

MEDIA RELEASE – 7 April 2016

NSW Coastal Reforms

This week, representatives from the NSW Coastal Alliance (NCA) met with the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH), members of the Coastal Council and Ministerial staff to discuss community concerns with the new coastal management reforms. NCA co-ordinators from the entire NSW coastline attended the three hour session in Sydney. Teleconferencing facilities were made available for Eurobodalla co-ordinator Ian Hitchcock and other NCA representatives who could not make it to the city.

The major issues discussed were community engagement, emergency provisions, and planned retreat without compensation. Concerns raised on behalf of Eurobodalla residents included the proposed vulnerable area overlays, discriminatory coastal zoning, and the massive increase in fines.

Under current predictions, approximately 60,000 homes in NSW will be affected by rising seas in the short to medium term, along with large tracts of industrial and commercial land. "At risk" locations already identified in the Eurobodalla will include the Batemans Bay CBD, Moruya Township and the Narooma Flat. Hitchcock asked the government representatives to look at the economic damage already caused in the Eurobodalla by an ill-considered interim sea level rise policy. The proposed state wide "vulnerable area" mapping could completely destroy investor confidence in low lying coastal and beachfront property, unless that mapping is accompanied by mitigation or defensive coastal hazard plans.

Local councillor Milton Leslight, an adviser to the NCA and attendee at the meeting, has been vocal in his opposition to the new coastal reforms ever since they were released on public exhibition. Cr. Leslight described the difference in regional coastal zones and Sydney coastal zones as hypocrisy. He has asked why coastal zones in Sydney could be as little as 50 metres when Batemans Bay and other NSW regional areas will be burdened with a 500 metre to 1.5 kilometre coastal zone, and the related planning restrictions. "The urban parts of regional areas are just as important to us as the urban areas in the Sydney seaside electorates of the NSW Premier and Ministers responsible for these reforms", said Cr. Leslight.

All NCA members are appalled at plans to increase the fine for trying to protect your home against coastal hazards to one million dollars. This proposal has been described as "un-Australian". Hitchcock has asked whether the same penalties will apply to others who try to protect their homes against other natural disasters like bushfires and inland flooding.

The NCA is hopeful that the NSW Government will listen to the voice of the people and rethink their coastal reforms in the broader interests of the NSW coastal community.

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