

Wollongong City Council in Liquidation Mode since 2008

As more confidential documents come to light, it is clear that since the State Labor appointment of administrators to Wollongong City Council in 2008, the Council has been on a path to liquidate the Illawarra's most precious asset – pristine bushland and facilitate industry that will kick back money to the political machine.

It can not be a co-incidence that pro-development Gabrielle Kibble, nor Dr Col Gellatly; the head of NSW Energy sell-off were first chosen of four to steer the Council in the direction that the NSW Premiers' Department demanded

WCC's Administration's first and most damning action was to pull the draft 2008 LEP (Local Environment Plan) and reset the draft for the 2009LEP. As a matter of course, submissions were sought from residents, interests groups, neighbouring councils and Government departments. The irony was however, that the more pro-development LEP was already decided. Any advice/demands from submissions that didn't fit the revised draft LEP were ignored, this included conservation-favourable submissions from
(links to copies of these documents below)

-the Department of Environment & Climate Change -."It is noted that the 7(d) lands have been converted to E2 Environmental Conservation in draft LEP 2009. DECC strongly supports this.Given the high conservation value of this area, DECC would have serious concerns regarding any proposal to change the environmental conservation zoning of these lands.."

**-Sydney Catchment Authority,
-Sutherland Shire Council**

And yet just three days prior to the Draft 2009 LEP being sent to the Department of Planning, for approval, Wollongong City Council downgraded the crucial conservation zoning of the Helensburgh – Hacking River catchment /Royal National Park buffer from E2 to E3 to allow for new development.

Funnily enough, Council was receptive to the Submission from the **Department of Primary Industries**, seeking a downgrade of E2 conservation zones in the Wollongong LGA to a zoning that would allow mining, coal seam gas mining and its related infrastructure to expand unhindered

Natasha Watson, a long time campaigner to save the wildlife corridor connecting the Royal National Park to the Illawarra escarpment through the Helensburgh and Otford region, is horrified by the seemingly duplicity. "Our region has fought hard for years to save this precious greenbelt, and up until early 2009 Council and their planning reports always stated that that this Hacking River Catchment - 2508 area would be rezoned from '7D' to its equivalent E2 – the seconded highest conservation level.

But just three days prior to the LEP draft being sent to State Planning for approval and gazettal, Wollongong Council, pulled a swifty on all of us and downgraded the 7(d) zoning to E3 and lower to allow for coal seam gas infrastructure, new buildings & land clearing on formerly protected land at the southern edge of Sydney. That downgrading was also against the warning and wishes of the DECC, and other government authorities who submitted under the belief that 7D was being to converted to E2 zoning,. To me that is the height of arrogance and totally against what the residents and other authorities want.

We know now Council and the Department of Planning & the Department of Primary Industries were quietly setting the stage for a mass release of gas bore holes and increased long wall coal mining, and a possible increase in MPs retirement/superannuation funds as pristine bushland lots bought dirt cheap years ago are finally capitalised"

Reference:

DECC -Page19-20 Notes on the Hacking River Catchment of Helensburgh

<http://www.otfordeco.com/Documents/DECCtoWCCSubmissionSuggestedamendmentspage19to20.pdf>

It is noted that the 7(d) lands have been converted to E2 Environmental Conservation in draft LEP 2009. DECC strongly supports this. It is understood, however, that the review is currently being undertaken and will be reported to the Council Administrators separately to draft LEP 2009 and any changes to zoning would be subject of a future amending draft LEP (pers comm John Bridge).

The Upper Hacking contains significant biodiversity values, a summary of which are provided below. Given the high conservation value of this area, DECC would have serious concerns

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regarding any proposal to change the environmental conservation zoning of these lands to a zoning that permitted uses that would adversely impact on those significant values.

DECC would welcome an opportunity to participate in the review of these lands and is available to discuss this issue further.

Maintaining a contiguous forest corridor from the Royal National Park through the upper Hacking Catchment to the Illawarra Escarpment is essential for the survival of current and future wildlife populations.

DECC - Full Document

(<http://www.otfordeco.com/Documents/DECCtoWCCSubmissionSuggestedamendments.pdf> 18mb)

Sydney Catchment Authority,

<http://www.otfordeco.com/Documents/SydneyCatchmentletterrezoning.pdf>

Sutherland Shire Council

[http://www.otfordeco.com/Documents/SutherandcouncilSubmissiontoWCContheDraftReviewof7\(d\)land.doc](http://www.otfordeco.com/Documents/SutherandcouncilSubmissiontoWCContheDraftReviewof7(d)land.doc)

Department of Primary Industries,

<http://www.otfordeco.com/Documents/NSWDepartmentofPrimaryIndustriessubmission.pdf>

The draft LEP indicates that large areas of the LGA will be zoned E2 (Environmental Conservation), in particular, areas west of the escarpment. The Department is concerned about the potential impacts of proposed E2 zoning on current and future mining operations and their associated infrastructure.

The Department requests that the proposed broad use of E2 zoning throughout the local government area be modified. It is the Department's understanding that under the provisions of the Department of Planning's Standard Instrument, local government areas will generally have limited areas displaying the characteristics suitable for the application of the E2 zone. Areas where a broader range of uses is required (whilst retaining environmental protection), may be more appropriately zoned E3 Environmental Management. The Department's preferred position is that areas west of the

Draft Local Environment Plan 2008 WCC Notes

Page 6 "At this stage, it is proposed to maintain the status quo with the 7 (d) zone by translating it to the E2 Environmental Conservation zone. The zoning will be reviewed following the completion of the Helensburgh review"

http://www.otfordeco.com/Documents/Documents/E_and_P_report_and_minutes_24_Jun08.pdf