

Submission to Clarence Valley Council re Draft Local Strategic Planning Statement.

The following questions and comments are those provided in an on-line questionnaire to Clarence Valley Council for public comment. My responses from the heart are as follows

4, Where are the places you love in the Clarence Valley?

In the rainforests, coastal heathlands, and anywhere nature is still relatively unspoiled

5, Please explain the reasons why you like those places.

These areas are rich in biodiversity, and biodiversity provides us with everything we eat and much of what we wear. They provide us with the air we breathe and filter our drinking water, eco-services they provide to us absolutely free, so must be conserved.

6, Which places in the Clarence Valley could be better?

The river and creek banks could be much improved. The Clarence River in particular is an absolute disgrace, we have cattle trampling the banks and defecating in the river, they have been stripped of almost all native vegetation leaving them exposed to erosion and weed infestation. It's a total tragedy that nobody cares enough to try to protect them, first of all be excluding livestock and secondly revegetating them.

7, Please rank the LSPS themes in order of importance.

Environment

8. In regards to land use planning, what needs to change to facilitate recovery and make Clarence valley communities more resilient?

As landowners operate within a catchment, I strongly believe they have a social responsibility based on the fact that whatever they do on their properties have the potential to impact on everyone downstream.

I strongly disagree with the "right to farm" philosophy which questions the right of "laté sipping city dwellers" to dictate what they can or cannot do. It is curious that those same landowners are the first to demand the Government help them out when drought, fire or floods impact their business. They seem to completely overlook the fact that it is not the Government that provides the relief funding, it is ultimately the taxpayers of Australia, with the laté sipping city dwellers contributing the most.

As a result, I believe any farming activity, that results in land clearing or land-use change, should be required to present an environmental impact statement (EIS), which includes social impacts. Where water use is concerned, a comprehensive water management plan should be presented with that EIS, explaining in detail how much water is required and where it will come from.

Ultimately, compliance monitoring and enforcement are crucial. Without it we might as well have no regulations at all.

It should also be recognised that more than 75% of land currently grazed in the Clarence Valley is

low fertility and not only environmentally destructive, but economically unviable. With the enormous threat to both the environment and mankind from global heating, here is an imperative to increase carbon sequestration through allowing forests to grow, and more forests to develop. Therefore Council has a responsibility to lobby governments to introduce some form of carbon trading scheme to allow landowners to cash in on an alternate income stream to the currently unsustainable grazing activities, which only cause erosion, weed invasion and a drop in water quality across the region.

9, Which Priorities or Actions in the Draft LSPS are most important for the Clarence Valley, particularly in the short term?

The following is the list of priorities to choose from

- 1. Support the development of a Resilience Strategy for the Clarence to help identify projects and actions to better inform land use and infrastructure planning and identify future funding sources. Work with relevant agencies to update our natural hazard management approach, including emergency management arrangements, hazard reduction, evacuation plans, bushfire mapping and land use plans.*
- 2. Strengthen relationships with Aboriginal people, including work with Traditional Owners, Local Aboriginal Land Councils and work with State government on development opportunities. Engage with Aboriginal communities on strategic planning and caring for country.*
- 3. Update our Local Environment Plan and Development Control Plans to ensure alignment with the Regional Plan and our other priorities to support recovery and development.*
- 4. Develop a Local Growth Management Strategy (LGMS) which will update the Clarence Valley Settlement Strategy 1999, in line with current planning considerations and community expectations to support a sustainable population.*
- 5. Prepare a Housing Strategy (incl. social and affordable housing), including a supply and demand assessment.*
- 6. Revise our development contributions plan in line with expected guidance from State government.*
- 7. Prepare an Integrated Freight Transport Plan to map and protect corridors, support freight and logistics, and inform future planning decisions.*
- 8. Prepare an Active Transport Plan and review Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plans (PAMPs) and integrate 'place making' and transport plans for our town centres.*
- 9. Support the Grafton CBD and other centres through developing 'place making' strategies to activate the CBD. These should celebrate our heritage, while considering car parking, pedestrian and access mobility, events and our sub-tropical climate.*
- 10. Work with industry to attract employment generating activity and update demand and supply studies for employment land. Progress investigations, planning and zoning for land around the Airport, Koolkhan, South Grafton and other areas.*
- 11. Support and grow the agricultural sector, protect important agricultural land and facilitate improvements in the supply chain to support economic activity, primary producers and the agri-food sector.*
- 12. Develop Local Character Statements for coastal villages.*
- 13. Implement our revised Biodiversity Strategy 2020.*
- 14. Reinstate Grafton as a Regional City in the North Co*

Numbers 12 and 13 are good, There is a certain charm about coastal villages that provide serenity and peace in an increasingly stressful world, and it is imperative for the Biodiversity Management Strategy to be implemented. Number 1, also has merit in deciding what areas are suitable for agriculture.

10, Are there Priorities or Actions in the Draft LSPS that should be changed?

Number 4 should not be a consideration in my opinion. Growth by its very definition is unsustainable over the long term. Number 10 should be approached with great caution to exclude mining in our fragile environment, along with other heavy industry and port facilities that should not be on the agenda as they are contrary to various council and state government strategy vision statements.

John Edwards

* * *