

BUSINESS HUNTER

11 August 2026

Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
post.mining@dphi.nsw.gov.au

Submission: Macquarie Coal Complex Transformation Master Plan

Business Hunter welcomes the exhibition of the Macquarie Coal Complex Transformation Master Plan and congratulates the NSW Government, Lake Macquarie City Council, Glencore and the Net Zero Economy Authority on the collaborative work undertaken to date in preparing this important framework for the future of the site.

We also congratulate Lake Macquarie City Council on its leadership in initiating and continuing to promote state and national conversations regarding the beneficial reuse of mining lands and acknowledge council's ongoing advocacy for the Macquarie Coal Complex precinct to be recognised and progressed as a pilot site for mine land transformation.

The master plan represents a significant milestone in the Hunter Region's transition planning and provides an important opportunity to demonstrate how former mining lands can continue to support employment, investment, housing and economic prosperity for regional communities.

Business Hunter has consistently advocated for the productive and beneficial reuse of mining lands as a key component of the Hunter's long-term economic development and diversification. As mining activity evolves over coming decades, it is critical that communities that have supported the resources sector continue to benefit from employment opportunities, investment and economic activity generated on these lands.

The Macquarie Coal Complex proposal is particularly important because it demonstrates how former mining lands can be transformed through coordinated planning, infrastructure reuse and long-term strategic vision. The lessons learned through this process have the potential to shape future approaches to mine land reuse across the Hunter and other regional economies.

Strategic importance of mining land reuse

Business Hunter strongly supports initiatives that enable former mining lands to be repurposed for industrial, commercial, residential and emerging industry uses.

Across the Hunter, substantial areas of mining land are currently operational, under rehabilitation or approaching closure. These sites represent a valuable economic asset. Unlike many greenfield locations, former mining lands can offer significant advantages for future development, including:

- existing infrastructure such as roads, water supply, electricity connections and communications networks

BUSINESS HUNTER

- established transport connectivity to freight networks, major roads and rail infrastructure
- existing industrial land-use history and associated buffer zones
- large landholdings capable of accommodating major projects and industry clusters
- access to a skilled workforce with transferable capabilities as mining and coal-fired power operations wind down.

For these reasons, Business Hunter considers the Macquarie Coal Complex highly suited to future employment-generating development and believes its successful transformation can make a substantial contribution to the Hunter's economic diversification while supporting communities that have historically relied on mining activity.

Importantly, productive reuse of already disturbed land allows economic growth to occur without unnecessary pressure to develop additional greenfield sites. This supports both sustainable land-use outcomes and responsible regional development.

Master plan vision and structure

Business Hunter supports the master plan's broad and flexible vision for the future of the site. A particular strength of the master plan is its recognition that the precinct can accommodate a diverse mix of complementary land uses rather than relying solely on traditional industrial development. The inclusion of opportunities for industrial, manufacturing, logistics, energy, commercial, recreation and residential outcomes provides important flexibility to respond to future market opportunities and investment trends.

This diversity will strengthen the long-term viability of the precinct while creating opportunities for a broader range of businesses and industries to establish within the area.

Business Hunter particularly supports the consideration of residential development opportunities in proximity to future employment-generating land uses. The Hunter region continues to experience significant challenges in the supply of affordable workforce housing. The opportunity to deliver additional housing close to major employment areas could help address a region-wide challenge while supporting workforce participation, reducing commuting pressures and creating more connected communities.

By enabling a mix of complementary land uses, the master plan creates the foundations for a truly integrated employment and community precinct that can deliver long-term economic and social benefits.

Leveraging existing infrastructure assets

Business Hunter supports the master plan's focus on leveraging and repurposing existing infrastructure assets within the precinct. The Cockle Creek sub-precinct presents a particularly significant opportunity. The former mine rail loop and the site's existing interface with the Main Northern Railway provide a strategic advantage that is difficult to replicate elsewhere in the region.

BUSINESS HUNTER

We support the master plan's identification of opportunities to reuse these legacy assets for industrial, manufacturing, energy, logistics and rail-related activities that can take advantage of existing transport infrastructure and reduce the cost of future development.

The precinct has the potential to become a major rail manufacturing and rail industry hub for NSW. This opportunity is strengthened by consideration of the area as a potential location for future NSW Government rail manufacturing activities and by emerging opportunities associated with advanced manufacturing requirements for High Speed Rail.

The site's strategic location also positions it to support future freight and logistics activities associated with the proposed Hunter Freight Rail Line, given its proximity to the preferred corridor. This creates additional opportunities for manufacturing, maintenance, warehousing, logistics and supply-chain industries that could support the region's future transport infrastructure.

