

A Submission in response to the Draft Redland City Plan 2015

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Introduction

We ask that Redland City Council rezones Coochiemudlo's Main Beach foreshore, between the ferry jetty and the barge ramp, on the island's southern edge. The site, Lot 23 SP144276, is outlined (below) in green.



The Draft Redland City Plan 2015 amends the current zoning of this site from 'Open Space' to 'Recreation and Open Space'. But we would argue that Open Space zoning of this area, in any form, is clearly incompatible with the Council's own Land Management Plan, and frustrates the volunteer conservation effort already being made to sustain the site's natural integrity.

We ask, therefore, that Lot 23 SP144276 be rezoned 'Conservation'. This doesn't preclude low impact Open Space activities; they already co-exist in Conservation zones around the island. Rather, the new zoning would affirm that this area, like the rest of the island's Conservation foreshore, is a natural asset, not just an empty space with a few patches of token 'nature'.

Nature, however defined, is the heart and soul of Coochiemudlo. We are, literally, surrounded by it. Lot 23 SP144276 deserves better.

Note: The framing questions that follow, address the State planning themes of environment and heritage, and safety and resilience to hazards.

Why is the current Open Space zoning of this area so inappropriate?

Council's [own definition of open space](#) is “public and private lands that are broadly available for public recreation, pedestrian and cycle movement, sport or for nature conservation purposes”. Whatever 'nature conservation purposes' might be, the rest of the definition implies quite the opposite.

Walking, cycling and sport require the removal or reduction of naturally occurring vegetation. Recreation implies the provision of facilities and hard infrastructure. 'Broadly available' implies frequent use with little restriction.

But all these Open Space descriptors: walking, cycling, sport, recreation and unrestricted access, contradict Redland City Council's own [Land Management Plan](#) for the island foreshore. Given the enduring reputation of the 2004 report that underpins the LMP, this is a serious contradiction.

The 2004 Coochiemudlo Island Land Management Report (LMR 2004) was produced by Rob Friend & Associates P/L. Nothing, before or since, approaches its detailed assessment of our island's natural assets, and the enlightened way in which its recommendations were developed in such close consultation with the island community and many stakeholders.

LMR 2004 identifies Lot 23 SP144276 as Foreshore Zone, and so declares it should contain no recreational infrastructure, no tracks or roads, and only be accessed at specific locations. Human impact on the fragile soil should be minimised, and focused on the rehabilitation of the natural vegetation - certainly not on sport, recreation, walking, cycling, buildings or facilities.

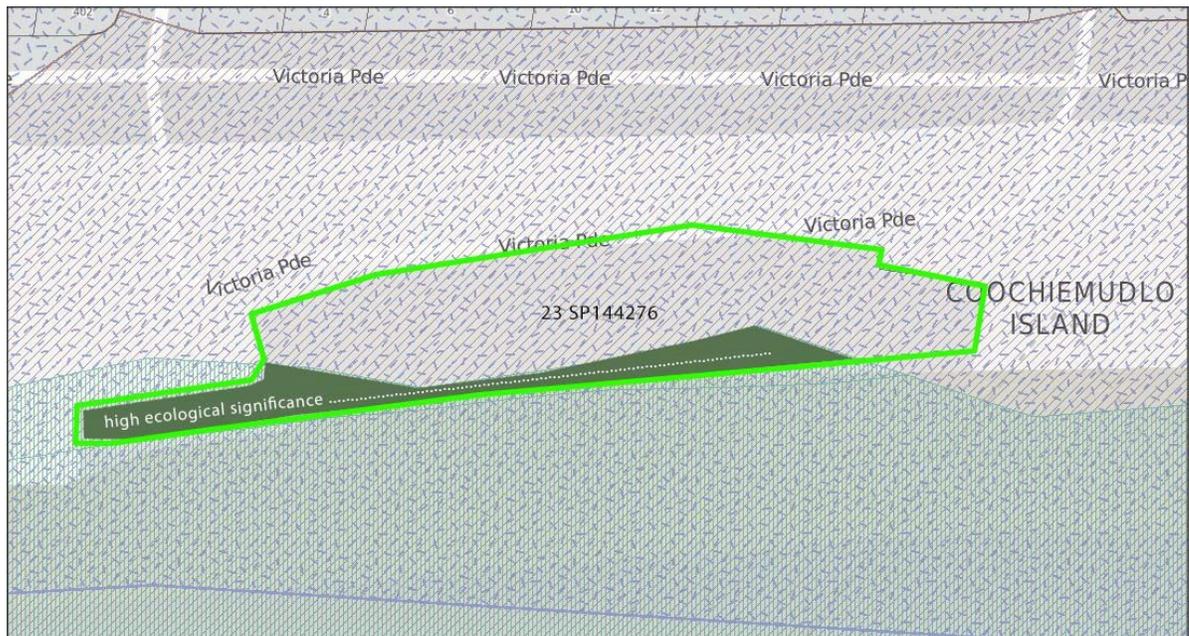
The contradiction between Council's own land management plan, and common Open Space management practices, could hardly be more obvious. The new 'Recreation and Open Space' label, proposed in the draft City Plan, only aggravates this contradiction. In specifying 'Recreation' it prioritises the category of land use that LMR 2004 noted as being highly likely to damage and degrade the island's fragile foreshore.

