

Population Health, Planning and Performance

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15th December 2010

The Director
Strategic Assessments
NSW Department of Planning
GPO Box 39
Sydney NSW 2001

To the Director

Re: Coal & Allied Southern Estates – Nords Wharf (MP10_0088)
Coal & Allied Southern Estates – Middle Camp (MP10_0089)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Environmental Assessment (EA) and State Significant Site (SSS) Listings of the Nords Wharf and Catherine Hill Bay sites. This response has been prepared by Hunter New England (HNE) Health's Population Health, Planning and Performance Division.

Developments such as these can affect the health and well-being of a community through impact on: the social determinants of health (including housing, education and employment), health risk behaviours (including participation in physical activity and consumption of healthy food), access to health services, and exposure to environmental health risks.

In this response HNE Health has considered the proposed developments with respect to these various influences on health and well being.

Access to Health Services

HNE Health recognises that Lake Macquarie is one of the fastest growing areas in the Hunter region, with significant increases projected in the numbers of older people and young families. These increases will affect demand for and access to public health services, which are important considerations for any new residential developments.

An analysis of the current population data of the Catherine Hill Bay area indicates higher numbers of older people, while Nords Wharf currently has high numbers of young and older persons.

The Coal and Allied developments project an increase in population numbers of approximately 1827 persons by 2015. Concurrently, Coastal Hamlets Pty Ltd (a Rose Property Group company) has proposed a development in Catherine Hill Bay, which is projected to add 1260 people to the area. If both developments are approved, the projected increase in the population will impact on current health services in the area.

With growing numbers of older people living in this area, availability and access to public and private health services such as after hours emergency medical services and healthcare providers such as general practitioners, dentists and allied health services

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need to be considered to maintain the health of the residents as they age. Access to aged care services (particularly low care residential beds and aged care packages) and transport should also be considered to enable older people to remain living in the area.

Young families are also frequent users of health care services. Access to child health services and other health care providers, within a reasonable distance from where they live, is an important consideration when planning for this population group. It is particularly important to ensure that there are good transport links with major centres, so that people can readily access health (and other services). Availability of and access to public transport is a major barrier to people accessing hospital and community based services. We note that the social infrastructure documents have addressed the *need* for public transport for this area.

Timely and local access to General Practitioners (GPs) is a critical issue identified in the documents. Currently there are no GPs in either the Catherine Hill or Nords Wharf areas, and patients have to travel to access services. This access is also dependent on whether the current GPs are accepting new patients. It is recommended that consideration be given to the provision of appropriately situated suites in commercial complexes for the establishment of a general practice and other health providers to set up services that would be required by this population.

Environmental Health

In relation to environmental health concerns, a number of recommendations are proposed for the two sites:

- The inclusion of water sensitive urban design is supported and must be implemented in accordance with the relevant guidelines and required approvals, to ensure that risks to health and the environment are avoided.
- There is potential for site contamination from previous activities. Appropriate site investigation and remediation are encouraged. The proponent should refer to the Department of the Environment and Conservation (DECCW) on this matter.
- Provision of a reticulated water supply and sewerage system to alleviate environmental and public health concerns is recommended. The reticulated water supply must be of sufficient quantity and quality for the population size. An increase in population reinforces the need for the water supply to meet water quality standards that are presented in the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines.
- A mosquito assessment should be undertaken of the sites terrain features to ensure any potential mosquito breeding sites are identified. A mosquito management plan should also be developed incorporating any proposed artificial wetlands in recycled water projects. This will reduce both nuisance biting and disease transmission to the local population.
- NSW Health supports the use of rainwater tanks (as demonstrated in the Beyond Compliance) for all **non-potable uses** where there is a reticulated potable supply available to residents. These uses could include garden watering, washing machine, toilet cisterns and car washing. The collection of rainwater conserves the potable supply and assists in reducing the potential impacts of stormwater.

Health promotion – health risk behaviours and social determinants of health

HNE Population Health has recently developed a resource for building liveable communities in the Lower Hunter Region. This resource outlines the following four principles as being essential to the development of a liveable community: accessibility, sustainability, flexibility and connectivity. Below are some suggestions as to the incorporation of these principles into the proposed Concept Plans. I am pleased to

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include an electronic copy of the resource with this submission, which may be passed onto the proponent.

Connectivity and public transport

Given the proposed development of the two sites, it is essential that access to public transport be reviewed, in particular, bus service access and frequency, to improve connectivity to surrounding areas. This is particularly important, given Rose Property Group's proposed development in the surrounding area. Furthermore, it is recommended that location of public transport stops be placed within a comfortable walking distance for most people between 400 to 500 metres, which will encourage more people to use the services on a regular basis.

Open space and community facilities

HNE Health commends the proposed provision of conservation reserves, parks, key focal areas and community facilities in the two development areas. For these facilities to be equally accessible to all residents, they should be available for the whole community to use, have flexible/mixed uses (for instance, be able to be used by a wide range of age groups for different purposes) and be positioned so that resident access is maximised (400-800m from all residential lots). It is also recommended that public domain areas are provided with wide footpaths, shade trees and ample seating.

To encourage the building of social capital, all open space areas should be freely accessible to existing and future residents. These measures will enable equitable access to open space and community facilities, encouraging active transport (walking/cycling for transport) and planned physical activity across all population groups within the community.

It is also commended that footpaths will be provided on all streets and that cycleways will also be provided. HNE Health recommends that walking and cycling links to the creeks and foreshore areas should comply with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles.

Access to Fresh, Healthy Food

It is recommended that consideration be given to access to affordable/healthy food choices within the two areas. This is especially important given the distance to other main centres and the potential for high food prices in village stores. The opportunity to create a community garden in the two areas is highly encouraged as this would improve the local availability of affordable/healthy food and facilitate increased physical activity through active transport and less car dependency. In addition, the provision of a public space suitable for farmers markets would increase access to fresh, local fruit and vegetables, and reduces air pollution associated with food transport.

Housing: affordability and ageing in place

Both Concept Plans mention that there will be a mix of housing types. HNE Health recommends placement of affordable housing options in positions where access to public transport and community services is maximised. Housing appropriate for ageing in place, such as accessible, low maintenance dwellings, should comply with these same positioning principles.

Community cohesion and consultation

HNE Health recommends ongoing community consultation throughout all stages of the development of the two areas, as this will encourage improved community cohesion and build social capital. Community feedback on current access to services and community facilities should be sought, given the significant increase in population and development being proposed for both areas.

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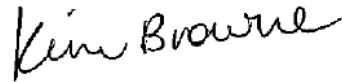
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Importantly this consultation should include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the area. Ongoing consultation with the Bahtabah Local Aboriginal Land Council is of particular importance.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like any further information with regard to this response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim Browne". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kim Browne
Director, Population Health, Planning & Performance
Hunter New England Health

Attachment: Building Liveable Communities in the Lower Hunter