

22 March 2016

The Secretary
Draft Central Coast Regional Plan
P.O. Box 1148
GOSFORD, NSW 2250

Dear Sir,

DRAFT CENTRAL COAST REGIONAL PLAN

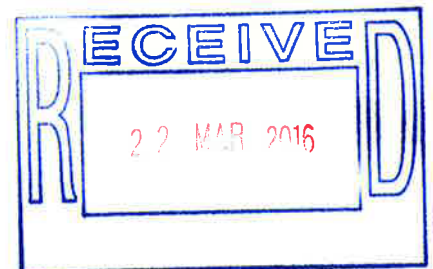
I have been living on the Central Coast, in retirement, for just a year and a half. During my working life as a survey draftsman, I was with the NSW Lands Department, the Papua New Guinea Lands Department, the National Capital Development Commission in Canberra, and the Northern Territory Lands Department in Darwin. As a retiree and before moving to Gosford, I assisted the Litchfield Council (which covered the outskirts of Darwin) with land administration and town planning advice. I completed the Land and Engineering Survey Draftsman Certificate at the Sydney Technical College at the start of my career, and later, studied for the Associate Diploma in Public Administration at what is now the Charles Darwin University in Darwin. As can be appreciated, various aspects of land, survey, and property administration, minor engineering matters and town planning issues have crossed my path all through my life.

In 1969, I purchased my block of land at Narara, with the distinct understanding that as Gosford was halfway between Sydney and Newcastle, massive development would see the Gosford area become the 'next big thing'. In 1974, I had an investment house built on the block, and moved on with my life.

But what a disappointment it has been. I continue to now read in the local papers the same type of articles I read in 1969, of the wonderful developments which are about to take place in Gosford over the next decade... Perhaps people will begin to believe it when cranes cover the skyline...

Upon my arrival here, I enquired as to why the infrastructure in the Gosford area was so poor. I was told that as NSW is so Sydney-centric, all other parts of the State suffer badly – unless they have Parliamentary representatives who care about their areas and strongly 'push' for necessary infrastructure projects to be carried out. I was also informed that at the time I arrived, the local representatives in the NSW Parliament were found by an anti-corruption Commission to be less than squeaky-clean. Hence, nothing was happening. What chance has the place got when these sort of things are going on.

So maybe, with new representatives, we are now entering a new era. Perhaps somebody out there may actually take a bit of notice of your proposed Central Coast Regional Plan – and all the previous development reports which have been put together over the past 40 years (I can recall many years ago, reading an excellent Planning report on the Central Coast, put together by the Cities Commission during the Whitlam era). And do something about it.



So, to the matter at hand...

Your Draft report makes for interesting reading, but I would suggest the following matters and projects which I have identified in the short time I have been here could also be given some consideration for inclusion in your final report....

MAIN ROAD CORNERS:

The sad thing about the Gosford area, infrastructure-wise, is the fact that all the surveys of the developed areas were carried out in the early 1900's days of horse and dray, and a long time before the days of Town Planners. Although the square street corners provided in the subdivisions at that time were just fine for horse-drawn vehicles, it is now painful to see very large B-doubles and other long wheel-base delivery trucks (and even 'normal' buses) struggle – often dangerously - to get around many (most) corners in the built-up areas in the City. Sadly, many (most) buildings on the corners have been built right up to property street boundary lines.

What is now needed is for someone to have a good look at the situation, identify those corners which need widening to cope with modern traffic requirements (to include provision for future Canberra-style articulated 'bendy-buses' on designated routes), design appropriate left-turn warrants or kerb-lines, acquire (compulsorily, if necessary) appropriate areas from the land titles, rebuild the affected buildings on the new boundaries, and to reconstruct the kerb-lines and footpaths.

THE MESS AT HOLGATE:

It does not need to be said that the amount of traffic from Lisarow to Erina Heights passing the Holgate Primary School is now 'out of control'. An official traffic count carried out in front of the school last year would give you the actual numbers, which the Holgate locals have been screaming about ever since I arrived here.

