

THE GREATER LAKE MUNMORAH STRUCTURE PLAN 2019

Submission May 2019

We, the Central Coast Greens, believe that the time period for review and submissions of this far reaching plan need to be considerably extended to allow residents and other interested bodies to give it their undivided attention. The timing of the exhibition, which coincided with, and overlapped, the course of the Federal Election will have severely hampered many people and community groups from giving their full attention to, digesting and contributing to the dialogue by having their say on a significant development on the Central Coast.

Nevertheless, we submit the following, noting our objection to the timeframe.

The Greater lake Munmorah Structure Plan is a patchwork of greenfield urbanisation, employment lands and preserved open space by way of a wildlife corridor taking in the area from Doyalson North to Lake Munmorah between Lake Macquarie and Lake Munmorah on the northern end of the Central Coast.

A United Nations report 2019 states that one million species are in danger of extinction globally as three-quarters of the earth's land mass is ploughed, paved, dammed or mined.

Australia has one of the highest rates of tree clearing of any developed country. Currently 1 000 animal and plant species are at risk of extinction including the koala.

In the 200 years since white settlement Australia has lost:-

- 25 % of its rainforest
- 45% of its open forest
- 32% of its woodland forest
- 30% of its Mallee forest

The effects of this clearing is clear with 20% of all Australian mammals, 7% of reptiles and 13% of birds listed as extinct, endangered or vulnerable.

In NSW, 100 species have become extinct in the last 200 years. (Wilderness Society Report)

The recently released State of the Environment Report for NSW 2018 section based on the Environment Protection Agency lists the following:-

Ongoing challenges:-

- The growing population of NSW continues to exert pressure on the environment. Innovative ways to use our natural resources more sustainably and protect our fragile ecosystems must be continued to be found
- Threatened species, currently sitting at 1025, continue to rise; species are at greater risk from threats including vegetation clearing; spread of invasive species; mounting impacts of climate change
- The condition of most native vegetation is deteriorating

- Love of the coast continues to put pressure on the condition of coastal estuaries and lakes. 85% of the 9.9 million people in NSW live within 50 kilometres of the coast.

Threats:-

- Land use intensification. Modification of coastal and estuarine areas has increased the pressure on the species that depend on them
- Soil resources in NSW show declines mainly due to acidification caused by intensification of land use

The Public Reserve system only covers 7.59 million hectares or 9.5% of the land in NSW.

The overall diversity and richness of native species and communities in NSW remain under threat of future decline

Wetland area has halved, in 2017 it was measured at 111 000 ha down from 235 000 ha, this has been a long term reduction.

Coastal development and land use continue to impact the viability of future populations including threatened species. Only 20% of estuaries and coastal lakes retain more than 90% of natural uncleared vegetation within their catchments and these are mostly along the south coast of NSW.

The destruction and fragmentation of native habitats from human activities has occurred at unprecedented scales in recent history and has become an instrumental threat to biodiversity globally (Soule 1986, Noss 1987, Wiens 1996, Harcourt et al. 2001, McKee et al. 2004, Ewers and Didham 2006, Lehmann and Perrin 2006).

This fragmentation results in lost opportunities for genetic transfer between populations, losses to resources, alterations to territory patterns and increased competition from both endemic and introduced species (Viveiros de Castro and Fernandez 2004, Lindenmayer and Fischer 2006, Antos et al. 2006). Interactions between fragmentation and climate change, anthropogenic disturbance regimes and other threats (e.g. fire, traffic, domestic animals, vertebrate pests and disease) and shifts in native and introduced species interactions magnify the initial impacts of fragmentation and become drivers of population shifts and reductions (Ewers and Didham 2006, Antos et al. 2006).

Due to their often linear nature, corridors tend to be impacted by edge effects, such as the invasion by plants and animals and altered microclimates, which can cause changes in vegetation and animal behaviour (Matlack and Litvaitis 1999). Maximising width has been suggested as the most practical way to reduce edge effects (i.e. provides more interior habitat for edge sensitive species) (Antos and White 2004). Wider corridors have been linked with increased insect abundance (Hill 1997), bird species richness and bird density in several studies (Croonquist and Brooks 1993, Keller et al. 1993). In some cases, narrow corridors have been found to support aggressive bird species which often compete with forest dependant species that are sensitive to habitat fragmentation, therefore compounding the effects of the disturbance from initial fragmentation (Catterall et al. 1991). The Indian Mynah is known to be able to penetrate up to 500 m.

