



SAVE OUR SPIT MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday, January 23, 2013

Broadwater Marine Project & Gold Coast City Council Community Consultation Public Survey

It has been brought to our attention that the validity of the official public survey conducted and concluded in December 2012 by the Gold Coast City Council to gauge public opinion regarding the Broadwater Marine Project proposal has likely been compromised.

The official survey and forum on the 'have your say' website, facilitated by NSW company 'Bang The Table' was advertised and opened to the entire Gold Coast public, inviting them to 'have their say' on the future of this city in relation to the project. It was completed by a great many respondents across the city and was concluded accordingly as was advertised. The website has recently been updated confirming that the "first phase" was concluded on December 21st and that it is now closed to the public - <http://gchaveyoursay.com.au/broadwatermarine>

This survey was advertised across radio and print, and was widely reported through TV and social media for all Gold Coast residents to partake regardless of their stance, view or otherwise.

In a sudden change of process, through chance, we have learned that an email was sent to a private invite-only group of unknown people on January 19th stating that the GCCC had somehow re-opened the survey just to that group, in an attempt to alter the already concluded outcome of the official government public survey. The shocking email claims that the public results are to be changed by a closed group of invite-only persons in order to "ensure that there is a statistically balanced sample of comments from your community".

Further investigation revealed that council voted to establish this group on September 14th last year after a 'councillor workshop' conducted a few days earlier. The group is a private group of invite-only persons. A GCCC document about the group states their comments, responses, identities and data are protected by the Privacy Act of 2009 and not available for public scrutiny. This group described as an 'online Community Reference Group' was later named 'GCengage'.

Information about the group is scarce, and extensive online searching yielded no results – this group is not known to the public and any information regarding this group is not readily available to the public. The group has their own private section on the 'have your say' website that can not be accessed by anyone other than invited members of that online community reference group and council – <http://www.gchaveyoursay.com.au/gcengageforum>

Further to this, we have also learned that GCengage group members are being offered financial incentives to complete surveys and commentary, in what some have described as a 'cash for comment' undertaking. It has also been made aware to us that this newly created version and illegitimate survey was recently set up elsewhere and is completely independent from the

original one, hosted on a completely different website (Survey Monkey), and is receiving responses from a controlled group of persons that fit a completely different set of respondent criteria and parameters.

A multitude of serious questions have been raised as to the legitimacy of this shock change to the community consultation process, and from what we understand, it is proposed that the responses recorded from this separate survey are to be added to the already concluded public results that were finalised in December, for the specific purpose of changing the outcome.

