

MEDIA RELEASE

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Community groups request more feedback time on Council's foreshore plan

Numerous Noosa and Peregian community groups are calling for Noosa Council to extend the community consultation period on the Eastern Beaches Foreshore Management Plan.

Eastern Beaches Protection Association (EBPA), Noosa Boardriders Club and Peregian Family and Friends say there is an inadequate amount of time for the community to have their say on a land management plan that will determine the future usability and management of the vegetated beach areas spanning Peregian to Noosa.

The community engagement sessions are scheduled to take place from 6 March, just two weeks after the plan was published, and the public was given less than 20 working days to share online feedback.

The three community groups agree that to ensure an effective and built for purpose plan, Noosa Council needs to provide additional information and allow the community more time to consider all the detail to be able to make a meaningful contribution.

EBPA spokesperson Minna Knight said the public consultation time period for a plan that could have widespread impacts is being rushed and it should be extended.

“Despite Noosa Shire Council pledging to undertake a raft of communication tactics to raise awareness of the consultation, there is no mention of it on local news outlets, community Facebook groups or the community websites they committed to, meaning only few groups are aware it is taking place at all.

“We are highly supportive of the creation and implementation of an Eastern Beaches Foreshore Management Plan as a means to protect the natural environment as well as the way of life of the communities that live alongside the foreshore for years to come. However, Council has provided an inadequate timeframe for feedback, there's low public awareness of the consultation, and there is an absence of published background materials to substantiate claims made within the document,” said Ms Knight.

The Queensland Government's guidelines for best practice community engagement stipulate bodies need to give advance notice of consultation activities, and response timeframes should be long enough to facilitate informed constructive contributions.

President of Noosa Boardriders Club, Paul Peterson, agrees stating the existing draft plan needs to be reworked and the community needs more time to wrap their heads around the complex and lengthy document, consult where needed and form an opinion.

“The current draft plan alludes to blanket restrictions on community access to their beaches without any substantial evidence. We're incredibly passionate about maintaining the health of these areas but we need more time to contribute to a plan that is reasonable and doesn't overreach unnecessarily,” said Mr Peterson.

President of Peregrine Family and Friends Leigh McCready said she is hopeful Council will work in partnership with the community on the formation of the plan and heed advice of locals.

“These foreshore areas are of utmost importance to the whole community as well as visitors who come to enjoy our pristine beaches. Many people access the beaches via the foreshore to swim, surf, walk or enjoy the views. We hope council will provide ample time and listen to the local residents who are best placed to provide advice on the strategies,” said Ms McCready.

Ms Knight said the plan includes a number of claims about the environmental significance of the areas but there are no supporting materials published that outline the methodology of how this information has been attained.

“Full transparency is needed to allow people to make informed decisions and drip feeding information or sharing half the story out of context means the community is misinformed. Council has omitted important materials that would empower the community to provide relevant and appropriate responses,” said Ms Knight.

“There are numerous instances in the document where supposed facts are laid out but no sources or datasets are included that describe the means, timeframes or specifics of how the information has been gathered. We are supportive of the implementation of a science-based monitoring program like an ecology census that tracks dune and beach health as a benchmark for future action.”

The three community groups agree the plan needs to be amended to ensure it better represents the balance between social and environmental values and fulfils the purpose it was originally slated to address.

“The Council’s budget and prescribed works need to be reallocated to fix the coastal creeks and stormwater systems along with implementing fire prevention management strategies, revegetation and weed management as well as public access track maintenance,” said Ms Knight.

“The plan primarily focusses on ways to address alleged encroachment but there are already existing laws the Council could simply enforce rather than implement additional restrictions that aren’t required. A thorough and meaningful consultation process will contribute to a more robust plan that benefits the whole community.”

END

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