

Choice — is it ours?

Whether you're new to Kuranda, or your family has lived here for generations, we all have one thing in common. We have chosen to live in this tiny parcel of paradise that offers peace, natural beauty and a delicately balanced ecosystem that has been protected for thousands of years.

Wallabies and cassowaries wander past our verandas. Frogs and birds share our homes. Our children camp in the yard, swim in creeks and bushwalk in the rainforest. We create a compromise between carving out a niche for ourselves and doing as little damage to the natural environment as possible. We can socialise or sink into private peace. We have built our worlds around us.

This low-impact living is potentially at risk

The KUR-World proposal, a massive 650-million-dollar development threatening to drop into our lives via Myola, seems to have dipped below the radar over the past few months. Initial community outrage has settled to a simmer, and community protests, letter-writing and rallies have slowed. Although the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) has not yet been produced, work is continuing behind the gates on Barnwell Road. Additional development applications are being submitted – for residential subdivisions, nature-based tourism (four-wheelers crashing around the property), a farm-based tourist attraction and now rural workers' accommodation. Each of these seems to be a small step toward the ultimate goal – an inappropriate and mammoth development that could double, then triple, our population and rob us of our freedom to live as we have chosen. These applications have all been done in such a way as to avoid an assessment of their overall impact and without our community having a legal right to comment on them.

It's time to pay attention again

In 2016, we all had the opportunity to register our concerns about the proponent's proposal for KUR-World when we were invited to comment on the Terms of Reference for the EIS. Many offered concerns about the effects on our community, natural environment, infrastructure and general quality of life when a small population suddenly explodes in the form of a tourist development. The final Terms of Reference are the points which the KUR-World developers are required to answer in their EIS response statement.

The EIS response is expected to be released by the end of September. The good news? We will have an opportunity to have our say. The bad news? The document promises to be massive (possibly 5000 pages plus, judging by AQIS Cairns response), and we will have very little time to respond. It's important that we are all prepared, informed and aware for the next steps.

Be reminded – what is proposed

- a 5-star, 200-room eco-resort
- an 18-hole golf course and clubhouse
- a 3 or 4-star, 270-room resort
- a central hub precinct, including retail, dining and amphitheatre
- approximately 380 residential villas
- a tertiary education campus and sport facilities, with accommodation for up to 500 students
- a medical centre with up to 60 rooms
- an adventure park with zip lines, suspended bridges and rope ladders
- a rainforest education centre including 14 cabins with up to 300 beds
- an equestrian centre and farm theme park

This totals over 4000 people, when fully occupied.

Be informed

If KUR-World goes ahead, it will affect all of us. How can it not? Even without concerns for the endangered species on the property, we understand twice to three times the population could be tapping into water, creating sewerage, using roads and other infrastructure which has been paid for by the current ratepayers. Thousands more could be living and working in and around Kuranda.

If KUR-World is approved, Kuranda will never again be as it is now, even if the development fails. And if it fails, as many resort developments have in the Far North, the minimum we can expect is an additional 323 residential lots. This means more population, stress on infrastructure, higher rates, fewer jobs even the possibility of a failed sewerage system polluting local waterways, like the failed Hinchinbrook development at Cardwell, now relying on ratepayers to fix.

Protect your families and your homes by asking the right questions. Be prepared to see the answers clearly.

More jobs for locals?

An application for rural workers' accommodation on the Barnwell Property has just been approved, when there are hundreds of local unemployed workers right now. Hundreds of contractors and sub-contractors will be needed in the development phases of this project, and the vast majority will come from outside of Kuranda. They will likely work and live here, creating even more pressure on the existing infrastructure and unemployment rates for lo-cals.

Better for businesses in town?

Kuranda offers shopping, restaurants, exhibits and so will KUR-World, we understand. They are even proposing an amphitheatre. Few of those tourists and residents of KUR-World are likely to bypass their shopping hub next door to venture into the Kuranda village.

