

**We The People**  
Program 52  
The Tweed Wars - 2



The scenic Tweed Valley born from an ancient eruption now draws tremors of another kind with a seismic split in the community and a Council of indecision, abdication and arrogance. These are the Tweed Wars. What on earth is wrong with the community there, where they seem paralysed and incapable of designing a forward thinking blue print for themselves and their children. Its brother against brother and sister against sister as some misguided minority groups claim they are driven by the environment but fail to communicate and go about their business by being adversarial on the public purse. Then there's the feral people contingent and I don't know where to place them on the yellow brick road of wizardry. Finally we have the Council which seems almost incapable of making a decision while the community endure their inconsistent and weak decision making. The Tweed Council seem immobilized with double standards and a case in question is a matter considered at the recent Council meeting.

The issue is about a gallery café called the She-Oak Shack which is apparently a popular meeting place on the river at Fingal. It appears the matter was clear cut with the proprietor not complying with significant Council requirements and yet the Council used every excuse to yet again defer the matter and not enforce their own bylaws and regulations. The public gallery was filled with rent a crowd supporters of the She-Oak Shack and their rowdy behavior was testimony to a rag tag group of people incapable of considering the future of the Tweed or each other. As an onlooker I was embarrassed for all the good folk in the Valley who want positive change and strong leadership. Right on cue the matter was again deferred by Council with the new GM saying very little on the subject. One councilor declared a pecuniary interest but winked at the assembled gallery of Shack supporters before leaving the meeting. That councilor is the sister of the owner of the cafe.

After the meeting I travelled to see the She-Oak Shack café for myself. I was really surprised to see a dilapidated humpy of sorts which would make good kindling and a place where I wouldn't eat or drink as I value my health. It's simply a disgrace and the council should at the very least dispatch a health inspector and fire officer to properly measure its suitability to trade safely. Why aren't they made to comply and the Council not acting is testimony to its inability to deal fairly with trading and safety issues let alone plan for the future of the Tweed Valley.

Now an observation regarding my first few hours in Murwillumbah. I drove onto the bridge under the Hare Krishna school sign, past a number of hairy folk in disheveled dress, past a car with 'Cows are Sacred' scrawled in the dust on the back glass and then onto the Council of indecision. Inside a raving loony demanded to sit with councilors and unfortunately ended up in front of me. It's a war of so called grubby greens and a council afraid of reality and lurching from one flawed decision to another. I also met a lot of right thinking people and business owners who are concerned for the future of the Tweed Valley. I met ordinary genuine Australians who are raising families or are retired but I also sensed public apathy equal to the Gold Coast. There is no plan or direction in the Tweed and frankly no hope until these various warring factions start talking to each other and call a truce. The She-Oak Shack issue is actually a metaphor for what's wrong in general in the Tweed Valley.

Now there is hope but time is not on the side of the Tweed with an aging population, low work participation figures and insufficient jobs. They can have a wonderful environment and a successful economy but it needs sane sensible communication and a recognition that there has to be positive change. All this and the Koalas are still dying while a number of cane farmers will not plant this year. I believe an administrator should be appointed to Council and the competent business and civic leaders and true real environmentalists come together in order to put in place a 50 year plan for the Tweed Valley. The Tweed Wars will leave a dreadful legacy for generations to come if not addressed now. **Until next time this is Kent Bayley**