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INGHAM
P L A N N I N G
Pty Limited

Our Ref: N Ingham

May 24, 2016

The NSW Department of Environment and Planning
PO Box 58
DUBBO NSW 2830

Dear Sir / Madam,

Re: DRAFT CENTRAL WESTERN AND ORANA REGIONAL PLAN

This is a submission to the NSW Government relating to the above draft Regional Plan. I applaud the work that has existed in the making of this draft Plan. It is a document that pulls together many of the issues relating to this region. My concern for the region is because I am a Life Fellow of the Australian Planning Institute and I lived in Condobolin and Lake Cargelligo for 12 months of my early career.

There are a number of issues arising from the exhibited document which I will address in the following paragraphs.

1. On page 6 & 7 of the document are plans which identified amongst other things, hospitals in the Region. However, there are numerous other hospitals which exist within the Region and which are described as "District" hospitals, as is Cowra, Parkes and Forbes Hospitals, but are not shown.

If the hospitals identified on these plans are "Regional" or have some special classification, they need to be identified by some distinctive terminology

2. The draft Strategy discusses, in numerous places, the Brisbane – Melbourne rail freight corridor. This appears to be a sound concept to keep freight out of Sydney. I would have thought that this will result in some freight being off-loaded in Parkes, with destinations in Adelaide and Sydney, as well as regional freight being loaded onto trains headed for Brisbane and Melbourne. This will require space for a freight terminal, which does not appear as part of the Plan.

Furthermore, there is no date set for the construction and completion of this freight line, which must be given a time frame if it is to be believed.

3. There is no positive proposal in the Plan concerning the preservation and damming of water, to assist agriculture in the region. During wet seasons, much of the water simply flows to the Murray/Darling rivers. During dry seasons there is not enough water for irrigation purposes.

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On pages 14 and 15 are two plans which show a very extensive irrigation area, but without any water storage areas for irrigation. These irrigation areas are meaningless, unless provision is made for water storage.

4. There is no identification in the Plan of land which is prime agricultural land, whether it has available water or not. Prime agricultural land should be protected for future generations. It should be protected, particularly from mining operations, which destroy and do not rehabilitate prime agricultural land. While the Plan does identify Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land, it needs to identify and protect prime agricultural land.
5. What steps are being taken to ensure mining operations progressively restore mined areas as the mine proceeds. Most approvals of mines have a condition of consent which requires restoration. However, it has been acknowledged by the lack of restoration generally. If a mining operation does not progressively rehabilitate mined areas, the mining operation should be closed down. This will require greater supervision and action by Government authorities, who will not be subject to pressure from the mine concerning jobs which could be lost if the mine closes. Mining operators need to be aware, prior to any development of the consequences of degrading the land. In any event, mining should not be permitted on prime agricultural land as the resource is a short term economic booster, whereas the agricultural use is continuous.

The comment on page 24 that the NSW Government will:

“investigate appropriate methods for encouraging best-practice rehabilitation and visual impact management for mines;”

is not good enough. The Government has had ample opportunity to enforce conditions of development consent on mining operations but has failed to do so.

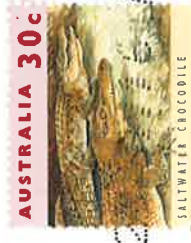
6. I question how the “Coordination and Monitoring Committee” is to operate unless it is given money to act. If the State Government is to determine the future and act to implement policy and proposals, then what use is the “Co-ordination and Monitoring Committee.” The creation of a committee will do nothing unless it has money and is given the power to act.

I trust that these comments will assist in the production of the final Regional Plan. I may have missed some relevant comment in the Draft Regional Plan, but these comments are intended to be helpful. I strongly support the making of this Regional Plan.

Yours sincerely

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