



ACTIVITY CENTRES and EMPLOYMENT CLUSTERS Strategy

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Prepared by:
City Strategy Team
Service Planning and Regulation
Maitland City Council

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PO Box 220
MAITLAND NSW 2320
AUSTRALIA
(+61) 02 4934 9834
mail@maitland.nsw.gov.au

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PART A: INTRODUCTION

Strengthening Maitland's activity centres and employment clusters is a critical building block in achieving Council's vision to create a vibrant, sustainable community for the residents, workers and visitors of Maitland.

According to their typology and scale, **Activity Centres** provide a diverse range of services, facilities and activities to enable residents, workers and visitors to participate in and be a part of the Maitland community. A strong sense of place and community is formed when activity centres, whether it be the Major Regional Centre or one of the many Neighbourhood Centres, are well designed, integrated and conveniently located to adequately service the local and regional community.

Employment Clusters are a concentrated area of economic activity usually located out of centres and focused on a particular type of activity. These clusters provide opportunities for industrial operations, bulky goods retailing and business activities to co-locate in a single location. This enables the sharing of facilities within a well designed environment, offering potential tenants and their employees with a pleasant place to work. Employment clusters can also offer a low-cost option in an accessible location to encourage new industries and enterprises to the Local Government Area (LGA).

Purpose of the Strategy

The purpose of this strategy is to:

- Provide a logical hierarchy and network of activity centres and employment clusters which supports the growth of the local economy and employment in Maitland for the next 20 years;
- Provide clear direction as to the vision, role, function and potential growth for each activity centre and employment clusters to support the predicted population growth within the Maitland LGA over the next 20 years;
- Ensure all activity centres and employment clusters in Maitland are well designed and provide appropriate facilities and services in a pleasant environment for residents, employees and visitors;

- Guide future land use and development decisions which reflect the principles of this strategy, the vision of the activity centre or employment cluster, to support the residential growth within the Maitland LGA; and
- Ensure that future reviews of this strategy and future policies relating to activity centres and employment clusters are flexible and able to respond to the changing economic and social circumstances. This includes the recognition that the network and hierarchy of activity centres and employment clusters may change over time to facilitate new uses and working practices.



Figure ONE: Central Maitland Markets

Activity Centre and Employment Cluster Typology

Defining a typology of centres and clusters is critical to understanding its function, role and place within the established network and hierarchy of activity centres and employment clusters in Maitland. This section provides an explanation of the types of activity centres, range employment clusters and specific types of retailing which exist in the Maitland LGA.

ACTIVITY CENTRES

Activity centres are the local and regional hub for community activity. They are places providing a diverse mix of activities where people can socialise, shop, work, meet, relax and often live. Activity centres range in size, scale and development intensity from a neighbourhood centre, like Largs or Tenambit through to a major regional centre, like Central Maitland. Activity centres are usually well-served by public transport, offering a highly accessible location for commercial, personal and retail services, community, entertainment and recreational facilities as well as a mix of housing options to attract for a diverse population.

Major Regional Centre:

This activity centre is the community, cultural, civic and commercial heart of a sub-region and is the highest order activity centre for the LGA. It provides a diverse mix of uses which cater to the needs of the local and regional population in a location serviced by high levels of accessibility and where different modes of public transport interconnect.

A significant concentration of commercial offices, higher order comparison retailing and convenience shopping, employment, health and professional services are located within the Major Regional Centre. A range of entertainment, community, leisure and recreational services, along with local and regional educational, arts and cultural facilities are also offered in this activity centre. The Major Regional Centre is also the preferred location for civic functions, facilities and other government departments.

The inclusion of higher density residential development adds to the social diversity and mix of uses. It's inclusion creates a lively neighbourhood with high accessibility to public transport, facilities and services, supports activity outside 'business hours' and supports a thriving evening economy and vibrant activity centre.

Town Centre:

This activity centre is the community and commercial heart of a specific area within the LGA. Town centres provide a mix of uses in a highly accessible location which accommodates the needs of the local population within a specific segment. An indicative scale of this centre typology can range from between 80 and 150 establishments.