Questions and concerns we have are listed below, but not limited to –

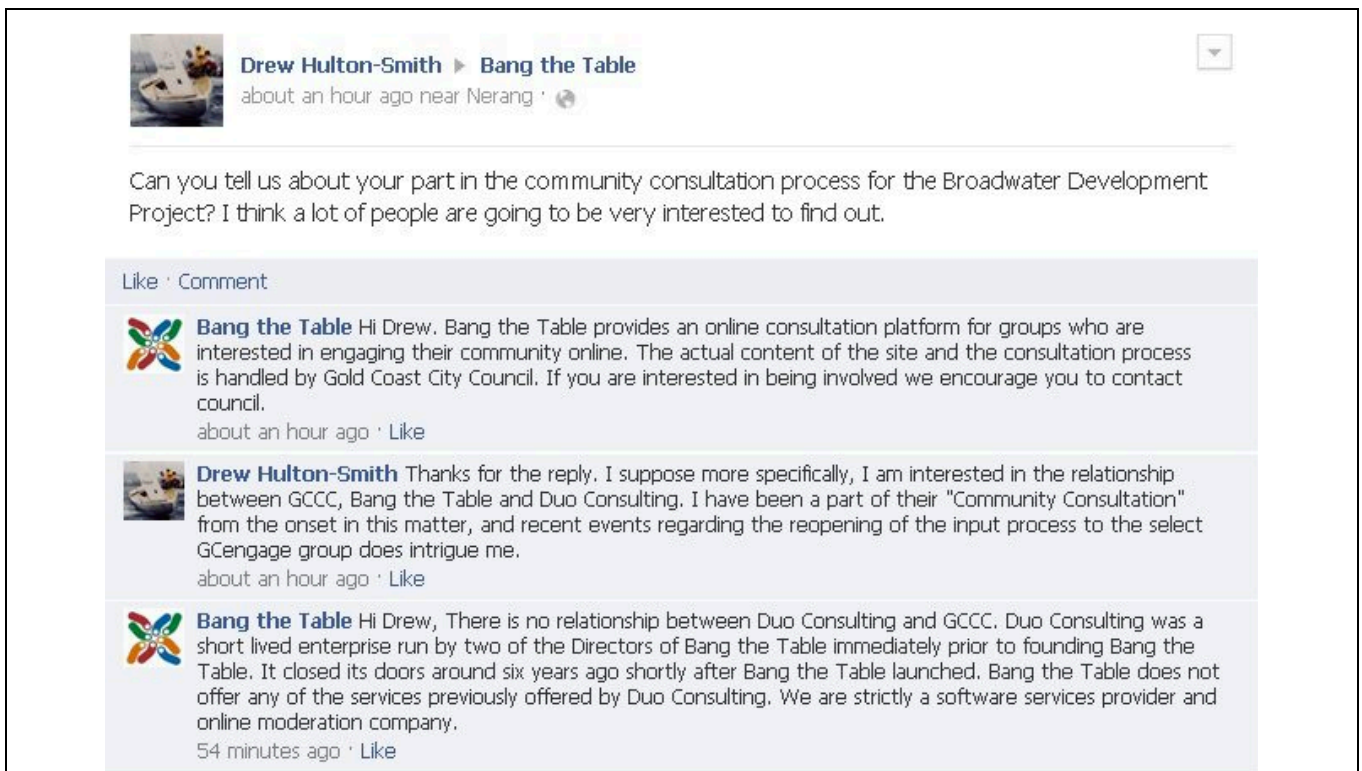
- How can an advertised, well-participated in and open-to-the-public consultation and survey process be suddenly regarded as not being “statistically balanced”?
- Is it ethical, democratic or even legal to manipulate the already recorded results of an official government survey by later adding a series of responses that were not generated under the same circumstances, that in fact are received from a separate survey from a closed group of pre-selected, invite-only persons that have been offered financial incentives to partake in it and change the original outcome?
- What kind of survey/public consultation company (Bang The Table) would risk their reputation to partake in this process and facilitate what is essentially the merging of two sets of incompatible results and possibly present them as official results that claim to represent the public?
- Who is behind this and what is contained in the official public survey results that have prompted them to take this highly questionable course of action?
- How can the Gold Coast community be expected to have confidence in the results if they are not tabled correctly and are altered in such a way that does not represent what the public contributed in the actual official public survey concluded in December that is already closed?
- Who actually set up the secret duplicate of the survey on the Survey Monkey website?
- Why are the GCengage forum and pages private and its members’ responses, identities and survey results listed as being protected by state privacy law? Why has no information about this group been made readily available to the public?
- How can this process be regarded as transparent and accountable at all when it is shrouded in so much secrecy?
- Overall, would anyone describe this as ethical, fair, open or acceptable and how can the mixing of results recorded under such differing circumstances and parameters possibly serve the interests of the greater community, or do they serve the agenda of a select few?
- If the survey has been re-opened for a limited time to gather more results, how could it be done in such a fashion that the public, the Gold Coast community is now blocked from participating?
- That in any results from the 2012 official survey made public, the illegitimate and leading ‘forced response’ question number 8 from the survey be stricken from the results. This compulsory question should be disregarded as it was clearly formatted to present a skewed result and force the hand of respondents to offer only pre-determined responses that favour the Broadwater Marine Project.

Save Our Spit Alliance on behalf of the Gold Coast community of residents and rate-payers (regardless of their stance on the Broadwater Marine Project) and their members and supporters are calling on the Gold Coast City Council including all councillors, Mayor Tom Tate, CEO Dale Dickson, and Community Engagement Coordinator Colin Russo to immediately release the

unaltered and official public survey and forum results in their entirety, recorded and concluded in December 2012, and that they absolutely and without prejudice or compromise separate any further responses that were received after December 21 into a separate document that clearly outlines that the new supplementary results were taken from a separate survey, from a private invite-only and pre-selected group of people, not the public. Further to this we call on them to remove and strike out all responses from the survey question 8 – Question 8 IS NOT a legitimate question, as it is a compulsory, forced-response question designed to generate a particular result that may not represent the respondent’s opinion or answers. No information collected from question 8 should be considered as accurate or legitimate and the question should never have been approved.

