

# Parks and Playgrounds Movement Inc.

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## The Greater Sydney Metropolitan Strategy



Department of Infrastructure  
Planning and Natural Resources  
Metropolitan Strategy  
GPO Box 3927  
Sydney NSW 2001

Revision 1

Dear Sir,

**The Greater Sydney Metropolitan Strategy**

The Parks and Playgrounds Movement was established in the early 1930s. Its secretary was the C E W Bean, the historian, lawyer and journalist. It was brought to Newcastle in 1952 by R.E. Farrell, and continues the work to safeguard our Natural and Cultural Heritage.

The need for a general strategic planning framework for the future of the Greater Metropolitan Region is essential. The last major formulation of a strategic concept plan to provide for growth and change was in 1967 with launch of the Sydney Regional Outline Plan. The Sydney Outline Plan has to a great degree been successful providing a guiding overview to regional growth.

However because of the increasing pressures for growth it is essential to have a strategy that can provide a firm base for an ecologically sustainable future.

### **Conserve our natural and cultural environmental heritage**

The strategy will need to be much more determined in triggering efforts from the whole of government to protect and conserve our natural and cultural environmental heritage in the emerging urban pattern.

The Hunter Region has had the benefit of a Statutory Regional Plan which itself needs to be reviewed to include stronger provisions for protecting and conserving the natural and cultural qualities of the Hunter Region.

There is a need for the creation of a mechanism within the Metropolitan Strategy to provide accountability and ensure that Government Agencies can be exposed for not implementing the a properly made Regional Environmental Plan.

Parks and Playgrounds Movement would like to make the following general observations and submissions to the Greater Sydney Strategy discussion Paper.

### **Dedicated National Parks control urban sprawl**

In terms of the overall strategy the dedication of National Parks is the most effective spatial determinant in the control of urban sprawl and in sustaining a quality environment.

This is obvious when you realise how much the Sydney Region has benefited from the dedication of the 14000ha Royal and Ku-ring-gai Chase National Parks, which were set-aside when Sydney's population was only that of the current Lower Hunter Region population.

The Greater Sydney Region has been fortunate in that there has been a committed voluntary conservation movement over many years that has been prepared campaign for the dedication of a ring of parks in the outer Sydney basin.

The Sydney Strategy needs to direct Government policy to protect the Harbours, Rivers and Lakes and remnant bushland areas within the Region by the use of adequate government policy and regulation.

## **Metropolitan Strategy Objectives**

The Metropolitan Strategy should reflect the following objectives.

- 1. To make the conservation of the Region's natural and cultural heritage an integral and essential feature of the Greater Sydney Metropolitan Strategy.**
- 2. To make Ecologically Sustainable Development the criteria for future growth and change.**
- 3. To clearly identify the elements and attributes of the Region's "unique natural beauty and enviable lifestyle" and include policies that will ensure their protection and survival into the future.**
- 4. To provide Public Domain policy for the Metropolitan Region that protects the right of every citizen to clean air and water and the enjoyment of public foreshores, parks and open spaces and beaches and the provision of public transport.**

Unfortunately the Greater Metropolitan Strategy Discussion Paper seems to be promulgated primarily on the basis of the facilitation of a number of projects that government has underway rather than by an incisive understanding of the impact of future Growth and Change.

## **The principal weakness of the strategy**

The principal weakness of the strategy is that it is not taking into account the protection of the Sydney Region's environment as the primary objective and then considering how growth and change can be accommodated within the natural framework.

As a community we must work toward a sustainable city regardless of whether there is growth and change in the manner outlined in the discussion paper. Parks and Playgrounds Movement want to see the future policy based on a realistic understanding of the environment. The complete mapping of the Region's native vegetation and the full assessment of the publicly owned lands for the protection of Flora and fauna in parks and reserves should be required as Government policy.

## **Development Corporation -not a transparent public body**

Parks and Playgrounds Movement is deeply concerned with the Strategy's contention that the establishment of Development Corporations is a satisfactory governance model.

A Development Corporation is not a responsible transparent public body

and *shall be subject in all respects to the control and direction of the Minister*. We are aware of the undemocratic nature of the operation of Development Corporations and are opposed to their use for the implementation of government planning policy in the guise of a regional Metro Strategy.

