

INQUIRY INTO REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND A GLOBAL SYDNEY

Organisation: Coffs Harbour City Council

Date received: 2 June 2017

BACKGROUND

1. That the Standing Committee on State Development inquire into and report on how Sydney's growing prominence as a global city enhances regional development in New South Wales, and in particular:
 - a. ensuring the regions benefit from the expansion of international trade, infrastructure, employment, tourism, innovation and research in the greater Sydney region
 - b. identify the sectors of the economy that can provide the greatest opportunities for regional development, including forecasts for jobs growth
 - c. how collaboration between levels of government, non-government and private sectors can assist the regions to benefit from Sydney's global position, and
 - d. any other related matter.
2. That the committee report by 28 April 2018.

SUBMISSION: COFFS HARBOUR, NSW.

Key issues:

- Population mix – Number of residents over 45yrs is greater than other regional NSW areas and metropolitan areas. Lack of quality employment opportunities and range of education opportunities to retain and/or attract young people
- Limited knowledge of regional areas by Sydneyiders and the opportunities that are available e.g. NBN enables remote working, lower cost land
- Transport infrastructure particularly road and rail transport
- Incubator/accelerator programs – limited accessibility to audience, investors and skilled workers/developers
- Limited funding for major infrastructure development

Recommendations:

- Investment attraction funding and incentives
- Promotion of regional areas strengths to international trade organisations
- Funding for Coffs Harbour Bypass to ensure safe and efficient carriageway
- Funding for infrastructure investment on the Coffs Coast
- Development of trade schools in innovative technologies around service industries e.g. agriculture, health, manufacturing to engage young learners/workers

DETAILS: COFFS HARBOUR, NSW

Coffs Harbour City Council acknowledges the growing prominence of Sydney as a global city and is pleased to provide an understanding of how this prominence can enhance development in regional areas, in particular Coffs Harbour.

The Draft Coffs Harbour Community Strategic Plan (CSP) includes the following objectives, showcasing the importance of community prosperity:

B2.1 – We are best prepared to exploit opportunities now and in the future

B1.1 – We champion business, innovation and technology to stimulate economic growth and local jobs

D2.2 – We collaborate to achieve the best possible future for Coffs Harbour

The CSP is the foundation for the strategies and delivery plans that Council operates under as they provide for the community. This includes the Coffs Harbour Economic Strategy 2014 – 2017 which identifies one of the key strategic themes as Invest Coffs or promote Coffs Harbour as an ideal investment, development, business and new resident destination.

NSW Department of Planning and Environment has identified Coffs Harbour as a regional city on the Mid North Coast of NSW with a current population of approximately 74,000 (ABS ERP 2016). The city has a diverse mix of industry including construction, health, retail and accommodation with the potential to build on existing opportunities in agriculture/food and associated industries, technology/ innovation enterprises including environmental technologies along with sporting excellence opportunities.

Appendix 1 shows the population of Coffs Harbour broken into age groups as compared to NSW. Coffs Harbour is well below the averages of NSW for population in the 20 – 44 year age brackets. This impacts on the number of people who have the potential to participate in the workforce (particularly in service or new industries), invest in business or residential property, and use disposable income.

a. ensuring the regions benefit from the expansion of international trade, infrastructure, employment, tourism, innovation and research in the greater Sydney region

Along with other regional areas, Coffs Harbour faces challenges associated with

- retention and attraction of young people
- promotion of the opportunities available in the region
- safe and efficient road transport options
- investment opportunities particularly in the technological sphere
- provision of infrastructure for community and business needs

Coffs Harbour, as a regional city, connected digitally and by air travel, is well-placed to build on and benefit from the expansion occurring in Sydney. To capitalise the benefit from the economic and trade positivity generated and grown in Sydney, a firm recognition of what regional areas have to offer must be given to new and/or expanding businesses of Sydney. Promotion of opportunities such as lower cost of commercial leasing and/or purchase, availability of workers and liveability of the area combined with accessibility via NBN connection and air travel are messages that should be passed on to companies and industries that know Sydney as the only opportunity. Regional areas such as ours are able to identify their prospects but require assistance to promote these prospects to large, multinational or international companies that come to Federal or State government agencies regarding establishing or growing in Sydney.

