

# **SUBMISSION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

## **REGARDING THE BROADER WESTERN SYDNEY EMPLOYMENT AREA Draft STRUCTURE PLAN (WSEA)**

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this planning proposal. Whilst I agree with the need to deliver strategic and strong long-term planning proposals to NSW, I cannot see how this plan meets some important objectives for the long-term ecological sustainability of the environment we depend on for our children and their future health. Irreversible losses of riparian and their linked terrestrial ecosystems, food production areas, and damage to the health of the Hawkesbury River and its productivity are all consequential on this proposal.

The aims of the WSEA are stated as having the potential to shape Sydney's future, boost the economy and provide jobs closer to home. Its development will be undertaken over a large area (<10700 ha) of several sections of Penrith, Blacktown, Fairfield, Liverpool Council and Campbelltown LGAs. It is also impinging on the foothills of the Greater Blue Mts World Heritage Area and its main river system: the Hawkesbury-Nepean.

I have lived in the Hawkesbury area for over 40 years. As a scientist, member of several environment conservation groups and as a teacher of Natural Resource Management (TAFE) for several years, I have strong concerns on which to object to the main core aims and development of the draft plan.

**1. This development will irreversibly affect the Cumberland Plain Woodland system** (listed as Critically Endangered) and the **Hawkesbury-Nepean River catchment** through further fragmentation for transport corridors and industry. The desktop study carried out by EcoLogical MUST be followed by an extensive series of surveys and further consultation with natural management agencies both at State and Government levels as well as internationally in the case of migratory species and the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

**2. This development will also irreversibly damage the extensive and significant floodplain system:** it is stated that there will be "effective utilisation of floodplain land". This in my view is taken to mean that floodplain land **WILL** be developed to support the employment lands (transport corridors, industrial hubs) and will not be maintained as exempt from hardening. Planning should reflect the need to protect water quality and waterways as natural resources, and maintain floodplain health, including wetlands. Floodplains are an essential part of a catchments ecosystem process. The ecological values they encompass and the significance of the habitats they provide is extremely important for our native species. It has become more and more recognised that there is interdependence between the health of a river and its floodplain and the periodic flooding that maintains the

connection between the two. Waterways and their connecting wetlands and floodplains provide substantial areas of habitat for out native flora and fauna; they move food sources through the system and allow for the migration and emigration of aquatic animals– often a critical factor in the survival of many native species.

3. No reference appears to have been made to the **need to retain the very significant areas of land currently zoned as rural or rural-residential over 50 ha in size for their agricultural productivity**. This land has potentially more significance for the future of Sydney’s food production than as industry areas and transport networks. Employment in food productivity is a key issue for current and future youth of the area, especially in relation to the floodplain areas; and would also maintain greater levels of health for most. As a community, we need to **consider resilience to climate change (not just reduction in travel to work, but reduction in food miles) as key issues**.

4. **It appears that the major areas of employment will continue to be warehousing and logistics**. It is sad that western Sydney communities are still being seen as the lowest-skilled workers. Manufacturing and trade skills are apparently not considered in this outlier of Sydney. Instead it is an import-export driven situation when it can be seen that consumption –driven economy is already seriously failing internationally! The lower health statistics of this area will continue to remain that.

## CONCLUSION

As in the White Paper currently under review, this plan gives **greater importance to economic growth and efficient decision-making and provides for orderly development and economic use; rather than focusing on ecologically sustainable development**. It fails not just on environmental grounds, in my view, but also on social grounds through failure to consider the long-term health of the western Sydney community. In the absence of a focus on ecologically sustainable development, it is likely that intergenerational equity, the precautionary principle and other environmental benefits will be outweighed by perceived public benefit in economic and social terms. The aims of regional plans should be healthy lifestyles, environmental benefits and socially inclusive communities. This plan does not do more than indicate growth for economic development which may well benefit developers at the expense of the community, rather than its public benefit!

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