

SLOW FOOD HUNTER VALLEY INC SUBMISION TO THE HUNTER REGIONAL PLAN

Who Are We?

Slow Food Hunter Valley Inc. is part of the global slow food movement. Slow Food founded in 1989 is a grassroots member organisation that works to save the food system. We believe that everyone has a right to Good Clean & Fair Food.

Our approach is based on a philosophy of food that is defined by three interconnected principles: **good, clean and fair.**

- **GOOD:** quality, flavoursome and healthy food
- **CLEAN:** production that does not harm the environment
- **FAIR:** accessible prices for consumers and fair conditions and pay for producers

MAIN PURPOSE FOR SUBMISSION:

We would like included a recognition of the food producers and growers who can supply the food requirements in the Hunter region as a vital part of regionality, gastronomy and food security.

Our Input

1. **Population is expected to double to 750,000 and an increase of 60,000 households. We see an increasing need to grow good, clean and fair food that is available locally. We therefore wish to see included in the plan:**
 - Exclusion zones for the preservation of current farming and potential farming land for food production
 - Food hubs created so that small scale farmers and producers can sell their produce direct to the market.
 - identify new farming land to produce more food for the projected growth in population
 - buffer zones around farms so that pollution on farms is minimised from the impact of building and occupation;
 - Restrictions on state government approvals on "Seniors developments" that utilise land viable for farming.
 - fair land rates for farmers as land values increase around farming land so that they can remain viable;
 - strict environmental controls on polluters so that farmers are able to produce food free of toxins;
 - Clean waterways policy so that the lifeblood of farms and people can be maintained.

2. The Hunter with its rich soils has long been regarded as a major food bowl. It has history, tradition and capacity to the supply of food to the region should be recognised in the plan:

- Farming of vegetables, fruit, dairy, meat in all its forms, grains, edible oils, provides food diversity, food security, employment and benefits in the food supply chain.
- We believe that the production of food must be considered alongside viticulture, equine and oyster industries.(As much as we like wine and oysters, they cannot provide the diversity our diet needs) The same could be said of the equine industry;
- A sustainable seafood industry should also be recognised along with the oyster industry.

3. The economic outlook of our region in the plan is based on existing economies continuing well into the future. We see that this approach is short sighted and indeed is a plan for the past, not the future. The use of fossil fuels for energy production is forecast to decline not expand and this could leave our regional economy in decline if we do not plan properly.

Mining has changed the environment in the Hunter Valley. The effects of modified topographies, changed and contaminated waterways, increased airborne contaminants, noise level increase, changes to lifestyles, structures and infrastructure are the legacy of mining in this region.

- renewable energy should be given greater prominence in the plan;
- the Hunter has been a major energy region and there is an opportunity for this to continue:
- the establishment of renewable manufacturing centres could drive growth:
- these centres could be supported by coal companies as a way for their existence into the future;
- the manufacture, installing and maintenance of renewable components could increase employment opportunities particularly in towns with unemployed miners.
- mining companies who established and operate mines be held responsible for restoring their intrusions on the environment and not pass on this responsibility to subsequent owners;
- NSW State Government collects and holds a surety or bond(as for a tenant renting a property) from mining companies to be returned when strict regeneration of environment is completed;

- the amount of this bond to be set by an independent body, but should be substantial enough to cover regeneration costs which could be borne by taxpayers should companies default;
- Mining sites should be regenerated to pre-mining levels within a strict time limit.

4. Development land for housing and infrastructure will increase rapidly. Human settlement has inevitably had an impact on landscapes and we recognise that this will continue at greater rates. We note that the plan includes mention of environments, habitat and biodiversity and provisions for human impact on these. We also recognise that there will advantaged and disadvantaged in any development.

- we are opposed to offset and banking schemes as these can lead to manipulation of environments, but recognise there has to be strategies to protect environmental and human interests;
- any such schemes should be open to public scrutiny and evaluation;
- the rights of farmers to grow and produce food is paramount;
- Development should planned to suit each separate and unique environment.

Concluding Statement

We believe that the draft Hunter Plan does not take into account the diverse food, farming and rural industries in the Hunter Valley.

We recommend a uniform recording system to map the food producing farms in the region and that development and resource objectives do not impede these areas.

We believe that a food mapping system will enable the development of a regionality (e.g.:Orange), local cuisines due to its proximity to Australia's biggest city – Sydney.

We object to the terminology of Natural environment and Resource sector in the one sentence when the references in the report are only towards mining and not AGRICULTURE.

We would like the acknowledgement of the farming sector as a vital part of the economic mix.

We recommend that the plan takes into account the importance of Food tourism which can be combined with wine and oysters to create regionality and contribute heavily to job growth.

In essence we believe the plan is narrow and short-sighted in its economic outlook through its stated dependence on coal and emerging coal seam gas. The future of these commodities will be determined by forces outside the Hunter. Planners would do well for this region by researching and acknowledging progressive worldwide diversifying economies.

We believe that food grown in the hunter region provides food security and food biodiversity and can enable the growth of employment.

We present our views for this region in good faith and thank you for your consideration.

Slow Food Hunter Valley Inc

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