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Online Submission from company Trees of Bateau Bay (org_comments)

Mar 22 (20 days ago)

j To:

Submission to NSW Department of Planning in regard to the Draft Central Coast Regional Plan 2015

by
Trees of Bateau Bay*

With reference to:

GOAL 1 " Enhance community lifestyles and accelerate housing supply, and
GOAL 4 " Protect and manage the natural and cultural environment

Summary: Local government to retain the responsibility to manage tree removals within the region. Consistent with Direction 1.1 of the Draft Central Coast Regional Plan 2016, which is to "Create great places to live" and Direction 4.1, "Protect and manage the region's environmental and heritage values", we wish to submit that the NSW Government states unequivocally that it will rely on Councils to manage tree removals and land clearance. That is, approval to remove a tree will be a mandatory function of local government. Councils cannot opt out of the approval process.

The reason we are asking for this amendment is that in April 2015, Wyong Shire Council amended its tree management policy to allow individual landowners to remove trees without seeking Council approval where the land size was less than 1500 square metres. This allowed individual landholders to remove thousands of safe, healthy trees in Wyong Shire for any or no reason. The character of the neighbourhood was considerably degraded. Neighbourhoods have become tense. Police have been called to help settle disputes.

The Central Coast has been differentiated from other regional areas by its natural assets. The natural environment is the primary attraction that entices people to want to live, work and play in the region. So the Central Coast Regional Plan must genuinely prioritise the natural environment to attract and sustain development.

It is not enough to provide and maintain isolated reserves or even wildlife corridors within the region. The health of the Central Coast environment relies on the maintenance of a rich biodiversity throughout the region and the avoidance of heat banks in residential areas.

In particular, the maintenance of biodiversity includes having native bushland permeating the residential suburbs and fringing all of the waterways. Trees cool and filter the air. Their root systems protect against soil erosion and filter water flows. Native trees sustain native birds and animals. Suburban beauty and amenity is improved with trees.

Previous state and local governments recognised the value of being actively involved in the management of trees and foliage in the urban landscape. The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act of 1979 called on Councils to maintain and promote biodiversity. Hence most existing suburbs have at least a sparse canopy of trees and some native bird and animal habitats. NSW Councils generally retain the necessary expertise to manage vegetation within their areas.

Councils throughout NSW have required landowners to submit for approval when intending to remove trees or clear shrubbery for various substantial reasons. Applications for trivial reasons were banned or routinely refused.

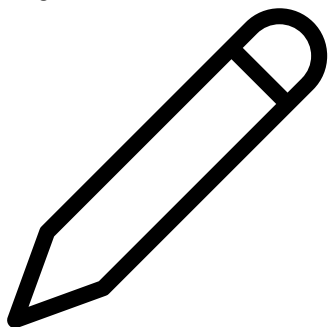
This NSW State Government-sponsored Central Coast Regional Plan is providing goals and criteria against which the maintenance and development of the regional environment will be measured. It can either require or strongly influence Councils to continue to be actively engaged in the management of trees and foliage for the benefit of the region and the total environment.

If local government does not accept that responsibility, the community and the state government are left to trust individual landowners and developers to put the environment ahead of their own self-interest. It is well known that such trust would be ill-founded. Self interest will win outright.

Local government is important to the way we live in neighbourhoods, communities and regions because it is so involved in social policy and sense of place. Absence of Wyong Shire Council as an informed and impartial arbiter for nearly 12 months has led to discord in the neighbourhood. Arguments develop when one self-interested neighbour removes a tree for reasons that appear to others to be trivial or unjustified. The community has a right to expect that an active local government will participate in the process and remove the opportunity for such difficulties to arise.

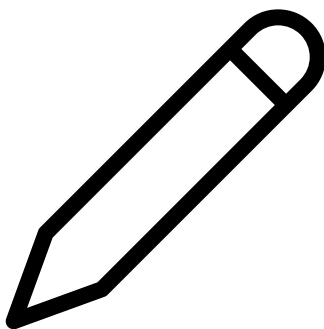
The Draft Central Coast Regional Plan aims to "create great places to live". The management of issues that influence orderly neighbourhood behaviour is essential to this goal. No plan can succeed if any of the factors that contribute to its success are not managed and especially if they are left subject to rampant self-interest. We respectfully submit that the Central Coast Regional Plan includes the statement (perhaps as an additional Action under Direction 4.1) that the NSW Government will:
"require Central Coast Councils to actively manage trees and vegetation within the region including retaining the responsibility of being the consent authority for the removal of existing trees."

*Trees of Bateau Bay " A community group formed in 2014 to campaign against the discarding of tree protection policies by Wyong Shire Council and the on-going destruction of trees across the Wyong Shire

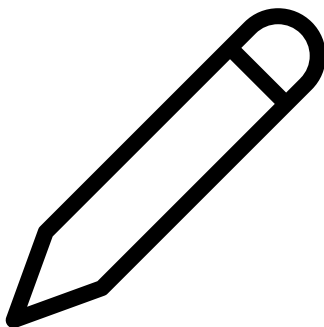


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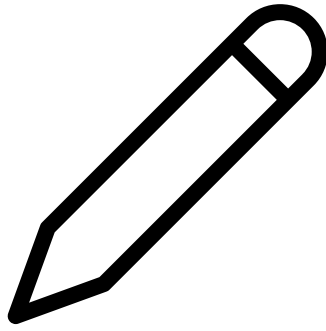
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