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Introduction

The NSW Government is committed to planning for the future housing, jobs, infrastructure and environmental needs of its regions. To deliver this commitment, the NSW Department of Planning and Environment released a series of draft Regional Plans in late 2015 for public comment.

Stakeholders and the community were invited to provide feedback and submissions on the draft Central Coast Regional Plan between 25 November 2015 and 24 March 2016. During this period, the Department received 223 submissions from a wide range of stakeholders.

This report summarises the engagement program undertaken for the draft Central Coast Regional Plan and feedback received through the engagement program. It also details the range of submissions received in response to the Plan, the themes raised through submissions and the government response and actions related to these issues. These responses have guided the development of the final Regional Plan which was released in 2016.
Engagement program

Methodology

To raise awareness of the draft Central Coast Regional Plan and to encourage feedback to help inform the preparation of the final Plan, the Department undertook a wide-reaching engagement program which initially ran from 25 November 2015 to 24 February 2016. The consultation program was extended by one month, until 24 March 2016, in response to community requests.

To ensure the final Plan responded to a range of needs, a thorough stakeholder analysis was undertaken and a number of stakeholders were consulted, including:

- residents, community and interest groups
- business and industry peak bodies
- high school students
- the Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council
- local government.

Tools and results

The engagement program involved a number of tools to reach these stakeholders and gather their feedback.

Events and briefing sessions

Briefings were held early in the consultation period to engage groups and people who represented a range of interests. The Department also held a number of follow-up meetings and briefings that focused on specific issues raised by participants. In total, 16 briefings and meetings were held with 227 attendees.

Meetings with key stakeholders have continued after the consultation process in order to discuss and clarify issues raised in the submissions.

Council outreach

Information about the draft Plan consultation was distributed at Central Coast Council information centres and included on their websites.

Youth forum

To engage younger people living on the Central Coast, the Department facilitated a forum on 18 February 2016 for high school students in the Central Coast area in partnership with the NSW Department of Education, Community of Catholic Schools, University of Newcastle and the Central Coast’s Ourimbah campus.

Students attended from Terrigal High School, Kariong Mountains High School, St Peters Catholic College Tuggerah, Brisbane Water Secondary College Umina Campus, Tumbi Umbi Campus, Tuggerah Lakes Secondary College, Kincumber High School and Narara Valley High School.

The forum was well received by attendees with 22 of the 32 attendees reporting an overall satisfaction level of five (the highest score possible) and all attendees giving the forum a satisfaction score of three or above.

An aspirational quote from the youth forum

“A modern ecofriendly city well known for it’s chilled out feel and laid back environment. Filled with tourism, youth involvement and family friendly vibe for all ages.”

Terrigal Surf Life Saving Club, outdoor dining
The forum attendees provided their insights on topics such as the impacts of increased urban and mining activity on the environment, the importance of engaging with indigenous groups, culture and inclusion of youth and families and keeping the planning process flexible so it can adapt to changes in regional, state and global economies.

Feedback from the forum was considered in the development of the final Plan and the issues consolidated with the issues discussed in the submissions analysis section of this report.

Email direct marketing

An email titled ‘Help shape the future of the Central Coast community’ was sent out on 25 November 2015 to over 5,000 subscribers on the Department’s eNews list and other contacts on the Department’s Central Coast regional team’s list. The purpose of the email was to launch the engagement program for the draft Plan and encourage subscribers to visit the Department’s website and lodge a submission.

Survey

The Department created a survey comprising 18 questions that asked respondents about their priorities, values, views, and goals for regional planning.

The survey was available online via the Department’s website and was also issued to a research panel of people living on the Central Coast. In total, 413 people participated in the survey.

Overall, the results of the survey showed:

- Health services, proximity to local services and local parks and greenspace are seen as most important to Central Coast residents.
- The three things that residents most like about their area are community, the beaches/environment and proximity to services.
- Jobs and housing affordability are two factors that local residents see as important, but are not seen as being well managed.
- Securing the region’s water supply and providing more support for employment are seen as the two most important environmental and land use factors.
- There is positivity about the draft Plan goals, however less support for increasing housing supply.

The five most important factors to the Central Coast region respondents were:

1. Health Services
2. Proximity to Services
3. Open Spaces, Parks and Recreation Areas
4. The Local Environment
5. Jobs
Digital (including online activity, social media and website)

A comprehensive program of digital advertising activity was undertaken during the campaign. This program helped to drive engagement over a number of channels including the Department’s website, Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

This program helped raise awareness of the consultation on the draft Plan and encouraged people to visit the Department’s website to provide feedback.

