



Hunter Bird Observers Club

Affiliated with BirdLife Australia

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc
PO Box 24, New Lambton, NSW 2305
www.hboc.org.au
ABN 62 415 889 446

2 April 2013

The General Manager
Port Stephens Council
116 Adelaide Street
RAYMOND TERRACE NSW 2324

Attn: Leonard Allen
Senior Development Planner

Sent by email to leonard.allen@portstephens.nsw.gov.au

RE: Soldiers Point marina expansion (Re: DA No. 16-2012-57 1)

Hunter Bird Observers Club (HBOC) is opposed to the amended plan and proposal to extend the Soldiers Point marina westward toward Dowardee Island. This letter should be read in conjunction with our original submission opposing the development (dated 27 April 2012) as the matters raised within it are still relevant.

The recent amended plan and supporting documents we feel do little or nothing to minimise the threat to bird habitat on Dowardee Island. Any development westward unarguably decreases the physical isolation of the habitat of the critically endangered Beach Stone Curlew. Increased risk of casual visitation by people and domestic pets would be catastrophic particularly during the warmer months when this bird breeds.

It is noted in the amended plan that fore and aft moorings proposed close to the oyster leases on the east of the island have been deleted. These may have provided some protection from boat wakes to the beach on the eastern shore. This beach is an important high tide roost area for many species of waterbirds. The amended plan will still force boat traffic closer to Dowardee Island where their wake could quickly remove this steep narrow beach.

We wish to respond to several points raised in the report by W.S. Rooney & Associates Pty Ltd prepared for the applicant to assess ecological issues raised by Port Stephens Council (specifically section 2 "Threatened Wading Birds"). One of our members accompanied Mr Rooney (who is not an ornithologist but specialises in marine science) around the area as mentioned in his report.

In page 3 of his report Mr Rooney attempts to paint a picture of a totally healthy bird populations in the area, however systematic studies have shown that shorebird populations are decreasing in Port Stephens. Increasing development can certainly not be excluded as a cause. The assertion that low boat usage from the marina somehow relates to less impact on local birds is incorrect. The marina and the vessels within are actually a de-facto residential area / holiday park. It is the casual excursions of people and pets in small tender type craft from the larger vessels across the proposed narrower channel that poses the greatest acute threat to wildlife on Dowardee Island.

Mr Rooney refers to the possibility of erosion on the island as 'unlikely '. We strongly argue that this is also incorrect. Increasing the number of vessels in the area and forcing them and existing boat traffic significantly closer to the island makes the risk of erosion from boat wakes likely.

Thank you for receiving and considering our submission, could you please provide us with acknowledgement of its receipt at your earliest convenience.

References:

Owner, D. and Rohweder, D.A. (2003). Distribution and habitat of Pied Oystercatchers (*Haematopus longirostris*) inhabiting ocean beaches in northern New South Wales. *Emu* **103**: 163-169

Roderick, M. and Stuart, A. (2010). "The status of threatened bird species in the Hunter Region". *The Whistler* **4**: 1-28

Stuart, A. (2010). Australian Pied Oystercatchers *Haematopus longirostris* in the Hunter Region of New South Wales, Australia. *Stilt* **57**: 18-20.

Stuart, A. (Ed.) (1994-2011). Hunter Region of New South Wales Annual Bird Report Numbers 1 to 18 (1993-2010). (Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc.: New Lambton, NSW.)

Stuart, A. (2011). Shorebird Surveys at Port Stephens, New South Wales 2004-2011 and Comparisons with Results from Previous Surveys, *Stilt*, **60**: 14-21