South East and Tablelands Regional Plan Consultation Report 2017
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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 draft South East and Tablelands Regional Plan in May 2016 for public comment.

Stakeholders and the community were invited to provide submissions on the draft Plan between 23 May 2016 and 23 August 2016. During this period, the Department received 46 submissions from a wide range of stakeholders.

This report summarises the engagement program undertaken for the draft Plan and feedback received through the engagement program. It also details the range of submissions received in response to the draft Plan, the themes raised through submissions and the NSW Government’s response and actions related to these issues. These responses have guided the development of the final South East and Tablelands Regional Plan.

The NSW Government has set four goals for the South East and Tablelands region:

1. A connected and prosperous economy
2. A diverse environment interconnected by biodiversity corridors
3. Healthy and connected communities
4. Environmentally sustainable housing choices
Engagement program

Methodology
To raise awareness of the draft South East and Tablelands Regional Plan and to encourage feedback to help inform the preparation of the final Regional Plan, the Department undertook a wide-reaching engagement program which ran from 23 May 2016 until 23 August 2016.

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

- residents, community and interest groups
- business and industry peak bodies
- high school students
- local government and council joint organisations

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 and 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, 11 briefings were held with 110 attendees.

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

Local government
Following the launch of the draft Plan, the Department approached councils in the region to request their support in promoting the draft Plan to the community via their newsletters, websites and other channels.

South East and Tablelands Councils:
- Bega Valley
- Eurobodalla
- Goulburn Mulwaree
- Hilltops
- Queanbeyan-Palerang
- Snowy Monaro
- Upper Lachlan
- Wingecarribee
- Yass Valley
Youth forum

To engage younger people living in the South East and Tablelands region, the Department facilitated a youth forum on 5 August 2016 for high school students in partnership with the University of Wollongong Bega campus.

Eleven students from years 10, 11 and 12 attended from Bega High School.

The aim of the forum was to gather information and feedback on what students believe to be important to their region now and into the future.

Attendees engaged in discussions on a range of matters such as what they valued about their region and what they would like improved. Their responses included:

**Things valued and liked**
- Environment (forests, lakes, beaches, national parks etc.)
- Organised sport
- Education opportunities
- Better hospital facilities (recently having undergone an expansion and relocation)
- Access to natural environment for the community
- Cultural awareness
- TAFE and UoW
- School based apprenticeships
- Rural environment
- Airport and port
- Shopping options (Merimbula)
- New hospital

**Things for improvement**
- Transport (public, private and freight)
- Services (community and youth)
- Lack of internet and phone coverage
- Not enough community spaces and services for youth – parks, playgrounds and informal undercover areas
- Not enough safe bike tracks
- Tourist season (too crowded)
- Limited tourist attractions

The Department’s response to specific issues raised has been included in the submissions analysis section of this report.

**Email direct marketing**

An email titled ‘Help shape the future of the South East and Tablelands community’ was sent out on 23 May 2016 to over 5,700 subscribers on the Department’s eNews 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 20 questions that asked respondents about their priorities, values, views, and goals for regional planning.

The survey was available online via the Department’s website. In total, 129 survey responses were received.

The results of the survey showed:
- The three most important factors to residents of the South East and Tablelands region are health, the local environment and farming
- Public transport and jobs are factors that residents see as important, but are not well managed in their area
- There is positivity about the goals in the draft regional plan, with more than 70% support for nearly all goals
The five most important factors to the South East and Tablelands region respondents were:

1. **Health Services in your Area**
2. **The Local Environment**
3. **Farming and/or Agricultural land in your Area**
4. **Proximity to services you require**
5. **Schools in your Area**

Digital (including online activity, social media and website)

The Department undertook a comprehensive program of digital advertising during the campaign. This program helped drive engagement by advertising on a number of channels including Facebook, across NSW Government whitelist websites, key regional press online mastheads and Google Search.

