

Bigambul Native Title Aboriginal Corporation (BNTAC)

# TOOBEAH

TRUTH-TELLING

LET'S YARN



# BIGAMBUL

· Native Title Aboriginal Corporation · BNTAC ·

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## TRUTH-TELLING



**BIGAMBUL**  
Native Title Aboriginal Corporation  
· BNTAC ·

In light of recent media around the Aboriginal Land Act 1991 (ALA) transfer process, BNTAC has prepared the following to dispel some of the mistruths and inaccurate reporting presented over the last 2 months.

## BACKGROUND

**Bigambul Traditional Owners** represented by BNTAC as the Native Title determined holders recognised by the Federal Court in 2016/2017 initiated a transfer under State Legislation through the ALA process in July 2019. The purpose of such was for cultural heritage protection, environmental and economic development and prosperity objectives for Bigambul Nation including regional eco-cultural tourism opportunities for Toobeah.

BNTAC representatives have engaged with local landowners on the process and objectives around the transfer since then on numerous occasions. Goondiwindi Regional Council (GRC) as part of the ALA process supported the trustee transfer with Council resolutions in February 2020 and January 2024; which was available public information.

The above included requirements for local considerations around access to non-potable water supply and related GRC infrastructure, Stock Route requirements and future GRC town planning expansion (subject to a separate future application process by GRC). Unfortunately, with a range of mistruths and misinformation in the public domain Bigambul must now provide this Toobeah truth telling summary.



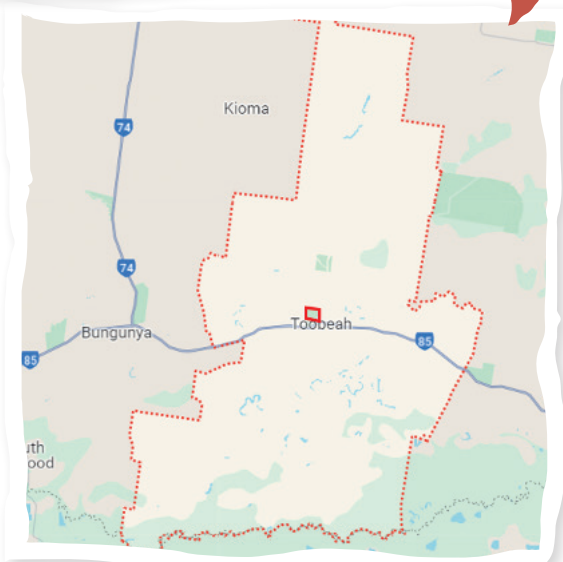
### COMMENT:

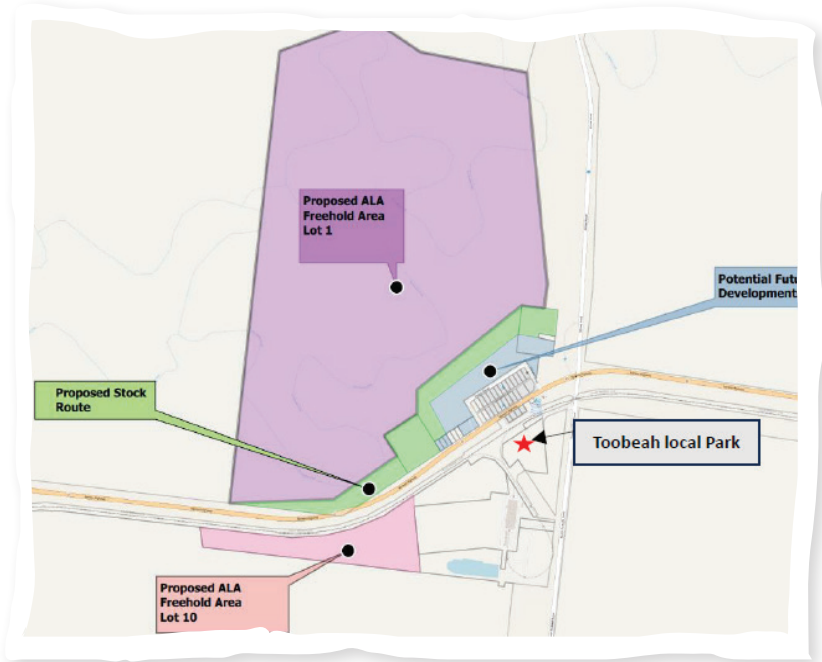
**State Government is giving away 95% of the town including;**

- Towns only recreational reserve
- The Town dump
- The Town Hall area
- The Rodeo Reserve
- Toobeah common

**NOT TRUE**

- Toobeah district is around 1,125km<sup>2</sup>. The 2.1km<sup>2</sup> (210ha) **Reserve for Travelling Stock and Camping** is .018% of the land mass.
- The local park (Toobeah Park) for recreation is across the road from the Hotel and is not part of the application or transfer.
- Refer to mapping on <https://www.grc.qld.gov.au/toobeah-reserve-information>
- The reserves' current lawful use (on licence application and for a fee) is for travelling stock and camping associated with such.
- The Town dump was decommissioned in September 2019 due to environmental regulations is outside of the ALA transfer area.





- GRC has a waste transfer station for locals near the Kindy also outside of the land transfer area.
- There is no Town Hall land that forms part of the transfer.
- The Rodeo Grounds where the Rodeo is held are not part of the land transfer.
- A portion of Rodeo Reserve is included to offset Toobeah Reserve land for future urban (by GRC) and to accommodate the Stock Route.
- Bigambul intends to maintain the relationship with the Rodeo organisation to enable access for events.
- There is no official "Toobeah Common" as reported in some sections of the media.



COMMENT:

Bigambul have a Local Housing Action Plan it suggests they (BNTAC) want to build social housing and have access to funds to do so but don't have access to freehold land.

