

Peri-Urban Areas – Transition Areas or Containment Lines

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The Peri-Urban areas surrounding major metropolitan centres are in reality complex environments in comparison to the metropolitan and rural areas on either side. There are population growth issues both in terms of aging populations using the areas as retirement destinations and the vacuum of young people moving away and heading for the larger nearby cities. These areas are also seen as major urban expansion possibilities for the 21st century.

At the same time our peri-urban areas are major food growing sources for nearby metropolitan areas, significant recreation and tourism destinations, sources of mineral and raw materials such as coal, hard rock and sand all needed for metropolitan growth. The many national parks and nature reserves located in these areas provide the lungs for the adjoining metropolitan areas as well as water catchments.

As Planners we are charged with the responsibility of facilitating diverse population growth and meeting the need for extra infrastructure, preserving areas for ongoing and potential future agricultural production and ensuring that the access to minerals and raw materials remains viable.

I will use the Local Government Areas surrounding the Sydney Metropolitan Area known as the Sydney Peri Urban Network (SPUN) as a case study. These areas range between 60 -150 kilometres from the centre of Sydney and are the gateways to northern, central and southern New South Wales. Geographically, Sydney has natural barriers to outward growth; the coastline to the east, the great dividing range to the west, National Parks to the north and south.

As the Sydney Metropolitan area continues to grow, so too do the decisions on retaining the rural character on the fringe areas and managing the growth. Sydney's Peri Urban areas are currently undergoing dramatic change, bringing significant growth and opportunities. However these opportunities are not without their challenges. The lack of sound strategic approaches to the management of the peri-urban areas is contributing to the disappearance of Sydney's rural landscapes and perpetuating the key issues faced in these areas.