

Joint Pre-Budget Submission



The Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP, Treasurer
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister Frydenberg

Re: Central Coast Council & Lake Macquarie City Council Joint Budget Submission

Thank you for the opportunity to make a pre-budget submission for the 2020-2021 Australian Budget. The following submission has been prepared in collaboration by staff from Central Coast Council and Lake Macquarie City Council.

Together, the regions of the Central Coast and Lake Macquarie City are quickly becoming one of the largest regions of growth in NSW. The existing population of 550,000 people will exceed 780,000 within the next 20 years. This is largely due to the liveability of the region, as well as its positioning between the metropolitan areas of Newcastle and Sydney. The area is quickly evolving from a 'coastal holiday destination' to a region of high-quality liveability supported by natural amenity, increased career opportunities, more affordable housing and the opportunity for people to live, work and play locally.

Combined, this region contributes in excess of \$35 billion to the NSW and Australian economies. Supporting long-term economic growth in this region requires enhanced infrastructure to support new jobs, new businesses, new industries and greater economic productivity. Investment is also needed to support the 29¹ per cent of residents currently commuting outside their local government area for work.

This submission requests the Australian Government consider the following:

- 1) Invest in infrastructure to support job creation through the activation of employment land and growth precincts within the following economic corridors:
 - a. Somersby to Erina, Central Coast
 - b. Tuggerah to Warnervale, Central Coast
 - c. Morisset to Glendale, Lake Macquarie

¹ 25 per cent Central Coast | 33.5 per cent Lake Macquarie

- 2) Invest in both intra- and inter-regional connectivity, including:
 - a. Roads of strategic importance, fast passenger rail (Newcastle to Sydney), commuter car parking, rapid bus networks and active transport connectivity
 - b. Expand the Australian Government's Wyong and Hornsby mobile coverage initiative to provide continuous mobile coverage on trains, as well as wi-fi at each train station on the Sydney to Newcastle train line
 - c. Protect infrastructure corridors to improve freight networks from regional NSW to global gateways to increase exports (e.g. freight and passenger transport routes, water supply, etc).
- 3) Commit to higher education in the regions by:
 - a. Accelerating the delivery of the Australian Government's election commitment for a Central Coast Industry Training Hub.
 - b. Building on the response to the *Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education* by increasing funding to Regional Development Australia to investigate higher education needs and opportunities within the Central Coast and Lake Macquarie City region.
 - c. Using the development of precincts and industry strategies (prepared by all tiers of government) to foster commercialisation of innovation, research and development, to create real economic benefits for the nation, such as in Lake Macquarie's Melt product development accelerator.
- 4) Increase collaboration with all levels of government and the community by:
 - a. Improving the outcomes of regional grant application processes across all levels of government, such as pre-submission consultation to help applicants align projects to government objectives.
 - b. Reaffirming the Government's commitment to City and Regional Deals to support liveable cities that encourage innovation, support growth, create jobs, and guarantee essential services.
 - c. Expanding the Government's pilot of 'Regional Deals' to include the delivery of growth corridors in the Central Coast and Lake Macquarie City.
 - d. Creating an opportunity for local government to engage with federal agencies, when assessing the possibility of relocation, to help local governments plan for and deliver measures targeted at supporting a relocated government agency in the future (refer to Australian Government's response to *Regions at the Ready Report*).

Invest in the Central Coast and Lake Macquarie City regions

The *Central Coast Regional Plan 2036*², the *Hunter Regional Plan 2036*³, and the *Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036*⁴ recognise the areas of Somersby, Warnervale, Morisset and Glendale as strategic centres of concentrated growth and economic activity.

Combining these plans together (see attachment) demonstrates that the eastern fringe of the M1 in the Central Coast and Lake Macquarie City local government areas will become a vital area for growth – a location that offers current and future residents the opportunity to live, work and play close to home. We would welcome any opportunity to work with Regional Development Australia to help coordinate economic development across these regions.