The website featured the draft Plan, a summary of the Plan’s highlights, an interactive map for visitors to comment on the draft Plan, and the online survey. During the campaign period there were 5,810 unique visits to view content relating to the draft Plan.

People also provided feedback by commenting on Facebook.

The three most popular themes discussed as a result of the Facebook campaign were:

1. boosting the Central Coast economy
2. housing
3. what people love about the Central Coast.

Media

The Department distributed two media releases – the first on 25 November 2015 to announce the regional planning process and the second on 24 February 2016 to detail the extension of the consultation period for a further month.

In total there were over 100 media stories.

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<th>MEDIA STATISTICS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Print and online newspaper articles</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
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The three most popular themes discussed as a result of the Facebook campaign were:

1. boosting the Central Coast economy
2. housing
3. what people love about the Central Coast.
Submissions

Methodology

As a result of the community engagement program, the Department received 223 submissions.

Each submission was comprehensively reviewed and relevant comments were identified and catalogued to prepare a comprehensive data set by theme.

The 15 themes identified were:

1. Population growth
2. Housing
3. Centres and settlements
4. Transport and infrastructure
5. Land use conflict
6. Agriculture
7. Resources and energy
8. Environment
9. Health services
10. Education services
11. Cross-border
12. Economy
13. Implementation and monitoring
14. Local place-based
15. Other matters.

In some categories, for example ‘Transport and infrastructure’ – a large volume of feedback was received. In these cases, sub-themes (for example, freight and logistics, public transport, proposed infrastructure and local roads) have been used to sort, analyse and present information.

Summary of submissions

Type of submitters

Submissions were received from a range of stakeholders including:

- private individuals
- business and industry groups
- community and environment groups
- local government
- state government
- elected representatives.

Location of submitters

The Central Coast Regional Plan covers the two former local government areas of Gosford and Wyong. Submissions were received from both within and outside the region.
Broad areas

Submissions raised a variety of different views on a range of topics.

Below is a summary of the overarching areas identified in submissions.

1. There is positivity about the goals in the draft Plan.

2. There are concerns around potential land use conflicts between environmental areas, agricultural land, extractive industries and residential development. More specifically, submissions request more consideration and better coordination of conflicts in land use planning to protect rural lands and extractive industries from excessive increases in rural residential or urban residential developments.

3. Water supply and water quality were prominent issues. In particular, the need to consider water supply for an increasing population and the conflict between extractive resources development and water supply. Submissions highlighted some diverse views regarding the management of water supply, quality and catchments. Some felt the priority given to these topics in the draft Plan was adequate while others felt these topics needed further consideration.

A number of submissions highlighted opposition to the proposal to expand the Warnervale Airport (since renamed Central Coast Airport) to a regional airport. This proposal is not a NSW Government proposal, was not proposed under the draft or final Regional Plan and is considered to be out of scope.
Submissions: Analysis and response

Population growth

Themes that emerged were:

- Views that population growth could impact negatively on the region’s environment and infrastructure.
- Concern that population growth will increase unemployment and traffic problems, regardless of any infrastructure improvements.
- Requirements for additional recreational areas to meet the health needs of a growing population.
- Calls for additional planning required for population projections and further detail regarding population growth.

Response

The final Plan is based on recently released (September 2016) population, household and dwelling projections prepared by the Department. These projections will be used by the NSW Government to help plan for service and infrastructure delivery for the community.

These are identified in the Plan as projections, not targets, and are based on assumptions that take into account recent and current trends for births, deaths and migration. Projections can change due to factors such as migration levels, new technology and social attitudes to different living arrangements.

In response to themes raised in submissions, the Department has:

- Identified as a priority action to align housing and employment land with development-enabling infrastructure through the implementation of an Urban Development Program, Employment Land Development Monitor and review of development contributions.
- Strengthened the aim of increasing the region’s level of employment self-containment to reduce the percentage of local residents who commute out of the region for work each day. This will be achieved through a range of strategies to increase and focus local employment opportunities in the regional growth corridors, regional gateways and centres and employment land distributed across the region.
- Included actions requiring the alignment of land use and infrastructure planning, including the identification of new sites for services such as health and infrastructure, reviewing development contributions and infrastructure plans for new development areas, aligning infrastructure provision in areas close to the border between the Central Coast and Hunter regions and aligning infrastructure and development sequencing plans.
Housing

Themes that emerged were:

