

Submission to Clarence Valley Council

Re

Wooli Village Draft Coastline Management Plan

Wooli Beach/Village Review of Coastal Hazards

Wooli Village Coastline Management Strategy Update and Options

Review

Janet Dunn, B A Journalist

On behalf of the Dunn Family

6 South Terrace , Wooli

WHY SAVE WOOLI?

Responses to the CVC'S draft plan reflect an undeniable disappointment in its content. Most submissions deal with the many complicated financial, legal and real estate issues inherent in the proposed changes. In an attempt to stick to facts and figures, it is easy to lose sight of the human face of these conflicts – this aspect has been given scant mention by the CVC and governments addressing these issues. My background of twenty-five years as a journalist writing hopefully inspiring stories is where my experience lies and it is this experience that I hope will enable me to express what Wooli means to me and countless others and why it is worth trying a little harder to save it.

I am a visitor/property owner who has been coming to Wooli for forty years. My husband's grandparents lived in Wooli and his father built a holiday shack on River Road that still stands. The current full-time Wooli residents have their own issues to face, no doubt more grave and pressing than mine. As a visitor, my home and livelihood are not under threat – merely my real estate. But I have a special connection to Wooli, one that is shared by many families who have enjoyed its magic for decades. I don't believe this magic is relocatable.

Part of Wooli's charm is the opportunity, year after year, to meet up with old friends and extended family in the tranquillity of the peerless beach, the unspoilt river and the wildlife that thrives in the peaceful surroundings. Above all, it is the locals and their spirit of community that have created this unique place where so many memories have been made. I have often passed the Wooli Primary and hoped that the children know how fortunate they are to be starting their education there. I sense the pride that pupils and teachers have in their school – its loss to a planned withdrawal would be nothing short of tragic.

It is probably inevitable that the ocean will eventually claim the town as it now stands. Sadly, our children and grandchildren may not experience the Wooli that we have grown to love. But we can tell them the stories of the unpretentious people, the glorious beach and river and the serenity that permeates the community. Hopefully these stories will include one about how their parents and grandparents manned the barricades and the fight that the Wooli community put up, not against the Clarence Valley Council, but against the sea.

AND ANOTHER THING.....

We became aware of the plan on 13th October only because a family member happened to be in Wooli and notified us. The notification process appears to have been desultory and piecemeal at best – publishing details of the plan in the Grafton press reached a number of interested parties, but as many Wooli ratepayers live outside the Grafton area, a more concerted and imaginative effort should have been made to inform all property owners in a timely manner of this development.

The original date for submissions, ie. 8th October, left a ludicrously short period in which residents and ratepayers could formulate responses to a proposal with life-changing financial and lifestyle consequences. Even after a request to bring this response period into line with other council practices in similar cases, the two week extension offered does not reflect the spirit of cooperation ratepayers expect from their elected Council, especially where matters of such grave importance are under discussion.

Other submissions have raised this point and there is a general feeling that Wooli community has been treated in an offhand and disrespectful manner by Council in the matter of timing. As Council well knows, gathering expert-based information, correlating community opinion, selecting community representatives and the investigation of legal options in the case of dispute takes longer than the time allotted. Wooli deserves the opportunity to present a well-informed, organised body of opinion if discussions about its future are to have satisfactory outcomes for residents, ratepayers and Council.

The option of a committed joint effort between council and residents to mitigate potential environmental damage has not been explored thoroughly over the past several years. Individuals, communities and councils cannot hope to succeed without each other's support. I fervently hope that a reasonable, receptive and cooperative rather than a confrontational approach, possibly involving legal complications and expense to both sides, will be adopted by CVC. Proactive guidance from Council, with the support of the Wooli community, will prolong the life of this unique village and its beautiful coastline, hopefully for generations to come.

Janet Dunn
6 South Terrace
Wooli