A Town Centre offers a range of convenience shopping and comparison retailing, health and professional services and commercial offices. It may also contain community and recreational facilities along with local educational institution. The location of restaurants and cafés, mixed with higher density residential development, provides a diverse range of activities, a strong local economy and supports activity outside 'business hours', which create a lively place to meet, socialise and live.

Local Centre:

This activity centre is the heart of a specific location. The function of a local centre is primarily to provide for the daily needs of the local residential population within a specific catchment located in close proximity. Residential development through shop top housing provides an alternative housing option in a accessible location and adds to the diversity of uses in this activity centre.

A Local Centre offers a range of convenience shopping with limited comparison retailing, local health and professional services along with a café, restaurant and/or takeaway establishment. A Local Centre may also contain local community facilities and can be characterised by a scale of between 4 and 12 establishments.

Neighbourhood Centres:

This activity centre is integrated within a residential neighbourhood to improve the walkability, provide for the convenience needs and create a place with a strong identity for the surrounding community. The scale of this activity centre is characterised by a small cluster of shops with the primary aim of providing convenience services and encourages a reduction in car use for short trips.

EMPLOYMENT CLUSTERS

Employment clusters provide an accessible location to accommodate a range of industries, bulky goods retailing and business activities. Employment clusters are usually located outside of activity centres however, due to the size, activity or

potential impact of the activity, it may be inappropriate for the particular industry or business use to be located within an activity centre. They range in size and intensity but all have a common aim to provide employment generating activities to encourage growth in the local economy and provide job opportunities to cater for a range of skills and qualifications.

Bulky Goods Retailing:

A large, stand alone store or a cluster of similar sized stores which are typically referred to as a 'homemaker's centre' and are usually located at the edge of or outside of existing activity centres. The types of goods sold within these stores varies widely from furniture, white goods and electronics to automotive parts and building supplies, however the defining feature is that the goods are 'bulky' in nature and can not generally be carried away without the use of a vehicle

Industrial Activities:

A range of business types including manufacturing, storage, warehousing, transport, engineering and general trades such as mechanics usually removed from activity centres and other locations where a sensitive interface is required.

Business Areas:

A concentrated cluster of similar business enterprises usually located outside of existing activity centres. These concentrations offer a range of business types including research and development, education campuses, storage, warehousing and logistics, office-based businesses and high tech industries. In some cases, businesses choose to co-located with others due to the similar type of industry or activity they are engaged in.

RETAIL TYPOLOGIES

Convenience Shopping:

The provision of everyday, essential items and services including food, drinks, newspapers and magazines as well as postal services and banking services.

Comparison Retailing:

The provision of items not obtained on a daily or frequent basis. These include items such as clothing, footwear, health and beauty, household and recreational goods.

Neighbourhood Shop:

A single shop located within a residential area or in other areas outside of activity centres and employment clusters, providing a convenience shopping function to the immediate residents. Areas for neighbourhood shops are not defined in this strategy as they are a single shop located within residential areas or as a result of an existing use.

Stand Alone Shopping Centre:

In line with the LHRS, a Stand Alone Shopping Centre is defined as being a privately owned freestanding format located away from other activity centres. Stand Alone Shopping Centres provide a focused retailing function in an enclosed format with associated car parking on a single site.

Planning Policy Context

The planning for future growth of activity centres and employment clusters is guided by a variety of state and local government's strategies and policies. The strategies and policies, as outlined below, provide the policy context for the preparation of this strategy to accommodate future growth of Maitland's activity centres and employment clusters.

DRAFT CENTRES POLICY

(NSW Department of Planning: April 2009)

The NSW Government's *'Draft Centres Policy – Planning for Retail and commercial Development'* sets out the Department's (DoP) desired approach to the development of centres with a particular focus on retail and commercial activities. The aim of this policy is to *"create a network of vital and vibrant centres that cater for the needs of business, and are places where individuals and families want to live work and shop"* (DoP 2009: ii).

