

**Submission
No 102**

**INQUIRY INTO PLANNING SYSTEM AND THE IMPACTS
OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND
COMMUNITIES**

Name: Ms Deborah Stevenson

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Submission to the Upper House Portfolio 7 Committee on Planning and Environment on how the planning system can best ensure that people and the natural environment and built environment are protected from climate change impacts and changing landscapes.

I am making this submission on behalf of myself and others in my community. I moved from Sydney to the Eurobodalla on the Far South Coast of NSW five years ago and in that time I have experienced severe drought with the lowest soil moisture readings ever recorded in this region (2018 – 19), historic and catastrophic bushfires (2019-20) which destroyed millions of hectares of bush, farmland and more than 500 properties in the Eurobodalla alone and several flood events (2020-2022). Right now we are back in drought and bushfires are beginning to burn around me (e.g. the Coolagolite fire August 2023).

I would like to address the first and second points in the Terms of Reference for this inquiry in relation to the substantial amendments that were made to the Eurobodalla Local Environment Plan 2012 in 2019 despite strong criticism from all of the public agencies assessing the proposed amendments and an overwhelmingly negative public response to the Rural Lands Strategy and the associated Eurobodalla Rural Lands Planning Proposal (ERLPP) to the amend the Eurobodalla LEP 2012. I have attached correspondence with the NSW Planning Minister and the General Manager of Eurobodalla Shire Council which outline in more detail specific concerns with the amendments, particularly in relation to bushfire risk and loss of biodiversity loss, as well as the whole planning process itself.

I believe that climate change impacts and changing landscapes are best addressed at the strategic level rather than on a DA by DA basis. The planning system has the capacity to do this both at the regional and local level using well-informed high level planning strategies and guidelines, as well as detailed environmental studies and mapping. The planning bodies who devised, and ultimately approved, changes to the Eurobodalla LEP2012 failed to do so, ignoring this information and placing both people and the environment at risk of escalating natural disasters associated with climate change.

Areas of the Eurobodalla Shire that became subject to a wide range of permissible uses and more intensive development (either through re-zoning or the opening of the applicable zoning tables) following gazettal of the ERLPP in late 2019, were hit by bushfires and floods in the following months. The environmental, social and economic impacts of this were huge and our region has yet to recover, if it ever does.

The attached letter to then Planning Minister Stokes outlines planning reforms that may go some way to addressing this lack of accountability by the relevant planning authorities and their failure to follow due process.

I would be happy to provide evidence in relation to my submission at a hearing of the inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Deborah Stevenson