

24 February 2021

ID Development Application: West Culburra Concept Proposal SSD 3846

We oppose the West Culburra Concept Proposal SSD3846 at Culburra Beach because of the environmental risks it presents to Curleys Bay, upper Crookhaven River estuary catchment and Lake Wollumboola Biopark without providing any social or economic benefits to the townships of Culburra Beach, Orient Point and Greenwell Point. Our reasons for these concerns are as follows.

1. Destroying 47 hectares of precious native bushland during a time of recovery and renewal following 2020/21 bushfires disaster

The Wildlife and Threatened Species Bushfire Recovery Expert Panel report released by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment on 20 March 2020 urges us to:

"...protect unburnt areas within or adjacent to recently burnt ground that provide refuge, as well as unburnt areas that are not adjacent to burnt areas, especially from extensive, intense fire."

Culburra Beach was lucky to escape the 2020/21 bushfire disaster relatively unharmed, although the bushfires came perilously close at nearby Comberton. The site of the proposed West Culburra Development is in the 20% of the Shoalhaven Region not damaged by the bushfires.

With unprecedented losses of native wildlife and vegetation throughout the Shoalhaven region on a scale never before imagined, all native bushlands left standing after the 2020/21 bushfires should be preserved and not destroyed. How else are our decimated wildlife populations going to recover if we destroy these remaining habitats and breeding grounds?

2. Crookhaven River from Bridge to Greenwell Point –significant tracts already cleared for grazing/cultivation

Almost all non-tidal land located on the northern bank of the Crookhaven River from its Bridge to Greenwell Point has been cleared for grazing/farming. This occurs to a much lesser extent on the river's corresponding southern bank, with cleared areas mostly occurring on the western side. The only uncleared and untouched native bushland is on the eastern side of the river's southern bank - an area which incorporates the proposed Western Culburra Development.

Should this development proceed, then only a small remnant of native forest will exist between it and cleared land to its west on the Crookhaven's southern bank. As all the land west of the development up to the Crookhaven River Bridge is owned by the same entity, it is highly likely that there will be a strong desire for future development, thus rendering both banks of the Crookhaven River from the Crookhaven River Bridge to Canal Street at Curleys Bay completely cleared of native forest and fauna habitat.

Precious little native bushland now remains on both banks of the Crookhaven River from the Crookhaven River Bridge to Canal Street, Culburra. The West Culburra Development will deduct a significant amount of remaining bushland from its stock on the southern bank. This could be the “thin edge of the wedge” in clearing the entirety of both banks of native bushland, placing this sensitive environmental resource under even more pressure.

3. Curleys Bay –mangrove foreshore already under pressure

This development will complete a ring of urbanisation around Curleys Bay, leaving just the foreshore of Crow Island and a small parcel of land behind the skate park in Prince Edward Avenue in a natural state.

Curleys Bay is already under pressure with sections of mangroves having been removed from its eastern foreshore. This development has the potential to bring even greater pressure to bear on this environmentally sensitive area.

4. Water quality – essential for the social and economic well-being of several communities

We enjoy fishing the waters of the Crookhaven and Shoalhaven Rivers. This is a past time enjoyed by many residents and visitors and a major source of income for local businesses.

The joy of knowing that any fish you decide to keep can be eaten with absolute confidence, completely free of contamination is priceless. We also enjoy eating the local oysters which we believe are world class, harvested from the pristine waters in which we fish, and understand that oyster farming is considered a priority industry, generating economic and social benefits for the Greenwell Point and Culburra/Orient Point communities.

We are not confident the proposed filtration system will prevent zero water runoff into Curley’s Bay. These systems require regular servicing and maintenance to be effective. The three significant rain events experienced in February, July and August 2020 resulted in the Shoalhaven River flooding on two occasions and the breaching of the Lake Wollumboola and Shoalhaven sandbars. How would the proposed filtration system perform under such conditions – especially the July and August storms which were barely 10 days apart. Would there have been sufficient time to inspect and repair the filtration system in time for the second, more severe storm?