The principles of the Department's draft Centres Policy include:

- Retail and commercial activity should be located in centres to ensure the most efficient use of transport and other infrastructure, proximity to labour markets and to improve the amenity and liveability of those centres;
- The growth of centres and the creation of new centres are to be supported by

a flexible planning system, which should regulate the location and scale of development. While the market is best place to determine the need for retail and commercial development;

- Planning should support a wide range of retail and commercial activities, ensuring a competitive retail and commercial market and that there is available floorspace to accommodate market demand, help facilitate new entrants into the market and promote competition; and
- Retail and commercial development should be well designed and contribute to the amenity, accessibility and sustainability of centres.

LOWER HUNTER REGIONAL STRATEGY

(NSW Department of Planning: October 2006)

The Lower Hunter Regional Strategy (LHRS) sets a collective future direction for the local authorities in the Lower Hunter (Newcastle, Maitland, Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens and Cessnock) to 2031. The vision for the Lower Hunter is articulated through a number of strategies, which includes growth of residential development, employment and the regional economy. Along with a range of infrastructure investment priorities, to accommodate the region's projected housing and employment needs for the next 25 years.

Within its framework of centres and corridors, the LHRS identifies Central Maitland as a 'Major Regional Centre' along with Thornton, East Maitland, Rutherford and Lochinvar as 'Town Centres'. Greenhills, is identified as 'Stand Alone Shopping Centres' in the LHRS, recognising the significant retail offer concentrated in this location.

Of particular relevance to the Maitland LGA and for this strategy, the LHRS seeks to achieve:

- Strong and vibrant centres through a local hierarchy of centres framework which supports the order established within the LHRS;
- An additional 3,200 new jobs and 1,300 new dwellings within Centre Maitland, a Major Regional Centre by 2031;

- An additional 1,500 new jobs created at Greenhills by 2031; and
- 26,500 additional new dwellings within the Maitland LGA equating to an additional 55,650 new residents by 2031.

MAITLAND URBAN SETTLEMENT STRATEGY 2001-2021

(Maitland City Council: reviewed 2008)

The Maitland Urban Settlement Strategy (MUSS) 2001-2021 provides a framework for the long term urban growth in the Maitland LGA. The primary focus of the MUSS is investigation, sequencing and management of land release for residential and to a lesser extent commercial and industrial land uses.

The overarching principle outlined in the MUSS for employment land is to *"provide suitable commercial sites and employment land in strategic areas"*. The adopted key policy directions to achieve this include:

- Concentrate retail activities in centres and identify and strengthen industry clusters;
- A range of employment opportunities are to be provided in Maitland, considering emerging trends in job growth and economic change and to facilitate the renewal of employment areas through incentives for redevelopment in appropriate and identified locations;
- Centres are to be protected and strengthened with the use of development guidelines and incentives. The hierarchy of centres is to be maintained, but will be subject to review and analysis;
- Encourage employment growth in Central Maitland, whilst maintaining and facilitating specialized civic, educational, medical and entertainment functions. Also limit retail and commercial development outside Central Maitland and Greenhills; and
- Maintain a 10 to 15 year supply of zoned employment land and ensure sufficient zoned land and infrastructure provision for employment land, by concentrating activities near areas with existing services that are underutilized or easily expanded.

PART B: SHAPING HIGH-QUALITY PLACES

Key Principles for Maitland's Activity Centres and Employment Clusters

This strategy is based on a set of key principles which aim to strengthen the viability of the activity centres and employment clusters to support the Maitland community. The role and function of activity centres and employment clusters is very different, however their combined success is critical to the future growth and prosperity of the Maitland LGA.

The principles specific to activity centres and those specific to employment clusters reflect the different roles and their contribution to the social and economic success of Maitland. The overall aim is to create places which facilitate community exchange and enhance the 'everyday experience', strengthen activity centres and consolidate employment clusters, to provide services, jobs and activities within the Maitland LGA. This aims to facilitate active participation by the community and create high quality places for residents, workers and visitors.

ACTIVITY CENTRES

Key principles for activity centres are embodied in the vision and key policy objectives for each of identified centre, as outlined in Part C of this strategy. These principles will guide future development and aim to strengthen Maitland's activity centres and support their growth as vibrant, vital places.

