

5 May, 2005

The Committee Manager
Standing Committee on Public Works
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Re: Inquiry into Infrastructure Provision in Coastal Growth Areas
- Call for Submissions

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the Legislative Assembly – Standing Committee on Public Works.

Our submission relates to our location on the NSW north coast, Coffs Harbour area - in particular, Sandy Beach. The community of Sandy Beach is located approximately 20 minutes north of Coffs Harbour on the Pacific Highway. We have a nearby town – Woolgoolga, approximately 5 minutes drive away, heading north on the highway towards Grafton.

Sandy Beach Residents' Association Inc is a voluntary, community-based group, formed with the best interests of Sandy Beach in mind. We exist as a means of representing our residents on matters of importance/concern/interest, through contact with appropriate government departments and agencies. Generally, we aim to gain improvements in infrastructure, facilities, and safety, as well promoting and protecting the lifestyle we enjoy in this location.

In response to your inquiry, we offer the following responses:

1. Key coastal population growth and urban consolidation trends in NSW

Sandy Beach is a key coastal population growth area, so we believe that we fit the terms of reference of the inquiry. All of Coffs Coast northern beaches are presently under development pressure due to a lack of water and sewerage infrastructure in the immediate past that imposed a 8-10 year moratorium on development. Now that some improvements to water and sewerage have been made by Council, there is a hell-for-leather catch-up by the developers.

Sandy Beach/Hearns Lake is presently under development pressure under a similarly named Development Control Plan. This DCP, if successful, will add up to a further 400+ home sites on land that is very sensitive environmentally – being a catchment for a lake in the hinterland of a Marine Park. Presently there are only 600 approx homes in Sandy Beach.

Sandy Beach Residents Association Inc.

The RTA are also presently questioning whether to blaze a dual carriageway through the middle of the coastal strip.

Neither venture appears to be considered in conjunction with each other. Infrastructure such as hospitals, schools, aged care, citizen halls, children's recreation, etc, appears to be further outside developer/Council/RTA concerns.

2. Short and long term needs of coastal communities for basic infrastructure (such as roads, power, water and sewerage) and human services infrastructure (such as hospitals, schools, aged care centres and sporting facilities)

Short term needs are immediate with regard to:

Roads – current feeder roads are without kerb and gutter, and drainage is completely inadequate to cater for existing traffic loads

Power – regular interruptions to power whether short spikes or blackouts, occur under existing loads

Water/sewerage – recently upgraded, but we continue to be on permanent water restrictions

Hospitals – Coffs region has similar waiting periods as most areas, due to previous development outstripping hospital bed planning. Up to 6-hour wait in casualty

Schools – Sandy Beach Primary is currently holding 380 students with the school built for 300. Woolgoolga High has 1200 students and a waiting list, and was built for 800. These current levels are unacceptable. *more development = more students

Aged Care Centres – Sandy Beach has no facilities. The developer of the Hearn's Lake/Sandy Beach DCP has decided that although the purchasers will most likely be elderly, there are enough services in Woolgoolga to cater for them. The Developer Contribution Plan contains NO facilities - absolutely unacceptable. There are needs in Sandy Beach now for aged facilities such as bus services, etc.

Sporting facilities – Sandy Beach has no sporting facilities – contributing to the social problems increasing in the bored youth. The developer of the Hearn's Lake/Sandy Beach DCP considered that a protected froglet habitat would be the only area for an oval. It is doubtful whether this part of the development will be allowed.

Police – we need more police now due to increasing crime ... delay in response, etc.

In relation to long-term needs, all of the above points will be further exaggerated if more pressure is put on the existing under-funded/designed services.

If hell-for-leather development goes ahead, then maybe new areas will receive infrastructure improvements without there being any improvements to existing areas. For example, areas like Sandy Beach which have always had the tag of being a poorer area, compared to other areas in Coffs Council's jurisdiction.

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It is very difficult to comment on how much further development will impact on current and proposed infrastructure, as the public have no idea what we are to consider under current development proposals. For example, at its meeting on 3/2/05, Coffs Council placed the Hearns Lake/Sandy Beach draft DCP on exhibition. It contains 3 sections -one being the Eastern Precinct - which concerns this Association, as it is to be built on environmentally sensitive land that Council is trying to zone 7(a) – which is protected vegetation. At the same meeting, a proposal was put before the Council to increase the number of homes on the DCP from approx 50 to 300 in this precinct. So while the public are considering a draft DCP with 50 homes on a precinct, the Council are considering an increase to 300 proposed by a Councillor on land that the Council considers environmentally sensitive.

This is exactly why it is hard to comment on long-term needs in specific detail – how much development will there be? Where will the highway upgrade/by pass go? Similar confusion exists with the detail the RTA supply to Community Focus Groups (CFG's) for comment, incomplete maps overlaid on 10-year old photos, etc.

3. Coordination of commonwealth, state and local government strategies to deliver sustainable coastal growth and supporting infrastructure

There needs to be a development ombudsman for the whole coast due to the following:

The average person can not follow the multitude of local, state and federal government departments that seem to overlap with responsibility with regard to development issues

The RTA does not appear to be planning the highway upgrade or by pass with Coffs Council's current opening up of the northern beaches for development

Once the Council do the water and sewerage infrastructure upgrades or projects, the state government plays catch-up with schooling issues, and the federal and state government then play catch-up with hospital and doctor requirements. Usually this creates a situation of finger pointing on funding deficit situations, and inadequate infrastructure results. All the infrastructure should be considered wholistically at the beginning of ANY development. This has not happened in the past and we as residents suffer forever.

4. Best Practise methods to plan, manage and provide infrastructure to coastal growth areas

This will involve slowly considering the impact of housing development and road building, and infrastructure building. The pace of development should not be set by impatient developers or Council under pressure.

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5. Management of social, environmental and economic considerations associated with infrastructure provision in coastal growth areas

How can this be done without a master plan of a whole region. Twenty (20) kilometers of coast from Coffs Harbour to Woolgoolga should be considered wholistically to stop ribbon development and inadequate provisions of hospital, roads, schools, etc.

Accordingly, the Sandy Beach Residents' Association Inc does not feel that the RTA or Council can be in a position to consider things such as: a highway by pass/upgrade; or developments such as Hearn's Lake/Sandy Beach Development Control Plan, under present dysfunctional processes. This of course does not mean that upgrading intersections and other safety features of the highway should be put on hold pending the inquiry that you are undertaking.

Thank you for the opportunity to have an input.

Yours sincerely

Andrew White
President