

Newsletter - 2.....September, 2021

Tamborine Mountain is facing a broad set of worrying issues.

The previous newsletter covered how “local government” with significant loss of community input was not working the way originally intended. In years gone by, the power in council was held by councillors and bureaucrats fairly equally. Gradually, at least in Scenic Rim, councillors delegated more and more powers to the bureaucrats, resulting in virtually an unelected bureaucracy running council under the leadership of upper management.

With upper management losing the thread with ground level constituents it exacerbates a situation which threatens residents’ aspirations and expectations for their chosen lifestyle.

Two Plans are governing how Tamborine Mountain develops.

Contrary to strong resident input, the release of the *Scenic Rim Planning Scheme 2020* by Scenic Rim Regional Council revealed that the decades long held community concern regarding population growth was ignored. Our earlier planning schemes were constructed ground up with a strong initial community base. This new planning scheme was based on a 75% required content from the state’s planners (*South East Queensland Regional Plan (Shaping SEQ)*).

This is where Scenic Rim Regional Council should have apprised state government of the unusual character of Tamborine Mountain and that it required special planning considerations. It doesn’t fit into a one-size-fits-all plan. It was only after TMPA discussions with the consultant planners for SRRC that a series of small special inserts for the mountain were sprinkled throughout council’s *Scenic Rim Regional Plan 2020*. This was something, but hardly a satisfactory clear picture of mountain distinctions. Loss of mountain character was bound to happen.

The upper level of planning is the state *South East Queensland Regional Plan (Shaping SEQ)*. Nearly twenty years ago, with south east Queensland the fastest growing region in the country, an overall planning strategy for the region became an urgent necessity. State government formed the Office of Urban Management to put in place the basic planning for SEQ – where to put growth, when, associated infrastructure etc. Its first head actually visited Tamborine Mountain to talk to representatives of several organizations to ascertain just what makes communities distinct from each other. He didn’t want towns & villages to start looking the same. Good intentions.

However, with a strict short deadline and the immense amount of work needed to map out the future for the west of Brisbane, as the head planner of Beaudesert Shire Council stated, “Tamborine Mountain was just a blimp on the horizon”.

Planners had been co-opted from around the state for this massive exercise, and in the draft Plan some distant planner put a great pink blob over the whole of Tamborine Mountain. The urban footprint. A huge response from eight mountain organizations plus Beaudesert Shire Council managed to wind this back to about half the plateau (the northern part) – but this was still not satisfactory.

The *South East Queensland Regional Plan (Shaping SEQ)* was upgraded in 2017 and this is the framework by which our *Scenic Rim Planning Scheme 2020* was formed.

Our discussions with representatives of the State Department, Infrastructure & Local Government & Planning and State Assessment Referral Agency (SARA) in December 2020 were followed by a letter to the ministers for Local Government and Tourism in March (*attached to April Newsletter*). Also attached was the reply we received from the State Planner explaining why Dual Occupancy was included in our planning scheme.

With problems are becoming more evident through an open door for unnecessary population growth on the mountain a further letter to the Minister for Local Government has been forwarded. (*attached*).

Unfortunately for us, off mountain planners see us on a sheet of white paper right next door to two highly dense city populations. The same thing happened with the MMM whereby our medical practice was classed as urban to everyone's detriment. A red flag for the mountain would have alerted planners that there are problems with urbanizing Tamborine Mountain. Actually, a supportive council could have helped, but we don't have that.

The attached letter describes in detail why standard planning principles do not apply to Tamborine Mountain.

A reply was received from the state government's State Department, Infrastructure & Local Government & Planning indicating that the Ipswich based SARA was landed with handling a response.

A tele-conference with this department was set up on 6th September.

A spokesperson pointed out the high level strategic policy plane on which they were working but without explaining why it was considered appropriate to increase the mountain's population. It appeared to be all about the quality of high level strategy without full attention to any undesired consequences on the ground. Bearing in mind the potential damage to the mountain's character, it is not understood how adding a few thousand to the mountain's population could possibly affect the distribution of the vast hordes expected to land in SEQ.

SARA had spoken to mayors regarding this population growth Plan. It can be assumed that at this point SRRC couldn't believe its luck. Worryingly SARA was happy with SRRC which was following the state guidelines to the letter for a Growth Management Strategy. Apparently some other councils were less organized.

Several hundred Tamborine Mountain residents responded to Council's "Have your Say" questionnaire as per the state's Section Two of the Growth Management Strategy (*see attached letter for details*). This pretty useless exercise of ticking some boxes with small boxes for surface comment enables council to do whatever it pleases. Scenic Rim Regional Council does not recognize Tamborine Mountain as different from e.g. Beaudesert or Boonah. Then there is the increased rate base of which the mountain provides nearly a quarter.

Problem points for the mountain appeared not to be taken up at the tele-conference – such as the mayor's media statement that a population cap is the preference of some on Tamborine Mountain, but it is not one that could be enforced by a local government. Why not ??

We were advised to muster the troops and have a really good input into Stage Three of the Growth Management Plan due at the end of the year. As this is a review of the already compiled draft plan, our experience is that apart from changing a few words here & there, nothing substantial is altered. No one listened to the comprehensive Dual Occupancy objections during both response time frames.

Also, we were told that whilst a Plan is in progress the minister would not consider a red flag or special designation to protect the mountain's unique and famous character. A planning scheme amendment is due early next year and there is a state review in about a year's time but good luck to anything much changing.

Staff move on and it becomes someone else's problem. Obviously it is all in the far too hard basket. The door is open for population growth till we literally burst at the seams. Too late for action then.

With much media hype about the parlous state of the state's tourism industry there is currently no high level strategic value placed on Tamborine Mountain as a "Green behind the Gold" key asset of south east Queensland.

Jeanette