Opportunities available in the Sydney region generated from international trade, international (and to a degree domestic) tourism and innovation and research could be made available to a centre that is both digitally and physically connected. Goods can be made or grown, innovative ideas tested, experiences undertaken within Coffs Harbour which would generate employment and opportunity for current and future residents. Infrastructure development in the Sydney region allows skill development of potential workers for regional areas.

b. Identify the sectors of the economy that can provide the greatest opportunities for regional development, including forecasts for jobs growth

Coffs Harbour typically has a high base of part-time and casual employment (*Appendix 2*) which makes it difficult to attract large numbers of highly skilled workers. Approximately 80% of the total dollar value of output of local industries is sold locally. The opportunity to encourage industries that allow export sales (sales of goods and services to non-residents) would be largely beneficial to the economy of Coffs Harbour and other regional areas. Industries such as:

- information technology
- manufacturing
- food growth and production

would create employment in the region but also allow export sales and build on the potential population and international trade opportunities of Sydney.

Agriculture is a growing industry in Coffs Harbour with an extra 123 jobs created in the last 3 years. The capacity of this industry to increase employment itself and through associated industries would provide further employment opportunities. The associated services to grow, develop products, package and send would enable this further growth. Road and transport logistics are important for regional areas if they are able to benefit and build on the opportunities created from an expanding global city like Sydney. Regional areas with the ability to grow food and create value added food products require the efficiency of direct transport.

The capacity that Coffs Harbour has with NBN connectivity direct to premise allows regional areas such as Coffs to provide either remote working space, trial opportunities of new technologies or opportunity for smart businesses to establish or expand. Recent reports have showcased 5 IT experts move to the area in the last 6 months due to the liveability of the area and the opportunity created by NBN.

Due to the lower cost of operation (i.e. leasehold or freehold costs) and the availability of transport networks by road, rail and air, manufacturing of traditional products or IT related products can provide employment opportunities for the region. The capacity to deliver is currently limited because of the lack of promotion of these opportunities. A current manufacturing firm on the Coffs Coast who provides product for Sydney customers has grown to employ 18 people locally and up to 10 in Sydney. The potential to replicate these sorts of opportunities are available.

c. how collaboration between levels of government, non-government and private sectors can assist the regions to benefit from Sydney's global position, and

To maximise the retention and/or attraction of youth and young people in regional areas the securing of education and work opportunities is important. Education within industries that have the greatest potential to deliver quality employment opportunities now and into the future should be expanded into regional areas. The learning opportunities can then be combined with earning opportunities.

Avenues such as Trade Schools with innovative design and manufacturing opportunities or incubator and accelerator programs for digital technology development would allow opportunities within our region to engage, attract and develop young people in both learning and employment programs.

The road infrastructure that supports Coffs Harbour is currently less than desirable to enable industries that may need or desire to transport their goods to major metropolitan areas. The bypass of Coffs Harbour has been being investigated since 2001 (*Appendix 3*) and with uncertainty and lack of safe and efficient road carriageway, the opportunity for Coffs Harbour to be well positioned to make use of the expansion of Sydney services and industries weakens. Collaboration between all levels of government is necessary for this project to proceed.

Other large infrastructure project investment is also essential for the health and vitality of regional areas. These projects provide for community needs but aid in the attraction of residents, businesses and private investment by showing that all necessary services are available, that there is confidence in the marketplace and that there is opportunity for expansion and growth. Infrastructure investment also creates direct employment.

d. any other related matter.

