

TAMBORINE MOUNTAIN PROGRESS ASSOCIATION INC.

“Protecting the quality of living on Tamborine Mountain”

5th July, 2015

Hon. Jacklyn Trad, M.P.,
Minister for Local Government k& Planning,
P.O. Box 5326,
WEST END, Qld. 4101

Dear Ms. Trad,

Rewriting the Planning Scheme Act

It is with hopeful anticipation this Association awaits the emergence of a new Planning Scheme. From all quarters, experts as well as laymen, the current Act has been a nightmare to negotiate.

It so complex and full of ambiguities one can read what one wishes out of it. The courts are clogged with litigants arguing their subjective visions from each end of the spectrum. Too often many planners, comfortable in well paid unelected positions, tend to yield to the greatest pressure, losing sight of sound planning principles in the best interests of the communities they serve.

A Planning Scheme, as well as accommodating orderly growth, should protect the distinctive features of many individual communities. Some years ago, Phil Day (decd) bemoaned the fact that with the churning out of hundreds of town planners from our institutions, “towns up and down the coast of Queensland were starting to look the same”.

One such area desperately fighting to retain its distinctive character is Tamborine Mountain.

Tamborine Mountain does not fit into any planning mould. Its unusual development stemmed from large community input into the direction of its growth over the past century. This is well documented.

Over the past two decades its residents have roundly responded to perceived inappropriate development applications, many of which would have completely changed the mountain’s character.

Mountain residents have relied on their Tamborine Mountain Zone planning scheme to argue the values within which comply with their lifestyle aspirations. Too often, distant planners using stereotype templates suitable for other areas have put them in a collision course with our Council. Residents are continually forking out for court battles. Currently there are two in the pipeline.

The 1997 Development Control Plan (Beaudesert Shire Council) was a forward looking document. In its innovative foreword, it clearly spelled out the overall desired outcomes, in simple language, for each mountain section. This sought to cover any ambiguities contained in the body of the text. It was supported by the residents.

This Plan was rewritten in 2007 according to State Govt. requirements. Whilst the original DCP planning principles remained basically the same, the document which sets them out is so complex, planners lose sight of the overall broad outcomes. It leads to tunnel vision.

Earlier planners, some resident on Tamborine Mountain, were adamant that this small plateau should be viewed as a whole. It is not a difficult concept. A piecemeal approach will lead to a patchwork of mixes and ultimate loss of Tamborine Mountain’s well known semi-rural scenic character.

It is to be hoped the new Planning Scheme is not being rushed to the point where important details are left uncovered or errors are made.

An example of this is the Urban Footprint on Tamborine Mountain.

When State Government was drawing up (in a hurry) its regional plan, the newly appointed head of the Office of Urban Management (Lindsay Enright) actually visited Tamborine Mountain to try to understand the qualities which make each community distinctive. Mr. Enright himself came from North Queensland and had never heard of Tamborine Mountain.

OUM seconded planners across the state to help meet the short deadline imposed by State Government. Other areas, such as west of Brisbane, became a heavy priority, and as observed by the senior planner of Beaudesert Shire Council at the time – “Tamborine Mountain was just a blimp on the horizon”.

This was in spite of strong submissions by Beaudesert Shire Council and a coalition of eight Tamborine Mountain organizations, pinpointing preferred urban footprint areas to be centered in and near the mountain’s three village centres. The proposed SEQRP draft footprint appeared to be a haphazard pink colouring of sections of a map from anywhere.

The mountain’s urban footprint in the final version was reduced but not enough and much of the mountain remained outside the footprint and is semi-rural.

Herein lies the problem. Decisions are being made, not only by Council staff, but by outside consultants and advisers. They are not alerted to this area’s distinctive character. They keep referring to Tamborine Mountain as “urban”.

Tamborine Mountain is a small plateau. There is no reticulated water, no prospect of any widespread infrastructure and is widely known by both residents and the annual stream of about one million tourists as a scenic semi-rural area.

It is a valuable asset for the region. Tourism Queensland found it to be the most visited day destination in South East Queensland. Successive waves of residents support, via the planning scheme, this character valued by all.

The problem is how to get the best possible value out of individual areas without wiping out the characteristics which appeal to people. People happy and comfortable with their lifestyles equates to a more satisfied electorate.

With best wishes for a much better Planning Scheme which can cover details as outlined above.

Yours sincerely,

Jeanette Lockey,
Hon. President,
Tamborine Mountain Progress Association