

27 October 2008

Prue Isenhood  
Planning Workshop Australia

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Dear Ms Isenhood

## New England Sustainability Strategy Submission New England Draft Development Strategy (Ref. No. 2049008)

Please find detailed below a submission identifying matters relevant to the New England Draft Development Strategy (NEDDS) from the perspective of the sustainability of the New England Region.

The submission is presented in accordance with the Rural Planning Principles, State Environment Planning Policy (Rural Lands) 2008, Section 7, specifically:

- 7(a) Promotion and protection of opportunities for sustainable economic opportunities
- 7(b) Recognition of the importance of rural lands and agriculture
- 7(c) Recognition of the significance of rural land uses to the State and rural communities, including the social and economic benefits of rural land use and development
- 7(d) Balance the social, economic and environmental interests of the community
- 7(e) The identification and protection of natural resources
- 7(f) The provision of opportunities for rural lifestyle, settlement and housing that contribute to the social and economic welfare of rural communities
- 7(g) Consideration of impacts on services and infrastructure and appropriate location
- 7(h) Ensuring consistency with any applicable regional strategy

### **About the New England Sustainability Strategy**

The content of this submission draws solely on the outcomes of the recent Public Forum held (at NERAM on 22 September 2008) to commence work on the development of the New England Sustainability Strategy.

This work is being led by the New England Sustainability Strategy Executive, a consortium of more than a dozen local and national professionals and experts in sustainability and whole of community strategic planning.

### **Importance of Sustainability**

This submission to identify issues from the work to date on the New England Sustainability Strategy (NESS) has been made particularly due to the centrality of sustainability in the New England Draft Development Strategy (NEDDS) and the broader planning context for the New England Strategic Alliance of Councils (NESAC).

The NEDDS has been prepared for the NESAC, with its purpose in part being to achieve 'sustainable land use (NEDDS, p.5), with a vision of 'quality development in an... environmentally sustainable manner' (NEDDS, p. 7).

In turn, sustainability NESAC has a stated purpose being in part to achieve a quality lifestyle that is self-sufficient and **sustainable** and work towards a vision of a region with vibrant and **sustainable** communities where all residents have the opportunity to achieve an enhanced quality of life.

Both NEDDS and the NESS have been prepared to address the needs of the entire NESAC Region. However, consultations for NEDDS have only occurred to date at a local Council or Shire level, with no NESAC region-wide consultation.

### **Recommendation 1**

A NESAC Regional Consultation be held to engage with key stakeholders, including regional stakeholders, in a New England wide consultation about the NEDDS.

This consultation could readily draw on the 200 plus stakeholders already engaged with the NESS and is key to ensure satisfactory performance against planning principle 7(d).

### **Natural Resources**

The NESS identified significant natural resources in the NESAC Region which are key to sustainability, from economic, environmental and social viewpoints. For example, one of the most significant strategies emerging from the NESS work, both in terms of economic and environmental outcomes, is that of regional regeneration – restoration of agricultural productivity in terms of soil fertility, carbon capture, wind/weather breaks and water way health, which in turn will provide resilience to anticipated changes due to climate change.

The NEDDS does not appear to include required data and maps of biodiversity and heritage information required to ensure that the sustainability of the Region, including mitigation and adaptation with regards to climate change, threatened species and ecological communities, wildlife corridors, etc.

It is noted that this may be a problem only with the layout of the document, and that the earlier Situation Analysis worked from geology and biology up, however this is not explicit.

These matters are particularly key to planning principle 7(e).

### **Recommendation 2**

The NEDDS be updated to integrate data and maps of biodiversity and heritage information required to ensure that the sustainability of the Region, including mitigation and adaptation with regards to climate change.

### **Ecologically Sustainable Development**

The NEDDS vision includes the principle of ecological sustainable development which connects with a wide range of attributes identified as key to the sustainability of the New England Region in the NESS work.

Water sensitive urban design, low energy consumption design, avoiding serviced rural residential subdivisions and limiting new residential development to areas likely to be readily accessible to public transport are three such areas identified in NESS.

Renewable energy is a further attribute of sustainability which is critical for the New England Region – which has been identified as having one of the highest per capita energy consumption rates in Australia – and was a high priority strategy identified in the NESS work. Since this strategy will require additional resources of many kinds to implement, from road building materials to electricity substations, there is a need for mechanism to obtain these sustainably, such as from renewable sources or to offset carbon emissions from them.

Generally, the application of the principle of ESD throughout the NEDDS is not clear. It is noted that this step may be intended through more detailed planning controls specified in Development Control Plans, however this is not explicit.

These matters are particularly key to planning principles 7(a), 7(d) and 7(e).

### **Recommendation 3**

That the NEDDS be reviewed and updated to ensure that appropriate principles of ecological sustainable development are sufficiently articulated to inform the new Local Environment Plan/s and other planning controls such as Development Control Plans.

### **Climate Change**

The NEDDS is being developed concurrently with the development of the NSW Climate Change Action Plan by the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC). The initial data from DECC's work highlight the relatively low affect of climate change on the New England Region, which in turn creates a likely development that the New England becomes a more attractive place to live in future decades relative to other regions in Australia that suffer greater impacts from climate change.

The NESS work identified this likely scenario, and additionally identified other pressures from climate change such as increased demands for agricultural productivity from the Region (due to significant declines in agricultural productivity and viability in other parts of NSW and Australia) and increased migration from environmental refugees, particularly South East Asia.

NESAC have recently received Australian Government funding to prepare a report on the possible impacts of climate change on the region.

While the NEDDS recognises climate change as a key planning issue, there are no specific planning responses. The working being done by DECC, NESAC and NESS highlight the opportunity and necessity to ensure appropriate planning in NEDDS to address climate change.

### **Recommendation 4**

The NEDDS consultation process include specific mechanisms to align NEDDS with the climate change work being done by DECC and NESAC, and the sustainability work being done in the NESS.

Please feel free to contact me should you wish to discuss this submission further.

Yours sincerely



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**Convenor**

**NESSiE – New England Sustainability Strategy Executive**

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