

Department of Planning and Environment
Hunter and Central Coast
PO Box 1226
Newcastle NSW 2300

Re: Draft Hunter Regional Plan

The new Hunter Regional Plan offers an opportunity to guide growth in the Hunter Region in a manner that is sympathetic with the needs of the community, as well as business, and the environment.

To this end, there are aspects to be commended within the current plan as well as areas recommended for improvement.

Within the Black Hill area (and local surrounds):

It is to be commended that the Draft plan has now freed Black Hill (specifically the area between John Renshaw Dr, Blackhill Rd and the M1) from designation as future "employment" lands. The rezoning of the Coal and Allied land bordering the M1 and John Renshaw Dr, along with industrial development in the Thornton-Beresfield area has more than adequately addressed any future needs for land for industrial development in this area.

Additionally, the entire Hunter area has such a vast amount of rezoned "employment" land (15,000 hectares) that it would be inappropriate to continue to tag land in this area that lacks significant infrastructure, as being needed for future development.

Additionally, land in Black Hill has high conservation value with a significant portion along Blackhill Rd already being offset land for Donaldson Coal until 2035. The Regional Plan needs to be amended to clearly show this land as such to protect it from future inappropriate development.

A significant oversight in the current draft plan in the local area however, is the planned re-development of the former Kurri Kurri smelter site. This site is already significantly developed to support industrial activities, has appropriate infrastructure and is close to transport and an available workforce and it should be noted within the planning framework as part the future development of the Cessnock region.

Looking at the Regional Plan more broadly, there are a number of other areas that also need addressing including:

1. A Conservation Plan needs to be developed in conjunction with the Regional Plan that earmarks important areas for future protection.
2. Development of farming and tourism as well as other important activities outside of mining need to be identified for the Hunter region in order to offset the structural decline in mining that is being experienced and provide for future growth and employment in the region.
3. A public transport system that bolsters connectivity between the Hunter and other centres and that enhances employment opportunities as well as tourism needs to be in place in order to support the region into the future.

Yours sincerely,