



Hunter Environment Lobby Inc.

PO Box 188
EAST MAITLAND NSW 2323
10 November 2010

Major Project Assessment
Department of Planning
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Sir/Madam

Submission - Huntlee Voluntary Planning Agreement

I refer to the exhibition of the draft voluntary planning agreement (VPA) in relation to the proposal to develop land at Branxton in the Cessnock and Singleton Council areas. The proposal is to enter into an agreement between Misthold Pty Ltd, Huntlee Pty Ltd, the Minister for Planning and the Minister for Climate Change and the Environment.

The Hunter Environment Lobby is a regionally based community group and has expressed concern about the Huntlee New Town development on previous occasions.

The VPA as proposed relates to an environmental contribution to offset biodiversity impacts of the proposed development. The group objects to the draft VPA for the following reasons:

- 1 The proposal supports inappropriate development of the land, and is contrary to the principles of ecologically sustainable development as enshrined in current local environmental plan provisions and zonings. The VPA reinforces this.
- 2 The agreement should include payments for other infrastructure as well as biodiversity offsets, such as a contribution to provide for upgrading of rail services servicing the area. Specifically this should allow for the provision of additional rail services between Branxton and Newcastle and upgrading of facilities at Branxton railway station.
- 3 The environmental contribution proposed in the VPA is inadequate as an offset for the environmental destruction to be caused by the development, and there is no indication of how this contribution will be managed, its basis or its likely effectiveness. This appears to be unreasonable and contrary to the public interest.
- 4 The provisions of the VPA are not transparent, and it is not clear how, when and where the money provided will be spent, and how this will benefit either the development or general community interests. No objective assessment of the monetary or environmental values of the costs or benefits has been undertaken.

Please acknowledge receipt of this letter.

yours sincerely

Jan Davis (President)