WVRA Inc. Submission

Opposition to Waterways Rezoning (W1 to W2)

Woronora Valley Residents Association Inc.

To: Sutherland Shire Council / NSW Department of Planning

Re: Waterways Planning Proposal – Rezoning from W1 Natural Waterways to W2 Recreational Waterways

1**. Introduction**

The Woronora Valley Residents Association Inc. (WVRA Inc.) strongly opposes the proposed rezoning of waterways from W1 Natural Waterways to W2 Recreational Waterways within the Sutherland Shire.

These waterways are highly valued for their ecological integrity, biodiversity, cultural significance, and community amenity. They form part of a sensitive and interconnected riparian and estuarine system that requires protection, not intensification of use.

2**. Summary of Concern**

The proposal seeks to enable increased recreational and commercial use of waterways currently protected under W1 zoning.

This includes potential for:

Kiosks and commercial outlets

Marinas and boating infrastructure

Boat hire operations

Increased tourism and visitor activity

This represents a shift from environmental protection toward commercialisation and intensified recreational use.

3. **Environmental Impacts**

The W1 zoning exists to protect waterways with high ecological value. Rezoning to W2 introduces increased physical disturbance, pollution risk, and habitat fragmentation.

Key impacts include:

Loss and fragmentation of riparian vegetation

Disturbance to shoreline bird habitat and nesting areas

Damage to seagrass beds and aquatic ecosystems

Increased erosion, sedimentation, and bank instability

Decline in water quality from intensified human activity

4. **Critical Role of Riparian Vegetation**

Riparian vegetation provides:

Bank stabilisation and erosion control

Water quality filtration

Habitat for aquatic and terrestrial species

Thermal regulation of waterways

Biodiversity corridors

Flood mitigation

These systems are highly sensitive, and even minor disturbance can result in long-term ecological decline.

5. **Foreshore Interface, Runoff, Dredging and Limits of Regulation**

Many foreshore areas sit adjacent to sensitive W1 waterways, forming a single interconnected ecological system.

Impacts include:

Stormwater runoff carrying pollutants into the river system

Petrol and oil leaks and spills from boats and marina activity

Bank erosion and sediment disturbance from vessel wash

Water quality decline from cumulative impacts

Dredging may also be required to maintain navigation and access, which can:

Remove seagrass and aquatic habitat

Increase turbidity and sediment resuspension

Disrupt fish breeding areas

Alter seabed structure

Even small-scale dredging causes cumulative ecological impacts.

There are clear limits to enforcement:

Runoff cannot be fully controlled in real time

Boat speed and wash impacts are difficult to enforce

Dredging impacts are cumulative and long-term

Diffuse pollution is often untraceable

Fuel and oil contamination is an unavoidable risk of increased boating activity and cannot be fully mitigated through conditions.

Once introduced, hydrocarbon pollution is extremely difficult to contain or remediate.

6. **Monitoring and Governance Limitations**

Water quality monitoring is shared between:

NSW Environment Protection Authority

NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

Sutherland Shire Council

There is no continuous real-time monitoring across the entire river system.

Limitations include:

Intermittent monitoring

Delayed detection of impacts

Reactive enforcement

Difficulty attributing diffuse pollution sources

7**. Boating Safety, Enforcement and Mooring Governance**

Concerns include:

Vessel speed and wash impacts

Safety conflicts between users

Limited enforcement capacity

Unclear mooring allocation and management

Potential commercialisation of public waterways

8. **Foreshore Stability and Existing Conditions**

Many seawalls are ageing or variably maintained.

Increased boat wash may cause:

Erosion behind seawalls

Structural weakening

Increased maintenance burden shore instability

Long-term foreshore instability.

9.**Ecological Condition of the River System**

The river system has experienced ecological decline in many areas, including reductions in mangroves, seagrass, and aquatic vegetation.

The system is now sensitive and recovery-dependent.

10. **Ecological Cascade Example**

Loss of seagrass in coastal systems reduces fish habitat and disrupts food chains.

Similar impacts could occur in estuarine systems if aquatic vegetation is further disturbed.

11. **Commercialisation and Tourism Pressure**

The proposal enables:

Kiosks

Marinas

Boat hire

Tourism activity

This will alter river character, increase congestion, and reduce passive recreation safety.

12. **Community and Amenity Impacts**

Impacts include:

Loss of tranquillity

Increased noise and activity

Change in community use

Reduced sense of place

13. **Flooding and Climate Considerations**

Riparian zones are essential for:

Flood control

Erosion stability

Catchment resilience

Intensification reduces natural resilience.

14**. Conclusion**

Far more will be lost—both now and for future generations—through the incremental exploitation of sensitive foreshore and riparian environments for recreational and commercial use than could ever be justified by short-term amenity or entertainment gains.

These systems are irreplaceable once degraded, and their protection must take precedence.

W1 zoning must be retained, particularly in already sensitive and environmentally burdened river systems, where restoration—not further pressure—must be the priority.

Protection must be based on prevention of impact, not attempted mitigation after degradation has occurred.

"On behalf of **WVRA Inc. Committee"**

Robyn Galvin [President]

Marelle Burnum Burnum [Secretary]