

## Sea-level rise prompts council to refuse development

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IN an unprecedented move, the Eurobodalla Shire Council last week knocked back a development application based on potential sea-level rise.

The message is don't panic but planning has to take into account the possibility that low-lying areas adjacent to the coastline and estuaries could slowly be inundated.

The residential development on Myamba Parade, Surfside was only around one metre above sea level and newly released State Government estimates are that sea level could rise by at least that much in 100 years.

This has grave implications for low-lying land around the district including the entire Narooma Flat, which is only just over one metre above sea level.

The vote against the Surfside development was contentious with mayor Fergus Thomson breaking the 4-4 deadlock and opposing the building.

Also voting no was Narooma councillor Lindsay Brown who did not want to sound alarmist but said that the council had to take into consideration State and Federal government warnings about sea level rises.

Mr Brown chairs the council's new Coastal Management Advisory Committee and said the current understanding was that sea level could rise by 40 centimetres in the next 50 years and then again at least that amount in the following 50 years.

It would be irresponsible for council to approve development that did not address the risk from potential sea level rise, he said.

The NSW Department of Planning currently has out for comment a sea-level change plan with comment due by December 9.

The Illawarra Mercury this week reported that the Eurobodalla Shire Council ranked just outside the top 10 as the 12th most potentially impacted with more than 2000 properties at risk.

Mr Brown said the challenges facing the shire were not easy as any devaluing of land could devastate a council reliant on rates on valuable coastal land.

Believe it or not

Those who remain sceptical about climate change and sea-level rise, or alternatively those who are sure it is happening, can hear both sides of the debate this weekend.

There is both the High Noon Debate at Bega on Saturday featuring Clean Energy for Eternity founder Matthew Nott on Saturday at the St. John Church Hall, while on the same day there is the Climate Action Forum at Moruya High School starting at 1.30pm.

Appeals to attend appear on the Narooma News letters page and while some might say the timing of the two events is unfortunate, it illustrates how serious many in the community feel issue is.

Climate Action Forum for Eurobodalla

The science is clear on human induced climate change. The amount of carbon in the atmosphere appears to have gone past the safe level of 350ppm for sustaining life as we know it on Earth. Just how bad is the climate change situation for Australia? How did we get to this point? What can be done about it?

A forum will be held on Saturday 21 November 2009 between 1.30 & 5.00 pm at the Moruya High School Hall, Bergalia Street, Moruya.

The keynote speakers are two widely respected authorities on global climate change.

Dr Mark Diesendorf, who teaches in the Institute of Environmental Studies at the University of New South Wales, is an author and world authority on energy generation and sustainability. Dr John Kaye, NSW Greens MP, was elected to the NSW Legislative Council in 2007. He is a former teacher and researcher in electrical engineering at the University of New South Wales where he specialised in sustainable energy and greenhouse issues.

Anne Marett, a member of the organising group, explained that "Mark Diesendorf has enthusiastically and generously agreed, at very late notice, to replace our original keynote speaker Professor Clive Hamilton. Clive has withdrawn to stand as Greens candidate in the Higgins by-election which will be held in Melbourne the weekend after our forum. Mark Diesendorf is a superb replacement speaker."

A number of local groups (Coastwatchers, South East Region Conservation Alliance [SERCA], Clean Energy for Eternity [CEFE] and the Eurobodalla Greens) are working with the students from the Moruya High School Environment Group to host this Climate Action Forum in Moruya.

The program will include presentations by Sheila Monahan from Coastwatchers explaining the carbon cycle, Philippa Rowland from CEFE and Keith Hughes from SERCA on climate change issues and local responses, and also Paul Anderson General Manager of the Eurobodalla Shire Council re how Council is responding to the challenges. There will be music and afternoon tea available and a long panel session where members of the audience will be encouraged to express their viewpoints and put their questions to any of the speakers.

#### High Noon debate

There was a very interesting photo on the front page of the Weekend Australian last Saturday. It was a photo of 80 year old Kevin Court emerging from the waves after a swim at Wollongong's North Beach. The photo was headlined "Science Is In on Sea Level Rise: 1.7mm".

Kevin has been swimming at North Beach for 50 years, and hasn't noticed any change in sea-level over 5 decades. I think the point of the photo was to demonstrate to people that concern over sea-level rise is alarmist.

Since Kevin started swimming at North Beach, sea-level has risen by about 10 cm. No wonder he has been unable to detect change! The Australian Baseline Sea-Level Monitoring Project has been monitoring sea-level rise around Australia, and they have been able to detect changes in sea-level. It is well worth looking up their findings at the Australian Bureau of Meteorology web site. Their results indicate to me a rate of sea-level rise of significantly more than 1.7mm per year.

Sea-level rise is one of the impacts of climate change that is likely to significantly affect us in SE NSW. It is important that we as a region look seriously at the science of the problem. Rob High and I will be debating the science of climate change as part of the Bega Festival. The debate will be on the science of climate change, and the extent of the problem. This is the 'High Noon' debate, and will be held at the St Johns Church Hall on Saturday 21/11/09 at 12 midday. The debate will be chaired by Tim Holt from ABC radio and the purpose of the meeting will be to encourage community feedback and input.

We are hoping to have a dispassionate discussion, and I would like to invite anyone that has an interest in the subject to come along. There will be a diversity of people and opinions, and it promises to be a very interesting hour or so.

Matthew Nott

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