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Online Submission

Mar 24 (20 days ago)

j To:

As a resident of Maitland for more than 30 years, I am deeply concerned with the NSW Government's Draft Hunter Regional Plan, underpinning planning and environmental decisions in the Hunter over the next 15 to 20 years. I note that this plan covers 11 local government areas in the Hunter with Maitland in the centre. This city has a history based on rural and agriculture, although much of that land is now being taken up by urban sprawl and the growing influence of coalmining and coal seam gas explorations.

I believe that this report fails to address these issues in serious detail.

Other concerns are climate change, the overuse of water resources, air and water pollution, transport, biodiversity loss and green jobs for the future.

But above all, is the scant regard for climate change. Our world is changing, our Hunter Valley is changing, and to disregard this major issue is a problem in itself. There should be more emphasis in this planning report on climate change risks well into the future. 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 Maitland with its floodplains. This city is regularly impacted by flood events and these are expected to be even bigger and more frequent into the future. I fail to see where this report addresses these issues appropriately.

Connected to the problems of climate change and concerns for agriculture is the issue of water and our water catchments. This planning document fails to recognise the dangers of long-wall mining and coal seam gas. Both these industries are a threat to our water supplies, both for drinking water and water to support agriculture.

Much mention is made of the "resources industry" coalmining and coal seam gas but little information afterwards. If this plan is for the next 15 to 20 years, we should have more detailed plans for mine rehabilitation. Will the coal companies be able to fill the voids and make sure of continued habitat connectivity? Final void issue for all coalmining and other heavy metal extractive industries need special plans for the future and leaving outcomes in the hands of the vagaries of market forces means a potential disaster for land management. Again I see no evidence of a realistic plan. Coalmining growth needs to be reined-in as its impacts on salt and heavy metal loads in the Hunter are increasingly impacting on types of crops being able to be grown.

Also, in relation to coalmining, we see there is a rapid decline in this industry as hundreds of jobs are being lost. I believe this planning document does not address the jobs issue. Industries of the future will obviously be "green jobs", that is jobs in the manufacturing area associated with renewable energy.

This plan also mentions protection of the environment, but fails to clearly outline mechanisms for protecting or enhancing areas of high environmental value.

To sum up, this document does not:

• Give enough emphasis on protecting land from urban sprawl to protect our agricultural industries. We need to keep feeding the people.

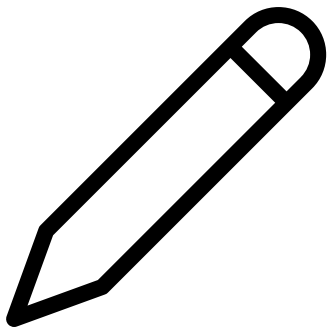
• Give appropriate support to looking after our valuable water supplies to support agriculture and drinking water.

• Recognise the danger of climate change on the way it will affect the future of the Hunter Valley in the next 15 to 20 years.

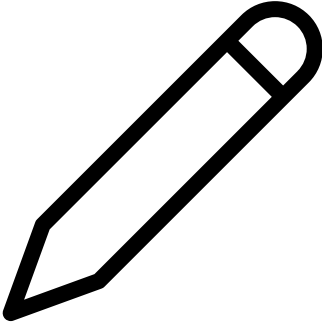
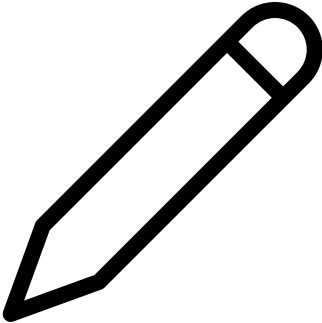
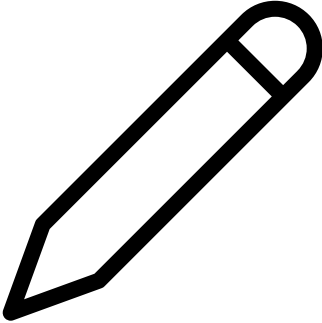
• Recognise the dangers of Coalmining and coal seam gas exploration, especially to our water supplies.

• Give adequately protection to our environment.

• Take into consideration air and water pollution, especially from the mining industry.



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