For South East and Tablelands the digital advertising campaigns achieved 1,350,000 digital media impressions and 5,348 digital engagements*.

Digital advertising helped to raise awareness of the consultation on the draft Plan and encouraged people to visit the Department’s website to provide feedback or make a submission. The website featured the draft Plan, a summary of the Plan’s highlights, an interactive map, and the online survey. During the campaign our website received 15,314 unique views 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. Protecting the environment
2. Roads and transport
3. Access to health services

**Media**

Parliamentary Secretary for Southern NSW and Member for Cootamundra Katrina Hodgkinson issued a media release on 23 May 2016 to announce the regional planning process.

The Department distributed a media release on 29 July 2016 inviting students to a Youth Forum to discuss the draft Plan.

In total, the media releases generated nine media stories.

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*Digital engagements: This includes any engagement with an ad or a post, for example clicks through to our website, Facebook post likes or post shares or comments on posts or ads, interactive map comments or any other responses.*
Methodology

As a result of the community engagement program outlined above, the Department received 46 submissions.

Each submission was comprehensively reviewed and relevant comments were identified and catalogued to prepare a comprehensive data set by theme. These 15 themes 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

Summary of submissions

Type of submitters

A wide range of stakeholders sent submissions including:
1. private individuals
2. business and industry
3. local government
4. state government.

Location of submitters

The South East and Tablelands Regional Plan covers the nine Local Government Areas (LGAs) including:
Bega Valley, Eurobodalla, Goulburn Mulwaree, Hilltops, Queanbeyan-Palerang, Snowy Monaro, Upper Lachlan, Wingecarribee and Yass Valley.
Broad areas

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

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

1. Support for the draft Plan’s acknowledgement of the ACT as a driver of growth.

2. Too focussed on ACT to the detriment of other areas/LGAs further away from the ACT.

3. Need greater commentary on freight opportunities (particularly with international flights from Canberra Airport), infrastructure and renewable energy.


5. Proposed governance arrangements, including role and membership of the Coordinating and Monitoring Committee.

Many councils raised concern with the lack of:

• local area guidance and detail;

• strategic infrastructure identification; and

• a framework to evaluate development proposals.
Submissions: Analysis and response

Population growth
Themes that emerged were:

- Hilltops and Snowy Monaro councils requested to limit any discussion about projected population growth in their area as it can be detrimental to strategies aimed at attracting new business and industry investment.

Response
In response, the Department has:

- Included population projections for the region as a whole. The projections for those local government areas that are experiencing a more significant level of growth have been identified in the local area narratives, or where relevant in the Regional Plan.
- Includes text about the broad population trends for the region, including the ageing of the population.

Housing
Themes that emerged were:

- Councils requested that discussion and figures for dwelling projections not be included.
- More local area guidance in relation to housing demand was requested.
- Concerns regarding the perceived lack of direction on rural residential development.
- Councils requested urban design principles be developed.

Response
In response, the Department has:

- Included dwelling projections for the region as a whole. The projections for those local government area’s that are experiencing a more significant level of growth have been identified in the local area narratives, or where relevant in the Regional Plan.
- Strengthened the policy on rural residential development for the region to guide the appropriate location of rural residential developments by enabling new rural residential development only where it has been identified in a local housing strategy, prepared by council and approved by the Department of Planning and Environment.
- Included an action in the Regional Plan to develop Urban Design Guidelines.
- Outlined additional policy and strategies in the Regional Plan that will promote greater housing affordability by encouraging a greater mix of housing.
Centres and settlements

Themes that emerged were:

• More guidance required from Government on speculative planning proposals that are inconsistent with the Regional Plan.
• Snowy Monaro Council requested Cooma be included as a regional centre and Wingecarribee advised that Bowral, Moss Vale and Mittagong combined perform the function of a regional centre. On further discussion with Wingecarribee Council it was agreed that Moss Vale is the preferred regional centre to be identified.
• Support for the Government to produce guidelines for local housing strategies.
• Need to secure water supply for urban use.

