

**Submission
No 104**

**INQUIRY INTO PLANNING PROCESS IN NEWCASTLE
AND THE BROADER HUNTER REGION**

Organisation: Woodlands Close Community Team

Date received: 21/10/2014

We are writing to request that your enquiry to include 2 separate projects approved by the Dept of Planning & Infrastructure at Hexham NSW.

The first project is called the 'Hexham Relief Roads' and is by ARTC & UHVA.

The second project is called the 'Long Term Train Support Facility' and is by Aurizon.

I write on behalf of the 2 closest residents & we are known as the Woodlands Close Community Team. We feel that there has been some underhanded deals done to get these 2 projects approved in the manner in which they have been to date.

We will list some of the problems that we have been lumbered with & the Dept of Planning do not want to know or try & resolve any of the problems, but tell us that we have to talk to the proponents, which is a total waste of our time, as they keep fobbing us off.

1 – We can't have our land changed from our flood zoning, but Aurizon have been given permission to fill in & use floodway zoned land. Yet, their works could increase flooding disasters with over a million litres of diesel could flow into the world class Hunter Wetlands. If something happens to their fuel depot, which has been built in high velocity flow, during flooding it will flow straight into the Hexham Wetlands affecting bird & animal life. There are no barriers between the fuel depot and the swamps.

2 – All of our complaints would have been ignored except for the intervention of MP Clayton Barr who has been a great support to the residents of Woodlands Close.

3 – Aurizon has on occasions been running water off their site into the Hexham Wetlands until we made complaints. Aurizon aren't allowed to pump water off site, so they spray it around the roads & onto their own land and this is generating water to flow into the Hexham Wetlands when it is already flooding, this will make flooding worse for local residents.

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4 – Destruction of all flora and fauna to build their worksites. This was done basically overnight. On being asked “Darren Green” from ARTC (their environmentalist) said “No birds were captured”. Finches, wrens, quail & other small birds were wiped out along with all the little frogs. Please consider that all this land was SEPP14 until the Dept of Planning & Infrastructure changed it to suit these major players.

5 – These projects have no intention of clearing local waterways by ARTC or Aurizon on completion of works or to assist landholders in the future.

6 – Flood planning is a farce & both projects were only asked to start flood mitigation within 12 months of starting & this does not even stipulate that they have to do anything, which is totally wrong. Overnight my property has become worthless & will be forced to sell my cattle. The projects were allowed to build temporary compounds, .however they did not model their flood planning to include them or the new access roads or buildings that have been approved.

7 – Matters that have been great concerns to residents have only been addressed because the Dept of Planning have had to instruct both companies to do something & this would not have been done without the assistance of Clayton Barr MP.

8 – The roads that have been allowed to be built onto major highways are potential disasters waiting to happen. Near accidents have already been experienced by residents.

9 – Aurizon & UHVA have at least doubled the size of the old coal washery block and we are concerned about the affects this will have on the Hexham Wetlands as now more water will be running off onto the environmentally endangered and protected wetlands when raining. We are unsure if they have been given approval to increase the height of the land like they have? We believe that this is their way of getting rid of unwanted & possibly contaminated soil. The fill needed was far more

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than the original plans & we are unsure if the Dept of Planning know that more fill was needed.

10 – The original surveying didn't even know there was a billabong and now that has been filled in & many, many plans have been made up along the way as they needed to change things, as nothing was planned out properly. How inaccurate have the original plans been concerning both projects & how can they be allowed to keep changing to suit themselves with no regards to residents?

Has it been doctored to allow work to progress & now it has gone too far & can't be stopped as the costs would be prohibitive to the State Government & at what cost to the environment & the residents? We won't know until a major flood, but as they have doubled the coal washery size & increased the height from when Aurizon originally bought the land, it has to impact on residents & the Hexham Wetlands.

11 – Residents have had to endure bad attitude & behaviour from both projects & there is no sign of any assistance to flooding us out of our properties.

12 – Dept of Planning & Infrastructure allowed both projects to dispose of SEPP14 protected wetlands & allowed them to use bogus offsets approx. 100 km away which does nothing for the denigrated area that both projects have created. Also the DPI allowed both projects not to bother doing any landscaping to disguise the eyesore that they are creating.

13 – These major projects has been allowed to continue even though it is so disorganised & no consistency between this supposed alliance. Dept of Planning have let both projects change the projects to suit themselves along the way.

14 – Both projects have only been re-active to complaints not pro-active to address residents concerns.

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On behalf of Woodlands Close Community Team

Linda Hain

Helen Lynch-Foster

Dated: _____

Email: