



28/02/2018

**Regional Director**

**Department of Planning and Environment**

**PO Box 1226**

**Newcastle NSW 2300**

(via online submission form)

**Submission on the Draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan**

The Tomaree Ratepayers and Residents Association (TRRA Inc) represents the interests of the 26,000 people living on the Tomaree Peninsula located at the eastern extremity of Port Stephens LGA. Our key objective is to act and be a representative voice in all matters that will enhance and protect their residential amenity and the local environment, both natural and built.

The Tomaree Peninsula is located just outside the proposed Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Area (GNMA), with Nelson Bay identified as a strategic centre in the Hunter Regional Plan 2036.

Some of the proposed population growth and employment centres will have a significant impact on the future of the Tomaree Peninsula together with the environmental impacts along the only access road connecting the Peninsula to Newcastle some 50km away, the Williamstown RAAF and airport/aerospace complex, Medowie, Raymond Terrace and the Pacific Highway.

We would like to submit the following comments

**General Concept**

TRRA endorse the concept of the major focus on the area covered within the draft approximately within 30 minutes commute of the heart of Newcastle. It is only natural that the greatest effect and expenditure will occur within this region but we would submit that other strategic centres such as Nelson Bay outside the arc should not be



forgotten or considered the poor cousins as they will contribute significantly to the overall Hunter region.

### **Figure 1, Greater Newcastle Vision 2036.**

We question if the blue dashed line marking the GNMA should include the whole of the Medowie area instead of just touching the southwestern border as Medowie has been identified as a significant growth area and is within an easy commute to the major employment centres around Williamtown, Tomago and Newcastle.

### **Collaborating To Deliver the Plan**

We fully support the approach of a collaboration agreement between the NSW Government and the five Greater Newcastle councils, the establishing a Committee for Greater Newcastle along with the engagement with young people and community groups who do not typically get involved in strategic planning. Greater ownership by the whole community working with all levels of government will ensure a better outcome.

### **Implementing the draft Metropolitan Plan**

It is important that local Councils ensure that local plans are consistent with the strategy once adopted but may require extra resources to ensure that full community consultation is undertaken to ensure that that local factors are fully considered.

### **Strategy 1.2 Grow the Airport and Aerospace and Defence Precedent at Williamtown**

Many of the current Tomaree residents work in the Williamtown precedent and we fully support the plans for employment growth in that area. Many new employees may choose to live on the Tomaree Peninsula for a coastal lifestyle as it is only a 30 minute commute.

The growth of the airport as a transport hub will not only provide improved options for air-travel both domestic and internationally for local residents but also open up a greater tourist market which will provide further employment opportunities for the Tomaree Peninsula.

We endorse the recommendation that Port Stephens Council protect the precinct from inappropriate uses such as bulky-goods retailing. TRRA have been very concerned about inappropriate fast food outlets being built or recently approved under the term “tourist facilities” on rural zoned land around the airport. As this is the gateway not only to the Tomaree Peninsula but the whole Hunter it is essential that a master plan is developed for the area to ensure that only appropriate new development that is attractive and sustainable occurs. The growth of fast food outlets in this area has had a negative effect on local food outlets within the smaller coastal villages.

Land zoning needs to be clearly identified as soon as possible to ensure that residential development areas are not affected by aircraft noise in the future and that the flood prone land and drainage is fully considered particularly with the impacts of climate change.

### **STRATEGY 1.5 –Expand Education and Innovation Clusters**

We submit that consideration be given to expanding technology innovation and research - particularly the potential for the University of Newcastle to have a research facility located in the Tomaree Peninsula. For example, the pending closure of the Department of Health facility on the Tomaree Headland at Shoal Bay would offer an ideal location to have a joint tourist and research centre for marine studies. The existing operation of NSW Fisheries research in the area would complement such a facility and provide valuable Government funded employment opportunities.

### **STRATEGY 1.7 –Attract Major Events and Sporting Teams and Increase Tourism Opportunities**

It is important that Tourist promotion for Greater Newcastle includes the Tomaree Peninsula and that the local tourist operators are fully involved. The hosting of sporting or other major events in Newcastle offers opportunities for some teams to be accommodated and trained around the Tomaree Peninsula.

