

TAMBORINE MOUNTAIN PROGRESS ASSOCIATION INC.

"Protecting the quality of living on Tamborine Mountain"

The Hon. Dr. S.J. Miles,
Deputy Premier and Minister for
State Development, Infrastructure & Local Govt. & Planning,
P.O. Box 15009,
CITY EAST, Qld. 4002

25th August, 2021

Dear Minister,

I refer to my letter to you dated 5th March, 2021 and the subsequent reply to this by Mr. Kerry Doss, State Planner dated 23rd March. In view of the considerable difficult problems which have impacted on Tamborine Mountain under the *South East Queensland Regional Plan 2017 (Shaping SEQ)*, we decided not to take the conversation further.

However, with the recent very public media stoush concerning matters pertaining to the Office of the Independent Assessor and Scenic Rim Regional Council, the following is an attempt to shed light on the problems worrying this community.

This association thanks Mr. Doss for his detailed and comprehensive response to the concerns raised in the letter of 5th March and we appreciate his time and effort considering the demanding pressures of his office.

Mr. Doss outlined in great detail the special features and values of Tamborine Mountain as recognized and outlined in the *South East Queensland Regional Plan 2017 (Shaping SEQ)*. With the best of intentions and care taken to address even small details for desired development, this has not gone to plan. Mr. Doss also outlined the planning details to ensure such protection. Unfortunately, these measures can apply to anywhere else – except Tamborine Mountain.

All this boils down to the very unusual nature of the mountain's population.

There are two distinct sections – 1) the young families here for a natural setting and access to our excellent primary schools and 2) the longer established large older generation population. There is not much else in between.

Young people.....: there are many off mountain families who rent their houses in, e.g. Brisbane, then rent on the mountain for their children to attend our excellent primary schools. Others move here primarily for the country style life they prefer for their children.

We have several secondary schools. As the teenagers grow, the lure of the endless opportunities available for them elsewhere, e.g. Brisbane and the Gold Coast, become obvious. Many young families with growing teenagers move off the mountain for this reason.

There are of course some younger couples who stay on after their offspring have departed. People can work from home or commute (using dangerous mountain roads) to the two cities for work. However, due to the minimum infrastructure, good job opportunities here are scarce. That many of our businesses employ off mountain people suggests a scarcity of local resources.

Then there comes the big gap.

The older group comprises of the empty nesters nearing retirement plus all the retired folk who choose a relaxed retirement lifestyle in a nice setting. They have come in from elsewhere. Their families live in other areas, many in different states, or even overseas.

There was no need for inclusion of Dual Occupancy in the 2020 Planning Scheme. The *South East Queensland Regional Plan (Shaping SEQ)* whilst seeking to maintain the Mountain's country town and hinterland village feel misjudged the population character and its needs.

Where the SEO Regional Plan 2017 (ShapingSEO) doesn't sit squarely on the local population

Dual Occupancies.....whilst there was much publicity that there was to be no more subdivision on Tamborine Mountain, this category opens the door for just that.

This association produces a weekly list of development applications to Scenic Rim Regional Council. What we are seeing is a steady procession of applications for dual occupancy and also for “cabins” (large full sized houses).

In these times of low financial returns, residents who can are making the most of capitalizing on the opportunity to enhance their financial holdings. It is not hard to imagine that in the not too distant future, particularly with the pressure of the fast growing SEQ population, it will become possible to subdivide these holdings (strata title or community title) and sell off.

As explained in the nature of our population, demand for dual occupancy for the purposes described is very limited. The needs of an aging population are already well met. At any time we have several hundred properties listed for sale. Any aging person wishing to downsize (and there are few left) doesn't have to wait long to find suitable alternate accommodation close by. Most aged/aging people are already on smaller lots.

For the few older residents who happen to have some family here, the opportunity to be close by is not a problem. On this small plateau, everyone is not far away from anyone else.

Some years ago we did a survey of the number of people wanting smaller accommodation in order to stay living on the mountain amongst their friends. The response produced four people. In the long run none of these stayed as they moved off to be nearer family and also to have easier regular access to medical services. Medical services on Tamborine Mountain are limited.

This remains the case today. A great many older people move away to be with family not to burden them with regular visits breaking their busy work/family schedules. As stated, older residents arrive here for a particular retirement and their families are scattered everywhere. But, an equally large number move to be nearer to more frequently required medical services. Tamborine Mountain has minimum medical service and traversing dangerous mountain roads becomes too difficult for elderly drivers. .

The aging section of the mountain's population is not changing in the same way as anywhere else. Whilst some move away, others replace them. It remains fairly static. Population growth here is being achieved by subdivision or its proxy. Tamborine Mountain is not an expanding space.

Then we already have Secondary Housing which cropped up in the 2007 Planning Scheme. I know of one instance where this has been utilized for a family setting. There probably are a few more. One enterprising resident managed to split his development into two and sell off the other subsequently strata titled property.

