

Australia Walkabout Wildlife Park

1 Darkinjung Road, cnr Peats Ridge Road, Calga NSW 2250 Australia
P. +61 (0)2 4375 1100 | F. +61 (0)2 4375 1257 | ABN. 25 662 583 787
E. info@walkaboutpark.com.au | W. www.walkaboutpark.com.au



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Objection to the proposed stormwater drainage cost changes.

1. Reclassified as 'agricultural' despite our objections, ours is not an agricultural property, it is a natural bush protectorate.
2. Our property is undeveloped bush with no landform modifications, fully draining into the aquifer and the natural creeks in the valley. We do not irrigate so we do not add to the natural rain effects. We do not have dams as the Calga aquifer and creeks do their job of recycling the water naturally. Stormwater falling on our property has zero impact on any council storm water collection system. We should not be required to pay Council to manage our stormwater when Council does not manage our stormwater, nature does.
3. We would anticipate that we should be classed as a 'low impact' property. However, the draft suggests that 'low impact' assessment will only consider dams favouring farms. As described above, we have no need for dams to contain and manage run off, with the natural water drainage system dealing with stormwater. In fact, dams would alter our otherwise in-balance environment, and dams can fill and overflow causing stormwater problems rather than solving them. Even in the 2015 extreme weather event that was classed as a natural disaster, despite a massive local impact from the deluge, all of our run-off was absorbed into groundwater or flowed into the creeks. There was zero impact on Council's stormwater system. Our unaltered natural drainage system is proven to be extreme-weather proof. Yet, despite this, we are concerned that, although we should be eligible for 'low impact' status, the low impact criteria will be written in such a way as to exclude us.
4. We bought in Calga not Wyong, and paid Calga prices to purchase our property. The price of the property was based on the cost of maintaining a property in Calga, not Wyong. We already lost our special Rates exemption after the amalgamation (we had been given a special exemption which was to continue for as long as we run a wildlife sanctuary) which took our Rates from zero to \$5,000. Now you want to impose a stormwater levy of \$5,427.81 on us too, which would take our increase in costs to over \$10,000.
5. These cost increases have the potential to break Walkabout Park financially, causing the Central Coast to lose the public services that we provide including wildlife rescue and rehabilitation, school education and community education, school and university programs, internships and TAFE traineeships, Aboriginal cultural education and contribution to the international tourist economy.

Gerald Barnard, Director
for Australia Walkabout Wildlife Park