It should be noted that in the draft reference is made to “Nelson Bay” as a popular destination, confusion often arises when Nelson Bay is used as a generic term for the whole of the Tomaree Peninsula. See also discussion below on Strategy 3.3.

### **STRATEGY 2.3 –Enhance the Blue and Green Grid and the Urban Tree Canopy**

The Tomaree Peninsula is a unique strip of land surrounded by the Stockton Bight, Tasman Sea and Port Stephens waterways, much of those waters being a declared marine park. Most of the land area is either listed as National Park, State Forest or of high Environmental value land so we fully support this strategy.

One very important recommendation is critical. “The Office of Environment and Heritage, with support from the NSW Department of Planning and Environment and Greater Newcastle councils will complete the long-term protection of regionally significant biodiversity corridors”. The corridor extending to the north/east of Newcastle towards the Tomaree Peninsula we understand is critical for a wide range of wildlife but particularly as a key area for existing populations of koalas to have adequate numbers and the right environment to sustain breeding populations. Koala numbers throughout the state are reducing each year through the loss of habit, it is essential that these known areas around Williamtown and Tomago be maintained through the enforcement of the biodiversity corridor. Extreme care will be required to clearly separate the

corridor and breeding grounds to provide habitat protection from the employment hubs proposed in these two areas.

### **STRATEGY 2.4 –Protect Rural Amenity Outside urban Areas**

TRRA have been concerned about the piecemeal development on rural zoned land particularly along Nelson Bay road. We support the strategy to protect this valuable land, not only for agriculture purposes but also to provide an attractive entrance to the Tomaree Peninsula and in the latest Anna Bay Flood Study also provides a valuable buffer for flood control.

### **STRATEGY 2.5 –Improve Resilience to Natural Hazards and Climate Change**

As mentioned in Strategy 1.2 and 2.4 the threat of climate change with rising sea levels and potentially more flash flooding on the low lying areas, particularly around Williamtown, Tilligerry Creek and along Nelson Bay Road need to be protected from development. Upgrading of Nelson Bay Road will be required to ensure that the entire length is above potential flood peaks as mentioned on page 94.

### **STRATEGY 3.3 –Prepare Local Housing Strategies**

TRRA support the recommendation that local councils prepare a local housing strategy based around the Hunter Regional and Greater Newcastle plans. We are very concerned that in the past Port Stephens Council has tried to impose an unrealistic high population/housing figure on “Nelson Bay” using these figures.

As discussed in Strategy 1.7, reports frequently use the term Nelson Bay rather than Port Stephens or Tomaree Peninsula. In the previous Hunter Plan growth figures were applied initially to just the Nelson Bay Township when it was originally intended to cover the whole Peninsular. This resulted in an unjustifiable push to increase the allowable building heights in the town to ‘solve’ an assumed housing crisis.

There is a lack of detail presented in this draft regarding the projected dwelling figures. Those shown are only for the entire Port Stephens region (Figure 10), rather than the section included in the Greater Newcastle area as for the other LGA’s.

Port Stephens, as mentioned on page 94 of the draft, is a mix of rural land, towns and coastal villages. A ‘one policy fits all’ approach to changing the mix of Greenfield and Infill development is not going to be appropriate for Port Stephens. There is potential for more Greenfield development around centres in the central and western parts of the LGA.

There is now very limited Greenfield space for new housing in the Tomaree Peninsula due to restrictions on flood prone land and most of the land being zoned as environmentally sensitive including National Park.

Some infill will occur naturally around the established parts of Raymond Terrace and the villages on the Peninsula when older homes are no longer viable and redevelopment of Townhouses and Medium Density developments close to facilities occurs. The plan should take note of strong community opposition to high rise development, particularly in Nelson Bay to protect the iconic village atmosphere in the natural amphitheatre surrounded by the wooded ridges, and ensure that unrealistic growth figures are not applied to the town of Nelson Bay or the wider Tomaree peninsula.

John James  
TRRA Vice President  
vicepresident@trra.com.au  
0447 158 810