

Cooroy Community Workshop, May 1998

The community workshop was conducted in the boardroom at the Cooroy RSL on May 21, 1998, between 6pm and 9pm.

Twelve representatives from a broad range of stakeholders, community groups and government departments attended the workshop. Participants' categories: DPI, Forestry, Beekeeper, Tourism Noosa, Noosa Parks Association, farm forestry, ICM Conservation, mill worker, local government, human services, contractor and mill manager.

Summary

How do you feel about living in Cooroy or the surrounding area?

The responses to this question fell into a number of positive and negative themes. The respondents thought that the small rural community atmosphere, the proximity to major centres and services, the environment and a connection to the forest industries were all positive aspects of living in Cooroy. The participants thought that the town had a diverse laid back community, which is good for raising a family. In addition, various comments were made about the town's potential, with most participants indicating that they think Cooroy has a great deal of potential.

The participants also identified a number of negative aspects of living in Cooroy, which can be grouped into themes. Issues surrounding employment, the effects of town planning and population growth were the negative themes identified during the workshop. Concerns were raised surrounding the uncertainty faced by mills at a time when there is increasing demand for timber resources accompanying the population growth.

What are some of the visions you have for your town/community in the future? How will these contribute to the local area?

The participants at the workshop generally had a number of visions for the future of Cooroy. The visions fall into a few common themes. A strong common theme is the need to create work opportunities in order to maintain a stable community in the future. Maintenance and upgrading of rural education facilities and courses, the need for all sections of the community to work together and to limit population growth are other common visions identified. The need to create stable sustainable work opportunities for the people of the area was recognised and the timber industry is seen as a viable industry capable of achieving this goal. Promotion of non-government plantation resources and community involvement in forest management were some of the visions held by the workshop participants.

What have been the most significant events in your community since 1980, and how has this community managed these events?

The workshop participants identified local annual and weekly events such as the Eumundi markets as being significant to their community. Other significant events included competitions and expos held in the area. Events that had significantly affected the area were closures of mills (Pomona Mill, 1989), loss of railway services, an increase in population and the development of farm forestry programs in the 1990s.

Other major events included the raising of public awareness about ecologically sound industry practice and the declaration of Cooloola State Park in 1992. In 1997, the Pomona Timber festival was established and the sugar industry had an upsurge in 1998, Pomona Furniture secured a \$2 million contract for the Sydney Olympics.

What do you think would happen to Cooroy and the surrounding area if there was a decrease in the availability of State forest resources?

The Cooroy workshop participants had many ideas about the possible effects of this scenario. Some of the possible positive effects included the creation of government initiatives to find more land for plantations and government incentives for land holders to plant more trees. It was thought that such a scenario would increase the emphasis on value added forest products and have the potential to increase conservation areas in State forest. It was thought that the scenario would encourage more sustainable native forest management given that current practices had proven to be unsustainable and create a focus on new secondary industries.

The negative impacts of the scenario related generally to the job losses that might occur and the flow on effects of this. Most workers in the timber industry lack transferable skills to find alternative employment and there would be significant impacts on their families and the community if these people were no longer receiving a wage. A negative economic impact of the scenario was thought to be the costs of cross industry training. Possible negative environmental impacts mentioned included the substitution of non-sustainable material such as steel and plastic where timber might previously have been used. Some participants were also concerned about the potential threat of fires appropriate fire management regimes were not implemented. There was also concern that this scenario would lead to an increase in imports of timber products, which would add to the national deficit.

Feelings about the town

Positive about rural atmosphere, proximity to services, diverse, relaxed community, good family environment. Negative about poor employment base, uncertainty for timber industry, excessive population growth.

Visions for the town

Work opportunities, non-government plantations, upgrading of rural education facilities.

Workshop Questions

Question 1: How do you feel about living in Cooroy or the surrounding areas?

