

Tamborine Times, 25th June, 2015

Dear Editor,

Scenic Rim Council has released its Biodiversity Strategy for public comment this month. I do not see myself as a “bleeding heart” greeny and I am a “lowlander”, however I do believe I share an accountability with every member of the Scenic Rim to nurture and protect the environmental resources we enjoy, rely on for income, and need for our long term well being. The Biodiversity Strategy opens with the reality check that the Scenic Rim has already dropped below the threshold for sustainable retention of remnant vegetation. It goes on to espouse a number of principles that together appear to promote a future direction of balance to respect the needs for economic development while preserving the critical remnant ecosystems.

The report even suggests an aim to achieve a miracle by regaining remnant vegetation. Having talked to a few scientists on the subject, they confirm my view that any renewal of vegetation will never qualify as remnant – it can only by definition be regrowth or rehabilitation – not quite the same, i.e. the ecosystem once lost can never be rebuilt the same.

As I read that article I was struck by a bout of confusion. If my Council was espousing such principles as the foundation for the future, and if they were also aware of the precarious position regarding remnant vegetation – Why had they ignored their already existing codes to approve the Guanaba Experience Development Application at Tambourine?

When I travel around the Scenic Rim, the Tamborine Mountain area hosts a priceless example of unique remnant vegetation Zone. And yet our Council has ignored the Tamborine Mountain Escarpment Precinct Zone status and the Tamborine Mountain Code to allow a development that puts at risk not just the development area itself but also the amenity and welfare of a large group of resident ratepayers.

I love my Scenic Rim – at present it wears its name well. With the balanced beauty of natural reserves, mountain ranges, meandering waterways, nestling townships amid productive farming lands with their spectacular contrasts, I want it to grow but not lose its character.

Now my confusion turns to concern! What worth is a Biodiversity Strategy if it is not upheld by our Councilors? In fact can I trust them to live up to these commitments?

I have witnessed out council hold a hard line and force an existing business to close in Boonah because of "Town Planning" requirements and environmental concerns? – and yet they are willing to ignore their own Biodiversity report and existing Council documents to support a development that will further risk our remnant vegetation in an identified fragile eco-system.

When visiting Tamborine Mtn, I have discovered that there is a deep sense of mistrust and a perception of divisiveness when it comes to our Scenic Rim Council. That should sadden every ratepayer and shame every councilor, including the mayor.

Yes, we want development, but not at the expense of the foundation ecosystems and social systems that make us uniquely Scenic Rim - councilors take a hard look in the mirror then tell us what you really stand for! Better yet show us – talk is cheap, stand up for our Biodiversity - We need it.

Greg Christensen