

Submission to the Northern Councils EZone Review Interim Report

SUPPORT

I strongly support:

1. the endorsement of environmental zones and overlays in far north coast council Local Environment Plans.
2. the Review recommendation that Environment Protection Zones be expanded in Kyogle, Lismore, Ballina & Tweed Shires to include all environmentally sensitive areas not currently protected.
3. the Review's endorsement of environmental overlays for buffers around estuaries, streams, wetlands, and rainforest.
4. the Review recommendation that guidelines be developed for the mapping of scenic amenity and that mapped areas be included as an environmental overlay.
5. cleared land subject to coastal hazards, including climate change effects, being removed from the E2 zone, though these should be placed in a new coastal hazard zone rather than becoming an overlay.

OBJECTIONS

I strongly object to:

1. downgrading of rainforest, old growth forest, wetlands, mangroves, riparian vegetation and 'rare, endangered and vulnerable ecosystems' from E2 to E3 (Recommendation 1 & 7).
 - These areas are all of exceptional conservation value and deserve the highest protection.
 - These values must remain under the protection of E2 zones as explicitly recommended by the NSW Department of Planning and Industry (Practice Note PN 09-002 – Environmental Protection Zones), and as is prescribed throughout the remainder of NSW.
 - This rezoning will also weaken protection from CSG and other mining activities in our most sensitive natural areas by automatically permitting these activities under the 'Mining' SEPP - State Environmental Planning Policy (Mining, Petroleum Production and Extractive Industries) 2007.
2. downgrading proposed E4 zones to residential zones (Recommendation 14).
 - These areas include core Koala Habitat, several Endangered Ecological Communities and significant threatened species habitat and their exceptional conservation value deserves the highest protection.
 - These values must remain under the protection of E4 zones as explicitly recommended by the NSW Department of Planning and Industry (Practice Note PN 09-002 – Environmental Protection Zones), and as is prescribed throughout the remainder of NSW.
 - These values cannot be given adequate protection by the Tree Preservation Order alone.
6. removing all protection for wildlife corridors mapped by the National Parks & Wildlife Service

- Wildlife corridors should be included as an environmental overlay to ensure they are considered in planning decisions.
7. allowing 'extensive agriculture' such as grazing, cropping and irrigated pasture within E2 zones (Recommendation 4).
- These activities can be highly destructive of the ecological values in environmentally sensitive areas
 - This redrafting of E2 provisions will also weaken protection from CSG and other mining activities in our most sensitive natural areas by automatically permitting these activities under the 'Mining' SEPP - State Environmental Planning Policy (Mining, Petroleum Production and Extractive Industries) 2007.

FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

I further recommend that:

1. In accordance with the review the NSW Government needs to urgently help Councils review vegetation mapping to improve its accuracy, and help Kyogle, Lismore and Ballina Councils to undertake comprehensive mapping of all high conservation value vegetation in order to expand their environment zones.
2. That 'extensive agriculture' be prohibited in all Shires to avoid automatically permitting CSG and other mining activities in our most sensitive natural areas under the 'Mining' SEPP - State Environmental Planning Policy (Mining, Petroleum Production and Extractive Industries) 2007.
3. That heathlands and shorebird roosting and nesting areas be included in E2 zones.
4. Core Koala habitat identified in a Koala plan of Management should be included in an E2 zone rather than just as an environmental overlay.
5. The Government should support the review's recommendation that all land designated within an environment zone should be a priority area for the application of incentive based mechanisms, including financial incentives, rate rebates, management assistance, and local award schemes.
6. The term 'validated dataset' be clearly defined and to include any data produced by generally accepted scientific methods for assessment of environmental conservation significance.