

Mid-Western Regional Council has had the opportunity to review the planning assessment undertaken by Mr Gary Bruce. The Council unequivocally supports the recommendation for refusal. In considering the Development Application for the Temporary Workers Accommodation (TWA) proposed to be located on the edge of Gulgong, Council urges the Central West Joint Regional Planning Panel to consider the overwhelming local community objection to the proposal which has been demonstrated not only through the 360 submissions in the form of objection to the Development Application but also the 340 submissions and 3 petitions with 163 signatures Council received during the preparation of the TWA Development Control Plan. In addition, a petition with 712 signatures was collated to be sent to the New South Wales Parliament. The community has **resoundingly rejected** the Mac Group proposal as expressed in the current Development Application.

The Mid-Western Region, which includes Gulgong, is not a remote community. The Mid-Western Region is located 3.5 hours from Sydney. Gulgong is a thriving country town with exceptional character and community spirit. When faced with adversity the town has demonstrated a strength of character and cohesiveness in its ability to rally and fight for the best outcomes for the community. This is indicative of the successful fight in 2010 to retain hospital services in the town. A fight which included extensive and consistent lobbying, representation to all levels of government, a far-reaching and coordinated media campaign that included a rally where over 2500 people attended, bearing in mind that the population at the 2006 census was 1906 persons.

The proposal by The Mac Group is to establish a 400 bed TWA with associated facilities that include dining, convention centre and indoor and outdoor recreation facilities. Supporting documents for the DA indicate that the facility has the potential to expand to 1,500 rooms. The “temporary” nature of the proposal relates solely to the length of stay of the inhabitants. The life of the facility has been estimated as 20 to 30 years. In this sense it cannot be considered a temporary structure or facility. The inhabitants may be long term employees of mines that work on a roster system that require short term accommodation during the working period. In this case the facility is not catering for temporary employees or contractors. Indeed, experiences in the Bowen Basin in Queensland demonstrate that the temporary accommodation of long term employees is precisely the market that these types of facilities cater for. Having regard to the long term employment status of the occupants, Mid-Western Regional Council’s preferred position is that the workforce be encouraged to permanently relocate to the Region providing an opportunity for the growth of sustainable regional communities and supporting the government decentralisation policy as articulated in the NSW State Plan.

In recognition of the need for temporary accommodation to house construction or temporary workers and to provide transitional accommodation, Mid-Western Regional Council has formulated a Temporary Workers Accommodation DCP which clearly indicates that the preferred location of TWAs is at the mine site or the site of the major infrastructure proposed. Mid-Western Council considers that the DCP caters for the true purpose of the TWAs which is to provide temporary accommodation for a temporary workforce in what were traditionally temporary facilities. Council considers that the Mac Group model where the facility is run “in a manner similar to boutique holiday resorts” (Whelan Insites, 2012, p.6) goes beyond the definition and intention of a TWA.

In this submission Council will outline its objections to the development application based on the following:

- Inconsistency with adopted Strategic Plans including the NSW State Plan and the Mid-Western Regional Council Strategic Land Use Plan.
- Inconsistency with the relevant planning controls including the Mid-Western Interim Local Environmental Plan and the Temporary Workers Accommodation Development Control Plan (DCP).
- Unacceptable negative **economic impacts** on the township of Gulgong.
- Unacceptable negative **social impacts** on the township of Gulgong.
- Unacceptable impacts on local infrastructure and service provision including medical, police and water and sewer.

Strategic Planning

NSW State Plan

Mid-Western Regional Council considers that this proposal and others of a similar kind are contrary to the NSW State Plan 2021.

Goal 3 of the State Plan states:

Goal 3 – Drive Economic Growth in NSW

We will work with regional communities, businesses and local government to achieve steady and strategic growth in our regions, with new investment in priority regional infrastructure, effective incentives to grow enterprises and job opportunities, a combination of public and private decentralisation, and improved services where people need them. We need to balance population growth between regional and metropolitan areas so all people have access to the economic and lifestyle opportunities of our State. (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2011, p.10)

Priority actions of the plan include:

Our strategy is to encourage decentralisation – steady and strategic growth in our regions. This will require a focus on regional infrastructure and job creation...