One of the key environmental challenges identified in the Central Coast Regional Strategy was the identification, protection and enhancement of significant biodiversity corridors (DoP 2006)

There exists a real opportunity for Central Coast Council to take a lead in providing incentives to land holders and developers to secure conservation measures in strategic locations. Therefore, incentives for offsetting should be a key objective to improve conservation land area and corridor connectivity. (Theses 2018 Investigations of corridor use by arboreal and scansorial mammals and an analysis of yellowbellied glider (*Petaurus australis*) populations and connectivity on the lower central coast of NSW; Antony von Chrismar Southern Cross University ePublications@SCU)

The system of 'spot rezoning' used by developers and landowners to remake large swathes of Sydney would disappear under changes pushed by Planning Minister, Rob Stokes. (Sydney Morning Herald, 'Stokes targets developers' rezoning tactics', front page, Wednesday, May 15th, 2019)

The above information is provided to inform the Central Coast Council of the current issues as stated by the NSW Government and other bodies with regard to any greenfield development and, in particular, the Greater Lake Munmorah Structure Plan.

Surely it is abundantly clear that a greenfield development in a sensitive coastal area that provides catchment for both Lake Macquarie and Lake Munmorah is totally inappropriate and will cause further significant environmental damage.

Run off management and drainage will be a huge cost either to the developer or the Central Coast Council's ratepayers with both detention and retention basins required along with gross pollutant traps and swales to name but some measures. One only has to review the residential development with the accompanying land clearing that occurred in San Remo and the millions that have had to be expended, largely by Council, to try to remedy the ongoing flooding and run off issues caused by heavy rain which we know is occurring more frequently due to climate change. The work is still being carried out 30 or more years since the area was developed for residential housing. The Budgewoi Lake has been negatively impacted by sedimentation from run off and acid sulphate soils as a direct result of this development.

The area under consideration in the Greater Lake Munmorah Structure Plan contains wildlife, flora and birds that are already threatened or under pressure such as gliders and the osprey; it has significant wetland area and provides a corridor of native bush and informal hobby farm land to support the native fauna, flora and birds. The proposed wildlife corridor is inadequate and narrows to 100 m at one point.

In mid-May 50 Swift Parrots, one of Australia's most critically endangered birds, were located at the Joshua Porter Reserve, Chain Valley Bay. (The Express Advocate, News, p7, Thursday 23rd May, 2019 'Twitchers glee over rare birds') In light of this and other data, what mapping of native species and birds that currently use the area has been carried out? How do they use it? Foraging, mating, using existing hollows for nesting, as habitat, or moving from one area to another? Has the Central Coast Council or other NSW Governmental body undertaken a thorough and comprehensive study to determine these, and, if so, has that information been shared with the public to make sure the proposed corridor will support all of the uses by our native fauna and birds?

The Wadalba Wildlife corridor should serve as an example that shows that inadequate mapping of species beforehand and inadequate corridor width have led to disastrous outcomes for the Powerful Owl and other native species. It is no more than a bush reserve that people use to exercise their

dogs and engage in other human outdoor pleasure pursuits. Some native fauna will survive but only those that have been able to adapt to the intrusion of humans, the others will have perished or be on the verge.

Lake Munmorah was the only lagoon in the Tuggerah Lake system to score an A in the State's recent report on the system's ecological health. This was due, in large part, to it having the least amount of urbanisation around its foreshore. The other lakes in the system rated B's and C's.

More car dependent urban sprawl will cause more pollution, significantly contribute to greenhouse gas emissions and hence further accelerate climate change.

Spot rezoning will be the normal method of changing the land's current use zone. The land should not be seen as privately benefitting landowners who bought their land with the current zoning in place.

There is no need for further employment lands at this stage or in the near future as stated in the plan. There is currently excess employment land available in the north of the Central Coast Council area and more would come on line when the Wyong Economic Zone is realised. Hence, not many people living in the new residential areas would be able to work locally; nearly all would have to travel by private car to other areas of the coast, Newcastle or train stations to access employment. This would severely impede and congest traffic along the Pacific Highway north and south.

The Central Coast should have, and deserves, a much better system of urban development. Common sense says it is appropriate to abandon this proposed structure plan with all of its inherent flaws and negative impacts on our native flora, fauna and coastal estuarine waters and rethink where development can, and should be, sited.

The answer to that question is, development should be opened up and intensified along the public transport links, particularly, the railway corridor. This development could be a mixture but include low rise medium density housing. This would accommodate all of the projected population increase required by the State government.