



# Hunter Bird Observers Club

*Affiliated with BirdLife Australia*

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc  
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Morven Cameron  
CEO  
Lake Macquarie City Council  
Box 1906  
Hunter Region Mail Centre  
NSW 2310

Dear Morven

**RE: Regional Growth – Environment and Tourism Fund – Fernleigh Awabakal Shared Pathway Project**

Hunter Bird Observers Club is pleased to support the Lake Macquarie City Council business case, seeking funding through the Regional Growth – Environment and Tourism fund for the Fernleigh Awabakal Shared Pathway. The project will deliver 3.5km of shared pathway linking the end of the Fernleigh Track with Blacksmiths Beach, with art and cultural installations along its length.

The objectives of Hunter Bird Observers Club are to encourage and further the study and conservation of Australian birds and their habitat, and to encourage bird observing as a leisure-time activity. We are particularly interested in the environmental advantages of this project although we also see the tourist potential of the project, especially in the field of ecotourism.

Birdwatchers make extensive use of the Fernleigh Track and this extension will give them access to even more of this valuable coastal heathland. The northern part of the shared pathway passes through the Belmont Wetlands State park, an area that is home to over 80 species of birds. We particularly welcome the construction of a bird hide on Belmont Lagoon.

Parts of the existing Fernleigh Track are inaccessible to people with mobility challenges, and the provision of accessible amenities and elevated boardwalks over the Belmont Lagoon will open up new recreation opportunities for all. Completion of this missing link in the 27km of shared pathway will ensure locals benefit from having a fully accessible environmental, cultural, historical tourism product to enjoy with visiting friends and relatives, including those from outside NSW.

Our organisation will benefit greatly from this important piece of public infrastructure and I have no hesitation in supporting Council's application for funding through the Regional Growth – Environment and Tourism fund.

Yours sincerely

President, Hunter Bird Observers Club

