

95 Bellevue Rd  
Tumbi Umbi NSW 2261

10 May 2005

The Hon Craig Knowles MP  
Minister for Infrastructure and Planning and Minister for Natural Resources

### **Central Coast – Planning, Infrastructure and Natural Resources Issues**

Dear Minister

As a resident of the NSW Central Coast for over 30 years, I feel compelled to voice my concern with various issues within your portfolio. Whilst I have always been regarded as being an active contributor within my local community, I have never belonged to any political party – my comments concern good governance rather than being politically partisan.

It is my understanding that the role of DIPNR is to provide a framework for *making integrated decisions about natural resource management and land use planning; bringing the social, economic and environmental agendas together to promote sustainability.* (DIPNR website)

With respect, I do not believe that your portfolio is delivering appropriate services to residents of the Central Coast.

#### **Infrastructure**

My comments here are based on my understanding of DIPNR's role / responsibilities for:

*demand management strategies for water, infrastructure and transport to ensure Government expenditure is targeted to those areas of greatest need.*

*This will include the planning, coordination and prioritisation of the provision of infrastructure such as transport, water and sewerage, and services such as schools and health, to support the Government's strategic direction.* DIPNR website

Whilst the NSW government is encouraging increased rapidly increasing population on the Central Coast, major NSW government funding is clearly being directed to areas in western Sydney. Whilst this may be politically populist, this is clearly an inequitable and ineffectual allocation of relatively 'scarce' resources.

The Central Coast lags behind many other areas in NSW in a range of infrastructure: roads, transport, hospitals / health, education – schools / TAFE, water and waste.

## Roads

Many of the major ("State" roads) on the Coast are woefully inadequate for current volumes of traffic. Whilst some improvements have been made (eg Avoca Drive, Wyong Road), many roads require immediate upgrading (eg Tuggerah Straight, The Entrance – Gosford main road).

- Recent work by the RTA at Terrigal Drive demonstrates utter contempt for local motorists – 40 kph speed restrictions have been in place at this major intersection for months – whilst the RTA has completed only minor works, including the partial installation of a few traffic signal poles.
- Despite announcements at the last election of major funding for widening of The Entrance Rd between Wamberal and Bateau Bay, a recent roundabout at Forresters Beach is not two-lane and recent footpath and landscaping near the retirement village at Forresters Beach does not allow for road widening ! I ask: is this just poor planning co-ordination or were the announcements just media spin with no intent to fulfil them ?
- Roads planning is inadequate and unco-ordinated with Council processes: traffic through Long Jetty regularly slows to a crawl – this bottleneck can only worsen given DIPNR / Council recent approval of large developments at Magenta Shores (North Entrance), El Lago site in The Entrance and hundreds of multi-storey units in The Entrance – access all of which is principally reliant upon traffic flows through Long Jetty

Funding to local Councils is clearly inadequate to provide adequate roads / maintenance to cope with the increased traffic flows generated by additional numbers of people which the NSW government is requiring be accommodated in new estates on the Central Coast.

## Transport

State Rail delivers an extremely poor service to some 30000 commuters each day. Hardly a week goes by when local media does not feature a story about late running, dirty or overcrowded trains. As a commuter myself for some 8 years, I have first-hand experience of this atrocious service; I sat on the steps from Gosford to Sydney only last week on the 9.17 am train – at least 20 people stood all the in the carriage I was in !

I accept that operational responsibility State Rail is not within DIPNR's portfolio – however many of the operational problems stem from inadequate transport planning.

- despite thousands of new houses being built in areas around Warnervale / Bluehaven, residents still have no proper access to rail services

Private bus services are poor:

- buses often take circuitous routes which means long journeys from stations to residential areas
- few services operate after hours, inconveniencing shift workers and those wanting a night out
- young people and the elderly continue to be disadvantaged by the lack of bus concessions (introduced earlier this year in Sydney).

### Hospitals - Health

Whilst I acknowledge the completion of substantial building works at both Gosford and Wyong hospitals, service delivery is still inadequate to meet the increased demands of a local population consisting predominantly of young children and over 60s.

Whilst I accept that day-to-day operation of hospitals / health services are not within the DIPNR portfolio, matching service delivery / demand is a Planning issue. Despite 'written in blood' promises by Premier Carr, long hospital waiting lists persist. Dental care is almost non-existent except at private (expensive) dentists; finding a bulk-billing doctor is nigh impossible!

### Education - Schools / TAFE

Local media is full of stories about overcrowding, schools with long-term inadequate maintenance and lack of facilities. Planning / co-ordination is totally inadequate – demountable classrooms are frequently installed, removed and re-installed as school populations fluctuate by relatively small numbers. Nearby Tumbi Umbi HS seen construction of two additions and now has demountables – and it is less than 10 years old ! Overcrowded playgrounds can only breed social problems.

