

Mr Adrian Panuccio  
General Manager  
MidCoast Council  
PO Box 482  
TAREE NSW 2430

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**Subject: MidCoast Council Urban Release Areas Report**

Dear Mr Panuccio

Thank you for MidCoast Council's request of 24 August 2022 seeking the Department of Planning and Environment's endorsement of the MidCoast Council Urban Release Areas Report ('Report'), which was adopted by Council resolution at its 28 July 2021 meeting.

I wish to acknowledge Council's efforts and commitment in preparing the Report and commend Council for identifying its urban release areas and growth areas across the Local Government Area. I am pleased to endorse all housing sites nominated by Council in the Report, except the following sites:

- Tallwoods Growth Area 1 (Redefining the village centre), which is subject to further local strategic planning underway in the form of Hallidays Point Structure Plan. This will resolve key issues, such as desired future character, bushfire, environmental impacts and housing demand.
- Parts of the Forster Growth Area 2 (Southern Parkway) site that are affected by a local biodiversity corridor and flood prone land are not endorsed as a growth area.
- Forster Urban Release Area 6 (Bert's Farm) site is highly constrained by flood impacts and threatened species habitat and is not therefore endorsed as an urban release area. This may be reconsidered for endorsement by the Department if Council can demonstrate the constraints can be adequately resolved, based on environmental and flooding investigations being undertaken to the satisfaction of Council and provided to the Department. Alternatively, the site could be considered on merit via a planning proposal should the proponents seek to progress the development.
- Gloucester Growth Area 2 (Cemetery Road) site is surplus to industrial land demand.
- Hawks Nest Growth Area 1 & 2 (known as North Hawks Nest) site has complex biodiversity offset requirements and forms part of an environmental corridor.
- Tea Gardens Growth Area 3 (Parrys Cove Marina) site for boating and recreation infrastructure requires consultation with relevant agencies and can be considered on merit through a separate planning proposal process.

The Department notes Council's assessment included analysis of the level of constraint for each site, and that most sites identified by Council with a high level of constraints were not recommended as an urban release area or growth area. The Department's position is to not endorse any site (or part of site) that has been identified as a high level of constraint where it is evident that further technical analysis is required to inform the suitability for growth prior to a planning proposal being prepared.

Council may wish to show these omitted areas as 'preliminary investigation areas' in its Report and Local Housing Strategy, for strategic planning purposes, noting that they have not been endorsed by the Department at this time. These areas may be reconsidered in a future strategic review process by Council and submitted to the Department for review and subsequent endorsement.

Alternatively, these areas can be reconsidered as part of the 2027 review of the Hunter Regional Plan 2041 or by a planning proposal being lodged that considers the constraints outlined above.

Please note that I have not endorsed the rezoning timeframes specified in the Report. More up-to-date information regarding supply and demand, infrastructure servicing and biodiversity constraints is required before this could occur. The Department's Upper Hunter and MidCoast Urban Development Program should facilitate a better understanding of this sequencing of growth. The Department will work with Council in applying the Urban Development Program to set timeframes endorsed by the infrastructure and service providers and industry and professional stakeholder members of the Program.

I encourage Council to regularly review the Report to ensure it facilitates an adequate pipeline of future housing sites and is responsive to changes in local housing needs.

Should you have any enquiries about this matter, I have arranged for Mr Paul Maher, Senior Planning Officer, Central Coast and Hunter Region to assist you. Mr Maher can be contacted on 4904 2719.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. McDonald".

19 January 2023

**Malcolm McDonald**  
**Executive Director, Local and Regional Planning**  
**Planning and Land Use Strategy**