Our strategy to increase the population in regional NSW will support balanced population growth across the State, invigorating regional economies and relieving congestion pressures within Sydney. (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2011, p.10)

The concept of Fly-in Fly-out (FIFO) or Drive –in Drive Out (DIDO) is inconsistent with the concept and aims of decentralisation. TWAs do not facilitate the permanent relocation of working population but supports the temporary injections of people into a community whilst they are rostered on for work. *The extent of the issue can be shown in the material provided in Rolfe et al. (2010), where there were estimated to be 38,029 employees in the mining and resources sectors in Queensland. More than 40% of these employees are located in Brisbane and communities along the Queensland coast (Rolfe, 2011, p. 3).*

While the mining boom currently being experienced in the Mid-Western-Region represents challenges for the local community, it also provide a range of opportunities. Many of these opportunities will not be achieved if the majority of the permanent workforce is accommodated in temporary rather than permanent accommodation as has occurred in the Greater Isaac Council area. Population figures for the Greater Isaac region, which includes towns such as Moranbah, Dysart and Middlemount (the Mac Group have facilities at all three towns), indicate that whilst the permanent population is estimated at 23,030 in 2011 it is estimated that the transient population will reach an estimated 28,220 in 2012 (KPMG, December 2011, p.6). The experience in Queensland clearly demonstrates that TWA accommodation for long term employees is the antipathy of decentralisation and therefore is inconsistent with the NSW State Plan. As stated previously, Gulgong and the Mid-Western Region are not remote and provide an ideal opportunity for sustainable growth. FIFO or DIDO are unsustainable methods of providing a workforce in environmental, economic and social terms.

Comprehensive Land Use Strategy

Mid-Western Regional Council commenced a Comprehensive Land Use Strategy for the Local Government Area in January 2007. The purpose of the Strategy is to manage the sustainable growth in the region and to provide strategic direction for urban and rural development. The Strategy documents the pressures for growth and identifies current and future opportunities for sustainable growth across the local government area. (Parsons Brinckerhoff, 2009, p. 30). The Draft Strategy underwent two exhibition periods and extensive community consultation. It was adopted by Council and endorsed by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure on 1 August 2011. Council has proceeded to prepare a principal Local Environmental Plan based on the Comprehensive Land Use Strategy. The Draft LEP was submitted to the DoPI on 19 January 2012 requesting that the LEP be made.

As part of the comprehensive Land Use Strategy a structure plan was developed for each town within the LGA. The structure plan has been included in this submission as Figure 1. The Comprehensive Land Use Strategy has identified sufficient land to supply in excess of 1500 lots in the short to medium term. This land consists of a variety of lot sizes ranging from standard residential through to 6 hectare lots. A planning proposal for the creation of 480 lots is imminent. A subdivision for 81 lots is currently under construction. In addition, on the 2 May 2012, Council approved a planning proposal for 361 hectares providing the opportunity for a further 1000 to 1500 in Mudgee which is located a 20 minute drive from Gulgong. These proposals are consistent with the areas nominated in the Comprehensive Land Use Strategy and look to provide adequate residential land supply for the future development of the region without the reliance on TWAs to house the permanent workforce. It is considered that the provision of permanent housing is an appropriate and sustainable response to the demand for accommodation having regard to the coal reserves available in the region which extend well beyond the current mining approvals.

The site of the Mac Development Application is shown in the Comprehensive Land Use Strategy as remaining rural. Development of this land for the purposes of residential development or *visitor and tourist accommodation* is inconsistent with the Strategy. Indeed, the subject land

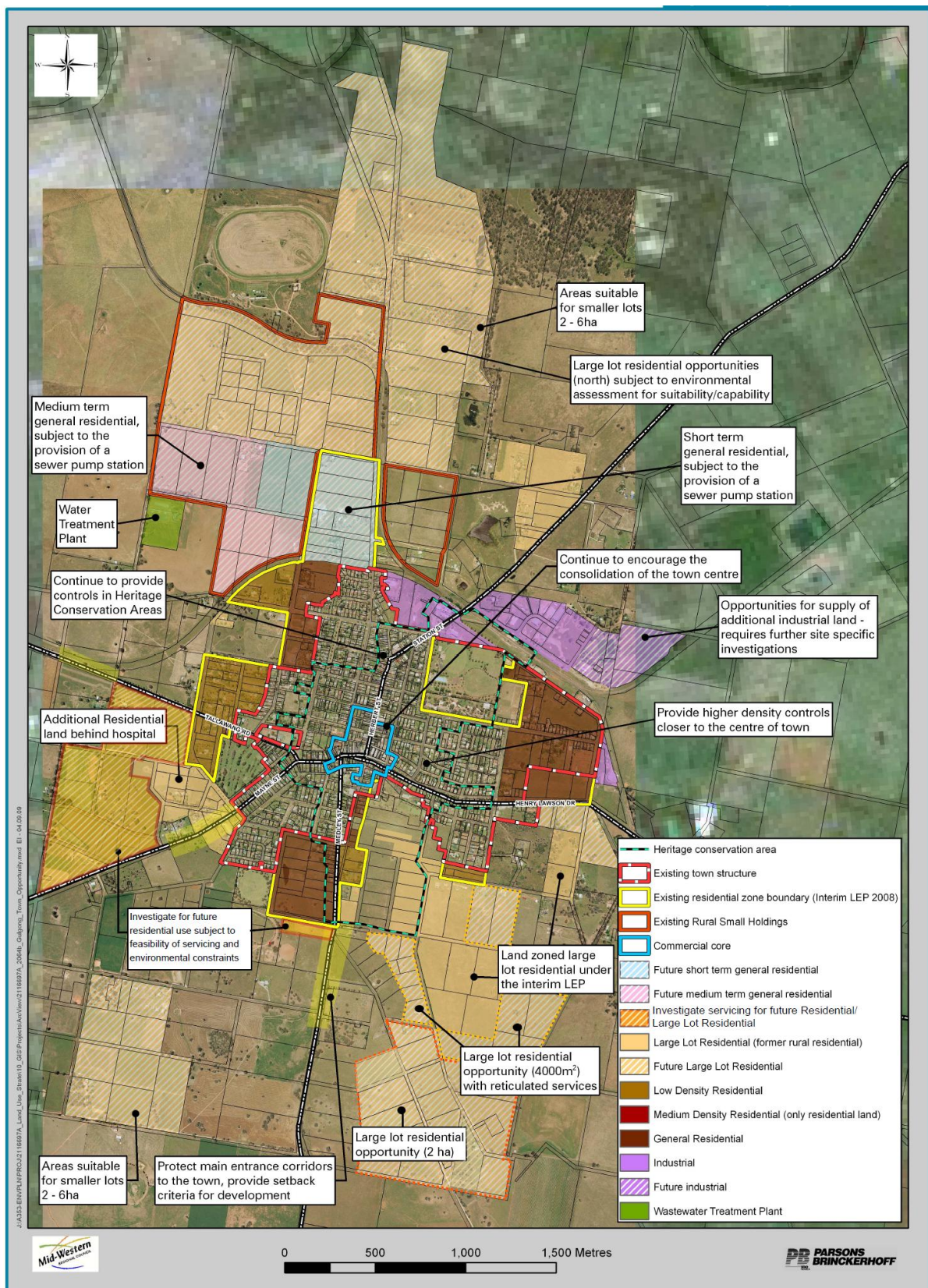


Figure 1

does not have a “dwelling entitlement” under the Mid-Western Interim Local Environmental Plan 2008 or the Draft Mid-Western Local Environmental Plan 2012. The proposed development of this land is opportunistic as the land was purchased as rural land and should remain as rural land. Notwithstanding the question of permissibility, should the developer wish to develop land for a TWA then a more appropriate site would have been a site identified in the Comprehensive Land Use Strategy for urban uses. **The development of TWA on this site will create a new suburb, which is more densely settled than the existing town.** The development of this site for urban purposes, particularly on this scale, has not been contemplated by the Land Use Strategy or Council’s infrastructure planning. In addition, the development of the site for an intensive residential use is inconsistent with community expectation as throughout the extensive community consultation process for the Land Use Strategy and the Draft LEP the land has been shown as remaining rural.

A further submission was made by the applicant entitled *Co-Integration of the Proposed Temporary Workers Accommodation Facility, Gulgong with Future Urban Expansion* addressed to the Mayor and received at Council on the 19 March 2012. In essence, the submission suggests that by connecting the proposed TWA to the reticulated sewer system the area between the existing town boundary and the TWA could be developed for urban purposes providing a potential yield of 1,200 dwellings. This submission is blithely made with no assessment of the suitability or capability of the land. The area contains a former waste disposal site, is severed by a drainage line and restricted due to extensive historical gold mining shafts and relics. Notwithstanding the capability or suitability of the site, the development of this area for residential purposes is totally inconsistent with the adopted and DoPI endorsed Comprehensive Land Use Strategy. This is an attempt by the applicant to hijack Council’s well-considered and consulted Land Use Strategy to justify their opportunistic site selection.

Statutory Considerations

Mid-Western Regional Local Environmental Plan 2008

Council considers that the proposed development is inconsistent with the Mid-Western Regional Interim Local Environmental Plan 2008 (the LEP). The development application has been submitted on the premise that the proposed use is an innominate use, i.e. not defined in the LEP.

Council considers that the use should be characterised as *Tourist and Visitor Accommodation*. The LEP defines *Tourist and Visitor Accommodation* as:

tourist and visitor accommodation means a building or place that provides temporary or short-term accommodation on a commercial basis, and includes hotel accommodation, serviced apartments, bed and breakfast accommodation and backpackers’ accommodation.

The Statement of Environmental Effects submitted in support of the application states:

*The Mac Accommodation model is unusual to the market, in that they develop, design, build, own and operate the facilities as a full-service provider in a manner similar to **boutique holiday resorts**.* (Statement of Environmental Effect: 6 - emphasis added).

In the legal advice submitted in support of the application the nature of the accommodation is summarised:

Whilst the DA does not provide specific information about the occupation of the rooms, it is made plain that the workforce accommodated in the accommodation will be “fly in/fly out” or “drive in/drive out”. The period of time a worker will reside in the room will be generally in the order of days or weeks on each occasion, followed by a departure and a return some weeks later, over a period of years. Whilst one worker vacates a room, another worker will then occupy it when the first worker is back at his or her permanent home.” (Clay, p. 2).

