

We The People
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We the People 226 **The Tweed Valley Election**



Good day to you. This weekend the good folk of the Tweed will vote in their Council elections. This is the democratic freedom we all enjoy and which is denied so many on planet earth. The question is whether the people of the Tweed will vote with knowledge and conviction or just toss a coin and tick a box, any box. When one looks back at the performance of the Tweed Council it's not impressive especially when it comes to looking after the Tweed, ecologically and environmentally. In fact my friends, if you keep on doing what you are then you will follow the Gold Coast into lifestyle and environmental oblivion. Many of the voices Tweedundians hear are those who claim the political high ground and promise development and jobs and yet what they are often doing is planting the seeds of destruction of your beautiful valley and coastline. Let's consider that for a moment.

In the medium term the population of the Tweed is set to grow by 37,000 people. Where will they live and where will they work and what will be the cost to the Tweed community and its environment. Unfortunately it may be the same as the Gold Coast where systematically lifestyle gives way to congestion, crime, corruption and loss of natural habitat and in Tweed's case the **extinction of the Koala**. Massive population growth is not your friend and will not generate long term jobs and in part the population growth is driven by immigration into Australia which has now reached absurd proportions. Around the world those countries with stable smaller populations have the best lifestyles so don't let the developer contingent tell you their industry represents wealth and progress, when in reality it may well support greed and the lust for power. Again look at the Gold Coast and look at your beautiful valley and coastline and do all you can to preserve it for the people who will settle there and value its natural beauty, heritage and biodiversity.

Governments at all levels are foolishly reactive when it comes to development in that they encourage building and population but don't plan the infrastructure. Tweed is no different. Think about the areas of Cobaki Lakes, Kings Forest, Area E Terranora, Billambil Rise and Dunloe Park all marked for massive human expansion and for what. These areas may well become congested treeless enclaves where unemployment abounds in the future. As 'birds of a feather flock together' so like attracts like, hence be very cautious about what Council approves and what you encourage in the way of building and expansion. The amount of lovely places to live on earth is diminishing and in the Tweed you have much to be proud of and conversely so much to lose.

My heart goes to the **iconic Koala** and its current plight in the Tweed. Here are some facts to consider when you vote. Between the years 2000 and 2010 the Tweed coastal Koala numbers declined by 50 %. The decline has been ongoing since then and in 2015 the NSW Scientific Committee formally listed the Tweed Coast koalas as endangered and **in imminent danger of extinction** if nothing is done. That's a catastrophic fall in numbers and an alarming prognosis for the future yet the Tweed Council appears to have ignored the advice given in the Tweed Coast Habitat study of 2011 directed by world Koala expert Steve Philips. I have met Steve and he knows his stuff. Let me be clear here in that not all Councillors are environmentally negligent and some are most worthwhile people. Unfortunately there is also a contingent of pseudo Gold Coast developer types who believe a rapid population increase represents progress when in fact it represents **regress**. So the Tweed Council is a house divided in my view and that should be avoided at this election. My strong advice to you good folk in the Tweed is to vote for those who value the environment **as well as the people** and who know what they are talking about. When you hear the mantra about jobs for young people be very careful because it's probably just an excuse to over populate and line the pockets of the wealthy. Vote for progressive Councillors who know how important it is to be part of a happy community and the value of the environment because without those two things the Tweed will fail and become just like the Gold Coast. God help you.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley