

Draft Central Coast Regional Plan Submission

23 March 2016

Central Coast Regional Plan

Submission

The Central Coast Regional Plan follows along the same path as plans before it. There is little new ground broken and in most respects I believe that to be a good thing for the sake of consistency. The lack of change also indicates that the direction of previous plans and this one are largely correct.

Goal 1-Enhance Community Lifestyles and Accelerate Housing Supply. Direction 1.1 is I believe not being satisfied as it should and I suggest the following.

The fundamental issue for The Central Coast is low household incomes, in particular in the Wyong Shire.

I am sure there is more than one way to raise income levels and the socio economic level of the area, although I have seen no evidence of this in my 25 years living at Wyong Creek. One way to achieve this is to encourage wealthy individuals into the area and to encourage those with wealth, professionals and those who generate wealth on the Central Coast to live here. In my submission on the discussion paper I noted the number of professionals who work on the Coast but live in Sydney. These people include managers, sales and marketing staff, doctors, specialists and business owners. These people must be encouraged to live on the Coast and an environment that encourages this will benefit the Coast.

To achieve these ends I believe it is important to provide the environment and opportunities the wealthy want. That boils down to appropriate real estate opportunities along with upmarket shopping dining and schooling at all levels.

I do not believe those opportunities are being offered or provided and certainly not in the Wyong Shire, with the exceptions of Magenta Shores and Kooindah Waters golf resorts.

The well off want to live in rural environments such as Holgate, Matcham and Pickets Valley, close to beaches and services and surrounded by large homes on graceful grounds. The Central Coast and Wyong Shire in particular can offer much more of this type of rural living, although I believe areas not intended for mining would need to be excised from mine subsidence areas to allow large homes to be built to the owners requirements without the interference and cost of Mine Subsidence Board restrictions or the threat of mining.

As a first step in this process, I propose that all the flood free, non water catchment rural land between Kangy Angy and Wyong Creek, is re zoned to accommodate one acre lots. Further I propose that the Mine Subsidence Board remove this area from any mine subsidence district so large homes can be built at a reasonable price. This land is close to Westfield Tuggerah, two railway stations and the M1 Motorway and will attract the wealthy families that Wyong needs. Land that is marginally flood affected should also be considered for rural subdivision to make the most of this limited and immediately available opportunity.

The prompt approval of the Mardi Farm development would be a good start to adding to the up market real estate pool. However the quality of the development must be paramount, otherwise the objective would be lost.

The well off also want to live in waterfront, water view and golf course developments. At present there are no new opportunities like this available. There are no more waterfronts to be had and no more water views except from home unit blocks.

I propose a development that will not only achieve water front, water view and golf course property but will also allow navigation in Tuggerah Lake, navigation to the Pacific Ocean but would also solve the flooding issues on Tuggerah Lake and in the feeding streams.

I propose the following;

- Allow mining under Tuggerah Lake to deepen it by up to 3m in parts making it navigable.
- Build an island canal, golf course development in the Chittaway bay area with a mix of high and low density uses.
- Connect The Entrance via two bridges onto and off the island from Chittaway point and The Entrance, solving the Entrance traffic problems and connecting the waterfront development.
- Build a new raising or higher bridge to the North Entrance connecting with the new Chittaway Bridges, which may also have to be raising or high.
- Build break walls at The Entrance and excavate a channel from the lake to the ocean to make it navigable by large craft.
- Install a lock to enable water craft to exit and enter the lake, while still allowing the natural water flow beside the lock in the current Entrance Channel. In the event of a flood, the lock doors can be fully opened to allow flood waters out of the lake at high flow rates while sea water levels are below lake levels.

While there are obvious environmental and traffic change issues to be considered, it should also be considered the Tuggerah Lake is in rapid and inevitable decline into becoming a coastal wetland as it silts up. My proposal may well arrest or even reverse that decline by raising water flows within the lake and adding depth to heavily silted areas that are now impassable in most boats.

The plan I put in my submission stays well clear of existing urban areas and interferes with the minimum number of existing lake views. An indicative diagram of my suggestion is attached. A variation on this theme would see the fingers face east west so more homes can have a north/north east aspect.

While the purists will not agree with my proposal, which is not thoroughly thought through or researched, it should be accepted that the lake is in decline and it is largely because of urban development. It is not out of the question to want to improve the lot of the Wyong Shire and perhaps reverse the impacts of urbanisation.

I believe the up side of my proposal is well worth considering as one of the few ways available to raise the socio economic lot of the Wyong Shire residents and to raise the profile and desirability of the Shire from the place to avoid, to the place to be. I understand it is highly unlikely that such a proposal would ever be adopted.

While the Actions in the plan are worthy, I do not believe they tackle the fundamental provision of high end housing.

