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June 1, 2005

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

Dear Sir

Re: Inquiry into Infrastructure Provision in Coastal Growth Areas

Please find attached Council's submission to assist the enquiry process.

The submission highlights a range of issues which relate to the provision of infrastructure in coastal growth areas. Of specific note are the following:

- Partnerships, communication and information sharing between government departments.
- The lack of regional planning over the last 2 decades has hampered the potential for co-ordination between local government areas in the utilisation of infrastructure.
- The combined effects of population growth and "sea change" migration has made effective urban consolidation very difficult in coastal areas. This has a flow on effect on the provision of infrastructure as the existing facilities are not optimised.

Council can provide additional information or detail on any of the issues raised in the attached submission.

If clarification of the above is required please contact the undersigned.

Yours faithfully

Paul Douglass
Group Manager
Sustainable Planning

SUBMISSION OF ENQUIRY INTO INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION OF COASTAL GROWTH AREAS

Introduction

The Port Stephens Local Government Area (LGA) is located at the boundary of the mid north and central coasts of New South Wales and covers an area of 979 sq. km. It is approximately 55 kilometres from east to west and 30 kilometres from north to south. Port Stephens extends north to Karuah, west to Duns Creek, east to Shoal Bay and southeast to Fern Bay and Hexham.

The area contains prime agricultural land, valuable natural ecosystems and a high level of species diversity. The LGA has a substantial estuary system with a surface area of over 100 sq kilometres, making it approximately three times the size of Sydney Harbour. The waterway lies at the junction of the Myall River Lakes System, Karuah River and the Pacific Ocean. The western half of the area is geographically dominated by the confluence of the Paterson and Williams Rivers with the Hunter River. In between there are extensive flood prone areas feeding extensive wetlands. The eastern portion of the local government area contains the Stockton Bight dunal system which extends for 32 km, the largest unvegetated dunal system in NSW as well as the second largest in the Southern Hemisphere.

Residents and tourists alike are attracted to Port Stephens because of its natural beauty, magnificent waterway and rural character. The Port and its surrounding environment are used extensively for tourism and recreation, as well as supporting a large professional fishing and oyster growing industry. Port Stephens has become a major recreational, tourist and retirement centre, as well as a place people choose to live and work given its proximity to Newcastle and Maitland. This is reflected in the fact that the residential population has grown from 43,823 in 1991 to around 61,379 in 2002. This population growth, combined with increasing levels of tourism, continue to place increasing pressure on the environmental integrity, character and attributes of the LGA.

The economy of Port Stephens continues to experience change. Economic activity is varied with agribusiness, tourism, property development, manufacturing, retail and small business activities predominating. Major employers include Tomago Aluminium, an expanding Williamstown RAAF Base and Newcastle Airport as well as Port Stephens Council. There has been a notable reduction in employment in the recent past in areas such as mining, agriculture and the provision of utilities.

1. Population Growth/Trends

1.1 The impacts of growth on infrastructure

Issue:

The rapid growth of population and tourism across such a large and dispersed area has generated many infrastructure gaps beyond the projected financial capabilities of Council alone. Gaps in community infrastructure include the basic provision of upgraded roads, drainage and foreshore areas and in particular the inadequate maintenance of existing roads, drainage, parks, natural reserves and foreshore networks throughout the LGA.

Challenge:

To continue to cost effectively manage Council's limited financial resources while engaging other levels of government and the private sector to first recognise these gaps and then for them to contribute more to the provision and maintenance of this local infrastructure.

1.2 DIPNR population growth predictions

Issue:

There has been a focus on simply estimating growth rates and leaving councils to manage the growth.

Challenge: To develop regional growth management strategies and coordinate infrastructure provision that provides councils with a framework to coordinate local planning for development, infrastructure, facilities and services.

1.3 State Plans, Metropolitan Strategy & Regional Plan

Issue:

Reliance on single issue statutory plans (e.g. SEPPs) has led to an increasingly complex, inconsistent and reactive planning system and policies.

Challenge:

To place resources and commitment to streamlining the planning system and to prepare and implement regional strategies. There has been a distinct lack of regional planning in the Hunter for the last 2 decades. It would seem that DIPNR is close to delivering a regional plan, however it is at a critical stage of preparation.

1.4 Population surge caused by tourism

Issue:

The population of Port Stephens and particularly the Tomaree Peninsular trebles in size during the holiday periods.

Challenge:

This creates a difficulty in adequately providing efficient services to an acceptable level on a year round basis due to very large fluctuations in demand.

1.5 The impacts of the ageing population**Issue:**

During the last 10 years, the Port Stephens population has experienced significant proportional growth in its aged population through natural ageing of existing residents and continuing influx of retirees settling in the area. For instance 15.8 % of the total population are now aged over 65 years compared to 12.1% 10 years ago. It is predicted that this figure will almost double to 24.2% by the year 2022.

Challenge:

Creating communities that have the inbuilt capacity to respond to the needs of an ageing population, for example: -

- Appropriately located and designed footpath links and support infrastructure (eg; bus stops and shelters)
- Accessible community facilities, parks and age friendly fit-out (eg; disabled access, shade, seating, toilets)
- Adaptability of centre based programs from Council's community and recreation facilities to deliver programs and activities which will reflect the demands and aspirations of ageing residents (eg lifelong learning, healthy ageing, passive recreation)

1.6. Port Stephens Urban Settlement Strategy**Issue:**

Has been prepared without a regional strategy framework in place and therefore its effectiveness is limited in managing population growth and capital intensive infrastructure.

Challenge:

To prepare a regional strategy that provides the Port Stephens strategy with a regional social, economic and ecological context.

1.7 The decline in persons/dwelling and increase in average house size

Issue:

Over the last 25 years, the persons per dwelling has steadily declined whilst the average house size has steadily increased. In simple terms, this means households of less people are living in larger houses. These simple statistics have a significant negative impact on the potential for urban consolidation.

Challenge:

Urban consolidation is a significant issue for coastal areas. Many coastal areas are constrained by natural features and as such the potential for growth is minimised. When this is considered in the context of “sea change” migration opposing denser urban development, it is often very difficult for coastal areas to achieve adequate levels of urban consolidation. It is important that the state government provide strong policies to encourage adequate levels of infill development as it has significant implications for the provision of infrastructure. Existing infrastructure should be optimised prior to additional infrastructure being constructed.

2. Infrastructure Needs – Short/Long Term

2.1 Public transport/vehicle dependence

Issue:

Inadequate infrastructure in place to support viable alternative transport options that can contribute to a reduction in the number of private vehicle trips. Public transport, cycling and walking all contribute to reduce private vehicle dependence.

Challenge:

Access to public transport is poor and often indirect. Port Stephens has a dispersed settlement pattern with a mixture of urban and rural areas spread across 979 square kilometres. The major villages and towns are located on or near arterial roads. Car ownership is high due to the vast local Government area and limited public transport services. Access to employment, education and specialist medical services requires a high proportion of trips to destinations outside of the LGA. The limited funding available for infrastructure construction, enhancement and maintenance is a barrier to transport alternatives

2.2 The provision of effluent disposal infrastructure

Issue:

In the Hunter, the service provider for effluent disposal is the Hunter Water Corporation. As a pseudo government department, the HWC provides water and sewer services, however the encouragement of the provision of services to unserviced areas apparently is not seen as a priority. Council has on occasion been in a position to assist in the drawing together of a number of significant landowners to provide services to an area. HWC's attitude is that Council should be solely responsible for co-ordinating and constructing with a view to the infrastructure being handed over to the HWC upon completion.

Challenge:

As growth continues in coastal areas there is a greater need for the provision of reticulated effluent disposal. Greater co-ordination and willingness to work with the private sector is required to provide innovative solutions for growth and the provision of water and sewer facilities as well as other utilities.

2.3 Medical and health facilities

Issue:

Port Stephens medical and health facilities are basically restricted to two community health centres and a 14 bed Polyclinic. Residents and visitors alike seeking either hospital and/or specialist medical services have to commute approximately 30-45 minutes to either Maitland or Newcastle to access these facilities. People who either don't drive or cannot access private transport are further disadvantaged by the limited public transport system. Another key issue is the shortage of General Practitioners and the associated problems of limited bulk-billing services, closed books, lengthy waiting times of up to three weeks etc.

Challenge:

Improving access to local and regional medical and health facilities and General Practitioners for a population of 62,488 people (ABS Estimated Resident Population, June 2004) with a population spread throughout an LGA spanning 979 square kilometres with pocket localities characterised by rural remoteness.

2.4 Transport links to Newcastle Airport

Issue:

Newcastle Airport (Williamstown) services the air travel needs of the Hunter and upper Central Coast Regions. Access to the airport is by road, passengers arriving and departing from the airport predominantly by private vehicles followed by taxis, hire cars and buses. This adds to traffic congestion and parking problems around the airport terminal and the surrounding road network.

Challenge:

There are no alternative public transport options available to the airport. For the nearest large population areas of Newcastle and Lake Macquarie, residents needing to travel to and from Newcastle Airport have no direct transport options other than private vehicles. With the expansion of airport activity, both passenger and freight, the need for alternative transport such as rail must be a consideration in planning and infrastructure investment.

2.5. Employment opportunities/Employment land

Issue:

The State Government has not provided direction in respect of the creation of employment land, employment strategies or centres policies. This highlights a significant lack of regional planning in the Hunter over the last 2 decades.

Challenge:

To provide real employment opportunities in coastal areas as an alternative to tourism that tends to be both seasonal and subject to volatile economic influence.

2.6 Capacity for private/public partnership**Issue:**

While there is the ability for Port Stephens Council to engage in these partnerships, due to the limitations imposed by state and federal government legislation and the large size of infrastructure lending itself to such an arrangement, Council's capacity is limited.

Challenge:

Council's challenge is to persuade other levels of governments to clear the "hurdles" to such arrangements and for Port Stephens to identify potential "packages" that may be of interest to the private sector.

2.7 The identifying of infrastructure gaps**Issue:**

While Council recognises many gaps in its community's infrastructure, it has limited financial resources to close these gaps. This is due to the large ratio between past provision and population, cost shifting by other levels of government, the private sector and finally rate pegging. Therefore Council now remains largely dependent on the recognition of the gaps and subsequent part or full financing by other government agencies. Moreover, due to a lack of overall strategic planning and co-ordination amongst these infrastructure agencies at all levels, resources are wasted arguing the relative "priorities" of these gaps. Worse, opportunities are lost to produce common infrastructure for the benefit of both the agencies concerned but moreover the common communities they and Council are supposedly serving.

Challenge:

Council must advocate for appropriate project funding. It must also continue to build its relationships individually with all the various agencies involved in infrastructure provision and work with them as well as engaging regionally to build a common view of their common community's infrastructure needs.

3. Coordination of Commonwealth, State and Local Government Strategies

3.1 Regional planning

Issue:

Lack of understanding by Commonwealth government on the possible negative effect of their policies upon regional and local strategies, plans and development (e.g. First Home Owner bonus), politicisation of funding projects by bypassing state governments by (in some cases, part) funding councils and the lack of strategies by the Commonwealth and state government to allow coordination.

Challenge:

To develop and maintain dialogue between the Commonwealth and the state/local governments and establish a strategy framework that allows regional and subsequent local coordination to be established.

3.2 Managing the Port Stephens Waterway

Issue:

There are a wide range of agencies involved in the Management of the waterway of Port Stephens however there is little or no co-ordination of strategies. This relates to Environment Australia, Department of Environment & Conservation, NSW Waterways, Department of Primary Industries, Catchment Management Authority, Department of Lands, Department of Infrastructure Planning & Natural Resources and local government (Port Stephens & Great Lakes). The Port Stephens Estuary Management Committee provides co-ordination to a degree however the committee has clearly identified the need for a co-ordinating body.

Challenge:

To provide a mechanism whereby the individual agencies strategies are appropriately co-ordinated and managed.

3.3 Co-ordination of service providers

Issue:

There is clearly a lack of co-ordination in major works carried out by individual service providers. A good example is major works carried out by Hunter Water Corporation and Energy Australia in the provision of services to the Tomaree Peninsula. Significant works were carried out by these two agencies in a similar area without any co-ordination to the overall detriment of a fragile environment.

Challenge:

To ensure agencies co-ordinate their operations to minimise environmental harm and maximise scarce infrastructure funds.

3.4 Lack of community partnership with Department of Defence**Issue:**

The Department of Defence (DoD) is a significant employer in the Port Stephens region, however there is a clear lack of community partnership with the DoD. To date Council has been unable to find out basic issues in relation to social services on the Base. A major difficulty in Council forming a real partnership with the Base is the constant changeover of DoD personnel which is a function of their staffing policies. There are 3500 people working on the base with supporting social infrastructure of which Council knows very little about. This is important information that should be factored into Council's Social Plan.

Challenge

To create an effective partnership with the DoD on equal terms.

3.5 Strategic planning for education needs**Issue:**

There would seem to be a clear lack of strategic planning at the State level in respect of the provisions of education services. By way of example, Tomaree High was insufficient to cater for the demand from the day that it opened.

Challenge:

To ensure that long-term strategic planning to meet the education needs of the community is carried out.

