



CLARENCE ENVIRONMENT CENTRE Inc

29-31 Skinner Street

South Grafton 2460

Phone/ Fax: 02 6643 1863

Web site: www.cec.org.au

E-mail: admin@cec.org.au

Date: 13th January 2017

Submission to the Draft Coastal Management SEPP

Introduction

The Clarence Environment Centre (CEC) has maintained a shop-front in Grafton for over 28 years, and has a proud history of environmental advocacy. The conservation of Australia's natural environment, both terrestrial and and marine, has always been a priority for our members, and we believe the maintenance of healthy ecosystems and biodiversity is of paramount importance. To that end we are making this submission to the Draft Coastal Management SEPP, in the hope of stemming the destruction of what little remains of the natural coastal environment.

Coastal wetland and littoral rainforests

Coastal wetlands and littoral rainforests have suffered immense degradation since European settlement began, and the need for, not only its protection, but also its enhancement is critically important. Therefore we are shocked to read:

“11 Development of coastal wetlands or littoral rainforest land

(1) The following may be carried out on land wholly or partly identified as “coastal wetlands” or “littoral rainforest” on the Coastal Wetlands and Littoral Rainforests Area Map only with development consent.”

To our organisation the very thought of consenting to damaging and removing native vegetation, terrestrial and marine, vegetation, or carrying out earthworks, including filling of land or the depositing of material on land, constructing levees, drainage works, and various other development is completely unacceptable.

However that is precisely what this proposed legislation will allow. Therefore, given the ongoing declines in these endangered ecological communities, we urge the department to rethink this clause, and exclude all development with the exception of environmental protection works.

The establishment of proximity areas for these areas is supported. The creation and maintenance of buffer zones and the expansion of habitat connectivity should be a priority.

Coastal vulnerability area

Likewise, we find the proposal to allow the granting of development consent on vulnerable coastal land to be unthinkable.

The suggestion that consent authorities only need to be satisfied that the proposed development “***is not likely to cause increased risk of coastal hazards, not likely to alter coastal processes to the detriment of the natural environment, not likely to reduce the public amenity, access to and use of any beach, foreshore, rock platform or headland***” is, in our opinion, inviting disaster. The very inclusion of the words “not likely”, admits a degree of uncertainty that is unacceptable.

The requirement for a development to “*incorporate appropriate measures to manage risk to life and public safety from coastal hazards*”, is also unenforceable. Apart from the virtual non-existence of any compliance monitoring, all too often problems emerge long after the developer has packed up and left, leaving the community and taxpayers to clean up the mess.

The NSW Government's earlier decision to insert its collective heads into the sand, and ignore the impacts of sea level rise by the end of the century, has left us with a situation where there is no prescriptive control on where building zones might be delineated and many councils have not completed coastal hazard studies. Even where consultants have stated the need to consider more severe flooding and its combined effect with storm surge this has not been done

Examples of this are West Yamba's 1100 home residential development, Harwood Island's rezoning for an industrial precinct, and Iluka's latest greenfield residential development, all in the Clarence Valley Council LGA, **and all on land less than 1m above sea level**. Our submissions to all of these can be found on the Clarence Environment Centre's website

Coastal environment area

As with the above Coastal vulnerability area, areas mapped Coastal Environment are also laid open to development, with consent authorities only needing to be convinced that a range of environmental and social impacts impacts are **unlikely** to result. Again we believe the risks are unacceptable

Tourism is increasingly becoming the mainstay of local economies, with the natural environment, particularly in coastal areas, being the major attraction. Therefore we believe only environmental works, and access maintenance to encourage that tourism, should be allowed in those areas.

Coastal use area

We see nothing in the development controls for the coastal use area that requires specific consideration to be given to impacts on the environment. This is a significant backward step from the current application of SEPP 71 and clause 5.5 of the Standard Instrument that require a broad range of considerations to be applied to the entire Coastal Zone.

With tourism a major 'user', and the environmental assets the big attraction, it stands to reason that much greater focus on environmental protection is needed.

Draft Mapping

Nowhere in the Act or the SEPP is there a map methodology that clearly specifies how the coastal management areas have been mapped. The current settings that have been used to develop the maps are inadequate.

We found the online mapping impossible to understand . The zoning is rough, and useless to anyone looking to assess future impacts to the environment or their property. The pink/orange zoning includes national parks in development areas, what is this about? Are Councils going to be granted a consent roll in national parks? We assume this is a typo but if not, we urge an immediate rethink of that matter.

The mapping of coastal wetland area and littoral rainforests is unclear, and does not explain exactly how coastal wetlands and littoral rainforests have been mapped. No information has been provided to assist communities to compare previous mapping of SEPP 14 wetlands and SEPP 26 littoral rainforests with the new mapping, or explain key differences.

These deficiencies also apply to mapping of coastal environment areas, with the 100m landward of State water and estuaries not adequately covering the full beach and dune system. This arbitrary application of 100m fails to take into account the natural variations along the coast so that some dunes and other coastal features are not fully included in the coastal environment area. Overall there appears to be a lack of ground-truthing which will have unwanted consequences in the future.

We are also concerned that the mapping fails to recognise areas of environmental significance outside of coastal wetlands, littoral rainforests and the proposed coastal environmental zone, which clearly should be included in the coastal environment area e.g. endangered ecological communities, National Parks etc.

In conclusion, we believe the Draft Coastal Management SEPP has been too hastily cobbled together, and that a lot more work needs to be done. Also, there is an urgent need to include sea-level rise predictions, and plans for strategic withdrawal from areas under threat from rising sea levels and coastal erosion.

Having said that, we urge the Department to place a for greater value on the natural environment and biodiversity which, in our area of the NSW North Coast, is internationally recognised as one of the world's greatest.

We thank the Minister for this opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely

John Edwards
Honorary Secretary.