

# **Planning Wentworth Shire The Opportunity for NSW**



## **Premier and Planning Minister announce new Twin City for country New South Wales**

The NSW Premier, Kristina Keneally, and Planning Minister, Tony Kelly, have today announced planning support for development of a new twin city in Wentworth Shire, opposite Mildura in Victoria on the Murray River.

“We see the growth opportunity for Wentworth Shire being similar to that achieved in the Albury Wodonga area in the past 25 years. There is the opportunity for a city the size of Dubbo (30,000 residents) plus significant new tourism and commercial development. This will bring growth and jobs to New South Wales and further strengthen the Mildura Wentworth area.” the Premier said.

Minister for Planning, Tony Kelly stated:

“We are today announcing \$500,000 of funding over two years for a masterplan of the Wentworth Shire and planning studies to ensure a balanced and environmentally sustainable development of the Wentworth Shire as a location for residential, tourism and commercial development. We expect this development will generate \$1 billion of new investment to New South Wales and create 10,000 new jobs in New South Wales over the next twenty five years.”



# The Opportunity

- Many strategic advantages:
  - Junction of Murray and Darling = reliable secure water
  - At junction of national grid = ideal location for electricity infrastructure
  - At junction of national highways
  - No short term needs for medical or education infrastructure as hospitals, schools, TAFE and University all available in Mildura
  - More hours of sunshine than Queensland
  - Area acts as a sponge for Riverland SA, Mallee VIC and Broken Hill NSW
  - Mildura is a major focus of Victorian Government activity
  - Large inexpensive land parcels available close to the existing Mildura city
- Wentworth can grow on the back of Mildura as Wodonga grew on the back of Albury
- Notwithstanding current horticulture woes Mildura is booming!
- Marina is being developed, a \$400 m Casino is proposed and the Mineral Sands and solar energy industries are taking over as major growth drivers.
- Every time a Victorian moves from Mildura to Wentworth Shire they bring to NSW:
  - Stamp duty
  - Rates, Rego and fees
  - GST revenue
  - Multiplier consumption
- With that same move there is minimal additional expenditure required for hospitals and education which are all available in Mildura

# Status Quo

- Wentworth Council has completely inadequate skills and resources to undertake strategic planning at the level required by Planning NSW
- An example of this is the Council not believing the SEPP (Rural Lands) 2008 applies to it because it is dated 2008
- Planning NSW's Dubbo Office is 7 hours drive from Wentworth and there is no air route – it would be easier to deal with Sydney
- No Rural Lands Study or Study relating to River Setbacks has been conducted – notwithstanding this major changes to setbacks and rural planning are being proposed
- Buronga Gol Gol Study was commenced 8 years ago and is not yet finalised
- Draft Rural Residential Study started 5 years ago and is not yet complete
- Mildura continues to grow while Wentworth stands still!

# Why has Wentworth's Planning failed?

- NSW Government logically wants **standard rules** across NSW so Planning Scheme/LEPs/Housing Codes are designed to meet needs of large city and coastal councils
- The system does not suit small regional Councils
- **Number Staff** of Wentworth Planning Dept. is inadequate to handle complexity of Planning Scheme/LEPs/Housing Codes – a minimum of seven is required to handle the complexity and Wentworth has three, two of whom do not have a town planning background
- Wentworth Council has not adequately explained local factors to the Department of Planning
- Wentworth has **no strategic planning experience** when the whole NSW Planning System is based on Strategic Planning
- Strategic **planning consultants used on ad hoc basis, not properly instructed and Wentworth isolated** from Department of Planning in Dubbo and Sydney

# Inappropriate linking of rezoning to rural lands issues in Draft LEP

- Wentworth Shire has recently asserted that they are being required by Planning NSW to insert changes to rural lands in the Draft LEP as a condition of rezonings of Land in Buronga Gol Gol being progressed
- Such action by Wentworth Councillors will breach the Wentworth Council Code of Conduct
- An investigation should be undertaken as to whether Wentworth Council and Planning NSW are acting appropriately in the implementation of the new LEP
- Rural landholders should be entitled to the same due process as city landholders
- Why are strategic planning studies so important *apart from where rural land is concerned?*

# Draft Murray Regional Strategy

## Rural Planning Issues

- Setback rural for the Murray River should not be changed to the detriment of rural landholders – why is it OK that city people have water views but country people can't?
- High Conservation Area designated locations of around 1 million hectares predominantly comprises existing farmland – maps have not been discussed with landholders or been subject to review

## Wentworth as a Twin Town

- Buronga Gol Gol should be planned as a Twin Town with Mildura
- Growth should be much more than the 10 homes p.a. projected in the Strategy – Mildura is planning for 500 p.a.
- Support some long term infrastructure such as a new bridge for the area

# Further Requested Outcomes

## Rural Planning Issues

- Rights relating to rural lands in Wentworth not be changed before public reviews have taken place including:
  - Rural Residential Study
  - Rural Lands Study
  - River Setback Study
- Dept. Planning Dubbo and Wentworth Council be instructed to not link rural lands issues with urban rezoning issues
- Process relating to Wentworth LEP be investigated to ensure issues are not being inappropriately linked

## Wentworth Shire as a Twin Town

- NSW Government recognise the potential for Wentworth Shire to become a Twin City with Mildura and support this by:
  - Taking control of Wentworth's strategic planning for a two year period and having the Cities Taskforce, Growth Centres Commission or a specific Taskforce draw up strategies for Wentworth's growth; OR
  - Alternatively, the Department could establish a working group with Wentworth Council or fund a Masterplan by a professional urban design company
  - NSW Government fund a short term increase in planning resource which is needed to conduct the tourism, industrial, rural lands and rural residential strategies and masterplan that are necessary – approx. \$250,000 pa for two years