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Masterplans a positive first step in mining land reuse

Business Hunter has acknowledged the rezoning of mine sites at Muswellbrook and Lake Macquarie for industrial reuse as an important first step in the repurposing of mining lands across the region to support new jobs and industries.

The draft masterplans, unveiled today, identify the potential for the Mount Arthur site at Muswellbrook and Macquarie Coal Complex at Lake Macquarie to support more than 7,000 jobs and represent a significant milestone in the long-term transformation of mining lands across the Hunter.

Business Hunter CEO Bob Hawes said it was encouraging to see federal, state and local governments aligned in their commitment to supporting the productive reuse of former mining sites.

“Having government-endorsed masterplans in place is an important first step, but there is still work to be done to address the land-use challenges identified by the NSW parliamentary inquiry into beneficial and productive post-mining land use and rehabilitation, and to attract the investment needed to turn these sites into thriving employment hubs,” Mr Hawes said.

“The scope of opportunity for beneficial reuse of former mining lands is extensive. Business Hunter understands in the Hunter Valley there are over 38,000 hectares of mining land that is either rehabilitated or being rehabilitated, disturbed or supporting current operations.

“These sites have a lot of advantages for industrial and commercial reuse. Typically, they already have significant infrastructure in place like roads, power and water supply, benefit from existing buffer zones and are often strategically located near transport links.

“Importantly, these are sites that have already supported industrial activity. Repurposing them for future industries allows us to accommodate economic growth without the need to open up additional greenfield land.”

Mr Hawes said the announcement demonstrated growing recognition by governments of the critical role former mining lands can play in supporting the Hunter’s economic growth.

“We acknowledge both the federal and NSW governments for taking proactive steps to support productive post-mining land use and we urge them to maintain this momentum through the legislative, regulatory and planning reforms needed to facilitate redevelopment,” he said.

“In particular, there is a need for clear regulatory pathways, greater certainty for investors, coordinated planning across government agencies and meaningful engagement with industry, local government and communities.

“The Hunter region has the skills, infrastructure and industrial capability to lead the next phase of economic development, but we need to unlock more industrial land to meet demand.

“Ensuring rehabilitated mine land can be repurposed efficiently and productively will help attract investment and support existing and future industries.”

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