

TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH GECKO CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR LOIS LEVY

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

Independent Australia (Dave Donovan): Just talking to Lois Levy, who is the president of GECKO ... chair?

Lois Levy: Campaign Coordinator.

IA: Campaign Coordinator of GECKO, which is the main environmental organisation here on the Gold Coast. Now, we are at the Waterways Hall, just having a meeting to talk about the fairly dire situation on the Gold Coast at the moment.

Lois, is there any part of the Gold Coast that is not under threat?

Lois Levy: I can't really think of any. Everywhere that I know of either has some problems, either with planning issues or loss of habitat, or you know, problems with Koalas and wildlife.

IA: Could you just tell me what GECKO does?

Lois Levy: Well, we do a whole range of things. We are not a single-issue environment group. So, we fight for our wildlife, our koalas to make sure they have still got somewhere to live. We fight for the natural environment, because it's something that we all depend upon. Even though people like to ignore that. And we also fight for sustainability of our built environment, and that's simply not happening at the moment.

IA: How would you class the environmental situation on the Gold Coast at the moment –bearing in mind that you know, we've just heard some fairly heartbreaking things about some of the Koala populations down here and given that the Commonwealth Games has got a Koala mascot – how do you feel?

Lois Levy: Well, we are very concerned about the natural environment situation, and our species living here on the Gold Coast. Because we can't stop development, but we can certainly plan it a lot better than it is now, to make sure there is still room for our wildlife and our, particularly our Koalas, that will be extinct within 5 years, unless we do something pretty drastic, right now.

IA: They will be extinct within 5 years?

Lois Levy: That's what the scientists are telling us, that unless something is done, in the way of conserving Koala habitat, which of course has other wildlife in it. And corridors, so that they can move around, they will be all gone within 5 years.

IA: Have you taken these concerns to the Council, and if so what have you heard back?

Lois: GECKO is just one of many organisations that has taken these concerns to Council. They do have a Koala Management Plan, but it's not adequately funded, and it doesn't address the primary concern, which is the removal of vast swathes of habitat. So, that they are still passing developments straight through, where every single tree is taken off the land, and so there is no possibility of having connections and corridors for these animals.

IA: That is very sad. Now look, you organised this meeting tonight which involved, I think, was it 17 different community groups?

Lois: That's right, yes.

IA: Can you tell me why you organised it?

Lois: I think it's because, for the first time in the 40 years that I have lived here in this city, I have seen a growth of community groups because of their anger and their concern about what is happening to their city. And we felt that it was time for us all to get together and unite, and actually try and do something about this situation. And make our Council be responsive to the community that elects them, and not to the vested interests, such as the development industry.

IA: What is your opinion on Tom Tate's administration of the Council?

Lois: Well I am very concerned about Mayor Tate's administration. It seems to be increasingly secretive, there doesn't seem to be any concern at all, as far as I can gather, for the natural environment. He appears to think that our public open space is there as a land bank for development and the cruise terminal on Phillip Park is a classic example of that. As indeed, in the past few years, where we have fought so hard to protect the Spit, Wavebreak Island, we've got problems now with Queens' Park, Bishop Park, Black Swan Lake – all of these things – which indicates to me that he really has no idea and doesn't care, to be honest, about our public open space and our green spaces, that are essential to the health of the people of this city.

IA: So, you don't think that Tate cares at all about the environment?

Lois Levy: No, I don't think he cares one iota about the environment. And, really, he won't even speak to groups like us, so that indicates to me that he is really not interested, at all.

IA: Is there anything else that you would like to say?

Lois Levy: I'd just like to say to all of those people who are listening, please come and join us. The more people who speak out and demand of their councillors that they represent them, and not vested interests, the better chance we've got of having the city that we deserve and the future that we deserve.

IA: Thanks very much Lois.

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