

Eastern Beaches Protection Association

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Noosa Council secret plan to ram through dud planning changes exposed

Noosa residents have been kept in the dark for more than seven months about a secret Council plan to implement adverse planning changes which ignore coastal erosion issues and pre-empt the outcome of the Coastal Hazards Adaptation Plan (CHAP).

Noosa Shire Councillors have been challenged to explain their knowledge and involvement in Council sending a letter to the Queensland Government on 29 July last year, asking permission to implement the changes to the Noosa Plan, without informing residents.

The document, uncovered under the State's Right to Information laws, was sent on the current Council's 'watch' which undermines any claims by Councillors they had no role in the damaging recommendations of the plan or the flawed consultation.

The letter was signed by the then acting CEO on 29 July, and asked to be able to implement the changes 'as early as possible' to meet a deadline of 24 December 2020 imposed by the then Planning Minister – a deadline it missed anyway.

EBPA spokesperson Minna Knight said residents had a right to hear from each Councillor on what they knew about this damning letter and, because it cast doubt on the legitimacy of hazard plan process, if they were concerned ratepayers had been misled and kept in the dark for seven months.

"This secret letter undermines Council's public comments on the CHAP process to date and strongly indicates at least some Councillors may have known that Council wanted to pre-empt the outcomes of the CHAP consultation. In other words, the 'consultation' process is a sham because Council already knew what it wanted the outcome to be," Ms Knight said.

"This is a complex process which new Councillors mightn't fully understand, but the release of the draft CHAP happened on the current Council's watch and it's been caught out. Now that the existence of this letter has been revealed, it's an opportunity for Councillors to 'fess up, step up and fix the mess by taking a much more measured approach to the CHAP."

Ms Knight said key concerns about the current draft CHAP included it having no measures to tackle beach erosion and inundation or justification for imposing adverse planning changes on a less than 1% risk of a significant impact in 50 to 80 years from now.

"We want to see Council go back and review the draft CHAP so that it actually protects our beaches and low lying areas – something many submissions actually agree with - while monitoring potentially impacted land over time and stepping back from costly pre-emptive planning measures that unnecessarily hurt homeowners and did nothing to protect our iconic beaches."

Members of the EBPA will brief Councillors again on 7 April.

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