

Leaders look at gardens

HORTICULTURE industry leaders last week took Logan councillors on a tour of market gardens in a bid to improve understanding of the sector and communication.

AUSVEG chairman and Scenic Rim Mayor John Brent, together with Growcom chief advocate Rachel Mackenzie and Chambers Flat herb grower Lisa Crooks, conducted the tour attended by 10 councillors, including Mayor Pam Parker.

The four-hour tour visited the farms of Pieter and Laura Hendrikson, Scott and Jenny Maxwell, Dhon Phan, Son Nguen and Ray and Lisa Crooks.

Scott Maxwell, who operates a hydroponics farm at Tamborine, said the councillors were keen to learn.

"There were lots of questions about how water is run and where it goes to, do you use sprays and how you control pests," he said.

Mr Maxwell, who uses a mixture of chemical and organic sprays, said chemicals, if used responsibly, were safe.

The issue of market gardens flared up in the community recently after land at Greenbank was cleared for



Scott Maxwell was happy to show councillors around his farm during a tour last week.

the purposes of intensive horticulture.

The clearing prompted anti-market campaigner David Hogan to reignite his Eye See campaign and Division 11 Councillor Hajnal Ban to call for a report reviewing council's policy on intensive horticulture.

Mrs Crooks said she hoped the tour enhanced communication and understanding between growers and council.

"Everyone was involved, the planning and development (committee) and both mayors," she said.

"We were very happy with it, and to be given the opportunity to educate and communicate about the

issues surrounding farming.

"We were also able to inform them how heavily regulated the industry is.

"For example, with the chemicals that we have, you need to have a permit to use the chemical, but to get that chemical you have to have approval.

"The process is a very drawn out process but it's very methodical."

Mrs Crooks said she also had the chance to talk with Cr Ban about her concerns with intensive horticulture.

"I had a good conversation and a look at the issues she has so we can go forward with the lines of communication," Mrs Crooks said.

Visits draw a mixed response from Logan's councillors

LAST week's market garden tour drew a mixed response from Logan City councillors.

While some described the tour as "informative" and "productive" others said more needed to be done to investigate farms not complying with best practice.

Deputy Mayor Russell Lutton said the tour highlighted how important market gardens were to the community.

"As a community we need fresh fruit and vegetables which are grown close to the city to keep costs down," he said.

"We as a council have to ensure that happens but we also have to ensure minimum impact on residential lifestyles."

Cr Pidgeon said the tour was very informative.

"It opened a few people's eyes as to how farming operations work and the intricacies of farming," he said.

Cr Hajnal Ban said she would have liked more involvement in the types of farms the tour group visited.

"The tours I went to in the morning were basically examples of very good farming practices," she said.

"Looking at best practice is one thing but that's not where the concerns are. It's not best practice farming, it's the ones who don't have practices in place to mitigate emissions and their alleged chemical drift."

Residents left out of tour

RESIDENTS have criticised council's tour of market gardens in Logan, saying not enough is being done to address their concerns.

Greenbank's Istvan Farkas, who lives next door to one of the gardens the councillors visited last Wednesday, said they did not bother to speak to him about the issues he has with the business.

"Nobody wants to know," he said.

"The beginning of the big labs, the first two, are about 40 metres away (from my house)," he said.

"Not even 100 metres away is a 4000 litre fertiliser tank he can blow anytime. Council took a lot of pictures in May and said 'he can't do that', but nothing has been done."

Mr Farkas said he was recently contacted by a council officer informing him council was going to install noise monitors, but his wife Ilona Farkas said it was not enough.

"We came out here for the fresh air. Now every weekend there is smoke and smells from the chemicals. Nobody wants to do anything about that," she said.

Greenbank resident John Paterson, whose neighbour operates a market garden, said his main concern was the chemicals used by the owners.

"If it blows over onto our property they don't care. The chemicals they use will affect our animals. We have pet dogs, pet geese, pet ducks, pet chickens," he said.

Mr Paterson said he has never had anyone from council visit him to talk about his concerns.

"I've been in touch with council before and complained. All they said is there is nothing they can do, that's their attitude," he said.

Join the debate. Email your thoughts to:
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