

Climate Change / Fossil Fuels / Food Resources

COMMENTS ON

Draft Central Coast Regional Plan

By R Weller (of Somersby)

We disagree with the content of the Plan on the following points:

1) CLIMATE CHANGE

The plan does not include sufficient information regarding either the impacts or the adaptation needed to cope with the impacts of climate change. Such impacts include:

- a) Sea Level Rise – around 1m by 2100 and 4m or more by 2200.
- b) Increased Temperatures – could influence the need for hospitals and buffer zones for bushfire protection.
- c) Decreased use of fossil fuels – by 2050 we essentially need to be a low carbon economy with zero use of coal, oil and gas.
- d) Increased incidence of floods – more intense rainfall will inundate housing in low-lying areas.
- e) Increased incidence of drought – source of water will be an issue of increasingly critical importance. As will production of food which relies on availability of water.

Sea level rise will seriously impact low lying land in the coming decades. In particular, land around the waterfront of Gosford and the foreshores of Tuggerah Lake will be at risk of inundation and erosion. As the sea level rises further towards the next century, whole suburbs will be at risk. Any new areas being developed at this time should take this future into account.

Flooding also should be taken into account by siting new housing areas above potential flood zones. Areas around Wyong and Warnervale that are flood prone should be excised out of the potential development zones. Fragmentation of higher ground areas by inundation/flooding of lower areas between is highly likely.

The development zones around both Gosford and Wyong clearly include areas where impacts are going to be high. Many existing housing areas will need to be moved as hazards increase. It is madness to throw large amounts of capital into these areas when such investments will be lost in the future.

Development should be directed towards zones where sea level rise and flooding are not a risk. The map on p. 52 must be modified to include areas at risk of potential flooding from catchment rainfall and inundation due to sea level rise. Alternatively, include an additional map showing these and other hazards that will constrain development with some information on how mitigation measures that might be used.

2) FOOD AND WATER RESOURCES:

The plan does not include sufficient protection for our food and water producing areas. These are to become increasingly more important as temperatures rise.

For example, the mountain plateau area is a vital source of water resources. 50% of the central coast water supply comes from ground water in the plateau area seeping into our creek system. These areas are not protected from inappropriate land use such as sand mining.

Agricultural and horticultural production is also very important on the plateau. This area is not included on the p. 42 map as valuable agricultural land. The value of this area for food production is very high with a micro-climate that is very supportive of horticulture and a ready irrigation source in the mountain's ground water reserves. It is a well known fact that the area has very good ground water, clean to drink, plentiful in supply (even in drought) and easily used for irrigation on the sandy soils.

Natural springs and bores up to 120m deep provide a very useful water supply for farmers.

The Wyong River is an important water source for farming and for drinking water. No account has been taken of the need to protect this resource in allowing mining industry under the Wyong valley.

3) FOSSIL FUEL MINING:

Given the need to reduce our emissions radically by 2050, the inclusion of coal mining and coal seam gas in the plan appears to be extremely short sighted. To stay below the 2 degree guard rail for global warming, opening of any new fossil fuel extraction (coal, oil or gas) must be strongly discouraged or even banned. Existing mines must be run down so that they cease production sometime in the next 20 years.

Without these measures (undertaken here and elsewhere round the globe) warming is likely to continue well past 2 degrees (we are already at 1 degree and likely to reach 1.5 degrees within the next 15-20 years). The consequences of a rise of 3 or 4 degrees are drastic (e.g. mass extinction; sea level rise of many metres). The Paris meeting decided that 2 degrees should not be breached for very good reasons.

Marking potential coal mining areas on the p. 45 map is a clear signal that mining (including new mining) is expected to occur on the Central Coast and is simply an encouragement to multinational companies to try for it. It would be a mistake to spend money on trying to develop these industries further when the Paris agreement clearly indicates that allowing such mining would be a mistake that would have to be reversed in the future at great cost to the community. It would be better simply to avoid beginning such business.

4) EXTRACTIVE AREAS ON THE MOUNTAIN PLATEAU:

The map on p. 45 continues the mistake of placing the entire mountain plateau into extractive industries. When are we to be free of this idea that the plateau is only of use for mining. The area produces millions of dollars of produce per year including beef, chickens, eggs, fruit, vegetables, flowers, etc. as well as being a horse breeding area. Tourism is also a high value business on the plateau with arts and crafts, farm stay, eco-tourism and businesses such as astronomy and paint-ball.

Digging large holes in the mountain plateau destroys the country, drains the ground water and removes any future productivity of the land. This change is permanent – the water will never be returned, the land is gone and I am not aware of a single mine that has been rehabilitated sufficiently to return the land to its former productivity. Compare this to farming – it provides the basic need of the community for food, it continues indefinitely into the future (does not wreck the land for future uses) and provides an intimate link between humanity and nature (e.g. tourism).