- A variety of views about housing supply and demand – including housing density, rezoning, land prioritisation and land release.
- Requests for targets to be set for housing delivery and employment growth.
- Suggestions that new housing developments should include housing that meets the needs of the Central Coast population and calls for guidance and strategies to ensure suitable kinds of housing are built.
- Comments supporting the merits and development potential of specific areas including sites and places at Somersby North, Kincumber, Holgate and Terrigal.
- Concerns the use of residential flat buildings in the Gosford local government area will not effectively alleviate rental housing shortages and housing affordability.
- Suggestions for better integration of land use planning and infrastructure to unlock potential for housing.
- Requests that affordable housing is clearly defined and considered within the final Plan, and that affordable housing targets are set in the final Plan and opportunities for this affordable housing exist for the local community.

Response

In response, the Department has:

- Identified a priority action to align housing and employment land with development-enabling infrastructure through the implementation of the Urban Development Program, Employment Land Development Monitor and review of development contributions.
- Included a direction to accelerate housing supply in the Central Coast’s existing and new development areas to assist housing supply and choice and support the needs of the region’s growing and ageing population while maintaining its relative affordability compared to Sydney.
- Included actions to provide greater housing choice, by delivering a diversity of housing, lot types and sizes, smaller housing types, including small-lot housing in infill and greenfield housing locations.
- Identified that the most efficient way to support growth and development will be through providing additional housing within the existing urban areas and concentrating new development opportunities in the North Wyong Shire Structure Plan Area. While there may be potential for some urban development to occur on the urban fringe, areas such as Somersby and other areas west of the M1 Pacific Motorway are unlikely to be required for urban residential development during the lifetime of the Plan. This matter can be considered further at the time of the next review to the Regional Plan.
- Committed to undertake further investigation to improve understanding of the region’s needs, including weekend, seasonal and aged housing and the demands placed on housing and services.
- Identified a requirement for the preparation of local housing strategies to respond to the housing needs of specific communities, including social and affordable housing. It is yet to be determined whether these strategies will include targets for affordable housing provision.
Centres and settlements

Themes that emerged were:

• Widespread support for the introduction of a ‘centres hierarchy’ to be developed in consultation with Council and calls for more direction around the role and function of strategic centres.
• Requests for more detail around new centre development plans and clearer definition around the term ‘regional gateway’.
• Suggestions that the final Plan include more information around the development of sustainable small village centres in the Somersby and Mangrove Mountain areas to counter population decrease, encourage rural diversification and promote tourism.

Response

In response, the Department has identified the importance of establishing a network of mixed-use centres across the region, including several strategic centres which are expected to be the focus of higher-order activity and infrastructure investment.

The Plan provides a framework for more detailed centres revitalisation work by Central Coast Council. Any plans for the expansion in the role of rural villages will be the responsibility of Central Coast Council and would be undertaken in consultation with the community.

Transport and infrastructure

Themes that emerged were:

• Requests for more detail around the proposed infrastructure projects aimed at increasing road transport capacity in the area.
• Requests for more detail around proposed public transport improvements.
• Requests for more planning detail for areas including Gwandalan, Summerland Point, Tuggerah Business Park, Wyong Road at Tuggerah, Long Jetty and The Entrance.
• Objection to the proposed Warnervale Airport development.

Response

In response, the Department has:

• Implemented a priority action to align housing and employment land with development enabling infrastructure through implementation of the Urban Development Program, Employment Land Development Monitor and a review of development contributions.
• Provided more detail around current planned and committed infrastructure in the Plan and how future infrastructure planning initiatives will be prioritised to align with growth.
• Provided guidance to allow more detailed local planning for the areas identified above to be undertaken by Central Coast Council.
• Clarified that the Plan will inform future revisions of the Central Coast Regional Transport Plan, prepared by Transport for NSW.

A separate response to the issue of the Warnervale Airport (now referred to as Central Coast Airport) is provided on page 13 of this report.
Land use conflict

A number of submissions raised concerns regarding land use conflict – in particular conflicts between environmental areas, agricultural land, extractive industries and residential development.

Key themes that emerged were:

• Requests for more consideration and better coordination of conflicts in land use planning to protect rural lands and extractive industries from excessive increases in rural residential or urban residential developments. Further to this, submissions called for a clear hierarchy of values and supporting mapping to ensure varying lands achieve the broader goals of the region.
• Calls for further guidance to be provided for lands west of the M1 Pacific Motorway.
• Recommendations for exclusionary zones, and preservation measures to be implemented to protect environmental values and water quality from extractive resources.

