

**COMMITTEE  
FOR  
THE HUNTER**

# **Williamstown Special Activation Precinct**

**RESPONSE TO DRAFT MASTER PLAN**



**Department of Planning and Environment  
Williamstown Special Activation Precinct  
Draft Master Plan  
activationPrecincts@regional.nsw.gov.au**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Williamstown Special Activation Precinct Draft Master Plan.

## **ABOUT THE COMMITTEE FOR THE HUNTER**

The Committee is an independent and inclusive champion for the people of the Greater Hunter and their enterprises. Representing over 60 organisations including some of the largest employers, institutions and peak bodies in the region, we provide a unified voice for the Hunter. Our members are drawn from the private and community sectors and all three levels of government. We come together with a shared interest in building a sustainable, prosperous and equitable future for our region. The Committee delivers on that promise through advocacy, thought leadership and providing a platform for partnerships between governments and the region.

The diversification of the Hunter economy is a [strategic priority](#) of the Committee.

For more information on the Committee and regional priorities and projects visit [www.hunter.org.au](http://www.hunter.org.au).

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## **KEY POINTS**

### **Support for a strategic and integrated approach to unlock the potential of the Williamstown Special Activation Precinct (SAP)**

The Committee commends the approach to the Williamstown SAP. Coordinating planning and infrastructure across departments, streamlined planning pathways and funding for enabling infrastructure will de-risk the precinct, giving the private sector certainty to unlock their investment and the significant opportunity on offer.

We are also pleased that the SAP scope applies learnings from previous approaches to precinct developments, notably the need to couple planning and infrastructure with active business concierge services to attract anchor tenants and activate sites.

It will important that the precinct is developed complementary to other centres and precincts in the region, including the upgraded Newcastle Airport terminal, and does not compete with or dilute the focus and function of these centres.

### **Continue to prioritise employment land uses in the development of the Williamstown SAP**

This is to protect the opportunity for jobs growth on this land in a diverse range of industries now and into the future. It will also be important that land uses do not risk or inhibit the future growth and operation of the Newcastle Airport as an international 24 hour gateway, or defence functions and industries associated with the RAAF base.

## **The level of ambition on the Williamstown SAP could be further raised to harness the full scale of opportunity presented**

The NSW Budget 2022-23 papers reveal \$25 million has been allocated to the Williamstown SAP out of \$1 billion for capital works. Commitments to all other SAPs eclipse this amount, with \$391M to Snowy Mountains; \$219M for Parkes; \$194M for Moree; and \$151M for Wagga Wagga. These economies are a fraction of the size of the Hunter.

In a similar precinct to Williamstown, \$260 million has been announced for a high-tech manufacturing facility proximate to the Western Sydney Airport.

The level of funding at Williamstown is the lowest of the SAPs. We seek a better understanding of NSW Government intentions for the SAP, including potential funding for a catalytic development on the precinct to boost industry and activate the site – as for other SAPs and the Western Sydney Airport.

NSW is to be commended for transport investments in the budget including upgrades to the M1 and Nelson Bay Road. These projects will benefit the airport and SAP, but they are needed regardless to deal with congestion backlogs and rapid population growth.

The Australian Government has invested \$121 million in the Newcastle airport runway and terminal. We are now looking to the NSW Government to do more heavy lifting on this important State precinct by providing sufficient resourcing to leverage the Commonwealth's down payment on our region's future.

## **OTHER FEEDBACK**

- [pp10 & 21] Position the 'opportunity' narrative and vision for the SAP to be part of a plan for the Hunter's economic diversification from coal industries. State investment in shared infrastructure and precincts are powerful levers to be deployed in this challenge and coordinated approaches to the Hunter's development will deliver better outcomes from government focus and funding.
- [pp10] Suggest population projections are updated with recently released Census data for the Greater Hunter, indicating a higher level of growth than NSW Government population projections.
- [pp11] Note the recent federal commitment to Newcastle Airport terminal upgrade (\$55 million).
- [pp22] *Economic Development*
  - Include supporting the Hunter's economic diversification as a key principle.
  - Adapt 4<sup>th</sup> dot point 'campus-style Precinct' to improve educational outcomes for Hunter communities, provide high value, knowledge jobs and connect locals to these opportunities (rather than increase jobs prospects and up-skilling). A lack of high value jobs in the Hunter is the problem to be addressed over raising the job prospects of people, while the transfer of existing workforce to other jobs is the priority and task over upskilling.
- [pp22 *Place and Landscape*] Insert a point on providing high quality connections to place, including between the precinct and the Airport and with the region.
- [pp23] *Environment and Sustainability*

- Align SAP performance with Australia Government and NSW commitments to Net Zero, rather than 'aim to be net-zero'.
- Align SAP performance with NSW Circular Economy Policy.
- [pp23] *Infrastructure and Transport*
  - Insert a principle for a precinct approach to utilities which will be an important aspect of the value proposition for developers and tenants. Apply the highest standards of sustainable design, construction and operation as being implemented by the NSW Government in the Aerotropolis Core proximate to the Western Sydney Airport.
  - Commit to 'improvements to public transport services' in addition to 'enhanced connections' and 'promoting public transport opportunities'. This is a regional priority and State responsibility.
- [pp106 7.1 *Transport network*] Commit to public transport improvements in the Master Plan rather than 'encourage improvements'.
- [pp109 7.2 *Road network performance and transport*] Insert a performance criteria to improve public transport connectivity to the precinct.
- [pp115 7.4 *Utilities, services and infrastructure*] The section misses the opportunity to present an integrated approach to the design, delivery and operation of utilities that building a new precinct offers, or for delivering on NSW commitments to circular economy.