In addition, in discussions with the Mac Group during the formulation of the DA, the Mac Group indicated that accommodation was not restricted to miners but that anyone could book a room at the facility, even a tourist. The Concession Report submitted in support of the application also referred to rooms being available for public use. This statement was retracted by the applicant on 20 April 2012. It should be noted that the Mac Group website refers to those using their facilities as guests. An enquiry made by Council staff on the 7 May 2012 at the Narrabri Mac facility indicated that anyone was welcome to book a room whether or not they were related to mining. The way that the Mac Facility operates in Narrabri is certainly consistent with the definition of *Visitor and Tourist Accommodation*.

It is Council’s position that the facility will provide temporary or short-term accommodation for visitors. The Macquarie dictionary defines visitor as:

One who visits, or makes a visit, as for friendly, business, official or other purposes.

There is no doubt that the miners are visiting the area for business or a purpose, that is, to work. They do not return to the same room each time and do not personally enter into a lease. It is Council’s position that the facility should be characterised as *tourist and visitor accommodation* and therefore prohibited in the Agriculture zone in accordance with Mid-Western Regional Interim LEP 2008.

It is also considered that the proposal is inconsistent with the objectives of the Agriculture zone as noted in the assessment report by Mr Gary Bruce. Council agrees with Mr Bruce’s assessment in this regard and maintains that the proposal is a high density urban use which is inconsistent with the protection of land for agricultural purposes and has the potential to severely impact on a primary industry occurring on adjacent land. The proposal fails to adequately address this potential impact. The objectives of the LEP recognise the potential land use conflict that can occur between agriculture and hobby farms and small rural lot subdivisions deeming that such uses should be avoided where they have an *unreasonable impact upon the efficient use of land for rural or other primary industries*. The TWA is a high density residential use and the potential risks for land use conflict with the existing primary industry use on land adjoining the site are extremely high. The proposal relies on the use of landscaping and earth mounds in an attempt to ameliorate impacts on adjoining land. Council considers that these measures are band-aid solutions that will not

adequately address the potential land use conflict and therefore the site is unsuitable for the proposed development. The configuration of the subject site, in that it wraps around the adjoining owner land, exacerbates the potential for land use conflict. Good planning practice would dictate that a more appropriate site selection would reduce the reliance on band-aid solutions and the potential for land use conflict. It is Council's position that the proposal is inconsistent with the majority of the objectives and poses a real threat to a lawfully established primary industry and therefore should be refused.

Draft Mid-Western Regional Local Environmental Plan 2012 and Planning Proposal to Define and Make Provision for Temporary Workers Accommodation

The Council agrees with Mr Bruce's assessment of the DA in terms of the Draft LEP 2012. It is considered that the use is inconsistent with the objectives of the zone due to the potential impact on primary industries and land use conflict. The provision of accommodation is an urban use and therefore cannot be considered to be consistent with objectives by virtue of providing accommodation for mine workers as purported by the applicant. By extension, if this line of agreement was followed, a supermarket or large scale commercial shopping centre could then be considered consistent with the objectives as it provides goods and services to the agriculture industry.

Council resolved to prepare a planning proposal to define and provide provisions for Temporary Workers Accommodation on the 7 December 2012 and received gateway determination for the exhibition of the proposal on the 2 April 2012. The proposal has been placed on exhibition from 16 April 2012 to 14 May 2012.

The amendment proposes to insert a clause into the LEP 2008 and Draft LEP 2011.

The intension of the clause is to specifically define temporary workers accommodation and provide locational criteria for this type of development. The clause is proposed as follows:

"1. Temporary workers' accommodation

(1) The objectives of this clause are as follows:

- (a) To enable development for temporary workers' accommodation if there is a demonstrated need to accommodate employees due to the nature of the work or location of the land,*
- (b) To ensure that temporary workers' accommodations is appropriately located,*
- (c) To ensure that the erection of temporary workers' accommodation is not likely to have a detrimental impact on the future use of the land or conflict with an existing land use,*
- (d) To minimise the impact of temporary workers' accommodation on local roads or infrastructure.*

(2) Development consent must not be granted to development for the purposes of temporary workers' accommodation for works unless the Consent authority is satisfied of the following:

- (a) the development is to be located within 5 kilometres of the site on which the work is being carried out,*

- (b) *there is a demonstrated necessity to provide temporary workers' accommodation due either to the nature of the industry that the workers are employed in or because of the remote or isolated location of the work site,*
- (c) *the development will not prejudice the subsequent carrying out of development on the land in accordance with this Plan or any other applicable environmental planning instrument,*
- (d) *water and sewerage infrastructure will be provided to adequately meet the requirements of the development,*
- (e) *when the development is no longer in use, the land will, as far as practicable, be restored to the condition in which it was before the commencement of the development.*

(3) *In this clause:*

temporary workers' accommodation means any habitable buildings and associated amenities erected on a temporary basis for the purpose of providing a place of temporary accommodation for persons employed for the purpose of carrying out works associated with a large-scale infrastructure project, including development for the purposes of an extractive industry, mining, renewable energy or electricity transmission or distribution works."

