



Australia's property industry

## Creating for Generations

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5 March 2021

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Dear Daniel

### Draft Hunter Expressway Strategy

The Property Council of Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide the following comments to the Department to inform its Draft Hunter Expressway Strategy (**the Strategy**).

The Property Council of Australia is the leading advocate for Australia's biggest industry – property. It champions the interest of more than 2,200 member companies representing a broad cross section of the property industry.

The Property Industry represents 13% of Australia's GDP and employs more than 1.4 million Australians. Our members are the nation's major investors, owners, managers and developers of properties of all asset classes. They create landmark projects, revitalised urban precincts and communities where people can live, work, shop and play. The property industry shapes the future of our cities and has a deep long-term interest in seeing them prosper as productive and sustainable places.

The Property Council welcomes the release of the Strategy as an important tool in guiding appropriate and long-term strategic planning.

As acknowledged in the Hunter Regional Plan, future planning for land along the Hunter Expressway corridor will consider its region-shaping potential and enable development that relies on access to the Hunter Expressway interchanges, provided it encourages efficiencies to the inter-regional transport network.

The Property Council further acknowledges that the Strategy is intended to work effectively with other planning documents, including the Hunter Regional Plan 2036 which is undergoing review by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) this year, as well as a Hunter Regional Transport Plan being developed by Transport for NSW (TfNSW). Transport oriented development is an important concept and should be of consideration in strategic land use planning.

This is equally important for land use planning along the Hunter Expressway given the combined area covered by the Interchange Growth Areas identified is around 13,300ha. This is larger than the Western Sydney Aerotropolis and overlaps in parts with the priority urban growth areas expected to cater for some of the highest levels of growth outside Sydney. Given the scale, it is imperative that this adds value and clarity to the process of long-term strategic planning. The Property Council is concerned the Strategy does not currently achieve this.

The Property Council encourages consideration of the following:

### **Strategic Planning**

The Strategy relies on individual Councils' strategic planning initiatives and State-Government assurance processes that do not exist or are not yet proven. Land use changes must be considered through a local strategy prepared by a Council, which must then be agreed between Councils, the DPIE, and TfNSW before rezonings will be considered. This poses several challenges, given the largest interchanges would also rely on joint-Council initiatives, Councils are not required to update their existing Local Strategic Planning Statements for another 5 years, and Urban Growth Management planning is not afforded a standardised approach nor is it a Local Government requirement. This has potential to lead to ad hoc and inconsistent implementation. You cannot expect a centralised approach from decentralised dependencies.

Further to this, the Interchange Growth areas identified contradict regional-level intentions to focus residential growth along the New England Highway. The Hunter Expressway created substantial capacity along the New England Highway and bypassed the three historic towns of Lochinvar, Greta, and Branxton. The Hunter Regional Plan prioritised urban development within corridors along the New England Highway, leveraging this capacity and to alleviate pressure for inappropriate development adjoining the Hunter Expressway. The growth areas identified, specifically for the Allandale and Branxton interchanges, undermines the agility of long-term planning for urban outcomes in what is expected to be the next 'boom' area in the Region. This Strategy should demonstrate a commitment to the future security of these bypassed towns by ensuring there are no additional planning restrictions imposed that hinder their growth.

### **Land Use Requirements**

The requirements for the employment-generating uses the strategy intends to prioritise are not specified. To plan for the categories of development nominated in the draft Strategy – “namely, intermodal, freight, logistics”, including warehousing and distribution centres in locations with convenient access to main roads – there needs to be a common understanding of the needs for these industries. This should include employment and land supply targets as well as land suitability criteria. What are the infrastructure needs and how will they be

funded? Is the land serviced? Planning across the relevant local government areas needs to be done in a consistent and coordinated manner.

### **Evidence supporting current and future demands**

The current and future demands on the Hunter Expressway are not clear. The Strategy aims to preserve road capacity for freight movements over all other transport priorities. However, it does not provide any existing evidence, or set a framework to establish a common understanding for traffic volumes arising from current and approved future land uses. The importance of the Hunter Expressway as a significant piece of infrastructure for freight transport is acknowledged, however, the Strategy would be better served by providing evidence of current traffic volumes along with a framework for identifying volumes associated with planned future land uses.

### **Existing employment land supply**

The Strategy does not recognise the Region's existing employment land supply. The interchange growth area boundaries overlook the substantial supply of land already zoned for industrial development in locations close to, just not immediately adjoining, the interchanges (see attached figure). Some of these, including a Greater Newcastle catalyst area, already have immediate capacity. At the very least, the Strategy should describe how connections will be strengthened to these areas.

### **Conclusion**

The Property Council and our members are grateful for the opportunity to provide feedback to the Department on the Draft Hunter Expressway Strategy.

We encourage Government to defer this strategy and consider it as part of the Hunter Regional Plan that is now under review, to ensure it supports and aligns with the outcomes of the Hunter Regional Plan. This will be important to its success.

We invite and look forward to further engagement on this matter and in particular the next steps in the process. We would urge government to undertake further engagement around detail of the Strategy and any changes made post exhibition.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0439 253 710 or [ahugo@propertycouncil.com.au](mailto:ahugo@propertycouncil.com.au).

Yours sincerely



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**Property Council of Australia**

Draft Hunter Expressway Strategy – Property Council of Australia submission  
Attachment



