

The General Manager
Department of Planning
Hunter and Central Coast
Newcastle
23 March 2016

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: The Draft Hunter Regional Plan and Draft Plan for Growing Hunter City

I am writing in response to the Draft Regional Plan which is currently on public exhibition and I wish to make the following comments.

1. We have been living here at Black Hill for well over 30 years and very much appreciate its natural beauty and quiet lifestyle.

I am greatly relieved to see that the land between John Renshaw Drive (JRD) and Black Hill Road is no longer designated as 'employment land' as it had been in the 2006 Lower Hunter Regional Strategy. During the exhibition period in 2006 it was designated 'conservation' however it was suddenly changed to 'employment' in the final document without any opportunity for public input. I do not wish to see a repetition of this situation. This area of land is vitally important to our community's ongoing sense of identity as a rural area. The final Plan needs to reflect the Draft Plan by leaving this area as it is, 'rural', or designating it as 'conservation'.

I note that the Draft Plan considers connectivity corridors essential for the preservation of our flora and fauna. This area, in my opinion is an important link in the Stepping Stones project of the Great Eastern Ranges initiative. It is also the most vulnerable point of the Stockton to Watagans wildlife corridor. By retaining this stretch of land from John Renshaw Drive to Black Hill Rd as 'rural' or 'conservation' is, I believe, essential to these initiatives.

2. Urban sprawl needs to be contained and controlled with more guidance and direction in the Plan. Areas for development and areas for conservation need to be more clearly delineated. Designating green belts around towns and villages is essential to contain the sprawl.

3. The Richmond Vale Rail Trail needs to be included in the final Plan. To be included in the Regional Plan would mean that such an important piece of local tourism and recreational infrastructure would become a reality much sooner and would greatly benefit the whole region.

Yours sincerely

