
Subject:

FW: Re Draft Central Coast Regional Plan

Dear Wyong Shire Council and Gosford Council (and NSW Planning) CC Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull

Re Draft Proposal Central Coast Regional Plan

It is great to see the level of community input possible in all aspects of NSW decision-making, as we are in a dangerous time in NSW and Australia where decisions for the future must be made carefully. This goes beyond the rush of short-term politicians and the skills of local employees, it should be a time for real national (and local) calm, commonsense and ethical revisioning for the better.

In many ways we in Australia face serious over-development issues as never seen before, with the massive new money and corporate development pushes - not just Chinese - following American models - but without their vast and hardy landscapes. The new generation of elders here now are facing massive challenges to make it right, be carefully engaged, and leaving an ultimate legacy that may approach the stability and sacrifices (if not simple environmental luxury) of what went before.

The Central Coast was once a very special place, and now faces new challenges as the population, climate and education vision (which have not perhaps kept up with wider-thinking global events) is revised. It is a rare landscape, and to get it all wrong would be a tremendous tragedy. To enhance the great natural beauty and richness of the area proudly would be to leave a legacy to be enjoyed for many generations when things calm again.

Much of the region's planning has, let's face it, been tasteless, some areas clearly more unprotected and worse than others.

I have however been impressed by the thought put into this Draft proposal, and wanted to add a few careful thoughts of my own.

The Central Coast could do with a 'softer' Cultural Development Committee of visionary people with no axe to grind (and they are here). We were lucky to have those people in previous generations, and faced with the massive media input and new wave of greed in this nation, it is more important than ever that we have stabilising forces who understand what makes whole nations and societies stable, happy, and rich. It is not just the mere words, or the money: it can be very much the planning and real actions and sensitivity that makes or breaks our lives.

There is a global push by powerful money-oriented vested interests to silence communities and individuals, particularly regarding environmental issues, and if this continues this would be an absolute tragedy for Australia (as it was shockingly for America). In contrast, we also have the 'obsessives', people running on ego and conflict, powered by a deep need for power and money and recognition, also harmful- and bullying. Occasionally, that even comes through wealthy women, newly arrived. We need to really examine, not through the vested interests of commercial radio and TV, or 'survival of the most aggressive' what makes the Central Coast truly rich and unique, and work hard to support, protect and enhance it, for a better more peaceful future.

Some areas here have great communities, and enormously insightful individuals, but they are too rarely truly seen or heard. Sadly this goes now for many parts of Australia, as we are facing never before experienced forces hellbent on ripping up and selling off the landscapes and special green or treasured parts of this endangered and fast-heating nation - with no respect. We must moved with care, tinsel is just that!

I would also suggest for the Central Coast that more work is to be done on indigenous input and voice, and this needs further recognition, healing, listening, sensitivity and understanding. It needs to be done as a priority, before any more land is sold permanently to (a proven unchanged) China. And I am not talking racism here, I am talking

priorities. Canada has made groundbreaking decisions lately in this regard, and they are more stable than we are at present.

Areas of contention need to be addressed and analysed, and all voices TRULY heard before serious decisions are made. The qualifications of the decision-makers may also come into question here, and rightly so in a time of glaring corruption.

Contentious issues that are long overdue for resolution, like the Avoca Cinema debacle that has gone on for 12 years now at the expense of the Hunters, should be resolved with a minimum of fuss and absolute fairness. They have surely paid enough. Avoca died when this incredible cinema closed for six months, and we are as a region in danger of listening to the loudest longest shouters, rather than what is right and in the best interests of the whole region. It is a rare asset that the Hunters have brought to an internationally-envied standard, and we need to take steps to resolve the issues and save it in such a way that the Hunters are not paying endlessly (as they have so far) for the egos and obsessions and blindness of others, to keep it. A heritage order may indeed be the worst action to take, if it means an unviable outcome for a team of fine family hard-workers, who have given years to this amazing icon. I repeat, this attack and delay has gone on long enough.

The environmental protection on all levels on the Coast is a given: the Central Coast's biggest asset IS that, and its climate. To make this another Chinese 'desireable area' (and Byron Bay is recently another new target being aggressively marketed and sold off in a newly aggressive China) would be heartbreaking on all levels, culturally, environmentally, socially - and for the future. The values, habits, goals, agendas, understanding and awareness are just too different for now to bring in a massive avaricious colonising force at this time. Their own international lawyers tell me that they think we are 'dumb' for selling off this nation's best, so cheaply, to a nation that has been teaching its young now for several decades that Australia will soon be theirs! Yes it would bring more money, and in a nation with such outstanding waste patterns and ridiculously high costs we should be simply ashamed. Selling the nation or region off to a parallel culture en masse is an incredibly poor and irreversible short-term idea, and extension of living off all that we found here, without thought. More education needed regarding the end results is needed urgently. TAFE's were essential to our young, and especially here.

The local expertise is now starting to regenerate again with the entry of new thinking, and resident experience and wisdom, added intelligence gazing with new eyes on what is a beautiful but lately somewhat 'looked down on' area. It is our job to keep it wonderful, and expand its true heart.

Sydney is tragically overdeveloped, and most Australians no longer feel it is ours, heartbreaking in one generation. The Central Coast is facing a similar danger approaching with strong money in hand, and we must tread carefully. Many have been bought already. This will NOT serve us.

I support the work of deep thinking with the best interests of this precious land, its future and its young, at heart. Massive shopping centres and never ending franchises make us poor in all ways, and our kids ultimately trapped and unhealthy and deprived of all that went before. They will also be financially enslaved.

The cultures that thrive in Australia are those where people learn to work together for the betterment of all, and without aggression, bullying or corruption. It is worth it to proceed in that fashion.

May history judge this generation of elders with the same respect we feel for the post-war generations (who did not get everything right but had a bloody good shot). We have choices. I say, make Australia a calm and special way to live again, where we can rightly share our good fortune with others, not become part of America or owned by China, but a nation that through ethics on all levels, wins back world respect.

Sincerely

KEY ISSUES

Vision and Goals:

- The principles of ecologically sustainable development (ESD) should be a core part of the vision and goals for the draft Plan.

For example:

- The vision should be amended to include the term "ecologically sustainable" as follows:

The vision for the Central Coast region is to protect the natural environment and to capitalise on its productive lands and resources, highly accessible business locations, and attractive coastal lifestyle to achieve ecologically sustainable economic growth and liveable communities.

- The goals should be amended to:
 - enhance community lifestyles and accelerate housing supply;
 - grow and diversify the regional economy in keeping with the principles of ecologically sustainable development;
 - sustain productive landscapes; and
 - protect and manage the natural and cultural environment.

Failure to provide adequate protection for the environment:

- While the draft Plan does identify areas of high environmental value (Figure 9: Environmental Assets, p 52), it does not provide adequate protection for those areas (e.g. no-go zones and/or clear restrictions on impacting development). The Plan must clearly specify how the identified areas of high environmental value will be protected and enhanced.
- The plan needs to ensure the protection of water, including both surface and groundwater ecosystems.

Coastal Open Space System (COSS)

- The COSS is unique to our region, with Gosford council the only council in NSW to actively acquire and manage bushland as a system of networks to encourage the enhancement and protection of our natural open spaces. The COSS was created in 1984 and council continues to actively purchase identified high nature conservation value land as it becomes available. As at Oct, 2014, 63% of the land (by area) identified for COSS had been acquire by Council. The Regional Plan must articulate a commitment to fully implement the COSS Strategy including mechanisms to ensure the long-term voluntary acquisition of the remaining 37% of land (by area) currently identified for COSS.
- The NSW Government has previously made a commitment to introduce an E5 zone to be applied to COSS lands in public ownership. This must be fully implemented in the Regional Plan with an E5 zone gazetted at the same time that the Regional Plan is finalised.
- The COSS should be used as a model for the entire Central Coast region. The Regional Plan should outline actions to undertake investigations, develop a strategy and maps to carry the COSS forward in Wyong LGA.

Failure to resolve land use conflicts

- The draft Plan identifies a range of land use values including areas of high environmental value (Figure 9: Environmental Assets, p 52), Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land (Figure 7: Selected Primary Industries, p42) and identified and potential mineral resources (Figure 8: Central Coast Mining, p 45). However the draft Plan fails to resolve conflicts between these various uses and defers important strategic planning and impact management to a later stage.
- The draft Plan also leaves the door open for mining in our drinking water catchment. After promises from successive governments, it is now time to rule out mining on the Central Coast - and this should be clearly articulated in the Plan.

Heavy reliance on biodiversity offsetting

- The draft Plan places too high an emphasis on biodiversity offsetting. Biodiversity offsetting is not appropriate in all circumstances.
- The draft Plan must identify 'red flag' areas (e.g. coastal catchments, areas of endangered ecological communities or threatened species habitat) that are not appropriate for biodiversity offsetting.

