

Mr Steve Murray
Director Regions - Northern
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31 May 2016

RE: Submission from Port Macquarie Chamber of Commerce - Draft North Coast Regional Plan

Mr Steve Murray,

The Port Macquarie Chamber of Commerce appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Draft North Coast Regional Plan.

There are a number of points we wish to highlight.

The Chamber welcomes a Regional plan that looks at the opportunities and needs of the North Coast Region as a whole while also putting consideration into the identified 3 regional cities, of which will be at the foundation for provision of services for the significant forthcoming population growth.

The Draft Plan lacks appropriate timeframes to ensure accountability of the plans implementation and Chamber encourages timeframes be included to ensure the document is retained as an ongoing plan rather than a vision.

The concepts of the proposed Coordination and Monitoring Committee and the Regional Cities Steering Committee are welcomed by this Chamber, however, Business and Local Government representation on these Committees is essential to ensure communication and coordination of successful outcomes and minimise confusion or the potential to lose focus on individual needs of an area. Local representation is essential. There also needs to be further clarification on how the Committees will be established and their specific charter. The concept of the Regional Cities Action Plan is also welcomed by the Port Chamber although further information is needed to clarify who, how and when this will take place (Action 2.1.2).

There is one specific project identified in the plan on which we would like to make a special comment. This chamber has been a long standing advocate for an orbital road to increase efficiencies and economic productivity in our regional city. As the population increases and economic drivers of increased employment (including but not limited to the industrial area, expansion of the health precinct and the new University campus) the need for safe and free flowing access around our city are paramount.

The future orbital road will support local growth and increase the potential of key economic precincts. That project requires funds. While it is envisaged by the Chamber that the funding may come from the privatisation of poles and wires, there is a need for the state government to assist with funding the feasibility study before the poles and wires money is allocated. Funding the feasibility will ensure the project is in a fit state to meet criteria when applications for regional funding are called.

Councils play a vital part in the economic life of the regions; far more so than in metropolitan areas. However, they are usually demographically lightly populated compared to the metropolis and accordingly, there are many calls on their limited funds without the economies of scale generated in Sydney, for example. Regional plans are significantly ham-strung if there is not also a review of the mechanisms through which regional councils are funded. The current ad hoc grants based approach to funding for major projects is simply inadequate and our submission concerning the orbital road highlights this. We call for a mechanism that permits councils to identify and fund infrastructure needs in the medium to longer term.

The Chamber supports more flexibility in planning systems. Multiple and flexible uses will ensure the sustainability of our agri-businesses. Offerings such as nature experiences, agritourism and ecotourism are increasingly popular and an ideal fit for our local economy and environment. There needs to be more flexibility in generating complimentary activities in rural zones to truly activate and elevate the potential of the rural based industries and bring a greater connection between industries.


The Chamber applauds the focus on housing, employment and growth opportunities in the three major centres in support of proposed population growth in these regional cities. The Chamber welcomes multi-unit housing as an option in local plans for increasing housing density within our city centre. Again adequate representation from a local level as to our needs and a flexible approach to planning is essential the best outcomes are sought for the respective regional cities and sub regions as outlined in the plan.

Health, education and aviation are well positioned growth industries for the Greater Port Macquarie region. Development of these industries relate well with our local priorities.

In summary, the key issues for the Port Macquarie Chamber of Commerce in the Draft North Coast Regional Plan are:

- 1) Inclusion of business and local government representatives on the Committees proposed in the Draft.
- 2) Orbital road for Port Macquarie – a key infrastructure project for the community and business in this region – needs funding for a feasibility study.
- 3) Secure ongoing funding arrangements for regional Councils.

Yours Sincerely,



Lisa McPherson

Executive Officer, Port Macquarie Chamber of Commerce