

## Changes raise questions

By Lee McCarthy

"The changes are a welcome relief but also a stark demonstration of the basic and permanent threat that commercial development would impose upon our National Parks if allowed to proceed".

That is how Protect Our Parks convener, Greg Wood, describes the recently confirmed relocation of two private lease sites within the State Government's commercial development plans for Cooloola National Park.

In mid-October the State Department of Environment and Science (DES) website notified changed locations for the development plan's two most controversial private lease sites, at Poona Lake and beside the Upper Noosa River near Campsite 3.

This occurred following prolonged criticism by residents and from visitors, who were commonly appalled at the significant features being put at risk upon those sites by the State Government's proposed Cooloola Great Walk 'Ecotourism' Project.

The DES website states that the sites were relocated in response to concerns received from community consultation.

Protect Our Parks convener Greg Wood says there has been no consultation.

Mr Wood says in lieu of sound consultative process State Ministers and agencies have created the need for community volunteers to virtually go to war to get them to listen and look at the 'bleeding obvious', which he says should be a basic job function rather than a concession drawn from extended battle.

Mr Wood says at long last these efforts have penetrated the state agency barricades set up to keep the public nose out of this private development deal going down in Cooloola National Park.

He says this newly announced amnesty for these two beloved sites is certainly a relief, but it also demonstrates very clearly why commercial development should not be let loose in



The model shows the 38sq.m cabin footprint proposed for overnight accommodation for 1-2 people in the State Government's proposed Cooloola Great Walk 'Ecotourism' Project

Cooloola or in any of our National Parks.

"It is absolutely a good thing to not degrade the intact community of huge, centuries-old trees at Poona Lake simply to develop luxury overnight accommodation," he said.

"However it is imperative that we ask how such utterly terrible site selections were made in the first place, in disregard of expert advice, and why these abysmal decisions were then defended for so long in the face of mounting public enquiry and concern."

Mr Wood said the willingness and actions of State Ministers and agencies to dismiss and avoid public engagement on these matters of huge public interest was disturbing, and it remains so despite this recent plan amendment.

"These serious questions are answered by looking at the direct effect of commercial interest within the equation", he said.

"Recent amendments to the Nature Conservation Act (NCA) allow commercial development inside of National Parks.

"Consequently developers have lobbied to

take advantage of this opportunity.

"Developers will always want to maximise their product's marketability and financial returns.

"The damaging site choices and operational standards deliver this."

"Quite evidently Government has found the developers' needs more compelling than the need to securely protect significant Park values.

"This is not surprising given the Park doesn't have a seat at the table, whilst the developers have many.

"A Noosa Parks Association representative was involved for three long years but where was their head at to let those poor choices get established and to then prevail so long in silence?"

Mr Wood said that the secrecy and avoidance of public input to this whole affair suggests the players involved know their plans conflict with the public interest.

He said they know the high regard that citi-

zens have for our National Parks and the general disdain toward privatisation of public assets. "Yet our public servants did it anyway and then drew their wagons in a circle for cover", said My Wood.

"The simple, most accurate answer to this whole silly sum is that National Park values and commercial development are not compatible.

"National Parks are what they are, precisely because commercial development has been kept out. To let commercial developers now exploit that exceptionally well preserved quality of landscape is beyond absurd. It is unconscionable."

Protect Our Parks and Keep Cooloola Cool began as grassroots community campaigns in late 2021 to publicise and oppose the Cooloola development plan.

Prior to the site relocations both groups focussed heavily upon the significant values of these two sites and the severity of impact each would suffer from the planned development.

Mr Wood said that other horrors, such as the Double Island Point site, took a bit of a back seat to the first two, but must now also be directly addressed.

He said the myriad of specific issues are all symptoms of the one core problem, which is that commercial development within National Parks will invariably seek advantages that impact upon Park values, in Cooloola or anywhere.

Mr Wood said the only sensible action is to stop the Cooloola plan and restore the NCA to its pre-2013 form that correctly excludes commercial development from Queensland's National Parks.

Mr Wood said to achieve that people need to object to the current plan.

A guide and further information is available at [www.protectparks.net](http://www.protectparks.net) and <https://parks.des.qld.gov.au/management/ecotourism/trails-program/cooloola-great-walk-ecotourism-project>

## The Calendar Blokes are ready to launch!

By Lee McCarthy

The launch date has been set, the calendars are ready, the merchandise has been created and the calendar models are preparing to meet their fans for the launch of the long awaited 2023 Rainbow Beach Blokes Calendar!

The launch will kick off at 4pm, Sunday 20 November at the Rainbow Beach Sports Club, where Mr September Joel Mak will be strumming his guitar and setting the right mood to have some fun.

Those who have ordered the 2023 Blokes Calendar will have the opportunity to collect their pre-ordered copies and all are welcome to come and say hello and celebrate this great community achievement.

Barb Bryant-Dunsha from Rainbow Beach Designs has generously donated tote

bags and mugs which will also be on sale.

Organiser Elisa Seul said it will be a chance to get together to share inspiring stories, discover the behind the scenes making of the calendar and get to know the models.

She said the event and calendar is a tribute to much loved local man, Timmy R. Janek who suddenly passed away earlier this year.

"The community can once again offer their sincere support to Timmy's family."

Elisa said the launch will also be a chance for locals to say a few words about how they have overcome their own challenges.

"We look forward to seeing you there and hearing lots of healthy giggles.

You can still pre-order your calendars, shirts, and stubbie coolers as there will be limited stock available at the event - [www.rainbowbeachblokes.com](http://www.rainbowbeachblokes.com)



Mr August, Brent Klekkar from Brechts Burgers Rainbow Beach, stepping up for the Blokes Calendar launching on 20 November.

Picture: JESS MCKENZIE



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