

Draft post on Housing Strategy

Submissions on the draft Housing Strategy are due by 20th March. Please consider having your say on this important issue, either by email or in the online survey at <https://bit.ly/2INbF1Q>

We suggest that key points are:

The Strategy is too 'growth' focussed, and does not adequately address major environmental challenges, including mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, and loss of biodiversity, including Koala habitat.

Housing demand in Tomaree is different from the rest of Pt Stephens, most of which is within the Greater Newcastle metro area, which will grow much faster.

No need to relax planning controls in Tomaree to encourage higher density infill development on small blocks – there is a natural trend through subdivision etc which should provide sufficient new low-rise houses, and Council could encourage site amalgamation instead.

Reject the proposal to allow increased heights and reduced setbacks in large suburban areas of Nelson Bay, Corlette and Shoal Bay. This could dramatically change the character of these areas, which is important both for residents and visitors.

The Strategy should include clearer policies on short term holiday accommodation and 'lifestyle' villages, both of which pose major problems in Tomaree.

There should be greater emphasis on sustainability, including more efficient building design, urban tree cover, and better integration of land use and transport planning, including encouragement of public transport while recognising parking demand.

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- The need to protect Port Stephens natural environment especially the koala habitat
- Need to achieve housing sustainability given the climate change factor
- Need to maintain the character of some key urban centres such as Nelson Bay
- Need to recognise the differing context of the area within the Greater Newcastle _Planning Zone and other localities such as the Tomaree Peninsula. More attention to identifying local and overall market demand related to housing preferences. This should not be limited to existing residents but assess preferences of those who will be seeking to migrate to Port Stephens from elsewhere
- While the draft strategy acknowledges the many constraints on future housing development across Port Stephens, there seems to be an undue focus on promoting significant growth in all targeted areas.
- The strategy's proposed reliance on relaxing standards for the quality of building design and planning controls to achieve growth.
- The practicality of greenfield/ infill ratios.
- Provision for parking in housing developments
- Limited recognition of the scale of lifestyle development across the LGA and their pros and cons for future servicing, place making and traffic / parking infrastructure

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Recent growth rates in population 13% since 2008 have placed PS third in the Hunter, but we cannot expect this to continue at the same or greater rate and equally across the whole LGA. (

The Hunter and Greater Newcastle Strategies expect major growth in employment in Newcastle and around the Tomago and Williamstown. The main demands for population and therefore new dwellings will be greater away from the 'Tomaree peninsula.

The assumption that business as usual will only supply up to 7500 new dwellings, yet a number of studies and earlier estimates from council suggest that we require something in the order of 11000 to 13000.

The REMPLAN report finding that '..without intervention... the housing supply is unlikely to support the demand from expected employment growth' (p11) may be a valid assertion for those parts of the LGA within the GNMP area, but is not necessarily valid for the eastern peninsulas.

TRRA opposes this consciously 'pro-growth' basis for the Strategy, both overall and specifically in planning the future of the eastern peninsulas. There can and should be a debate about the extent to which the western parts of the Port Stephens LGA should contribute to the Greater Newcastle 'Metropolis', but different considerations should apply to the eastern parts outside the metro plan area – both for amenity and tourist economy protection of the environment and of existing character must be given a higher priority than growth for growth's sake.

We accept the need (and demand) for some further medium density infill development but the Strategy, if implemented unchanged, will encourage too high densities in too many areas, changing the character of localities too drastically and likely causing a major backlash from existing residents.

There is a big difference between 75 and 130 dwellings needed p.a. for the 'Tomaree planning area—the community needs to know what figure is being used as the basis for housing demand.

Whichever figure is preferred, it amounts to a relatively modest demand for new dwellings in Tomaree, and is almost met in its entirety by the 1,618 lots identified as supply under existing policy settings and standards (p17).

The draft Strategy identifies multiple constraints on development on the Tomaree peninsula (National Parks and other protected environmental land, flood prone land, acid sulfate soils etc. We support the conclusions that there is limited opportunity for new greenfield development

(opportunity sites are primarily around Anna Bay) but potential for infill development in some existing urbanised areas.

A false assertion of inadequate supply should not be used as an excuse for loosening controls which are vitally important to meet other objectives including protection of the character of the natural and built environment, both for resident amenity and for the unique selling point of the area for tourists

We submit that some of the proposed actions such as increasing height limits to allow multi-unit apartments on small lots, and reducing setbacks, are fundamentally incompatible with this objective, and should not be pursued.

Support move for lot accumulation.

We are disappointed that the draft Strategy does not seriously address some of the major environmental challenges that lie ahead, including mitigation and adaptation to climate change, and loss of biodiversity