

Submission
No 145

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

Name: Name suppressed
Date Received: 3 November 2023

Partially
Confidential

NSW PLANNING INQUIRY PERSONAL SUBMISSION NOVEMBER 2023 FROM

I do not wish to give evidence at a hearing.

I am addressing some of the terms of reference.

My comments relate to Yamba.

Please visit Yamba to see for yourselves

You can read development proposals and submissions and look at maps, plans, photos and videos but in my view there is no substitute for looking at something in person with 360-degree vision. So please pay Yamba a visit and see for yourselves the impact of development in Yamba.

In particular, I request that you look at:

- West Yamba Urban Release Area (WYURA) - access via Carr's Drive
- Parkside at Park Avenue, Yamba - access via Shores Drive and Park Avenue

Personal background

I first visited Yamba in 1985, bought land in 1991 8 feet above the then 1 in 100 year flood level, built a house in 1994 and became a full-time resident in 2002.

Flood prone area

Yamba is located at the mouth of the largest coastal river in NSW and is a coastal, flood prone area vulnerable to rising sea levels, coastal erosion and tsunamis.

I have witnessed several floods in Yamba in the last 20 years, the February/March 2022 being the worst in terms of severity, duration, lack of basic and essential supplies to the town's burgeoning population, and lack of SES support.

Lower Clarence Flood Model 2022

Please note the Lower Clarence Flood Model 2022.

At its 24 October 2023 meeting Clarence Valley Council resolved to undertake community consultation regarding the Flood Model from 3 November 2023 until 29 January 2024.

Fire prone area

Yamba is very close to Yuraygir National Park with a concomitant bush fire risk.

I have had to be ready to evacuate twice during the 20 years I have lived here due to bush fires. The September 2019 bush fire which encroached on Yamba came within a couple of kilometres of our house. Luckily, for us the ferocious wind was blowing towards the coast that day and we did not have to evacuate although we were on a be ready to evacuate order. The Proposed developments on Carr's Drive (WYURA) are between our house and Yuraygir National Park and would have been in the path of the bush fire if the wind had changed direction.

Tsunami

There have been several tsunami warnings during the 20 years I have lived in Yamba. There is very little higher ground to relocate to. People would need to evacuate Yamba resulting in congested roads.

Adequacy of planning powers and planning bodies

I am very concerned that the local Council appears to be powerless to review, amend or revoke development approvals.

I am very concerned that where Council does refuse development approval its decisions can be overturned by the Northern Region Planning Panel. And Councillors are not allowed to sit on the panel when local matters are being considered if they have already voted on the matter in Council which does not seem sensible to me.

Cumulative impacts of development

In 1985 Yamba was a tiny place with very few shops. When we built our house in 1994 we were on the outskirts of Yamba and ours was only the fifth house to be built in our street. Since then, there has been a massive amount of development in Yamba –

Beachside

The Links Estate

The Dunes Estate

Boat Harbour Estate

O'Gradys Lane stage 2

Harold Tory Drive area

Yamba Quays

Lady Nelson Estate,

Newport

Palm Lake Resort additional housing
Grevillea Waters additional housing
Parklands Estate, Carr's Drive
Clifton Lifestyle Village
Allan's Close, Carr's Drive
Caroona Aged Care Facility – independent living units and apartments
Parkside Lifestyle and Retirement Village, Park Avenue – 136 dwellings - DA approved October 2022
Habitat, Yamba Road – 17 luxury apartments - DA approved 2023
181 Carr's Drive, Yamba - 6 residential lots – DA approved 24 October 2023
Mulgi Street, Yamba – 14 townhouses – DA submitted

There are further large developments in the pipeline at 120 Carr's Drive and 52-54 Miles Street located in WYURA.

Building on flood plains and swamp land

I am fully aware that there is a housing shortage. However, building on flood and swamp land is not a viable solution to this problem.

Impact of fill on flood prone land

In Yamba the land being developed is being built up much higher than existing residential areas resulting in people's houses being flooded, insurance premiums escalating, people not being able to get house insurance at all or no longer being able to afford it.

