

BCC questions contentious Port of Brisbane proposal to turn Swan Lake into a car park

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From: [The Courier-Mail](#)

September 23, 2013 12:00AM

<http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/bcc-questions-contentious-port-of-brisbane-proposal-to-turn-swan-lake-into-a-car-park/story-fnihsrf2-1226724743291>



The Port of Brisbane's move to fill in a lake teeming with birds so it can be used as a car park for imported vehicles has been questioned by the city council. Picture: Tim Marsden *Source: News Limited*

BRISBANE City Council has raised doubts about the Port of Brisbane's controversial proposal to fill in a lake teeming with wildlife to build a car park.

The council has complained about how the port proposes to address the loss of biodiversity if the man-made wetland is bulldozed.

Dubbed Swan Lake by birdwatchers, the wetland was built 14 years ago as open space and to handle run-off as the port expanded along the foreshore.

Despite intense development in the region, it has become heavily populated with birds and is one of the most important wetlands for black swans.

Cramped for space, the port now wants to fill in Swan Lake to make way for 20,000 to 30,000 imported cars which are parked at the port.

Queensland Conservation chairman Simon Baltais said if the Government approved the development it would set a precedent in which all environmental offsets offered by industry as a trade-off to land clearing would become worthless.

"They promise you something one day, then take it away the next," Mr Baltais said.

This would produce an impossible situation where all sorts of projects including major mines and ports for which environmental offsets were proposed would become worthless.

"Communities put a lot of trust in industry when they offer environmental offsets," he said.

"Communities oppose developments but are told if they let a development go ahead, the environmental offsets will make up for it. How could you trust them after this?"

A spokesman for Deputy Premier Jeff Seeney said the Government could approve the project if it was satisfied the council had no substantial objection.

"The council has expressed concern regarding the retention pond and adjacent wetlands," he said. "The department is awaiting formal advice from the port regarding the outcome of discussions to resolve these concerns."

Council planning and development assessment chairman Amanda Cooper said the Government could approve the development regardless of the council's opinion.

"Council has raised concerns regarding the way in which impacts relating to the loss of biodiversity values of the retention pond and adjacent wetlands have been addressed," Cr Cooper said.

"It is council's view that the port undertake further consultation with respect to measures to offset the impacts of filling the pond and associated wetlands."

A port spokesman said a deal had been signed with Landcare to offset the loss of the lake by delivering four projects over five years with a value of more than \$250,000.

The projects included work such as weed clean-up, revegetation and landscaping at the Minnipi Parklands, the Lindum Sandy Camp Rd freshwater wetland, Wynnum North roadside areas and Bayside Parklands.

Seven conservation and animal rights groups, including the RSPCA have formed an alliance to fight the port's proposal.

More than 150 species use the lake which is carrying more than 1000 birds.