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Director Environment and Building Policy  
GPO Box 39  
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing to express my concern that at recent community meetings in the Eurobodalla Shire the Department and the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) have indicated that the draft State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) does not identify mapping of vulnerable areas in the Eurobodalla or other Shires. This is doubly concerning as it appears the Shire Councils are using the Office of Environment and Heritage to undertake the mapping as Councils claim they do not have the resources for the task. This is a dangerous move as the OEH has been shown as being incapable of understanding the land owners needs and an inability to prioritise vulnerable areas by applying a cost/benefit analysis to rehabilitating threatened areas.

I have been a member of the Eurobodalla Rural Land Strategy Advisory Committee for four years and have firsthand experience of the OEH activities in the Eurobodalla Shire. Despite the resources of the Shire's Planning Department they refer excessively to the OEH to undertake their mapping needs. Further, it seems that this will mean that different hazard assessments will apply to different Council areas.

I consider that the vulnerable area mapping must be completed before legislation and the property rights and welfare of local land holders must be considered during the mapping process. Where land owners are excessively disadvantaged there should be compensation schemes to assist them. Furthermore, in the case of Eurobodalla, the 'project timeline' already appears to be 4 – 6 months behind schedule.

Yours faithfully

Huon Hassall OAM

