

NOOSA PARKS ASSOCIATION Inc.

NOOSA PARKS ASSOCIATION
ENVIRONMENT CENTRE

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17 September 2023

Hon Steven Miles
Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development,
Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning
E: shapingseqsubmissions@dsdilgp.qld.gov.au
E: deputy.premier@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Re: Shaping SEQ 2023 Update

Dear Minister Miles,

Noosa Parks Association is Queensland's oldest and largest local community-based conservation organisation. We welcome the opportunity of making a submission on the Shaping SEQ 2023 Update.

Introduction

Noosa Parks Association notes that the Queensland State Government is committed to significant population growth and economic development across SEQ over the next 25 years, and that it is requesting that relevant SEQ local government authorities make provisions to this end. Noosa Parks Association submits that Noosa Council can best play its part by:

- i) Getting Noosa's future housing mix right, so that Noosa Shire's economic potential will not be hampered by a deficit of available and affordable housing that is already leading to worker shortages.
- ii) Getting Noosa's resident-tourist balance right, so that Noosa once again becomes an attractive and environmentally sustainable place to call home, or to visit.

Getting Noosa's future housing mix right

Noosa Shire is already suffering from a serious lack of available and affordable housing stock. Many businesses report that they are struggling to find local workers. Some resort facilities are even giving up tourism rental space to provide housing for their staff. Thanks to disruption arising from the short-stay on-line accommodation sector (Airbnb, Stayz etc), Noosa is experiencing the same problem faced by many other popular coastal destinations: a lack of long-term housing stock. This, in turn, is having an impact on Noosa businesses and, more broadly, on the Noosa community.

Noosa Council needs to amend its town planning instruments to both increase and diversify its social and affordable housing stock. Unless and until Noosa Council takes active measures to diversify housing, as well as create avenues for long-term rental accommodation, the current crisis in worker availability will continue to hamper Noosa Shire's economic trajectory.

Noosa Parks Association is aware that Noosa Council has gone some way towards addressing this issue - at least at the policy level - in its Noosa Housing Strategy which includes a "review of planning scheme provisions to ensure more affordable models of housing are not over-regulated or disincentivised."

We are also aware that Noosa Council has submitted a suite of proposed amendments to their planning scheme to address its housing crisis. We recognise that these submissions to the Queensland Government remain confidential and are currently on pause.

Noosa Parks Association submits that Noosa has moved past the point where market-based development of more high-density accommodation can deliver the affordable accommodation required. Already, increases in available accommodation are only available to high net-worth purchasers, not average working individuals or families.

Noosa Parks Association urges the Queensland Government to ensure that Noosa Council clearly demonstrates that it has strategies in place to facilitate sufficient social and affordable housing to meet current and future worker/resident accommodation requirements.

Getting Noosa's destination management right

Clearly the envisaged population increase across SEQ will disproportionately impact on Noosa. With more people living in SEQ, there will be many more drive-in visitors wanting to experience Noosa. As one of the nation's most iconic tourism meccas, there is a very real risk that Noosa will be choked by year-round over-tourism, with an attendant loss of both visitor experience and resident amenity.

Noosa Council's current destination management puts the interests of tourists ahead of residents. It can and must get the balance right.

Noosa Council's destination management challenge is to provide a delightfully relaxed and appealing recreational experience for visitors in a way that is both environmentally responsible and which complements rather than detracts from resident amenity.

If Noosa Council is to deliver such an outcome, it will need do some heavy lifting sooner rather than later. To succeed, a revised destination management strategy will need to gain support from the Queensland Government, Tourism Queensland, the Noosa tourism industry, and the Noosa community. In the face of increasing tourism pressures resulting from SEQ population growth, this issue has never been more urgent.

As part of its current SEQ regional plan negotiations with Noosa Council, Noosa Parks Association urges the Queensland Government to seek evidence from Noosa Council that it is serious about doing the necessary heavy lifting to get the resident-tourist destination management balance right.

Conclusion

Noosa Parks Association submits that the answers to the problems associated with housing affordability, adequate worker accommodation, community wellbeing and destination management will not be achieved through either increasing building heights nor by changing residential zonings or enlarging urban footprints.

Indeed, the existing low building heights and lack of "big city" symbols (advertising hoardings, traffic lights etc) are crucial to Noosa's success as a unique tourism destination. City dwellers specifically choose to come to Noosa because it is so different to their home milieu.

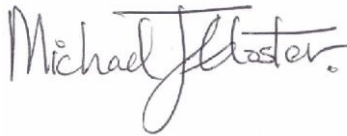
What's more, new housing generated by private developer interests has not and cannot meet Noosa's need for affordable housing. The rapid increase of land values across the shire has ensured this is the case. We are aware that Noosa Council has begun to consider how best to achieve affordable housing through utilising existing Council-owned land and assets.

Finding the ideal balance between Noosa's tourism and economic needs, liveability for residents, and the shire's significant ecological values is a task that only governments can foster. We therefore ask that the Queensland Government work with the Noosa Council to progress:

1. A viable destination management strategy that respects and protects resident amenity and provides equitable access to visitors, and
2. A housing diversity strategy that isn't simply applying big city solutions to a locale that has long been successfully marketing itself as the alternative to big city life.

Thanks to you and your team for considering this submission, and we look forward to a favourable outcome for both Noosa and Queensland.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Michael Gloster". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line above the first name.

Dr Michael Gloster OAM
Vice President
Noosa Parks Association