

We The People Program 51



The Tweed Wars - 1

Millennia ago a seismic convulsion ripped the earth open and a massive volcano spewed out sulfur, ash and lava. This mountain of magma was 100 kilometers wide and 2 kilometers high and was by any measure a cataclysmic event. Over time the geological furnace died away and weathered to an impressive valley with a rock hard volcanic core prominent at its center. Time and weather produced an Eden like fertile land we know today as the Tweed Valley and Mount Warning is testament as its dead heart. Back then the earth was at war with itself and today a new war rages in the Tweed Valley but this time between the community and the Tweed Council with a pyroclastic flow of developers on the ramparts.

A division of thought and philosophy has been sending tremors through the area for years and its reached a point where neither side is winning and a stale mate has occurred which is working against the community and the land as a whole. The nub of the problem is seen as the Greenies vs the Council and so called progress where locally, you live in one camp or the other. I don't like the phrase 'Greenies' as it tends to unfairly group anyone concerned with the environment into one antagonistic group. Being aware of our environment and being concerned for future generations is a noble thing but in the Tweed a few of these leafy larrikins are misguided hypocrites. In turn the Council seems grid locked in decision making and shackled to a bureaucracy which sees any environmental input as stifling progress. This is where it gets tricky because as with Gold Coast Council any expansion and forest clearing is seen as progress which may or may not improve society. The opposite of progress is 'regress' and continual growth and expansion is an impossible concept for a healthy happy community. Real progress means stalling population growth and to live in sustainable harmony with the earth and each other. Neither council really understands that and if the Tweed wants a cruise liner terminal then we have one on the drawing board you can have right now. The Gold Coast mayor thinks its progress along with a nuclear power station.

In terms of beauty the Tweed Valley it is indeed a scenic place but it depends on your vision. The Council and tourism web sites show a beautiful river reflecting the sky and pictures of Koalas and bird life together with the ubiquitous sunrise from Mount Warning and a host of colourful metaphors. The reality however is that Camphor Laurels crowd out the natural bush and the remnant Koala populations are endangered while there is no riparian river bank forest from the sea to Murwillumbah and beyond. Vast sugar cane plantations act like truffids and pesticides and fertilizers run off into water ways. It's the Council and communities inability to see it for what it is that's a worry and frankly except for the national parks the Tweed Valley is an ecological and environmental shambles. What one person sees as picturesque another sees as so removed from what it should be that the result is not beautiful at all.

The new GM of the Tweed Council, David Keenan said recently, "I believe the economic environmental and social infrastructure in Tweed Shire has the potential to be utilized to create competitive advantages that add value to the Tweeds diverse communities". This is bureaucratic speak for how long winded can I be and really say absolutely nothing of consequence. When you break the words down its almost meaningless but sounds regal at first pass. I fear with this tired meaningless double speak that the good folk in the Tweed need to be concerned. If you truly respect the valley and your communities then don't fall for more incompatible development because if you do then you will lose even more of what you prize. This should be about preserving and building a wonderful life style and reclaiming the original natural wonder of the ancient volcanic miracle. If you do, then the right business will flourish and not simply more harsh development which is out of step with real quality of life. My next few narratives will focus on more about the Tweed and the current war going on which if not checked will surely destroy your valley. These are the Tweed Wars.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley