



**Regional  
Development**  
*Australia*  
H U N T E R

## **Regional Plan**

**2010 - 2020**

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## **A VISION FOR THE HUNTER**

**RDA Hunter's vision is for the growth of a vibrant and sustainable regional economy in a carbon constrained future.**

**The Hunter will have a more diversified economy supporting a larger and better connected population, with healthy and thriving communities – more socially cohesive, innovative and enriching**

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 The Hunter Region

The Hunter region is home to over 9% of the NSW population and is the largest growth centre in NSW outside the Sydney basin. The Hunter offers steadily growing employment and investment opportunities across the region as well as a quality lifestyle. It is predicted that the Hunter will become home to a population of one million people within the next thirty to forty years.

The economy of the Hunter enjoys a number of strengths and makes a significant contribution to the Australian economy.

The region is rich in resources and underpinned by the world's best quality coal, natural water resources, significant electricity generation capacity, an innovative manufacturing sector and a progressive business culture.

The region boasts leading research and education facilities, world class wine and equine industries, vibrant cultural and tourism opportunities and a quality lifestyle for its population.

The Hunter is positioning itself strongly as a world-class regional centre. The Hunter's location on Australia's eastern seaboard, between Melbourne and Brisbane, and two hours' drive from Sydney together with an impressive transport infrastructure gives the region a competitive edge in accessing Australian and international markets.

Newcastle is poised to become a leading, globally competitive city. It is Australia's seventh largest city and is the regional capital serving the Lower Hunter and the Upper Hunter and parts of the Central Coast, as well as the major city in the northern part of an integrated Greater Metropolitan Region. The transformation of the city is evident in the larger scale and efficient commercial, transport and residential construction investment and the associated improvements in productivity.

The Hunter region referred to in this publication relates to a geographical area comprising the following eleven local government areas,

- Cessnock
- Lake Macquarie
- Maitland
- Newcastle
- Port Stephens
- Muswellbrook
- Singleton
- Upper Hunter Shire
- Gloucester
- Great Lakes
- Dungog

## RDA Hunter – working for the Hunter community

Established in 2009, Regional Development Australia (RDA) is a partnership between Australian, State, Territory and Local Governments to strengthen regional communities. Regional Development Australia Hunter (RDA Hunter) is part of a national network of 55 RDA regions across Australia.

RDA Hunter is the peak regional development consultative organisation for the Hunter Region. It is a locally based, not-for-profit, incorporated association governed by a board of community members

and business people, who volunteer their time to promote the sustainable development of the Region.

RDA Hunter receives funding from the Australian and NSW Governments, and its activities are supported through project grants and financial contributions from regional partners. Its activities focus on collaboratively linking regional community members and businesses to government to address challenges and create opportunities for long-term and sustainable economic growth, while fostering community well being.

RDA Hunter achieves its objectives by:

- Bringing together the three levels of government to advance opportunities for regional growth and development;
- Advising government about the needs and opportunities in the Hunter;
- Ensuring whole-of-government responses to opportunities and needs;
- Supporting and promoting Federal and State governments' regional development policies and programs;
- Facilitating partnerships between regional development organisations, community groups, the private sector and regional stakeholders to identify strategic responses to issues;
- Representing the views of the region to government on economic, social and environmental issues and opportunities;
- Managing strategic and regionally significant projects which support the goals of the RDA Hunter Regional Plan;
- Supporting projects which complement the goals of the Regional Plan; and
- Actively marketing and promoting the competitive advantages of the Hunter region.

RDA Hunter works with other leading regional organisations and with Local Governments to influence and deliver Federal and State government policies and programs.

### **Working with government**

Since July 2010, changes in both the Australian and NSW Governments have increased the emphasis on regional Australia and 'regionalism', and enhanced the roles and responsibilities of RDA committees.

RDA Hunter is committed to working with responsible ministers, Federal Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government, the Hon. Simon Crean, and NSW Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services, the Hon. Andrew Stoner, to enhance the growth and development of the Hunter Region.