This is achieved through the logical distribution of activity centres which vary in size and scale and are conveniently located for residents, workers and visitors. They will provide a range of health, community and education facilities, commercial and retail services as well as places which enable a range of artistic, cultural and civic experiences and to actively participate in the Maitland community.

These principles also ensure the creation of new activity centres will continue to support new and existing residential communities, providing access to 'everyday



Figure TWO: Temple Bar, Dublin

items' in a 'walkable' distance. Strengthening all activity centres aids growth of the local economy and access to jobs close to home for a variety of skills and qualifications.

The key principles for the future development of Maitland's **Activity Centres** are:

- Activity centres provide a range of uses and services to meet the social and economic needs for residents, workers and visitors in the Maitland LGA;
- Continue to strengthen the vitality and viability of existing activity centres and, where appropriate encourage the creation of new centres to support the growing population;
- The network and hierarchy of activity centres provides guidance as to the location and scale of Maitland's activity centres and to ensure out of centre

development does not adversely impact the vision, role and function of existing centres and consider the relationship and network of centres and clusters.

- The vision, role and function of all activity centres – from the Major Regional Centre to all the Neighbourhood Centres – is reflected through the future development and future revitalisation of activity centres;
- All activity centres, particularly the major regional centre and town centres provide high levels of public transport accessibility and provide safe, pleasant connections for pedestrians and cyclists which link residential and employment areas with the activity centres of Maitland;
- Encourage the integration of smaller scale activity centres with new and existing residential areas to reduce car dependence and create walkable neighbourhoods. They will provide high quality, safe public spaces to encourage a range of activities to take place, enhancing opportunities for the participation of residents, workers and visitors in community life; and
- All activity centres are well designed and integrate with the wider public realm. This can be achieved through a variety of elements such as the provision and access to green spaces, linking with existing LGA-wide cycle and pedestrian routes, high quality landscaping, sensitive reuse of heritage buildings and a variety of built forms which present high quality design outcomes

EMPLOYMENT CLUSTERS and CORRIDORS

Key principles for employment clusters and corridors are embodied in the vision and key policy objectives for each of type of cluster and corridor, as outlined in Part C of this strategy. These principles aim to support the continued growth of Maitland by providing opportunities for a diverse range of employment generating activities to locate in the Maitland LGA to provide jobs and contribute to a robust and thriving local economy.

The principles for employment clusters aim to ensure that sufficient land is available in appropriate, locations to provide for a mix of employment generating activities ranging from research and development operations, light industrial and trade activities through to professional and office based enterprises.

Employment clusters are usually disconnected from activity centres located in out of centre locations. Therefore, it is critical that future development in employment clusters provide a pleasant amenity for their tenants, employees and customers and improved links to provide a high level of accessibility is equally critical to the viability and sustainable development of employment clusters.

The key principles for the future development of Maitland's Employment Clusters and Corridors are:

- To protect the viability of employment clusters in Maitland and to ensure that its location, role and function is strengthened and compatible with the network of clusters and corridors;
- To provide a range of employment generating activities within accessible locations that grow collectively with Maitland's activity centres to ensure the network and hierarchy of centres and clusters is robust and responsive;
- To protect and provide well-located industrial and employment land to meet the needs of a broad range of employment generating activities and to promote innovation and new industries to diversify and grow the local economy and contribute to the creation of jobs for a variety of skills and qualifications;
- All business activities within an employment cluster or corridor support the stated vision, role and function of the location. The co-location of business, industry and other enterprises which have similar operational characteristics builds on the symbiotic relationship enabling the sharing of facilities, services and support activities;
- Future development in employment clusters, whether industrial activities, bulky goods retailing or business uses, is well designed, respects sensitive interfaces with other land uses and provides a pleasant environment and appropriate ancillary uses to support their employees and customers; and
- Businesses located in employment clusters encourage the use of public transport by providing safe routes in a pleasant environment for pedestrians and cyclists to connect with public transport infrastructure, and where appropriate, to the activity centres and residential areas of Maitland.