



FACT SHEET

March 2009

NORTH ARM COVE

Land at North Arm Cove, on the foreshore of Port Stephens, was subdivided speculatively before the 1920s and the introduction of planning controls (these are now known as 'paper subdivisions'). The area contains up to 2,700 small lots – urban in size though rural in zoning – that have never been able to have a house constructed on them.

These lots have been sold to many purchasers without having any building rights.

In 2007, the Department of Planning included the land, together with adjoining land owned by developers, in draft growth area maps to be investigated to determine definitively whether potential existed for future urban development. Information accompanying the draft maps indicated the site had significant environmental and infrastructure constraints which would need to be overcome if any potential for development were to occur.

As part of this subsequent investigation, the Department has found a number of issues that preclude urban development on the land, including:

- **Transport:** The area is isolated from existing settlements, infrastructure and services, being situated around 22km from Tea Gardens and 33km from the closest regional centre of Raymond Terrace. Development at this site would require considerable investment in public transport to adequately service the population.
- **Infrastructure:** The isolated location of the site was also found to be a significant issue in regard to the availability of basic urban infrastructure such as water, sewerage, adequate roads and drainage. The cost of extending and providing services to the area was estimated at approximately \$160,000 per lot, which would make the lots unaffordable.
- **Environmental sensitivity:** The site is heavily vegetated with State significant vegetation communities, including 150 hectares of endangered ecological communities comprising of several threatened species. Urban development has the potential to destroy the site's environmental value.

For these reasons a significant proposed release area at North Arm Cove has been excluded from the final Mid North Coast Regional Strategy.

The Mid North Coast Regional Strategy identifies more than adequate supply of unconstrained land for housing in more accessible locations where infrastructure, transport and services can be more economically provided.

**INFORMATION REGARDING 1(A) RURAL LAND WITHOUT DWELLING
ENTITLEMENTS
IN
NORTH ARM COVE, PINDIMAR, BUNDABAH, CARRINGTON LOCALITIES**

- Certain lands in the above localities are currently zoned 1(a) Rural under Great Lakes Local Environmental Plan 1996. In accordance with cl.19 of this Plan they must have an area of 40 hectares for Council to consent to the erection of a dwelling thereupon.
- This current situation is not the result of a council-approved subdivision but stems from a subdivision created in the early 1900s, well before the introduction of formal planning legislation/controls that are now administered by local councils.
- The majority of these lands have been zoned 'non-urban' and have had no building entitlement since 1964.
- Despite these restrictions the properties are NOT exempt from rates. Council has nevertheless been mindful of the limited use of such properties and as such they have been issued the lowest rate levied by Council.
- On 14 October 2003 Council adopted its "*Tea Gardens/ Hawks Nest Conservation and Development Strategy*". The proposed development precincts identified in the Strategy have been endorsed by the Department of Planning to guide future growth within this region for the next 20 to 30 years. The Strategy, however, has not identified any of the above localities for future growth during this period.
- Neither the State Government nor Council have plans to rezone land in the above localities for urban purposes and are unlikely to support any future rezonings outside precincts identified in an adopted growth strategy.
- As such lands are primarily constrained in terms of access, provision of infrastructure (water, sewerage, roads and drainage), flooding and/or high ecological sensitivity, and as they are unlikely to meet the Sustainability Criteria outlined in the Department of Planning's *Draft Mid-North Coast Regional Strategy*, there is **little prospect of any change to their non-urban zoning for the next 25+ years (ie. 2031)**.

Should you require any further information please contact Council's Planning and Environmental Services on telephone (02) 6591 7351.

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