Response

In response, the Department has:

• Identified a priority action to undertake a project which will identify and address land use needs west of the M1 Pacific Motorway to provide integrated and adaptable planning outcomes for natural assets, productive lands and rural lifestyles.
• Identified the importance of a broad range of values which apply west of the M1 Pacific Motorway and of dealing with these in an integrated way.

Agriculture

A number of submissions requested greater protection of rural lands and a stronger emphasis on agricultural development in the Plan.

Other themes raised were:

• Requests for the development of a suite of policy, legislation and zoning documents to control agricultural land use.
• Calls for the implementation of incentives and further community engagement and education.
• Claims that the future of the fishing industry on the Central Coast had not been captured in the Plan.

Response

In response, the Department has:

•Acknowledged the importance of a range of values which apply west of the M1 Pacific Motorway.
• Highlighted the value of agricultural production and identified a priority action to undertake a project which will identify and address land use needs west of the M1 Pacific Motorway to provide integrated and adaptable planning outcomes for natural assets, productive lands and rural lifestyles.
• Identified that aquaculture is one of the important primary production industries in the region and also identifies several actions in relation to water quality and protection of the region’s waterways.
**Resources and energy**

The majority of these submissions mirrored sentiments raised under the land use conflict and ‘Agriculture’ themes.

Other themes raised were:

- Calls for clearer definition of the land used for extractive industries and better planning and regulation in these industries to mitigate air quality, noise and water supply impacts on health.
- Suggestions the extractive industries in the Somersby and Mangrove Mountain areas have a negative impact on amenity and sustainable agriculture and do not greatly contribute to employment.
- Disagreement with the emphasis placed on traditional mining and coal seam gas extraction as energy sources, and suggestions that a greater emphasis should be placed on renewable energy sources.

**Environment**

Themes that emerged were:

- Calls for the final Plan to articulate commitment to the Coastal Open Space Strategy (COSS) including long-term voluntary acquisition of the remaining 37% of land currently identified in the COSS. These submissions also included calls for the COSS and its methodology to be applied to the entire region.
- Feelings the plan did not offer enough protection for areas of high environmental value or native flora and fauna and for clear mechanisms to protect these areas. These submissions also called for prohibition zones to be included in the Plan.
- Suggestions that too much emphasis has been placed on using biodiversity offsetting as a tool to facilitate development.
- Diverse views regarding whether the management of water supply, quality and catchments had been significantly considered in the Plan. Some felt the priority given to these topics in the draft Plan was adequate while others felt these topics needed to be better considered.
- Calls for more recognition of the need to consider water supply for an increasing population and the interaction between extractive resources development and water supply.
- Concerns regarding the risk of climate change, extreme weather events and natural hazards on existing community assets and proposed housing developments.
- Calls for the final Plan to include specific reference to strategies for heatwave resilience, including community awareness of the health impacts.

**Response**

In response, the Department has:

- Highlighted the economic value of a number of sectors in areas west of the M1 Pacific Motorway, including resources.
- Identified a priority action to undertake a project which will identify and address land use needs west of the M1 Pacific Motorway to provide integrated and adaptable planning outcomes for natural assets, productive lands and rural lifestyles.
• Requests for the implementation of ‘best practice’ principals and clearer mapping around biodiversity offsetting.
• Calls for the abandonment of the east-west green corridor in favour of biodiversity offsets.

Response
In response, the Department has:
• Included a new action in the Plan to strengthen the region’s network of reserves and open space (including the Coastal Open Space System) by expanding its links and extending new corridors to balance growth in the north of the region and protect the network of natural areas across the region.
• Included an action in the Plan to identify terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity values and protect areas of high environmental value to sustain the lifestyle, economic success and environmental health of the region.
• Included an action in the Plan to undertake a precinct approach to biodiversity offsetting in northern Wyong to protect riparian corridors and terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity to achieve the conservation and development objectives of the North Wyong Shire Structure Plan.
• Included an action in the Plan to effectively manage surface and ground water use in agricultural areas to support ecosystem function, food production and cater for the increasing demand of urban communities and industry.
• Highlighted the value of the areas west of the M1 Pacific Motorway for drinking water catchments and required the application of the ‘neutral or beneficial’ test to land use decisions in this area. This principle has also been applied to the final Plan to ensure consistency across regional boundaries.
• Included a new direction in the Plan on climate change to protect the coast and natural hazards and put a greater focus on renewable energy.

Health services
Feedback on this theme included incorporating the improvement of community health and wellbeing as an explicit objective and goal of, in line with the approach taken in the 2015 Illawarra/Shoalhaven Regional Plan.