The Independent Agreement (Annex B) outlines the Australian Government's commitment to regional Australia. The *NSW 2021 Plan* also contains a strong regional emphasis. RDA Hunter aims to maximise benefits that flow from these new policies and plans to the Region.

## 2. The Hunter Region – Context for Planning for 2020

As a world-class regional centre of Australia, the Hunter services national and international markets. It is important to look well beyond regional boundaries when envisioning the Region's future. RDA Hunter has taken a range of information into account in developing its plans.

### International Context

The world is rapidly changing and RDA Hunter considered the following megatrends and shocks, identified in a 2010 CSIRO report, as being particularly relevant to the Hunter:

- **Limited resources.** Population growth and economic growth are creating increased demand for dwindling resources.
- **Personalisation of services.** Australia's services sector contribution growth from 30% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1900 to over 70% today.
- **Urbanisation and increased mobility.** Mobilisation impacting lifestyles, housing and transportation needs, and employment markets.
- **Divergent demographics.** People living in wealthy countries face an ageing population and shrinking workforce.
- **Digital and natural convergence.** Increases in internet use and functionality point towards a convergence between the natural and its digital.

Sudden, and dramatic, events, referred to as "megashocks", are particularly important to a regional economy operating in international markets:

- **Asset price collapse.** Australia debt to asset ratio rose from 9% to 19% from 1990 to 2008. Australians now hold \$1.1 trillion worth of debt.
- **Slowing Chinese economy.** Total value of merchandise traded between Australia and China 2008-09 was \$76 billion. Trade has grown an average of 22% a year over 10 years.
- **Oil and gas price spikes.** The oil price determines a vast number of production and consumption decisions throughout the world, notably world food prices.
- **Extreme climate change related weather.** Through droughts, cyclones and flooding Australia is vulnerable to climate change. Our population is concentrated in coastal areas with high vulnerability. Recent, and future, droughts may threaten the viability of agricultural industries, mining operations and towns/cities.

## National Context

RDA Hunter understands the importance of the whole of governments approach to planning that is implicit in the RDA structure. It is working towards achieving consensus and a cooperative approach in the Region.

The Independents Agreement (Annex B) provided a national framework for regional Australia and set out both existing and new regional policy and funding initiatives. Of particular relevance to Hunter infrastructure, are Federal Government reports and plans including the National Port Strategy, the draft Land Freight Strategy, the National Aviation White Paper and the High Speed Rail Feasibility Study. Other important reports and programs informing RDA Hunter's strategic priorities include 'Our Cities Our Future' and the national Broadband Network.

RDA Hunter has noted *Communicating the Imperative for Action*, a report to COAG from Infrastructure Australia, which identified four specific infrastructure related challenges:

- a) A decline in the rate of national productivity growth, and the uncertain prospects for future improvements in productivity;
- b) The failure of governments to lead a community debate and agreement on necessary changes in the way the nation funds the development and operation of key infrastructure, especially in the transport sector;
- c) Slow progress in pursuing regulatory and other reform, including limited progress in implementing reforms that governments have already agreed upon, for example, in the water sector; and
- d) Continuing weakness in the planning of our infrastructure investment decisions.

RDA Hunter has particularly noted the following Infrastructure Australia challenge:

*Do any of our cities have clear targets for the economic, social and environmental outcomes for their communities? If there are no targets and no clear plans to reach those targets, it is little wonder that many in the community feel that as a country, we are drifting and apprehensive about the future. We need clear economic focus to drive our infrastructure investment in cities and elsewhere.*

## State Context

In September 2011 the NSW Government released its policy directive entitled *NSW 2021 A Plan to Make NSW Number One*. It is a 10-year plan to rebuild the economy, provide quality services, renovate infrastructure, restore government accountability and strengthen the local environment and communities. It is expected that by 2012, Regional Action Plans will be completed in support of *NSW 2021*, which identifies plans to support Western Sydney, Illawarra and the Hunter to play key roles in the future economic growth of the State.

