



PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2010

The Noosa Civic Stage-3 legal battle continues into 2011. The development application (DA) remains so far outside the Noosa Plan that Noosa Parks Association (NPA) continues to call for outright refusal of the application. NPA remains a co-respondent in this matter and is determined to stay in until the bitter end. This remains a shopping precinct on an enormous scale that Noosa neither needs nor wants and the ramifications of it being allowed to metastasise to its proposed size are frightening. Furthermore, if this DA is approved, a precedent will have been set for future excessive development applications to succeed.

2010 confirmed one of NPA's deepest fears about our regional council: when pressured by state government over development issues, it would simply roll over. Once the Sunshine Coast Council (SCC) demonstrated it lacked the intestinal fortitude to say no to the State Government at the outset of the Caloundra South proposal, the State Government knew it could act as it pleased. We are now left with a proposed development the size of the city of Bundaberg under the farcical guise of much-needed 'affordable housing'. The outrage expressed by both council and community was once again too little too late – attempting to close the stable door once the horse has bolted appears a recurrent theme amongst SCC. It is likely that the SCC's early acquiescence on Caloundra South led directly to the State Government taking planning and development control away from Council.

This reinforces NPA belief that a new, improved, stand-alone Noosa Shire is imperative if we are to ensure that the local community has an ongoing say as to how our neck of the woods is managed over the next 50 years and beyond. NPA hope is thus for a council with a comprehensive conservation policy. One that will ensure the blueprint for limiting excessive development is firmly in place, thereby minimising the risk of the proverbial bushfire starting. This is in distinct opposition to the current council approach of trying to put out multiple bushfires once they've started. The inevitable question is this: will having a strong, visionary new Noosa Council guarantee that Noosa's famed population cap will not be run roughshod over by a belligerent future state government? There is no guarantee. It may happen that Noosa's population cap is undermined by State Government actions, **but** it's certainly not inevitable.

There have been at least two occasions in the past where the State Government has threatened Noosa Council with dismissal, and both times our former Council stood its ground and the State took no action. We thus need a council with vision and backbone. The problem is that our current Councillors are not prepared to put their jobs on the line for their community. We need a new Noosa Council, supported by its constituents, that is willing to fend off bullying by State Government.

What is the alternative? What if we do not de-amalgamate, instead remaining part of the monolithic SCC? The king hit will eventually come on the planning front. We now have a Council unwilling and unprepared to protect Noosa values by taking on the State Government. Without a strong local Council, population pressure in SE Queensland will consign Noosa's population cap to history. Congestion of roads and public places will follow. Development interests hungry for windfall profits will carve up Noosa's rural districts. Chillingly, mayor Abbot is on record proclaiming that Noosa's hard-won population cap could be "flexible".

Ian Seels
President