Direction 1.2 Grow and enhance liveable local centres could also be applied to my suggestions. The Mardi Farm site that we back on to should be encouraged as a liveable local centre.

Direction 1.4 Accelerate housing supply

More rural residential housing at Mardi and surrounding areas complies with this direction. The Mardi and surrounding areas could provide many hundreds of high quality rural houses.

Action.5.1 Support delivery of greater housing choice in and near centres with existing services

The provision of housing choices for wealthy individuals should feature in the Action. The Mardi and surrounding areas comply with this Action. The area is close to services and near centres while delivering greater choice.

A canal development in Tuggerah Lake would also comply with this direction and action as it too would allow choices and is close to existing services at The Entrance.

Goal 2-Grow and diversify the Regional Economy

The provision of high end housing and associated facilities would grow and diversify the Regional economy by encouraging entrepreneurs to live work and invest in the Wyong Shire and Central Coast. Firstly the economy would grow because the business leaders would stay on the Coast and would not be so inclined to relocate to other regions. Secondly other business people would migrate to the Coast to live in a safe convenient and upmarket environment.

The provision of upmarket housing also diversifies the housing market away from the provision of project home, town house and unit development. There is a higher margin to be made in the provision of upmarket homes and their facilities.

Direction 2.1 Support the 21st century needs of business

Until semi retirement, I was a self employed Engineer in the food industry for over 30 years, eleven of those spent as a project engineering contractor at Sara Lee Bakery in Lisarow and other Sara Lee factories around Australia. I can attest to the reality of a food industry cluster. I had many subcontractors on the Central Coast working for me on projects on the Coast and other areas. Very few contractors came from Newcastle or Sydney. However that situation was largely bought about by the fact that I lived and worked on the Coast and tried to keep the available work on the Coast. This situation was different for each of the engineers that worked at Sara Lee over the years and changed markedly with each new Engineering Manager who took over. All but one Engineering Manager came from outside the Coast, as was the case for virtually all senior management, sales and marketing staff.

The tendency was for managers from outside the Coast to bring in contractors and staff from outside the Coast. I believe that had those managers lived on the Coast they would be more disposed to employing contractors and staff from the Coast. Which brings me yet again to the provision of housing and upmarket facilities, call them enclaves, for the wealthy, professionals, up comers and managers. Management that lived on the Coast tended to employ on the Coast.

In my submission on the Discussion Paper, I emphasised how poorly Wyong Shire was performing compared with surrounding areas.

Category		Gosford	Lake Macquarie	NSW
Unemployment	7.80%	6.10%	5.30%	5.90%
Median Household income	\$934	\$1,089	\$1,117	
Population	149,746	162,440	189,006	
Education				
Attending TAFE	7.70%	7.40%	8%	7.90%
Attending University	8.10%	11.30%	11.60%	14.20%
Median House Price (domaine.com.au)	\$360K	\$460K	\$415K	
Travel to Work				
Car driver	39,945	42,020	58,694	1,807,358
	66.60%	59.10%	70.20%	57.60%
Train	1,112	3,795		193,099
	1.90%	5.35		6.20%
Public transport	3,164	8,468	2,115	433,016
	5.30%	11.90%	2.50%	13.80%
Weekly family income				
Without children	\$1,834	\$1,995	\$2,955	\$2,120

With children	\$2,060	\$2,229	\$2,317	\$2,370
Employment status couple families				
Both not working	27.30%	23.20%	25.70%	20.50%

Over a period of four days, I sat and counted vehicles onto and exiting the M1 at the Gosford interchange. I believe this work supported my contention that there is significant traffic to the Central Coast from Sydney for work purposes. Harnessing this work force as residents of the Coast must assist in raising our economic prospects.

Date	Time	No To Sydney/min	Time	No from Sydney/min
3.10.14	7.55am	22	7.56am	8
	7.58am	29	7.56am	17
	8.00am	17	7.59am	7
	8.03am	27	8.02am	10
	8.05am	32	8.06am	19
	8.09am	11	8.07am	10
	8.10am	10	8.08am	9
	8.11am	11	8.12am	10
Average		19.87/min		11.25/min
		No To Sydney/2 min		No from Sydney/2min
9.10.14	7.15-7.16am	41	7.16-7.17am	11
	7.19-7.20am	74	7.21-7.22am	18
	7.23-7.24am	45	7.25-7.26am	19
	7.27-7.28am	66	7.29-7.30am	17
	7.33-7.34am	67	7.35-7.36am	28
	7.37-7.38am	54	7.39-7.40am	20
	7.41-7.42am	52	7.43-7.44am	33
Average		28.5/min		10.42/min
		No to Sydney/3min		No from Sydney/3min
20.10.14	5.11-5.13am	58	5.14-5.16am	2
	5.18-5.20am	73	5.20-5.22am	3
	5.30-5.32am	69	5.26-5.28am	3
	5.39-5.41	76	5.34-5.36am	5
	5.46-5.48am	112	5.36-5.38am	5
	5.57-5.59am	125	5.52-5.54am	6
	6.00-6.02am	91	6.03-6.05am	18
	6.10-6.12am	100	6.07-6.09am	9
	6.21-6.23am	120	6.17-6.19am	22
	6.28-6.30am	119	6.25-6.27am	18
	6.49-6.51am	100	6.30-6.32am	6
			6.40-6.42am	27
			6.46-6.48am	17
			6.52-6.54am	14
Average		31.6/min		3.26/min
		No to Sydney/3min		No from Sydney/3min
27.10.14	10.57-10.59am	30	11.00-11.02 am	33

