

ITEM 3

WOLLONGONG CITY COUNCIL SUBMISSION - SIX CITIES REGION DISCUSSION PAPER

The Greater Sydney Commission was established in 2015. It was charged with the strategic city planning for the Sydney metropolitan area. The Greater Sydney Commission developed a Region Plan referred to as A Metropolis of Three Cities in 2018. Three District Plans were subsequently released to align with the notational cities - Western Parkland City, Central River City and Eastern Harbour City.

In April 2022, legislation was passed in the NSW Government to establish the Greater Cities Commission and incorporate the Central Coast, Hunter and Illawarra - Shoalhaven Regions to create six cities for detailed consideration and city planning.

In September 2022, the Greater Cities Commission released a Discussion Paper for the Six Cities Region. This report outlines the proposed Council submission in response to the Discussion Paper.

RECOMMENDATION

- 1 The Discussion Paper for the Six Cities Region released by the Greater Cities Commission be noted.
- 2 The General Manager be authorised to finalise the draft submission (Attachment 1) and forward it to the Greater Cities Commission for their consideration.

REPORT AUTHORISATIONS

Report of: Chris Stewart, Manager City Strategy

Authorised by: Linda Davis, Director Planning + Environment - Future City + Neighbourhoods

ATTACHMENTS

- 1 Draft Council Submission

BACKGROUND

The Greater Sydney Commission lead by the Chief Commissioner Lucy Turnbull, developed key strategic plans including A Metropolis of Three Cities in 2018 and three District Plans. Placing housing, jobs, infrastructure and services within a 30-minute reach of more people was central to the aim of the Three Cities Plan.

This work was undertaken to align with the Western Sydney City Deal announced in March 2018 which facilitated the planning and commenced construction of the Western Sydney International (Nancy-Bird Walton) Airport. The Metropolis of Three Cities Plan also focussed on important innovation districts including Tech Central in the Eastern Harbour City and the Westmead health and education hub in the Central City.

The Greater Sydney Commission has been replaced with the Greater Cities Commission (GCC) with Mr Geoff Roberts appointed the Chief Commissioner. Under the GCC structure, a commissioner is appointed to each city. The City Commissioner for the Illawarra-Shoalhaven is Ms Jacki Johnson. A team for each city is being established within the GCC to support strategy development.

Commissioner Johnson has met with the Council Mayors of the Illawarra - Shoalhaven and recently appeared at industry functions held in Wollongong. She has described the Discussion Paper as a document which outlines the vision, scope and leadership proposed under the city planning model. Council's feedback on the Discussion Paper has been sought.

PROPOSAL

The GCC has been established to develop the Six Cities Region Plan incorporating the Illawarra – Shoalhaven. The six cities have three international airports, three deep-water seaports and a concentration of world class universities. In the next two decades the six cities population is expected to grow from six to eight million people.

The GCC has been charged with leading the vision to deliver global competitiveness and local liveability for the Six Cities Region.

The Discussion Paper aims to stimulate conversation about the best way to plan the Six Cities Region to collectively build the scale, scope, education and potential for a world-class region of better jobs, housing, education, and leisure that is productive, sustainable and liveable for everyone.

The new Six Cities Region Plan will build upon A Metropolis of Three Cities 2018 recognising the challenges facing our society including housing supply, housing affordability, climate vulnerability and matching infrastructure to growth. These challenges have framed the GCC's thinking and informed development of six Region Shapers to guide delivery of the new Six Cities Region Plan in 2023.

A draft submission to the Discussion Paper is attached to this report (Attachment 1). The following summary of Council's response to the six City Shapers is provided below:

An embedded First nations voice

Council is committed to the reconciliation and engagement with the Aboriginal community and has a productive relationship with the Illawarra Local Aboriginal Land Council.

We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with our First Nations communities on strategic planning processes. We see a clear need to create practical processes and establish appropriate resources to support culturally sensitive planning outcomes.

A connected Six Cities Region

The Port of Port Kembla should be recognised as a nationally significant asset which requires infrastructure enhancement and planning certainty for flexible and adaptable land use in the short, medium and longer terms.

The Port and region needs to be supported by a resilient transport network for freight and passengers including increased investment in road and rail connections.

Housing supply, diversity and affordability

The potential for the West Dapto Urban Release Area to deliver significant housing supply needs to be recognised and priority given to infrastructure investment to support growth and emerging communities. In particular, the provisions of educational services for the Release Area requires certainty in terms of planning, funding and delivery. As does the provision of water and sewer.

Affordable housing and key worker housing are significant issues facing our region and we support a focus on identifying solutions, noting Council's limited role and policy levers.

Inclusive places connected to infrastructure

The Wollongong City Centre is a vibrant and productive metropolitan area that would benefit from greater investment by the State Government at key sites including the Railway Station, Wollongong Health precinct, Illawarra Sports & Entertainment Precinct and Wollongong Harbour.

