

24 March 2016

General Manager Hunter and Central Coast
Department of Planning and Environment
PO Box 1226
NEWCASTLE NSW 2300

Dear Ms Gibson

Subject: Submission - Draft Central Coast Regional Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Central Coast Regional Plan.

Lake Macquarie City Council (LMCC) recognises the importance of regional-scale strategic land use planning and supports the Department's efforts in the preparation of new regional plans across the state.

The draft Central Coast Regional Plan applies to the Local Government Areas of Gosford and Wyong. The City of Lake Macquarie adjoins Wyong Shire to the North, and contains communities, in particular Wyee, which have strong links to the Central Coast. Consequently, aspects of the draft Central Coast Regional Plan are of direct relevance to LMCC.

The following submission has been prepared by LMCC staff for the Department's consideration.

General remarks

This project, as with the other regional plans, is an opportunity for the Department to consider the future role of the region within a wider context. To this end, the Plan should be clearer on how the Central Coast relates to the Sydney metropolitan area and the proposed "Hunter City" metropolitan area and hinterland.

Overall, the draft Plan provides relatively little specific guidance for land use planning at the local level, but instead re-states existing plans and policies and contains generic planning principles. Economic development appears to be a higher priority in the draft plan than the protection of natural infrastructure within the region. This imbalance should be addressed.

The Plan should provide stronger guidance in relation to:

- accessibility and transport objectives, especially measures to reduce long-term road congestion;
- long-term protection of air quality and mitigation of the effects of urban development on climate change;
- the transition to cleaner energy and the phasing out of local coal-fired power stations and associated coal infrastructure, including identifying these sites for strategic investigation for other land use opportunities.

- floodplain risk management – specifically the need to incorporate sea level rise in flood planning for properties adjoining Lake Macquarie and other tidal waterways on the Central Coast.

North Wyong Shire

The development of the Warnervale town centre and surrounding proposed urban areas will generate pressure for urban growth in a wider area and increase traffic congestion and accessibility problems if an integrated transport and land use planning focus is not pursued.

Wyee and Morisset are both established communities with existing railway stations and services and have considerable scope for urban expansion. Morisset is particularly well placed to play a greater role as a strategic centre for southern Lake Macquarie and the northern part of Wyong Shire, due to its robust urban fabric, ready motorway access, growing industrial area and established social infrastructure and public facilities.

Some areas identified for urban expansion or investigation in the north of Wyong Shire have high biodiversity values and provide regional biodiversity connectivity. The Plan should acknowledge biodiversity corridors already recognised within environmental zones in Lake Macquarie Local Environmental Plan 2014 and protect and enhance linking corridors within the Vales Point Power Station, to Olney State Forest, and to west Lake Macquarie and the Wallarah Peninsula.

Biodiversity Considerations

Action 1.6.2 is ‘to secure regional wildlife corridors and offset the biodiversity impacts of new development’. It is proposed that this action should:

- refer to “*biodiversity corridors*” rather than “*wildlife corridors*”,
- include an additional statement to ensure that the Biodiversity Offset Strategy in northern Wyong can be extended to include Lake Macquarie.
- refer to the need to investigate and establish suitable conservation reserves to protect biodiversity in perpetuity in the area, including the Awaba Conservation Area.

Figure 10 should be redrawn to more accurately reflect natural biodiversity values and actual connectivity. The map implies that Ourimbah State Forest is a key centre for linking regional biodiversity, but this is not the case. Specifically, this map should show all land with biodiversity values within the region and adjoining regions, and present connectivity and corridors in a more realistic way. It should recognise the importance of north – south migration of key species including many listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. The current map and its key is unhelpful in either representing biodiversity values, or in assisting future planning for the establishment of conservation reserves, minimising development impacts, or determining biodiversity offsets.

Regional green corridors connecting the Central Coast and Lake Macquarie should be recognised in the Plan as shown in *Attachment 1* to this submission. Some of these corridor links are significant because they include substantial areas of native habitat that warrants protection.

The Plan should support preservation of vegetation/environmental corridors and areas for wetland retreat due to climate change-induced sea level rise.

Warnervale Airport

Appropriately, the draft Plan makes no mention of any new or upgraded airport for the Central Coast. Nonetheless, Council is aware that Wyong Shire Council, having abandoned plans for a new airport at Kiar Ridge, now intends to undertake major upgrades to the existing Warnervale Aerodrome at Sparks Road, including an extension to the runway, to turn it into a regional airport with the capacity for 450,000 passenger movements¹. Some LMCC residents have significant concerns with this proposal and its potential impacts on nearby communities. LMCC does not consider it appropriate for the Plan to endorse this proposal without prior detailed investigations and consultation with LMCC, as part of a broad strategic investigation that clearly demonstrates the implications for existing or proposed development in the vicinity, including at Wyee. It is noted that any extension of the runway beyond 1200 metres requires ministerial approval under the Warnervale Airport (Restrictions) Act 1996. That legislation also requires an independent review to be carried out in relation to the proposal, as well as a noise study that involves consultation with all residents within a 7.5 kilometre radius of any runway or proposed runway.

Cross Council boundary collaboration

The draft Plan contains an Action 1.6.3 to “*support further cross-council boundary collaboration*”. While LMCC supports the sentiment of this action, the Plan should be more specific in terms of what it means, and identify the mechanisms for how it is to be achieved.

Should you require further information, please contact me on 4921 0416.

Yours faithfully



Andrew Donald
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Integrated Planning Department

¹ www.wyong.nsw.gov.au/about-council/council-news/media-releases-2015/regional-airport-to-take-off

Attachment 1 – Marked up Figure 10 from draft CCRP

