

TO whom it may Concern,

I welcome the opportunity to comment on the Draft Hunter Regional Plan, as a concerned resident and an Environmental and Community Advocate.

My submission will cover:

Goal one: Grow Australia's next major city

Principle 3: The NSW government states it identifies with a city wide transport network that improves public transport, walking and cycling options.

I support all transport options that improves sustainable connectivity not only in the Hunter City but the Hunter Hinterland including more purposed built shared bicycle/walk trails; promotes active transport modes that promote health benefits, reduces air pollution, noise pollution and protects the natural environment; and offers tourist opportunities and sustainable economic growth. This includes more shared bicycle/walk trails in the west side of Lake Macquarie.

I support public transport options that promotes connectivity between communities, supports the growing aging population, assists in employment opportunities and sustainable economic growth, improves air quality, and reduces congestion on the roads.

Goal 2: Grow the Largest Regional Economy in Australia:

I supports the investment of renewable energies projects at a large scale including wind solar and geothermal. I support the divestment of new coalmines and projects and that of Coal Seam Gas.

I support the investment of primary industries, and the services and tourism industry, including increasing biosecurity measures. I support the injection of funds into our public education as well as the research and resource that support our education system.

Goal 3 -Protect and Connect Natural Environments

Direction 3.1 Protect the natural environment and biodiversity.

While I applaud all actions that promote the protection and enhancement of the Hunter's natural environment, including biodiversity and connectivity, I am surprised that the west Lake Macquarie Area has not been acknowledged in this Plan. There area was acknowledged in the Hunter Regional Conservation Plan (2009, p. 32) and was considered the next high priority by the NSW Government. While the Draft Hunter Regional Plan acknowledges that not all areas of high environmental value has been mentioned, Figure 11(p46-47) recognises the High Environmental Value of the area.

Action 3.1.1 states – “Improve the quality of and access to information relating to high environmental values and use this information to avoid, minimise and mitigate the impacts of development on significant environmental assets”. *Why has the west Lake Macquarie area been omitted in the Draft Regional Plan?*

I strongly suggest that the west Lake Macquarie area bushland, including the Proposed Awaba State Conservation Area, be acknowledged and planned for in the Draft Hunter Regional Plan. It is an important wildlife corridor and habitat for threatened species such as the Spotted-Tailed Quoll, Squirrel Glider, Regent Honeyeater, Swift Parrot, Powerful Owl, Masked Owl, Sooty Owl, Grey-Headed Flying Foxes and Tetratheca junceae. It provides an important wildlife corridor from the Watagan Mountains to Lake Macquarie State Conservation Area.

I understand from the OEH that the area has competing land use values however underground mining is allowed in State Conservation Areas and open-cut mining is prohibited in the area. The coal industry is no longer as strong as it used to be. The energy plant at Eraring has also a limited life and Origin Energy is exploring alternative power generation. Most of the land is Crown land and a parcel of land is now owned by LMCC. May I suggest that at least Crown land around LMCC land (DP1166295, DP755207 and DP1149082) be gazetted as Conservation Area?

Goal 4 – Support Robust Regional Communities.

Action 4:1:1 – Investigate demand for and options to accommodate long-term housing growth in regional towns and villages -working with Council to review planning controls and encourages appropriate medium density housing in appropriate areas.

I support sustainable management of urban growth areas and utilising local retail precincts.

This includes development that:

protects the environment, promoting wildlife corridors and wildlife overpasses over transport corridors;

provide necessary and appropriate infrastructure (including health facilities) within communities;

provide street trees, and open green spaces to offset heat island effects and provide recreational spaces;

has a height restriction of four storeys in medium density housing developments;

promote active transport such as cycling, walking and public transport;

promotes local retail precincts via active transport and infrastructure;

uses infill and brown field spaces appropriately for housing development;

promotes community engagement;

offers affordable housing options for lower income and aged residents.

Yours sincerely

Robyn Charlton