We have lost count of the number of “cabins” now on the mountain adding to the spread of houses. There is already a precedent for “cabins” to be strata titled and sold off separately.

Cabins, and now Dual Occupancy are filling in the rural spaces with the subsequent loss of the country town and village feel central to the mountain's famous character so prized by millions of visitors. This is not to mention the impact on the natural environment.

Whilst several zonings (Low Density residential and Rural Zone (Rural Escarpment Protection Precinct) are impact assessable & require community input, this will not put a brake on development expansion. Few people want to tangle with their immediate neighbours preferring not to respond negatively. Most would be unfamiliar with zoning provisions or even be aware that an uncalled for incremental growth creep is taking place.

To complicate matters, Scenic Rim Regional Council regularly breaches planning schemes (described in TMPA letter of 18/8/21). If Council stuck to the planning schemes, within reason, this association would have nothing to do. Today we have a Council whose Mayor is totally fixated on a one-size-fits-all character for the shire and doesn't recognise the mountain characteristics described by Mr. Doss.

Planning decisions by Scenic Rim Regional Council regularly do not align with values held by Tamborine Mountain residents. Responses from residents are ignored and over the years many people wonder why bother and walk away demoralized.

In 2017 members of this association attended a forum in Robina. Here a group of lawyers from the Environmental Defenders Office and the Gold Coast representative of SARA went right through the new *South East Queensland Regional Plan (ShapingSEQ)* explaining its content and what was new. At the end, we asked what happens when our (mountain) values are not shared by our Council. No one could supply an answer.

With limited resources, TMPA is able to alert residents of only the largest inappropriate development applications which would impact on their broad lifestyle aspirations. Currently we are participating in our twentieth Planning & Environment Court case. This time, for a change, we are on the same side as Council. But for the strong resident support and extremely generous public financial backing, Tamborine Mountain would already be something completely different.

Growth Management Strategy

We thank the Dept of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning for the opportunity to meet at length with its officers in December 2020. We had hoped to alert the department of the impending decline in Tamborine Mountain's famous character forged by over a century of in-house resident activity. We had hoped to alert the department of the continuing decline in Tamborine Mountain's famous character. We were advised to make use of the Growth Management Strategy currently being prepared to counter concerns about unwanted mountain population growth. .

In April Council issued a "Have your Say" questionnaire to shire residents regarding two housing growth options to accommodate the additional 10,000 dwellings in the region by 2041. In a one-size-fits-all policy, Tamborine Mountain, with no reticulated water or sewerage, let alone anything but basic infrastructure, is lumped in with all other sections of the shire.

In Option A, Council proposed the majority of new dwelling to be concentrated in Beaudesert and to a lesser extent at Boonah, Canungra, Kalbar, Aratula, Tamborine Mountain, Tamborine and Kooralbyn.

Option B proposed that new dwellings are dispersed proportionally across all our towns and villages with more opportunities for acreage living.

The questionnaire for both options listed three choices in its various sections. A, B or neither.

Foreshadowing further unwelcome growth, Council's "Have Your Say" questionnaire was taken up by many mountain residents. Three hundred and forty eight (out of a shire population of forty thousand) responded. It would be a fair guess that a large number of these, if not most, came from Tamborine Mountain.

In a July media statement the Mayor stated that whilst some did not want to see "high levels of housing and employment", the population growth was inevitable. Further, he stated "a population cap is the preference of some on Tamborine Mountain, but it is not one that could be enforced by a local government. Instead it can set rules about what can be built and where". It is clear from the Mayor's message that as usual any messages from Tamborine Mountain will be ignored. We are set to have even more houses.

For the past two decades, forums, questionnaires, community consultations re planning schemes, etc. have regularly produced just three primary resident concerns – environment, population cap and water. For the Mayor to infer only a small number of residents seek a population cap shows how little he knows of Tamborine Mountain, or even cares. If a plebiscite were taken today, there is little doubt nearly all residents would prefer a cap on the population.

An aerial view of the mountain shows the surprising density of established houses already. With time and a steady decrease in the country town and hinterland village feel the population likewise will lose its strength to protect what remains of these qualities. Populations which carefully nurtured these key characteristics for over a century are also changing.

It is no good even saying any action may be taken some time in the future. Whilst both levels of government have put the skids under the long established country character of Tamborine Mountain, it is the local Council that has done the most damage.

Minister, it already is too late. Unless some drastic action is taken now, Tamborine Mountain in the very near future will cease to be the extremely valuable key environmental asset of South East Queensland we know today.

Yours sincerely,

Jeanette Lockey,
Hon. President,
Tamborine Mountain Progress Association.

Attached; letters dated 5/3/21 & 23/3/21

cc: Premier
Minister for Tourism
Leader of the Opposition
Member for Scenic Rim