

## **TAMBORINE MOUNTAIN PROGRESS ASSOCIATION INC.**

**“Protecting the quality of living on Tamborine Mountain”**

### **Water extraction on Tamborine Mountain**

#### **Some background**

The mountain has approximately 1,000 bores, not all of which are currently active. Up to the mid nineties there were several small bore water extractors (with small haulage tankers) and these serviced the local and catchment areas with water, especially in times of drought.

These extraction sites have changed hands over time and together with other bores have become the source of an ever expanding commercial water extraction industry.

Nearly two decades ago residents began to express concerns that water was being extracted and sold off the mountain. This concern increased, especially during the recent seven year drought when residents were lining up for top up water deliveries. Families with children were most affected.

Today we have about six commercial water extractors. Several have only Minor Public Utility permits. Two extractors do service local needs.

About a decade ago, the then Beaudesert Shire Council permitted conditions for a number of the extractors to remove large commercial quantities of water for sale. A variety of individual conditions (for Minor Public Utility permit holders and others) was allowed. These set out tanker movements per week, etc.

After much pressure from the community, the Scenic Rim Regional Council is currently checking that compliance has been occurring and just what all the operators have been doing.

This has come about after local residents did a 24/7 one week monitor of tanker movements on and off the mountain. The result suggested that a great deal more water was being shipped off the mountain than would show up on Council's books.

To compound the whole problem, the mountain has been involved in a long running court case involving proposed industrial sized commercial water extraction in a quiet leafy residential street.

#### **Original application for commercial groundwater extraction**

##### **Gillion Pty. Ltd., 22 Power Parade**

In 2009, in response to complaints from residents about loss of amenity, noise and road damage, Council moved to close down the Gillion Pty. Ltd. operation as being unlawful. In the Planning & Environment Court, Council was granted a declaration that the use of the land was unlawful (Court Application 2608/2009).

In 2011 Gillion Pty. Ltd. submitted a Development Application seeking to declare an unlawful operation to be lawful. Council subsequently refused the Development Application and the matter went on to the P & E Court. (Appeal 4506/2011).

With the granting of about twenty extensions, Gillion Pty. Ltd. was able to continue trading for several years. Referring to himself as being “between a rock and a hard place”, the judge in the P & E Court was hesitant to stop extraction due to Council's planner's report recommending approval which was posted on Council's website, but was subsequently refused by the Council.

In May 2013, The Gillion appeal was refused, mainly on planning grounds.

An appeal to the High Court was also lost, with the judge supporting the grounds in the judgement of the P & E Court.

### **Basically same application lodged again**

In 2014, basically the same Development Application has again been lodged with Scenic Rim Regional Council with emphasis on “economic need” and planning scheme compliance. (D A MCBd 14/070)

During the initial gazettal stage of the 2011 application, over 900 residents lodged objections to the Development Proposal. Currently, the community is again gearing up to respond in the new gazettal period, 5th to 27th March.

Anecdotal evidence suggests the other large commercial extractors are being kept in the loop and residents are reporting that further bore owners, as yet not operating commercially, are waiting in the wings for the Gillion water case to be finally decided. Needless to say, big money is at stake.

Gillion Pty Ltd proposes to withdraw approx. 28 million litres per annum. This is approximately the amount to fill a 7.9 acre lake one metre deep. This is just for one business alone. Some other extractors remove even more. Reportedly it takes 26 years for rainfall to reach the aquifer contained in the mountain's five layers of volcanic basalt with unknown pockets of unknown quantities of water.

The attached pro forma lists objection points as “Conflict with the Planning Scheme”, “Community need”, “Loss of Amenity” and Water Sustainability”.

The conflict with the Planning Scheme was upheld in both the Planning & Environment Court and the Appeals Court (Supreme Court). In a residential street in a village centre, this could set an unwanted precedent.

As no payment is made by the water extractors, there is no benefit to the community. Further, wear and tear on our small country roads is paid for by the ratepayer. There is increased risk of road accidents.

Neighbours have reported bores running dry, and this was graphically illustrated in a “Today, Tonight” programme on Channel Seven some time ago. The adjacent nursery, whilst having just put in a new bore, had to buy in water to keep operating.

Without reticulated water, it is understandable that mountain residents are nervous that their back-up water supply is being depleted at a fast rate. There are 75 tanker loads or more of water being transported off the mountain each week. This equates to 42 Olympic size swimming pools leaving the mountain each year. This is 120,000,000 litres of water or 180 million 600 ml bottles of water every year. Big biccies in anyone's books. And you don't have to be an Einstein to figure out this is not a good scenario for our essential backup water supply.

**Due to an error in signage at the Power Parade site, the submission period has been extended to 27th March. ---**

**4 pm at the library,**

**email to [mail@scenicrim.qld.gov.au](mailto:mail@scenicrim.qld.gov.au)**

**or post to The Scenic Rim Regional Council, P.O. Box 25, Beaudesert, Qld. 4285**

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