



Media Release

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Farm school breaching local government by-laws

BRIGHTON Council has notified the Education Department that it is unable to continue to allow the keeping of farm animals at the Bridgewater School farm in the Brighton township contrary to local government by-laws.

This follows serious community concerns expressed regarding the location of the farm in a residential zone and Council's representations to the Education Department over many years.

Brighton Council has today advised the Department that it is unable to grant permission for the school farm to continue to keep animals at the existing location. Council understands that any relocation will take time and has given the Department 28 days to provide a removal plan and six months to remove the animals from the site.

Since 2010, Brighton Council had made repeated representations to the Department outlining community concerns and the farm's non-compliance with the by-laws. Council had urged that it relocate the farm to a more suitable site, appropriately zoned for keeping farm animals.

The School Farm is currently located on a 10.3 hectare site, close to the centre of the Brighton township and its activities are inhibited by its confined space with no capacity for expansion, its dependence on town water supplies, the cost of purchasing stock feed, and other limitations.

Council by-laws and the Public Health Act provide significant restrictions on keeping farm animals and stock in a residential zone so as to protect the health and amenity of the neighbourhood. The General Manager is required to act on any breaches of the law.

Several months ago, Council staff had been instructed to enforce the by-law to remove three horses from another property in Bridgewater and Council could no longer ignore the issues surrounding the school farm. Further, Council had also received complaints about an open drain accessed by animals at the farm and the Environmental Health Officer continued to monitor this.

General Manager Ron Sanderson said Brighton Council did not want to see the school farm close, but rather have the Department move it to a more suitable and legally compliant location.

"I must stress that the Brighton Council is aware of the importance of the farm school and the value it provides to the education of our high school students.

“With this in mind, Council had attempted to accommodate the school farm and previously commissioned a report that recommended the farm be relocated to a new and much larger site at Honeywood, adjacent to the Baskerville Raceway. This land had been used to grow a range of crops and contained two large dams as well as access to town water and reuse water connections.

“This property is the same distance from the school as the current farm, however, due to the Education Department’s inaction, it had now been sold and was no longer available.

“In the circumstances, we are no longer able to ignore the Council’s by-laws and the provisions of the Public Health Act relating to farm animals being kept in a residential zone, hence the refusal to grant permission to keep animals at the site, and the serving of notice on the Department,” Mr Sanderson said.

Ends....

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