Response

In response, the Department has:

• Provided more detailed policy to guide the sustainable development of communities, including improved guidance on dealing with speculative proposals.
• Cooma and Moss Vale has been included in the Regional Plan as strategic centres.
• Identified and recognised the role and function of the region’s strategic and local service centres.
• Retained the commitment to develop guidelines for local housing strategies.
• Included greater commentary and actions to develop a regional water strategy for the areas surrounding the ACT that clarifies the requirements, available volumes and quality of all water supplies available and define the optimal level of water use.

Transport and infrastructure

Themes that emerged were:

• The need to capture on the agriculture export opportunities that arise from Canberra Airport’s international flights.
• Requests to acknowledge particular roads as important transport links that support economic growth.
• The need to articulate the particular challenges for the region’s freight network, including B-Double access issues.
• Need to continue to coordinate cross border infrastructure to support urban development.

Response

In response, the Department has:

• Mapped the intra- and inter-regional transport links that support economic growth in the region.
• Identified the challenges associated with the region’s freight network, including B-Double access issues in places such as Brown Mountain.
• Included expanded commentary and actions relating to the opportunities associated with international flights at Canberra Airport.
• Retained the commitment to coordinate cross border infrastructure to support urban development.
• Identified the region’s strategic transport links.
Land use conflict

Themes that emerged were:

• Support for directions and actions that discuss protection of agricultural land to reduce loss and fragmentation.

• More land use planning policy to guide land use conflict particularly in regards to protecting agricultural land from unsuitable uses such as mining and rural residential development.

Response

In response, the Department has:

• Included specific directions and actions in the Regional Plan to minimise the potential for land use conflict arising between different land uses, for example, between agricultural land and rural residential development.

• Identified strategies that will manage the region’s mineral resources to ensure that urban encroachment and potential land use conflicts are avoided.

• Retained the commitment to map important agricultural land and protect these areas through local environment plans.

• Strengthened the policy on rural residential development for the region to guide the appropriate location of rural residential developments.

Agriculture

Themes that emerged were:

• Not enough focus on the diversity of agriculture, including the importance of aquaculture to the region.

• Support for identification of important agricultural lands in the region.

• A need to explore in greater detail the export opportunities for produce out of Canberra Airport.

• Better acknowledgement of value adding opportunities and agriculture research in the region.

• Need to articulate the opportunities associated with the region’s proximity to Sydney, and the potential to promote the region as a place for agricultural industries to relocate.

Response

In response, the Department has:

• Retained the commitment to map important agricultural land.

• Provided expanded commentary about the diversity of agriculture in the region, opportunities for growth in the sector, including value add, export opportunities, and an increased agricultural research presence.

• Included a direction to articulate the opportunities associated with the region’s proximity to Western Sydney.

• Included a direction to grow the south coast’s aquaculture industry.
**Resources and energy**

Themes that emerged were:

- Strong opposition to any coal seam gas or coal mining activity in the region, particularly in the Sydney Drinking Water Catchment special areas.
- Desire for the Regional Plan to reduce reliance on coal as an energy resource and take up opportunities for renewables.
- Explore the economic opportunities of the area as an area of renewable energy excellence.

**Response**

In response, the Department has:

- Included a direction in the Regional Plan to promote the region as a hub for renewable energy excellence, capitalising on the region’s existing natural assets, renewable energy infrastructure, and research opportunities.
- Included a direction in the Regional Plan to sustainably manage mineral resources in the region.
- Retained the commentary about the importance of protecting the Sydney Drinking Water Catchment and its special areas.

**Environment**

Themes that emerged were:

- Strong support for protection of the High Environmental Value lands.
- Strong support for protection of the Koala populations in Cooma and a suggestion that this be expanded to include Wingecarribee.
- Too focused on environmental values of the South Coast to the detriment of other areas.
- Need to include the ACT environment data in the mapping.
- Questions about the availability of the High Environmental Value land mapping data.
- The need for a greater recognition of the Enabling Adaptation in the South East project.

