

Draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan

NSW Department of Planning

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Introduction

The Hunter Business Chamber (The Chamber) is the largest regional business chamber in Australia and was established in 1886. The Chamber independently represents almost 2,000 member organisations to all levels of government and is the peak industry association in the region, reflecting the interests of all business sectors.

The Hunter Business Chamber works as an integral part of the NSW Business Chamber network and represents business at local, state and federal level to advocate for an improved operational climate for businesses in this region.

The Hunter is well recognised as the home to Australia's most resilient and diverse regional economy. The Hunter region in NSW just north of Sydney covers over 31,000 square kilometres and has over 660,000 people or 9% of the state's population.

An unparalleled cross section of industry calls the Hunter region home. Newcastle is the eighth largest city in Australia and is renowned for being the world's largest coal export port. The Port and Newcastle Airport are significant global gateways and have grown exponentially over the past ten years.

Newcastle, as the second largest city of NSW and the capital of the Hunter, has the ability to be a world-class city, given its coastal location and access to infrastructure. It is home to world-class health, research and education facilities as well as a range of complementary and emerging industries such as renewable energy technologies, the defence industry, tourism and the digital economy.

Response

The Hunter Business Chamber is pleased to provide the following feedback to the Draft Plan.

Transitioning to a service, creative and knowledge city

Newcastle and the Hunter are undergoing significant growth and revitalisation. The inner city suburbs are home to world-class education, research, health and legal facilities. While it is exciting to see growth across the innovation and start-up sector the Plan should also acknowledge that much economic contribution is still derived from other industries such as manufacturing, mining/resources, defence and tourism related sectors. The Chamber challenges the statement that we are transitioning purely to a service, creative and knowledge city and find it contradicts the statement *"It builds on the city's dynamic and vibrant city centre, its strong industrial employment base"*... found under the section on **An emerging metropolitan city with global appeal**.

A Planned Approach to Growth and Sustainability

The Draft Plan identifies the following catalyst areas as centres of importance where a planned approach will drive the transformation of Greater Newcastle as a metropolitan city.

The Chamber acknowledges the inclusion of the following centres: Broadmeadow; Callaghan; East Maitland; John Hunter Hospital; Kotara; Newcastle City Centre; global gateways of Newcastle Airport and Newcastle Port as well as major trading hubs at Beresfield-Black Hill and Tomago, and would challenge that Glendale/Cardiff should be included in this plan as a catalyst area going forward. This is a growing centre and will provide links to other catalyst areas.

Collaborating to Deliver the Plan

The Chamber concurs that growth and success of metropolitan cities will be achieved best where there is a collaborative approach between all levels of government, business, industry and the community, to a shared vision and planning.

The Plan discusses a collaborative governance framework with a view to *“establishing a Committee for Greater Newcastle to advise on metropolitan-scale collaboration between community, industry and government”*.

We support this approach and have been working with key regional stakeholders to develop a committee with a common goal of providing a single voice for the Hunter.

Regional stakeholders include: Hunter Business Chamber, Port of Newcastle, Newcastle Airport, Property Council, HunterNet, University of Newcastle (including Hunter Research Foundation) and Urban Development Institute of Australia. Further collaboration will be undertaken with other regional stakeholders including community and local government.

This group has had an initial meeting and drafted a Memorandum of Understanding that has been circulated for consideration and sign off. We look forward to engaging more widely going forward but this is indicative of significant appetite and commitment to providing a united and collaborative approach to advocacy efforts in the Hunter and will deliver on this component of the Plan’s governance objectives.

Create a Workforce Skilled and Ready for the New Economy

Strategy 1.1

The City Centre has undergone significant change and continues to transform. Growing investment and confidence in the city will see more visitors and business attracted to its centre. The Chamber supports the actions outlined and looks forward to seeing these progressed and implemented. In providing new housing for workers and students it is important to ensure there is a mix of affordable housing options to sustain optimal utilisation.

Strategy 1.2

The Chamber notes the attention to addressing enabling infrastructure that will support and facilitate growth and development of the Williamstown Defence and Airport Related Employment Zone (DAREZ) for aerospace industries and associated complementary uses.

Newcastle Airport and Williamstown Defence base are significant assets and critical contributors to the regional and state economies.

Demonstrating the already strong position of the region, passenger throughput at the Airport has grown by 25% in the past 10 years, and they forecast that in the next 20 years the Airport will welcome up to 2.65 million passengers annually (double the current annual passenger movements).

