

Thank you for taking the time to send me your letter and I am excited to again represent the community of Division 12 and this great City. I will continue to work tirelessly to ensure our community and our city is the best place to live, learn, work, play, and raise a family.

I spent a lot of time meeting and talking with residents and users of the lake during my recent campaign and at the Division 12 forum, I committed to advocate for the lake's health if re-elected. Since taking office, I have already met with City Lakes & Waterways officers to discuss previous works and potential future initiatives associated with the lake. It was clear to me that these officers understand Lake Hugh Muntz (LHM) is a valued community asset and have frequently engaged with residents, surf clubs, triathletes and other users regarding their concerns about the lake.

City officers have advised me that numerous factors exist that can impact the water quality within LHM. These include; the age and size of the lake; the fact it is fed by 16 stormwater outlets; groundwater inflows; exposure to nutrient loads during heavy rainfall events like those experienced at the beginning of this year; and of course the ongoing changing environmental conditions. I have also viewed the previous Griffith University reports which found that the blue green algae species within the lake can tolerate a wide range of water temperatures, salinity levels and can be sustained for long periods of time. I also understand even when conditions are no longer suitable for algal growth, the algae can produce resting cysts which fall to the lake floor and lie dormant until conditions change for growth to resume. This obviously makes it very difficult to completely eradicate or even control future blooms. Considering all of these factors, it is very challenging for the lake to always have water quality suitable for recreation and the lake may even experience periods of algal blooms into the future.

While I understand that it is very difficult to completely eradicate the algal blooms, I am committed to working with City officers, Griffith University and other experts to consider evidence-based feasible initiatives for the lake.

As stated in my previous letter, I will also endeavour to work with the LHM Care Group to investigate ideas that have merit. Prior to meeting with City officers, I thought there might be some immediate solutions to reduce the algal blooms. Many of the Care Group's suggestions sound reasonable, such as the one-way valve at the lake outlet. However on further investigation I discovered that Griffith University has already considered this option and found it would be ineffective and possibly even detrimental to the health of the lake. This further highlights the need to be guided by experts in lake management and algal blooms.

While I appreciate the Care Group's enthusiasm for these objectives to be implemented, I believe an evidence-based approach supported by experts is required to guide future investment at LHM. My response to the objectives set out in the Care Group correspondence dated May 2020 is provided below:

1. PHOSLOCK TOP UP

The effectiveness of a further Phoslock top-up is being considered in the scope of Griffith University's current study.

2. INSTALLATION OF A ONE-WAY VALVE AT THE LAKE OUTLET

I have been informed that this has previously been assessed by Griffith University. The exchange pipe allows water to move in and out of the lake. The inflow of this water provides the lake with new water during periods of no rain. A previous Griffith University report found that a tidal exchange pipe at the lake outlet would not have a positive effect on improving the water quality or reducing the saltwater from entering the lake as more saltwater enters the lake through the groundwater than the canal pipe. Shutting off inflows may actually reduce water quality within the lake.

3. SAND CAPPING AND PHOSLOCK TREATMENT

The effectiveness of sand capping combined with a Phoslock treatment is being considered in the scope of Griffith University's current study.

4. CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT ISSUES

I was pleased to be advised that the City has already taken a number of steps to address catchment management issues around the lake over several years including installing 66 gully baskets in drains around LHM.

I had previously advocated for the use of catchers when mowing the parklands, however, while this is a fairly simple thing to do in our own backyards, it is a significant undertaking across a city with 2500 parks. I personally believe the City provides an extremely high level of service in maintaining all of our amazing green space. Unfortunately, it is impractical and unaffordable to mow all of this green space with a catcher. Even just mowing the parks around the LHM with a catcher comes at a significant cost, mainly due to having to dispose of the clippings. This activity would significantly increase the time to mow the surrounding parklands and also increase truck movements through our residential areas. Griffith University have also advised that the grass clippings entering the lake from surrounding parks are not a significant contributor to the overall problem of algal blooms.

To further address runoff issues from surrounding parklands, City Parks Officers will be continuing a schedule of works to improve some of the bare areas that were exacerbated by the prolonged dry period last year. They will also continue with some tree maintenance to improve vegetation growth in conjunction with planting out certain areas to assist with reducing soil runoff during rain events. Climatic conditions will play a significant role in the effectiveness of these works in the long term. I am also pleased to learn that Parks officers met the Care Group in February 2020 outlining their upcoming program of works.

5. AQUATIC VEGETATION

The City previously installed and trialled floating reed beds in the lake, which are designed to provide a base for plants to grow on and assist in improving water quality. Unfortunately reports into the reed beds have concluded that they have not been effective. The reed beds are also nearing the end of their asset lifecycle.

City officers advised me that they have investigated planting aquatic vegetation along the edge of the lake to improve water quality but it can be difficult to find plants that thrive in the brackish water of the lake. While this is something the Care Group supports, I am also aware that some residents living around the lake do not support this option so their views will be considered in any future planting proposals.

6. AERATION OF THE LAKE

While I know aeration is used in other lakes, Griffith University explained in detail at the LHM Stakeholder Group Meeting in November that an aerator would be ineffective and might actually prolong algal blooms and lead to strong odours from the lake.

7. BROADEN THE CURRENT RESEARCH SCOPE

After meeting with officers and learning more about the collaboration between the City and Griffith University, I am satisfied that a holistic and responsible approach is being taken to managing the lake's overall health. Unfortunately there is no easy "fix" or silver bullet to the issues but I believe the research scope is appropriate.

I will continue to seek the advice of City officers, Griffith University experts and feedback from the wider community regarding LHM and endeavour to keep the community informed about appropriate and feasible management options for the lake into the future.

I trust the above information is of assistance.

Regarding your request for a meeting, please note that as COVID-19 has far reaching public health implications, and to mitigate the risk of infection to the broader community, I am not conducting face to face meetings until further notice.

Notwithstanding the above, if you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards

Pauline

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