

Toowoomba Community Organic Gardens Association Inc.

PO Box 6153 Toowoomba West 4350 ABN 61 287 586 984

The Chief Executive Officer
Toowoomba Regional Council
P.O. Box 3021,
Toowoomba Village Fair, QLD, 4350
Attention Nick Hauser Manager Parks and Recreational Services
30th November 2008

Re: Toowoomba Organic Gardens Budget Allocation

Background

The Organic Gardens in Goggs Street have now been a feature of Toowoomba's landscape for more than a decade, and continue to provide an important contribution to 'The Garden City' in ways that rarely attract the media attention or recognition that is probably rightfully deserved.

The Gardens are a wonderful venue for a variety of community benefits, as exemplified by recent events below:

- Used regularly by the Spiritus Art Group
- Mental Health Volunteers work at the Gardens weekly
- 20 International Youth Pilgrims tree planting, followed by morning tea / lunch
- Roman Catholic Diocese Toowoomba Youth
- Doug Graham's Overseas Post Graduate Group from UQ Gatton Campus
- Bushcapades conducted every school holidays - Kristie Jenkinson
- Talks provided to U3A and Wilsonton High School
- Annual Open Day at the Gardens

Additionally, 9 Workshops on a variety of topics were held in the past 12 months to complement the ongoing permanent demonstration plots involving:

- circle gardens
- worm farming
- composting
- permaculture

And a reliable core of volunteers from the approximately 40 financial members continue to provide valuable contributions by way of:

- ongoing maintenance
- Notice Board updates
- weeding and mowing
- removal of fallen timber
- regular monitoring of potential public hazards
- minor repairs

With the recent acquisition of the rainwater storage, interest in the gardens is experiencing somewhat of a revival, since watering is at last again possible. All public rental plots are fully booked, and more manpower is becoming available.

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Financial Implications

During the establishment years, it was the practice of Council to provide an annual budget allocation to the gardens to cater for ongoing capital expenditure and improvements. Changing personnel, and perhaps lack of 'push' on our own part, has seen that financial commitment by Council decline in recent years, with our ongoing Council support reduced to a 'goodwill' component associated with a few Parks and Gardens officers.

As a result of this decline, no funds are available to the Association for any projects that require even modest outlays, and it is the purpose of this letter to seek some redress of this situation.

Some Examples of What's Needed

10 years of operation without any attention to structural maintenance has resulted in an appearance of general neglect to some areas of the gardens. Aspects such as:

- Signage
- Paintwork
- Bitumen pathways
- 'Suntuf' roofing
- Unfinished capital improvements

could all do with some attention to build on what is an important asset of the community. The productive capacity of the volunteers who give freely of their own time would be further enhanced if they had easier secure access to water hoses at strategic locations, and electrical power and a rain water tank that formed part of the original planning continue to be needed.

What We Seek

It is not our goal at this point to have everything provided on a platter for instant gratification. We seek at this point to secure the Council's assurance that upcoming Council budgets will reinstate the annual commitment to the Gardens by way of an annual allocation of say \$10,000 for use as the TOGA Committee recommends on an annual basis.

May we also take this opportunity to thank the Council for the assistance it has provided by way of mowing and provision of nursery items as needed? We look forward to an ongoing harmonious relationship, and the opportunity to further extend our input with the support of an assured budgetary provision.

Yours faithfully

Mary Mountford
President TOGA