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Bushfire Prone overlay Central Coast Council

This is a submission in response to Draft Amendment PSA2020002 to the Central Coast Interim Planning Scheme 2013 whereby the Bushfire Prone Area maps are inserted into the Central Coast Interim Planning Scheme 2013

To start I object to the blanket definition of all but a few select urbane areas having a prone to bushfire classification. The term prone, after extensive definition searches, basically means having a tendency or inclination in relation to this application. Extensive areas within this overlay have never burnt in living memory. Much of the region is open farming land. A large percentage of this rural land is irrigated for cropping and Dairy utility.

The report recognises the considerable savings in costs to allotments not covered by the overlay in relation to new development and renovations. These costs will be imposed on rural residents at a face without any consideration of fire mitigation infrastructure already in place.

Much of the farming land in Central Coast Shire is in declared Irrigation Districts and not using this overlay to inform this report is an obvious omission. To allow that the ability of firefighting services can mitigate areas of urban areas from being subject to the overlay prejudices against rural areas who have access to the very same services.

The ability to develop rural areas for residence and infrastructure is prohibitive beyond belief. To add another layer of ill researched spatial analysis in times when it would be possible to produce accurate data to gain value in planning is disappointing. The expected out come from a myriad of royal commissions is to avoid creating indefensible assets through planning, not to burden primary producers with unnecessary compliance.

There is a strong possibility that future insurance cover will increase dramatically by the adoption of this overlay. The region could become less attractive to investment unless a more nuanced approach to the real risks of bushfire is not undertaken. This overlay creates the potential for rises in fire protection rates where there has not been any physical change to the farming districts only an imaginary analysis. I would suggest the Central Coast Council could have spent our money far more effectively on hazard reduction rather than the production of this report. The whole shire could be zoned red and the cost of singling out a few urbane areas is not fair to all ratepayers. There could be a strong argument to prove that these urbane areas would be just at risk, as everywhere else, in an out of control bushfire.

This is probably, in reality, the last time the council will have the power to act as a planning authority. The new adoption of the State Wide Planning scheme will eventually be swallowed up by a new state bureaucracy. The cost to get this overlay more reflective of the reality is essential, as the time for people to object will have passed, and their enlightenment of how this cost burden has occurred will happen at the planning desk. Most people are bewildered by the cost and process of planning and there is no reason to add extra unnecessary costs.

The written reports that will mitigate fire risk will become expensive. They will be tested in court by insurance companies and individuals. Exactly the same as the dilemma building surveying faces, will be replicated on the fire risk reporting consultants. There will be many other unthought detriments to ratepayers that will only appear after this overlay is applied. I hope other ratepayers take the time to point these out in what has been a short window of time to respond to the application of this overlay.

Thankyou for the short extension to respond.

Ben Hiscutt Batchelor of Rural Resource Management