Newcastle Airport already contributes over \$1 billion in economic impact to the state’s economy. The NSW Government’s support of quality transport infrastructure and planning will provide people with greater ease of access and remove barriers to connectivity.

In addition to growing domestic visitation, Newcastle Airport is ready to receive international flights and the HBC understands they are working to secure these opportunities.

The HBC further understands that Newcastle Airport will launch its 20-year Master Plan and 60-year vision in 2018.

The NSW Government *Hunter Regional Plan 2036* notes that “Greater Newcastle benefits from direct access to national and international markets through the global gateways of Newcastle Airport and the Port of Newcastle. They have enabled the Hunter to become the largest regional economy in Australia and an important gateway for regional NSW for goods and tourists. The region’s ongoing economic prosperity will depend on its ability to capitalise on these strategic assets.”

“The gateways and their associated networks will be safeguarded so they remain viable, globally competitive and adaptable. Improving connectivity and ‘last mile connections’ between freight routes – and to the Port of Newcastle and Newcastle Airport – will improve freight movements to global markets and drive regional economic growth. It will also improve connections between the labour force and global markets, sustaining productivity in the Hunter.”¹

Maximising the use of the Hunter region’s assets will also help grow and diversify regional New South Wales economies. This is a goal of the Hunter Regional Plan 2036: “*The Hunter is strategically situated to leverage proximity to Asia and the region’s growing agricultural, health, education and tourism sectors to supply developing Asian economies with resources and products.*”

It is important that transport, infrastructure corridors and land that support this airport zone are identified and preserved.

Strategy 1.3

Newcastle Port is a key economic driver for Newcastle, the Hunter Region and NSW. It is a strong contributor to a smart, liveable and revitalised city. It has been integral to the growth and identity of the city for nearly 220 years.

Plans need to be aligned to support further growth, investment and employment opportunities: The Port is developing a 20 year Port Master Plan. It is crucial that the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan takes into account and supports the current and future opportunities for the Port which flow across the community. The port’s economic contribution has a flow on impact across a range of sectors.

Future planning needs to support the current trades as well as the development of new diversification initiatives. These include the Newcastle Container Terminal, East Coast Bulk Terminal and the strategic development of the adjoining land, such as the Intertrade Site for a port-related use.

The port is a vital *trade gateway for NSW*. This includes the export catchment areas in western and northern NSW, as well as supporting population growth in Sydney and regional NSW for imports. Having access to a world class trade gateway with capacity to grow without major

¹ *Hunter Regional Plan 2036*, 2016, P15

infrastructure investment is a strategic opportunity for NSW. The value and capacity of this nationally significant asset must be recognised, supported and protected.

The identification of industrial land zoned for logistics, warehousing and distribution is needed to support future port development plans, including the development of a container terminal.

It is the Chamber's understanding that the Port of Newcastle is committed to the growth of all its trades including coal, and to the continuation of coal export activities at Carrington and Kooragang Island.

It further understands that the Port encourages the proactive management of urban interface with the port and transport corridors to ensure sustainable operations and protection from issues of urban encroachment. This includes recognition of the Port's economic value and operational requirements in Government land use strategies and plans, as well as ensuring adequate protection of the port on an individual development assessment basis.

Page 84 of the Plan highlights the *"potential to relocate coal export facilities and bulk fuel storage away from residential areas and explore options to renew the Carrington Precinct for alternative uses (including tourism)."*

The Chamber does not support this. This does not align with Port of Newcastle's plans, or the State Environmental Planning Policy (Three Ports) 2013 ('the Ports SEPP'). This land is part of Port of Newcastle's landholdings under its 98 year lease with the NSW Government which commenced on 30 May 2014. The land is zoned for Special Activities SP1 pursuant to the Ports SEPP, the aim of the zone being to facilitate development that by its nature or scale requires separation from residential areas and other sensitive land uses.

Coal is an important part of the Port's diversification strategy. This statement does not reflect the importance of the Carrington Coal Terminal and is inconsistent with Port Waratah Coal Service's operations as well as Direction 2 of the Hunter Regional Plan.

The Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan must be reconciled with other Government plans and strategies to ensure consistency of objectives and outcomes and importantly providing certainty to business and community.

Conclusion

The Hunter Business Chamber appreciates the opportunity to provide these comments on the Plan and would welcome any further engagement around this matter.

Contact

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