I have spoken to people whose insurance company has declined to continue insuring them, those whose premiums have gone up 43%, 64%, people who have been able to get insurance by hunting around but flood cover would cost an additional \$10,00 per year which they can't afford. We are talking about people on low incomes here, some of whom live alone and have no-one to share the cost with.

Seniors have to cope with the aftermath of flooding to their property, some of them on their own as they have no partner or other family support,

Impact on access to services

Even if people's homes are not actually flooded, they are unable to access shops, medical and health facilities etc. because their homes are cut off by flood water across local roads.

In February/March 2022 Yamba was cut off for 7 days. The major supermarket and other food shops had empty shelves. The Pacific Highway was cut to the north and the south. Many people cannot afford to stock up on food in advance and even if they can there is the extra electricity cost of freezing and

refrigeration and the possibility of spoilage if the power is cut off, appliance failure, bush fire or flood damage.

Aged demographic

Yamba has a very high proportion of aged people – the average age is around 57. [2021 Yamba \(NSW\), Census All persons QuickStats | Australian Bureau of Statistics \(abs.gov.au\)](#)

Most of the developments are for retirees.

People are already waiting up to 6 weeks for a GP appointment and most if not all of them have closed their books. One woman told me that she had to go to Ballina (1 hour drive, no public transport) to get a GP appointment. It is a similar story with dental appointments. A further influx of Seniors will put even more pressure on medical (including hospital) and dental services.

Aged population and medical emergencies

An aged population means a higher incidence of stroke, heart attack, bowel obstruction and other medical emergencies. It is likely that people suffering such emergencies during a flood or bush fire would not be able to obtain timely medical assistance resulting in severe incapacitation or death.

My husband had a stroke during the 2019 bush fires. Luckily, the Pacific Highway was open that day and the paramedics were able to take him to Lismore Base Hospital for stroke treatment. Such treatment is not available at Maclean Hospital or Grafton Base Hospital. If the stroke had occurred on a day that the Pacific Highway was closed (which was frequently in the ensuing weeks) the outcome would have been quite different.

Emergency Evacuation Plans

Evacuation plans for two developments seem to me to be unsatisfactory.

- *Grevillea Waters* does not have a dedicated on-site manager every night.
- The 136 dwelling *Parkside* Manufactured Housing Estate (MHE) aims to accommodate all its residents and their pets in a 500 square metre community building; that's 3.67 square metres per household (not person). Residents are required to take dry food, pet food and medication to the community building. The MHE will apparently also invite residents adjacent to the complex to stay in the community building. Mention was made during the Northern Regional Planning Panel Meeting that the community building would house 500 people for 7 days.

Impact on roads

Yamba Road is already quite congested, and even more so in holiday periods. Continued development and the consequent increase in population will exacerbate traffic congestion.

At its 24 October 2023 meeting Council considered a Preliminary Environmental Investigation into the potential for a new Yamba Urban Bypass (first proposed in the 1950s or 1960s). The investigation scoped potential environmental impacts and provides advice on the future planning for the proposed bypass corridor. The study showed there are significant environmental and First Nations heritage values.

Council and Transport for NSW have commenced discussions about the preparation of a Network Plan to investigate Yamba's transport planning challenges and to identify solutions.

When the Survey has been conducted Council will decide whether to proceed with a Yamba bypass corridor which would provide another route into Yamba from Oyster Channel Bridge at the entrance to Yamba.

Traffic lights or a roundabout at an intersection between Yamba Road and Witonga Drive would alleviate some of the congestion on the stretch of Yamba Road from Witonga Drive to Shores Drive roundabout and also on Treelands Drive by creating an alternative route to Yamba Quays, Yamba Waters, Crystal Waters, the Peninsula and Shores Drive.

Improving the frequency of the bus service from Yamba to Grafton (approximately 2 hourly) might also help. Another possibility is a local bus service within Yamba.

There is only one road into Yamba from the Pacific Highway. Building another road is not feasible given that the land between the Pacific Highway and Yamba is flood prone.

29 October 2023