



Shoalhaven Riverwatch Inc.

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20 August 2012

Shoalhaven City Council
PO BOX 42
NOWRA NSW 2541

Attention: Mayor Paul Green

Dear Paul,

IMPROVEMENT OF SHOALHAVEN RIVER WATER QUALITY AT SHOALHAVEN HEADS

Riverwatch was approach by the newly formed Shoalhaven Heads Estuary Focus Group, regarding the state of the Shoalhaven River at Shoalhaven Heads. The local residents of Shoalhaven Heads are concerned that the state of the River at the Heads will continue to deteriorate unless there is a change to the current entrance management plan.

Over the years there has been an increase in sedimentation at the Heads due to continual erosion of riverbanks further upstream and the lack of any substantial flood event over the last 13 years. The poor quality of river water at the Heads was also mentioned in Council's Shoalhaven River Estuary Management Plan (SREMP).

At the meeting of the Shoalhaven Natural Resource and Floodplain Management Committee in August 2011, Riverwatch did support the current Entrance Management Plan in preference to having a permanent opening of the Heads. However Riverwatch also stated, in our comments to Council in February 2012, that any proposal to permanently open the Heads should be subjected to an independent study.

Riverwatch understands that Council is prepared to contribute 50% of the funding to undertake a study to re-examine a permanent opening of Shoalhaven Heads. If similar funding is obtained from the State Government, Riverwatch would request that the following items are included in the study:

- Address the current build-up of sedimentation at the Heads, the possible causes of the build-up and any solutions which can reduce the sand levels.
- Review the Entrance Management Plan with the aim of improving the frequency of opening the Heads to improve flushing of the Shoalhaven Heads estuary.

- Investigate other options which will improve the flow of water. These options could include a permanent opening at the Heads and closing Berry's canal, however Riverwatch is concerned that any such major diversion of the river water may cause more serious problems along the Shoalhaven Heads coastline.

Riverwatch also considers that the issues of Shoalhaven Heads should be addressed within the context of a wider, and more comprehensive River Management Plan. Such a Plan would use input from the SREMP, NSW Maritime's Shoalhaven River Boat Safety Plan, the Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority's Catchment Action Plan and current studies being undertaken by the University of NSW. The Plan would produce environmental strategies to protect and improve the River by allocating activity zones for various water sports and to identify and prioritise projects to limit sedimentation of the River through bank restoration work.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'PMason'.

Patricia Mason
President
Shoalhaven Riverwatch Inc