

**INQUIRY INTO INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION IN COASTAL GROWTH
AREAS.**

I have lived in Brunswick Heads in Byron Shire since 1986.

The permanent resident population at 2001 Census, 7th August 2001 was 1666. The projected "peak" population over the next 15 years is 3200-3250 i.e. 95% increase. This projection is dependent upon the implementation of Byron Shire Council's endorsed Brunswick Heads Settlement Strategy 2002 into an enforceable LEP and DCP.

Brunswick Heads has been repeatedly described as a beachside village that has historically provided "family based holidays". The village is currently experiencing the impact of a "sea-change" albeit development, other than the restoration of existing properties has been held abeyance by the 1998- to date "Sewerage Moratorium". Still the visible impact of time and change on the demand for infrastructure, appropriate to the future direction of the village is blatant.

Added to the projected 95% increase in residential population is tourism. The draft EIS for an upgraded sewerage treatment plant for Brunswick Heads-Mullumbimby projects the tourist population in Brunswick Heads to be 2.25per head of resident population. The inadequacy of Council's resources to accommodate this influx as well as that for the residential population is obvious. Council alone cannot be relied upon to fund the infrastructure to meet the emerging tourist and residential demand.

The following items, albeit not exclusive nor in rank order, are of concern.

A. TRANSPORT

- i) **PUBLIC TRAIN TRANSPORT** has been closed from Casino. This has caused problems to the movement of people and in particular the elderly and parent(s) with young children. Given that Tweed- Byron are major growth areas, with an aged demographic, it is imperative that access to rail transport

is given a priority as infrastructure. A Countrylink bus connection from Casino does not provide the service most suited to the needs of the elderly. E.g. my elderly and increasingly frail and widowed mother will no longer travel north because of the problems she experiences with changing her mode of transport. Coach travel is not an option for her. Her problems with long distance travel would not be unique.

- ii) A public rail service is needed to link with Queensland's infrastructure. Surely the days of tribal warfare between the State's can be put aside given the population and tourist growth of S.E Queensland and Northern NSW?
- iii) **A LOCAL COMMUTER TRAIN** is also needed to allow for the intra-regional movement of people. This need can be readily reflected in census data on age, income and vehicle ownership/household. It is also reflected in the aged projections for coastal growth areas, where there will inevitably be a growing dependency on public transport, particularly as the aging find they are only confident driving short distances and then not be able to drive at all.

B. ROCK WALLS along the Brunswick River foreshore are collapsing and have been for many years while inter-government departments continue to wrangle over whose responsibility it is to address this problem. Currently the walls adjoining the public foreshore parklands in Brunswick Heads are in part, fenced off with the ubiquitous orange plastic.

C. SEWERAGE MANAGEMENT AS INFRASTRUCTURE.

Byron Shire Council's Brunswick Valley Wastewater Committee was formed in 1998. That committee has strenuously and successfully campaigned for land disposal of treated effluent. The design concept for the upgraded sewerage treatment plant (STP) that

incorporates this principal should be operational in mid 2008. The STP will be located upstream of the prime recreational areas of the Brunswick River estuary at Brunswick Heads.

The Brunswick Valley is the highest rainfall area in NSW and while there is rainfall throughout the year there is a distinct 'wet' and 'dry' season. The design for the upgraded STP targets land disposal of treated effluent in the 'dry' season. With the increasing cost of a water licenses to pump directly from the Brunswick River, the demand for treated effluent is dependent upon farmers realizing it will cost less than pumped water. To date, the demand for treated effluent from the existing Mullumbimby STP has been most encouraging. However, that has been a function of both the prolonged drought and dry weather conditions. It has also been a function of farmers maintaining a high demand for water e.g. irrigated pasture for dairy and cattle grazing.

Effluent that is not disposed on land will continue to be discharged into the Brunswick River. And while this will occur most often during the 'wet', the incidence of that summer 'wet' coincides with the tourist peak season and the highest primary contact with recreational waters downstream of the proposed STP. Even with the best of treated effluent below that of potable water, there is still the perception of a public health risk associated with effluent discharge into a waterway such as the Brunswick River.

Thus the most vulnerable aspect of this sewerage management strategy is the extent and location of land suitable for effluent disposal. Consequently, if this strategy is to be sustainable it means that the notion of 'infrastructure' needs to be extended to include the management of treated effluent. In the Brunswick River valley, this means Council taking a precautionary approach to any re-zoning of existing rural land that would be suited to the disposal of treated effluent. The problem here is that real estate prices for rural holdings are escalating and the biggest rural cash crop is "subdivision." **As a consequence Council will most probably have to purchase rural land as an integral component to its sewerage management.. Such land will need to be seen as part of its infrastructure and this means 'infrastructure' is more than the State contributing only to the funding of the STP alone.**

The paradigm shift to treat effluent as a resource and to recycle grey water for household use will also require retrofitting of pipelines from the STP. This would be a cost beyond Council alone and would require funding from the State.

