



Cats get claws into tourism

IPSWICH looks set to house a tourist attraction of a very different kind, with Ipswich City Council in talks with an Australian-based conservation organisation to open an exotic wildlife park.

Founder and managing director Liz Bellward said Karma Cats had been founded in January with the aim of constructing a big cat breeding centre in the Ipswich region.

She said the project would initially open with lions, tigers, snow leopards, cheetahs, servals, an Australian wildlife and a children's farmyard petting zoo.

"All profits will be used to run the centre or support conservation

initiatives around the world to protect endangered species in the wild," Ms Bellward said.

She said the fact the city was "moving ahead in leaps and bounds", while still offering enough land to house the project, had made it the perfect location.

She said if everything went to plan the facility would open in 2013.

Ms Bellward said the organisation was seeking close to 81 hectares of land, which would be composed of an African safari set up and bush walking tracks.

"It is getting people away from the typical view people have of animals in cages and getting them back to nature and enjoying

animals," she said.

She said the organisation would meet with companies over the coming months to discuss corporate sponsorship.

Ipswich Mayor Paul Pisasale said the project was a fantastic opportunity.

"It would bring international recognition for the city," he said.

"We've banned circuses on council land and will now create a sanctuary for animals.

"Who would have thought that Ipswich would be home for lions and tigers."

Cr Pisasale said council was open to working with neighbouring councils to help find a suitable location for the park.