Respect Springbrook Mountain
CABLEWAY NO WAY

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Cableway at last on Council Agenda

After 12 months of silence the community and Councillors will finally learn about the work Gold Coast City Council officers have been doing on the proposal for a cableway to Springbrook.

Lois Levy of Respect Springbrook Mountain Coalition said "*Councillors will be asked on Tuesday to decide whether to spend another $1.1million on de-risking the cableway proposal for the benefit of unnamed potential developers.*"

"However, based on professional expertise the Respect Springbrook Mountain Coalition has sound reasons to estimate the costs of de-risking to be between ***$4.8 million – $11.7 million."***

"There is no doubt Councillors will need to consider funding well beyond $1.1million to 'de-risk' the approvals process for commercial proponents. And there's still no guarantee a cableway project will get approved."

The process of de-risking, if done as required, would take many years. Seasonal wildlife surveys, cultural heritage assessments, geotechnical investigations, fire and natural hazard risk assessments, social-impact studies, and then redesigning the project/route to avoid identified impacts identified are all required for an environment impact assessment (EIA).

"A thorough environment impact assessment would take at least 18 months and if it's deemed inadequate more studies could be required," Lois Levy said.

If the proposed cableway route goes through, or adjacent to, the World Heritage Springbrook National Park, the standard of the EIA, and the cost, under the Federal EPBC Act will be high.

Crucial to the whole process is consultation with Indigenous groups who hold Burrigan (Springbrook Mountain) as sacred in place and lore.

The Respect Springbrook Mountain Coalition has provided Council with information regarding the risks of the proposed project and has consistently suggested that Councilors and officers refer to the original Co-Ordinator General Report of 2000 which rejected the Naturelink cableway.

"Since the original proposal, the key reasons for its refusal, including bushfire risk and significant impacts on World Heritage values, have only become worse," Lois Levy said.

The cableway agenda item from the Economy, Tourism and Events Committee - Thursday 21st November 2024 meeting is lengthy, giving a brief recap of the previous motions before outlining the work done over the past 12 months.

Assessment could be by State Government under the EPBC Act through a delegation process or it could be undertaken by the Co-Ordinator General. It was the Co-Ordinator General who refused the Naturelink proposal in 2000 because of the many risks involved and impacts on protected species and the World Heritage area.

A Project Working Group consisting of an unknown number of paid consultants and Council officers would work on the investigation of all facets of the proposal, taking advice from a new unpaid Project Advisory Group (PAG).

The total timeframe remains unclear, but additional ratepayers' funds would be sought to begin the process of conceptualisation, options analysis, and a complex business case including the 18-month long environment impact assessment.

It appears an MOU with the State Government to progress the cableway is a conflict of interest as the State Government could be the body assessing the project. Instead, a Gold Coast Ecotourism Projects Government Liaison Group chaired by the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI) has been formed.

"It remains to be seen how Council would avoid a conflict of interest as an assessor, particularly given their objection to the cableway on the grounds of impacts on the Gold Coast water supply in the original proposal,"

Lois Levy representing the Respect Springbrook Mountain Coalition said "*We strongly believe the lengthy, extensive and expensive de-risking process for a commercially operated cableway cannot be justified in the light of the many environmental risks of the proposal, the costs of opportunities forgone by the community, and the well publicised lack of Council funds and rising costs. The Gold Coast community deserves better use of their funds than this "pie in the sky project."*

"It's time the Gold Coast City Council together with the tourism industry, put forward innovative, world class ideas for nature-based tourism that benefit nature and the community."

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