

tabled by
Leader L. Hircutt
23 March 2021
Clerk
Deputy Clerk

L. Hircutt

Petition No:

35 of 2020

RESPONSE TO PETITION

TITLE OF PETITION: Preservation of Garden Island Creek and Garden Island Sands from erosion and provision of safe beach access

The petition of the undersigned Citizens of Tasmania draw to the attention of the House:

1. Foreshore erosion issues, due to sea level rise, currently affecting the residents of and visitors to Garden Island Creek and Garden Island Sands.
2. The foreshore is eroding at a rapid rate. The banks have destabilised causing many large trees to fall into the water, creating hazardous debris. The boat ramp, which was damaged by sea level rise and storm activity, was recently removed, leaving beach access in an unsafe condition, and not permitting access by children, the elderly or people with a disability.
3. Domestic septic systems are becoming closer to the receding shoreline and may soon pose a threat to human health and the environment if erosion control measures are not enacted.
4. The report by SGS Economics and Planning 2015, Garden Island Creek Coastal Adaptation Pathways, Final Report to Huon Valley Council and the Tasmanian Climate Change Office, outlined how the lowest cost pathway of coastal adaptation for this community was to 'Protect existing development for as long as possible while protecting natural values'.
5. To date, no measures have been taken, erosion has proceeded and is now considerably worse than when the above report was written.

Your petitioners, therefore, Call on the government to: Make funds available to begin a strategic approach to prevent beach erosion as has been discussed in previous reports. As well as restoring safe beach access, the boat ramp, addressing fire safety concerns and implementing beach nourishment measures, to restore a community space that has been enjoyed for generations.

GOVERNMENT POSITION:

Garden Island Creek is located approximately 18 km south of Cygnet, with part of the community fronting the Huon River. The land tenure is classified as Public Reserve and is managed by the Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS). The beach and adjacent foreshore is prone to the effects of coastal erosion, which has been an ongoing and longstanding issue. The beach is susceptible to natural forces and coastal processes and is experiencing erosion much like many places along the State's coastline. The adjacent foreshore is of variable width, currently being between 20 to 25 metres wide from the freehold boundaries to the high-tide mark.

The Huon Valley Council and the Tasmanian Climate Change Office commissioned SGS Economics and Planning to complete a report to identify Coastal Adaptation Pathways for Garden Island Creek. The aim of the report was to inform the Council, residents, and visitors of Garden Island Creek, and the wider community, about coastal risks in

light of sea level rise resulting from climate change. It considered ways to respond to risks, while also considering the values of living and recreating in the area. It noted that a better understanding of the issues, and possible responses, will inform decisions to respond to sea level rise and its potential impacts. The completed report, provided in July 2015, focussed on short-term adaptation pathways (to 2050), and also considered the longer term impacts (to 2100).

Until most recently, neither the Council nor the residents have had any contact with the PWS to progress adaptation measures for any mitigation works. In similar cases around the State, where the responsibility clearly did not rest with the Crown, the private landowners effected funded works themselves.

The *DPIPWE Coastal Hazards Policy 2019* clearly articulates that the Crown is not responsible for naturally occurring erosion processes such as this. This policy also explains that public funds may be expended when public facilities are at risk, such as roads and utility infrastructure. No public infrastructure is at risk in this circumstance. Private property is also not at immediate threat.

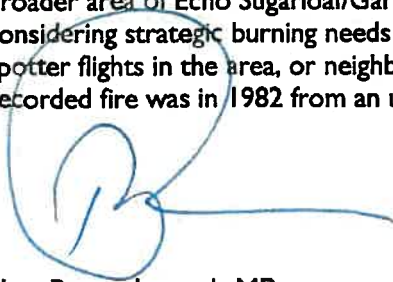
The SGS Economics and Planning report estimates the number of private freehold properties that may be impacted by 2050 is 22 (on the Sunset Drive frontage), with a further 25 to be impacted by 2100.

In accordance with the *Building Act 2016*, altering or installing an on-site wastewater management system requires a plumbing permit to be issued by the Council. The report confirms that the community is not connected to reticulated water and sewerage and noted, in extreme rainfall events and inundation, that contamination was plausible. It is the responsibility of residents to ensure wastewater and sewerage is managed within the applicable Acts, it is not the responsibility of the State Government.

The report identifies adaptation pathways for consideration in the period leading up to 2050. The pathways were not predictions or recommendations, but ways of imagining different futures based on a range of choices about how to respond to climate change effects. There were no recommendations compelling the Tasmanian Government to be responsible for any pathway solution.

The removal of the broken boat ramp, following a number of years of monitoring, was considered necessary as the structure had deteriorated beyond repair and was exacerbating the rate of erosion where the structure adjoined the Public Reserve. There is no record of any authorisations for the construction of the boat ramp, and no party was forthcoming in wanting to be responsible for its ongoing maintenance. The Council has indicated there is no interest in providing recreational structures for access at Garden Island Creek as they have assets at nearby Charlotte Cove. There are no current plans to replace the boat ramp or provide an all access structure for use by residents and visitors to the area. The Crown land has also been impacted by unauthorised encroachments, and vegetation clearing (for views). The PWS has recently been working with adjoining residents to educate against the clearing of vegetation along the foreshore.

Coastal Public Reserve frontages, such as that at Garden Island Creek, are generally considered low fire risk. These long, narrow reserves are not always a high risk, even if they have high fuel loads, because a fire crossing a narrow strip of reserve will only travel a short distance as a head fire and not build up intensity before reaching a reserve boundary. The PWS notes that a fire could still travel a long way parallel with neighbouring houses, however the properties are exposed to a less intense flank fire and little ember attack. The PWS also acknowledges that the broader area of Echo Sugarloaf/Garden Island does contain some long unburnt forest and vegetation and is considering strategic burning needs in the area in its future burning program. Fire detection is by fixed tower, spotter flights in the area, or neighbouring property owners. Historical fire history for the area indicates the last recorded fire was in 1982 from an undetermined ignition source.



Hon Roger Jaensch MP
MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND PARKS

Date: 18/2/21