

BLUEPRINT SURVEY REVEALS COMMUNITY'S VIEWS ON TAMBORINE MOUNTAIN'S FUTURE

In October last year more than 100 Tamborine Mountain community members attended a meeting to discuss how they could capture a vision for a 'Mountain Blueprint' that would provide an overarching plan or pathway to the future.

Eight months later, following a comprehensive and transparent survey of residents' views, we have captured a revealing but not altogether surprising list of opinions that are important to the local community.

Consider the following snapshot:

- 92 per cent of us condemn the sales of aquifer water for commercial purposes
- 52 per cent agree that in time we should consider a move to another council (18 per cent rejecting that), and
- Public transport is the number one topic heading the list of priorities, closely followed by fixing the issues around Gallery Walk

A vision, supported by our community at large, is that Tamborine Mountain should work towards a self-sustaining and sustainable lifestyle, leading the way in Australia. This supports the broadly held concept of the 'Green Behind the Gold'. The Blueprint process, with hundreds of submissions and more than 250 people taking part in the online survey, delivered much more. The TM Blueprint is 100 per cent transparent and community driven. The latest documents, including the Survey outcomes and the remarks by participants can be found online: www.visittamborinemountain.com.au/blueprint.

The main results are presented in six different categories.



NATURE

TM Blueprint confirmed what most of us know already: almost everyone lives on the Mountain because of its green, pristine environment and quaint, rural lifestyle. We also appreciate the fact that this environment is shared with many visitors, including the benefit that it brings the economy and jobs to our town. A concern about how best to balance the protection of nature while locals and tourists access

nature is an ongoing issue, as local residents only have limited control.

The majority appreciates our current water supply system and sewerage structure but believe there is a need for better monitoring and compliance. Commercial water off-mountain sales are rejected by 92 per cent. Profits from these sales hugely benefit the owner of the bore which in effect is selling a community resource, a recent court case by the Progress Association revealed.

It's believed that a local non-government organisation (NGO) for 'green activities' would be a solution to increase the involvement of the local community, creating more financial benefits and influencing regulations. It could be a local organisation coordinating efforts to reduce negative impacts of high visitor numbers on the rainforests, establishing a biosphere and increasing biodiversity. Above all, it could increase professional involvement of locals in nature-based tourism.



PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Lack of public transport to a railway station at the Gold Coast, as well as local public transport (hop on, hop off), stand out as a major concern for the Mountain, for locals and visitors alike. Questions to consider are a series of failed past attempts when trying to solve this, and the struggle to find solutions if bus lines cross council boundaries (as would be the case here).



COMMUNITY

An upgrade of the existing swimming pool is important for many locals, as is the MMM zoning issue for healthcare. It was only after this topic was raised by TM Blueprint in *Scenic News* that our federal member stepped in and took action which delayed a final decision on the issue till January 2020. An art/environmental centre and further improvements of the library are highly valued. More options to recycle waste and reduce the use of plastic (bottles) also score high. A limit on further subdivisions is important as well.



TOURISM

Gallery Walk is an eye-sore for business people and local residents alike. The existing plans for a complete overhaul of Gallery Walk/Cook Road should be implemented, according to the majority (60 per cent). 'The Green Behind the Gold' is a theme that is supported widely in the community. It should not only be a marketing slogan but also have a meaning in conservation terms. The Mountain should be an exemplary location to experience sustainable living in a high-quality, natural environment. Renewable energy, low-plastic policies and a focus on nature should be drivers for tourism policies.



ECONOMY/INFRASTRUCTURE

The community understands the need to improve the management of tourism, as well as the resulting traffic; without improvements the impact of tourism will be unsustainable. Most of us don't feel that this issue is well managed by the responsible governmental bodies. Opening up the Long Road extension sooner rather than later will alleviate congestion and ease the flow of traffic, plus give an alternative route should there be a severe weather event. The proposed 'circular cycling/footpath' for school kids, locals and tourists is widely anticipated.



GOVERNMENT

Our rates – twice as high as in the Gold Coast – are not the most popular Council policy to state it mildly; it does not deliver value for money. Overall the community is not happy with the current Council and their responses indicate that It is a good moment to consider a move to a cheaper, and economically stronger Council (52 per cent agree with this proposition, 18 per cent disagrees and 30 per cent are neutral). Some 70 per cent said they don't care under which Council the Mountain resides, as long as our environment is protected, development is limited, and rates are cheaper.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The outcomes of the TM Blueprint process so far have recently been shared with the respective presidents of the Progress Association (TMPA) and the Chamber of Commerce (TMCCI), Jeanette Lockey and Alison Rip. They share most of the concerns expressed in the TM Blueprint process.

Currently efforts are being made to define ways to achieve some of the 'high priority' goals.

The TM Blueprint Team is considering how the topics raised in the Blueprint survey can be addressed, including whether a specialised working group should investigate the potential options for some form of public transport.

It will offer Scenic Rim Council a presentation of the outcomes to discuss where Council can, or won't, support the community. If the outcome is deemed not good enough, it believes Gold Coast City Council should receive the same approach. The Team which is not beholden to any specific group, individual or opinion, will report back to the community.

Groups that are already addressing issues can benefit from the statistical data. Examples are Save Our Water, TMPA's Biosphere initiative, MMM zoning discussion with doctors, Scenic cycle path group and Chamber of Commerce's efforts to implement the Gallery Walk plan.

If the Blueprint Team receives requests to organise a community meeting to share and discuss the TM Blueprint with the broader community, then that will be done. For now, the policy is to present all outcomes to the community. In addition, some high priority topics will be identified and addressed in the most effective way. For some topics the community can take action; others require involvement of local groups or of government.

The TM Blueprint process itself is strongly supported by the community: 80 to 90 per cent appreciate it and believe that it should be used as a guideline of local public opinion.

To make sure that TM Blueprint stays alive, a group will be established to coordinate follow-up, including regular feedback to the community.

Jaap Vogel