How does the current zoning affect management of the area?

Lot 23 SP144276 is the missing link in a chain of protection - the otherwise unbroken Conservation zone - that encircles the island's foreshore.



The State Planning Policy overlay shows how badly this natural asset has been devalued by that omission. After years of Open Space management only a small seaward strip still retains its 'high ecological significance'.



The degraded remainder of the site is that area mowed by Council contractors: suburban park management, not okay on vulnerable foreshore.

The remnants of 'high ecological significance' on site only survive in fenced patches weeded and planted by volunteers. Across the island, they only work in Conservation zones, for administrative and practical reasons. Open Space zoning actively excludes them from much of Lot 23 SP144276.

And that's a great pity, because even with restricted access to their few patches, they've achieved remarkable rehabilitation of the foreshore. These areas, maintained by local carers, show how the entire area should look, and could look, with Conservation zoning and better volunteer involvement.



Compare the healthy, abundant vegetation framed in the background, where volunteers weed and plant, with the bare grass and blown sand drifts where the foreground soil has been stripped of its natural cover.

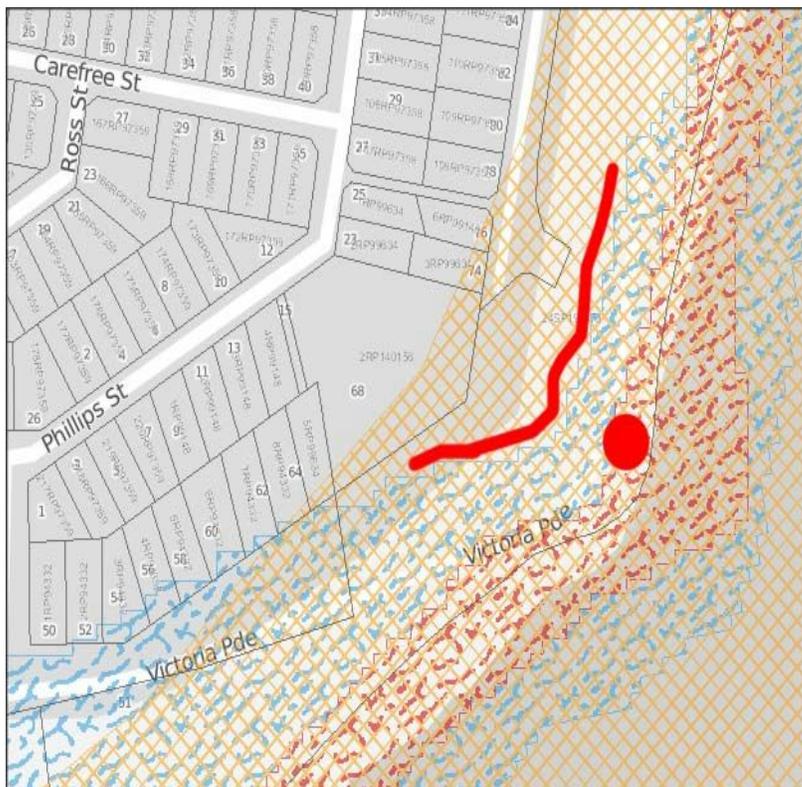
It's easy to see which is 'Conservation', and which is 'Open Space'. One is a thriving natural asset cared for by willing workers, the rest, a barren, wind-eroded emptiness, flattened every few weeks by a mowing contractor.

That mowing also spreads mother-of-millions into the small rehabilitated zones, which further frustrates the volunteers' efforts to control them.

What are the safety and hazard implications of the current zoning?

When, not if, a destructive weather event strikes the foreshore along Lot 23 SP144276, we already know the probable scenario and aftermath. We've watched the destructive outcome when sparsely-vegetated stretches of island foreshore are struck by storms, tides and powerful winds.

