



Ray and Kathy Smythe are unimpressed by the Toowoomba City Council's burnoff of Jack Duggan Park.

PICTURE: DAVE NOONAN

Anger smouldering in wake of burn-off



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Jack Duggan Park now a stark and charred landscape

ANGRY environmentalists and unrepentant Toowoomba City Council staff stood toe to toe yesterday.

Councillors inspected the charred remains of Jack Duggan Park after its controversial burn-off in late October.

Environment and Heritage portfolio chair Sue Englart said the scene had been softened by the appearance of a tinge of green.

Friends of Escarpment president John Swarbrick complained to council that hundreds of hours of voluntary work "had been swept away in one day by the bonfire and chainsaw massacre".

Also wanting answers was Kathy Smythe, whose family owned the land that was resumed for the park.

"This park is right opposite a residential area and to have an environmental park next to a resi-

dential area is beyond me.

"This park needs to have all the dead timber removed and slashed to mow the long dead grass and replace some of the trees with nice new trees and some walking tracks for people to enjoy the beautiful views and make it a park," she said.

"I am quite sure Jack Duggan would turn over in his grave to have a park that is left in such a state to be named after him."

Mr Swarbrick and Hugh Krenske, also a volunteer, attended yesterday's council committee meeting.

The Friends' major concern lay with biodiversity and habitat while neighbours feared the bushfire risk given the high fuel loads in the park.

Council officers remained firm that the burn was successful.

Both parties agreed better consultation was needed.

Cr Englart said: "The sad part is that these volunteers cleaned up weeds and returned the park to the natural vegetation.

"They found it most upsetting that they had taken ownership of the park and they weren't consulted.

"It's the very issue that affects us all — we should talk to each other."

Both parties agreed a bushland management consultative committee should be formed as well as better consultation with the nearby residents.

Cr Englart said: "The basic argument is not against the use of fire — fire is a good tool if it's used well.

"That's why council went there — because there were members of the Environmental Advisory Group who felt quite upset by the severity of the fire and it could have been managed better."