



Pru Goward MP

Minister for Planning
Minister for Women

MEDIA RELEASE

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BETTER BALANCING OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND FARMING INTERESTS ON THE NORTH COAST

The NSW Government has today continued its work to balance the needs of environmental protection and farming on the North Coast, with the release of the first findings of an independent report into the use of environmental planning in the fast-growing region.

Minister for Planning Pru Goward released the interim report into the use of environmental zones by councils in local environmental plans along with the Department of Planning and Environment's draft response.

The report was commissioned to consider how North Coast councils should use planning controls to protect the environment while still allowing the growth of the important local farming sector, and was undertaken by independent consultants Parsons Brinckerhoff.

"The NSW Government is working to bring together landowners, communities and councils to strike the right balance between appropriate environmental protections and sustainable farming on the North Coast," Ms Goward said.

"Smart planning needs to be backed by strong evidence – that's the principle behind these draft recommendations.

"Putting more rigour behind the planning decisions of local councils will be better for the environment and provide more certainty to the farming sector."

Ms Goward said the North Coast environment was the region's defining characteristic and supported jobs through tourism, but was not inconsistent with farming which was also vitally important to the local economy.

"The North Coast is unique in our State; it has a thriving farming industry and a spectacular and important natural environment," Ms Goward said.

"That's why we are working with councils to ensure that every decision they make in this regard is backed by strong evidence."

The NSW Government has given in-principle support to some of the report's interim recommendations, including:

- Setting clear criteria for environmental zones known as E2 and E3 to ensure that these zonings are based on strong evidence
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- Allowing grazing and other kinds of extensive farming activity with consent in some environmental zones and without consent in others
- Removing aesthetic value as an objective of the environmental management zone known as E3
- Removing the proposed environmental zones from Kyogle Shire Council's local plan until proper evidence is provided
- Replacing the proposed environmental living zone in Byron Shire known as E4 with a more appropriate residential zone.

The draft report and interim recommendations were prepared after extensive consultation with councils, landowners and local stakeholders.

"The draft recommendations will now go on exhibition. Feedback from stakeholders will inform the Government's decision, and a Direction will be issued to guide councils on the specific criteria to use when deciding to apply an environmental zone," Ms Goward said.

Decisions on land being considered for environmental zoning have been deferred as local environmental plans are finalised.

Once the criteria for environmental zones are finalised, each Council will assess the land that was deferred.

Councils will propose zones based on the final criteria and exhibit the proposed zonings for public comment.

The interim recommendations will be on exhibition until 5 June 2014. To view a copy of the report and provide feedback, people are encouraged to visit:
www.planning.nsw.gov.au/proposals

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