

CCPCC Submission on the Draft Central Coast Regional Plan

The Central Coast Plateau (CCP) Sub Region has long been *off the radar* as far as planning for sustainable development for food production and associated business interests, caught in a mindset by both Gosford City and Wyong Councils planners that *nothing happened* west of the M1.

Members of several organisations, including the Central Coast Plateau Chamber of Commerce (CCPCC) and CC Branch of NSW Farmers, were invited and met with, a number of government agencies, including DPI and DPE in October, 2014 to progress an agribusiness strategy for the Central Coast.

It was disappointing to discover that the intensive discussion outcomes from this forum were basically ignored in the current Draft Central Coast Regional Plan and *Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land* appointed to the Narara, Yarramalong & Dooralong Valleys, areas which were lost to mainstream food production a number of decades ago, overtaken by suburban, rural residential and industrial development.

We had discussed, in great depth, the broad scope of agribusiness production currently located on the CCP which include stone fruit, avocado, nursery, vegetable, cut flowers, chicken meat and beef production with a number of emerging industries such as horse spelling. While citrus, once a mainstay of the region, has experienced a small downturn in the past few decades (the forgotten years), when small, uneconomical units were often chosen by life stylers, it has been more than replaced by one of the state's largest poultry meat (currently worth over \$200m/year to the Central Coast) and avocado production regions.

Jobs creation and retention was discussed along with the need to provide a planning option to provide accommodation for seasonal and some permanent workers – size restricted RU5 (village) zones at Peats Ridge, Kulnura and Mangrove Mountain where *village* style resources already exist. To avoid village sprawl akin to the urban sprawl, currently the concern of many Sydney Basin councils, TDRs (Transferable Development Rights) might be explored as an innovative way to contain development without the loss of property capital gains. This last concept is not currently utilised in Australia although Brisbane has used it as a tool to protect heritage property. I have attached a document I provided to a State Development Committee in 2009.

We noted that RU4 has been omitted from the plan. This would allow smaller primary production units to evolve giving new, and potentially younger, farmers to invest with confidence in intensive agriculture.

While the CCPCC has been active in promoting the area west of the M1 to all levels of government very little recognition has been achieved by state or local government to affirm in real terms the potential food production value of the Central Coast Plateau Region. This assumption is borne out by the release of the last, and we are led to believe, final *Draft Central Coast Regional Plan*, set to be finalised in 2016

Attached to this submission are a further three papers which focus on the economic, tourism and poultry meat potential development for the Central Coast Plateau. Due to financial constraints and time these papers are not as current as they should be; however all of them predict that the CCP has even greater food production benefits into the future than at present, especially taking into account R & D into greenhouse and intensive agriculture.

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As this meeting was directly targeting the development potential of agriculture we did not touch on the potential value of agri tourism which is definitely on the radar for the Chamber of Commerce.

The CCPCC is working on an inter regional basis with the Wollombi Valley Chamber of Commerce to continue to build a viable harvest trail tourist farm gate food and accommodation experience via the existing *Tourist Route 33*. Both Chambers believe that the proximity to the populations of the Sydney Basin and Central Coast as well as inbound international tourists make the CC Plateau a winner in the short stay, day or weekend, tourism market.

Verbal acknowledgement has been made freely on numerous occasions by local and state politicians on the food production value of the CCP; however we now need it to be translated into the future planned trajectory for the Central Coast Plateau by actually mapping that position. While we have co-existed remarkably well with current extractive industries, an extension of mining across the plateau without due consideration to food production, is not conducive to future potential food drought proofing.

At a further meeting with DPE & DPI we reiterated the value of food production on the CCP and the importance of Australian food production to Australians. We also expressed our disappointment that the draft plan appeared to favour mining on the CC Plateau with no mention of it being a long standing, existing and future source of a huge variety of agricultural productivity.

The future potential to further develop the agricultural food production capacity on the Central Coast Plateau utilising greenhouse and new technological means is endless. We have the right climate, in comparison to many other regions, and the closest proximity, aside from the ever decreasing immediate Sydney Basin, to the largest consumer market in Australia – Sydney, Central Coast, and Newcastle.

With insightful strategic planning for the future, the Central Coast Plateau, given emerging incentives for the future of agriculture in Australia, the CCP can continue to be a major food production region to quarantine our population from predicted food shortages worldwide.

**Lorraine Wilson
Chairman**