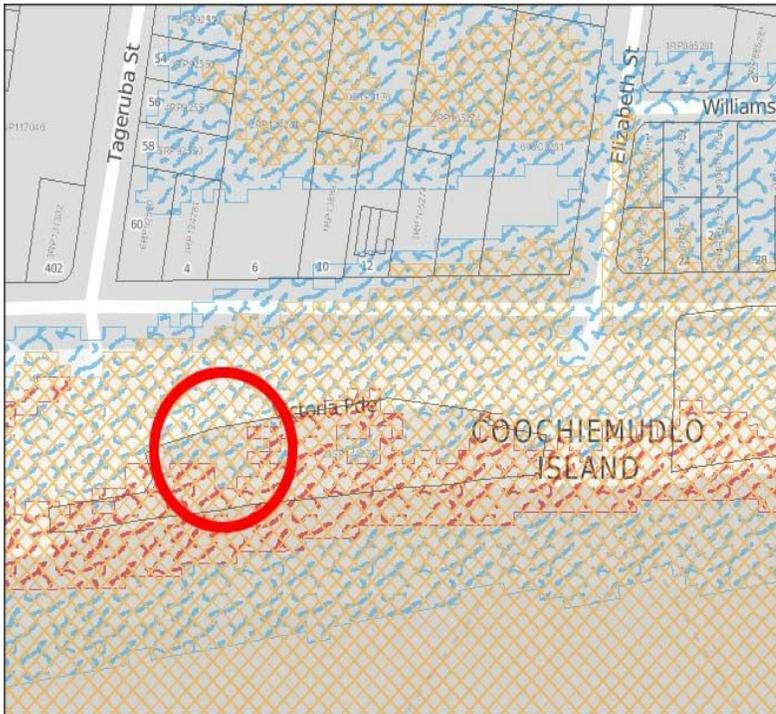
A coalition of invasive forces crashed ashore early in 2013. A storm tide, driven by the remnants of a cyclone, breached the Norfolk Beach dune. Fences collapsed, trees toppled, and the road (photo at right) was submerged and crumbled, never to reopen. Council's losses were limited only by the absence of much infrastructure, and the water was halted by a natural earth bank landward of the road.



This is how the area above appears on State Planning's hazard overlay. The red line is the earth bank that stopped water which swept over the road.

The red dot is the area in the photo, where the most intense damage is predicted by the red waves on the map.

In 2013 it came true.



This is the same hazard map showing Lot 23 SP144276.

Unlike Norfolk Beach, no inland barrier exists between the sea and the housing zone - nothing that would stop the 2013 double-punch of a king tide and a storm surge.

The red circle in the middle of the high hazard zone is the exposed area below.



Given a similar storm, from the south, the State Planning overlay predicts this low-lying, vulnerable foreshore could expect an onslaught just as

ferocious as that which caused so much destruction along Norfolk Beach three years ago. Hundreds of hours of volunteer work, and thousands of dollars were spent rehabilitating the island's eastern beach. The damage was worst where there was, as in the photo above, no vegetation forming an effective buffer against the waves.

The patches of Lot 23 SP144276 foreshore that have been rehabilitated by volunteers, show exactly why their work must be allowed to extended right along the beachfront to create a wall of resistance to extremes of weather. The rezoning we propose is critical to enabling and enacting that process.



On the left is the revegetated zone, where spinifex plantings now protect and bind the dune, catching ever more sand that steadily increases its height. Behind that, native ground cover, bushes and trees consolidate the sandy soil and present an energy absorbing barrier to storm driven water.

But where human impact has flattened the rest, on the right of the photo, a storm surge on a high tide would run clear through to the road and beyond. That prediction is made by State Planning's own hazard mapping, which so accurately forecast the scenario on Norfolk Beach in 2013.



Some of the ugliness of this foreground - the churned sand where nothing grows, all the way back to the road and beyond - must be blamed on the long term Open Space zoning of Lot 23 SP144276. Hard impact recreation, on fragile dunes and foreshore, is a bad mix.

Rezoning this area to Conservation should be the catalyst for restoring its high ecological significance, and the natural protective buffer along the island's foreshore (above) that shines so clearly where the spinifex begins. The rezoning should also underpin a careful rebalancing of public access and use, against the fresh commitment to environmental protection.

In summary, we ask that Lot 23 SP144276 be rezoned as Conservation

- to re-establish its ecological significance and natural appeal
 - to enact and enable better volunteer outcomes
 - to restore compliance with the land management plan
 - to protect against predicted increases in severe weather
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