Improved infrastructure and better services?

Even if KUR-World is responsible for the development of some internal roads, water and sewerage facilities, who will ultimately pay for maintenance and continuation of services?

Higher valuation of your land?

Maybe. But the monetary value of your land means little if you've moved your family here to live quietly, and unobtrusively in a friendly, safe community.

Maybe not. If KUR-World fails, and the masses do not come, we may be left to pick up the pieces, pay our new higher rates and could have lost the unique beauty that is Kuranda. Or we could be faced with the more likely scenario of depressed property prices from an over-supply of residential lots.

However you feel about the KUR-World proposal, take the time to back your opinions with facts of what's been happening to date from reputable and varied sources:

- Kuranda Region Planning Group www.kurandaregion.org
- KUR-alert Facebook page
- Kuranda Envirocare (position statement) www.envirocare.org.au
- Kuranda Paper www.kurandapaper.com
- Mareeba Shire Council
www.msc.qld.gov.au/building-planning/development-applications/
- The State Government KUR-World EIS process www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/assessments-and-approvals/Kur-World-integrated-eco-resort.html

This potential major change for all of us is worth talking about, even if we don't agree. Ask the hard questions. If you aren't getting the answers you want, maybe it's time to take a new stand.

Be motivated

KUR-World will change all of our lives and not just those who live on Myola Road. As well as the threat to the natural environment and stress on infrastructure, as well as the increased traffic on the Range Road and population and rates, we may also feel a threat closer to home. In 2008 State government, with strong community input, decided that further residential development in Myola was not desirable or necessary until at least 2031 (Regional Plan 2009-2031). It is 2018 and a 650-million-dollar development is being considered in this very same area.

If the KUR-World proposal or the proposed high-density residential development goes ahead in Myola, what's to stop another wealthy developer building an inappropriate project in that block beside you?

Be present

How you can exercise your choice:

- Respond to the EIS. As our time will be limited, once the EIS has been released, and summary responses from credible experts have been prepared, response workshops planned to run for two weeks. These will concentrate on streamlining the information and offering it to the community in smaller, more easily understood bites. Individuals can write their own responses, or choose to use templates or form letters that will be offered, developed from responses by credible experts.
- To register to receive information about the EIS, contact eiskuran-da@gmail.com.
- Send emails/letters to Mareeba Shire Council and MP Craig Crawford asking questions and stating your concerns about the KUR-World proposal generally.
- Send emails/letters to Mareeba Shire Council at info@msc.qld.gov.au and MP Craig Crawford at barron.river@parliament.gov.au, specifically questioning the need for rural workers accommodation on the proposed KUR-World site, given how many people in the area are looking for casual work.
- Donate what you can to the cause to help pay for legal representation.
- Stay in touch. Sign up for newsletters at kurandaregion.org and attend meetings (last one was 24th August, see Kuranda TV for video footage if you couldn't attend).

One thing is certain. If the KUR-World proposal is approved, the development may quickly change the lives of over 2000 people. The choices that brought us here will not matter. How will this affect your children? Grandchildren? The more land we sacrifice to concrete and golf courses, the less we have to hand over to our kids.

The love of unsustainable development for the short-term economic gain of a few seems to be growing in epidemic proportions all over the country.

You have chosen to live in Kuranda and soak up all that it offers. Get the facts, make your decision and take a stand. Once our chosen lifestyle is gone, it's gone forever.



Annual General Meeting Thursday September 6th

Kuranda Recreation Centre, Fallon Road

7.00pm Guest Speaker

The Origins and Global Significance of our Wet Tropics World Heritage Area
by Terry Carmichael, Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA)
Should be an inspiring talk by Terry Carmichael, who was a wildlife guide, before his time with WTMA

8.00pm Official AGM

Election of officers and appointment of auditor.

— Light supper provided —

For more information, contact Cathy Retter, 0419 624 940