3.6 Cost shifting through Department of Commerce re: school construction**Issue:**

Local Councils are continuing to experience various forms of cost shifting from other levels of government. Of major concern is in the development of new state government facilities such as schools. The focus has been on the building construction and associated on-site works. Little if any recognition is given in the project costing to address the infrastructure impacted immediately surrounding the development such as footpath and cycleway links, bus bays, shelters and safety fencing, and inadequate parking. This is incorrectly assumed to be the responsibility of Councils.

Challenge:

Establishing an agreed mechanism to facilitate discussions with State Government Departments at the project concept stage. State Government needs to accept responsibility for the ongoing negative impact that a new development has on a local community. The development is accessible and functional, interfacing with the surrounding public space. This is asking no more than what is required of the private development industry as a result of the Section 79(c) assessment process in accordance with the EP&A Act.

3.7 The consideration of mosquitos as a State/Regional issue**Issue:**

Mosquito-breeding habitat in Port Stephens and Newcastle is extensive. Evidence from mosquito trapping program in Port Stephens is showing an increase in the number of mosquitos carrying the Ross River Virus. In March & April 2005 Hunter New England Health & Port Stephens Council issued community health warnings about mosquitos and the virus.

Challenge:

Port Stephens area has significant river and estuarine systems, flood prone and tidal land including wetlands. The estuarine system includes the largest area of mangroves and approximately 18% of the remnant salt marsh in NSW, making it an ideal environment for mosquito habitat. The problem has been recognised as a regional and state problem with the Premier's Department, Hunter working with local government and other agencies to develop a management strategy that provides a consistent approach. The challenge is to have a state perspective given the major population centres existing along the coastal zone of NSW. Community health, development control, new land releases to accommodate future population and tourism are all impacted. Consistent Statewide applied legislation or strategic planning is required to address this issue.

3.8 Co-ordination of State/local agencies' strategic plans**Issue:**

Most State and local agencies have a strategic or management plan to guide their respective organisations. However there is little or no co-ordination of these plans to ensure any goals are achieved.

Challenge:

To ensure appropriate levels of communication, consultation and co-ordination between state and local agencies.

3.9 Department of Lands – Commercial Lands Policy

Issue:

Policy adjustment by Department of Lands to become more commercially focussed has meant that the promised transfer of Nelson Bay Harbour to Council has not been completed. It is Council's belief that a contract exists for this to proceed.

Challenge:

By retaining the harbour, the Department has now effectively ceased all development of the Nelson Bay foreshore area and placed a higher burden on Council from a maintenance perspective. Council was and is committed to spending all income from the site on the site and the surrounding area to handle the impacts of international, state and regional tourism.

3.10 The non-alignment of State agency boundaries**Issue:**

The respective boundaries between State agencies, local government and now CMA's are not aligned. This creates a lack of synergy between organisations with significant communication, consultation and co-ordination gaps. Port Stephens believes this is wasteful of limited resources at all levels of government.

Challenge:

To improve wherever possible the commonality in the boundaries between organisations. Where this is not possible, then to seek to minimise the "wastage" and interfaces.

3.11 The impact of SEPP71 on coastal planning**Issue:**

SEPP71 was created by the State Government with the principal intent of ensuring consistency of development on the NSW coast. In effect, this has not occurred. For example, a recent decision by DIPNR in Shoal Bay ignored a local DCP regarding height. This DCP was created over an extensive period of community consultation with due regard for the effect on the environment. This created a situation which has required Council to legally challenge the Minister's decision in the Land & Environment Court. Whilst this is unfortunate, Council had little alternative.

Challenge:

To improve the process for coastal planning in NSW. There are clearly instances where the Minister should be the determining authority due to size, employment potential, value, etc however SEPP71 has created the situation

where the Minister is responsible for a wide range of minor local developments.

3.12 The lack of consultation on planning issues – SEPP74

Issue:

In 2003 the State Government introduced SEPP74 which related to industrial lands in both Newcastle and Port Stephens. This was introduced without any consultation with Council. The issue in this instance is the lack of respect from a state level for valid local planning processes.

Challenge:

To create a better partnership between state and local governments in major planning issues.

3.13 The impact of the Seniors Living Policy on coastal planning

Issue:

The NSW Seniors Living Policy enables aged care facilities to be constructed on land adjacent to residential regardless of the zoning. Council's experience with the seniors living policy is that it subverts local planning processes and does not provide adequate detail for the support required for such developments. In Council's experience to date, this has led to serious detrimental outcomes.

