**Save Fred Caterson Reserve**

As you may be aware, The Hills Shire Council has adopted a Master Plan for Fred Caterson Reserve. The Council wants to upgrade the existing sports and other facilities and to build a “premier rugby union precinct”. The original Master Plan involved the destruction of 52,821 sq ms (5.28 hectares) of bushland including 23,709 sq ms for the rugby union facility. Following a great deal of community opposition, the Council has now developed a Concept Plan for this facility which would involve the loss of approximately 7,000 sq ms of vegetation instead of 23,709 sq ms.

This is a pleasing improvement but it would still mean that 3.6 hectares of bushland would be destroyed which would obviously have a significant impact on the bird life of the reserve.

I have written to the Mayor on behalf of CBOC to express our opposition but it would be great if as many people as possible in our club can also write to the Council. This is of course particularly relevant to people who live in The Hills Shire but I‘m sure it will also be of interest to all members of our club as the reserve is a favourite place for birding.

You don’t have to write a long letter. Anything you have time to write is valuable because the more people who take the time to write demonstrates how widespread the opposition is to what the Council wants to do.

The best person to write to is the Mayor, Dr Peter Gangemi, at Mayor.Gangemi@thehills.nsw.gov.au.

If you live in The Hills Shire, you may also like to send the same email to the Councillors for your ward. You can find their names at [thehills.nsw.gov.au/Council/Your-Mayor-Councillors](https://d.docs.live.net/a9e3e4c233ce8f3b/Desktop/Mansfields/Fred%20Caterson%20Reserve/thehills.nsw.gov.au/Council/Your-Mayor-Councillors). You can also find a map there which you can use to work out which ward you are in if you are not sure.

The following are some points that you could include in your letter. If possible, try to use some of your own words so that each letter is different. With thanks in advance for anything you are able to do.

Start by introducing yourself. If you live in The Hills Shire, mention that. Also say that you are a member of CBOC and of any other groups you belong to that you think are relevant. Explain briefly why you’re passionate about protecting Fred Caterson Reserve. You could mention any outings you have been on at the reserve.

Say that you are writing to express your strong opposition to the Council’s Master Plan for the reserve.

You could then make some or all of the following points:

* The Master Plan states that the reserve “supports a healthy community of endangered ecological habitats and local wildlife”.
* However, it also acknowledges that the reserve has suffered degradation since 2010. A Council document called *The Bushland of Fred Caterson Reserve*, published in 2007, identifies 2 species that had already disappeared by 2007. You could say that you fear that the number of bird species in the reserve has declined further since then.
* Say that you are pleased that the Concept Plan for the rugby union facility involves a reduction in the amount of vegetation that would be destroyed for the creation of this facility compared to the amount stated in the Master Plan. However it still means that a total of 3.6 hectares of bushland would be lost in the development of the reserve as a whole. This would reduce the remaining amount of the reserve’s original bushland to just 55%.
* The destruction of an additional 3.6 hectares of vegetation will significantly reduce the habitat available for birds to feed, roost and breed, and therefore threatens the ongoing presence of bird species in the reserve.
* Club members have recently seen Glossy Black Cockatoos at Fred Caterson Reserve. They have a conservation status of Vulnerable so it is vital that no more of their habitat is destroyed.
* Australia is facing an on-going extinction crisis of fauna and flora. One of the main causes of this crisis is the clearing of habitat. Every piece of habitat is important. Every individual and organisation has a responsibility to help protect and preserve habitat if we are to avoid further extinctions.
* Ask the Mayor and The Hills Shire Council to fulfil this responsibility by withdrawing the adopted Master Plan for Fred Caterson Reserve, and replacing it with a new plan which provides improved facilities where necessary but does not involve the destruction of vegetation.