

# Submission to Lake Macquarie City Council

## Draft Winding Creek and Lower Cockle Creek Floodplain Risk Management Study and Plan

25 July 2016

# WHO WE ARE

## AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST INDUSTRY



## BIG JOB CREATOR



The Property Council of Australia is the leading advocate for Australia's biggest industry – property.

The Property Council champions the interests of more than 2200 member companies that represent the full spectrum of the industry, including those who invest, own, manage and develop in all sectors of property. Creating landmark projects and environments where people live, work, shop and play is core business for our members.

Our industry represents one ninth of Australia's GDP (the largest of any sector), employs 1.1 million Australians (more than mining and manufacturing combined) and generates \$72 billion in tax revenues to fund community services.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Property Council of Australia commends Lake Macquarie City Council for compiling a thorough analysis of both the flood behaviour and floodplain management issues within the catchment.

The focus of the policy should be to reduce the impact of flooding on individual land owners, whilst not sterilising land that could be reasonably developed. Our recommendations aim to sharpen that focus by providing further clarity around what is acceptable in flood prone areas when projects are being assessed for commercial feasibility.

Greater certainty will lead to better development outcomes for industry and the community.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Filling of Flood Prone Land and Cumulative Impact of Filling*

- Fill should be placed adjacent to existing higher ground, however if fill is proposed above the PMF level, the creation of a flood island may also provide a closer point of refuge for other flood prone properties.
- The Floodplain Development Manual should contain an explicit definition of what constitutes “significant impact”. The current benchmark is ambiguous and could unnecessarily constrain further development in established urban areas that are flood prone.
- Where designated growth or renewal areas are concerned, the Floodplain Development Manual should contain an explicit definition of “allowable fill extent” and any corresponding mitigation measures to allow an early assessment of project feasibility.

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## *Restriction of Development on Flood Prone Land*

- A number of smaller flow paths are designated as “floodway” in the study, thereby restricting development and prohibiting various classes of buildings in areas where the velocity is greater than 1.5m/s.
- It is reasonable to expect that engineering controls could be designed for these smaller flow paths, thereby changing the hydraulic category and flood hazard.
- The Floodplain Development Manual should outline the derivation of the threshold velocity and the classes of building prohibited.

## *Rezoning of Flood Prone Land*

- The need for developments in areas requiring rezoning to consider “the criteria of no increase in risk compared to current risk” should be removed.
- Increases in density will lead to increases in flood risk, so to retain this policy setting would prevent the future rezoning of flood prone land.

## *Provision of Flood Information to the Public*

- We strongly encourage Council to pursue and implement the report’s suggestion of an electronic web based delivery tool for presenting flood information to the public.
- Such a tool would raise awareness of flood risks within the community and assist investors to assess development projects for commercial feasibility at an earlier stage.



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