Powering local jobs and economies

The Wollongong City Centre and surrounding health and education precincts are potential employment hubs capable of delivering more jobs for our people closer to where they live. An increase in good quality jobs within 30-minute of where workers live will have social, environmental and economic benefits. In terms of housing affordability, access to good and higher paying jobs is an important consideration for the region.

Optimising use of industrial lands for high density and high value jobs provides a unique employment opportunity in the Illawarra-Shoalhaven city and in particular for Wollongong.

Climate-resilient green cities

Council welcomes a regional scale focus upon climate-resilience. This scale of examination is considered appropriate and should highlight not only the challenges associated with climate change but also the enormous opportunities for the density populated area to drive down emissions and address the shocks and stresses of climate change.

Council notes that we are well progressed in our commitment and policies in relation to climate change mitigation and we look forward to supporting strategies that do not delay, undermine or duplicate existing initiatives.

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Staff have consulted internally across Divisions to prepare the draft submission to the Discussion Paper. A Briefing to Councillors was provided on 14 November 2022.

Council staff will also be attending a series of workshops in November / December 2022 hosted by the GCC to inform development of the new Six Cities Region Plan. We will be provided with ongoing opportunities to work with the GCC on development of the region and city plans.

PLANNING AND POLICY IMPACT

This report contributes to the delivery of Goals outlined in Our Wollongong 2032 – Community Strategic Plan including -

- We value and protect our environment
- We have an innovative and sustainable economy
- Wollongong is a creative, vibrant city
- We are a connected and engaged community
- We have a healthy community in a liveable city
- We have affordable and accessible transport

It specifically delivers on core business activities as detailed in the Land Use Planning, Natural Areas Management, Economic Development, Community Facilities, Parks & Sport fields and Transport Services.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Climate-resilient cities is one of the six City Shapers set to inform development of the new Six Cities Region Plan. Council is well placed through its commitment to emission reduction to demonstrate leadership in this space. A regional scale focus upon climate-resilience is appropriate and will highlight the challenges and opportunities for the density populated area to address the shocks and stresses of climate change.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The Discussion Paper has strong themes around economic development, aligning infrastructure delivery with growth, climate-resilience and the like. It also recognises the importance of celebrating and leveraging each city's unique character and strengths. It is important that Council engage with development of the new Six Cities Region Plan to ensure it reflects the vision for the area detailed in Our Wollongong 2032 – Community Strategic Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications of Council's staff participation in the city planning framework is unknown at this stage. Costs are likely to be absorbed under the current resourcing budget.

CONCLUSION

The Greater Cities Commission has released a Discussion Paper detailing the current thinking and shapers to develop a Six Cities Region Plan. A draft response to the Discussion Paper has been prepared.

It is recommended that the submission be forwarded to the Greater Cities Commission for their consideration. Staff will continue to engage with the GCC team as the strategic plans progress.

Wollongong City Council Submission to The Six Cities Region - Discussion Paper (Sept 2022)

Wollongong City Council welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission on the Discussion Paper for the Six Cities Region.

In terms of strategic direction and leadership, the six Region Shapers align well with the vision and aspirations outlined in several of Council's key guiding documents including the Our Wollongong 2032 - Community Strategic Plan. The current thinking on the challenges facing the region in terms of housing supply, housing affordability, climate vulnerability and matching infrastructure to growth, are also consistent with our communities lived experience.

Specific comments on the six Region Shapers are provided as follows -

First Nations

Wollongong is located on Dharawal country. It has significant Aboriginal heritage, with two Declared Aboriginal Places and a number of unresolved Aboriginal Land claims. Parts of Wollongong are known to contain Aboriginal burial sites which have been tested and dated to be 6,000 years old.

Council is committed to the reconciliation and engagement with the Aboriginal community and has a productive relationship with the Illawarra Local Aboriginal Land Council. Several culturally sensitive projects have been undertaken with the Land Council through a social procurement process.

We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with our First Nations communities on strategic planning processes. We see a clear need to create practical processes and establish appropriate resources to support culturally sensitive planning outcomes.

In terms of the new governance arrangements, care should be taken not to duplicate the Federal Government focus on Indigenous Voice to Parliament.

A connected Six Cities Region

The Port of Port Kembla should be recognised as a nationally significant asset which requires infrastructure enhancement and planning certainty so it can be flexible and adapt to land use requirements and opportunities in the short, medium, and longer terms.

It is critical that the Port and region is supported by a resilient transport network including increased investment in road and rail connections. Strategic investments should include consideration of -

- Direct rail connection to South-West Sydney - South-West Illawarra Rail Link (SWIRL) / Maldon Dombarton.
- Bridge clearance heights across the road freight network to accommodate movements of oversized and over mass products.
- Inland bulk goods receipt facilities needs to be examined for optimisation of Port functions.
- Road infrastructure, including Picton Road upgrade / duplication and the Mt Ousley interchange, should be high delivery priority.

