



Australia's property industry

## Creating for Generations

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The General Manager  
Cessnock City Council  
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Dear Ms Jackson

### **Draft Local Strategic Planning Statement 2036 (Reference: 59/2015/1/2)**

The Property Council of Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on Cessnock City Council's Draft Local Strategic Planning Statement 2036 (draft LSPS).

The Property Council champions the interest of more than 2200-member companies that represent the full spectrum of the industry, including those who invest, own, manage and develop in all sectors of property. Creating landmark projects and environments where people live, work, shop and play is core business for our members.

Property is the nation's biggest industry – representing one-ninth of Australia's GDP and employing more than 1.1 million Australians. Our members are the nation's major investors, owners, managers and developers of properties of all asset classes. 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.

In the Hunter, the property industry contributes \$3.4 billion to economic growth, pays \$1.48 billion in wages and generates 23,287 jobs.

## **Background**

We acknowledge that the draft LSPS is Cessnock City Council's response as to how it intends to direct land use planning over the next 20 years.

The draft LSPS will set out:

- The 20-year vision for land use in for Cessnock City Council and the LGA.
- The special characteristics, which constitute Cessnock's local identity.
- Shared Community values to be maintained and enhanced
- How growth and change will be managed into the future.

It is intended that the LSPS will give effect to and implement the actions of the Hunter Regional Plan 2036 and Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036 as well as inform Council's own land use planning priorities to 2036.

## **Cessnock City Council – draft Local Strategic Planning Statement**

Overall the Property Council is supportive of this plan and its principles and congratulates Council on deferring the discussion around dwelling entitlements in rural areas so as not to hinder progress on developing and implementing the LSPS.

This appears to be a comprehensive plan with 31 planning priorities across four planning themes of Liveable, Productive, Sustainable and Unique.

Specific comment is provided around the following:

It is encouraging to see Sawyers Gully/Weston/Abermain precinct and Nulkaba as investigation areas for future potential. The Property Council acknowledges the high strategic planning workload that Council has been experiencing and would therefore encourage Council to facilitate developer led investigations into these areas so that the outcomes are realised as soon as possible.

Clarity needs to be provided around the vision to become the *economic power house of the lower Hunter Region*. The LSPS needs to clearly articulate how the LGA's economy is currently positioned, what the objective is and set the strategy to achieve this vision.

The strategy should detail how the Cessnock LGA is to become the *economic power house of the lower Hunter Region*, where and how economic growth is planned, what sectors of the local economy are targeted to lead this growth, and ensure that it complements the vision to provide lifestyle opportunities while protecting the area's amenity and natural character.

One of the Planning Themes should be focused on economic growth and development. This section should be setting out the current status and performance of the local economy, what the future opportunities and strengths are within the existing economy to achieve future growth and economic performance, and then specific planning priorities should be established setting a strategy to achieve the vision. It could be considered that the **Productive** theme could incorporate this.

The vision should potentially articulate an additional focus on recreating Cessnock's image as a lifestyle city – a place where people come to embrace the area's scenic and rural amenity for tourism and living purposes. The local economy is now more broadly based than just industrial, with a strong and growing service industry.

The Property Council recognises the challenge of sustaining and growing town centres of Cessnock and Kurri Kurri. These towns face mounting challenge from surrounding centres in Rutherford and Greenhills/East Maitland where retail, commercial, bulky goods and support industrial development is occurring as well as better access to the primary transport corridors servicing the Lower Hunter.

Cessnock is the main Strategic Centre within the LGA, however it is not experiencing the same level of growth as other strategic centres in the lower hunter. This appears to have been exacerbated since the Hunter Expressway became operational, isolating Cessnock from the main transport corridors of the lower hunter.

Cessnock has beautiful heritage buildings in the main street which could support a tourist/commercial strip with cafes and boutiques. The town centre improvement plan should encourage tourism-oriented activities and attract tourists that visit the vineyards into the town by making it more attractive and interesting within the existing heritage context of the town and surrounds. This growth would be in line with Planning Priority 13 – ‘our town centres are the focus of local commerce’ and Planning Priority 29 – ‘Our commercial centres and villages are tourist destinations in their own right’.

Cessnock has much to offer and could better promote itself as a lifestyle city and differentiate itself from the housing product being offered elsewhere in the lower hunter. This is in keeping with Planning Priority 3 – ‘The character and vitality of our town centre and villages is protected and enhanced’.

In terms of Kurri Kurri, our members are aware that there has been detailed investigations undertaken into the town centre to find an appropriate space to locate a Woolworths supermarket, but to-date, due to land fragmentation and other issues that has been unsuccessful. The LSPS needs to be proactive in this and seek to identify a space before there is overwhelming pressure for a new retail centre outside the Kurri Kurri town centre.

