

Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance (Inc)

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General Manager, Hunter & Central Coast
Department of Planning and Environment
PO Box 1226
Newcastle
NSW, 2300

27 February 2016

Dear Sir/Madam

Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance

Submission to the Draft Hunter Regional Plan

The Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance (the Alliance) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft Hunter Regional Plan. The Alliance is the umbrella organisation representing over 15 local Sustainable Neighbourhood Groups across the City of Lake Macquarie.

The Alliance would like to raise the following points for consideration in the development of the Hunter Regional Plan.

1. Improve active transport options and infrastructure

In relation to:

Goal 1 - Grow Australia's next major city

ACTION 1.1.1, Principle 3: ... "The NSW government will identify a city-wide transport network that improves options for public transport, walking and cycling options ..."

and

DIRECTION 2.3, Enhance inter-regional transport connections

The Alliance strongly supports investment in public and active transport infrastructure to promote connectivity between communities, support the growing aging population, and increase employment opportunities and sustainable economic growth.

The Alliance supports actions that will improve sustainable connectivity throughout Hunter City and the Hunter Hinterland including:

- An increase in the number and connectivity of purpose built shared pathways to increase walking and cycling options, around all areas of Lake Macquarie. The current Plan only indicates pathway connectivity around the northern and eastern parts of the lake. Western Lake Macquarie needs to be included and connected to this network.

- Promotion of active transport modes that provide health benefits, reduce air and noise pollution, protect the natural environment and offer opportunities for tourism and sustainable economic growth.
- Public transport and active transport infrastructure and services should be integral to the design of the Hunter's regional and local transport network, for example investment in rail services at the Glendale Interchange.
- Expediting planning and investment to create a high-speed rail network along the east coast.

2. Encourage and support the development of the renewable energy sector

In relation to:

Goal 2 – Grow the largest regional economy in Australia

Action 2.1.1, Identify energy and mineral resource lands to support sustainable growth of mining industries and diversification of NSW energy supplies.

The Alliance supports the diversification of NSW energy supplies away from a reliance on coal, in order to provide sustainable energy security and minimise the significant environmental and health impacts of coal mining. We encourage significant investment to develop the renewable energy sector in the Hunter, including solar, wind and geothermal.

3. Protecting and Connecting Natural Environments

In relation to:

Goal 3 - Protect and Connect Natural Environments

The Alliance applauds and encourages all actions that genuinely lead to the protection and enhancement of the Hunter's natural environment, biodiversity and habitat connectivity.

The Alliance is concerned that the biodiversity value of the west Lake Macquarie Area, and in particular, the proposed Awaba State Conservation Area (ASCA) has not been acknowledged in the Plan. The ASCA is an important wildlife corridor and habitat for threatened species such as the Spotted-Tailed Quoll, Squirrel Glider, Regent Honeyeater, Swift Parrot, Powerful Owl, Masked Owl, Sooty Owl, Grey-Headed Flying Foxes and *Tetratheca juncea*. It provides an important wildlife corridor from the Watagan Mountains to the Lake Macquarie State Conservation Area.

The area was acknowledged in the Hunter Regional Conservation Plan (2009, p. 32) and was considered the next high priority for conservation gains by the NSW Government.

The Draft Hunter Regional Plan identifies the area as having High Environmental Value (Figure 11, pp46-47), but does not indicate any relevant actions that will lead to the area's protection for conservation and biodiversity values.

The Alliance recommends that the high biodiversity and conservation values of the west Lake Macquarie area, including the Proposed Awaba State Conservation Area are acknowledged in the Draft Hunter Regional Plan, and that specific actions are included that will protect and enhance these values by planning for the area to be formally gazetted as the Awaba State Conservation Area.

The Alliance also encourages an increased investment and focus on waste and litter reduction to protect our terrestrial and aquatic environments, in existing urban areas, and areas of urban expansion. The Alliance supports a statewide ban on single-use plastic bags; a container-deposit scheme; and increased investment in waste avoidance and recycling infrastructure and education. These actions would make valuable additions to the Plan.

4. Create Sustainable Communities

In relation to:

Goal 4 – Support Robust Regional Communities.

Action 4. 1 – Investigate demand for and options to accommodate long-term housing growth in regional towns and villages -working with Council to review planning controls and encourages appropriate medium density housing in appropriate areas.

The Alliance supports sustainable management of urban growth areas and utilising local retail precincts. This includes development that:

- protects the environment, promoting wildlife corridors and wildlife overpasses over transport corridors;
- provides necessary and appropriate infrastructure (including health facilities) within communities;
- provides necessary infrastructure to encourage and enable recycling and waste reduction;
- provide street trees, and open green spaces to offset heat island effects and provide recreational spaces;
- promote active transport such as cycling, walking and public transport;
- promotes local retail precincts via active transport and infrastructure;
- uses infill and brown field spaces appropriately for housing development;
- promotes community engagement; and
- offers affordable housing options for lower income and aged residents.