

MAYOR PROVIDES PROMISE OF MITIGATION WORKS TO PROTECT 1,000 VULNERABLE COASTAL PROPERTIES IN THE EUROBODALLA

The latest edition of the flyer “Living in Eurobodalla” explains Council’s position on the categorization of 1,000 coastal properties as subject to coastal hazards. Headed “coastal hazards explained”, the Mayor assures affected property owners that the UNSW study signals the beginning of a process to manage coastal hazard risks in the Eurobodalla. The Mayor goes on to confirm that Council will come back to the community early this new year to find the most feasible and acceptable mitigation solutions. According to the Mayor those solutions might include rock walls, new sand dunes and beach nourishment. I would also expect to see solutions that include groins and “raise and fill” proposals for very low lying areas, in the mix.

In an earlier press release the Council indicated that it had funding for the stage three mitigation program in its Eurobodalla Coastal Management Program to commence this month.

I commend the mayor for this clear statement of concern for the property rights of coastal residents and the move away from “planned retreat” that has been the hallmark of this administration for the past 5 years. I also commend the staff and councillors who are standing up for those residents who find themselves in a position of owning a depreciating asset if their properties are declared “at risk”, or vulnerable, without any associated mitigation planning.

The NSW Coastal Alliance has never opposed risk planning, provided the risk analysis is based on hard evidence. The UNSW study falls short of our expectations in some areas, but if protective works are to be the order of the day, the problem of exaggerated projections, and worst case scenario assessments, will be overcome.

It is now up to the Mayor to turn her words into actions. We await her advice on the appointment of coastal engineering experts to examine and provide the mitigation/ protective planning options for residents to consider, and the program of community meetings to decide on the preferred options.

Most importantly, we want to see the local member Andrew Constance throw his support behind the Mayor and advise the Council and affected residents on the availability of State Government funding for the protection of private properties. This question has so far been avoided by the Office of Heritage and Environment and the responsible Ministers.

The Mayor and the local member should also be aware that the owners of the 5,000 or so estuarine properties, identified as at risk of flooding or coastal hazards under Council’s Estuary Management Program, are still waiting for their stage three mitigation plans. It would make economic sense to complete the estuary plans in concert with this same phase of the Coastal Management Program. Remember, Council has declared large areas of all three Eurobodalla CBD’s at risk of flooding and other coastal hazards. Developer confidence will not return to this area until the future existence of our major towns and foreshore property is guaranteed.

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