In terms of achieving a lifestyle vision for residents, the LSPS needs to articulate how this is to be achieved with good examples already existing in the LGA (Kelman Estate, The Vintage and Huntlee). There is opportunity for Council to use Traditional Neighbourhood Design (TND) principles as the basis for all new design work within its Urban Release Areas. Council should also look at all forms of housing to achieve this vision and this should be a key component of the Councils Housing Strategy (see Planning Priority 2).

Compact urban areas are also encouraged to make use of existing infrastructure, but it will be important not to impact on some of the significant character areas of the towns. The present planning framework should be reviewed so as to enable broader development of medium density housing, especially in areas which have large lots/ ¼ acre lots (eg Aberdare).

It is apparent that rural properties, especially in the eastern areas of the LGA and in the Quorrobolong Valley, are slowly being converted to rural residential land use. One strategy to protect rural land and agriculture production would be to identify areas around existing rural settlements (eg villages and towns with existing primary schools including Sawyers Gully, Abermain, Mulbring, Paxton, Ellalong, Millfield, Wollombi, Greta, Branxton etc) for rural lifestyle developments – lots in the ½ acre to 5 acre range. Council should also consider enabling dwellings on existing lots, notwithstanding the lots size requirements, within say 3km of existing villages. This type of strategy will not only take pressure off the agricultural industry as there will be less demand to use rural and agricultural land for rural residential purposes, but it will also align with the “lifestyle” vision.

There is a need for Council to investigate options for a new industrial estate on the north side of Cessnock to support the wine tourism industry in particular. The existing zoned land at south Cessnock is highly constrained and questionably located.

We are aware that there are issues around some land use activities and their permissibility in areas where they would be expected to be located, specifically RU4 zoned areas, like a wine warehouse or bottling plant. There is also the growing spirits and brewery industries, laundries etc, and optimal location of these facilities needs to be considered in line with the long-term plan for the city.

Council also needs to consider where it is going to enable artisan food and drink industries as they are currently only permitted in industrial zones. These are an important element of an emerging tourist sector that needs to be catered for.

One of the priorities has been to provide a transport infrastructure link between Cessnock and the Hunter Expressway. While this provides important connections, it is worth determining the order of priority for this in line with the other objectives the City is trying to achieve across the LGA. Consideration should be given to building the growth of the centre then providing links to it, to ensure attraction and retention of visitors.

## **Response to specific actions**

### Planning Priority 1 – Urban areas are compact

The draft LSPS has identified six actions to deliver on Planning Priority 1, including three immediate actions and two short term actions. The Property Council welcomes Council's intention to prepare a Local Housing Strategy and review its local environmental plan (Cessnock Local Environmental Plan 2011). As noted previously, we support Council developing planning controls that will ensure that new residential development aligns with a vision that seeks to establish the Cessnock LGA as a lifestyle city.

Further comments will be provided when the details of this strategic planning work are finalised and released for consultation.

### Planning Priority 2 – Housing is diverse, adaptable and affordable and our urban areas facilitate affordable living

The draft LSPS has identified five actions to deliver on Planning Priority 2, including an immediate action, three short term and one ongoing action. It is important that Council put in place strategies that will enable the delivery of more housing diversity that is also affordable. Actions that achieve these outcomes are supported and further comments will be provided when more detail is released when the studies are completed.

### Planning Priority 3 – The character and vitality of our town centres and villages is protected and enhanced

The draft LSPS has identified seven actions to deliver on Planning Priority 3, including one immediate action, four short term, one long term and one ongoing action. The actions proposed need to be implemented with strong involvement of landowners and the local business community. The costs associated with implementing the infrastructure needed to rejuvenate these town centres and villages must be shared between the Council and local community.

### Planning Priority 4 – Our community is safe, healthy and active

The draft LSPS has identified seven actions to deliver on Planning Priority 4, including immediate, short-term and medium-term actions. The proposed changes to the Cessnock LEP, DCP and development contribution framework are noted. Aspects of these changes

are supported and encouraged. There will be several actions where further comment will be made when more detail is released during the community consultation.

Planning Priority 5 – Infrastructure and services meet the needs of the community and are appropriately funded.

The draft LSPS has identified two actions to deliver on Planning Priority 5, both short-term actions. As both of these actions have significant impact on the property sector, the Property Council will provide specific comments regarding these proposals when more details are released during the community consultation.

Planning Priority 6 – Opportunities for rural, large lot and environmental living are provided in appropriate locations.

As noted previously, in order to take pressure off rural and agricultural land being used for rural residential purposes, we would suggest that Council consider allowing a dwelling on lots above 2,000m<sup>2</sup> within 2km of an existing rural village (RU5 Rural Village zone) provided the lot has adequate infrastructure or can be provided with adequate infrastructure. This should be a new action.

Planning Priority 7 – Urban development is encouraged in areas with existing infrastructure

The draft LSPS has identified two actions to deliver on Planning Priority 7, including an immediate action and a short-term action. Actions that give priority to the development of areas currently serviced with infrastructure is appropriate. The Property Council looks forward to reviewing both of these proposals in greater detail when they are finalised and released for community consultation.