	11.03-11.05am	35	11.06-11.08am	23
Average		10.8/min		9.33/min

Warnervale University

Wyong Shire Council is working on a university at Warnervale. I believe there is no place for such a development in the Central Coast Regional Plan as it is unjustified, unnecessary and a waste of land that could be used for productive purposes.

There are a lot of similarities between Wyong Shire Councils' Warnervale University and their Warnervale Airport. Neither are justified, economic or supported by the facts. Both developments are now proceeding under cover of confidential sessions within council.

Wyong Council commissioned SGS Economics and Planning to study their university proposal in October 2013. The report was never released to the community, although it has frequently been used to justify the university development. Efforts to gain access to the SGS Report under GIPA law were resisted by Council until the Administrative Tribunal released the report to the writer in October 2015. The SGS Economics Report does not support Wyong Shire Councils' university.

SGS Report Page 1

Business Park Demand

"The Precinct 7a economic benefit report indicates that the relatively low demand for business park uses (given existing supply), combined with the high holding costs, suggest that the development would need to be staged."

SGS Report page 2

Education Demand

Based on the benchmarking analysis, there is not sufficient demand for a new TAFE campus at Warnervale. Furthermore, given the location of the existing TAFE at Wyong centre, it is unlikely that a similar size TAFE campus would locate at Warnervale.

This additional university market is probably not large enough to warrant a new Greenfield campus and is likely to be hotly contested with University of Newcastle currently in the 'box seat' to take a share of it.

SGS Report page 3

Opportunities and challenges

It is clear from the challenges listed that a Warnervale University is not a viable proposition. The challenges include:

- Modest business park demand
- Relatively low demand for employment land
- Competition with the Ourimbah Campus will be strong
- Insufficient demand for a campus on-site.
- High cost of infrastructure

- Decommissioning of old Warnervale Train Station, undermining the transport credentials of the precinct.
- University or other training facilities are difficult to stage
- Universities are now more directly competing with each other
- Competition with a university in the Gosford CBD would pose a threat to the viability of an education and business precinct at Warnervale from at least two perspectives-greater accessibility and industry integration.
- Attracting a higher education partner to facilitate the development of the precinct.
- The growth in digital online learning may drive down prices and provide alternatives to a conventional university campus.

SGS Report page26

Central Coast Campus Plans

"A University in the Gosford CBD would pose a threat to the viability of an education and business precinct at Warnervale from at least two perspectives-accessibility and integration".

" Firstly the Gosford CBD is arguably more accessible to a larger population than Warnervale. It is accessible to a large population in the southern Central Coast region and is accessible beyond this region by virtue of the existing rail station. This advantage would be accentuated if the existing station at Warnervale is decommissioned. Furthermore it is more accessible to the northern suburbs of Sydney by rail and road. Secondly, given the existing profile of the CBD as an established employment area, it is more likely to attract certain industries seeking a university relationship than Warnervale."

These statements make the lack of viability and level of competition clear. What will happen when the Central Coast Councils merge?

The station at Warnervale will be decommissioned once the new Warnervale Town Centre station is built. The trains are not going to stop at Warnervale No2 only 2km down the track from Warnervale Town Centre. Clearly the Gosford CBD is the place for a campus and not Warnervale.

SGS Report page27

Challenges

The challenges listed here are formidable, however the competition from Ourimbah Campus and Gosford CBD Campus are the *"specific challenges for the proposed Warnervale University"*

SGS Report page28

Business Park Demand

"SGS Economics and Planning completed an employment lands study for the Wyong Shire Council in early 2013."

It was found by SGS that the business park would be unfeasible.

"Given that other precincts have capacity, their established nature and favourable location to major residential areas and centres would mean that the take-up rate for development at Warnervale would likely be unfeasible"

SGS Report page30

Education Demand

The only part of the SGS Report quoted by Wyong Shire Council is the so called forecast short fall of university places for the region. The report says *“Given that the University of Newcastle has 18,600 undergraduate places (including the Newcastle and Ourimbah campuses), there is currently an ostensible shortfall of 7,600 university places for the Central Coast and Lower Hunter regions.”*

The critical word here is *“ostensible”*, because in reality the shortfall is non existent. Also the Lower Hunter is included in the catchment, even though this is clearly the province of Newcastle University.