Business Hunter believes these opportunities align strongly with state and national priorities relating to sovereign manufacturing capability, supply-chain resilience, advanced manufacturing and regional economic development.

Planning framework and investment attraction

Business Hunter supports the proposed rezoning pathway, including the creation of a dedicated planning framework through the State Significant Rezoning process and the application of the SP4 Enterprise Zone.

Given the pioneering nature of mine land transformation projects, flexibility will be essential. Future opportunities may emerge that are difficult to fully anticipate today, particularly in areas such as advanced manufacturing, clean energy, logistics, technology and other emerging industries.

Business Hunter believes a planning framework that provides clarity for investors while having flexibility to accommodate future market opportunities offers several important benefits:

- greater confidence for investors, industry partners and the broader community regarding appropriate future land uses
- a more consistent and efficient development assessment framework
- planning controls tailored to the unique characteristics of the precinct
- the ability to balance employment generation with environmental and community outcomes
- flexibility to respond to future market opportunities and investment demand.

This certainty will be critical to attracting long-term private investment and supporting successful redevelopment outcomes.

While the master plan includes comprehensive performance criteria across chapters 5-10 for environmental, urban design, infrastructure and community outcomes, it does not establish any equivalent criteria to assess economic outcomes. Specifically, there is no mechanism to

BUSINESS HUNTER

evaluate a proposal's contribution to employment generation, industry sustainability, or local and regional economic diversification. As these outcomes are central objectives of the master plan, performance criteria should be incorporated to ensure economic benefits are appropriately considered and measured as part of the assessment process.

Addressing land transfer and regulatory barriers

Business Hunter welcomes the collaborative approach that has characterised development of the master plan to date and encourages governments, industry, local councils, traditional owners, landholders and community representatives to continue working together as the project progresses.

While Business Hunter supports the master plan, we note that further work is required to address the land-use, planning and regulatory barriers that continue to affect the beneficial reuse of former mining lands. Many of these issues were identified by the NSW parliamentary inquiry into beneficial and productive post-mining land use and rehabilitation.

These issues remain important considerations for investors who will ultimately be responsible for delivering projects and employment outcomes within transformed mining precincts. Investors require certainty regarding future land ownership arrangements, environmental obligations, rehabilitation requirements and development approval pathways before committing significant capital.

While discussions are continuing across government and industry regarding these matters, the pathway from mine closure and rehabilitation through to relinquishment and subsequent redevelopment can remain difficult for prospective investors and developers to understand.

Business Hunter encourages continued efforts to resolve these issues and suggests future additions to the master plan include information regarding the relinquishment and land transfer process and associated regulatory pathways, where possible. Providing greater clarity on these matters would strengthen investor confidence and assist in attracting future development opportunities to the precinct.

Regardless of future ownership arrangements, investors will require confidence that land can be repurposed without unnecessary regulatory complexity or ongoing uncertainty. Clear, efficient and transparent pathways for land transition will be essential to attracting investment and ensuring the precinct achieves its economic potential.

Economic, environmental and social outcomes

Business Hunter welcomes the balanced approach reflected in the master plan to economic, environmental and social outcomes. The plan appropriately recognises that successful mine land transformation must deliver a combination of economic opportunity, environmental stewardship and community benefit. The proposed mix of employment-generating land uses, environmental outcomes, housing opportunities and community infrastructure demonstrates that these objectives are not mutually exclusive.

Business Hunter particularly welcomes the inclusion of residential and community-focused opportunities alongside industrial development. This broader vision provides flexibility and

BUSINESS HUNTER

creates opportunities to address regional challenges such as housing supply and workforce availability while supporting long-term economic growth.

The integration of employment, housing, transport and environmental outcomes has the potential to create a precinct that delivers lasting benefits not only for businesses and investors, but also for residents and future generations.

Conclusion

Business Hunter views the Macquarie Coal Complex Transformation Master Plan as an important and positive step in demonstrating how former mining lands can support the next phase of economic development in the Hunter region. We acknowledge the proactive steps taken by government to support productive post-mining land use and urge that this momentum be maintained in seeking to resolve land-use, planning and regulatory barriers to redevelopment.

The Hunter has the workforce, industrial capability, infrastructure and expertise required to lead Australia's next phase of economic development. Unlocking the potential of former mining lands such as the Macquarie Coal Complex will be critical to achieving that future.

Business Hunter supports the exhibited master plan and encourages all levels of government to continue progressing the reforms, investment attraction activities and implementation measures needed to deliver enduring economic, environmental and community benefits from this landmark project.

Yours sincerely,



Bob Hawes
CEO Business Hunter