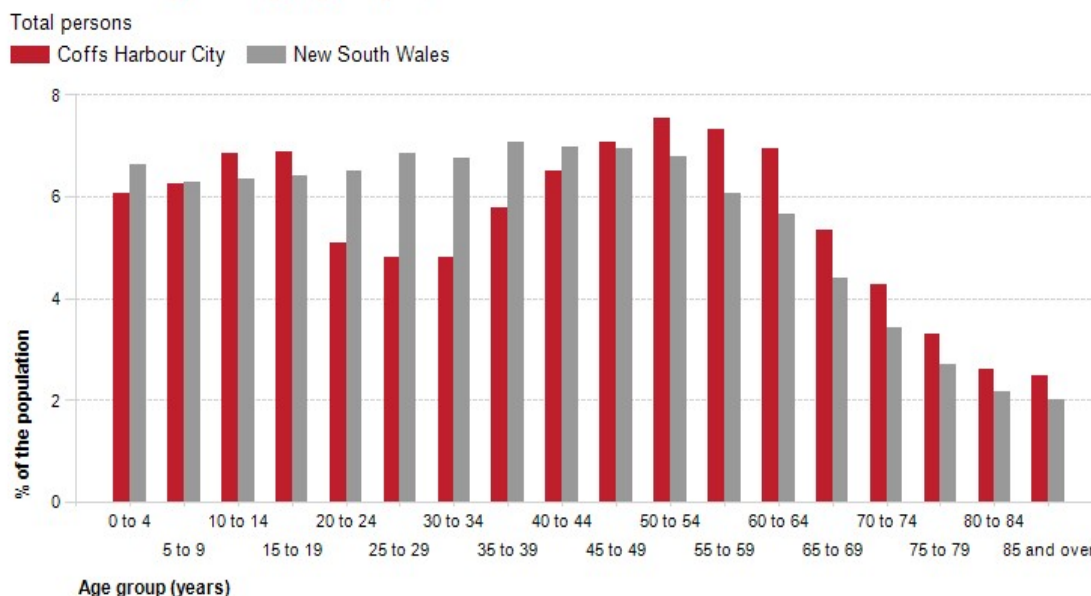
While Sydney is the major gateway to NSW and Australia and a major attractor of overseas migrants, it boasts a population of 5.25 million (average annual growth rate of 6.15% over the last 5 years), is the 12th most expensive city in the world to live in and has a population density of 400 people per square kilometre (www.population.net.au/sydney-population) compared to 63 persons per square kilometre in Coffs Harbour. This growth in population and international interest, along with the changing delivery methods involved with employment and education prospects, provides an opportunity for outlying areas within regional NSW to provide services, space and labour to the growing economy to strengthen NSW as a whole.

The opportunities potentially provided to regional areas by the expansion and prominence of Sydney as a global city is an important opportunity for an area such as Coffs Harbour. Coffs Harbour City Council and our local business community have developed a working relationship to understand needs, opportunities and capabilities of the region. We look forward to working with other levels of government to build the economy of this region.

Appendix 1 – Population by age group Coffs Harbour vs Regional NSW

Age structure - five year age groups, 2011

export



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2011 (Usual residence data)
Compiled and presented in profile.id by .id, the population experts.

.id
the population experts

Appendix 2 - Employment status in Coffs Harbour

Employment status

export

Coffs Harbour City - Persons (Usual residence)	2011			2006			Change
Employment status	Number	%	New South Wales %	Number	%	New South Wales %	2006 to 2011
Employed	27,994	91.7	94.1	25,671	91.1	94.1	+2,323
▪ Employed full-time	15,444	50.6	60.2	13,957	49.6	60.8	+1,487
▪ Employed part-time	11,970	39.2	31.8	11,082	39.3	30.6	+888
▪ Hours worked not stated	580	1.9	2.1	632	2.2	2.7	-52
a Unemployed (Unemployment rate)	2,537	8.3	5.9	2,493	8.9	5.9	+44
▪ Looking for full-time work	1,580	5.2	3.5	1,617	5.7	3.7	-37
▪ Looking for part-time work	957	3.1	2.4	876	3.1	2.2	+81
Total Labour Force	30,531	100.0	100.0	28,164	100.0	100.0	+2,367

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2006 and 2011. Compiled and presented by .id, the population experts.

Labour force status

export

Coffs Harbour City - Persons aged 15+ (Usual residence)	2011			2006			Change
Labour force status	Number	%	New South Wales %	Number	%	New South Wales %	2006 to 2011
a Total labour force (Participation rate)	30,531	55.2	59.7	28,164	54.4	58.9	+2,367
Not in the labour force	21,966	39.7	34.6	21,014	40.6	34.3	+952
Labour force status not stated	2,810	5.1	5.7	2,575	5.0	6.8	+235
Total persons aged 15+	55,307	100.0	100.0	51,753	100.0	100.0	+3,554

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2006 and 2011. Compiled and presented by .id, the population experts.