SGS Report page 31

Education Demand

The following caveats apply to the derived benchmark and forecast:

- *All regions and universities are treated as equal*
- *-The 18-25 year old cohort is assumed to have an identical propensity to study at university in each region. And*
- *-There are no increases to the number of university places in the regional catchment.*

The last caveat is an important one. Any additional new university campuses or significant expansions of existing facilities elsewhere in the region (as proposed for the Gosford City centre), which increase the number of university places, would moderate the level of demand for a university at Warnervale.”

Of course Newcastle University and possibly others will increase places to accommodate the market. The Gosford CBD Campus will proceed. Therefore there is NO SHORTAGE of university places and therefore no students for a Warnervale University.

SGS Report page 49

Scenario1: Staged Sales

With an 85% net developable area, the developer is set to lose \$9,911,437.

With a 70% net developable area, the developer is to lose \$17,617,195.

SGS Report page 50

Scenario1: Joint Venture

With an 85% net developable area, the developer is set to lose \$8,864,237.

With a 70% net developable area, the developer is set to lose \$16,569,995.

SGS Report page 54

“The most likely candidate to grow the higher education sector on the Central Coast is the University of Newcastle. The University will compete strongly to protect and enhance its geographical territory, which includes the Central Coast”

This is not good news for a Warnervale University, in fact it should be the end of the idea when Councils' hand picked consultant delivers this statement.

SGS Report page 56 & 57

“As discussed above, tertiary educational institutions already involved with delivering programs on the Central Coast, University of Newcastle and NSW TAFE Hunter Institute, are possible candidates, as Warnervale is part of their “natural” catchment. Both have major commitments to the region. In the event that they do not wish to become partners, they may actually become competitors for the Warnervale site and scale up existing regional facilities. Given the under-representation of students enrolled in tertiary education in the region, this may not be a bad development, but it does need to be considered as a possibility by the proponents of the Warnervale project”

Again the report makes it clear that it expects competition from TAFE and Newcastle University.

“The higher education asset will only be successful if it attracts quality teachers and students. This report indicates there may not be a sufficient number of students within the Central Coast catchment to justify major investment in a Greenfield university”

Despite this and against all advice, Wyong Shire Council continue to proceed with the Warnervale University.

Goal 4: Protect and manage the natural and cultural environment

Beyond the position of the Central Coast between Sydney and Newcastle and within commuting distance of both centres, the natural environment is the Coasts next most important asset.

I believe we are not making enough of this natural environment. Although recently “Tree Tops” has been established at Wyong Creek, there has been little in the way of this type of development.

The mountain bike riding in the forest behind Tree Tops is very popular, with State significant events being held there. So the area is already well known for bike riding and this use could be more formalised, encouraged and expanded.

Pelotons of road bikes also travel up and down the Yarramalong Valley on weekends. Again not enough is being made of these tourism opportunities. A café or two at the Mardi Farm development would capture some of this business.

Wyong Council has gone some way to improving the situation by allowing primary producers to build farm stays. These establishments will encourage tourism into the hills, forests and conservation areas behind the Central Coast. An appreciation and awareness of these assets is the best way to protect and improve them.

Extending on the Tree Top and farm stay theme, I believe bike tracks should be constructed along Yarramalong and Jilliby Roads, interconnecting over the hills west of Yarramalong Village to create a loop. This would create a thriving bike culture to attract tourists and add income to the valleys, the Mardi Farm development and Yarramalong and Dooralong Villages.

Further on the bike path theme, I believe the completion of a bike track around Tuggerah Lakes should be a priority, again to attract tourists, but also to enhance the lives of residents. The bike culture could support bike shops and cafes.

I suggest that these two projects would do a lot more for the Wyong Shire than an airport or a university and would have been a better place to spend the tens of millions of dollars wasted on these projects to date. All is not lost however and there is time to ensure that precious ratepayers dollars are spent on these bike tracks as a priority rather than wasting more ratepayers money on dead loss airports and universities.

Action 4.1.1 Protect areas of high environmental value

While this may not sit well with my proposal to build a canal estate in Tuggerah Lake, I believe there should be no relaxation of environment protection laws. I am particularly concerned with the application of offset laws which Wyong Shire Council sought to exploit for their Kiar Airport development and which they will no doubt seek to exploit for Warnervale Airport and surrounding developments. However large and unique areas of environmental importance should be protected and enhanced as they are what makes the Central Coast special.

Proposed Waterfront, Bridge,
Lock, Break Wall

