



# Hunter Bird Observers Club

*Affiliated with BirdLife Australia*

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**Planning Proposal**  
**Facilitating urban and environmental conservation uses**  
**35, 35A and 35B Frederick Street and 1 Glendon Crescent Glendale**  
**Draft Amendment to Lake Macquarie Local Environmental Plan 2014**

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc. (HBOC) is aware that Lake Macquarie Council has sought a gateway decision on rezoning 169 hectares of Lake Macquarie LGA bushland stretching from Glendale to Newcastle Link Road.

Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc. objects to the proposed rezoning of this significant section of bushland in Lake Macquarie LGA adjacent to the last remaining area of bushland in the Newcastle LGA.

According to T. Peake 2006:

*“76% of woodland and forest from the Hunter Valley floor have been cleared leaving only 19% of fragmented remnant vegetation. A mere 0.8% of this remnant vegetation is in protected ownership - national parks, which are situated on poorer soils and have lower bird abundance and diversity.”*

There is no doubt that the 19% remnant vegetation has diminished significantly since the time of this statement.

The BirdLife Australia database (Birdata) lists 105 species as having been recorded on this proposed subdivision which is approximately 18% of species in NSW. Of these species six (6) are listed as vulnerable under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (BC Act 2016)*.

Threatened species listed under the *BC Act 2016* include Little Lorikeet (vulnerable), Masked Owl (vulnerable), Powerful Owl (vulnerable), Little Eagle (vulnerable), Glossy Black Cockatoo (vulnerable) and Square-tailed Kite (vulnerable).

This site has large areas of the *Endangered Ecological Community (EEC) Lower Hunter Spotted Gum Ironbark Forest*. The criteria for this listing are as follows:

*“Lower Hunter Spotted Gum Ironbark Forest in the Sydney Basin and NSW North Coast Bioregions is eligible to be listed as an Endangered Ecological Community as, in the opinion of the NSW Threatened Species Scientific Committee, it is facing a very high risk of extinction in New South Wales in the near future, as*

*determined in accordance with the following criteria prescribed by the Biodiversity Conservation Regulation 2017:*”

This vegetation community is well-known in the Lower Hunter for providing the key habitat resource for a range of threatened woodland birds, including the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot. Both of these species are on the brink of extinction and could use this large remnant of temperate open forest, because it is such a diminishing habitat type, with greater than 85% cleared across south-eastern Australia. Further, coastal habitats are likely to become more important for these species in the context of the effects of climate change (causing severe droughts in the western slope habitats).

The conservation land proposed for the site is not of a sufficient size to serve as habitat for anything except adaptable and aggressive bird species, such as Noisy Miners, which are known to exclude woodland birds from their home ranges. They are fragmented, narrow and do not include significant areas of high value woodland. The edge effects in these areas will be enormous. The areas proposed seem to follow the watercourses and topographical areas of 20 – 30+ % slope. This is confirmed by the preliminary engineering assessment which states:

*“The majority of the site (grading at less than 20%) can be developed utilising standard engineering and construction practices.”*

That suggests the conservation areas have not been selected on biodiversity or habitat value, but on their low value for development. This is exactly the reason that the vast majority of lowland open forest has been cleared.

Further fragmentation of the conservation lands by services Infrastructure and connection requirements will be likely. Linkage of the conservation lands will be degraded by lack of management and degradation by residents.

HBOC questions how this rezoning complies with council’s Local Strategic Planning Statement :-

- *“a place where the natural environment (bushland, coast, lake and mountains) is protected and enhanced”.* (Community Values Page 6)
- *“With growth pressure, we will continue to protect and enhance the health and amenity of our natural areas, waterways and coast. We will achieve this by protecting and managing significant areas of biodiversity and reinforcing local and regional biodiversity corridors”.* (Natural Environment Page 18 )
- *“Avoid and minimise the impact of development on areas of high ecological value, while supporting opportunities to enjoy our natural areas”* (Planning Priority 6 - Principles )“
- *“Protect and enhance important biodiversity areas and corridors”* (Planning Priority 6 - Principles )
- *“Develop policy and mechanisms to provide for the acquisition of strategically important conservation lands by Council to build a strategic conservation network.”* (Planning Priority 6 – Action 6.1)
- *“Implement policy and practices that minimise the rezoning of land identified to contain ‘high ecological value’ vegetation.”* (Planning Priority 6 – Action 6.4 )

As previously stated this is a huge area of remnant bushland and is a link in the green corridor from Blackbutt Reserve to Mount Sugarloaf.

According to the recent report by the UN Environment Programme (Unep) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)

*“The world must rewild and restore an area the size of China to meet commitments on nature and the climate, says the UN, and the revival of ecosystems must be met with all the ambition of the space race.*

*Existing conservation efforts are insufficient to prevent widespread biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse, the global body has warned at the launch of the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, an urgent call for the large-scale revival of nature in farmlands, forests and other ecosystems”*

Statements by the current NSW State of the Environment resonate with the FAO view above:

*“The main threats to listed species in NSW are habitat loss due to the clearing and degradation of native vegetation and the spread of invasive pests and weeds. The capacity of species to adapt to these pressures is further constrained by climate change”.*

In NSW 1025 species are listed as threatened – a 3% increase in threatened species over the past three years (26 more species) and there are 46 key threatening processes.

Considering these issues in relation to the lack of adequate areas reserved for biodiversity in the LGA, that this area is designated as high ecological value in your Local Strategic Planning Statement, the pressures on the few remaining semi natural areas, and the fragmentation of the few green areas under reservation we again voice our objection to any rezoning of this estate.

Prepared by T. Kendall for HBOC conservation sub-committee 27 June 2021

#### **References:**

Birdlife Australia Database (Birddata)

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/-/media/OEH/Corporate-Site/Documents/Animals-and-plants/ScientificCommittee/Determinations/2019/lower-hunter-spotted-gum-ironbark-forest-final-determinationEEC.pdf?la=en&hash=45284937A71F0175AF94955070E93778C784AA0F>

Lake Macquarie Council Website - 21SP041 - USC Attachment 1c - Rezoning Glendale - Prelim eco. assess.

Lake Macquarie City Local Strategic Planning Statement

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jun/03/rewild-on-massive-scale-to-heal-nature-and-climate-says-un-decade-on-ecosystem-restoration-aoe>

NSW State of the Environment <https://soe.epa.nsw.gov.au/all-themes/biodiversity/threatened-species>