### Water

Whilst I accept that the Gosford-Wyong Joint Water Authority currently manages local water supply, current shortages appear to date back to non-completion of tunnel / pumping facilities when the NSW government constructed the Mangrove Dam some 30 years ago. Whilst the Boomerang Tunnel was constructed, it appears that pipeline work was never completed and high-capacity pumps were never installed.

I fail to see how DIPNR can claim a role *making integrated decisions about natural resource management and land use planning* without accepting responsibility for fully funding and completing such infrastructure so that it serves anticipated demand. (I acknowledge that the names of various departments / authorities have changed over the years; the roles / responsibilities remain).

### Waste

I note in Wyong Shire Councils draft Management Plan 2005-2006 that Council pays an EPA levy of \$ 2,237,000 (05-06 budget); yet remains responsible for managing Buttonderry Tip. I assume a similar levy paid by Gosford City Council and similar waste disposal arrangements.

I ask: what services does DIPNR provide in return for this \$ 4-5 million EPA levy on Central Coast residents ?

### Planning

There appears to be little co-ordination of planning between DIPNR (and its various predecessors) and local government – Gosford and Wyong Councils. There is woeful lack of any holistic approach or commitment to a triple bottom line philosophy – social,

economic and environment.

I actively participated in consultations culminating in production of the *'Shaping the Central Coast'* document – I ask: what has happened to this ? No mention is being made of it in recent Council Management Plans – have DIPNR and local government agreed to the document ? If not, what framework *is* being used to co-ordinate State and local planning ?

It seems to me that the State government is mandating that the Central Coast become a 'dormitory' for an expanding population from Sydney but is providing only token funding to support this population influx. With Central Coast population growing at approximately twice the rate of NSW as a whole, local Councils are struggling to provide new infrastructure as well as maintain services for current population.

I read in Wyong Shire's draft Management Plan 2005-2006 that Council contributes some \$ 470,000 PlanFirst levy; presumably Gosford City makes a similar contribution. I ask: what funding / services does DIPNA provide to ensure co-ordinated planning and provision of resources for the Central Coast ?

The new Warnervale precinct is an example. Private enterprise has many new homes, but government services are severely lacking. Whilst many 'plans' have been exhibited, a DA for the railway station has only just been lodged (due for completion June '05 ??) and the NSWFB has been forced to build a fire station in a residential precinct because the main road where it should be built does not yet exist. Proper planning and appropriate and timely funding of government services is owed to the thousands of people have been building new homes in this area for at least 5 years !

It is well recognised that social problems are increasing on the Central Coast – high levels of unemployment, low median incomes, high levels of commuters travelling long hours, a preponderance of young children and aged over 60s and inadequate facilities, transport etc can only cause increased degeneration of the social fabric – its a real shame that the tranquil coastal environment is being destroyed by inadequate planning and resourcing !

DIPNR's recent approval of the Magenta Shores project at North Entrance demonstrates piece-meal rather than holistic planning procedures – it is a mystery how one could responsibly approve ongoing large development in an area with severe water shortages and chronic traffic problems (through Long Jetty) !

Apart from recent efforts at Kariong (business park) and token funding of Business Central Coast, the NSW government has virtually ignored local employment needs – promoting the area / developing industrial estates has largely been left to local Councils. Lack of planning has resulted in fewer than needed local jobs forcing many people to commute to / from Sydney by private car (requiring widening of the freeway) and train (causing many of the over-demand / crowding / servicing problems).

### **Natural resources**

Natural resources are one of the major attractions of the Central Coast. The regions mountains, forests, lakes, streams, beaches, dunes and scenery are a priceless heritage

which our generation should respect and ensure is protected.

Given its role in *integrat(ing) natural resource policy to protect and sustainably use, manage and allocate natural resources and to ensure the retention and sustainability of productive agricultural and forestry communities and making integrated decisions about natural resource management*, it is hard to rationalise DIPNR's role in

- recent approval of gas exploration in the mountain areas west of Wyong – apparently without consideration of possible damage to groundwater resources
- preparedness to grant a licence to Coca Cola to extract and bottle vast quantities of ground-water at a tiny fraction of the cost being paid for water by local residents and prior to completion of projected demand studies
- considering granting licences for an open-cut sand mine at Somersby – apparently without local consultation

Surely DIPNR owes local residents a duty of care in considering all available scientific studies (and making these public) and the courtesy of consultation and input into such decisions !

As I said in my opening paragraph: I am not a politically partisan person and would prefer to engage in discussing worthwhile issues rather than engaging in political partisanship and media spin.

Regrettably, I am increasingly entertaining the belief that local politicians and NSW government departments are grossly failing in their responsibilities to the Central Coast.

I would greatly appreciate your detailed comments on and response to the issues raised above.

Sincerely

Kevin Armstrong

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Hon Grant McBride - Minister for the Central Coast and  
Member for The Entrance