



**Michael Berkman MP**  
For Maiwar ▲

7 May 2020

The Hon Grace Grace MP  
Minister for Education  
Via email: [education@ministerial.qld.gov.au](mailto:education@ministerial.qld.gov.au)

## **QASMT and community access in Toowong**

Dear Minister Grace,

I refer to my letter of 29 April 2020 and write to again seek your urgent response regarding the community access to the Vera Street Community Garden, and further questions that have arisen since then regarding the short and long term access to school ovals at the Queensland Academy of Science Mathematics and Technology (QASMT), along Toowong Creek and along the southern side of the campus.

### **Background**

I expect you're aware of the various issues and concerns that have arisen in recent years around the master planning and expansion at QASMT. Those concerns have included the impacts of the expansion on local Aboriginal cultural heritage and the ecological value of Toowong Creek, and access restrictions as a consequence of the construction.

The reality is that because of how the surrounding suburb is laid out, the school grounds have huge value to the community as a source of green space, and as an essential thoroughfare along well-used paths.

In recent years I have written to raise these various issues with you, Jackie Trad MP in her role as Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Cameron Dick MP as Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning, and Mick de Brenni MP as Minister for Housing and Public Works.

I have until this point addressed my concerns about access to and across the school campus to the Principal at QASMT, Kath Kayrooz, given that these have largely appeared to be operational questions. Specifically, I have written to Ms Kayrooz in November 2018 and May 2019 about issues relating to access to and across the school. I have had conversations with Ms Kayrooz but have received no written response or clarity about current and future access arrangements.

I have sought to work collaboratively with QASMT and the community to address these various concerns even though some conflict has arisen between locals and the school. I understand that access to and through the school property has necessarily been limited to an extent because of the construction at the school and an alleged arson attempt in one of the new buildings. However, I understand recent

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circumstances have led to direct Ministerial or Departmental intervention about access to QASMT property, and that this requires me to direct these concerns to you.

## The Site

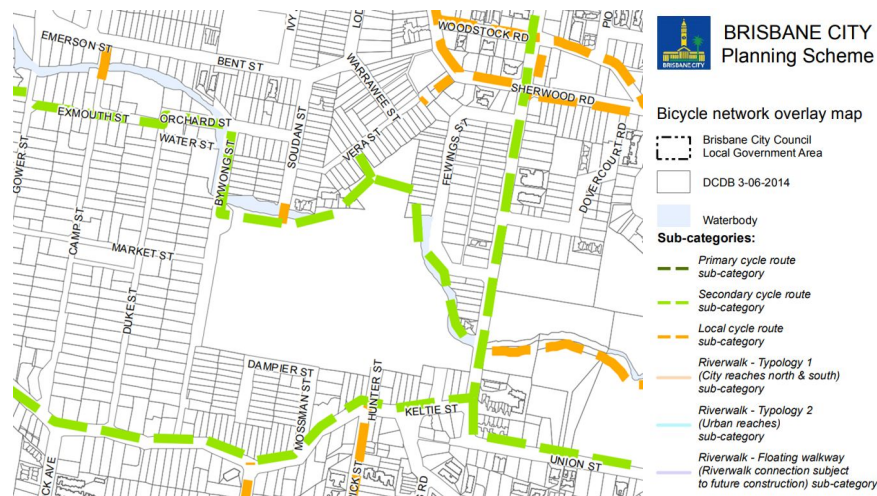
For ease of reference, I've attached a copy of what I understand to be the current survey plan for the property (Lot 102 on CP 852773) which shows much of the north of the property is bounded directly by Toowong Creek. A portion of the site is located north of the creek and surrounded by properties on Vera St and Fewings St. This northern area consists of largely vacant green space, which I understand are outdoor sports courts no longer used by QASMT, and the Vera St Community Garden in the far northern corner of the block.

The Community Garden is a vibrant, grassroots community hub, and one that engages a number of members of the local community. The adjacent green space is also much loved and well used by locals, young and old, and provides a serene setting to enjoy and explore the ecology of Toowong Creek. It is run by an incorporated associated registered as a Community Land Resource Management group with the State Department of Natural Resources, Water and Mines.

This northern area is accessible only via a driveway to Vera St and a low bridge over Toowong Creek from the QASMT sporting fields to the south.

South of Toowong Creek and to the east of the campus (on the Miskin St end) are large sporting fields that are also routinely used and enjoyed by local residents outside school hours. I understand that arrangements have been in place for some time now to allow Brisbane Boys' College (BBC) staff and students to use these ovals for sports training and fixtures.

You may not be aware that the line of the creek and the green space adjacent Vera St is identified in Brisbane City Council's planning scheme as a significant active transport thoroughfare. The *City Plan 2014 Bicycle network overlay map* identifies a "Secondary cycle route" along Toowong Creek adjacent to the campus, and to Vera St through the green space adjacent to the Community Garden. I've done a quick copy paste below for easy reference.



Brisbane City Plan 2014: Bicycle network overlay map at QASMT site<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This map is available online at: [http://docs.brisbane.qld.gov.au/City Plan/v19\\_00\\_20200501/MAPS/Overlay/maps/om21/om0021-28.pdf](http://docs.brisbane.qld.gov.au/City Plan/v19_00_20200501/MAPS/Overlay/maps/om21/om0021-28.pdf)

In such a hilly suburb, following the line of the creek from the Bywong St/Vera St side of the campus to Misikin St makes sense for pedestrians and cyclists alike. Unsurprisingly, the route along the creek is well used, and I wrote to the QASMT Principal in 2018 and 2019 to convey the concern of local residents about the closure of this route, which I understood to be only temporary and as a direct consequence of the construction on site.

There is also a bridge over Toowong Creek at the end of Souden Street that is identified as a Local Cycle Route in the *City Plan 2014 Bicycle network overlay map*, which I understand has also been closed since 2018 to secure the construction site.

South of the ovals is a vegetated area that backs onto residential properties on Stanley Tce, Keltie St, Mossman St, Dampier St, Hunter St and Palmer St, and through which runs a pedestrian access path to Misikin St.

Local people have been allowed to access the low-lying areas of the site since the 1800s when it was the residence of Sir Arthur Palmer, the 7th Premier of Queensland and was known as "Palmer's Paddock". As I noted in my letter to you on 29 April 2020, my understanding is that the site was bequeathed to the Queensland government on the condition that public access be maintained. Since the 1960s when Toowong College opened on the site, local residents have used the ovals and green space and have walked and cycled along the pathway along Toowong Creek. Generations of families and local kids have treasured these quiet green spaces.

### **New information**

Since sending my most recent letter to you on 29 April, my staff and I have gathered more information speaking to staff in your office (Clare Quinn in my office spoke to Tania in your office on 30 April 2020), Ms Kayrooz (I spoke to Kath yesterday afternoon, 6 May 2020), and local residents who have spoken to the QASMT Facilities Manager.

#### *Access to Community Garden and adjacent green space*

I understand that the access from Vera St to the Community Garden and the adjacent green space was closed last Tuesday 28 April by QASMT in response to a direction from you. I'm advised that you gave this direction to address complaints received about local residents gathering there over the preceding weekend in contravention of the COVID-19 health directions. On this basis, I understand that this is only a temporary access restriction, but neither I nor the affected community members have any sense of when the access will be restored, or what relaxation of existing health directions might be required for access to be restored.

We were told by your office that QASMT undertook to advise all residents who use the space of the planned closure, but this was not QASMT's understanding. As a consequence, I understand no one in the local community was consulted or even informed of the closure of this area other than those involved directly as organisers of the Community Garden. I understand that only these organisers have been given a single key to the Vera St gate.

#### *Proposed construction of fence around QASMT campus*

I understand construction of the new buildings is nearing completion, with the final building ready for students and staff to move in as soon as next week. All landscaping is expected to be complete and the

final contractors off site by mid-June, and it is at this point that I understood access would return to normal, and the community would be directly engaged in a conversation about future access arrangements.