Planning Priority 8 – Important Agricultural Land is Protected.

As with Planning Priority 6, have a new action that seeks to provide rural residential housing in close proximity to existing rural villages and towns to take market pressure off rural and agricultural land being purchased for rural residential purposes. Consider applying the RU6 Transition zone to these areas.

Planning Priority 13 – Our town centres are the focus of local commerce

The draft LSPS has identified four actions to deliver on Planning Priority 13, including a short-term, a medium-term action and two ongoing actions. These actions are supported.

Planning Priority 14 – Industrial land is developed in an orderly manner and meets future development needs

The draft LSPS has identified three actions to deliver Planning Priority 14, including an immediate action and two short-term actions. These actions are supported.

Planning Priority 15 – Our industrial land fosters economic growth, business diversity, and employment opportunities

The draft LSPS has identified two actions to deliver Planning Priority 15, including an immediate action and a short-term action. The Property Council broadly supports these initiatives and will provide more comments when the details are released in due course.

Planning Priority 16 – Key infrastructure is leveraged to support economic growth.

The draft LSPS has identified eight actions to deliver Planning Priority 16, including one immediate action, a short-term action, two medium term actions and four ongoing actions. These actions are generally supported.

Planning Priority 17 – Our City embraces technology and innovation

The draft LSPS has identified one action to deliver Planning Priority 17. This action is supported.

Planning Priority 18 – Protect and enhance lands of environmental value

The draft LSPS has identified a number of actions that will have impact on development within the Cessnock LGA. These actions, including changes to the Cessnock LEP and DCP, will require more detailed consideration when they are more fully developed (and their impact can be evaluated). Further comment will be made when the changes are released for community consultation.

#### Planning Priority 19 – Strengthen and protect biodiversity corridors

The draft LSPS has identified a number of actions to deliver Planning Priority 19. Some of these changes may have an impact on development within the Cessnock LGA. These actions require more detailed consideration when they are more fully developed (and their impact can be evaluated). Further comment will be made when the changes are finalised and released for community consultation.

#### Planning Priority 21 – Adapt to climate change and build climate resilience

The draft LSPS has identified three actions to deliver Planning Priority 21. These changes have potential to have a significant impact on development in the Cessnock LGA, particularly changes to the Cessnock LEP and DCP. These changes require more detailed consideration when they are more fully developed (and their impact can be evaluated). Further comment will be made when the changes are finalised and released for public comment.

#### Planning Priority 23 – Developments are suitable, minimise environmental impact and respond to environmental characteristics

The draft LSPS has identified four actions to deliver Planning Priority 23, all to be undertaken in the short-term. Many of these changes could have an impact on development within the Cessnock LGA. These actions, particularly the changes to the Cessnock LEP and DCP, require more detailed consideration when they are more fully developed (and their impact can be evaluated). Further comment will be made when the proposals are finalised and released for community consultation.

#### Planning Priority 24 – The rural landscape of the area is retained and enhanced

The draft LSPS has identified three actions to deliver Planning Priority 24, including an immediate action and two short-term actions. Many of these changes could have a significant impact on development within Cessnock LGA. These actions, particularly the proposals to amend Cessnock LEP and DCP, require more detailed consideration when they are more fully developed (and their impact can be evaluated). Further comment will be made when the proposals are finalised and released for community consultation.

Planning Priority 25 – The scenic and rural landscape of the Cessnock LGA Vineyards District is preserved

The draft LSPS has identified two actions to deliver Planning Priority 25, including an immediate action and a short-term action. As the changes involve proposals to make changes to the Cessnock LEP and DCP, they have potential to impact development within the Cessnock LGA and require more consideration when they are more fully developed. Further comment will be provided to Council when the proposals are finalised and released for community consultation.

Planning Priority 27 – Nature-based and recreational tourism is facilitated and promoted

The draft LSPS has identified five actions to deliver Planning Priority 27, including both immediate and short-term timeframes. As a number of these involve changes to the Cessnock DCP and development contributions framework, they will require more detailed consideration when they are more fully developed. Further comment will be provided to Council when the proposals are finalised and released for community consultation.

Planning Priority 28 – Our region is internationally acclaimed for its events, festivals and hosting functions

The draft LSPS has identified three actions to deliver Planning Priority 28, all with an immediate timeframe. As the change involve proposals to make changes to the Cessnock LEP and contributions framework, they have potential to have significant impact to development in the LGA and require more detailed consideration when they are more fully developed.

As noted with our submission on the recently exhibited Section 7.11 Developer Contribution Plan, we do not support Action 14.

Further comments on these proposals will be provided to Council when they are finalised and released for community consultation.

**Conclusion**

The Property Council and our members are grateful for the opportunity to provide feedback to Cessnock Council on its draft Local Strategic Planning Statement.

We would welcome any further discussion and future engagement regarding this document.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anita Hugo'.

**Anita Hugo**  
**Regional Director Hunter**  
**Property Council of Australia**