Consequently, I am amazed that there is absolutely no mention of doing anything about this in your report, as it is blindingly obvious that a safe direct main road (ie 70 - 80 kph) is required between Lisarow and Erina Heights, bypassing the school.

Accidents often happen on this heavily-used existing 'goat-track'. The running off the dreadful and dangerous Paroo Road down an embankment by a lady last year being just one case in point... Again, this mess is all tied up with the fact that the Holgate area was surveyed early last Century (with the road reserves following existing bullock tracks, put in when trees were being cut down to clear agricultural land), and poor decision making with respect to the 'improvement' of the main road(s) in the intervening years.

Someone has got to take the lead to clean up this mess... My suggestions, which I trust will be given a bit of consideration, follow:

The Arundel Road bridge:

This would have to be the first cab off the rank. Why good money was spent on making Carlton Road suitable for heavy through traffic, instead of designing and constructing a two-lane (and bike lanes) flood-free bridge over the Erina Creek on Arundel Road from the Milina Road intersection directly to the Central Coast Highway at Erina Heights, beggars understanding. To provide just a narrow wooden pedestrian/bicycle bridge across the creek on Arundel Road was just a waste of money.

Reports are now available which show the areas affected by flooding, and these are available at the Gosford City Library.

It is not all that hard to deal with this part of the project, as the public road reserve is already there. The only dramas will be the removal of the large trees which lie within the road reserve on the Erina side of the creek, and the provision of a large roundabout – to cope with B-doubles and semi-trailers – at the Arundel Road-Milina Road – Wattle Tree Road intersection.

So, that takes care of the southern part of the Lisarow-Erina Heights link (which is the easy part).

Holgate by-pass Road:

The rest of the two-lane link road - the 3.5 km from Bishendens Road to the northern end of Talbingo Road -, and then by Talbingo Road south to link in with Wattle Tree Road just north of the Katandra Road intersection, will be a most interesting design and construction exercise. Existing curves will need to be straightened (ie mountainsides pared back to provide 500 metre + centerline radius curves), and bridges, culverts, and tunnels will probably need to be built.

Land titles will be affected by all this, but hopefully, a suitable road alignment within a 30 m wide road reserve can be determined, which does not unduly affect existing buildings.

The construction of the Arundel Road bridge should be given consideration asap. However, the Holgate bypass may, due to the difficult terrain, have to be a long-term project. With the construction of the Arundel Road bridge, Carlton Road could well be closed off at the Central Coast Highway end with a cul-de-sac. As the Carlton Road area is virtually across the road from the Erina Shopping Precinct, there would be a good case for all the flood-free area off Carlton Road to be rezoned and resubdivided for medium and/or high density housing, with perhaps, market gardens being established on the flood plain.

KINCUMBER CREEK BRIDGE:

It is a given that every Saturday morning, slow-moving traffic is bumper-to-bumper along Empire Bay Drive from the Kincumber Nautical Village to the roundabout at Mitre 10 (the Scenic Road intersection). Again, this section of road is clearly along the route of an original bullock track. Although I am aware of complaints about this, nothing has happened in the year-and-a half I have been here (fortunately, I travel *against* the traffic to St Huberts Island each Saturday morning to visit my cousin). I have no doubt the situation is the same on school-days...

So, for what it is worth, how about building a two-lane arterial standard road over a flood-free bridge across the Kincumber Creek, northerly from the northern entrance (exit ?) of the Kincumber Nautical Village to link up with the southern end of Gunya Road, to traffic lights at Avoca Drive (which is slated to be reconstructed through Kincumber shortly). Bilinga Road could be extended to meet up with the new road.

With a bit of luck, such a road pattern will 'sort out' the mess at the Scenic Road intersection.

DUNLOP HILL TUNNEL:

With Avoca Drive to be reconstructed east of Algona Avenue, one can only hope that as part of that, a road tunnel under Dunlop Hill on Avoca Drive from the Greenway entrance to Algona Avenue is on the books as a long-term project (ie within the 20 year period covered by your proposed Regional Plan).

