

Submission: Draft North Coast Regional Plan

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We would like to raise the following issues in relation to the Draft North Coast Regional Plan.

Prohibition of Unconventional Gas Mining

We would like to thank the Baird government for buying the unconventional gas mining licences held over the land in the North Coast region. However, we feel that the government needs to go further keep our region gasfield free permanently. There should be no provision for unconventional gas mining in this Regional Plan. To that end, we ask that all references to the **development** of the coal seam and unconventional gas industry be removed from the Final Report.

We call on on Rob Stokes NSW Minister for Planning, to honour his commitment to “....ensure that the final plan makes it manifestly clear that coal seam gas resources on the north coast will remain in the ground.”

To that end, we ask that a clear statement prohibiting further exploration or mining of gas be included in the Final Report. Further to that, we also ask the Government to deliver explicit statutory protection preventing the issue of new exploration licences. Without taking this step, we believe that the safety of our Region and the current Government's commendable actions in buying back the licences will remain under threat.

Renewable Energy Sources

The Draft Plan needs to include strategies for the development of renewable energy as an alternative to the current reliance on fossil fuel resources. We therefore call on the Government to take responsible action in this regard and make a commitment to support and encourage the development of the renewable energy sector and to state this clearly in the Final Plan. (More on this in “Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities”.)

Food for the Region and Beyond

Plans for releases of agricultural land for residential purposes only will result in more land being withdrawn from agricultural use, or being withdrawn from potential agricultural use.

What steps will this Plan take to protect the current agricultural economy? If predictions for significant population increases pan out, then we need to take active steps to include how

these new populations as well as the current ones will be fed. If we convert agricultural land to residential land only, we will reduce opportunities for growing food locally.

One solution to this is to encourage land owners, in particular those in large lot residential land and their subdivisions, to participate in farm linkage programmes by creating a register of interested participants and land holders, and campaigns to encourage this participation. The opportunity exists here in the North Coast to lead the way in a national movement of making better use of our land and natural resources for growing food.

Analysis of Traffic and Impacts of More Cars

While the Plan states that the cost of new roads will need to be cost neutral for Council, it fails to define what 'cost neutral' means. The plan needs to be explicit about road tolls, shared costs with developers, subsidies, etc, with respect to the construction and maintenance of roads.

Will Council conduct any analysis of the impacts of extra cars travelling on the connecting roads, the resulting extra traffic in towns?

Consultation with Impacted Residents

How does the Plan propose consultation with local residents around a proposed new subdivisions?

Population Increases

How will the Plan regulate land release in line with the number of dwellings recommended over the remaining 15 year period of that plan? The number of dwellings recommended in the Plan is for approximately 4500 in the next 15 years. This draft strategy potentially provides for over 800 new dwellings, which accounts for a significant percentage of that overall goal.

Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities

What steps will the Plan be taking to provide access for families on lower incomes to buy into any of these land releases? The extra costs put onto housing developments by private developers makes the hope of buying any of these properties a mere dream for many families living in this region. There is an opportunity for this Plan to lead the way in developing innovative solutions to keep these land releases as affordable as possible for families, ie outside of the traditional model where it is developed by private interests who are beholden to their shareholders, not the community in which they operate.

There are some really inspiring examples of environmentally sustainable housing solutions in other parts of the world, and at this crucial opportunity for innovative planning, we need to include solutions such as these.

<http://www.fastcoexist.com/3060167/this-new-neighborhood-will-grow-its-own-food-power-its-elf-and-handle-its-own-waste>