It is considered that the DA does not comply with the provisions of the Planning Proposal as it does not meet the locational requirements.

Temporary Workers Accommodation Development Control Plan

The Temporary Workers Accommodation Development Control Plan commenced on the 17 February 2012. The DCP is a matter for consideration in the assessment of the application however the applicant fails to address the DCP. Council prepared the DCP in response to concerns regarding the potential impact of TWAs on the region. Initially the DCP contemplated allowing TWAs adjacent to existing towns and the Draft DCP was exhibited with 340 submissions being received and three petitions with 163 signatures. The majority of these submissions were objections to the location of a TWA adjacent to Gulgong. In response to the submissions and in light of a review of the characterisation of the use, Council on the 28 November 2011 resolved to amend the Draft DCP as exhibited and re-exhibit the Draft DCP for a further 28 days in accordance with the requirements of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulations 2000. The second version of the Draft DCP included the characterisation of TWA for the purposes of the Mid-Western LEP 2008 as *tourist and visitor accommodation*. Only four submissions were received in response to the amended DCP. The process clearly indicated that the Gulgong community were opposed to the location of TWA on its boundary.

Council supports Mr Bruce's assessment of the application in relation to the requirement of the DCP. It is considered that the DA is inconsistent with the DCP in terms of the characterisation of the use, inconsistency with the objectives of the DCP and the locational requirements including the provision of footpaths connecting the proposed facility to the town of Gulgong.

Economic Impacts

Council questions both the short and long term economic benefits of the proposal particularly, when the negative impacts are taken into consideration.

Economic Impact during Construction

The Socio-Economic Report submitted in support of the DA notes that \$6.75 million will be spent locally during construction of a 400 room facility. The report includes commentary suggesting that there will be opportunities for local businesses during this phase. Whilst a project of this size may provide a reasonable injection into the local construction industry, there is a question mark about the ability and capacity of the small businesses operating within Gulgong and the wider LGA to meet requirements. Many of the businesses are micro businesses facing difficulties in finding skilled labour.

The Socio-Economic Report acknowledges only “modest” economic benefits, based on modeling that assumes that \$6.75 million of construction expenditure will be incurred locally. Any reduction in the amount of work that can be carried out locally will reduce the corresponding economic benefits.

Economic Impact during Operation

The Socio-Economic Report submitted in support of the DA notes that a 400 room facility will contribute \$4.0 million to the local economy during operation. At least half of this expenditure will be incurred by the operators of the facility. Similar to the expenditure during the construction phase, the reliance on micro businesses with limited capacity to cater for a range of goods and services on a large scale, could result in some economic leakages outside the Region.

A further source of expenditure will be the expenditure by the FIFO/DIDO workforce. Informal discussions with residents in Narrabri where the Mac Group have recently established a facility indicate that apart for the licensed premises, little economic advantage has been experienced by local business. The economic benefits of the FIFO/DIDO workforce are largely captured in the place where their families are based (ie. their home town) and not in the place where they go to work. This is especially the case for mine workers who work different shifts with varied hours, and do not have time to visit local shops between working and sleeping.

A significant economic impact expected of this proposal will be the negative impact on the Gulgong property market. The reputation of a town usually suffers when it has a mining village associated with it, and this will result in a decrease in the value of existing properties and in the rental income earned by existing investors.

The impact on the long term desirability of Gulgong as area to reside for the non mine related population could have long term negative economic impacts on the Gulgong real estate market. These concerns are substantiated by the Rolfe report.

In Moranbah in the Bowen Basin, Ivanova and Rolfe (2011) report the results of a community survey where they asked a random sample of households in the town to indicate the planned length of residence in Moranbah. The results, summarised in Figure 6, show an average of 8.4 years for

expected residency. When residents were asked about different development options, an increase in workcamps was identified as the major concern, with planned residency falling by an average of 1.3 years (16%) if major workcamps were developed. (Rolfe, p. 12)

Due to the proposed concentration of mine workers, as encompassed in the Mac DA, in what is essentially an artificial environment which abandons the social norms, there is a potential for the reputation of Gulgong to be adversely effected reducing the desirability of the town and in turn the value of property.

There is a body of research that demonstrates that the long term economic benefit is not gained by the “host” community, in this case Gulgong, but that the economic benefit is continued to be reaped by the “source” community.