² <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Plans-for-your-area/Regional-Plans/Central-Coast/Central-Coast-regional-plan>

³ <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Plans-for-your-area/Regional-Plans/Hunter/Hunter-regional-plan>

⁴ <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Plans-for-your-area/Greater-Newcastle-metropolitan-planning>

Invest in intra- and inter-regional connectivity

Connectivity is critical to the success of regional NSW, particularly within Central Coast and Lake Macquarie City. Road improvements, such as the current M1 upgrades, are helping to unlock the area. However, more investment is required to improve journey times within the region.

Investment in faster rail on the Sydney to Newcastle line, supported by full mobile phone black spot coverage, will vastly improve the region's liveability. This includes the delivery of the Lower Hunter Freight Bypass.

The benefits of improved connectivity to Sydney are clear. It is important to also recognise that being able to get from Gosford to Lake Macquarie and Newcastle in less than an hour opens up new opportunities, particularly in business, employment, and health services.

It will also connect young people within the region to educational institutions. The Government's 2015 *Engaging Young People in Regional, Rural and Remote Australia Report* recognised that regional, rural and remote communities would greatly benefit from strategies aimed at reducing outmigration to capital cities. By making it easier and more affordable for young people to access higher education (physically or digitally), we can help reduce the 'brain drain' occurring in our region when we lose our young people to Sydney and other capital cities.

A clear commitment to deliver high speed rail

Investment in high-speed rail could reduce the travel time between Gosford and Newcastle to 15 minutes. High-speed rail will also see Newcastle and Gosford travel times to Sydney reduced to 45 and 30 minutes respectively. The Government needs to commit to high-speed rail to allow land use planning and corridor protection to occur.

Infrastructure corridor protection

In addition to corridor protection for high-speed rail, investment is needed to ensure infrastructure corridors are and remain protected until the infrastructure is built. Water, transport (passenger and freight), and utility corridors should be identified and protected as soon as possible to ensure that residential and commercial development is integrated with these corridors.

Invest in Education

The Australian Government recognises the importance of higher education in regional Australia. This is evident in the Government's continued investment in Regional University Centres (formerly known as Regional Study Hubs). We would welcome the accelerated delivery of the Government's election commitment for a Central Coast Industry Training Hub as well as other opportunities to consider the expansion of Regional University Centres to other locations within the Central Coast and Lake Macquarie City.

The University of Newcastle is the only university servicing the Central Coast and Hunter regions with two campuses in the City of Newcastle and a satellite campus in Ourimbah, Central Coast. There is a growing need for more diverse higher education opportunities within the region, particularly as the traditional sectors of mining and manufacturing transition within Central Coast and Lake Macquarie City. Opportunities include increasing regional loading funds given by the Government to help universities maintain regional campuses or incentives to support a 'multiversity' being established within the region, such as the multiversity being established in Western Sydney.

Policy clarity

Australian Government policy decisions can have a significant impact on the prosperity of regional Australia. Collaborating with the Government to achieve greater policy clarity will enable the region to improve the prospects of attracting significant investment via grant programs, City Deals or other significant policy initiatives. For example, a City/Regional Deal for the Central Coast or Lake Macquarie City would deliver an opportunity for collaboration with the NSW and Australian Governments, in addition to other neighbouring councils, to deliver targeted measures and initiatives - unlocking growth and prosperity, while maintaining the characteristics that make this region so attractive.

We welcome the opportunity for greater collaboration between Central Coast and Lake Macquarie City councils and the NSW and Australian Governments to transform our region into an innovative, dynamic region of the future through transformative public investment.

For any questions relating to the submission, please contact Louise Fisher from Central Coast Council, via 0417 987 423 and Louise.Fisher@centralcoast.nsw.gov.au, or Dan Hughes from Lake Macquarie City Council, via 02 4921 0187 and djhughes@lakemac.nsw.gov.au.



Morven Cameron
Chief Executive Officer
Lake Macquarie City Council



Gary Murphy
Chief Executive Officer
Central Coast Council