



23rd November 2023

Media Release
Urgent Motion - "This IS Native Vegetation!"

Byron Shire Council will consider an Urgent Motion at today's Ordinary & Planning Meeting, to gain independent ecological advice on the status of the controversial 'Wallum' site in Brunswick Heads. Members of the local group Save Wallum are gathering this morning at the Council Chambers to support the area in question being assessed by experts, as to its status as Native Vegetation, after a Council Staff member had undermined this fact.

A Zombie DA has been resurrected from decades past, for the proposed subdivision, on land that is home to 9 EPBC listed Threatened Species and one Endangered Ecological Community, that would see 260 trees cut down, including 76 old-growth 100-400 year old hollow-bearing Scribbly Gums, as well as 27 Swamp Mahogany, primary Koala food trees, and 38 Glossy Black Cockatoo, She-Oak food trees.

The site has also been the subject of ongoing controversy in relation to slashing of the rare heath vegetation. James Barrie, Save Wallum spokesperson, stated, "On the 3rd of November approximately 6ha of the rare wildflower heath was illegally cleared by a slasher, against both the BSC Motion, from the 12 October, 2023, and the DA's Conditions of Consent, as no Subdivision Certificate has been issued.

The DA10.2021.575.1 Consent Conditions, Clause 3, Vegetation Removal, states "***No native trees or vegetation may be cleared or removed until a Subdivision Certificate has been issued relevant to those trees and vegetation.***"

Following numerous recent letters of complaint to the federal government, Clarence Property - the proponent, has been prompted recently by the Federal Minister for the Environment, Minister Plibersek, to fulfill their obligation to self-refer any development proposal that may have impact on Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES).

"It appears the Slasher was sent to the site to destroy vital evidence towards the expected EPBC referral", Mr Barrie said. "Sadly, a member of the Byron Shire Council (BSC) staff, following conversations with the developer, adopted a position that appears to state that the area is not considered "native vegetation", simply as it has been historically slashed; which we believe is a misinformed position".

"In response, there is an "Urgency Motion" before Councillors today to consider whether to engage an independent expert ecologist to assess if the site is indeed native vegetation retaining ecological value, or not. If it is found to be Native Vegetation, any heavy machinery activity to clear the Wildflower Heathland would be illegal and should trigger a stop work order from Council ", he concluded.

For further comment, contact James Barrie 0490 530 022 jamesbarriemusic@gmail.com