Development Corporations are used as a quasi-local Government public planning authority and need to be made publicly accountable to a specific electorate.

The Development Corporations legislation provides for the creation of Growth Centre boundaries that can be altered without exhibition and for *Approved Schemes* that are required to be implemented but can be disregarded as the Minister sees fit and are without a statutory exhibition or notification process. There are no annual meetings where directors can be questioned and the minutes of meetings are not available to the public.

Special Purpose Corporations established by parliament that have clear core responsibility and a defined life for a specific project such as for the Sydney Olympic Park Authority for the Olympic Games could be more appropriate.

A Ministerial Corporation under the Growth Centres Act has broad powers to compulsorily acquire lands and to *promote, Co-ordinate, manage and secure the orderly and economic development of the growth centre*. It can make recommendations to the Minister on any matter or proposal for the development and use of land within its Growth Centre or on the planning and use of land including development of land in conjunction with utility services and public transport.

These governance matters can be developed separately or in opposition to the Local Council's planning authority and without the knowledge of the local Government Councillors.

Governance should be about true partnership with the electors or their representatives and be publicly transparent and accountable to the electors.

## **Corridors for Conservation**

The Metropolitan Strategy should recognise and establish a biodiversity corridor for conservation from Stockton Bight through the Hunter River estuary to the Sugarloaf Range and a Biodiversity corridor for conservation in the Wyong/Lake Macquarie buffer zone from the Wallarah Peninsular to the Wattagans.

Furthermore; the State Government should amend the existing statutory Hunter Regional Environmental Plan 1989 and any future Lower Hunter Planning Strategy to include these corridors as inviolate conservation zones and that Nature Reserves, National Parks, Regional Parks and State Conservation Areas be dedicated within these corridors.

## Essential Historic Newcastle Station and Railway Corridor

The Movement reaffirms its support of the retention of passenger rail services to the Historic Newcastle Railway Station and recommends that the Regional Planning Strategy encourage urban development adjacent to railway stations along the rail transport corridor as urban village development.



There can be no public confidence in a Greater Metropolitan Strategy that does not clearly recognise the importance of maintaining and improving the existing railway infrastructure such as the historic Newcastle to Maitland railway and the Sydney to Newcastle Railway. The Newcastle to Maitland Railway was the second passenger railway system constructed in Australia. The railway corridor must become an essential spine for development in the region providing efficient ecologically acceptable public transport between the station nodal points on the existing network.

The Lower Hunter Transport Working Group made up of members of the Board of the Honeysuckle Development Corporation can only give tainted recommendations to government. It has no credibility in the Hunter Region as a responsible body that should be advising Government on public transport.

## Long term proposals for Biodiversity Corridors

Parks and Playgrounds Movement in proposing the corridors for conservation strategy for the Lower Hunter is aware of the long term conservation proposals advocated for the Biodiversity Corridors by conservation groups over many years. We believe that it is important for the Metropolitan-Strategy to reflect these proposals in a cohesive and widely supported strategy to guide Government in

preparing for more Environmentally Sustainable Development in the Lower Hunter Subregion.

Two major biodiversity corridors have been identified in the lower Hunter and the passenger rail development corridor as the 'corridors for conservation strategy', which we believe is needed as part of the base structural planning in the Lower Hunter.

Corridors for conservation should also be identified for inclusion as an integral part of the overall Greater Sydney Metropolitan Strategy.

The Corridors for Conservation strategy is supported locally by active lobby groups: *Wallarah Peninsular Alliance*, the *Green Corridor Coalition* and *Save our Rail* lobby.

We trust that the principles of our submission will be considered for inclusion in the final Greater Sydney Metropolitan Strategy and that the Parks and Playgrounds Movement will be included in the next Futures Forum.

We would be grateful if you could keep the Movement informed on the progress of the Strategy.

Parks and Playgrounds Movement reserve the right to make further submissions to the Greater Sydney Region Metropolitan Strategy.

Yours faithfully

Doug Lithgow, Freeman of the City of Newcastle  
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<http://www.geocities.com/parksandplaygrounds/>