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Should other Councils follow Noosa's population capping example?

By Paul Summers



By the early 2000s all south-east Queensland local governments were carefully measuring their population levels and matching their financial capacity to supply infrastructure.

A little more than a decade ago when we first began seriously measuring the population capacity in Noosa there was serious laughter. Regional planners, State politicians, State bureaucrats and other local governments had a great giggle at Noosa's expense.

We checked our water licences to determine whether we could draw sufficient water to supply our anticipated population at a reasonable cost to our community.

Of course we found that if we reduced our population capacity, for those on a reticulated supply to a permanent resident figure of around 40,000, then we did have sufficient water based on the agreements then held with the State.

What we could not predict was the future price of water.

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"Economic and environmental strategy are not mutually exclusive": Noosa CEO

NOOSA Council sits easily on the coast with a population balanced neatly with infrastructure. Residents have given it the thumbs up for lifestyle and environmental sustainability. [read more](#)

Mary River Traveston Dam fight continues

To the chant of "No Dams" Queensland Premier Peter Beattie entered the Pavilion at the Gympie Showgrounds to announce details of the proposed Traveston Crossing dam. [read more](#)

Dams leaving us high and dry. Pictorial account gets to the bottom of the issue

It was my information-gathering visit to the Sunwater website that set off a four-day chain of events. Sunwater is

So Noosa Council chose to live within its means and limit the levels of population or, more precisely, the extent of permissible development and thereby population in the Shire. Once again the peals of laughter rang out!

All this took place in the period 1994-97, but Noosa persisted and, despite the mirth, put in place planning provisions that saw a limit on development designed to meet the community desires relating to character, the environmental capacity of the area and our ability to supply critical infrastructure such as water.

A decade on when Mayor Bob Abbot calls for south-east Queensland to seriously consider whether there should be limits placed on growth to ensure that we have adequate water and other infrastructure. Once more the laughter rings out. Peter Beattie says: "I wish the growth wasn't as high as it is, in terms of numbers ... but it's simply not possible to [cap numbers] and that's one of the reasons why we have to build these dams ...".

Well the local governments that were full of mirth looking at Noosa, were not so a few short years later. By the early 2000s all south-east Queensland local governments were carefully measuring their population levels and matching their financial capacity to supply infrastructure. It is now time that the State Government took this issue seriously too.

The issue is however not one about population capping. That is an emotive and unrealistic notion that belies the science that sits behind matching need for infrastructure to supply of materials or matching the character sought by communities to the impacts arising from growth.

No, it is about how we distribute our population not only in Queensland, but also across Australia. Desley Boyle Minister for Local Government & Planning hit the nail on the head when she said: "Welcome to Queensland ... and keep on driving", referencing the problems in focussing all growth in the south-east corner.

Minister Boyle recognises that there are limits to growth. They occur in the worlds of nature, science and even business – but not in Queensland! Here we have a seemingly never-ending capacity to cater for growth. Why? Because we don't measure things and if we do, we don't publish the results.

If we did, we might get a fright and discover that our current way of doing business is not sustainable.

Noosa did.

responsible for managing most of the dams across the state. In the quest for current dam levels, I found myself face to face with a rather alarming map. [read more](#)

Cate Molloy goes against the tide to 'do the right thing'

CATE Molloy likes to read and is engrossed in Tim Flannery's latest book The Weathermakers. But she hasn't been able to devote much leisure time to reading it because something else has taken over her desk. [read more](#)

How to solve the water crisis without a new dam

Our limited water resources face pressure from increasing population at the same time as we are facing a prolonged drought. As a consequence, we are using water at a faster rate than supplies are being replenished. We cannot continue to do this. [read more](#)

Campaigners call for \$500,000 to fight Mary River dam

GYMPIE dam fighters consolidated support and moved into the second stage of their campaign recently – the long haul – to

Until we have a mature debate about our spatial distribution of population across this country, billions of dollars will be expended on roads, tunnels, dams and the like, consuming our fossil fuels at ever-increasing rates while pumping out greenhouse gas emissions at ever-increasing volumes. It is fundamental to business to match demand with supply of resources, whether they be raw materials or environmental values. Measuring our impact on those values or whether we have sufficient resources is the keystone to good planning.

It is not a laughing matter!

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achieve the all-time elimination of the proposal to dam the Mary River. [read more](#)

Peak Oil ... when the glass really is half empty.

Do you believe in the glass being 'half empty' or 'half full'? To say that the glass is 'half empty' is to be seen as pessimistic – but if you consider what is left of the world's oil resources as the contents of a glass – seeing things as half empty is perhaps now more realistic than pessimistic. [read more](#)

Tax on biodiesel production will damage a renewable fuel industry

The Federal Government's Fuel Tax Bill, which was passed in mid June, has been a slap in the face for the fledgling biodiesel industry. [read more](#)

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