

Proforma E – Friends of Coila – 12 responses

Dear Committee,

Friends of Coila formed to oppose the housing development at Coila Lake, Tuross Head, approved in 1984. The area is prized by locals and visitors. It is of significance to the local Indigenous population. It contains native flora and fauna, including vulnerable and endangered species. Coila Creek delta is listed in the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia. The development would require the removal of over 5 hectares, and indirect disturbance to over 16 hectares, of native vegetation.

- It is in a flood and fire prone area that is becoming more vulnerable to natural disasters due to climate change.
- It abuts three threatened ecological communities: Swamp Oak Floodplain Forest; Swamp Sclerophyll Forest on Coastal Floodplains; Coastal Saltmarsh.
- It is next to important Migratory Shorebird habitat: the critically endangered Far Eastern Curlew and the Bar-tailed Godwit, federally listed as vulnerable, both forage on the lake foreshore during their non-breeding season.
- Tuross Head has no bushfire or heatwave haven. The designated assembly points in case of fire or other hazard are a car park and a playing field.
- The access road between Tuross Head and the Princes Highway is approximately 6 km long and skirts bushland for about 2-3 km. During the 2019/2020 bushfires, Tuross Head escaped burning, but resources were stretched beyond capacity. For three days we could not leave and were without power, adequate water pressure or any means of communication besides battery-operated radios. Essential supplies ran out. In the event of a future emergency, any increase in population would further stretch resources.

We understand that government at all levels faces challenges in balancing the needs of our environment with the demands for development, including housing. The challenges are increasing due to climate change. We submit that the current planning system is inadequate. It appears that there is little communication between the various bodies responsible for planning and the environment. We see a need for coordination and transparency instead of buck passing and obfuscation. When asked to act on inappropriate and 'zombie' developments, the NSW government refers us back to our local council.

Unfortunately, in our opinion, Eurobodalla Shire Council has not managed the Coila development appropriately. It has provided, and continues to provide, incorrect information. It has failed to follow the correct process when considering a modification to a development application. It has failed to comply with our application under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW) (GIPA Act). It has declined to check that the developer has made the required referral under the federal EPBC Act. And it is not in a financial position to revoke consent, a decision that would presumably result in legal action by the developer.

We submit that the current system works in favour of property developers, placing more importance on the profits of private companies than on the needs of our environment. While we understand that developers should receive a return for their investment, the current system appears to value this to the detriment of other factors, including care of the environment.

Yours sincerely,