

## **INQUIRY INTO REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND A GLOBAL SYDNEY**

**Organisation:** Blue Mountains City Council

**Date received:** 9 February 2018

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8 February 2018

Office of the General Manager  
Reference File: F04657 – 18/5717

The Director  
Standing Committee on State Development  
Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000  
Sent by email: [statedevelopment@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:statedevelopment@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Sir/Madam,

**SUBJECT Regional Development and a Global Sydney – Discussion Paper**

I refer to the discussion paper published by the NSW Legislative Council inquiry into regional development and a global Sydney. At the Ordinary Meeting of 30 January 2018 the Blue Mountains City Council (the Council) considered the discussion paper and it was resolved:

*"That the Council endorses the attached submission to be sent to the NSW Legislative Council inquiry into regional development and a global Sydney in response to the November 2017 discussion paper."*

[Min No. 15]

The Council's attached submission provides comment on:

- The Greater Sydney Commission's classification of the Blue Mountains as part of metropolitan Sydney;
- The stated role of the DestinationNSW Destination Networks, and the need for a commitment to timings for specific deliverables;
- The need to identify a funding mechanism to support stretched tourism infrastructure and services that provide an economic benefit to the state but are currently being subsidised by local ratepayers; and
- Additional investment required to improved transport connectivity, including road interchanges at district centres, additional Western line train services, and an alternative to road freight on the Great Western Highway.

If you require any further information, please contact Council's Program Leader Strategy, Jane Lambert on (02) 4780 5497 or [jlambert@bmcc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:jlambert@bmcc.nsw.gov.au).

Yours faithfully

ROSEMARY DILLON  
General Manager  
Encl.



## Blue Mountains City Council

# Response to NSW Legislative Council Inquiry into Regional Development and a Global Sydney – Discussion Paper

The Blue Mountains City Council (the Council) provides the following responses to the questions posed in on the discussion paper published by the NSW Legislative Council inquiry into regional development and a global Sydney.

### **Question 2**

**a) How should the NSW Government define regional New South Wales?**

**b) Does the concept of three tiers of regions have merit?**

The Council is of the view that the Blue Mountains is a distinct part of metropolitan Sydney. The draft Western City District Plan classifies the Blue Mountains Local Government Area (LGA) as a Metropolitan Rural Area (MRA). While Council supports the Blue Mountains LGA being outside the Metropolitan Urban Area, inclusion in the MRA does not reflect its character, typical land use or settlement pattern, and the descriptions, objectives and strategies for the MRA are not accurate or reflective of the Blue Mountains LGA.

Blue Mountains' World Heritage status, its remoteness, environment and topography, dispersed settlement and low population densities distinguish it from other LGAs in the Metropolitan Rural Area and Greater Sydney. Settlement in the Blue Mountains is typically urban surrounded by bushland, and comprises low-density residential neighbourhoods, developed around centres at train stations.

The Council has prepared a submission on the draft Western City District Plan recommending that the Greater Sydney Commission (GSC) introduce a classification for Blue Mountains that reflects its character, typical land use and settlement pattern. The Council also recommends that the GSC introduce a priority to protect and enhance buffers to the natural areas and enhance the contribution the natural areas make to the Blue Mountains, including liveability, nature-based and cultural tourism/recreation, drinking water catchments and quality, and biodiversity.

**Question 9 a) How can Destination NSW better assist Destination Networks and local stakeholders to work together to grow tourism in the regions?**

**b) What economic contribution do day visitors and overnight visitors make to regional economies?**

Blue Mountains is in the Sydney Surrounds North Destination Network – which includes Penrith, the Central Coast, Newcastle and the greater Hunter region (amongst others). The scale and breadth of this network will make it challenging for DestinationNSW to deliver projects that reflect shared interests and foster effective collaboration, particularly in reasonable timeframes.

