


Inquiry into climate change and environmental impacts on coastal communities



30th May 2008

Submission No:70.....
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Secretary: 

SUBMISSION by North East Bioregional Network Inc. (Tasmania)

Unfortunately our group has only become aware of this inquiry at a late date and as such our submission will be brief, however, we would be pleased to provide more detailed information in relation to our concerns if further hearings or consultation is carried out.

Comments

- **Population:** We support stabilising population growth in Australia as soon as possible because population increase is one of the main drivers of environmental degradation in the coastal zone in Australia.
- **Planning:** There is lack of long-term strategic planning in the coastal zone. Local Councils do not have the expertise, resources or political will to protect the coast from over-development. The Commonwealth Government needs to provide national leadership in planning to ensure that one of Australia's greatest assets is protected and restored. At present the condition of our coastal environments is degrading at an alarming rate due to over-development and population increase. Planning schemes need to be based on genuinely ecologically sustainable principles.
- **Corruption:** We believe that Tasmania urgently requires an independent corruption commission to investigate corrupt Councils. We believe that the Break O'Day Council should be investigated but there is no independent body in Tasmania which can investigate community concerns. The State Government departments responsible for protecting our coast regularly fob off genuine community concerns leading to a culture of corruption and cronyism.
- **Climate change:** Councils are still allowing development to occur in areas vulnerable to sea level rise. They are also allowing development to proceed in areas where water is becoming scarce. North East Tasmania is predicted to suffer higher temperatures and less rainfall yet Councils continue to ignore

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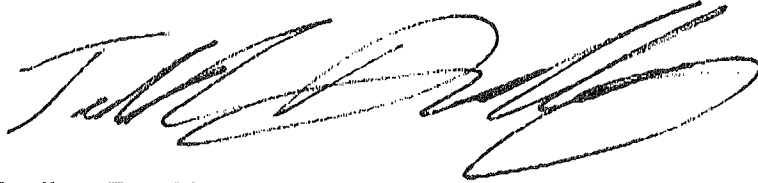
these issues. It is important to maintain landscape connectivity to allow species to move in response to climate change.

- **Dams:** We are concerned that the Federal Government is funding environmentally destructive dams which will destroy a number of coastal catchments. The Waterhouse proposal in NE Tasmania will destroy a number of high conservation value areas and waterways to facilitate dairy conversion on marginal/saline land. The Federal Government should withdraw funding for this project and adopt a more holistic approach to funding. Projects that are environmentally destructive should not be funded.
- **Marine Reserves:** Tasmania is in desperate need of more Marine Reserves. The current independent Resource Planning and Development Commission process for the Bruny Bioregion is being undermined by the State Government.
- **Land Clearing:** Tasmania's land clearing legislation is totally inadequate. What exists is not enforced. The system of enforcement is cumbersome with both local Councils and the Forest Practices Authority regularly allowing clearing to occur. In addition penalties for breaches are woefully inadequate. There have been a number of illegal land-clearing incidents in Break O'Day in the past 10 years causing considerable environmental damage to coastal ecosystems.
- **Lack of resources:** There is a lack of funding to support community projects. National Parks staffing is at critically low levels.
- **Infrastructure:** Federal and State Governments should move away from their traditional policy of supporting ongoing water and sewerage infrastructure. The provision of such infrastructure is extremely expensive and always leads to further urban sprawl and ribbon development in coastal areas. Instead we need to start respecting the ecological carrying capacity of coastal environments. There is no incentive for unserved coastal settlements to adopt more environmentally friendly solutions when local, State and Federal Governments continue the out-dated practice of funding costly water and sewerage infrastructure.

There are a number of other issues that need to be addressed including:

- Off-road vehicles
- Shorebird conservation
- Protection of Aboriginal heritage sites
- Stormwater management
- Impacts of feral species e.g. cats, dogs, weeds, etc.
- Mining
- Catchment management

The coast is under enormous pressure. If the Federal Government can provide long-term ecologically sustainable direction for the coast it will be a great legacy for the continent.



Todd Dudley, President
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Examples of coastal degradation (Break O'Day Council Municipality, NE Tas)



Illegal quarry (Photo by Matthew Newton)



Illegal land clearing near St. Helens

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