Instead, in my conversation with the QASMT Principal yesterday afternoon, I learned of plans to construct a fence around the entire perimeter of the school property south of Toowong Creek, within 2-3m of the property boundary. I understand this is a separate issue from the (presumably temporary) closure of access from Vera St, but it has serious long term consequences for the community's access to and through the campus. I urge you to take whatever steps are necessary to prevent the building of the proposed new fence, or to realign it to secure the school's built assets and facilities in a way that addresses the access concerns set out below.

Foremost among my concerns is the potential impact on pedestrian and cycling access along the Secondary Cycle Route identified in the Brisbane City Plan 2014. When I first learned of this proposal from Ms Kayrooz yesterday she was unaware of this designation in the City Plan, despite having discussed and inspected the proposed location with staff from the Education Department.

I understand that the Department plans to erect signs around the new fence indicating that pedestrian access would be prohibited. If this occurs, many local residents will lose very important and much-valued access routes across the campus, and the Council Secondary Cycle Route will be compromised.

The proposed fence would deny the community access to the school ovals outside school hours, even though BBC will apparently be allowed regular access.

It is not surprising that the community has been confused about the planned changes, given the poor communication about both the closure of Vera St and these parallel plans for a permanent fence.

### **Request to maintain access and for further information**

On behalf of local residents I am seeking the following commitments:

- Maintain access to the much-loved green space including the Vera St Community Garden, Toowong Creek and the school oval outside school hours.
- Maintain access to the walking and cycling route along Toowong Creek and the Secondary Cycle Route, including by reopening the Souden St bridge.
- Maintain access to the southern side of the campus between Bywong St, Dampier St, Hunter St and Miskin St.
- Engage in detailed, meaningful consultation about the medium- and long-term future of public access QASMT with the local community.

I believe that these requests can be accommodated while maintaining the ability of the school to deliver world-class education to children from across Queensland in a safe environment. Local community members have expressed a strong willingness to discuss these requests with the Department. It is in the best interests of the school, the Department and the local community to maintain a respectful relationship underpinned by clear communication.

I am also seeking your assistance with the following questions:

- In relation to the COVID-19 public health directions, what are the conditions required for the Department to reopen the Vera St gate in the short term?
- Does the Department have any material indicating that the land was bequeathed with the intention that the community maintain access to the creek and adjacent property?
- What arrangements are in place to allow BBC use and access to the school ovals?

Given the pace of the recent developments outlined above, and the potential for the costly construction of a fence in the very near term, I would appreciate your urgent response.

