

We The People
Program 53
The Tweed Wars - 3



During the week I interviewed Tom Senti a local business man and senior elder from The Tweed valley. Tom knows full well the fire that waits to be ignited there but despairs at the smoldering future of the areas hopes and dreams at present. Tom says it how it is and I like him for that and his work with the Tweed Economic Development Corporation. When speaking of the future of the area he says its best viewed from 20,000 feet because at that altitude you can see the whole picture and plan accordingly.

The Tweed stands at the cross roads and the upcoming local government elections will be very important and set the direction of the Tweed for many years to come. Unfortunately I don't have much faith in a positive outcome as the candidates seem like a weak lot to me with no apparent vision or plan for the future. Tweedundians must look for that leading light and courageous person to say 'follow me' because I have a well thought out practical plan. Now the Tweed has plenty of people of the right caliber but it seems they won't stand for Council because they fear being just a target for the loud people who neither sow nor reap and I can't blame them.

The Tweed is driven mostly by the service industry and in fact that accounts for over 90% of business. Tourism and agriculture including sugar cane farms account for well under 10% so the paradigm has shifted with seismic force over the last few decades. The work participation rate is just 42% compared with Australia's national rate of 65% so clearly more symbiotic jobs are required. There are about 93,000 people living in the area from Tweed Heads across the valley and Muwillumbah but less than 20,000 work in the area. I could go on with the statistics but they reveal to all that positive change is needed and fast. It's my own belief that a 50 year plan is required which should also be the way the gold Coast is governed. If your definition of progress is population growth alone then you're wrong and especially in this dry continent or on our precious coastal strip. The Tweed's population will grow but should be kept to sustainable levels for business and the community and most importantly the environment. My hope is planting trees will attract positive carbon credits and be a silent and productive source of income across this barren nation.

Local government is chartered with managing services and infrastructure to the area. Many have now grown to believe their charter includes building a future and a master plan which I don't think is their role or their skill set. Bureaucracy and politics is an unhappy marriage and a wasteful one too where time after time we despair at the colossal waste of our taxes at all levels of government. So The Tweed has a unique opportunity to keep the Council just managing services and infrastructure and appoint a specialised group with power to design a sensible long term plan for the Tweed Valley. State intervention may be required to ensure the enlightened plans were not just deferred or bypassed by the lack of horsepower in Tweed Council. The vision I have is beyond their own town planning department which appears to be suffering bureaucratic grid lock. It's time to be creative and it's time to appreciate the significant limitations to the local government structure. Don't feel alone because here on the Gold Coast the same thing applies where elected members are not capable of making considered decisions at this level of planning.

When you vote understand you are having a hand in shaping your communities future and every vote counts. If you don't know who to vote for then take the time to find out. Democracy is your weapon and your passport to a great future in the Tweed Valley while apathy and disinterest will sink you and your beautiful environment. Remember, for evil to prevail only requires good people to do nothing.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley