



Ms Paulina Wythes
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Submission: Discussion Paper, A new approach to rezonings

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the NSW Government's Discussion Paper: A new approach to rezonings. Mudgee District Environment Group (MDEG) supports early, inclusive and informed community participation, and we work for a sustainable, resilient community that protects and conserves the natural world for the future of all.

The proposals in the discussion paper appear to favour developers. The strategies put forward ease the way for developers and council staff: that is the obvious and much-needed intent of the revision of the system, however, there is little reference to improved outcomes for any other stakeholders. The eight strategies listed in the Introduction (p1) do not acknowledge any contribution of the proposed system to achieving Sustainable Development goals as the NSW government departments are all required to do.

Our perception of the priority given to developers is reinforced by the list of parties the department consulted with. 'Industry, councils and planning professionals' are the stakeholders who provided feedback on 'how best to address the backlog of planning proposals and set the direction for improvements.' (p2) This limited range of input did not give voice to impacted communities.

It is unfortunate that the engagement process described (p8) involved only 50% of councils and again does not suggest any input from communities or impacted localities where the current rezoning process has caused angst, uncertainty and/or a loss of amenity.

The discussion paper prioritises developer requirements at the expense of the environment, and community desires. It appears that the speed of approval of rezoning and the associated development, is the only measure of success. Unfortunately, community, neighbours, the environment, landscape and amenity are all likely to suffer in such a scenario. Strong environmental performance standards should be specified.

We believe that meaningful community consultation requirements should be specified, with full accountability and transparency for all parties involved. We note that timeframes may need to be revisited (p17), 'as councils, proponents, (*the community*) and the department adapt to the new approach'.

It is desirable that the community can comment on the separate processes of the rezoning application and the development application. It may be that the community is happy for a rezoning of the land, but the development proposed is not desired. There must be built-in contingency for that situation.

MDEG suggests that the scoping stage is the appropriate opportunity for community engagement to commence. If there is transparency and meaningful consultation, and the proposal is consistent with strategic plans, then there is an even playing field for informed discussion. It seems obvious that the proposal must be consistent with strategic plans, as the community has already been given a voice in the

development of these plans. It is a waste of time and money for an inconsistent proposal to be exhibited and assessed.

It would be helpful if the Department is creative and uses all forms of media to provide community members with the opportunity to participate in all levels of strategic planning and the exhibition period. We believe the public should be able to comment before the application is assessed.

Members of the public who object to the proposal should have rights to make objections based on merit.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Rosemary Hadaway

Chair

Mudgee District Environment Group

1st March 2022

