

TAMBORINE MOUNTAIN PROGRESS ASSOCIATION INC.

“Protecting the quality of living on Tamborine Mountain”

5th March, 2021

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 by email deputy.premier@ministerial.qld.gov.au

The Hon. S.J. Hinchcliffe,
Minister for Tourism,
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Dear Sirs,

Tamborine Mountain

- Tamborine Mountain is a valuable asset of South East Queensland.
- It is the most visited day destination in SEQ.
- More than 1.5 million people visit it each year.
- International visiting cruise ships (Brisbane) list it as a day tour.
- It is world famous.

And we are gradually losing the essence of what makes Tamborine Mountain such a valuable State asset.

In the 1890's it was already famous even overseas for its “flora and fauna & its ‘escape from urbanization’”.

In 1915 when this organization was formed, the population of Tamborine Mountain was about twenty.

Fast forward to 2021..... Tamborine Mountain's population is 8,000, visitors have snowballed – and yet..... they are coming here for the exactly the same reasons!

How could this be so?

Tamborine Mountain still presents as semi-rural with a distinct environmental flavour. Its elevation, views, fresh air and its national parks keep attracting a huge number of visitors. And as luck would have it – it adjoins two very large cities, just a short ride away. A freak of nature from which we have all benefitted.

A major reason why this area has not grown like Topsy as elsewhere is that it is a plateau and lacks the reticulated water and infrastructure available in other towns the same size. Its oldy-worldy characteristics have so far been fairly well preserved. This is highly valued as per our surveys of both residents and visitors.

Our water situation is what has kept the population cap down and kept our infrastructure to a minimum.. Yet this has not stopped the long battle residents have been having against perceived inappropriate development .

Developers, driven by dollar signs and with deep pockets, regularly attempt to breach the planning scheme guidelines and a constant battle, particularly over the past several decades, has been waged and paid for by the residents. For without this resident input the immense & costly pressure on council would have resulted in a mountain character completely different to what people enjoy today.

Tamborine Mountain residents are famous in the Planning & Environment Court as people who “like to have their voice heard”. Quite often group blocks of about one hundred Co-Respondents have taken part in court appeals – and this number is limited only by the short time frame available for an appeal lodgment. Many years of local resident input has safeguarded fairly well the mountain’s unique character.

Yet with the arrival of the new planning scheme (March, 2020) the door has been further opened for more intensive population growth on the mountain. This is not only a threat to our semi rural character but ignores the fact that without reticulated water and only a basic infrastructure population growth is unsustainable. . With the planning scheme’s introduction, the mayor of Scenic Rim Regional Council stated (apparently directed at Tamborine Mountain) ...that “it would not please some residents”. This also ignores the valued current attraction the mountain has for its 1.5 plus annual visitors.

We understand that 75% of the planning scheme content was directed by the State. Here has been the drive for infill due to the expected population increase in South East Queensland. Contrary to the strong recommendations of this organization and many residents, the new planning scheme introduced the category of Dual Occupancy. This is in addition to the category Secondary Housing which crept into the then remake of the plan in 2007. As a short cut equal to further subdivision both categories unnecessarily add to urbanization of Tamborine Mountain and its slide to becoming yet another SEQ ordinary suburb..

Tamborine Mountain has many large lot sizes particularly in the south part where nearly all blocks are one acre or more. We estimate the Dual Occupancy opens the door for about 1,400 more houses, increasing the population substantially once more. Already a steady stream of Dual Housing applications are coming in..

Council blames the State for this direction, yet there is no evidence that council alerted State designers that Tamborine Mountain is quite unique and has special requirements.

There is a distinct lack of understanding by council planners of how a “town” of 8,000 can present as semi-rural. Far off planners, unaware of the local ethos and expectations typically use urban templates with values far different from those held by mountain residents.

The mountain’s distinct valued semi-rural character is achieved by the separation of denser residential clusters by rural land. Its larger open and green lots add to the environmental appeal and provide the wildlife corridors essential for biodiversity survival.. It has become a cheap Clayton’s ride into the “countryside” especially by the masses of the two cities it adjoins.

The only value Tamborine Mountain has for Scenic Rim Regional Council is as a rate base. So it is understandable no culture has developed there to give the mountain special treatment.

Further, Scenic Rim Regional Council has for some time been heavily promoting its shire-wide image under the heading “One Scenic Rim”. This one size fits all policy (as per the new planning scheme) has extended to other areas and organizations, including our previously locally based Chamber of Commerce which suffered an acrimonious split several months ago. The local Chamber has had a long history of promoting Tamborine Mountain and a one size fits all did not sit well with many members. For Tamborine Mountain this policy is a death knell. It is not like anywhere else. In fact it is quite unique in the whole country.

At a meeting on 11th December, 2020 by some representatives of this organization and the A/Director, Dept. of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government & Planning and three representatives of SARA our problems were discussed in great detail. We noted at that meeting that our best next move would be to have input into the Growth Management Scheme currently being developed by council.

However, this promises to be a long and convoluted process and by past lengthy experience there is unlikely to be any change to the too rapid slide into urbanization here and thus its irrelevance as a key State attraction.

It is the residents who have maintained this unique attraction as it is estimated that over the years 90% arrive for a particular lifestyle. This is different from anywhere else. Therefore over the years it has been the ready and strong resident responses to inappropriate character changing development applications that has seen this place retain most of its attraction. They can't keep expending so much energy and money fighting for this worthy cause ad nauseum.

Tamborine Mountain is not a prospective big money earner for State tourism. Rather it is a vital component of the tourism industry based in Brisbane and the Gold Coast. As a long time world traveler what has been noted is that in every country, in every district, their tourist spiel has always included the area's environmental credentials. In today's world, this is a must key attraction.

The mountain has spectacular views (and more could have been done here), tropical rainforests, fresh air, relaxed semi-rural atmosphere, good restaurants & eating places, country markets (two a month) and roadside stalls amongst other things. Its abundant bird life thrives around the escarpment's lush forests. The visitor numbers of at least 1.5 million each year (the best PR one could wish for) is astronomical compared to that of so many famous places around the world.

So if the State doesn't want to lose a key asset it should be able to come up with something. Whilst we have already tipped over the edge, what's left is still worth saving, perhaps by utilizing some sort of special designation.

We respectfully ask that State government gives this its widest possible attention.

Yours sincerely,

Jeanette Lockey,
President,
Tamborine Mt. Progress Association.

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