



JOINT STATEMENT – For immediate release

12 November 2019

FROM:

- **Sunshine Coast Environment Council**
- **Coolum and North Shore Coast Care**
- **OSCAR**
- **Friends of Yaroomba**
- **Development Watch Inc.**

PROPOSED COOLUM 'SURF RANCH' AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT POSES UNACCEPTABLE FLOOD RISK

Several community organisations named in an ABC radio interview on Wednesday 6 November¹ have issued a joint statement, expressing their concerns with the proposed intensive urban development and 'Surf Ranch' at Coolum.

In the interview, Andrew Stark, General Manager of World Surf League (Australia), mentioned consultation had taken place with several community organisations including the Sunshine Coast Environment Council, Coolum and North Shore Coast Care, Friends of Yaroomba, OSCAR and Development Watch Inc.

From the conversation that followed, listeners may have construed that these organisations are broadly supportive of the proposal. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Representatives from these organisations met with Mr Stark and Don O'Rorke (Executive Chairman Consolidated Properties) on 14 October for a briefing on the project which includes approximately 1500 residential lots, commercial, retail and hotel complexes, a school and the superficially appealing 'Surf Ranch'.

¹ <https://www.abc.net.au/radio/sunshine/programs/mornings/mornings/11656718>

It was clear from the outset that this project represents an intensive urban development on a floodplain with an ambitious and exclusive 'surf ranch' part of the overall concept.

The 510ha site lies within a particularly low-lying area of the Maroochy River floodplain where it already experiences tidal inundation as well as being extremely flood-prone regularly flooding to average depths across the site of 2m and 3-4m in large sections. It is zoned rural in the Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme and sits outside the Urban Footprint in the South-East Queensland Regional Plan. Both these planning instruments and associated policies and assessments recognise the significant constraints of this parcel meaning urban uses, such as that proposed in this latest speculative venture by Consolidated Properties, are not a compatible land use nor contemplated.

While the concept of a Surf Ranch may have merit and appropriate residential (urban) developments can occur if in accordance with the Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme, this proposal is completely at odds with not only the relevant planning instruments but sound planning and the need to avoid risk to people and property from flooding.

Catchment-wide flood modelling for the dynamic Maroochy Catchment and climate change projections shows intensification of development on an already highly modified floodplain resulting in loss of flood storage capacity is likely to create significant impacts on already vulnerable communities.

Along with the broader community, the Sunshine Coast Council and the State Government have recognised the importance of the retaining and enhancing the function of the Maroochy coastal lowlands. The 'Blue Heart' project is a collaborative project covering 5000ha to protect and enhance this area for blue carbon sequestration, habitat for biodiversity and water processing.

Council is also developing a Climate Hazard Adaptation Strategy (CHAS) which is looking at the combined impact of sea level rise, storm surge and flooding of the Sunshine Coast catchments. While this important work is ongoing, the Maroochy catchment is a short, coastal catchment with a high annual rainfall. Any changes within the catchment, such as those proposed through this development, will likely amplify overall impacts.

Another serious concern is the wave pool itself. From the dimensions provided by Mr Stark, the volume of the wave pool is in the order of 350,000 cubic metres. That is a massive amount of water. Mr O'Rorke stated it would not be taken from reticulated town water but extracted from the nearby Maroochy River, its associated waterways and interconnected ground water via a complex (and unsustainable) pumping system into the pool then circulated onto constructed wetlands and a series of 'lakes' – presumably for the upmarket 'lakefront' housing lots.

This risky and energy intensive process could severely impact on the hydrology of the river and its protected wetlands. Coolum Creek Conservation Park and the regenerating Yandina Creek Wetlands are within proximity to this site. The mobilisation of hundreds of thousands of cubic metres of acid sulfate soils to 'create' an aspirational 'developable' area of some 125ha compounds the unacceptable risk from this project.

Our organisations do not support this proposal and urge the community and the government to also fully understand the serious ramifications, inherent risks and inappropriateness of this proposal.

-ENDS-

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND COMMENT:

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[The Blue Heart Sunshine Coast](#) aims to protect and manage the most critical areas of the floodplain. At a regional level it enables us to:

- take a proactive approach to understand and manage the impacts of coastal hazards
- establish a significant and complex wetland and floodplain for our region
- enhance water quality of the Maroochy River system.

The land within the Blue Heart area is held for:

- rural and agricultural purposes
- conservation
- generation of renewable energy
- water quality nutrient offsetting
- vegetation offsetting and carbon sequestration
- open space purposes.