Ella Bay, Innisfail, North Queensland – Research Proposal

The Role of Disaster Management Planning in Coastal Residential Development

Principal Researchers:

Associate Professor John Minnery,
Dr Clive Warren, and
Dr Mike Gillen,
School of Geography, Planning & Architecture,
University of Queensland

The Ella Bay development represents a substantial integrated master planned community incorporating housing and resort development on a 450 hectare coastal site. The proposed development will have a time span of ten to fifteen years with an estimated total development value of $1.81 billion. The site is situated in coastal North Queensland approximately ten kilometres from the town of Innisfail.

The development proposal will result in a very significant level of residential development in and around the development site with an estimated 540 new dwellings plus development of four five-star resorts, a retail and professional services precinct, an educational precinct and golf facilities. It is estimated that total development costs will be in the region of $1.81 billion and that some 8,050 person years of employment will be generated, peaking at 1800 employees in year seven of the development. Once completed the development will employ approximately 650 persons.

The development site is situated in a coastal location surrounded by the Ella Bay National Park. Access to the site is via a single coastal road from the town of Flying Fish Point.. The region in which the project is located is recognised as being subject to a number of natural hazards, including cyclones, storm surge and other hydro-meteorological events.

There is growing global recognition that climate change is having a material effect on the occurrence of such events, the number of which has doubled since 1996. The annual average number of natural disasters globally between 1991 and 1999 was 354; this had risen to 728 a year between 2000 and 2004 (IFRC 2005). The Innisfail region itself was the victim of cyclone Larry in March 2006. The location of the Ella Bay development in tropical North Queensland presents a significant exposure to natural hazards principally of a hydro-meteorological nature but including significant potential threats from bush fire.

Global efforts are being made to plan communities to withstand the impacts of many forms of natural hazard. The need for good disaster risk management planning when establishing communities and the ongoing need to prepare for and plan recovery strategies is being recognised by governments, aid organisations and developers globally. In Queensland the connections between community and land use planning on the one hand and hazard management on the other are incorporated into policies such as coastal management strategies and a State Planning Policy. The Ella Bay project with its unique mix of high quality residential development within a new coastal community provides a good case study within which best practice hazard management strategies can be assessed and guidelines developed.

This study proposes to undertake a review of the literature relating to hydro-meteorological hazards and their effects on coastal communities and to use the project as a case study to develop guidelines that can suggest ways to help reduce the physical, social and economic effects of such disaster events. The research will focus on the role of the various stakeholders in the development process in reducing the impact of disaster events. Using the Ella Bay development as a case study and focus the research will evaluate world best practice in planning and implementing hazard risk management strategies through land use, building and related strategies.

The outcomes of this research will both inform the community and provide a model against which future major coastal developments can be evaluated. The report will identify the positive outcomes for the residents of Ella Bay and highlight any future strategies which might be implemented within the wider coastal community.

The research proposal is largely focused on a review of the available literature and in interviews with key stakeholders in the project and surrounding community. The estimated time line for this project is twelve months with a budget for travel and research assistance of approximately $15,500

Reference:

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2005) *World Disasters Report, 2005*, IFRC, Geneva