D. CROWN RESERVES ON THE BRUNSWICK RIVER FORESHORE AS OPEN PUBLIC SPACE AND RECREATIONAL LAND NOT CARAVAN PARKS

There are three caravan parks in Brunswick Heads. Each of these parks is located on prime river foreshore land held in Trust by Byron Shire Council. For years to date Council has been involved, in its conflicting role as manager, regulator and developer of these Crown Reserves, in a 'land grab' of the community's foreshore parklands. Government departments responsible for these Crown Reserves have been well aware of Council encroaching its commercial operations outside the designated operational boundaries of its caravan park e.g. The Ferry Crown Reserve

The focal area of Brunswick Heads is its foreshore parklands. These extend from the Nature Reserve at The Ferry Crown Reserve, along the estuary foreshore to the Brunswick Bowling Club. The present and future value of these foreshores as infrastructure is currently being tested in Brunswick Heads as Council's agenda is to incorporate its existing foreshore encroachments into the commercial operation of its caravan parks. There has been sustained objection over the last 7 years to this action. This is best illustrated in the case of The Ferry Crown Reserve. Here Council is currently being persuaded by Department of Lands to incorporate the foreshore land up to the Mean High Tide Water Mark into the caravan park and then provide for a precinct area on the foreshore for tent sites only during peak holiday period. For years this foreshore has been given under licence for tent sites during Xmas and Easter. Such advice to Council staff in particular does not give the public certainty that this 2000sqmetres, a handkerchief-sized piece of prime land, will remain as parkland. Only by keeping it outside the operational boundary of the caravan park can it realize its intended use as parkland.

In Council's publicly exhibited Section 94 Development Contributions Plan 2005 it is stated:

"The Council does not wish to acquire additional land (parkland) beyond that of identified in previous CP's (e.g. the 2001-2006 Plan). However, as a result of population growth the per capita rate of provision of open space will decline and this would lead to a diminution of the existing standard of open space. To counter this drop in standards, the Council will place an emphasis in this plan of embellishing existing reserve rather than accumulating additional open space areas. This will allow the carrying capacity of existing open space to be increase so that the existing population's standards will not be diminished."

page 35

Therefore, where land is already zoned as Public Open Space and Recreational Land, and when conflict such as is occurring in Brunswick Heads, the precautionary principle should be maintained and the contested land remain as parkland.

E. FOOD LAND AS INFRASTRUCTURE

This was not included in the Committee's Frame of Reference but I consider it of sufficient worth to have it acknowledged.

A 'rich' society is one that can feed its people. The loss of prime agricultural land to urban development is a loss of food land and a loss in the richness of that society. The increasing salinisation of food land and ravages of prolonged drought conditions at the national scale only highlights the need to protect the agricultural land along the eastern seaboard.

The coastal valleys have for centuries been food baskets. The loss of this prime agricultural land to urban residential development ought to be alarming. If the notion of 'infrastructure' is to have a future oriented perspective, then it would seem appropriate

that prime agricultural land is identified, marked and labeled as a form of infrastructure for the explicit purpose of protecting its soil and food potential.

F. AFFORDABLE HOUSING

This topic was not explicitly referred to in your Frames of Reference but could have equally been referred to in your examples. Its failure to appear has been interpreted in this submission as an unfortunate omission.

Byron Council area has an accommodation crisis. This is partly explained by the prolonged failure of government to provide public housing. It has also been aggravated by the lifestyle choices of households wanting to live in this location. As a consequence households are living in sub-standard accommodation some of which has failed to satisfy fire safety regulations, illegally converted garages, caravans powered by extension chords in private backyards (\$100-150pw!) and converted railway carriages (\$100pw) etc. It is in this context that the language of “affordable housing” has emerged.

With demand for accommodation outstripping supply, the term “affordable housing” has taken on both a popular and political mantra. This has been reinforced with the dogma that a household can only be expected to pay 30% of income in rent. That dogma also dismisses:

- a) how households choose to allocate income to finance lifestyle choices;
- b) the increasing impost of items such as medical, transport and food on household income; but

does reinforce the historical stereotypical relationship between tenants and property owners.

In response to “affordable housing” there is a reactive mantra looking to ‘philanthropy’, ‘ethical investment’ and ratepayers foregoing income to provide concessions to developers. All of these suggestions have been leveraged on the value of “protecting social diversity”¹.

