

**Submission  
No 6**

## **INQUIRY INTO REGIONAL PLANNING PROCESSES IN NSW**

**Organisation:** Narromine Shire Council

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File No: 91.687  
Contact Person: Melissa Ward

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The Director  
Standing Committee on State Development  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY 2000

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE – Inquiry into regional planning processes in NSW**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the NSW Legislative Council's inquiry into regional planning processes in NSW. Please see below Narromine Council's comments in regard to your inquiry.

**(a) Opportunities to stimulate regional development under the planning framework including through legislation, policy, strategy and governance**

Essentially the planning framework needs to be made easier and more simplified in regional areas. Whilst I contend that the standardisation of the LEP framework has simplified the ability for a developer to read an LEP across different Councils, it is the content in this standard framework which has not vastly changed and if anything, the introduction of new layers of restriction (such as biodiversity sensitive areas, groundwater vulnerability and the like) has pushed more rural Councils into requiring development applications rather than complying developments.

Fast-tracking of rezoning applications to permit value-added industrial and commercial land where opportunities exist should be made a priority.

**(b) Constraints to regional development imposed by the planning framework, and opportunities for the framework to better respond to regional planning issues**

Multiple layers of conflicting legislation can be confusing for all types of developers. For example, on the one hand the Exempt and Complying SEPP lists certain types of minor developments which are meant to be straight forward and assessed within a short 10 day timeframe to avoid unnecessary delays.

Overlapping with this is Biodiversity, bushfire prone and groundwater sensitive maps which then limit the ability to submit a complying development on such lots affected by these restrictions. There needs to be greater scrutiny when applying such maps as legislation in regional areas due to their often vague satellite-based determinations. This limits the ability to carry out the complying development on any part of the lot (even if one small portion of the lot is affected by an environmental restriction).

**(c) The suitability of a stand-alone Regional Planning Act**

An Act suited to the regional areas of NSW seems excessive although I do support the notion of differentiating between issues and constraints relevant to regional and rural areas and city-coastal areas. As an aside to this, the more you differentiate between the work of a city/coastal planner and regional/rural planner, the less likely it could be for planning professionals to move to the country and work under a completely different Act – it could be akin to moving states. Subsections within the same Act would be a softened yet workable outcome.

**(d) The effectiveness of EPI's including SEPPs and LEPs (including zoning) to stimulate regional development, and opportunities to improve their effectiveness**

Narromine Shire Council, like most other rural Councils, is bound by a state-written Exempt and Complying Development State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) which sets out the criteria which make a development exempt or complying depending on zoning and other factors. Whilst this is a comprehensive framework, it is still quite city-focussed and includes (for example) requirements for sound-proofing of swimming pool pump enclosures in rural areas where the closest neighbour may be more than one kilometre from the pool. Whilst this is not a big impediment to regional development, a complete review of such additional costs for development in regional areas is warranted.

**(e) Opportunities to increase delegations for regional councils in regard to the plan making processes**

If a LEP amendment is proposed which complies with a Land Use Strategy endorsed by the Department of Planning and Environment, this should be a fast-tracked amendment. Delegations could be given to Councils to fast-track consultation with the community (as this should have been done comprehensively with the Strategy) and providing a number of checks are done, it could be sent to the Department for gazettal within a shorter time period. This shortened process puts greater emphasis on smart strategic planning at the beginning with the rezoning component a smaller procedural process following adoption of the bigger picture prior.

**(f) Opportunities for strategic planning to assist in responding to challenges faced by communities in regional areas including through regional plans**

Regional plans need to show economic strengths both common and unique to different LGAs and highlight how these strengths can be further exploited. Strategic planning through regional plans need to be responsive to government policy changes and easily amended where change can bring about positive economic benefits.

**(g) Opportunities for government-led incentives that promote regional development**

NSW could review the effectiveness of Victoria's recently established *Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund* and replicate the intent behind this stimulus package if successful. With the current government pushing for employment-generating small businesses to be allocated tax savings/breaks, regional areas need to capitalise on these opportunities by allocating land in appropriate areas for small and medium businesses to locate.

**(h) Pathways to improve decision-making processes for regional development proposals, including increasing the use of complying development, improving negotiation processes for voluntary planning agreements and reducing costs associated with assessment**

I am unsure how a large development proposal could be categorised as complying development, depending on its scale. Despite this, I support the above streamlining suggestions and will be interested to hear of how this could be implemented.

Please contact Council's Corporate, Community and Regulatory Services Department on 02 6889 9950 if you require any additional information in relation to the above.

Yours faithfully

Melissa Ward  
**Manager Planning**