Response
In response, the Department has:
• Highlighted the need to provide a range of infrastructure and services to support the growing and changing population, including health facilities.
• Identified opportunities to support major infrastructure investment in health facilities at Gosford and Wyong hospitals and leverage this investment to support revitalisation and local employment.

In response to submissions, the Department has identified opportunities to support major infrastructure.
Education services

Submissions raised concerns regarding a lack of emphasis on education facilities and requested the plan feature more detail around the proposed education infrastructure improvements in the region.

Response

In response, the Department has:

• Highlighted the need to provide a range of infrastructure and services to support the growing and changing population, including education facilities.
• Identified opportunities to leverage infrastructure investment in education facilities, including the Ourimbah campus of the University of Newcastle and the Central Coast, to support revitalisation and local employment.

Economy

Themes that emerged were:

• The need to maintain a strong focus on employment growth and job creation.
• Calls for a strategy around economic and employment development that identifies the key initiatives being undertaken to provide for employment and economic growth.
• Widespread support for regional economic corridors and requests to clearly identify the measure of success of these corridors.
• The importance of smaller neighbourhood centres in encouraging small business opportunities and providing employment.
• Requests for the Plan to identify more strategies to grow the tourism economy, in particular the increasing popularity of caravan and holiday and tourist parks.
• Requests for the Plan to identify the importance and availability of industrial land in employment growth and identify key industrial precincts.

Response

In response, the Department has:

• Identified strategies for increasing local employment, developing city centres and economic growth corridors and supporting specific economic sectors.
• Developed a priority action in the implementation plan to identify integrated opportunities in the Northern and Southern Growth Corridors and update local plans to foster economic development.
• Supported the ongoing work and review of the Regional Economic Development and Employment Strategy.
• Identified several actions to deliver on the NSW Government and community’s combined vision for Gosford City Centre.
Implementation and monitoring

Themes that emerged were:

- Suggestions for membership of the governance and monitoring committee for the Plan. In particular, it was suggested the committee include representatives from the community, local businesses, property industry, local councils, local health district, various NSW Government departments.
- Support for an implementation committee, but concerns for limited representation on the committee, a lack of diverse views and transparency in the appointment process. Suggestions were made regarding membership of the committee including views local land services and community groups should be represented.
- Suggestions the directions and actions outlined in the Plan should be more measurable and amended to include targets and timeframes, and requested a comprehensive list of deliverables that the taskforce will be accountable for implementing.
- Highlighting links between the Plan and local government operational plans and suggestions the Regional Plan should inform these plans.
- Calls for more meaningful community engagement around the Plan.

Response

The NSW Government’s commitment to the delivery of the Plan is demonstrated by the establishment of the Central Coast Delivery, Coordination and Monitoring Committee. The Committee will drive delivery and lead coordination to achieve the vision and goals of the Plan. It comprises local and state agencies that will work together and listen to the community, to ensure that growth is aligned with infrastructure delivery.

The Committee will implement this Plan – prioritising the actions needed to seize on immediate and emerging opportunities for the region. In the short term, planning for growth corridors, freight and logistics, agribusiness, resources and the protection of regionally significant biodiversity corridors will leave a long term legacy. Over time, new priorities will be identified to support growth and change in the region.

The Committee will actively monitor trends and activities to review progress towards achieving the vision and goals for 2036. This information will support the prioritisation of the NSW Government and Council’s infrastructure delivery and influence policy settings.

Monitoring will include an annual report for stakeholders on indicators for housing, employment, communities and the environment, as well as advice to government on the delivery of the short term actions. This monitoring will be prepared in partnership with Central Coast Council. Every five years, or as needed, the Plan will be reviewed and adjustments made to ensure the vision for 2036 is realised.

More specifically, the Department has:

- Drafted a new section in the Plan titled ‘Delivering this Plan’ and prepared a stand-alone Implementation Plan that includes timing and responsibilities to support the final Plan.
• Identified a proposed government structure for the implementation committee and included this structure in the final Plan.
• Taken note of suggestions for representation on the implementation committee.

Local place based

Submissions proposed the development of a Regional Performing Arts Precinct.

Response

The Plan supports ongoing work to deliver on the vision for the Gosford City Centre and more detailed precinct planning for areas such as the Gosford Waterfront.

Other matters

A number of submissions related to topics outside the scope of the regional plan.

Response

Where issues not related specifically to the region plan were raised, these matters have been referred to relevant agencies within the NSW Government.