RDA Hunter welcomes the establishment of Infrastructure NSW and hopes it will act as a catalyst for a more coordinated and strategic approach to infrastructure planning in the Hunter.

*The NSW Economy in 2020, A Foresighting Study*, an Access Economics report for the NSW Innovation Council, was released in September 2010. The report indicates that the NSW economy is expected to experience strong growth up to 2020, with diversification identified as a major asset. Particular strengths were identified in globally focused areas including financial and business

services, high value manufacturing and agriculture, the creation of smart networks and delivery of smart services, and knowledge exports.

The report referenced four megatrends that will have a major impact on NSW's future economy:

- national and global policy actions to address climate change
- the widespread adoption of new information technologies
- demand and competition from emerging economies – especially China and India and
- demographic changes across Australia, especially a growing and ageing population.

## **Hunter Context**

### **Economy**

The Hunter is an important contributor to the wealth and economic stability of the Australian and NSW economies, with the potential to play an even more strategic role to the nation in coming decades. Over the past 20 years the Region has been transformed from one dependent on heavy industry, to a diversified resource, services and business powerhouse. It has a gross regional product – the key measure of regional activity – of \$35 billion. This is 9.24 per cent of the NSW total, and nearly three per cent of the national total.

### **Population**

The Hunter Region population represents approximately 9 per cent of the NSW population, and just under 3 per cent of the nation's. While rates of growth (between 1996 and 2006) are roughly similar between the State and the Region, the rate of increase in the older population (aged 40 and above) was slightly higher in the Hunter (2.1 per cent per annum on average) than in the State (2.0 per cent). If the population continues to grow at its current rate, the Hunter will become home to more than one million people within the next 30 to 40 years, generating strong demand for housing and employment. Population growth is generally welcomed in the region but greater balance in terms of age structure would potentially benefit the region, especially if new developments and economic diversification seek a younger work force.

### **Infrastructure and transport**

The concern most frequently expressed in relation to population growth is that it will only benefit the regional economy if matched by adequate planning, especially in the area of critical infrastructure. In particular, the Region's current and future significance as a centre for transport and logistics means that planning, financing and building the necessary infrastructure to meet this function will be a key future challenge not only for the Region, but also for the State and the nation.

The Hunter's strength – and greatest challenge – is its rich resource base. The region is a major producer of black coal. It also produces about 15 per cent of the electricity needed in Eastern Australia, agricultural produce and wine, and has an important equine industry. However, a majority of the income generated by black coal and electricity generation accrue to the owners of the capital, meaning that a significant proportion of it flows out of the Hunter.

Infrastructure Australia recognises that Australia's trade performance can be improved by cutting the cost of moving goods and bulk commodities through ports and airports, and related logistics chains. This is a major challenge for the Hunter. Newcastle Port is one of the largest coal exporting ports in the world and one of the busiest ports in Australia. Newcastle Airport has more than one million passenger movements each year, making it the tenth busiest airport in Australia. With freight

movements predicted to double in the Region by 2031, congestion around these major national and international gateways will intensify. Connectivity between labour and employment will be equally critical as the Hunter economy changes. Fast, efficient and affordable transportation corridors and connectivity between centres within the Region will be increasingly important to achieving improved productivity.

### **Land use**

Competing demands for land from agriculture and resource exploitation, combined with population growth and urbanisation, and the need for long term water security, are already sources of growing tension in the Hunter. These concerns are fundamental to comprehensive land use planning and must be addressed strategically in the near future if the full potential of the Hunter is to be realised in the long term. Strategic land use planning across the Hunter is currently fragmented, with local government bearing the majority of the planning burden, and planning consequently focused on local rather than regionally integrated projects.

### **Environment**

It is inevitable that there will eventually be a price on carbon emissions and new rules for trading emission permits. This will present both challenges and opportunities for the Region. Recent announcements and policy decisions on a carbon pricing mechanism have highlighted conflicting views in the Hunter and stimulated discussion on how the Region should respond to carbon pricing. However, Hunter industries, particularly the coal industry, are already preparing for the changes.

