

John Castrilli MLA



Land swap a win-win situation

Several years ago, an important environmental issue came to the fore in Bunbury when concerns were raised over the clearing of land in College Grove.

Bushland south of Somerville Drive was to be developed for housing, but due to the area being an important flora and fauna habitat, environmentalists and local residents alike opposed the further clearing.

I proposed that a "land swap" arrangement be implemented.

This would save the forest areas while also compensating the City of Bunbury, which is a joint venture partner in the subdivision, for loss of income through land sales and rates on future housing.

Last week, I was pleased to be able to announce that a package has been offered to the City of Bunbury which aims to finalise this long-awaited agreement.

It is important for people to understand that the College Grove land was never owned by the City of Bunbury, it is Crown land.

However the City is effectively being compensated for the loss of it, which is why this offer is such a good deal for Bunbury.

The land swap represents a win for the environment and a win for the City of Bunbury.

The State Government has closely consulted with the City and the land areas offered in the deal are those which were directly identified by council.

A major parcel of land on Koombana Drive will be transferred to the City in freehold, with an adjoining parcel made available to allow the City to build its new visitor interpretive centre.

Also, an amount of \$2.8million will be brought forward by the State to allow the Somerville Drive extension to go ahead. This is an important outcome for current College Grove residents who have only one entry and exit to the suburb.

A further parcel of land on Ocean Drive has been added to the joint venture for future development to assist the joint venture partners to clear debts.

The land swap offer is yet to be signed off on by the City of Bunbury and despite some misleading and confusing comments from the Mayor, I am optimistic that this important agreement will go ahead.

I look forward to the City's formal acceptance of the offer, which would mean that the 43 lots at College Grove which are already serviced and soon to be released for sale will be the last blocks developed south of Somerville Drive, leaving the remainder as an important area of bushland.