

Our Reference: E14.8227

28 May 2014

The Hon. Pru Goward MP  
Minister for Planning  
Level 34 Governor Macquarie Tower  
1 Farrer Place  
SYDNEY NSW 2000  
[office@goward.minister.nsw.gov.au](mailto:office@goward.minister.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Minister

I am writing to you on behalf of council and the community of the Eurobodalla Shire in regard to the independent Northern Councils Environmental Zone (E Zone) Review conducted by consultants, Parsons Brinckerhoff. On the 14 May, 2014 you issued a media statement announcing the release of the study and the government's interim response, for public consultation until the 5 June 2014.

Council supports the NSW Government providing clear policy direction in regard to the appropriate use and allocation of environmental zones, however is disappointed at the process being undertaken, and in particular the limited opportunity for meaningful consultation with council and the community. Whilst the study relates primarily to a defined group of north coast local government areas, it is clearly articulated that the intent is to use this study to develop a state wide policy position. It is therefore appropriate to engage with all local government areas.

The use of environmental zones has been very controversial in our community as it has been across coastal NSW. Council therefore believes that the NSW Government should provide a more meaningful engagement process with local government and our communities on such an important matter. In the event that this does not occur in response to the material currently on exhibition until the 5 June 2014, there needs to be a guarantee that such opportunity is provided when the NSW Government develops a State wide policy.

Council is currently undertaking the preparation of a Rural Lands Strategy (RLS), in consultation with the community and with the support of a steering committee consisting of members of the community and NSW Government authorities including the Department of Planning. This process will provide the evidence and strategic direction required to address the potential use and allocation of environmental zones within the Eurobodalla Shire, following the use of such zones being deferred at the time the LEP 2012 was made. Given the important nature of this issue it is essential that Council be meaningfully engaged and provided with timely advice and direction to ensure that the resources being allocated in preparing the RLS are not compromised.

Once the NSW Government has set a policy position Council believes it should be given the autonomy to make a decision as to if, how and where environmental zones are used, provided that such decisions are evidence based.

I thank you in anticipation for considering this brief submission and would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the concerns of Council and the community.

Yours faithfully



Councillor Lindsay Brown  
**Mayor**



**Pru Goward MP**

**Minister for Planning  
Minister for Women**

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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Wednesday 14 May 2014

### **BETTER BALANCING OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND FARMING INTERESTS ON THE NORTH COAST**

The NSW Government has today continued its work to balance the needs of environmental protection and farming on the North Coast, with the release of the first findings of an independent report into the use of environmental planning in the fast-growing region.

Minister for Planning Pru Goward released the interim report into the use of environmental zones by councils in local environmental plans along with the Department of Planning and Environment's draft response.

The report was commissioned to consider how North Coast councils should use planning controls to protect the environment while still allowing the growth of the important local farming sector, and was undertaken by independent consultants Parsons Brinckerhoff.

"The NSW Government is working to bring together landowners, communities and councils to strike the right balance between appropriate environmental protections and sustainable farming on the North Coast," Ms Goward said.

"Smart planning needs to be backed by strong evidence – that's the principle behind these draft recommendations.

"Putting more rigour behind the planning decisions of local councils will be better for the environment and provide more certainty to the farming sector."

Ms Goward said the North Coast environment was the region's defining characteristic and supported jobs through tourism, but was not inconsistent with farming which was also vitally important to the local economy.

"The North Coast is unique in our State; it has a thriving farming industry and a spectacular and important natural environment," Ms Goward said.

"That's why we are working with councils to ensure that every decision they make in this regard is backed by strong evidence."

The NSW Government has given in-principle support to some of the report's interim recommendations, including:

- Setting clear criteria for environmental zones known as E2 and E3 to ensure that these zonings are based on strong evidence
- Allowing grazing and other kinds of extensive farming activity with consent in some environmental zones and without consent in others
- Removing aesthetic value as an objective of the environmental management zone known as E3
- Removing the proposed environmental zones from Kyogle Shire Council's local plan until proper evidence is provided
- Replacing the proposed environmental living zone in Byron Shire known as E4 with a more appropriate residential zone.

The draft report and interim recommendations were prepared after extensive consultation with councils, landowners and local stakeholders.

"The draft recommendations will now go on exhibition. Feedback from stakeholders will inform the Government's decision, and a Direction will be issued to guide councils on the specific criteria to use when deciding to apply an environmental zone," Ms Goward said.

Decisions on land being considered for environmental zoning have been deferred as local environmental plans are finalised.

Once the criteria for environmental zones are finalised, each Council will assess the land that was deferred.

Councils will propose zones based on the final criteria and exhibit the proposed zonings for public comment.

The interim recommendations will be on exhibition until 5 June 2014. To view a copy of the report and provide feedback, people are encouraged to visit:

[www.planning.nsw.gov.au/proposals](http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/proposals)

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