The Mayor was adamant that the original survey and public forum was advertised well to the public and even stated on Nine News GC that *“Well they found out about it, so I think we did our good job”*

In a coincidental twist, the CEOs of the original company operating the questionable survey platform previously operated a consultation and lobbying company called Duo Consulting that had some questionable links to many large project developers and government planning departments, and boasted once that “We utilise our insiders’ knowledge of government priorities and policies to work with your team to develop the best approach to ensure a fast and smooth approval pathway through local and State Government for your project.” The [Duo Consulting website](#) currently says nothing about it being a redundant business and still lists contact details and office hours although Bang The Table today claimed that the company no longer operates and ceased operation 6 years ago.



The screenshot shows a Facebook post by Drew Hulton-Smith from the page 'Bang the Table'. The post asks for information about the community consultation process for the Broadwater Development Project. Below the post are three replies from 'Bang the Table'.

Drew Hulton-Smith [Bang the Table](#)
about an hour ago near Nerang · 🌐

Can you tell us about your part in the community consultation process for the Broadwater Development Project? I think a lot of people are going to be very interested to find out.

Like · Comment

Bang the Table Hi Drew. Bang the Table provides an online consultation platform for groups who are interested in engaging their community online. The actual content of the site and the consultation process is handled by Gold Coast City Council. If you are interested in being involved we encourage you to contact council.
about an hour ago · Like

Drew Hulton-Smith Thanks for the reply. I suppose more specifically, I am interested in the relationship between GCCC, Bang the Table and Duo Consulting. I have been a part of their "Community Consultation" from the onset in this matter, and recent events regarding the reopening of the input process to the select GCengage group does intrigue me.
about an hour ago · Like

Bang the Table Hi Drew, There is no relationship between Duo Consulting and GCCC. Duo Consulting was a short lived enterprise run by two of the Directors of Bang the Table immediately prior to founding Bang the Table. It closed its doors around six years ago shortly after Bang the Table launched. Bang the Table does not offer any of the services previously offered by Duo Consulting. We are strictly a software services provider and online moderation company.
54 minutes ago · Like

According to a document found online at the NSW Government planning department this is not true, the document reports they were actively consulting for Crighton Properties in November of 2010 - <http://leptracking.planning.nsw.gov.au/ShowDocument.aspx?DocumentId=3323>

We've also learned that in 2008, then NSW Minister For Transport David Campbell went before parliament after the NSW Government had engaged the services of Bang The Table, and in an unrelated (To the GCCC) case he stated before parliament that *"the Government has lost confidence in Bang the Table and will terminate arrangements with the company. It is because questions were raised about the Government's ability to protect information that I spoke in the House yesterday. It is now clear that Bang the Table not only did not protect the security of the Government's information; it also provided wrong advice to the Government about its security measures. This is completely unacceptable to the Government. I made yesterday's statement in good faith and based on information provided to me by Bang the Table. That information was wrong and, accordingly, I apologise. Now it is time for Bang the Table to apologise."* -

[http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/hanstrans.nsf/V3ByKey/LA20100224/\\$File/541LA171.pdf](http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/hanstrans.nsf/V3ByKey/LA20100224/$File/541LA171.pdf)

It is unclear whether or not Bang The Table has any knowledge of the new secret survey, it is not hosted on their website - rather it is a new and separate form hosted on a generic survey website (Survey Monkey). However emails to GCengage members discussing the new survey have been received by some GCengage members from the Bang The Table website. When trying to access the GCengage pages on the 'have your say' website, the general public are denied access and directed to contact the admin at Bang The Table for help. Bang The Table have responded saying they have nothing to do with it and that all queries should be directed to council.

Lastly it seems as if the now closed-to-the-public survey still contains the illegitimate and leading 'forced response' question number 8, and as such any report containing any responses from this particular question should be wholly discounted and not included.

Many more questions have been raised - but in the end what can be said for sure is that this is an unusual and potentially unethical methodology currently being undertaken, that has been employed by people that are supposed to be working for the people, not against them.

Below is a list of links to relevant websites and references, as well as some images documenting what has transpired. Unfortunately but not surprisingly, no references online to the private invite-only GCengage group can be found.

