

4 June 2014

Director
Planning Coordination and Support
Department of Planning & Environment
GPO Box 39
Sydney 2001

Dear Sir/Madam,

Northern Councils E Zone Review Interim Report Submission

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my views on the E Zone Review Interim Report. As a long term resident of the north coast working in various capacities in natural resource management since the 1980s I have welcomed the growing awareness of the need to protect and manage our scarce environmental resources to safeguard these significant environments and the environmental services they provide for future generations.

I believe there are aspects of the review that are commendable and that I endorse, including:

- including environmental zones and overlays in LEPs,
- expanding environmental protection zones to protect environmentally significant areas not protected in in Kyogle, Lismore, Ballina & Tweed Shire
- environmental overlays to provide buffers to estuaries, streams, wetlands, and rainforest.
- developing guidelines for mapping scenically significant areas and including these areas in an environmental overlay.
- placing cleared land subject to coastal hazards, taking into account climate change predictions, in a new coastal hazard zone.

However I do not support the following:

- downgrading ecological units of demonstrably high conservation value such as rainforest, old growth forest, wetlands, mangroves, riparian vegetation and 'rare, endangered and vulnerable ecosystems' from zone E2 to E3.
- Recommendation 14 - downgrading proposed E4 zones to residential zones. These zones should be used to safeguard clearing and modification of core Koala Habitat, endangered ecological communities and significant threatened species habitat in urban/semi-urban settings which are also most under threat.
- removing all protection for wildlife corridors mapped by the National Parks & Wildlife Service. These should be placed in an environmental overlay to ensure adequate consideration in development control and strategic planning decisions.
- Recommendation 4 - permitting 'extensive agriculture' such as grazing, cropping and irrigated pasture within E2 zones. Undertaking these activities in these zones will degrade and in many cases remove significant environmental values.
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I also request special consideration of the following:

The NSW Government needs to get behind the Councils that need to review their shire's vegetation mapping to improve its accuracy (Kyogle, Lismore and Ballina) so high quality mapping of all vegetation can occur to support protection in environmental zones.

Heathlands and shorebird roosting and nesting areas need to be specifically identified and protected in E2 zones.

Protect core Koala habitat identified in Koala Plans of Management in E2 zones rather than as an environmental overlay.

Land zoned for environmental protection should be priority area for landowner assistance to manage their ecological values, for example, financial incentives and rate rebates.

Considering the importance of a 'validated dataset' in determining environmental zonings (and outcomes) the term requires a clear definition which should include data produced by generally accepted scientific methods for assessment of environmental conservation significance.

I look forward to your consideration of the issues that I and many others concerned for long term protection and recovery of significant ecosystems on the north coast have raised. Bring back our E zones and let's have LEPs that are balanced.

Yours sincerely,

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