

Memo

Environment

To: All Councillors
From: Malcolm Ryan - Deputy General Manager Environment
Date: 15 March 2012
Subject: Recent public correspondence regarding the exhibition of the draft Warringah Biodiversity Conservation Study
Link: 2012/075614

Council at its 14 February 2012 meeting resolved to exhibit the draft Warringah Biodiversity Conservation Study. The draft Study ranks the conservation significance of over 3,000 ha of vegetation in Warringah, and maps the known and potential threats to biodiversity. As per Council's resolution, the draft Study was placed on exhibition on 20 February 2012, for a period of 28 days.

Recently, Councillors and Council's Executive have received a number of submissions in relation to the draft study and its exhibition. The submissions contain 3 key comments/concerns which are addressed below:

1. Notification letters were not sent to individual landowners for which the draft Study applies

The consultation process developed for the exhibition was done so with reference to Council's Community Engagement processes. In this instance, it was not considered necessary to send letters to property owners whose land is referenced in the Study as the Study does not incur or obligate private land owners, and has no role in development controls or planning. Council is simply auditing its remaining biodiversity so that it can prioritise expenditure (particularly for operational bushland management on public land).

Notification of the exhibition was via three Manly Daily articles, Council's web page, letters to individuals with an interest in operational bushland management and two group emails to a general Council register. Council staff maintain that this consultation approach, including the notification was sufficient.

2. The heading used in the advertising materials is misleading, given the study seeks to apply a "conservation layer" to land

With reference to the title, the heading "Warringah's Wonderful Wildlife" was used for webpage and newspaper advertisements only. The heading was used to try and attract people to the information, and was not in any way an attempt to mislead or hide the information. Staff have however, amended the text on Council's webpage and any additional marketing materials during exhibition will avoid the use of this text. The draft Study provides a synopsis/inventory of Warringah's biodiversity and will not be used for development or planning controls (or to apply a conservation layer to land).

3. Additional consultation, including exhibition for a total of 3 months, with two public meetings, and extra notification to add validity to the document.

Council's resolution required the Study to be exhibited for 28 days as is often typical during exhibition periods. To date, (with the exception of the submissions referred to above) minimal queries or submissions have been received, and the briefing sessions held had minimal patronage; a total of 19 participants spread across two sessions. Given that the study does not obligate private

landowners or incumber land, Council staff maintain that this consultation approach was sufficient and in accordance with requirements.

Council staff are in the process of preparing responses to all the correspondence you have received on this issue. Should you have further queries, please contact Todd Dickinson, Group Manager Natural Environment on (02) 9942 2314.



Malcolm Ryan
Deputy General Manager Environment