4.1. Fly-over Effects

Regional strategy documents, media reports and other materials repeatedly emphasize the view that resource development companies which operate in rural regions benefit from the resources in those regions but, by accessing their workforces and buying supplies and services from the larger metropolitan centres, they give little back to the regions [8]. These —fly-over// effects [9] are perceived to harm rural regions by failing to provide employment or training opportunities for people in those regions. As such it effectively encourages young people to leave their communities to find work elsewhere which, ironically, could mean back flying back to their own region, and by so doing, inhibits population growth or leads to population decline in rural communities

Fly-over effects mean that many of the benefits of resource developments in remote areas accrue to the larger, distant, metropolitan urban centres. This is particularly evident in Western Australia where most commute workers live in the Perth region. Furthermore, the smaller regional centres not only fail to capture many of the benefits of development within their own regions [11], but often experience additional cost burdens resulting from the need to provide services for transient workers and operators with little return for their investment. (Storey, 2010, p.1163)

Salary income tends to be spent in the towns where people live rather than where people work, so the effect is that direct income from mining employment tends to spread more widely than it would be if employees only lived in specific mining or industry communities. (Rolfe, p. 11)

Indeed, the literature review included in the Socio- Economic Report is dominated by negative observations regarding social and economic impacts associated with TWAs. Whilst it is pleasing the report undertook some locally based interviews, the numbers were limited and as conceded in the report *assessing the economic impact of the operational phase is slightly more problematic in that mine workers residing in Gulgong or Mudgee will generate some expenditure locally no matter where they are housed.*

It is Council's position that the Socio –Economic Report overstates the value of any economic benefit to the town of Gulgong and fails to address the ability of local business to capture any benefit and the potential long term adverse impacts on real estate value. It places too much emphasis on the benefits derived from the expenditure of a DIDO/FIFO workforce.

Gulgong is a renowned town for tourism being one of the first conservation areas declared in NSW. Gulgong was established during a gold rush in the 1870s and the organic growth of the town is reflected in the built form and street pattern. Henry Lawson had a close association with Gulgong. His parents brought him to the Gulgong area when he was an infant, and he spent his childhood and early teens in locations between Gulgong and Mudgee. The scenes and experiences of these years influenced Lawson enormously. They appear, with vivid clarity, in many of his works. The rich history of Gulgong is reflected in the Gulgong Pioneer Museum, the Henry Lawson Centre and the Henry Lawson Heritage Festival. Council considers that the development of the Mac Group village on the fringe of Gulgong will have a detrimental effect the character and social fabric of the town and place the tourism industry reliant on that character in jeopardy.

Social Impact

Council considers that the TWA proposal has the potential for significant adverse social impacts in the community. Again, whilst it pleasing that the Socio-Economic Report conducting a number of local interviews its statement that *"There appears to be some negative community perception about the proposed MAC facility at Gulgong"* fails to acknowledge the depth of concern and objection expressed in the 360 submissions made in relation to this application. It should be noted that this is the highest number of objections that this Council has ever received in relation to a single development application. Whilst the Socio-Economic Report attempts to shift the concern to *"the influx of a large number of drive in drive out mine workers rather than being specially related to the MAC facility"*, it fails to recognise that concern expressed in the submission relate to the subject proposal and its location on the edge of Gulgong. A proposal for a TWA in Ulan, located in close proximity to the mine for a 140 bed TWA only received 3 objections of which 1 specifically related to land tenure issues. The Socio-Economic Report, whilst citing an array of negative observations in the literature review, dismisses most concerns as not all towns are the same. Mid-Western Regional Council agrees with this statement. Gulgong provides a viable and desirable option for long term relocation of workforces into permanent housing and this should not be threatened by the inappropriate location of a TWA on the edge of the town.

Concerns have also been expressed about the costs of development associated with a large transient population which makes little contribution to the community, but which may have high social costs as a result of increases in crime, drug use, prostitution, gambling and similar activities. These activities also have economic consequences as increased demands are placed upon infrastructure and services, the cost burden of which tends to fall on the community rather than the resource developer (Storey, p. 1165).

The advent of the "them and us" mentality is documented throughout the studies. The concentration caused by the location of this facility on the edge of town can only acerbate this

problem. The submissions received to the DA indicate a real perception of reduced safety. This is highlighted in the submission received from the Blackwater Community Progress Group Inc who state:

These accommodation facilities are only required to house workers while they are sleeping between shifts. Communities miss out in terms of their economies and struggle with their infrastructure. The Blackwater community is now at the position where transient workforces outnumber the permanent residents. This is something we, as resident community members active in our community, would not wish on any community.

The Introduction of transient workers may also become a detraction for local residents, as well as for potential visitors, feeling that it may not be safe (or just comfortable) to venture out with a number of people who are widely unknown in the local community.

Although the SEE cites a smooth introduction of the Mac Facility at Narrabri, a fight at the facility was recently experienced and the newspaper article reported a number of people fleeing the scene (Attachment 1).

Perception of safety goes to the desirability of a place to live and sense of community.