Within the region, the frequency of the passenger train service (local and commuter) also requires examination to support urban renewal around train stations and reduce travel times

particularly for those people commuting to Sydney. Digital connectivity along our train routes is currently poor and improvements are essential to increase productivity.

Housing supply, diversity and affordability

The potential for the West Dapto Urban Release Area to deliver significant housing supply needs to be recognised and priority given to infrastructure investment to support growth and emerging communities. This includes improved certainty in terms of planning, funding and delivery of -

- Schools that are designed and located to support safe walking/cycling routes to school and provide a focus for the development of cohesive local neighbourhoods (i.e move away from the current service delivery model of 1000+ place primary schools).
- Water and sewer.
- Flood reliable roads, including commitment towards the delivery of the West Dapto Spine Road.
- Public transport services.
- Ramps and interchanges to connect West Dapto to the State road network (M1).

Wollongong has over 6,700 social housing dwellings which represents 7.5% of our housing stock. Council seeks a commitment from the State Government to maintain or increase that percentage of social housing as our population and housing stock grow. The current self-funded business model for Land and Housing Corporation is not supported by Council because it requires significant urban renewal and increased densities to even maintain the current social housing stock.

Notwithstanding the above, Council supports the proposed target of up to 30% for the proportion of social and affordable housing in residential developments on New South Wales Government land, noting that Land and Housing Corporation should be funded to provide significantly higher proportion of social and affordable housing.

It is understood that the Six Cities Region Plan will set various targets for housing delivery. Whilst Council's existing planning controls and strategies have theoretical capacity to meet these targets, existing data and trends suggest that delivery of housing by industry is likely to fall short of the housing demand.

We would welcome a balanced and collaborative approach to setting and meeting targets which relate to different housing typologies and acknowledge the role of various stakeholders. We are interested in understanding how housing types (e.g. key worker housing) will be defined, monitored and delivered. We also note that affordable housing targets for rezonings in release areas that are mid-way through long term development roll-out, would create equity issues and may not be appropriate.

Failure to meet housing targets should not be punitive and productive measures such as a review of planning controls and policy settings, roll out of enabling infrastructure and engagement with industry peaks should be considered to facilitate delivery of housing.

Inclusive places connected to infrastructure

Council is committed to facilitating well-designed inclusive places through our planning controls (LEP and DCP), Planning Proposal and Neighbourhood Plan processes, and would welcome input to achieve best practice outcomes in this area.

Wollongong is identified on the map as a Metropolitan City which is a tier below Newcastle's proposed classification of Metropolitan Centre. Council would be interested in understanding the criteria for the centres hierarchy and likely implications for the equitable distribution of Government investments arising from our classification.

The Wollongong City Centre is a vibrant and productive metropolitan area that would benefit from greater investment by the State Government including its own assets -

- The Wollongong Railway Station precinct.
- Ongoing investment in the Wollongong Health precinct.
- Illawarra Sports & Entertainment Precinct.
- Wollongong Harbour.

Council is currently preparing a Social Infrastructure Needs Assessment for the West Dapto Urban Release Area. The work will inform the 2023 review of the West Dapto Development Contributions Plan. Council would be happy to share this information with the Commission.

Connecting communities should include both inter and intra regional transport services, recognising the high commuting rate from Wollongong to Sydney and the need to support active and public transport as viable alternatives for residents to access local employment and activity centres.

Powering local jobs and economies

The Wollongong City Centre and surrounding health and education precincts (including the University of Wollongong) are potential employment hubs capable of delivering more jobs for our people closer to where they live. An increase in good quality jobs within 30-minute of where workers live will have social, environmental and economic benefits.

With an estimated 20,000 residents travelling to Sydney each day (pre-Covid) and a world class University, Wollongong has a ready and skilled workforce to accommodate any jobs growth.

The Port and heavy industrial Port Kembla precinct provides a particular value proposition for the Illawarra Shoalhaven that should be fully leveraged for high density and high value employment opportunities.

The investment in TAFE services, coupled with a strong University sector, will be important to support the ongoing availability of a skilled and innovative workforce to drive business investment in the region.

In terms of housing affordability, access to good quality and higher paying jobs is an important consideration for the region. Increasingly, access to key worker housing is being identified as a constraint to business investment which requires particular attention in the Region Plan.

Climate-resilient green cities

Council is well placed through its commitment to emissions reduction to demonstrate leadership in this space. Council welcomes a regional scale focus on climate-resilience. This scale of examination is considered appropriate and should highlight not only the challenges

associated with climate change but also the enormous opportunities for the densely populated area to drive down emissions and address the shocks and stresses of climate change.

We are well progressed in our commitment and policies in relation to climate change mitigation and looks forward to supporting strategies that do not delay, undermine or duplicate existing actions.

Council would welcome any further information regarding roles and opportunity to implement 'circular economy' initiatives relevant to the strategic planning and development assessment processes.

Council has been through many strategic planning processes over the last two decades. We look forward to implementation being a pillar of the GCC's approach to regional planning.