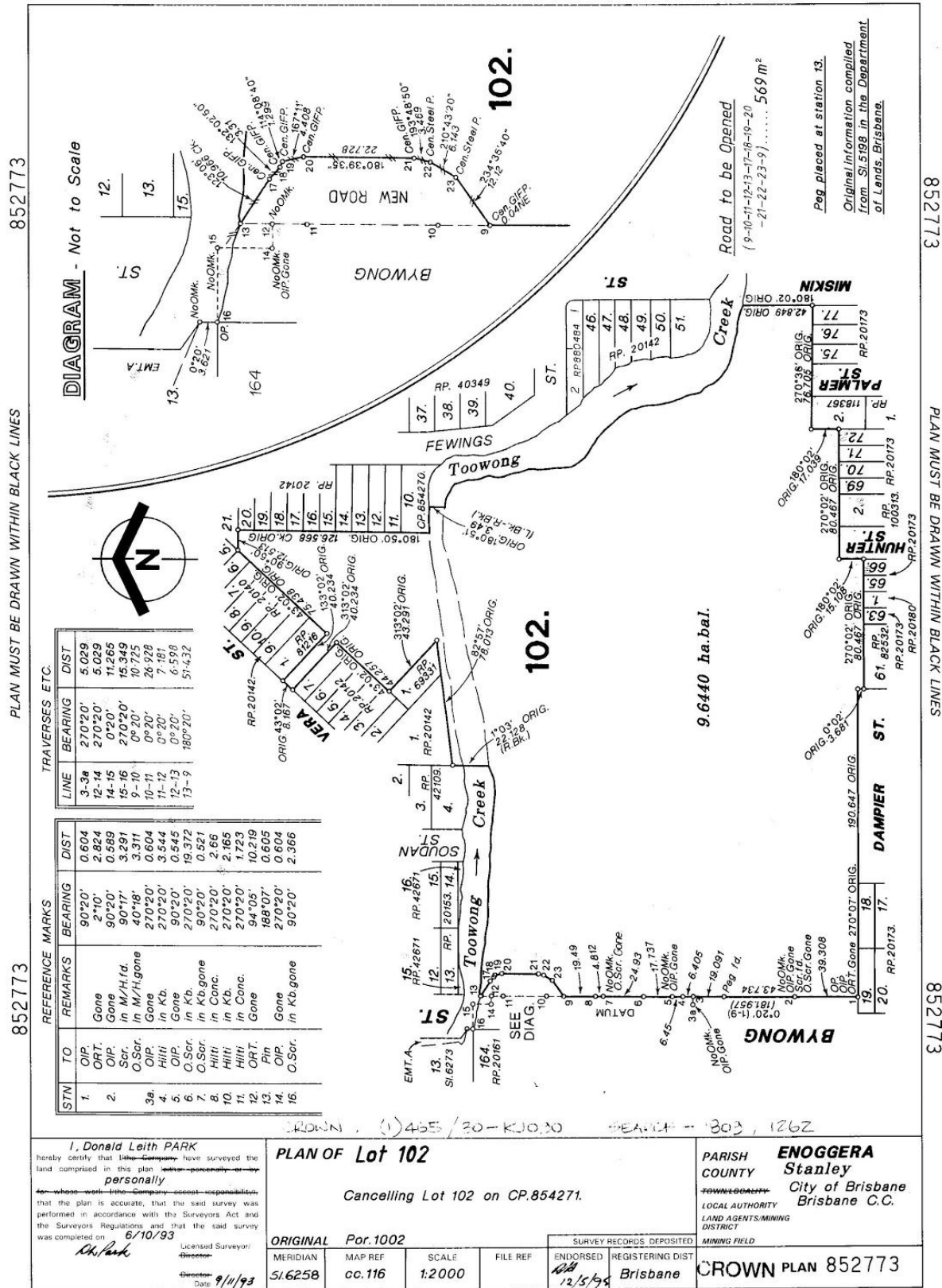
I look forward to hearing from you. Please do not hesitate to contact my office on 3737 4100, or [maiwar@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:maiwar@parliament.qld.gov.au).

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Berkman', with a stylized, cursive script.

Michael Berkman MP

WARNING — PLAN MAY BE ROLLED — A FOLDED OR MUTILATED PLAN WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED



STN	TO	REMARKS	BEARING	DIST
1	OIP	Gone	90°20'	0.604
2	OIP	Gone	2°10'	2.824
3	OIP	Gone	90°20'	5.029
4	OIP	Gone	90°20'	5.029
5	OIP	Gone	90°20'	5.029
6	OIP	Gone	90°20'	5.029
7	OIP	Gone	90°20'	5.029
8	OIP	Gone	90°20'	5.029
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11	OIP	Gone	90°20'	5.029
12	OIP	Gone	90°20'	5.029
13	OIP	Gone	90°20'	5.029
14	OIP	Gone	90°20'	5.029
15	OIP	Gone	90°20'	5.029
16	OIP	Gone	90°20'	5.029

LINE	BEARING	DIST
3-3a	270°20'	5.029
12-14	270°20'	5.029
14-15	0°20'	11.265
15-16	270°20'	15.349
9-10	0°20'	10.725
10-11	0°20'	26.928
11-12	0°20'	7.181
12-13	0°20'	6.598
13-9	180°20'	51.432

**PLAN OF Lot 102**

Cancelling Lot 102 on CP.854271.

ORIGINAL Por. 1002

Meridian: 51.6258  
Map Ref: cc.116  
Scale: 1:2000  
File Ref: 12/15/95

Survey Records Deposited:  
Endorsed: 12/15/95  
Registering Dist: Brisbane

Parish: ENOGGERA  
County: Stanley  
City of Brisbane  
Brisbane C.C.

CROWN PLAN 852773