BLACKWALL MOUNTAIN TUNNEL AND BLACKWALL POINT BOAT RAMP DEVELOPMENT:

I could not believe it when confronted with a 25 kph bend in the main arterial Blackwall Road -Memorial Drive from Woy Woy, as it loops around the western end of the Blackwall Mountain along the original horse and dray track. The year now is 2016, not 1900....And a 25 kph bend in a main arterial road in 2016, is just ridiculous.

I am halfway through preparing a submission to the Gosford Council / Roads and Maritime Services Department, calling for the construction of a 220 m road tunnel linking the Woy Woy end of Blackwall Road, and Memorial Avenue, by a 500 m radius curve beneath (through) the mountain. This proposal brings up quite a lot of issues, which I will address in my submission. One issue is the rock removed from the tunnel, being used to reclaim part of Brisbane Water at Blackwall Point (a mere 500 m away) to provide a brand-new modern design boat ramp and trailer-boat parking area to replace the 'absolutely hopeless' existing ramp and parking area. Another issue is the provision of two or three new plots of flat serviced land for development in the area, by formally closing parts of the existing public road reserves rendered unnecessary by the project. My suggested plan is to auction the blocks to the highest bidder (following decisions as to what should be placed on the blocks), in order to partially offset the cost of digging out the tunnel.

The proposal is not all that difficult to implement. Modern equipment is now able to chew through rock like it is soft butter (note the tunnels being dug for the northwest rail link), and there is only one private landowner to deal with (all the rest of the land is vested in or owned by the Council or the NSW government). However, it will still need someone somewhere to monitor the exercise at all stages to ensure all is done which needs to be done.

UMINA-WOY WOY RAPID TRANSIT ROUTE:

I love Umina, as do the many elderly residents who live in the Umina Beach area. It has a most salubrious shopping precinct, and the beach is just down the road.

However, Woy Woy remains the centre of the World for all Umina and Peninsula residents. There are minimal road connections between the two, and they are all jam - packed with vehicles at all hours of the day. And it is not going to get any better as Umina Mk II is developed (ie the original houses at Umina are ripped down and blocks of Units are built in their place).

My suggestion is that a dedicated rapid bus transit route, perhaps as part of an existing bus route, be established soon along Trafalgar Street, McMasters Road, Welcome Street, across the parkland to Edward Street, Edward Street, and a loop via Victoria Road, Charlton Street, Railway Street (and Woy Woy Station), Blackwall Road

and return via Victoria Road, linking West Street in Umina directly to Woy Woy Station to ensure residents have quick access to the Station and the Shopping Centre.

Rezoning of land within a certain distance of the route to medium density housing could also be considered as part of the exercise (consideration could be given to adopt a policy in the area that medium density housing will only be permitted once two – or more - adjoining allotments are amalgamated, to ensure sufficient on-site ground level car-parking spaces are able to be provided (ie 1.5 spaces per 2 b-r Unit). Possible closure of the ends of roads crossing the route, with culs-de-sac, could also be considered.

ERINA HEIGHTS SUBDIVISION:

Appalling. No other word is suitable to describe the Chewynd-Worthing – Portsmouth Roads ‘goat-track’ from Chiltern Road to the Terrigal Drive intersection at Erina Heights. Access through this area is a disgrace. The whole area – east to Serpentine Road - should be looked at seriously with a view to it being rezoned for suburban development, be completely redesigned by a competent Town Planner, and then built up as a ‘normal’ suburb. With the Erina Shopping Complex next door, it is now time to ‘move on’.

And that is about all I can think of at this time (other than for the dreadful lack of kerbs and gutters in all suburbs. If a policy is ever adopted to put in kerbs and gutters, to bring the Central Coast into the 21st century, it might be just as well for all the ugly power poles on the streets to be removed, and for all electrical, NBN and phone services to be placed underground as part of the work).