

MEDIA RELEASE

13 December 2016

The Baird hare is running again. This time the NSW Coalition is racing to get the Coastal Management Legislation finalised before public opinion overturns another piece of ill-conceived Liberal Party legislation.

NSW Planning Minister Rob Stokes has finally produced the draft State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) to finalise the coastal management legislation that he pushed through the NSW Parliament in May of this year. The draft SEPP, which was supposed to contain mapping that identifies all areas subject to coastal hazards, fails to identify any of the coastal vulnerability areas in the Eurobodalla.

At an information meeting held at the Moruya Golf Club on Friday 24th November, NSW Planning and Environment and Heritage staff tried to sell the SEPP to concerned local groups and community associations. The presenters attempted to cover up the Minister's failure to provide the promised uniform vulnerability mapping by saying that it was too difficult for the State Government to prepare this documentation. The State Government will now collaborate with local councils to complete the mapping over the next 5 years.

Minister Stokes promise of uniformity was also a hoax. The Office of Heritage and Environment (OEH) is back using the material provided by local councils to identify coastal hazard areas. This means that OEH will adopt different hazard assessments from different councils up and down the NSW coastline. Eurobodalla residents know only too well that our previous council adopted the toxic Whitehead sea level rise report and saddled the shire with an interim sea level policy that saw all areas less than 4 metres AHD (initially 5 metres) placed in a coastal hazard investigation area. If, as OEH staff have suggested, these documents/policies and other local studies are used to inform vulnerability mapping in the Eurobodalla, the shire is in for more grief, another property down turn and a worsening of general economic conditions.

The NSW Coastal Alliance realises that the coastal management legislation is complex and many of the affected residents find it hard to understand the politics and fine detail. All they want to know is how the SEPP will directly affect them.

Firstly, if your property is within the 4 metre AHD investigation zone you are at risk of being included in the Eurobodalla coastal vulnerability area. These areas include Batemans Bay CBD, Surfside, areas of Long Beach, Maloneys and Durras. Areas of Catalina, Batehaven, Malua Bay, Broulee, Tomakin, Moruya, Moruya CBD, Tuross, Dalmeny and the Narooma Flat. This policy affects around 6,000 properties in the Eurobodalla.

If your property is included in the coastal vulnerability area any future development, other than temporary (transportable) buildings, or time limited consent, will have to be fully justified. This is an almost impossible task given the way the Coastal Management Act and SEPP have been worded. Time limited consent means you must remove the building/s and all infrastructure after an agreed time period. Rezoning of your land for subdivision or higher usage will not be allowed.

This is what is described as “planned retreat”. The planning restrictions prevent or make it too difficult for you to develop, redevelop or renovate in vulnerable coastal areas and the land becomes useless after the current buildings reach the end of their useful life. The economic effect is immediate because no one will want to buy houses in these zones.

The NSW government wants to resume this land when it is consumed by coastal recession or inundated by the sea, but Mike Baird and his Planning Minister don’t want to pay any compensation to the unfortunate landholders.

Developers will desert commercial areas like Batemans Bay CBD, Moruya CBD, and the Narooma Flat, if they are affected by this SEPP. Residential property owners in a vulnerability zone will have a depreciating asset. Their properties will become worthless over time.

Early in the new year, your local member Andrew Constance will be asked to vote blind on this SEPP without knowing how many properties will be affected in the Eurobodalla, how the CBD’s of our three main towns will be affected, or the likely effect on the local economy.

The NSW Coastal Alliance believes that any local member, who votes in support of this SEPP before the vulnerable area mapping is completed, will be acting irresponsibly without any regard for the property rights and welfare of their constituents. It is most important for all coastal management mapping to be agreed with local communities before it is passed into legislation. It is also smart politics.

The economic fallout of this SEPP will be felt by everyone in the shire, not only those property owners in the direct firing line. Have your say by making a submission to the Department of Planning by the 23rd December deadline. Go to www.planning.nsw.gov.au/CoastalReform . At the same time contact Andrew Constance on bega@parliament.nsw.gov.au and let him know how you feel about his government presenting the SEPP to Parliament before completion of the mapping. Also, tell him how you feel about the Eurobodalla being penalised because two State Government departments appear to be incapable of managing a uniform mapping project for the entire NSW coastline.

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