

Draft Hunter Regional Plan

Summary

Some key concerns

The priority of the plan continues to be the expansion of coal mining and CSG throughout the region with nearly one third of the 87 page report dedicated to these fossil fuel industries. The emphasis on the benefit the Hunter has received from coal (p18); and little consideration of the impact on critical habitats, and forward planning for mining dominated regions when the industry continues to decline. There is no consideration of the impacts of sterilising areas of the hunter region by mining.

The "Hunter City" discussion appears primarily intended as a way of creating the image that there is a strong focus on the development of the area beyond just mining. It is considered an insufficient model to foster development of a truly liveable city.

The report makes clear that public transport will come second, stating that transport development will occur primarily to support the coal industry.

Environment preservations have predictably been treated as a low priority for the State Government, with the report stating that they will encourage biobanking to ensure conservation.

Direct impacts on forests under the draft plan are very high. The maps provided show that coal mining titles cover most of the State Forests in the region, meaning that the plan directly threatens many hundreds of hectares of plantation and native forest.

The plan flags the use of a risk model for decisions around water quality, rather than strict rules in place protecting the waterways of the region, and in particular the oyster industry.

Climate change considerations are minimal, with no detailed plan to cap emissions at 2 degrees, or to plan for climate ready communities.

Aboriginal Heritage has been treated as an afterthought, with no solid plans outlined in the report to preserve Culture and Heritage.

Questions

- How do we highlight the potential loss of State forests to mining and fossil fuels that this plan proposes?
- What role for renewable energy should be in the plan? What planning needs to be done in the area to ensure it is not sacrificed for the dying coal and gas industry?
- What alternative considerations should be included for the failing mining sector?
- Do the plans for the Hunter City reflect a realistic and sufficiently detailed plan for that area?

MY PARTICULAR CONCERNS ARE DETAILED ON THE FOLLOWING 2 PAGES WHICH I HAVE CUT AND PASTED (NOT PARTICULARLY WELL) AS THEY EXPRESS MY CONCERNS WELL



Newcastle Art Gallery

The Newcastle Art Gallery is a major public art museum and a significant cultural asset for the city, the Hunter and State of NSW. The institution was founded in 1957 and has a significant permanent art collection carefully built up over almost six decades. The Newcastle Art Gallery's holdings are very significant, second only in importance to the State's permanent art collection held by the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.

The Gallery's collection strengths focus on Australian art, spanning the Colonial era through to contemporary art, including Indigenous Australian art (Aboriginal art). The works of art include painting, sculpture, photography, video, ceramics and works on paper – graphic art, drawings and watercolours. Many distinguished Australian artists are represented in the Art Gallery's collection, including Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton, Grace Cossington-Smith, Margaret Preston, William Dobell, Albert Namatjira, John Olsen, Margaret Olley, Brett Whiteley and Emily Kngwarreye.

The Newcastle Art Gallery's Economic, Tourism and Educational value to Greater Newcastle

~~(b) (1), I have a concern here about the use of the word "former".~~

The Art Gallery traditionally attracts visitors from a broad spectrum of society, spanning artists, art students, art teachers and lecturers (K-tertiary), art lovers and collectors, specialists, tourists - local, regional and national, families and indigenous people. Disadvantaged community members, including people with physical and medical disabilities also access this important collection. Many of these visitors stay on in the city and spend money at Newcastle businesses.

The Gallery also offers valuable education programs and resources for school students from Kindergarten to Year 12 and tertiary level, and for teachers and

NICRA members were told that further information will be added later by the relevant NSW government departments and agencies. To many people this delay appears inappropriate when seeking community feedback at this stage in the development of this important planning document. The omissions include reference to:

1. Public Transport Infrastructure Strategy
2. Education and Medical infrastructure Strategy
3. Tourism strategy
4. Arts and Cultural Infrastructure Strategy
5. Heritage and Historic Sites Strategy
6. Sports Infrastructure Strategy
7. Indigenous Culture Strategy
8. Provision of Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries

What is in a Name? – Plan for Growing Hunter City

At the 1st February NICRA community meeting, the overwhelming response to the name of this document was strong opposition to it (c.95% against). NICRA members did not understand, or agree with, the reasons presented for why the state's second largest and second oldest city, Newcastle, was not referred to in the title of the document.

In just about probably every other planning jurisdiction in Australia the primary urban centre naturally gives its name to the expanded urban hinterland when it comes to planning. For example, reference is often made to Greater Sydney, Greater Wollongong, Greater Brisbane, etc. This is done for clarity and follows the traditional form of referring to significant planning documents.

The *Growing Hunter City* title says more about 'spin' and marketing than about good planning for the future. Let's be factual, informative and follow a good convention. In future, the Department should refer to this planning document as **Plan for Growing Greater Newcastle** not *Plan for Growing Hunter City*, which is meaningless and easily misunderstood.

Revitalise Newcastle

NICRA members were advised that this draft *Growing Hunter City* planning document builds on the existing *Revitalise Newcastle* strategic planning document. *Revitalise Newcastle* generally refers to development in the old city, stretching along the long Hunter Street corridor. This strategy focuses on three "nodes" or hubs for development – East End, Civic and West End.

However, the overall *Revitalise Newcastle* document is not complete nor has it been released. While aspects of it are known, including the use of light rail, the proposed light rail route and the revised GPT/UrbanGrowth NSW plan for the heritage *Newcastle East End* project, little else is known about this major urban renewal development plan. This is not helpful.

Very Fast Train Service between Sydney and Newcastle Essential

The Newcastle Inner City Residents Alliance identifies having a fast and efficient train service between the state's two largest cities, Sydney and Newcastle, as essential. While funds may not be available at present, this should nevertheless be a major long-term plan because it will have a profoundly beneficial impact on business, employment, educational, health and tourism opportunities in Newcastle and the lower Hunter region.

Any land required for a future Very Fast Train-Service rail corridor should be identified now and quarantined for this purpose. This should be a long-term infrastructure objective of all NSW governments, and the NSW Transport and Planning Departments.

Transparency, Probity and Governance

There is insufficient detail in the draft *Growing Hunter City* planning document about important bureaucratic mechanisms and safeguards to deal with governance issues, including Conflict of Interest and improper developer influence (which have been very serious matters in NSW for decades), and to ensure fair, open and transparent