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Sent: Thursday, 17 December 2020 10:25 PM
To: DPE PSVC Illawarra Mailbox
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan Submission

Thank you. I have prepared a revised submission. I would appreciate it if this could be treated in confidence.

To whom it may concern

I'm writing to provide some very brief comments on the Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan (the Plan). I'm a resident of the Wollongong LGA and have lived here since 2009, after moving to Wollongong from Perth WA for work. I love the region, particularly for its natural areas and unique biodiversity, but also for the strong sense of community and the willingness of locals to help each other out.

My four comment areas are as follows:

1. Stronger **action on climate change mitigation** should be a major focus of the Plan. The current Plan commits to no action on climate change mitigation, covering only climate adaptation. After the devastating bushfires of summer 2019-20, I think most residents want to see much stronger action to reduce carbon pollution across the region.
2. A focus on **green regional jobs should be central to the Plan**. This region has, as the 2015 Plan notes, some amazing natural areas, and these are tourism draw cards. However, they need investment in conservation and retention to stand the test of time. The environmental values espoused in the 2015 Plan won't preserve themselves - they need commitment and funding from the state government. A move away from fossil fuel extraction and towards renewable energy should be absolutely central. Additionally, there should be support for environmental protection and biodiversity conservation (bush regeneration, maintenance of natural areas, recycling, seed collection and seed banking, etc). The Illawarra Escarpment and the Woronora Plateau area to its west comprise one of the last major unburnt natural areas in NSW, and they need protection and support to remain unburnt, and in order to prepare for the horrible possibility that fire may affect this region too.
3. Infrastructure efforts should, in support of 1 and 2 above, be concentrated on rolling out low-emissions transport options. The budget for active transport infrastructure regionally (walking and cycling) lags far behind the budget for fossil fuel transport. This needs to change.
4. The Plan **does not pay sufficient attention to environmental protection and biodiversity conservation**. I have lived in this region for eleven years, and in that time have seen the quality of the natural environment go backwards across many indicators. Ongoing land clearing is occurring, particularly but not only in Calderwood and West Dapto. More ecological communities have been listed as endangered or critically endangered (e.g. Illawarra-Shoalhaven Subtropical Rainforest of the Sydney Basin Bioregion and as of today River-flat Eucalypt forest on coastal flood plains (federal listings). More species have been listed as endangered or critically endangered (e.g. Scrub Turpentine (*Rhodamnia rubescens*) is now critically endangered). The number of invasive species in various categories continues to increase and their spread to grow. Removal of planning powers from local government to higher levels of government, changes to bushfire clearing regulations and relaxation in planning regulations have resulted in ongoing loss of established trees and natural vegetation from properties across the region, including areas of endangered ecological communities and sites with potential to host threatened fauna species such as Grey-headed Flying-fox, Greater Glider, Koala and Powerful Owl. The damage by deer becomes ever more extensive. The pressure on designated national parks estate is continuing to grow, with informal mountain bike riding impacting extensively on the Illawarra Escarpment State Conservation Area and little to no compliance action in response.

The Plan makes no serious effort to balance its commitment to environmental conservation (covered by Objective 11 (Protect important environmental assets)) and to Objective 10 (Sustainably maximise the productivity of resource lands) or Objective 5 (Create a diverse visitor economy). Insofar as there is a focus on the environment it seems to be restricted to looking at individual small-scale 'environmental assets' (p.7) rather than taking a bigger picture focus on conserving or even restoring the natural environment across the area

covered by the Plan. This is extremely narrow-minded - the environment in this region cannot be reduced to certain limited 'assets'. And it is clear from the ongoing decline of environmental quality across the area that what is currently in place is not sufficient - much more is needed, and the focus cannot be on just protecting a few outstanding areas because these depend for their integrity on the presence of other natural areas that may not qualify as 'important'. A minimum necessary change to the Plan would be to change the focus of objective 11 from 'Protect important environmental assets' to 'Protect and restore environmental assets.'

Efforts to conserve and protect biodiversity and environmental values across the region should increase, and more funds should be dedicated to protecting local National Parks and State Conservation Areas, as well as supporting protection of ecological communities on private land. These areas should be managed for their biodiversity and conservation values. Adventure tourism activities such as mountain bike trails should not be a priority, as they are likely to reduce the biodiversity and conservation value of these areas. The current plan seems to prioritise exploiting natural areas for tourism potential, not protecting them for their own sake or for the ecosystems services they provide.

I apologise for the brief nature of my comments. I have a chronic health condition and find it a struggle to provide comments on all the many plans, strategies and proposals that are available for public comment. Thank you for considering the comments.

Yours truly,

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