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SEPP discussion paper raises questions

Shoalhaven City Council has received a report that formed the basis of a submission to the Department of Planning regarding proposed amendments to the Infrastructure State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) that are outlined in a detailed Discussion Paper.

While Council supports the overriding intent of the SEPP in streamlining procedures related to the approval of infrastructure projects to reduce delays in provision, it has identified some issues in the proposed amendments that need to be addressed or considered further.

Council's submission highlights that the limited for consultation period does not provide sufficient time to undertake detailed internal staff, community or Councillor consultation. In the future a minimum consultation period of six weeks should be allowed to provide enough time for Council and other stakeholders to consider any changes.

Several of the proposed amendments relate to guidelines or regulations that provide support to the amendments. However these guidelines have not yet been provided and in some cases written, so the adoption of amendments without supporting documents could allow uninformed decisions to be made.

In the future supporting documents and guidelines must be made available during the consultation period so that the complete package of information can be reviewed. Other areas of concern in the Discussion Paper include:

Air transport facilities: In relation to aircraft noise assessment, the Discussion Paper amendments do not include a reference to Defence Air Bases such as HMAS Albatross. Council has requested that the amendments include HMAS Albatross and possibly other Defence Air Bases in the State, to reflect their strategic importance.

Coastal protection: The proposed amendments would allow private land owners to undertake some coastal protection works without the consent of Council. The amendments in this regard are intended to compliment a Bill to be considered by Parliament shortly.

Graffiti: new guidelines are proposed for the prevention of graffiti damage to Public Infrastructure Facilities including the use of costly materials and specific design and processes. There is the potential for these requirements to add to the cost of future public building works and Council would like to explore other methods for prevention of graffiti that may not be consistent with the new yet to be released guidelines.

Emergency facilities and Health Service Facilities in Residential Zones: This amendment would allow for Emergency Facilities and Health Service Facilities to operate within residential zones. This has the potential to create land use conflict between housing and these facilities (ie, noise, hours of operation).

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