



To whom it may concern,

27 October 2023

Noosa Shire Residents and Ratepayers Association Inc (NSRRA) writes regarding the Council 'Have Your Say' consultation process for the 2023 Destination Management Plan (DMP).

Noosa Shire Residents and Ratepayers Association is a volunteer, not-for-profit community organisation operating for the benefit of residents and ratepayers in Noosa Shire. NSRRA has a proud history of advocating on behalf of the community, hosting public forums, petitioning, and lodging submissions on matters of importance to members and residents.

Executive Summary

NSRRA acknowledges the benefit of Council proactively engaging in managing the impacts of tourism on Noosa's environment, amenity, and liveability. However, NSRRA are concerned that over time, Council have allowed the interests of the tourism industry to take precedence over those of residents and ratepayers.

The DMP discussion paper appears to reinforce this practice by promoting the economic benefits of tourism, without adequately addressing the significant cost and impost of over-tourism on the community.

NSRRA considers the imbalance of tourism policy can be attributed to successive Councils elevating the funding and influence of Tourism Noosa, which is essentially a publicly subsidised industry representative body.

Tourism Noosa

Increasingly ratepayers are questioning why Council funds Tourism Noosa to the tune of \$2.5 million dollars per year, particularly as it's comprised of entirely vested interests.

Council expends significant resources to provide infrastructure and services for visitors and mitigate the adverse impacts of the tourism industry on the Shire.

It therefore seems counterintuitive for ratepayers to fund an industry body whose mission is to increase profits, expand the tourism industry, and leave the community to literally clean up the mess.

Tourism Noosa operate as a quasi-department within Council and appear to have ever-increasing access to the bureaucracy and influence within the political sphere.

NSRRA is requesting Council reconsider its long-term public funding commitments to Tourism Noosa.

It would be more appropriate for Tourism Noosa to operate as a self-funded representative body functioning independently of Council, similar to other business and community representative groups.



DMP Public Consultation

The influence of the tourism sector on Council policy has never been more evident than during the DMP 'Have Your Say' process. The discussion paper reads more like a promotional brochure than a genuine examination of the challenges the community face from a sector that's had exponential growth in the last decade.

We note Council estimates over 30 000 beds in the Shire are now available for visitor accommodation.

NSRRA questions Council's interpretation of the 2021 Liveability Survey which suggests there is broad support for the tourism industry.

These fairly heroic assumptions fail to align with community concerns regarding the increasing size and impact of the tourism sector, particularly on housing.

NSRRA notes Council have requested feedback on these specific headings:

- Traffic Management
- Environment
- Waste Management
- Destination Marketing
- Visitor Accommodation
- Visitor Experiences and Services
- Major Events
- Governance

Whilst the NSRRA acknowledges the importance of these issues, we are perplexed at the first of the four options provided for feedback being described as a "Do Nothing" option.

Whether this means retaining the status quo or Council literally doing nothing remains unclear however we find such an option being provided as questionable and unhelpful. Doing nothing on these critical issues is not an option.

In any case, NSRRA supports a more proactive Council approach to mitigating impacts of the tourism industry on the community. Council must address a policy imbalance which has resulted in expansion of the tourism sector being prioritised over the best interests of the wider community.

A perfect example of how past policy failed in this regard was Council allowing the Short-Term Accommodation (STA) sector to proliferate in the residential suburbs of Noosa.

Ironically, the tourism lobby opposed limiting and regulating the STA industry, yet now laments the unaffordability and unavailability of accommodation for their workforce, which is directly attributable to unmitigated STA expansion.



Event management

NSRRA believes Tourism Noosa's facilitation of an increasing number of major events is another example of how Council has been directed to place private interests over that of the public.

For many years, residents have informed the NSRRA of their discontent with the adverse impacts of major events, many of which provide little if any benefit to locals.

Conclusion

NSRRA requests Council tailor its responses to the challenges Noosa faces as a destination by reprioritising the interests of residents over that of the tourism industry's vested interests.

NSRRA acknowledges the importance of tourism to our economy and the historic work of Tourism Noosa in building our brand as an iconic destination. However, we strongly believe the time has come for ratepayers to cease funding destination promotion which results in over-tourism.

Tourism Noosa must be required to stand alone as a representative body with comparable access to Council, like every other lobby group.

NSRRA is confident Noosa will maintain its status as a premiere South-East Queensland tourism destination, without ratepayers funding its promotion.

We thank Council for the opportunity to provide feedback on the DMP and look forward to your response.

Yours Sincerely,

Secretary