Fear of crime can affect the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities (ABS, 2010). Perceptions of safety when alone may indicate perceptions of problems in the neighbourhood, previous experience with crime and the level of trust in their local community. Higher proportions of people who feel safe indicate higher levels of trust and social cohesion within the community.
[http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/1370.0~2010~Chapter~Feelings%20of%20safety%20\(4.4.4\)](http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/1370.0~2010~Chapter~Feelings%20of%20safety%20(4.4.4))

The submissions received in response to the exhibition indicate a negative impact on the perception of safety. Both the cohesiveness of the community and the safety of knowing the community are critical characteristics that demonstrate the desirability of the Gulgong living environment. The proposal to concentrate 400 transient workers, with a longer term view of 1500, will have a very real negative impact on the perception of safety within the Gulgong community and have the potential to essentially change the nature of this small town.

Also of concern is the potential adverse social impact of long term occupants and the subsequent need for additional counselling and other related services. There have been many studies regarding the impacts on the transient worker including dislocation from family and community. A recent story from ABC Heywire entitled “David Martyr’s Story – Disconnected: Life on mining and construction camps where everyone misses home” highlights the personal nature of these concerns (Attachment 2).

Infrastructure Provision

A study undertaken KPMG for Isaac Regional Council made the following observation:

Non-resident workers are largely self-contained in terms of accommodation, food, water and even entertainment and leisure activities (such as gyms), which means their impact on the local

community is reduced. But there are “touch points” where the non-residents do have an impact in local services and infrastructure. There is minimal requirement by non-resident miners for community services, such as churches, gyms, museums, art galleries and even cafes and restaurants in a nearby town. But other services and infrastructure are affected by non-resident miners, such as road usage and maintenance (especially form B-doubles) as well as medical and allied health services and even police services (KPMG, Dec 2011, p. 33).

The roads main areas for concern regarding infrastructure provision are roads, medical, police and water and sewer.

Roads

It is noted in the Assessment report that the level of service on Cope Road will drop from A to B. This will result in a decline in the level of service to local traffic movements as a consequence of the development.

The road pattern in the town centre of Gulgong is unique reflecting the historical organic growth of the town. The roads are narrow and winding with traffic flow often restricted by parked vehicles. The Traffic Assessment submitted in support of the DA acknowledges the restricted carriageways. The study relies on the use of the town by-pass to cope with the additional traffic generated by the proposal. Council is concerned that the use of the by-pass cannot be enforced and should occupants of the TWA use the facilities of the town (as purported by the applicant) there will be a considerable adverse impact on traffic flows and parking in the town centre considering the 400 bed option represents a 21% increase and the 1,500 bed option represents a 79% increase in the town's population.

The proposal will result in a concentration of traffic on the Cope Road. The applicant fails to address the ongoing maintenance burden that will result from this increase in traffic. Should the DA be approved Council will be seeking a VPA to assist with this ongoing maintenance issue.

The applicant has indicated that public transport will be used as opposed to private cars to move between the TWA and the mines. Council's experience with mines operating in the area that the use of buses is limited although there is some car pooling. It is considered that in assessing the potential impacts of traffic that use of private vehicles should be assumed to ensure that traffic impacts are not understated.

Medical

The DA fails to adequately address this issue stating that they are willing to enter into a VPA to address medical services. The provision of medical services is not a Council responsibility but the additional demand on services that will be generated by the proposal should be addressed. The demands on medical services for a TWA differ from long term residents. In discussions with the Manager of Planning in Isaac Regional Council it was highlighted that a TWA generates three different medical profiles for each bed as each potential patient has different needs. The stresses on the provision of medical services in the Isaac Regional Council area are well documented.

Currently at Gulgong the indicative waiting time to visit a General Practitioner can be in excess of four weeks. The sudden expansion and concentration of a workforce on the edge of Gulgong will place the medical services under considerable strain. The applicant has failed to adequately address this issue and it is considered that the solution should be found by the applicant who intends to profit from the proposal rather than the local community.

Police

There is not a 24 hour police presence in the town of Gulgong. The Local Area Command has had difficulty in retaining staff due to the pull of higher incomes at the mines. The sudden increase in the population base of 400, with the potential increase to 1,500, will adversely impact on the provision of police services in the area. It should also be noted that the demographic profile of this additional population will be disproportionately represented by males under 40 years of age, the group that traditionally has a higher incidence of anti-social behaviour.

Water and Sewer

In conjunction with the Comprehensive Land Use Strategy, Council has given consideration to the increase in capacity required to service land already zoned for urban uses and that land identified as part of the Comprehensive Land Use Strategy. The assessment report prepared by Mr Bruce clearly outlines Council's program to provide for this planned development and Council's priority to service existing and future urban land which is consistent with the Land Use Strategy. The sudden and unplanned development of the subject TWA would place the ability for Council to service the planned growth into jeopardy.

Conclusion

The community have clearly demonstrated that the proposal by the Mac Group for the location of 400 TWA on the edge of Gulgong is unacceptable due to its potential negative social and economic impacts. Indeed, this DA has received more objections than any other DA in the history of the Mid-Western Regional Council. It would appear from the level of objection that the proposal has no social licence to operate and indeed the negativity associated with the TWA could polarise the community into a "them and us" scenario.