Challenge:

Given the issues of ageing in NSW, as with Australia, and its particular impact on coastal communities, a stronger and clearer policy across the state is required.

3.14 The local government boundaries issue

Issue:

A review of local government boundaries has been a destabilising process for local government. At this stage the issue of further amalgamations or boundary changes has not been resolved.

Challenge:

To maintain local government initiatives despite the distraction of potential amalgamation or boundary change. Port Stephens Council has, and will continue to, strongly support and participate in Hunter Regional Organisation of Councils.

3.15 Tomaree High School

Issue:

When Tomaree High School was initially proposed, a working party was created with a view to doing a land swap between Council and the Department of Education. This was unsuccessful due to bureaucratic difficulties. The result is a school on an impractical puzzle of land. This process occurred again in Tomaree when a community hall was proposed to be used by several different community service providers. Again, the process failed due to bureaucratic difficulties.

Challenge:

To continue to engage various state bureaucracies to provide greater flexibility to achieve better common community outcomes. At present, many bureaucracies perceive themselves as either customers rather than

suppliers to local government or worse, as having no responsibility at all to local representation on behalf of the affected community.

4. Best Practice Methods to Plan, Manage and Provide Information

4.1 The collection/disposal/recycling of waste

Issue:

The growth in Port Stephens over the past 25 years in our unique environment has led Council to radical changes to solid waste management. Since 1980 solid waste management in the local government area has evolved from:

- Weekly collection of waste in 80 litre 'tin or plastic bins' with most homes burning paper and cardboard waste in back yard incinerators to a total ban on home incinerators and open burning in backyards in urban areas.
- Multiple wheelie bins each week for both recycling and waste.
- Alternative tertiary world's best practice waste technologies processing all waste, and conversely
- Costly waste disposal fees influenced in part by the NSW Waste Disposal Levy.

These initiatives have either been unsupported or, in some cases, actively discouraged by the appropriate state agencies.

The next 20 years is expected to see Council continue similar waste and recycling collection systems but with a significant increase in the amount of waste generation due to increased population and tourism.

Challenge:

Port Stephens Council suggests that the Inquiry into Infrastructure in Coastal Growth Areas give serious attention to the full use of the NSW Waste Disposal Levy to assist Councils to:

- Rehabilitate old landfill sites
- Adopt local site-specific vs. generic alternative waste technologies over landfill
- Site new landfill facilities to accommodate safe disposal of residual waste streams not catered for by alternative waste technologies
- Fund Councils that adopt comprehensive resource recovery strategies to encourage a move away from land filling as well as promotion of industry life cycle management.
- Actively encourage regional solutions and resource sharing to address common solid waste issues

- Develop innovative design principles for high-density dwelling areas to ensure that waste and recycling collection systems continue to provide a service that is convenient, clean, quick, safe and quiet.

4.2 The Hunter Councils model

Issue:

The Hunter Regional Organisation of Councils (HROC) model has more than proved an effective mechanism for facilitating local government co-operation across the region. However, the effectiveness of this model has not occurred across the state.

Challenge:

To replicate the success of HROC in those areas of NSW currently lacking.

4.3 Opportunity for integrated planning and data sharing

Issue:

Various state government agencies have untold data suitable for use by other agencies and local government not accessible by either incompatible systems or respective policies and practices.

Challenge:

To “unlock” this valuable community resource appropriately and cost effectively to improve all decision-making.

4.4 State Government benchmarking – no co-ordination/comparative data

Issue:

In many facets of the state government there is a distinct lack of benchmarking. Further, there is either none or only “tacit” consultation at the local government level. For many long-term major issues affecting local communities, a “one off” input is occasioned without the necessary ongoing conversation. Requirements are established without consideration of the principles of best practice and the associated benchmarking to establish a suitable level of service.

Challenge:

To “extend” decision making past the political imperatives to ensure long-term sustainability of our common communities.

5. Management of Social, Environmental & Economic Considerations

5.1 Urban consolidation and the impacts of sea change

Issue:

The notion of “sea-change” generally relates to populations relocating from cities or inland country to change their lifestyle by living on the coast. This provides a mindset that the same medium density which occurs in the city should not be permitted on the coast. The issues which apply to urban consolidation in the city context are just as relevant, if not more, in coastal development. Coastal villages such as those in Port Stephens are more often than not constrained by natural features and fragile environment and as such it is crucial to optimise the existing available “unencumbered” land and urban infrastructure.

Challenge:

For the state government to provide legislative support to ensure urban consolidation principles are maintained in coastal areas as well as strict environmental controls for “enviro” land.

