

Bad business

The proposed zoning of 108 hectares — everything except the green and yellow areas is to be built on.

Excerpt from the submission by Byron Environmental and Conservation Organisation (BEACON) to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure:

The West Byron proposal is a shoddy piece of work that appears intended to misrepresent the [rezoning] proposal, the need for it and the impacts it will have. It is a misleading document. Nobody reading the proposal can obtain an accurate or truthful appraisal of the proposed development.

- This proposal is contrary to the [2007 Far North Coast Regional Strategy](#) as Byron Bay already has more than enough land zoned for development to satisfy its growth targets until after 2031. The Strategy gave us the opportunity to evolve as a community (rather than being overwhelmed), to better live in line with environmental and infrastructure constraints, and to better cope with our tourist burden. That is now gone.
- Key unfavourable reports have been **omitted** from the public exhibition so as to preclude consideration of what they contain. The presence of Acid Sulfate Soils and their management is one of the key issues, yet the **report on this has been omitted** from the documents. Similarly the report by Biolink Ecological Consultants identifying core [Koala habitat](#) has been **omitted**.
- The Ecological assessment **grossly understates** the area proposed for clearing and misrepresents the impact on threatened species particularly as it does not account for the proposal to widen the drain to 30m.
- If successful, the proposal will over-ride the shire-wide LEP which will no longer apply to the site. The proposal is to zone West Byron into industrial (5.3ha) and mixed business/residential zones (7.8ha) opposite Ozigos (akin to the existing industrial estate), a mixed shop/residential zone on Belongil Fields (2.2 ha), with a residential zone (49.8ha) surrounding this and two tourism zones (2.8ha). The balance is recreation (2.2ha), stormwater treatment (24.6ha) and conservation zones (13.8ha).
- The proponents do not specify the size of their intended development, though they prescribe minimum densities of dwellings per hectare that equate to a minimum of 980 dwellings, with an estimated household size of 2.55 people, this represents a population of 2,500 people. Though with the proposed minimum lot size in the residential zone of 200m² and allowance for 'secondary dwellings' there is room to dramatically increase the scale of the development in the final plan.
- In the media, the proponents have **deliberately misrepresented** the proposal as being for 850 dwellings housing 1,000 people.

- While it has always been claimed that one of the intents of development of the area was to provide “affordable housing” (originally envisioned to be a van village) it is now claimed that this will be achieved by allowing increased density to reduce the land costs – i.e. it may reduce house prices from \$600,000 to \$500,000 thereby making it affordable for the poor and needy!
- There are a variety of major issues associated with the development, most notably: chronic traffic congestion on Ewingsdale Road and in town; underlying Acid Sulfate Soils; noise and smell from Sunnybrand chickens, development of floodprone areas (including the use of fill); bushfire hazards; impacts on the coastal wildlife corridor, threatened species and core Koala habitat; pollution of Belongil Creek; loss of visual amenity along Ewingsdale Road; and impact on the nature and attractiveness of Byron Bay.

Misleading presentation

- The West Byron Landholders claim on their website that their development only proposes 850 dwellings, and the traffic study uses 855 dwellings, but the figures given in their plans equate to a minimum of 1100 dwellings.
- Between them Byron Bay and Suffolk Park have a population of around 10,000 people. The developers claimed in the Echo that the development will result in a population of about 1,000 people. Their website claimed that while the current occupancy in Byron is 2.5 people per dwelling, this will reduce in future such that their development will only be occupied by 1,000 people and represent 10% of Byron’s population. This assumes that each of their houses will be occupied by single people while 2.5 people continue to occupy other houses in Byron!
- At current occupancy rates their development will support 2,500 people and represent a 25% increase in Byron’s population (even if occupancy rates drop to 1 per house it will still be 25%). This is without counting secondary dwellings. The proposal has been clearly misrepresented and grossly understated.
- The developers seek to maintain the illusion that there is insufficient land approved to satisfy Byron Shire’s growth targets by only mentioning the 540 dwelling capacity of new land releases without admitting the identified potential of infill development to satisfy targets.
- The traffic study is based on an understated identification of the scale of the proposal and thus gives a misleading impression of traffic impacts.
- The Engineering Report is based on understated and inconsistent identification of the scale of the proposal (different even from the traffic study) and thus provides a misleading assessment, most notably of ET requirements.
- The proposal failed to identify and address all the constraints identified as required to be considered in the Settlement Planning Guidelines, thereby giving a false

impression of the constraints that apply to the site. This is a significant failure and is grounds alone for rejection of the proposal.

- The Department of Planning need to recognise that there is a need to comply with the Regional Strategy and prepare a Growth Management Strategy before this land can be considered for rezoning. Existing Settlement Strategies already provide more than enough land to satisfy dwelling targets until after 2031.
- This addition would be contrary to the intent of the Regional Strategy' to reduce development pressure both on the coast and on Byron because of immense tourism pressure.
- Need to recognise that the existing Settlement Strategies for Byron Bay, Suffolk Park, Brunswick Heads, Mullumbimby and Bangalow identify sufficient land already zoned for development to meet the Regional Strategy's target of 2,600 new dwellings until 2031, without considering the rest of the Shire or requiring development of West Byron.
- There is absolutely no need to create a new suburb of 1,000 houses at West Byron to meet our housing needs until well after 2031. It is over-development. The 2002 Settlement Strategy for Byron Bay and Suffolk Park identified there was existing allowance for a 30% increase in the area's population, with the potential for 1,400 new dwellings and 3,250 people within areas already zoned for development.
- Numerous developments have already been approved in Byron above what the draft 2002 Settlement Strategy identified – including Bayshore Village, Becton, Suffolk Park and a variety of infill developments, with Council also proposing to develop the South Byron STP.
- The North Coast Regional Strategy requires preparation of a Local Growth Management Strategy prior to zoning further land for urban, commercial and industrial uses in accordance with the Settlement Planning Guidelines. This is a pre-requisite.