

We The People

Program 113

Our Precious Forests



Put on your Nike's and try this. Imagine walking from Southport to Main River or Robina Town Center to Mudgeeraba or from Currumbin Beach to Tugun or Hope Island to Sanctuary Cove. These walking distances have one thing in common in that they are about 2 km or just over 1.2 miles. Most people with reasonable health could walk that, given a little time because relative to so many other journeys it's not far as the crow flies. We walk at about 4 km an hour so at that rate it would take around half an hour to cover the distance. Now that you have a feel for how far 2km is, imagine that distance straight skyward and the result is you would be out of breathable atmosphere. This thin band of air around planet earth is all we have in terms of a minimum life sustaining oxygen level of just 16% at around 2 km or 1.2 miles. Earth's atmosphere at sea level contains about 21% oxygen but at 2 km it falls to just 16%. At 5km it's only 10% let alone at low pressure making breathing very difficult, while at the summit of mount Everest the oxygen level is a terminal 6%.

Now given this it would seem pretty important to me that we look after the atmosphere and especially oxygen levels. Green house gasses are another issue as well but I'm not referring to that today. All this begs the question, where does the earth's oxygen come from and surely as we burn it relentlessly its pretty important to ensure its replaced. Half our planets oxygen comes from phytoplankton in our oceans which use the suns energy to consume carbon dioxide and release oxygen. The other half comes from photosynthesis on land by trees, shrubs, grasses, and other plants. In fact the earth's forests are absolutely vital to our oxygen supply. Now forests also create habitat for animals and birds and a myriad of other creatures and stabilise the climate and hold the earth firm. So wouldn't it make sense to look after our forests?

Now enter Campbell Newman the Premier of Queensland. In his headlong campaign to get business moving it appears he has placed little or no emphases on our States forests except a commercial one. For the record Queensland, which is 13 times the size of England or 7 times the size of New Zealand has just 5% of the land devoted to national parks. Over the last 100 years Queensland's forests have been decimated and now only exist in pockets where wildlife corridors are limited or nonexistent. It's been the result of ignorance and stupidity and in more recent times, greed. Now Mr Newman wants to allow mining and cattle grazing and tourist development in our limited and priceless national parks and wilderness areas. He is also reviewing the status for national parks which means we could actually lose some. There are a few concerned organisations which fight the tide which includes Gold Coasts Gecko, National Parks Association of Queensland, Queensland Conservation and Wild life and many other smaller groups too. It appears however that their work is in vain due to a recalcitrant short sighted LNP government and general public apathy.

Remember, half the earth's oxygen comes from forests and plants and yet we don't value them and the Newman State government clearly is arrogant in its refusal to listen or to act in the long term best environmental interest of the State and the nation. On this base alone it is well on its way to spoiling Queensland all in the name of business and little else. Mind you Campbell's lot have to move quickly because of the massive debt left by the Beattie Bligh Governments but that's no excuse for not caring about our States contribution to the planets oxygen.....remember we all share it. Surely too the forests and national parks are worth so much more in every possible ecological way and if we care we need to tell the State government its hands off our forests and vote for the people who understand the canary in the mine is in trouble. How much further must we approach the precipice and how much more Russian roulette can we play with the biosphere and our magnificent life sustaining planet before the inevitable tipping point. In my view Campbell Newman doesn't care and it appears the Mayor Tom Tate doesn't see the environment as a priority either. Just try and get a meeting with either of them about the issue and see for yourself. Now if you care speak up and reflect on the life giving properties of our forests because your life depends on them.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley