

12 April 2011

[Addressed to members of the Tasmanian Legislative Council]

Re: Support for Canal Estates (Prohibition) Bill 2011

Dear Sir / Madam,

The Australian Coastal Society 'is a voice for the Australian Coast – dedicated to healthy ecosystems, vibrant communities, and sustainable use of coastal resources'. The Society promotes knowledge and understanding of the environmental, social and economic values of the Australian coast, and encourages the sustainable use of coastal resources and responsible stewardship of coastal assets.

The Tasmanian Chapter of the Society has monitored the events of the Walker Corporation's proposed canal estate in Lauderdale, and celebrated the landmark decision by the Tasmanian Planning Commission (TPC) to reject the proposal for reasons including the development being "inherently unsustainable", and inconsistent with the objectives of the Resource Management and Planning System and the State Coastal Policy.

The Society was pleased to see the Government follow with the Canal Estates (Prohibition) Bill 2011. We strongly support this bill and this proactive approach in Tasmanian for sustainable use of the coastal zone and the protection of key sites of environmental and social significance in coastal areas.

Environmental impacts associated with canal estate developments include (but not limited to):

- Loss of wetlands habitats and other sensitive aquatic ecosystems, including the reduction in sustainable values of estuaries as highly productive nursery areas necessary for fisheries;
- Impacts to hydraulic functioning which may reduce water quality through poor flushing, cause sedimentation of waterways, or affect the structural integrity of the canal walls;
- Impacts caused by storm-water and urban runoff, including erosion and sedimentation away from a canal estate development site;
- Impacts associated with imported fill material;
- Problems caused by disturbing acid sulfate soils;
- Pollution by wastes from vessels;
- Ongoing impacts from maintenance dredging.

There are also serious concerns about the sustainability of canal developments in the face of climate change induced sea level rise and the higher frequency of inundation events. The recent assessment of the proposed Lauderdale Canal Estate by the TPC also raised significant social and economic implications of the proposed development.

Coastal management documents in most other states include provisions banning or regulating canal estates, on the basis of the proven impacts to the environment.

In NSW, State Environmental Planning Policy 50 – Canal Estates, prohibits canal estates and this prohibition is reinforced in the Coastal Policy:

“Canal estate developments will be prohibited in recognition of the fact that they can pose serious water quality problems, threaten the integrity of coastal wetlands and fisheries habitats, exacerbate flooding problems and disturb potential acid sulfate soils.”

The Victorian Coastal Strategy 2008 provides:

“It is also policy to prohibit the development of new residential canal estates to ensure the protection of coastal and estuarine environments. Canal estates can have major adverse impacts on the host estuary, causing loss of habitat, polluting estuarine waters by urban runoff and boating activities and disturbing coastal acid sulfate soils.”

The Bill before Parliament recognises that the development of artificial canal estates in other areas of Australia has led to serious adverse environmental and economic impacts. The Bill aims to avoid these impacts and consequences in Tasmania, and provides clear guidance to developers that such developments are not considered sustainable and will not be contemplated in Tasmania.

The Society notes that there is strong support for such a ban in the Tasmanian community. The preliminary consultation report on submissions to the Southern Tasmanian Councils Authority regarding the Draft Strategy, highlighted active support for the ban on canal estates, and that no submission opposed the ban. Further to this, the last round of consultation for the Draft State Coastal Policy 2008 also included numerous submissions which stated the need for policy which prevents inappropriate and unsustainable development on the coast, such as canal estates.

Progressive and cooperative reforms are needed to address the myriad of coastal planning and management issues faced in Tasmania. The Canal Estate (Prohibition) Bill 2011 is both timely and progressive. Coupled with regional planning reforms and a reinvigorated State Coastal Policy, Tasmania could again take the lead in coastal planning and management in Australia.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Woehler', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr Eric J Woehler
President, Tasmanian Chapter
Australian Coastal Society