The Council supports the following goals of the Destination Networks as outlined on page 7 of "Destination Networks - Driving Growth of the Visitor Economy in Regional NSW"<sup>1</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> Available at <https://www.destinationnsw.com.au/our-industry/destination-networks>



- *Develop and implement the region's Destination Management Plan and Business Plan, in alignment with the NSW Destination Management Plan, and ensure alignment with local tourism and related plans*
- *Work with Local Government and industry on product development, including investment attraction.*
- *Work in collaboration with DNSW led marketing and communications activity for their 'hero' destinations, experiences, events and festivals and regional campaigns*
- *Work closely with the appointed DNSW Zone Manager Explore Industry Development initiatives (i.e. identify opportunities for growth) e.g. Conferencing, Field Study Tours, local industry education and training needs especially for small to medium sized tourism operators Oversee and/or prepare the DN's RVEF applications and provision of required KPI deliverables.*
- *Assist local industry to prepare RVEF applications and undertake initial assessments of the region's RVEF Contestable Fund applications, in collaboration with DNSW"*

However, the Council recommends that a commitment is required from DestinationNSW in terms of timings for these goals and their associated deliverables.

**Question 9 b) What economic contribution do day visitors and overnight visitors make to regional economies?**

DestinationNSW reports show that visitation to the Blue Mountains has increased by more 50% in the last 5 years, and the region now attracts over 4 million visitors a year. This exceeds previously published forecasts.

The effect of tourism on the Blue Mountains local economy is pronounced. Tourism currently accounts for 11.9% of all jobs in the City which equates to 2,127 full time equivalent jobs. This ranks it as second in terms of job creation (after health care and social assistance). Visitors to the City spend, on average, \$402 million annually. The total value added to the local economy by tourism is \$186 million.

However, in order to leverage the economic value of tourism, investment in product and infrastructure is needed, and funding options need to be supported by the NSW government.

Council has a significant role in supporting tourism. Many of the City's major attractions, surrounding and associated facilities are managed by or supported by Council or in villages. These are on the escarpment and are readily accessible to visitors including Echo Point, estimated to attract 2 million visitors each year.

Some of Council's infrastructure expenditure benefits both locals and visitors. However, unless substantial funding is received from other levels of government, local rate payers will continue their current subsidisation of visitor infrastructure. Furthermore, with the expected growth in tourism there may be insufficient funding available for required maintenance and renewal of visitor infrastructure such as walking tracks, lookouts, carparks, toilets and other built infrastructure.

To date, the issues faced by the Council in funding visitor infrastructure and services (as highlighted in our previous submission to the inquiry) have not been adequately addressed in the Draft Western City District Plan or the emerging Western Sydney City Deals process.



**Question 27**

**a) *What more can the NSW Government do to ensure road and rail freight corridors are made a priority to facilitate regional development and connections to Sydney?***

With increasing visitation and increased volumes of freight by road and by rail, congestion on key Blue Mountains roads – particularly the Great Western Highway (GWH) and Bells Line of Road – is set to rise. Traffic volumes on GWH have already increased from 27,000 in 2014 to 31,000 in 2016, and NSW volumes of coal and container trade are predicted to more than double by 2031.

The Council requests that infrastructure and funding options to address road congestion issues in the Blue Mountains are included in the Western City District Plan and planned Western City Deal initiatives. This includes targeting improved road access to Katoomba and Springwood, as congestion at these district centres frequently impacts the flow of traffic.

To cater to increased tourism numbers and take pressure off the road network and parking facilities, continuous improvement of the existing T1 western line rail service to the Blue Mountains is also required and should be included in the District Plan. Improvements in commuter transport, including the frequency of trains, additional express trains at peak times and improved commuter parking areas are required.

Council also supports additional investment in rail infrastructure that connects Blue Mountains residents to more locations north and south of the existing T1 western line. Improvements to public transport permeability across Western Sydney have long been needed. Greater connectivity through the north and south west of Sydney via a northsouth rail corridor would beneficially serve a large population centre in employment, freight and services.

Funding for improvements to the transport of freight via rail are also of particular concern as this removes heavy freight vehicles from the Great Western Highway and Bells Line of Road. Heavy vehicles using the Great Western Highway impact significantly on the amenity and environment on the Blue Mountains and its residents. The completion of the Maldon to Dombarton Railway Line would provide an additional link for the freighting of goods from Central Western NSW to Port Kembla. The completion of this project would enhance the freight rail network and combined with upgrades to the Main Western Line would reduce the number of heavy vehicles on the Great Western Highway.

Council broadly supports State funded upgrades to existing transport and road infrastructure because such improvements would also benefit our own residents and town centres by making them more accessible and thereby stimulating greater levels of economic activity. However any such upgrades would need to be planned carefully, and in consultation with Council and the Blue Mountains community, and must consider the City's location within a World Heritage Area, the unique character of the towns within the Blue Mountains, and other environmental concerns such as impacts on water quality.