

23.2.2016

The General Manager
Hunter and Central Coast
NSW Planning and Environment
P.O. Box 1226
NEWCASTLE, NSW, 2300.



re Draft Hunter Regional Plan incl: 1. Draft Hunter Regional Plan
2. Draft Plan for 'Hunter City'

- You appear to have given more importance to the 'Hunter City' plan (Newcastle?) than the Hunter Regional Plan, which is without detail and seems to lack 'local' information.

As a member of an extended family who lives in Cessnock, with family stretching from Newcastle to the upper Hunter since 1832, your description of the area beyond Maitland towards the Broken Back Range as 'hinterland' I am deeply concerned that we will become a stagnant backwater, because you have neglected to recognize the rich history and international wine industry at 'Hunter City's' back door.

The dictionary's description of 'hinterland' as a 'region remote from Urban Areas ('back country') only increases my dismay at your oversight - no future role is indicated for the Cessnock area, or its sustainability.

- You have failed to recognize that the demise of the coal industry in the Hunter regional areas, opens up the opportunity for diversity, particularly renewable energy which will help solve the problems caused by mine closures, on local employment. There are many natural areas which need protection, cultural heritage, both Aboriginal and European, a thriving wine industry and world renowned national Parks, Yengo in particular abounding in Aboriginal heritage, farming and the horse industry. Our local environment values, including biodiversity require investment and funding to assist in Aboriginal targets - there is immense value in the rural precincts which are necessary for people in 'Hunter City', and they must be valued and funded, to remain sustainable.
- There seems to be plenty of focus on 'regional connectivity' for the Stockton/Watagan Corridor which does not include the 'back-country' of Cessnock. This area's focus on Watagan is the

Draft Hunter Plan: cont.

2. protection of the natural environment there, particularly Bow Waw Gorge, the millfields wetlands which rise in the Watagan mountains (Catieboy Wetlands) flowing via the Wallumbi Brook to the historic convict/colonial village of Wallumbi.
- By 'corridor' it seems you mean 'transport' corridor. It is my understanding, as an environmentalist, that the Watagan corridor is all about biodiversity and the connectiveness of isolated wildlife reserves which have become dangerously fragmented by mining and inappropriate development. (see plans for connecting the Eastern Ranges). You seem to have an immense contradiction here - it cannot be both, as a transport corridor fragments connectivity as far as biodiversity is concerned, among other negative outcomes.
- There is no mention of a corridor specifically for a Very Fast Train (Melbourne/Sydney/Newcastle/Brisbane) with a special Heavy Rail Freight in tandem. It is necessary to have this plan at least indicated as 'future' so we can determine if it will enhance the 'Hunter' plan, or further fragment biodiversity in our area, particularly.
We already have rail connection, to Maitland, which has been seconded by mining - no passenger trains have run to Cessnock from Maitland for over 50 years and our only connection to Newcastle (Hospitals, University, etc) is by bus. The existing rail line is not even shown in your plan. It would be one of the few positives in your plan, for us, if the existing line could be connected to a high speed train near Maitland in the not too distant future, (providing that corridor did not further destroy environmental connectivity).
- Being able to maintain our rural lifestyle, biodiversity, tourist industry and employment for our children only at the expense of becoming a stagnant backwater or being gobbled up in a giant city as 'fringe dwellers' is not an uplifting prospect. Your Hunter City needs us as much as we need you to respect what we offer and include our area accordingly, in the appropriate manner. What have you to say? I hope all 'Hunterlanders' respond.
Yours faithfully,