¹ There has never, in all documents relating to affordable housing an explanation as to why “social diversity” is a “value.” Instead there is a plethora of writing on socio-economic diversity. But even this

Under the Brunswick Heads Settlement Strategy 2002, Council is being pressured to compromise residential site densities in Brunswick Heads to allow “garden flats” as a way of addressing the “affordable housing” issue. Under the Valuation of Lands Act 1916 No 2 Sections 26(i), Section 27(i) and Section 14(a) para 4, gazetted in 1.1.01, this form of development is only ratable under extremely limited conditions. Thus “garden flats” will represent a cost to ratepayers and Council income. In context of Brunswick Heads, these dwellings will continue to promote the “back economy” and miss the targeted population simply because more revenue can be made by making them available for tourist accommodation e.g. Xmas 04/05 @\$1500pw! Between Easter to Xmas these same dwellings can be rented on a short term lease thus forcing the growth of a transient rent population in the village. The social and economic costs of what was applauded as an alternative form of housing in the village cannot be supported unless they can be rated and the existing legislation changed to give Council’s the right to include such development within its ratable properties.

The aforementioned is not intended to distract from the need for “affordable housing” in coastal growth areas. However, it is encumberant upon the State, not Council to provide this infrastructure. It is also apparent that the State will not be able to fund the quantity of housing needed to address what will be a continuing and growing problem in selected localities along the eastern seaboard. The State also needs to acknowledge that this will be aggravated by the generational change coming through Australian society with a history of renting, non-tenured work and personal debt. However this does not exclude the State from exploring other means of addressing the problem

It is not outside the frames of reference of this inquiry to spin-off ideas into other areas such as legislation relating to tenancy agreements to address the “affordable housing” issue. I would strongly recommend that the State examine how legislation can be introduced or existing legislation modified to make long-term leases such as in Europe

lacks any consideration of the tolerance of inequity in household wealth/income that would embrace his diversity and still maintain a “healthy community.”

another option in the private rental market. My understanding albeit limited, of such leases as operating in Germany for example, is that the responsibility of tenants and property owners are markedly different from that which exist under current NSW legislation. Such leases would have the potential to reconceptualise and institutionalise “renting” as “respectable” as opposed to “renting” as representing failure to achieve the Australian dream.

G. AGED CARE - HOSPITALS

I am so disgusted at the collapse of the public hospital system that I have decided to include the letter I sent to respective Ministers at State and Federal level. It speaks for itself.

3 Mona Lane
Brunswick Heads
NSW 2483

My father is dead.

Prior to his death he had been hospitalized on two separate occasions. During these periods he was exposed, all up too:

- i) waiting time in Emergency for 7hrs prior to assessment;
- ii) waiting time in Emergency for 5hrs prior to assessment during which time he was semi-conscious;
- iii) an intravenous drip not functioning and remaining unnoticed by medical staff in the Emergency unit for an indefinite period during (ii);
- iv) left unsupervised and consequently falling in the shower incurring injuries to leg, arm and a then recent skin graft of the scalp to remove cancer;
- v) access only to an on-call doctor during weekend periods;
- vi) realization that unless members of the family were in attendance he would not have had food sustenance

AND

- vii) the repeated mantra that all of the above was an outcome of inadequate resourcing of the public hospital system.

My father, without recourse to any tax minimization schemes, had paid his taxes to the State on the understanding that the State would in return take care of him. In the critical area of health it betrayed him by its omission to do so.

As a consequence of my father's lack of trust in your hospital system, we respected, understood and supported his decision to be nursed at home until his death on 2.10.04.

The enclosed is the bill for those services.

Nursing at Home for 99 days

49 days allow 8hrs per day @\$16.00/hr	\$ 6,272.00
ADD	
50 days allow 21 hrs per day @\$18.00/hr	18,900.00
TOTAL	<u>\$25,172.00</u>

NOTE:

- (i) These rates are at the lowest rate for unregistered nursing and exclude penalty rates. The increase to \$18.00/hr is commensurate with improvement in both the quantity and quality of the skill base over the 99days
- (ii) Laundry and food preparation have been excluded
- (iii) An allowance of 3hrs per day has been average as representing
 - (a) respite needed to maintain intensive patient care
 - (b) time taken for professional nursing services

COST TO THE PUBLIC HOSPITAL SYSTEM AS PUBLISHED IN THE MEDIA IS
\$380,000 PER YEAR OR \$1041.90/DAY

Hospital care for 99 days = \$103,068.90

THIS BILL REPRESENTS A SAVING TO THE STATE OF \$77,896.90

In disgust and anger at the continuing collapse in the duty of care of the hospital system,

Patricia Warren.

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I trust the above items will inject responsible action by the State and that such an Inquiry as this will not become yet another cul-de-sac where good ideas are corralled and buried.

Yours sincerely,

Patricia Warren MA, MEd., Dip.Ed.

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