



Australian Institute of
Landscape Architects

15 March 2017

Attn: Minister Anthony Roberts
NSW Minister for Planning
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney, NSW 2000

RE: Draft New England North West Draft Regional Environmental Plan

Dear Mr Roberts,

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, NSW Chapter (AILA NSW) is pleased to provide feedback on the Draft Plan. It is encouraging to see this document provide a vision that addresses agricultural, economic, community and environmental values in a highly diverse region. The challenges facing these communities are not unique and apply to many of the rural and regional centres throughout NSW and Australia.

The planning framework for the Regional Environmental Plan utilises existing evidence from a diverse range of studies and documents and it is helpful to have these all referenced within the one document. The use of existing OEH mapping, along with additional community and industry engagement should assist in the ownership of this Plan and the important next stages to work with the detail in implementing the directions and actions from the five goals of the plan.

The Plan is clearly presented and grouped under the five key goals:

- Goal 1: A growing and diversified agricultural sector
- Goal 2: A diversified economy through the management of mineral and energy resources including renewable energy generation.
- Goal 3: Communities resilient to change, with housing choice and services that meet shifting needs and lifestyles.
- Goal 4: Prosperous urban centres with job opportunities.
- Goal 5: Protected water, environment and heritage.

This structure, along with the welcome illustrations, figures, tables and case studies, allows the Plan to be consulted as a whole document or under the discrete goals and focus areas. This greatly assists in its relevance and 'user friendly' focus for those who are to implement from the plan or drive its' actions. It is important that Councils in all of the Local Government Areas, can relate their local activities to the broader regional vision, as well as obtain as much assistance in delivering the desired outcomes. The success of the coordination and monitoring committee's engagement during the implementation process, and the ability to adapt where needed, should greatly assist. Council

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planning strategies and Local Environmental Plans will address these policies, as noted under local planning initiatives, with a clear framework that the NSW Government will work with Councils. This is a key factor.

The continued success of the agricultural sector and responsible mineral and energy resource management are essential factors in the viability of the region.

There are many excellent inclusions in the five goals, arranged under Goals-Directions and Actions, with interrelated actions included where they are relevant across a number of the goals. In terms of the success associated with these actions detailed implementation measures are noted and the success of the Plan will be based on the detail and implementation measures. For example a valued objective is noted under 'Direction 3.3-Deliver housing choice to suit changing needs'. One of the actions associated with this is 'Action 3.4.2-Promote quality urban design in neighbourhoods and centres.' This emphasis on high quality urban design, streetscape, community uses and access to sufficient open space are all key factors in delivering neighbourhoods that are effective living spaces for people with diverse needs. In many rural and regional centres housing choice is limited.

Illustration by example of high quality examples of alternative housing forms, streets, landscape and open space areas assist. The plan illustrates shop-top housing as a means to invigorate centres, and could illustrate other high quality examples of the Neighbourhood Planning Principles listed. Consultation with Councils, agencies and industry representatives to review and update the neighbourhood planning principles, is seen as a valuable way to assist in the delivery of better neighbourhoods and centres. The case study of Glen Innes Town Centre Master Plan is provided as an important CBD revitalisation.

AILA supports the invigoration of centres to increase vitality and viability in these regions. As noted in the Plan under 'Goal 4- Prosperous urban centres with job opportunities,' there is often disparity in the declining town centre and new shopping precincts located away from the centre. The Plan sights the need to encourage retail and commercial uses in main streets and town centres. Key to this is the Town Centre Master Plan, to ensure the centres continue to provide an attractive space to visit, with shade, outdoor seating areas and activated streets.

As the Plan states, the commercial and retail environment is changing, and the centres that adapt to the change and remain capable of delivering community and social benefits, will be successful. More emphasis on the urban design and landscape of these centres, housing, industrial areas, streets, town entries, recreation and open space areas could be included in the Draft Regional Plan.

With these issues addressed residents will have a reason to visit their centres, and tourism will grow with increased visitation from passing traffic to these regional towns.

AILA congratulates the Department for developing this important document and looks forward to its successful adoption.

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We would, of course, be happy to meet you to speak about this further.

Gareth Collins
NSW Chapter President
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