

We The People
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Good day to you. Springbrook is a mountain and plateau area, in Springbrook National Park, west of the Gold Coast. This magnificent green wilderness is part of the ancient Gondwana Rainforest, home to an abundance of wildlife including koalas and rare birds. Dramatic Purling Brook Falls flow most of the time because of the significant annual rainfall while Twin Falls dramatically cascade into 3 rock pools. Nearby the cave like Natural Bridge was formed by the force of water and remnants of an ancient Antarctic Beech forest nearby seem wildly prehistoric. It's a peaceful green sanctuary and a precious rare example of what the earth was like without people. In 1994 UNESCO listed it in their world heritage register.

I recently travelled to Springbrook and met with local resident Ceris Ash who lives alongside these pristine forests and waterways. She and her husband Mark are dedicated green guardians focused on looking after this true paradise and they are not on their own. An emerging problem at Springbrook is water mining where bore holes are drilled down between 60 and 100 meters and the ground water extracted. From here it's taken away in huge tankers holding 28,000 litres with total extraction at **31 million litres a year** and that's all trucked away toward Brisbane to be bottled as '**spring water**' or some equally ill-conceived deceptive term. The truth is it's all bore water often lacking the mineral components we need. Would you buy and drink a bottle of bore water, I wouldn't. According to Ceris some bottled water brands are owned by Coca Cola, which also owns a property at Springbrook where several bores are located. They appear unconcerned about robbing the water table which feeds the national park streams and waterfalls and the world heritage forest and ultimately Hinze Dam. The Tweed Water Alliance correctly describes water mining as a lawless industry without proper or effective regulation. Our town water is subject to stringent testing and regulations to be sure it's safe to drink but bottled water is categorised as a food product and not subject to the same control. Town water also has tiny levels of fluoride added to help strengthen teeth as this element occurs naturally in the environment but bottled bore water may or may not have fluoride and in some extreme cases the level of fluoride may be much greater than in the town water supply or none at all. Tap water has relatively high levels of minerals like calcium and magnesium more than the bottle brands so tap water could be sold as mineral water. The pH and acid levels vary as well, with a pH of 7 being neutral while the lower the number the more acidic the water while under '4' tooth enamel can be damaged. Some major brands of bottled water wouldn't pass tap water tests with a pH down 3.7.

Apart from the problems with bottled water robbing the national park of precious ground water, there is the massive waste problem of the plastic bottles. Currently about **112,000 litres a day** are being extracted from the Springbrook world heritage site which represents about **31 million litres a year** or an equivalent **62 million half litre plastic bottles**. If the water miners and Coca Cola have their way this may increase to 84 million litres a year or **168 million half litre plastic bottle** equivalent. The scale of this water extraction at Springbrook is a national disgrace and all to pretend it's 'spring water' and somehow better for us. **Its bore water**, so it's all high grade marketing nonsense. Surely the Gold Coast Council and the State government must move to control this because in dryer times many little streams and beautiful waterfalls are drying up now at Springbrook and it's simply not worth the risk just to sell **bore water as spring water** or some kind of pure liquid, when tap water is far superior and way cheaper at just .2 cents for a half litre. The quantity of water extraction is huge and so, are we prepared to see this potentially dry out the forest and lay waste to the land and the wildlife that lives there. See this for what it is as a short term money grab risking a national park of world status on the Gold Coast.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley