

NSW Department of Planning and Environment
Gosford

24th March 2016

Dear Sir

SUBMISSION – DRAFT CENTRAL COAST REGIONAL PLAN

I am a resident of the Central Coast and for my 16 years here I have fully appreciated the natural environment that the Central Coast offers. The natural wooded ridges that have been protected from development frame the wonderful waterways and serve to extend the network of National Parks which are such an attraction and beneficial feature of the Central Coast. In many ways the Central Coast feels unspoiled by over development. The beaches are also an attractive feature.

I would like to make the following comments on the draft Central Coast Regional Plan.

Growth

There appears to be an emphasis on growth with proposals for increases in population, housing and new infrastructure which has the potential to destroy much of our green spaces and threaten existing flora and fauna. Constant growth may create further urban sprawl and could eliminate the very environment that people are attracted to on the Central Coast.

There should be a realistic projection of the expected population capacity that can be accommodated on the Central Coast.

Do we really want wall to wall housing estates and unit blocks where little room left for trees of any decent size or gardens to soften the built environment? This is happening in Wyong now. **There should be commitment in the plan to retain and even increase areas for recreational** purposes such as playing fields and also to maintain the ratio of green/bushland areas that presently exist.

Biodiversity offsetting

There is heavy reliance on biodiversity offsetting. The draft Plan places too high an emphasis on biodiversity offsetting. This 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 so that there is no net loss of biodiversity and offsets must be provided within the Central Coast region.

Coastal Open Space System

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. I believe the Regional Plan must set out a commitment to fully implement the COSS Strategy and ensure further acquisitions. I would like to see the COSS used as a model for the entire Central Coast Region as part of the plan for the future.

Mining & water resources

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 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. **These restrictions should be clearly articulated in the Plan.**