The current proposal is considered to be inconsistent with both Strategic and Statutory planning documents. **The development of TWA on this site will create a new suburb, which is more densely settled than the existing town.** The applicant has failed to address the potential adverse impacts on the provision of infrastructure with particular regard to medical, police and water and sewer.

The site is unsuitable for this form of development as it will adversely impact on a primary production industry on the adjoining land and it is inconsistent with the rural character of the area due to its high density residential nature.

Mid-Western Regional Council has carefully considered the role of TWAs in the formulation of its planning documents. The Council and community have been keen to learn from the mistakes in Queensland where the transitional population can often exceed the permanent population. Numerous studies have documented the negative social impacts not only on “host community” but also on those occupying this form of accommodation on a long term basis. In the interest of protecting its towns, Council has developed a planning proposal and a DCP that recognises the role of TWAs in supporting the resource sector whilst providing long term sustainable solutions for the provision of permanent accommodation in its towns.

REFERENCES

ABC, viewed 7 May 2012, <http://www.abc.net.au/heywire/stories/2011/12/3388314.htm>

ABC News, viewed 6 May 2012, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-03-26/mac-village-fight/3912368>

Australian Bureau of Statistics, viewed 6 May 2012

[http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/1370.0~2010~Chapter~Feelings%20of%20safety%20\(4.4.4\)](http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/1370.0~2010~Chapter~Feelings%20of%20safety%20(4.4.4))

Department of Premier and Cabinet 2011, *NSW State Plan 2021*

Clay P. 2012, *Memorandum of Legal Advice*

KPMG 2011, *Redefining Regional Planning: Managing Change, Measuring Growth (abridged version)*

Parsons Brinckerhoff 2009, *Mid-Western Regional Comprehensive Land Use Strategy Part A*

Rolfe, J. 2011, *Submission to the House Standing Committee on Regional on Regional Australia on Fly-In Fly-Out (FIFO) Workforce Practices in Regional Australia.*

Storey, K, 2010 Fly-In/Fly-Out : Implications for Community Sustainability, *Sustainability vol. 2*, pp.1161-1181

Whelan Insites 2012, *Statement of Environmental Effects*, Development Application 0217/2012.

Attachment 1

Man injured and property damaged in MAC Village fight

Elyse Denman

Posted March 26, 2012 09:10:16

Map: [Narrabri 2390](#)

Police are appealing for information after an affray at the MAC village in Narrabri on the weekend.

Police attended a fight at the miner's residence on Old Gunnedah Road at around 11.30 on Saturday night.

On arrival police allege a number of people ran from the scene where a 48 year old man was left with lacerations to his head.

He was taken to Narrabri Hospital for treatment.

Police investigations allegedly discovered damage to multiple vehicles in the area and vandalism to several rooms at the village.

A 22 year old man was arrested at the scene, but was later released.

Attachment 2

Disconnected: life on mining and construction camps, where everyone misses home

The plump middle-aged man opens his door and sits down on the step, phone in hand. It's 8:15pm. Must be time to call home I figure. I've been sitting on my doorstep for a few minutes working through a cigarette. He talks quietly into the speaker, head slightly bowed. Just staring into the ground.

I know he sits out there nearly every night, talking to his family. He must miss them a lot. It's a lonely thing being away from home 10 days at a time. You work long hours, with the same people day in day out. I've conjured up pictures of his family in my mind, his kids running around the house, the missus frantically trying to clean up after them, cook dinner, clean and work her day job.

I avert my gaze and stare down the line of accommodation buildings like I have a hundred times before. Approximately 25-30 doors all lined up either side. And every few doors along there's a yellow light bulb, giving off a soft ambient glow. A solid concrete footpath snakes between the dongas.

I hear a quiet snuffle and focus my stare on the door opposite mine, and out of my peripheral vision I can see the man's cracked, weathered fingers running over his balding head. It's the same every night I think to myself. He hates it here. He arrived about six months ago to this particular camp.

These camps, whether for mining or construction, are generally well catered and the conditions are nice. But sights such as these are pretty common from my experience. I sneak a glance and see tears rolling down his cheek, I can faintly hear him "Nah nah... it's ok. Yep. Nah I'm sure. I love you. Miss you too. Goodnight".

With the uttering of this last word his voice cracked and for a second you could glimpse the manly façade break away at the thought of his beloved wife. He spits on the ground, pockets the phone and steps back into his 3x3m room to sleep.

He may only be a hundred kilometres from home, he may be thousands. I don't know. Either way it doesn't matter. He doesn't have the pleasure of waking up next to his loved one every day, or kissing her goodnight. He misses birthday parties, outings and generally watching his children grow up. He does this to himself for the money; he feels that it's worth the cost.