**NOT ACCURATE**

- BNTAC has a Local Housing Action Plan.
- Local Housing is identified as a need and is a strategy of the BNTAC Strategic Plan.
- There is **no intention nor plan to implement this Local Housing Action Plan on Toobeah Reserve.**
- The site has been applied for under ALA for cultural, ecological, economic development and prosperity objectives for Bigambul Nation through regional eco-cultural tourism opportunities for Toobeah.



COMMENT:

The community won't have access to water

**NOT TRUE**

- An easement for existing GRC water infrastructure is included in the application process re. non-potable water supply to the township for GRC.
- This has been reported numerous times in the public domain since 2020.



COMMENT:

**Residents were not consulted**

**NOT TRUE**

- While not part of a formal process since the application process began in 2019 Bigambul representatives have spoken to local (and prominent) landowners several times over the years about the process and why it was implemented by Bigambul.
- Bigambul has remained compliant and followed the processes as required by Department of Resources.
- Some community representatives have not been transparent with their own economic interests, access and use of the Reserve.
- Bigambul with State Government involvement will initiate a Community Reference Group (CRG) through a local public Expressions of Interest (EOI) process to come together and work up a Master Plan for the site.



COMMENT:

**Bigambul will shut the gates and the public won't be able to access it for camping and fishing**

**NOT TRUE**

- The reserves' current lawful use (on licence application & for a fee) is for travelling stock and camping associated with such.
- People have been riding trail bikes and four-wheel drives across the property unlawfully and damaging the river banks and riparian vegetation over the years.
- Bigambul plans to develop the site as an eco-cultural attraction for the Town and region, and extend visitor stays.
- Bigambul has repeatedly and publicly stated this.
- The above may be subject to approval by State Government tenure arrangement and/or Regional Council requirements under the Local Planning instrument.
- Bigambul Executive Director Justin Saunders has on many occasions over the years spoken directly to Michael Offerdahl about this as well as addressed the matter via 2 public forums (February 12th and March 4th), media releases and at several additional community representatives' meetings in Goondiwindi as well as by phone calls received.
- Local representatives have been aware of Bigambul's intention for the Toobeah Reserve to be transferred under the ALA process since 2019.
- Local representatives have in the past approached Bigambul regarding access and use for private purposes, this includes those who are now publicly stating they have not been consulted; contrary to facts.



COMMENT:

**The Voice referendum results show this isn't supported by the community.**

**NOT TRUE**

- This has nothing to do with the referendum on the Voice to Parliament, rather it relates to the transfer of land to Aboriginal people for areas that are significant culturally and historically.

NOT TRUE



COMMENT:

**This is just an Aboriginal Land grab**

- The Bigambul People underwent an extensive 40-year process to seek Native Title Determination on Bigambul Country, which includes the significant site of Toobeah Reserve.
- The transfer application is entrenched within cultural values and uses and a range of important aspects to Bigambul people including:
  - The cultural significance of the site; it was home to generations of Bigambul people including as recently as a camp/reserve during the 50-60's
  - The land is in dire need of restoration and rejuvenation with many weed species throughout, bush medicines and foods are no longer in abundance and native fruits lacking quality due to a lack of caring for country work.



COMMENT:

**Historically Bigambul tribe were in this area but not specifically Toobeah**

NOT TRUE

- Many Bigambul families lived on the reserve throughout the mid-20th Century up to the late 1960's.
- The above included co-existence with non-Aboriginal people living on the site as an integrated community including marriage and families.
- Current Bigambul Elders from Bigambul families grew up on the reserve while their parents worked on local farms and industry across the district, including farm hands, shearers, house keepers, ring barkers.
- Prior to colonisation the area is located along songlines comprising trade routes and the linkages that connected nations and families.
- Most of Queensland's (and Australia's) stock routes created during colonisation were an exploitation of existing known safe routes to Aboriginal people for travel due to their characteristics i.e. proximity to water and food sources.
- Physical evidence across the site includes scar trees (shield and canoe), and Bigambul Elders historical accounts.



COMMENT:

**"We'll lose our Stock Routes"**

NOT TRUE

- BNTAC has been vigilant to ensure that existing Stock Routes are not hindered for contemporary use.
- BNTAC agreed as part of the ALA transfer a responsive to the requirements of Stock Routes to exclude part of the area for Stock Routes.
- The stock routes exist from the songlines of Traditional Owners.
- For thousands of years these connecting lines and points across Queensland and Australia were where Aboriginals traversed the land in trade, communication, ceremony and survival.
- These songlines are a lifeline of culture, connection, water, and resources.



**COMMENT:**

**The Aboriginal Corporation is based in Brisbane**

**NOT TRUE**

- Bigambul head administration building is in the main street of Goondiwindi at 78 Marshall St, Goondiwindi.
- The Brisbane address relates to corporate registration through legal representation that is based in Brisbane.
- Due to the nature of colonisation, assimilation policies and regional expansion of agriculture since colonisation many Bigambul people were separated from Bigambul Country with forced relocations during the frontier wars. North to Cherbourg, east to Toowoomba and Brisbane, west to Dirranbandi and south to Moree plains settlements in the late 19th Century. This dispersal pattern continued with relocation during the Aboriginal Care Act 1909-1969 and affected the

numbers of people living on Country as was the intent of the policy of the day.

- To this day there are Bigambul people living on Country and transferring land back to the Bigambul people is intended to provide a basis for the cultural obligations Aboriginal people have for caring for country through restoration works on traditional lands.
- Bigambul's Strategic Plan objective is to undertake measure to deal with poverty, social disadvantage and many of the issues reflected in Closing the Gap, which is widely reported and known to be failing on most metrics.



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