
Subject:

FW: Submission re Draft Central Coast Regional Plan by Beryn Jewson

As a proud member of the Community Environment Network for 12 years, I have used its submission guide to emphasise my concerns.

The Vision for the Central Coast region

Any reference to “sustainable economic growth” **should be amended** to “**ecologically** sustainable economic growth”. The term “**ecologically sustainable development**” (ESD) has been side-stepped in recent years and been replaced with the term “sustainable development” or “sustainable economic growth”. The two latter terms are meaningless without the word “ecologically”.

Protection of the environment

The Plan needs to clearly state **how** the identified areas of high environmental value will be protected and enhanced.

Coastal Open Space System (COSS)

The Regional Plan needs to show a commitment to fully implement the COSS Strategy, and ensure that the voluntary acquisition of the remaining lands currently identified for COSS does happen.

The COSS should be used as a model for the entire Central Coast region. This is especially needed in the Wyong LGA where the current council appears not to value ESD.

Protection of Central Coast Drinking Water Catchments

Mining in our drinking water catchment should be totally **ruled out** in the Draft Plan.

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.

Biodiversity offsetting

Biodiversity offsetting is often not best ecological practice. 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.

Climate Change

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.

Implementation of the Draft Plan

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.