First phase of consultation confirmed to be 'concluded Dec 21st'

<http://gchaveyoursay.com.au/broadwatermarine>

Duo Consulting / Bang The Table dissected

<http://www.crikey.com.au/2008/07/02/lobbyists-are-behind-community-forum-site-bang-the-table/>

The secret, non-advertised section of the 'have your say' site for GCengage group only

<http://www.gchaveyoursay.com.au/gcengageforum>

Newly made and completely separate GCengage version of the survey

(Note: Save Our Spit does not recognize this unofficial component of the survey as accurately representing the Gold Coast community. We will not be encouraging anyone to partake, and we refute its legitimacy and results as it does not form part of the "first phase" of community consultation and the results do not represent the views of the Gold Coast rate-paying public)

<https://www.research.net/s/BroadwaterMarineSurveyGCengage>

Bang The Table consultation and survey company

<http://bangthetable.com/services/>

Ch9/NBN news report on the apparent secrecy of the Broadwater Marine Project community consultation process, which was denied by the Mayor, and the 'forced response' question 8 that is wholly illegitimate and designed to generate a pre determined, one-sided result.

<http://www.nbnnews.com.au/index.php/2012/12/13/council-criticised-for-not-advertising-cruise-ship-terminal-info-session/>

Gold Coast City Council minutes from September 2012 (with the discussion and resolution on the formation of GCengage as well as the revelation the Mayor has the authority to approve the consultation process and all survey questions)

<http://www.goldcoast.qld.gov.au/documents/ma/council-20120914-AdoptedMinutes.pdf>

See below for images and contact details...

The invitation email that was sent to members of the invite-only GCengage group

You're receiving this email from us because you participated in the online discussions or you have opted to receive updates for GCengage Forum at [GC Have Your Say](#).



The Broadwater Marine Project [survey](#) has reopened for a limited time to Gcengage Forum Members. GCengage forum members will go into a random prize draw for one of **three \$100 gift vouchers** for completing a survey!

Why? Council has reopened this survey to ensure that there is a statistically balanced sample of comments and feedback from your Community.

Council confirms that these results will be independently analyzed by an external agency and that the results of the survey will be published on the Council Website and Gcengage Forum Home page in the coming months.

The Broadwater Marine Project is a joint initiative of the Queensland Government and Gold Coast City Council and seeks private sector investment to deliver what could be the largest integrated tourism development in Queensland's history.

The world-class project seeks delivery of a cruise ship terminal on State Government-owned land on The Spit or on Wave Break Island in the Broadwater.

In addition to the terminal, the potential multi-billion dollar integrated tourism project could include hotel, casino, marina and super yacht facilities, retail, entertainment, hospitality, community open space, recreation facilities and a mix of residential (types and tenure).

A Gold Coast cruise ship terminal and associated tourism infrastructure have the potential to boost tourist visitation, increasing expenditure into the state and local economies and creating jobs.

Yours sincerely,

Colin Russo
Coordinator, Community Engagement
For the Chief Executive Officer
Gold Coast City Council

The 'forced response' question 8 from the Broadwater Marine Project public survey (* denotes that the question is compulsory and that the survey can not be completed and submitted without the respondent answering – Question 9 offers a place to refute the question, however it is formatted as such that the response to question 8 can be selectively published **with or without** the question 9 response)

Organised tourist activities (e.g. whale watching, day trips)

Other (please specify)

*** 8. The Broadwater Marine Project presents opportunities for the Gold Coast. The key opportunities are identified below. Of the opportunities, please rank the following in order of importance to you. (1 = most important, 7 = least important). Please note, you can drag and drop your choices, or use the numbers to reorder your choices on the survey page.**

<input type="button" value="↕"/>	a. Provide local jobs
<input type="button" value="↕"/>	b. Boost Gold Coast City economy
<input type="button" value="↕"/>	c. New tourist attractions/things to do in the city
<input type="button" value="↕"/>	d. Greater access to Wave Break Island
<input type="button" value="↕"/>	e. Community recreation e.g. new dive opportunities and recreational boating infrastructure
<input type="button" value="↕"/>	f. Community accessibility to parklands and waterfront
<input type="button" value="↕"/>	g. Better access for boats through the Seaway (e.g. deeper/wider navigation channel)

9. Please identify any other opportunities not listed in the question above.

10. What are your top three (3) concerns about the Broadwater Marine Project?

- Impact on the environment
- Impact on surfing
- Impact on diving
- Impacts of dredging
- Changes to community access
- Infrastructure upgrades ie roads

The privacy clause that covers accountability and transparency for results taken from the GCengage private group – this taken from the GCengage 'criteria document'

