

Coastal Infrastructure Needs Mayoral Column Daily Examiner July 2008

Migration of population to coastal areas including Clarence Valley, and known as the Sea Change phenomenon, continues to accelerate. Many are expressing concern that the rate of current growth in coastal Australia is not sustainable.

I believe there is an urgent need for an integrated, whole-of-government approach to addressing the impact of coastal growth and development. Currently no single Commonwealth government agency has overall responsibility for matters relating to coastal planning and development. Instead there is a shared responsibility across several Federal and State agencies.

A need also exists for greater understanding and use of best practice models for planning, infrastructure provision and management in coastal areas. Most agree that current methods of planning, funding and managing population and tourism growth in coastal areas are inconsistent and inadequate.

We should all be concerned about the impact of inappropriate urban growth and development on the environment of coastal areas. The level of development is placing at least some coastal environments at risk of serious degradation. The potential impact of climate change is also of particular concern to coastal communities.

Adding to this mix is the fact that coastal communities are often characterised by lower incomes, higher unemployment levels and greater socio-economic disadvantage. The effects of the continuing increase in the percentage of ageing people in coastal communities are also significant.

Your Council is a member of the National Sea Change Taskforce and supports its current proposals before the Federal government for a national policy framework to address these issues. In particular the following key elements will be forcibly lobbied by the Taskforce for Council and Clarence people:

1. That a coordinated national approach to managing coastal growth be adopted based on a commitment by all three levels of government to work collaboratively to ensure the sustainability of coastal communities and the coastal environment.
2. That accurate and consistent methods of measuring the impact of tourists and other non-residents in coastal areas be implemented to enable resources to be better matched with demand associated with population growth.

3. That high level planning policy is enacted by State and Territory planning authorities to 'mainstream' climate change mitigation and adaptation considerations in all coastal planning decisions to ensure long term liveability and adaptability for coastal communities.
4. That further research is conducted to assess the social implications of coastal growth, including socio-economic disadvantage, health and housing.
5. That a coastal community infrastructure fund that is tied to the adoption of policy be developed.
6. That an effective interface between key stakeholder groups with a role in coastal planning and management be created through the establishment of a National Coastal Alliance.

Council will continue to lobby for these special needs given it represents a rapidly growing coastal community.

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Mayor

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