5.2 The impact of the ageing population

Issue:

Capacity of Council to appropriately plan and deliver services within resource limitations to ensure quality of life of increasing aged population is maintained with reference to the needs, expectations and aspirations of existing and future ageing populations.

Challenge:

Building upon opportunities arising from an ageing population (eg growing pool of prospective volunteers for community based initiatives) whilst working towards the continued provision of aged and disability friendly Council services, infrastructure and facilities with due regard for a projected reduction in revenue (eg projected increases in number of aged residents deferring payment of rates against their estate, uncertainty over future levels of State and Federal funding to Councils for the delivery of aged specific programs eg Home & Community Care).

5.3 The effects of rate pegging

Issue:

Council continues to reject continued “rate pegging” as it strongly believes a democratically elected local government should be able to determine its maximum general income as other levels of Australian government continue

to do. Further, Council now believes its local community is seriously deprived of infrastructure as a result of inequitable rate pegging. Rather than fixing maximum general income, the Government should be guaranteeing no reduction in maximum general income, no reduction in grants, borrowing programs and the like for up to 7 years to allow appropriate planning.

Challenge:

To advocate to state government to recognise that modern local government and its professional management in the overwhelming main has the ability to control its own income and services and "special" cases such as Liverpool Council should be treated as such without additional administrative burden on all 120 others.

5.4 The reliance on the car as the primary source of transport

Issue:

The majority of residents in Port Stephens are reliant on private transport as there are no "government: bus or train services operating in or through the area. Public transport need is serviced by private bus operators, and a low level of service is generally provided. The major emphasis in a number towns and villages is school student travel. Access to transport is continually raised at community consultations as one of the major issues within the area. (Also refer to 2.1)

Challenge:

Car ownership in Port Stephens is high: of the 21,510 dwellings occupied in the 2001 Census, the number of households that owned one car was 2,767, 2,141 had two cars and 642 had three or more. The number of cars owned by Port Stephens residents is in excess of 8,975. A review of the method of travel to work indicates of the 21,223 people travelling, 12,905 travelled as a car driver and 1,421 as a passenger. The ratio of driver to passenger is very high 9 to 1. The main challenge is providing real alternatives to a greater percentage of private vehicle trips.

5.5 Managing the Port Stephens Waters

Issue:

There is a widely recognised view through various levels of government and users of the waterway that a more co-ordinated approach to the management of the waterway is required. In 2000 Council introduced zoning restrictions which required development consent for tourist boats in an attempt to regulate the impacts. The process of development control for tourist boats is difficult to adequately enforce and has limited potential to assist in the co-ordinated management of the waterway. Furthermore, the

zoning issue does not address the fundamental issue of carrying capacity for the estuary and the associated pressures this creates on the environment.

Challenge:

The Estuary Management Committee has actively considered the issues relating to the waterway over the last decade, with the committee comprising Port Stephens & Great Lakes Council's, and a wide range of State Government Authorities. This committee has clearly indicated that the estuary suffers from a lack of co-ordination as there is no clear authority. The issue of a marine park has been on the agenda for a number of years and from Council's perspective would provide the means for effective co-ordination of the authorities involved in the management of the waterway. A marine Park is not the only option however it is the direction chosen to date by the State Government and Council supports the finalisation of the marine park.

5.6 The legislative limitations of Section 94 contributions

Issue:

Since the inception of the EP&A Act in 1980 Council's have collected Section 94 contributions through the development application process. The nexus between development and the provision of services often makes it difficult for Councils to spend the money. This is quite evident in coastal communities where services are minimal. To spend the Section 94 monies Councils must provide funds to cover the costs of the existing community.

Challenge:

There has been legislation drafted which seeks to amend Section 94 of the Act so as to facilitate spending and the provision of services. Whilst Council has not been privy to the detail at this stage the potential for developer agreements, borrowing between components, flat percentage rate with flexibility in spending and possible retrospectivity is fully supported by Council.

5.7 Building social capital – Karuah Economic Development Plan

Issue:

Mitigating negative impacts of various state government initiatives, for example the new Pacific Highway bypass of Karuah.

Challenge:

Recently appointed two year position of 'Karuah Community & Economic Development Project Officer' faces challenge of attracting financial and in-kind resources required to implement the 'Karuah Community and Economic Redevelopment Plan' as well as empowering the local community to proactively identify and recognise ideas and opportunities to ensure the town's long-term community and economic sustainability and prosperity.

To date the state government's contribution compared to perceived need is regarded as insufficient.