



Rob Stokes
Minister for Planning

MEDIA RELEASE

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NORTH COAST ENVIRONMENTAL ZONE REFORMS

Planning Minister Rob Stokes today released a range of reforms for environmental zones across the North Coast to protect the region's most environmentally sensitive areas and safeguard farmland.

Mr Stokes said today's announcement means local councils now have the clarity needed to identify the most appropriate zone for environmentally important areas.

"Today's reforms resolve a longstanding challenge for the North Coast community in protecting the region's pristine local environment while respecting and safeguarding its rich farmland," Mr Stokes said.

"We've been very careful to make sure the primary use of the land, whether it's for conservation or agriculture, is the key driver behind the zoning decision so farmers and the community can proceed with confidence."

The reforms come from recommendations of an independent review undertaken into the use of environmental zones by North Coast councils in their Local Environmental Plans.

The reforms clarify that:

- Zoning decisions will reflect the existing primary use of the land
- Environmental zones will only be applied to places on the North Coast where the primary use of the land is environmental conservation (E2) or environmental management (E3)
- Before proposing an E2 or E3 zone, the council will need to validate the ecological evidence that supports the rezoning
- Councils can use vegetation maps to recognise environmentally sensitive land on farms without having to rezone land or impose new restrictions

Member for Lismore Thomas George and Member for Tweed Geoff Provest welcomed the reforms.

"This is an important step in ensuring landholders and the community have certainty in what is permitted in different areas throughout our community," Mr George said.

"We want to make sure we strike the right balance to protect our environment and our local economy," said Mr Provest.

The recommendations will initially apply to the five North Coast councils of Ballina, Byron, Kyogle, Lismore and Tweed. There will be further public consultation to consider a similar approach for environmental zoning in other NSW council areas.

For more information visit www.planning.nsw.gov.au/environmentalzones