


Submission No:78.....
Date Received:6-6-08.....
Secretary: 

3 June 2008

The Secretary
Standing Committee on Climate Change, Water, Environment and the Arts
PO Box 6021
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Dear Sir/Madam,

***INQUIRY INTO CLIMATE CHANGE and ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS ON
COASTAL COMMUNITIES.***

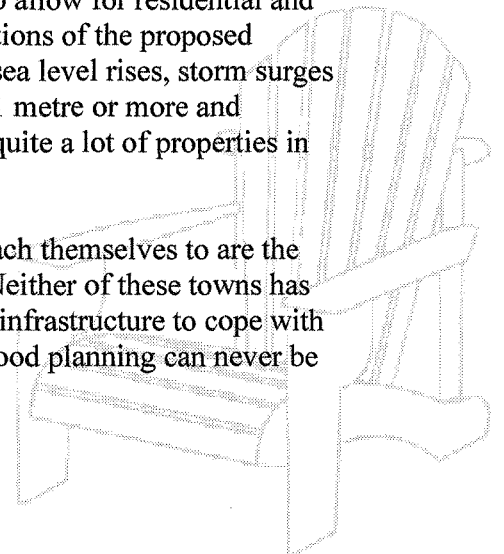
I am writing this submission to highlight current planning policies which I believe are allowing for reckless and short-sighted decision making.

Currently the Department of Planning are considering the rezoning of environmentally protected land on the Wallarah Peninsula. This land was identified decades ago as being of extremely high significance for numerous environmental reasons. The area is abundant with critically endangered flora and fauna and acts as a long standing green corridor.

The land under consideration was planned to be purchased by the State Government for dedication as a National Park. Currently a "deal" is on the table, with Minister Sartor signing an MOU with The Rose Group and Coal & Allied, to allow them to develop the most "prime" 30% of the land, in return for handing over the remaining 70%, (much of which has not been regenerated after many decades of mining).

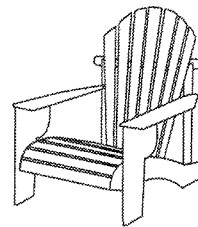
As you can imagine, most of the land proposed for rezoning to allow for residential and commercial construction, is ocean or lake frontage. Large sections of the proposed developments are at risk from climate change and associated sea level rises, storm surges and tidal fluctuations. A predicted minimum sea level rise of 1 metre or more and possible increase in storms and tidal surges is going to affect quite a lot of properties in these areas.

The communities that these developments are proposed to attach themselves to are the small, isolated towns of Gwandalan and Catherine Hill Bay. Neither of these towns has adequate public transport, employment opportunities or basic infrastructure to cope with the influx of new residents. Most of the crucial questions of good planning can never be answered at these locations.



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Yes, the Wallarah Peninsula is special but not only for it's natural attributes. Some of the last remaining isolated coastal towns are located here. If our current town planners do not address the urban sprawl which is rapidly being allowed to erode the very fabric of small towns, they will soon be responsible for creating our newest addition to the list of extinct species.

We are smart enough to value rare and endangered flora and fauna. We, as a nation, will go to extreme lengths to protect and acknowledge diversity, yet it appears our own Department of Planning has chosen to ignore the endangered species that is, "the small town". At a time when the mainstream of Australia seems to be waking up to the reality of Climate Change and the impact it is having on our environment, I would hope that our leaders might be able to consider the radical concept of the small town as another "endangered species".

Wyong Shire Council representatives have categorically stated that these developments will lead to species extinction. The developments will also damage two significant wetlands, one into Crangan Bay the other into the ocean abutting the development with stormwater run-off and weed edge effects. This is coupled with the removal of approximately 60 000 trees on the Crangan Bay waterfront site alone.

These developments contravene the NSW Coastal Design Guidelines; the State Environmental Planning Policy No 71 – Coastal Protection; the State Environmental Planning Policy No 65 all of Section 79C(1)(c) of the Environmental Protection and Assessment Act '79. They are also contrary to the NSW Coastal Policy '97; the Hunter's Coast – Hunter Coastal Urban Settlement Strategy '94 and the Lake Macquarie Coastal Management Plan.

When considering the Department of Planning's opinion of the development applications for the Wallarah Peninsula, some things are blatantly obvious,

1. Sound planning policies are not to be applied to all applications!
2. Environmental constraints are up for negotiation!
3. There is no limit to the amount of policy compromises the Minister will consider!

I only hope that the ultimate refusal of the Wallarah Peninsula development applications, will set a precedent for future, sensible, sensitive coastal development.

Regards,


Melanie Symington
Accredited Building Designer