Less recognition has been given to climate change and its potential to impact on living standards, the economy and the environment, despite the fact that 85 per cent of the Region's population lives on the coastal fringe. Planning is mainly vested in local governments and is currently fragmented.

### **Facing challenges**

The Hunter, with its reputation for resilience, strong regional organisations, and a robust and diverse economy, has good reason to be optimistic about its future. In the coming decades, the Hunter expects to continue to play a significant role in the national economy. How well it does this will be determined by how effectively it plans for, and overcomes, its major challenges including fragmented planning, growing freight and people movement problems, competing land use opportunities, adjustments to a carbon constrained economy, climate change, water security, and population growth.

### **RDA Hunter's response**

RDA Hunter, in consultation with the community, business, non-profit organisations and all levels of government, are working to articulate local priorities, identify and align resources, engage stakeholders and promote solutions. Specifically, it will build on its work already completed or in progress including:

- *Connecting the Hunter* – Infrastructure report highlighting regionally significant projects as well as enabling recommendations such as planning for a population of one million for the Hunter through skilled migration, a regional governance approach to local government infrastructure, and establishing a regional transport authority to identify, assess and advocate long-term public transport related projects.
- *National Urban Policy* – RDA Hunter has commissioned work to assist in identifying priority areas for research, analysis, and decision making to improve planning arrangements in the Hunter and to inform its response to COAGs Cities Criteria.
- Facilitating meetings to build consensus between all levels of government on regional issues.

RDA Hunter will continue to work with regional partners and through State and Federal Governments to address regional challenges and to maximise the available opportunities for sustainable growth and enhanced community well being in the Region.

## 3. Strategic priorities for the Hunter

### 1. Infrastructure to Improve Productivity and Efficiency

The Hunter is too far from Sydney city to benefit strongly from growth in that region, for example, through business-to-business trading, but Sydney is close enough to capture retail and other expenditure by Hunter residents. Strategic investment in major new infrastructure is required to provide levels of regional connectivity and reduced journey times to position the Hunter as integral to the Sydney city-region. This will help to increase business interaction across the region and to attract residents and visitors to the Hunter. Other infrastructure, including water and telecommunications are essential to support population and business growth.

#### **Interaction with other strategic areas**

Transport infrastructure supports all other elements of the plan. The movement of goods into and out of the Hunter is critical, as is business and visitor travel and commuting. Faster and cheaper goods movements will make the Hunter's manufacturing industries more competitive, while business travel can bring benefits such as knowledge 'spillovers' that come from closer interactions with other businesses. The ability to commute to Sydney would transform the potential to attract people and skills, as well as making the Hunter more accessible as a visitor destination. Investments in water and telecommunications infrastructure are also critical in expanding the population and the business base.

#### **Priorities:**

- High Speed Rail Network between Newcastle and Sydney;
- Connectivity of airport, seaport and Newcastle CBD via road and rail;
- Glendale Interchange; and
- National Broadband Network
- Water security.

#### **Support:**

- Identification and prioritisation of new regional infrastructure investment opportunities to generate improved productivity and efficiency;
- Acquisition of land for future road and rail expansion;
- Continue work on the Hunter Expressway/completing the F3 to M2 link road;
- Expansion of Newcastle Port and Airport capacity; and
- Upgrade capacity of Hunter rail infrastructure.

### 2. Grow the Hunter's Economy

The Hunter economy is overly dependent upon a few major sectors, all of which are owned and controlled externally and some of which are potentially vulnerable to global competition or policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. There is some diversity but it is limited and the level of success in attracting new investment outside the resource industries is poor. The rate at which new

businesses are started is low and too many businesses are in sectors, such as local services, which have limited potential for exporting their outputs to other parts of Australia. A more diverse economic base, including more employment in higher 'added value' industries and more future-facing sectors, including renewable energy, are essential elements for economic growth.

