

To Draft Hunter Regional Plan

Submission

24th February, 2016

Dear Panel,

Through no fault of the writers of the 'Draft Hunter Regional Plan', tourism to and through the Dungog Shire is grossly under-represented in the Draft Plan, partly because previously the Shire saw itself as a mainly cattle-breeding, dairying and timber-getting shire. However, these industries are static, diminished or gone, and the tourist potential for Dungog is growing but largely untapped and unrecognised by signs, websites, maps etc of the Hunter.

The potential can be summarised as follows:

- 1. No minerals:** Dungog Shire, having no mineral deposits, has retained its totally fresh country flavour throughout.
- 2. Ideal Event Town:** The town of Dungog is becoming something of an events town, with all features within walking distance, and capable, so far, of holding events up to 14,000 people.
- 3. The Common:** The 600 acre English-style Common on the edge of the town is ideal for hiking, cycling, bike riding, horse riding in a safe environment, with huge natural amphitheatres for large-scale events.
- 4. Nearest point to Sydney:** Dungog is the *nearest departure point to Sydney for access to the Barrington Tops National Park*, Dungog being only 2.5 hour drive from Sydney. From Dungog walks such as the Blue Gum Loop Walk and the Jerusalem Creek Walk, to mention just a couple, consist of magnificent remnants of the the Gondwana Rainforests of pre-history, preserved in their natural state. In addition, the train link from Sydney to Dungog town is around 3.5 hours direct and allows easy access for the non-driver.
- 5. 'Horseshoe Drive'/'Gondwana Drive':** An underdeveloped Tourist Drive (from the perspective of signage) is what has been called the Horseshoe or Gondwana Drive. This leaves the highway in the Raymond Terrace area, passing through Clarence Town, Dungog, Gresford, Vacy, Paterson and joins the New England Highway in the Maitland area (or vice versa). The drive can be achieved in a day or a month, depending on the activities which bring the tourists to the area. Both Gresford and Dungog are stepping-off points to the Gondwana Forests and the road between these two towns, rarely shown on maps as a tourist road, is arguably the most scenic road in the Hunter Valley.
- 6. Potential:** Being underdeveloped, this area has the greatest potential of all for the greater

development of tourism in the Hunter Region, but it is necessary to give it more prominence in general literature of the region, as well as an improvement in internal strategies.

7. Dungog Shire (PAW River Valleys) Tourism Strategy and Destination Management

Plan: Up until now, the Dungog people had depended on Hunter Tourism for inclusion in the Hunter Tourism Destination Management Plan. This resulted in almost no mention of Dungog at all, probably because of a lack of 'push' by Dungog. However, please find here also another attachment, a copy of the just approved Destination Management Plan and Tourism Strategy for Dungog Shire, the result of the tourism community coming together to kick-start tourism in Dungog Shire - the Paterson, Allyn and Williams River (PAW) Valleys, which run together into the Hunter River. (This, by the way, is independent of any outcome of the current amalgamation proposals). The Council this month approved their involvement in the Strategy, and to change their funding priorities to accommodate the plan.

On Behalf of the Tourism Advisory Committee Working Group, a 355 committee of the Dungog Shire, consisting of both Councillors and members of the Tourism Industry and the Dungog and District Chamber of Commerce, I request that you give further consideration to the Action 2.2.2 in the Draft Hunter Tourism Plan to give more prominence to the potential of enhancing tourism infrastructure in the Dungog Shire, namely, the drive mentioned above, along with others already mentioned, "The Lakes Way, Bucketts Way, Nelson Bay Road and Wine Country Drive".

Kind Regards

Nancy Knudsen

Chair

355 Committee Tourism Advisory Committee Tourism Strategy Working Group

Dungog Shire.