**Response**

In response, the Department has:

- Included a direction about mitigating and adapting to climate change, and also included greater commentary about the Enabling Adaptation in South East project.
- Retained the actions to protect the region’s environmental assets.
- Expanded the commentary regarding the value of the region’s environmental assets to avoid the high focus on the south coast.
- Included ACT environmental data in the mapping.
- Developed an online map for the environmental data to improve transparency and accessibility.
- Retained the commitment for a Koala plan of management for Snowy Monaro, and extended it to include Wingecarribee.
Health services
Themes that emerged were:
• The need to acknowledge the recent investments in health facilities in the region.
• Explore opportunities associated with South East Regional Hospital in Bega.

Response
In response, the Department has:
• Acknowledged recent infrastructure investment in the region.
• Included actions on growing complementary healthcare opportunities around the region’s health services.

Education services
Themes that emerged were:
• Need to better explain the process and methodology used to manage demand for school placements, and identify the need for new schools.
• Suggestions were made to promote greater tertiary education services in the region.

Response
In response, the Department has:
• Included commentary on the potential for the region to leverage opportunities for ‘university centres’ as a way to access greater tertiary education services.
• Included greater commentary in the Regional Plan that better articulates the NSW Government’s approach to managing school placements.
**Cross border**

Themes that emerged were:

• Support for the acknowledgement of the role that Canberra plays in the region.

• Support for a cross border land and housing monitor for the region (including using ACT housing data).

• Support for improving cross border transport connectivity, with a particular acknowledgment of the cross border public transport challenges.

• Support for the sharing of freight data between the ACT and the NSW governments.

**Response**

In response, the Department has:

• Continued to acknowledge the role Canberra plays in the region, acting not only as a driver of growth and a significant location for employment and services, but also acknowledging the reciprocal role NSW plays in providing a diversity of housing, experiences and opportunities beyond the city’s limits.

• Continued the commitment to develop a cross border land and housing monitor.

• Retained the commitment to work collaboratively with the ACT Government to enhance cross border transport connections, including the preparation of an issues options paper to address cross border public transport challenges.

• Retained the commitment to share freight data between ACT and NSW Governments.

**Economy**

Themes that emerged were:

• Feedback on this theme reiterated comments raised in agriculture, transport and infrastructure and resources and energy.

• Need greater recognition of the tourism opportunities arising from international flights at Canberra Airport.

• Support for promoting innovative work practices, including smart work hubs in the region.

• The need for greater commentary about leveraging growth opportunities from Western Sydney.

**Response**

In response, the Department has:

• Provided expanded commentary about the opportunities for tourism in the region including directions and actions relating to marine tourism and the Port of Eden, opportunities for a year round economy at the Snowy Mountains, and expanded trails and experiences throughout the region.

• Included a new direction to capture opportunities for innovative work practices in the region’s strategic and local centres.

• Included a new direction and actions relating to the opportunities for growth relating to Western Sydney, acknowledging significant movement of workers from the region to Sydney.
Implementation and monitoring

Themes that emerged were:

- Suggestions for membership of the governance and monitoring committee for the Plan.
- 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 that 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 committee will be accountable for implementing.
- The plan should be a whole of government approach and not simply focused on land use.
- Calls for more meaningful community engagement around the Plan.

Response

In response, the Department has:

- Incorporated a new section titled ‘Delivering this Plan’ to explain implementation mechanisms and governance structures.
- Prepared a stand-alone Implementation Plan which includes responsibility and timing for actions.
- Noted suggestions for representation on the implementation committee, recognising that further engagement with additional stakeholders will be undertaken throughout implementation of the Plan and delivery of individual actions.

Other matters

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

Response

Where issues not related specifically to the regional plan were raised, these matters have been referred to relevant agencies within the NSW Government.
For more information about the South East and Tablelands Regional Plan 2036 visit planning.nsw.gov.au