Appendix 3 - <http://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/projects/northern-nsw/coffs-harbour-bypass/>

Coffs Harbour Bypass - planning

The NSW Government is funding the planning of the Coffs Harbour bypass. The project includes around a 14 kilometre motorway standard upgrade of the Pacific Highway from Englands Road in the south and connects with the newly upgraded Sapphire to Woolgoolga section in the north.



Updates and announcements

Project update – December 2016

The [Project update – December 2016](#) (PDF, 1.08Mb) is to inform the community on the progress of refining the concept design and preparing the Environmental Impact Statement for the Coffs Harbour Bypass.

Community Feedback Summary

The [Community Feedback Summary](#) (PDF, 1.01Mb) provides an overview of the community feedback received on the preliminary concept design in August and September 2016. Key themes raised by the community include design, route selection process, property, noise, air quality impacts, construction and environmental impacts.

Business and community survey

We invite you to complete a [business and community survey](#) to assist us with understanding the benefits and impacts associated with the bypass.

Responses will help inform the traffic and transport investigations and the social impact assessment required for the Environmental Impact Statement.

Latest news

As part of the environmental assessment phase of the project a State Significant Infrastructure application report was submitted to the NSW Department of Planning and Environment.

The project has now received the Secretary's environmental assessment requirements (SEARs) for the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

You can view the report and the SEARs on the [NSW Department of Planning and Environment's website](#).

Project background

Roads and Maritime Services has been investigating a Coffs Harbour bypass since 2001 as part of the Pacific Highway upgrade. The preferred route was announced in 2004 and the concept design report was published in 2008.

Since then funding priorities have targeted the full duplication of the Pacific Highway between Hexham and the Queensland border by 2020.

In March 2015 the NSW Government pledged \$200 million for construction of the project, subject to a business case. The project has been allocated funding to carry out the environmental assessment and to finalise the concept design.

The preferred route

The preferred route for the Coffs Harbour bypass was confirmed in 2004 and provides a four lane divided motorway standard road from Englands Road in the south and connects with the newly upgraded Sapphire to Woolgoolga section in the north. The route passes through the North Boambee Valley, through the Roberts Hill ridgeline and then traverses the foothills of the Coffs Harbour basin west and north to Korora Hill.

Roads and Maritime will be seeking planning approval through carrying out the environmental impact statement on the preferred route.

Brief history of the project

- The Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) issued to the project by the Department of Planning and Environment
- March 2016: Arup was awarded the contract to develop the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and finalise the concept design.
- March 2016: RCA Australia was awarded the contract to carry out the geo-technical investigations for the project.
- July 2015: The NSW Government pledge \$200 million towards construction of the bypass subject to a final business case and agreeing funding from the Australian Government.

- 2009: Coffs Harbour City Council preserve the road corridor in the Local Environmental Plan.
- April 2009: In response to submissions received during the concept design display, Roads and Maritime Services announced that it will retain the Luke Bowen footbridge.
- September 2008: Concept design announced and displayed for community comment.
- November 2007: Coffs Harbour Highway Planning Strategy Economic Analysis Update report release.
- November 2006: Geotechnical investigations carried out to further refine the road corridor.
- December 2004: Preferred route was announced as part of the Coffs Harbour Highway Planning Strategy.
- February 2004: Route options announced including a review of a proposal submitted by the community for a western bypass corridor, known as the Coastal Ridgeway.
- September 2001: Coffs Harbour Highway Planning Strategy was announced to address the need to upgrade the Pacific Highway between Sapphire and Woolgoolga, while planning for future traffic need within the Coffs Harbour urban area.

Project benefits

- Travel time savings for through and local traffic, and the transport industry.
- Improved road safety conditions for traffic, pedestrians and cyclists using the existing highway through Coffs Harbour.
- Improved freight efficiency.
- Improved accessibility to the Coffs Harbour central business district.

Key features

Key features of the project include:

- Three grade-separated interchanges at Englands Road to the south, Coramba Road and Korora Hill to the north.
- Two tunnels at the northern end of project, and a cut and cover tunnel south of Coramba Road at Roberts Hill Ridge.
- Structures to pass over local roads and creeks as well as a major elevated viaduct over the North Coast Railway.
- Upgrading parts of the local road network to enable local connections across and around the Pacific Highway alignment.

Property acquisition

Roads and Maritime has purchased about 40 per cent of properties required for the project.