Positive Aspects

- Laid back lifestyle
- Open space
- Clean air
- Good place to raise family
- Close to coast and Brisbane, but far enough to maintain our lifestyle
- Diverse community

- Country lifestyle
- Parcels of rainforests within State forests – largely due to common sense management of 'onsite' state public servants who began to realise that once areas of rainforest are logged they are gone forever – no ifs, buts or maybes
- Good access to local community and health services
- Bursting with potential
- Central to other towns and work
- Good public transport from Cooroy to other centres nearby • Good skill base – arts / crafts / furniture and general
- Environmentally aware community – Landcare / Permaculture
- Pioneering farm forestry 20–30 years ago – innovative in the field
- Community has strong links to timber tradition
- Forestry resource availability good – very diverse forest types – range of products and uses
- Enjoy working in the area
- Good sporting facilities and recreation opportunities
- Retirement / hobby farm settlements bringing new ideas to farming – fruit / vegetable etc.
- Strong sense of community
- Tourism increasing
- Dormitory town for coast industries
- Heaps of potential
- Rich, fertile country
- Good rainfall
- Good community development programs
- Easy access to educational facilities and other essential services
- High level of interest in conservation, revegetation and farm forestry within the community

Negative Aspects

- High unemployment
- Land degradation – pest plant management problems
- Job uncertainty for youth
- Lack of community assimilation – wanting to change status quo
- Increased population – accelerated unemployment situation
- Increased population – pressures on infrastructure planning
- Changes to schools, town / settlements have led to loss of farming lands
- Transient nature of population – lack of community input / caring for home long term benefits
- New community changes the nature of existing community
- 'Big city' syndrome – cultural / socio-economic diversity and understanding
- Fast population growth in SEQ affecting and putting pressure on the natural features of our environment
- Increase in highway traffic – 1 truck a minute
- Dependency on sawmills with uncertain future
- Ageing population
- Lack of town development plan beyond Noosa Shire Strategic Plan
- Loss of rural values due to unplanned development
- Population pressures and demands on timber resources
- Diverse community poses challenges for local government

Question 2: What have been the most significant events in your community since 1980, and how has this community managed these events?

Date	Events
Annually	King of the Mountain – from 1956 started again 1979
Annually	Noosa Show
Weekly	Eumundi Markets (Wednesday and Saturday)
1 in 10 year	World class competition on Lake Cootharaba for catamaran sailing
1 in 3 year	National competition – catamarans
Late 70s	Amalgamation of dairy farms, then beef and now sub-divisions of lands Brick works major investment – 2 kilns – previously 150 employed now only 35
1980s	Loss of small family timber mills (close mills)
1981	Funeral march for forest – native land – exotic pines DPI policy for Pomona influenced by this decline Greens , industry (native) came together
Late 80s	Population expansion – managing the event – pressure on management of natural resources
Late 80s	Public awareness – desire to improve economics – Increased in environmental groups in the area – green/brown
1986	Kin Kin horse race – annually in October
1989–90	Pomona saw mill closure
Early 1990s	Railway stations closed
1990	Start of Noosa Landcare and subsequent farm forestry program for community based program on private lands
1990–91	Butter factory bought by council and converted to TAFE / education / arts / crafts youth support centre
1991	Move of Noosa Shire Council chambers from Pomona to Noosa
1992	Boral timber dropped from 2 shifts to 1
1992	Cooloola State Park declared
1994	Bypass of Cooroy – people now come specifically to Cooroy
1994	Postponement of dam in Mary Valley
1994	Farming the future Expo conference
1995	Fine furniture expo at butter factory (in June/July annually)
1995	Loss of DPI–Forestry in Pomona
1997	Pomona timber festival
1997	Sugar industry took off
1998	Main street upgrade
1998	Pomona furniture's \$2 million contract for Olympics

Question 3: What are some of the visions you have for your town/ community in the future? How will these contribute to the local area?

- Maintain rural community and industry as is – with subsidy if required – better than no town

- Landcare becomes involved with secondary schools and TAFE
- Establish a rural based adult education TAFE
- Become less dependent on primary production and move towards skills based jobs
- Create more work in our rural shire, maintain jobs base in local area and reverse dormancy
- Develop alternative primary industries e.g. wildflowers, camphor laurel
- Joint ventures between industries in the area and bypassing government's involvement. This will provide incentives for handing responsibilities and plantation areas back into community. Government's role in production and regulation of industries to be avoided
- No traffic lights – flow of traffic
- The promotion of better work-related operations
- Sustainable well-managed forest industry – to secure employment and draw visitors to the area
- All parties being able to work together
- Limit population growth and promote community development in rural area
- Community ownership of managing natural resources sustainably through experience and education
- Link unemployment with need for rural labor and workers
- Expansion in private forestry through tax and superannuation incentives e.g. NZ model