pull your divisional funding. And that is what is happening. The councillors are being bullied into a state where they are too afraid to go against the mayor, and the councillors that are in his pocket because they are afraid of losing their funds to do things, like roads, rates and rubbish, in their divisions.

**IA:** Look, you mentioned that you know it all came in under Newman. We've got a state election coming up, it's one of the things that Councillor Peter Young mentioned just then, that it would be a bit of a worry if there was an LNP government. Is that an issue or do you think that things are just in bad under the Labor state government?

**Darren Crawford:** It's a massive issue. So, we've seen what Stuart Robert did, right? Sorry, if we go back to what Peter alluded to tonight, when the block was first put through - 2005, right? These like-minded candidates. All the CMC did there was tell them to sharpen their pencils and do it properly. No one got prosecuted, except for Peter.

We've got the same thing happening again. What these blokes have done is say "Hey, they are on to us, we need to rot it in a better way. So, what we'll do is, Stuart, you get your Fadden Fund, slip some money to Simone. Simone, you then go and slip it out to everybody else." But they are not LNP, they might be a member but they'll cancel that membership. They might have handed out some how to vote cards for Stuart Robert, they might have worked in his office, but they are not LNP. But they still give them the money. So, that's how it works and that's how they've managed to get a bloc. It's just a different name, that has not been registered, into Council, and they're the ones holding the power.

**IA:** So, you're suggesting that if the LNP get into government, then it will be open the floodgates again?

**Darren Crawford:** With the CST, right? Tate does a deal with ASF, that deal is done through Seeney's office. Okay, now there are a couple of men in Seeney's office that were very privy to what was going on. Now, Newman loses government but somehow those two operatives manage to maintain their job under Minister Lynham. Now it's pretty rare, you know how state government works. The ALP get in, they kick out all the LNP blokes and they bring in their own people. Yet, for some reason, out of all the departments, these two blokes held their jobs. And what happened three months later?

**IA:** Do you know what their names are?

**Darren Crawford:** I do, but I'm not going to tell you now. These two blokes held their jobs. Three months later we have Minister Lynham standing on The Spit saying hey, The Spit is going to be protected but we are going to put a casino right here.

The same two blokes standing in the background. You with me? If they get back in we are screwed, because we are back to day one with the cruise ship terminal. We are back to day one with whatever is happening with the Koalas, we've got nothing. We are under the air con duct.

**IA:** You mentioned that Tom Tate had a master plan. I don't think you put it exactly like that, you said there was an endgame involved. Was it something to do with his casino development, that he had planned several years ago, which he couldn't quite get through? Which was on that same area as the Surfers Paradise bowls club?

**Darren Crawford:** If you go back, and you don't even have to go through... If you go back to the *Gold Coast Bulletin* archives, it's quite easy to join the dots between what's going on. I can say a personal conversation happened, where I know that this was going to happen. Peter alluded to it tonight.

**IA:** Alright, I have just got one more question for you. Is the Gold Coast Council corrupt?

**Darren Crawford:** There are elements within the Gold Coast City Council that definitely need to be investigated.

**IA:** Alright, now look thanks Darren. Is there anything else that you would like to say?

**Darren Crawford:** We are not against development. We are not against jobs. We are not against growth. We, as a City and as a State, need to see development that is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable. And if it's not, we have some of the best minds in this country, that are now entering into this age where they should be taking over. Me included. And we were all taught about sustainability. And it's these guys that are in their 50s and 60s that don't know about it and don't care, and are operating under the old ways. We need to get them out and we need to get fresh ideas in, that are going to stop building these coal-fired power stations, that are going invest in renewables and are going to stop building things like that. [Points to graphic of six high rises.]

**IA:** So, can The Spit be saved?

**Darren Crawford:** Yeah, all it needs. That is simple, all that needs to happen there. I work in the Department of Tourism, Sport and Hotel Management. We are the number one department in Australia. We are the number one tourism school in Australia. I think we are rated top five in the world. All of our research shows us that eco-tourism is on the rise. That is the go to. Tourism Australia released stats last year, 2015/2016. The number one thing that international tourists come to this country for is, guess what?

**IA:** Tourism.

**Darren Crawford:** They want to come here, and they want to sit on our beaches and see our clean nature. The second thing, koalas, kangaroos — all that.

You know what's down the bottom: number 13? Cruise ships, casinos. They don't want it. So, if they don't want it and here we are as a City, right, with our own natural green amphitheatre, separating the city from the sea. We should have the Moreton Bay Marine Park come all the way down to Sea World. Stop there, go over across to the other side of the bridge. Make it all national park, just bring it down. And then eco-tourism ventures all the way up. Clean and green.

Gold Coast Waterways Authority is already moving that way. Underneath Sea World, keep it the way they intended - under 3 stories. When the National Party first gazetted the area, that was their aim. No development north of Sea World, three stories under Sea World. This is how dodgy the bastards were, how'd they get around it? They just extended Sea World and let the Japanese build a resort there.

**IA:** Thanks very much Darren.