

Proforma D – South West Rocks – 25 responses

Dear Committee,

South West Rocks is facing widespread unsustainable development, rapid and widespread native vegetation clearing for housing developments, and a lack of community consultation. This land clearing is based on outdated environmental protection measures. Residents and visitors have been upset at the rate and scope of old growth habitat clearing currently underway in our local area, which is resulting in irreversible loss of unique natural and cultural values, placing strain on threatened species such as the koala and having unacceptable impacts to land, water, drainage, traffic and increasing pressure on amenities such as sewage treatment.

Destruction of the environment is having a detrimental effect on the mental health of the community and the health of the environment, which is intrinsically linked to human health. In South West Rocks, we currently have 13 development sites, 9 under construction or approved, 6 ranging from 1993 - 2017 and zero wildlife corridors.

South West Rocks is a one road in and out town. In the last 6 years alone we have faced fires, floods, erosion and again now fires. As our country has moved from La Niña to El Niño, our community is bracing itself and experiencing this first hand with thousands of hectares burning 20km to the south of South West Rocks and west of Kempsey and it's only October. The mass onslaught of unsustainable developments has only accelerated our climate emergency and the complete clear felling of natural weather protection habitats is effectively leaving us without protection or shelter from the impacts of climate change.

As part of the inquiry into the planning system and the impacts of climate change on the environment and communities, we ask the committee to back the science and our community with the following:

1. Strengthen planning legislation to address the changing climate with a long term view that incorporates predictive flood mapping, coastal erosion and sea level rise into the future. For example, land currently being developed in South West Rocks is not flood prone but it is at risk of inundation from sea level rise in 50-100 years.
2. Consider land carrying capacity and community resilience in the planning approvals process. This is particularly important for coastal villages with one road in and out, limited infrastructure and limited resources that will be continually stretched as climate change brings an increase in catastrophic weather events.
3. Prioritise conservation of existing habitat to slow down species extinction and absorb greenhouse gas carbon dioxide. In particular, in regional areas where koalas have been sighted, we request full koala mapping be undertaken and factored into all DAs to protect koala habitat and avoid species extinction.
4. Develop a process by which DAs older than 5 years can be reviewed and assessed with up-to-date biodiversity data, climate modelling and ecosystem impacts considered.
5. Elevate the knowledge of First Nations Australians and elevate the consideration of their connection to country within the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act.
6. Review the current development approvals process that allows certain developments to bypass local government planning approvals, and for decisions to be made without local community knowledge and consultation.

Yours sincerely,