- If biodiversity offsetting is to occur, it must meet best practice principles that require 'like for like' offsets, no net loss of biodiversity and offsets must be provided within the Central Coast region.

Infrastructure Planning for Growth

- Although we recognise the merits of growing Gosford City Centre, the draft Plan fails to adequately outline infrastructure improvements that will accompany growth. There are significant transport challenges in terms of the transport corridors and facilities to support the Precincts in Gosford and the proposed Somersby to Erina Corridor, however, these appear in the plan as vague statements that "the NSW Government will work with Gosford City Council and other stakeholders to develop a long term transport framework for Gosford City Centre."

This is a completely inadequate response to the proposed growth in development and transfers responsibility between agencies, rather than giving any confidence that infrastructure (in particular, transport) planning is well advanced.

- The Draft Plan should require a Transport Plan to be produced and exhibited before the final draft Regional Plan is adopted.

Protection of Central Coast Drinking Water Catchments

- In order to adequately protect the Central Coast's water resources, all coal seam gas and long wall coal mining activities should be banned in the Central Coast drinking water catchments. Specifically, coal seam gas mining in the vicinity of Peats Ridge should not proceed it has the potential to affect the aquifer.
- The requirement that any development should have neutral or beneficial effect on the region's water quality must be established in law (c.f. State Environmental Planning Policy (Sydney Drinking Water Catchment) 2011).
- The Regional Plan should require the implementation of an Operating License for the Water Authority(s) for the Central Coast - this does not currently exist. The Operating License would ensure transparency and accountability within our water supply operations and protect consumers by prescribing minimum standards of service.

Similar to Sydney Water and Hunter Water, the licence would include requirements for:

- water quality
 - asset performance, including system performance standards
 - water conservation
 - environmental indicators and management
 - community consultation
 - performance monitoring and auditing
- Each year, an independent audit should be undertaken to assess compliance with the Operating Licence.

Climate Change

- The draft Plan fails to adequately plan for climate change adaptation and mitigation. The only clear action in the plan is for the State Government to continue to support councils to consider the long term implications of climate change in decision-making. There should be more emphasis in the document on climate change risks as a constraint on development. The State Government has a responsibility to the community to map areas that will be impacted adversely by climate change and protect appropriate development controls for those areas. This is particularly important for floodplains, low lying coastal areas and high bushfire risk areas.

Proposal Warnervale Regional Airport

- We are pleased to see that the proposal for a Regional Airport has been removed from the draft Central Coast Regional Plan. We understand that Wyong Council is continuing to lobby for such a proposal to be implemented.
- We strongly oppose any move to develop a Regional Airport on the Central Coast for the following reasons:
 - An airport would negatively impact on community and social amenity and make surrounding housing undesirable to live in. Proposed flight paths are over or adjacent to Wyee, Mountain Road Warnervale, Alison, Watanobbi, North Wyong, Wyong, Bruce Crescent, Warnervale and the new Town Centre.
 - The airport site is surrounded by environmentally sensitive land. The proposed 1,800m runway and safety runoff penetrates 900m into the SEPP 14 and E2 zoned Porters Creek Wetland. Porters Creek Wetland is the largest remaining freshwater wetland on the Central COast and forms part of the drinking water catchment for the region.

Implementation of the Draft Plan

- The delivery of the final Plan will be by the Coordinating and Monitoring Committee, made of Government and local council representatives (1 from each council). The proposed committee is heavily weighted with NSW Government representatives, and local government representation will be reduced if Gosford and Wyong Councils amalgamate.
- In order to provide improved links with agricultural and natural resource management objectives, representatives from the relevant Local Land Services should also be included on the Coordinating and Monitoring Committee.
- Consideration should also be given to community input into the implementation of the plan. For example, Illawarra Environment and Resources Groups have been identified as relevant supporting groups under the Illawarra-Shoalhaven Regional Plan.

Ability for local councils to effectively deliver the plan

- The draft Plan relies on ongoing implementation by Gosford and Wyong Councils, working with the NSW Government. Environment and community groups in the region are concerned with the poor track record of both Gosford and Wyong councils in failing to adequately protect areas of high conservation value, habitat corridors and sensitive coastal environments.
- Appropriate oversight is needed to ensure that the relevant local councils protect the important environment and coastal values of the Central Coast in accordance with the Plan.
- The draft Central Coast Regional Plan was prepared without regard to the proposed amalgamation of Gosford and Wyong Councils. If the amalgamation goes ahead, this could impact on the short term capacity of the newly amalgamated LGA to deliver on the draft Plan.