



RETHINK ON REZONING OF PORT STEPHENS DRIVE

A packed gallery faced Port Stephens Council on Monday night. It largely comprised members of koala protection and environmental groups and Tomaree Ratepayers and Residents Association (TRRA), concerned about the vote scheduled on a Rescission motion on a proposed amendment to the LEP. This amendment would facilitate rezoning of land on Port Stephens Drive, currently zoned Rural 1A, to Industrial 4A. It would be contrary to recommendations of the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) and the Koala Management Steering Committee. Attendees were concerned about the impact of the rezoning on koala corridors and endangered species in the area, and supported a buffer zone of vegetation between industrial development and Port Stephens Drive which is a primary entry route into the Tomaree Peninsula. They also questioned the appropriateness of proceeding with the rezoning when the development is the subject of legal proceedings.

It was expected that the rescission motion would be defeated by the pro-development faction that has a majority on the Council. However a last minute meeting between the developer, Eureka Funds Management, Council officers and representatives of DECC led to an agreement that the developer will revise its development application to allow a larger area as a koala habitat, after assessment of the site and a full environmental and ecological report by a ecologist. This resulted in unanimous support from Councillors for the Rescission Motion.

After the meeting Robert Young, Chairman of TRRA commented that: 'It was a pleasure to sit in the gallery at council tonight, together with other concerned citizens and witness the full support of all councillors to the Rescission Motion. We are pleased to note that the matter will now be deferred until a full environmental and ecological report has been completed, assessed by council staff and approved by the Department of the Environment and Climate Change.

We would like to place on record however, that our position is in full support of the Koala Plan of Management by Port Stephens Council and that of SEPP44 with respect to the safety and protection of endangered species. We also stress the importance of maintaining a vegetated frontage to Port Stephens Drive to ensure that a primary access road into the residential localities of Tomaree does not become a vast industrial landscape impacting upon generations into the future.

To defer any changes to the current LEP can only be of a distinct benefit for the entire community. Now is an ideal opportunity for council and councillors to address appropriate zonings along the entirety of the road and create a proper and realistic buffer zone between it and any industrial or bulky goods developments. To achieve this can only add to the attractiveness, desirability and growth of all business, tourism and residential sectors throughout Tomaree and prevent creation of a potential, long term industrial eyesore. We are pleased to see such a positive step and look forward to a better and more appropriate outcome'.

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