

**Submission to the NSW Department of Planning:**  
**Draft Hunter Regional Plan & Draft Plan for Growing Hunter City**

I thank the NSW Department of Planning for the opportunity to place this submission. I have the following general comments on the plan. There are many detailed comments which could be made, however until the overall plan is acceptable, detailed comment is not of great value.

**1. Future of the coal industry.**

- The coal industry is in major decline on a world wide scale.
- There is a future for coking coal and for the use of coal as a source of carbon for advanced materials.
- Renewable energy is replacing coal generated electricity. The technology is available at the right price. It **will** continue to happen. If the transition is planned, it will be reliable and economical. If the transition is not planned, it will be haphazard and expensive and leave many assets stranded.
- The future is about rapid change from the old established technologies. At one stage, the introduction of electricity was a new and radical technology. The generation technology has been stable for over 60 years. Change is happening due to technology improvement. That is normal progression and not to be feared.
- The major change in coal use needs to be included in the Hunter Regional Plan.
- The Hunter has many industrial skills that will be of great value in the new world.

**2. Future of existing Power Stations**

- The remaining four coal fired power stations in the Hunter are all over 30 years old and have a finite remaining life. Liddell and Vales Point are both scheduled to be closed down within 10 years. Eraring and Bayswater Power Stations have a remaining life of only 20 – 30 years. The end of life of a power station is not only economic, but also technical. Major highly stressed components and infrastructure have safe service life time and are very expensive to replace.
- It is unlikely that new coal fired generation will be installed in the Hunter Valley for economic reasons.
- The limited life of power generation in the Hunter needs to be planned for in the Hunter Regional Plan.

**3. Growth**

- The Hunter is the largest coastal valley on the east coast of Australia; it is also one of the most heavily industrialised and populated. The Hunter has a limited land area and has existing land use conflict.
- Open cut coal mines destroy land, water sources and leave open voids at the end of their short life.
- Coal mining industry cannot keep growing without impacting on other industries. If it keeps growing other major industries, including all forms of agriculture, will be forced to move on.

- The population of the Hunter is likely to keep increasing. There will be a need for more space for housing.
- Areas with Natural Vegetation are most at threat because it is “easy” to build housing and industries on “green field” sites.
- Areas of natural vegetation provide benefits to the Hunter in the form of clean air, clean water as well as many other environmental values. These values are not represented in the draft Hunter Regional Plan.
- The Hunter Regional Plan needs to address the limits to growth of both urban, mining and other industrial sectors and in particular, needs to limit growth to areas which are already urbanised, industrialised or mined. Areas of native vegetation should not be industrialised.

#### **4. Coal Seam Gas**

- The Hunter Regional Plan is now out of date. The only place that coal seam gas extraction should be contemplated is in areas that have previously been mined or areas that are about to be mined. This will require changes to legislation covering Petroleum Exploration and Coal Mining.

#### **- Health of the Population**

- The Hunter Valley has a high incidence of Asthma. Air pollution from power generation, mining and other industries contributes to this problem.
- The Hunter Valley has a high incidence of lung disease, particularly Pneumonia.
- The Hunter Valley has a high incidence of cancer. A recent government study looked at Muswellbrook hospital for records of cancer; however, the study was flawed. For instance, my family has a member with a brain tumour. This person was referred by a local doctor directly to the John Hunter Hospital and then on to a Sydney Hospital. There would be no record of this brain tumour found in the records of Muswellbrook Hospital.
- The adverse health effects of mining and power generation need to be acknowledged in the Hunter Regional Plan and appropriate steps included for a healthier future.

#### **5. Relevance to myself**

- I am a long term resident of the Upper Hunter.
- My property and my health are being impacted by the effects of air pollution.
- The future of our community will be affected by the Hunter Regional Plan.

As outlined above, I believe that the Draft Hunter Regional Plan needs major revision before it is acceptable.