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Gosford Council adopts sea level rise policy

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John Asquith is concerned about rising sea level forecasts. Picture: TROY SNOOK

THE issue of climate change that brought down the Federal Opposition leader this week, is also polarising Central Coast groups.

On Tuesday night, Gosford Council took two significant steps on climate change.

The first was to adopt a climate change policy which will be put on public exhibition for two months.

The second related to one of the inevitable impacts of climate change - sea level rises.

From now on all council planning will assume a rise of 0.9m with far reaching implications for how development applications and land use are handled.

There was extensive public consultation about where to set the sea level rise, and groups remain divided about the issue. Environment groups claim 0.9m is too low while urban development groups say it is too high.

Dozens of developments could be at risk following Gosford Council's decision to adopt .9m as its sea level rise planning level for the year 2100.

The council will use the level as a basis when proceeding with risk assessment, policy development and strategic planning decisions. And a notation will be placed on planning certificates for land within regions expected to be affected.

Community Environment Network chairman John Asquith said he was not sure the council had done enough. "We are very pleased the council put out a draft policy on sea level rises - if they hadn't they would have been caught out and so would the people who live in those areas," Mr Asquith said.

"But predictions by authorities are continually increasing and that's a worry. While the council has adopted the state government figure of .9m that is likely to be upped fairly regularly.

"One report said levels could be double these by 2100. The level predictions are based on the assumption we will tone down our carbon emissions but that is not happening quickly enough."

A number of submissions were made to the council on sea level rises. These included one by the Urban Development Institute of Australia which urged a level of 40cm be adopted and reviewed regularly.

The Property Council also made a submission arguing that the adoption of a 0.9m level was "premature" and asking for the decision to be postponed.

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