Despite the proposed filtration system, the West Culburra Development still poses a risk to the water quality of Curleys Bay and the entire Crookhaven River catchment. This would not just affect the integrity of the Crookhaven’s water quality, it would have an undesirable impact on the social and economic well-being of the Greenwell Point, Culburra Beach/Orient Point communities.

5. Lake Wollumboola Biopark site – threat to its diversity and endangered species

The main residential section of this development places 244 residences between Curleys Bay and the Lake Wollumboola Biopark site (located on the other side of Culburra Road). The existence of non-native pests such as Indian Mynahs, starlings, sparrows, rabbits, and predatory foxes is already widespread throughout the Culburra/Orient Point urban area. The West Culburra Development will encourage the spread of these pests west into the native bushland on both sides of Culburra Road, including the Lake Wollumboola Biopark which is located just across the road. Domestic pets accompany any residential development - the inevitable increase of feral cats and dogs. will compromise the biodiversity of all neighbouring bushlands included the adjacent Lake Wollumboola Biopark.

The proximity of the Lake Wollumboola Biopark to this development could place its biodiversity at risk with the arrival of invasive pests as well as the likely prospect of increased number of predators such as foxes and feral cats and dogs.

6. The West Culburra Development fails to deliver any social and economic benefits to the local community.

Despite all the environmental risks and concerns the West Culburra Development represents, we really do not understand how it can have a positive impact on the social or financial well-being of the Culburra/Orient Point communities.

Culburra already has an oversupply of retail space and the West Culburra Development plan for increased retail/industrial space will only exacerbate and not remedy this situation.

High-rise buildings will only serve to destroy our town's charm and reduce commercial opportunities for visitors and tourists and high-density/low-cost housing can create social issues which are best managed in larger towns (such as Nowra) where support and services networks are readily accessible.

7. Traffic – and there are no plans to provide a second way in/out of Culburra Road

We live in Orient Point and are very concerned about what would happen to us should there be a bushfire (or similar disaster) and we need to evacuate. Culburra Road is the only road in/out of Culburra and we are located about 4 kilometres from it. We currently accept that we would be last out and at the end of the queue. However, the increased populations generated by the West Culburra Development would place those residents at its head - making it a very long and slow queue.

Also, Culburra traffic volumes and general condition of the roads are already in a sub-optimal state. The increased populations brought about by West Culburra Development are just going to add to the traffic congestion and further compound the already appalling state of our streets.

8. How the very reasons we chose to live in Culburra will be diminished should the West Culburra Development proceed:

What we love about Culburra now	What will we lose
Culburra/Orient Point has a quaint seaside village feel – mixture of houses built for various uses across different building periods. Low-rise housing on large blocks with much loved gardens and trees adding to the relaxed and natural feel of the township.	The West Culburra Development is not in keeping with rest of Culburra. High-density/high-rise dwellings which are promoted by this development will destroy much of the town's charm.
A corridor of bushland welcomes you right up to the town's doorstep.	Visitors will now be welcomed by a large housing development, expanded industrial estate and high-rise units on the approaches into town.
<p>The drive from Nowra to Culburra is dominated by dairy farms, with much of the landscape cleared.</p> <p>But then you pass the Coonemia Road turn-off and the magic happens as you drive 4-5 kilometres through a corridor of native bushland; hearing cicadas and birds and seeing the occasional wallaby.</p>	<p>The majesty of the drive from Coonemia Road to Culburra will disappear.</p> <p>Should the owners succeed in having their entire holding on the northern side of Culburra Road rezoned, then most of the drive to/from Nowra will be cleared land – comprising farmlands and/or housing developments.</p>
Culburra Beach/Orient Point is bordered by the natural beauty of the Crookhaven River (north), Lake Wollumboola (south), Pacific Ocean (east), and to its west a strip of bushland traversing the western shores of Lake Wollumboola and continues across to Curleys Bay, Jeringa land at Orient Point and onto Comerong Island.	The West Culburra Development will break the natural barrier which hugs the western fringes of the town to form a wildlife corridor which stretches from Jervis Bay National Park to Seven Mile Beach National Park.

We are hoping this submission continues to raise the many environmental and community concerns which exist towards the West Culburra Development.