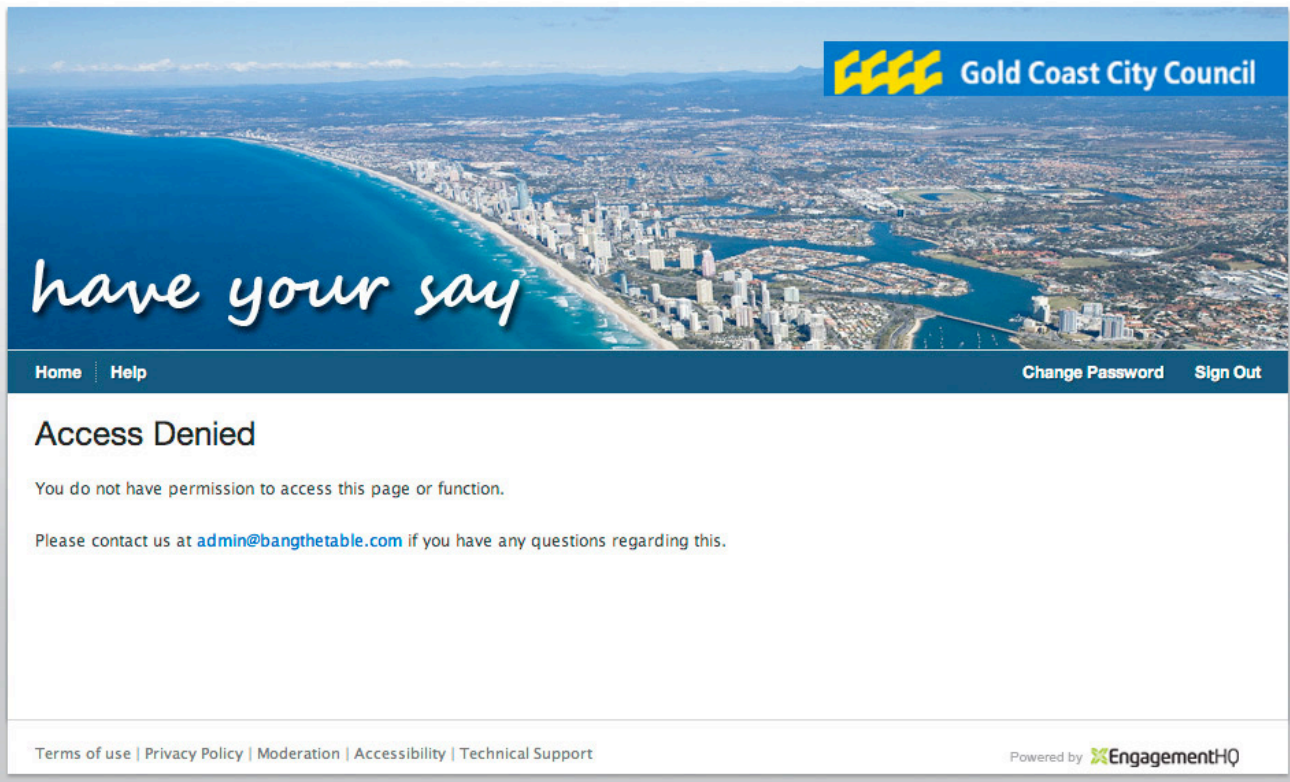
GCengage Forum Members

Members receive information bulletins about local and citywide projects and are invited to complete online surveys and participate in online discussion forums. Members' responses and comments will be provided to Council to help inform decision-making on challenges and opportunities affecting the future of the city.

Members:

- Must be over 18 years of age.
- Can unsubscribe at any time.
- Will be invited to complete online surveys and participate in online discussion forums on local and citywide projects.
- Members will receive notification of surveys via email and must have access to the internet to be able to participate.
- Will have their comments and responses provided to Council to help inform decision-making on challenges and opportunities affecting the future of the city.
- Information provided to Council will be governed by the State Government Information and Privacy Act (2009). This means that information will only be accessed by authorised Council officers, Councillors or Council contractors in accordance with the conditions of the Act 2009. Members' information will not be given to any other person or agency unless they have provided permission or Council are required by law.

What the public receives when trying to access any information about GCengage



For comment please see below

Luke Sorensen
Save Our Spit Alliance Spokesperson
lukesorensenis@gmail.com
0412631974

Dr Steve Gration
Save Our Spit Alliance President
sgration@virginbroadband.com.au
steve.gration@griffithuni.edu.au
0403788175