#### **Interaction with other strategic areas**

There are strong links with other strategic areas: in addition to marketing the region, attracting and growing high 'added value' activities is heavily dependent on skills and talent; strategic land use planning is required to provide attractive locations; and better infrastructure and enhanced connectivity are both essential to attracting and retaining businesses and investment. Improved urban areas will help to attract new residents and visitors and to retain expenditure within the region.

#### **Priorities:**

- New and alternate (green/cleaner) energy industries;
- Market the Region; and

#### **Support:**

- Defence contracts and related industries,
- Expanding economy in the Upper Hunter;
- Port of Newcastle and port-related industry;
- Tourism, wine and equine industries;
- Angel Investing; and
- Cultural and creative industries.

### **3. Comprehensive and Cohesive Long-term Planning**

In the five years to 2009, the Region's average population growth rate was higher than that of Sydney or NSW. The Hunter's population seems likely to expand at a faster than average rate in the near to medium term, driven in part by expectations of continuing strong demand for coal, the expansion of capacity at the Newcastle Port, and the planned investments in new mining projects in the Hunter Valley. Congestion and accommodation stress in Sydney may also contribute to growth in relocation to the Lower Hunter and Newcastle. While the Hunter welcomes growth and is planning on the basis of a population of one million people, adequately catering for the scale and diversity of population increase will be critical to its future.

Strategic land-use planning is also needed to provide greater certainty to existing and emerging industries about future arrangements for managing and developing the Hunter's natural assets. Robust planning, informed by data and community engagement, offers the opportunity to minimise tensions between competing interests, and foster the growth of those industries central to diversification and growth.

#### **Interaction with other strategic areas**

Land use is fundamental to every area of socio-economic activity, and therefore strategic land use planning links closely with housing, land for industry and commerce, and investment in infrastructure. In particular, the community and transport infrastructure to support population growth

will intersect positively (or negatively) with planned enhancements to the productive infrastructure of the region.

Similarly, protecting the Hunter's built and natural heritage is dependent on an orderly approach to growing the Hunter's population, which recognises and manages the risks to this heritage that arise through inappropriate growth, and leverages these assets to create liveable places for new communities and resources for the visitor economy.

**Priorities:**

- Encourage and plan for population growth; and
- *Our Cities: Our Future – National Urban Policy* response

**Support:**

- Update to *Lower Hunter Regional Strategy* and formulation of a Upper Hunter Regional Strategy;
- Growth and expansion of Newcastle Port and Airport;
- Address issues of land-use conflict;
- Co-ordinated approach to regional transport planning; and
- Managed approach to Hunter Region Employment Lands (HDC).

#### **4. Investment in Education, Skills and Workforce Development**

One of the scarcest resources in the developed world is talent. In some sectors, business investment locates where it can access critical skills, but in every sector maintenance of high incomes in the face of global competition requires technological leadership, continuing innovation and the ability to add value in increasingly complex and competitive markets. The Hunter lags in terms of its skills base.

**Interaction with other strategic areas**

Working with businesses and the community to adequately meet skills shortages will parallel actions to assist business development generally and to encourage and assist people starting new business ventures. The ability to attract new residents is closely linked to actions to deliver attractive residential locations and services, to enhance the built and natural environments, to enhance connectivity, especially to the Sydney city region, and to position the Hunter as a quality place to live and work.

**Priority:**

- Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering program (ME).

**Support:**

- Vocational education and training;
- Improve participation and retention rates in schools;
- Support Aboriginal participation;

- Support expansion in the tertiary sector; and
- Skills development strategies with Hunter TAFE.

## 5. Build Knowledge Skills and Innovation Capabilities

Creativity encourages innovation and innovation plays a vital role in the development of new business concepts, process and products. Creativity and innovation play important roles in all types of business and industry at all levels, with theory strongly linked to practicality.

For the Hunter Region to continue to grow and prosper into the future, innovation and the rapid diffusion of knowledge, skills and best practice must occur and develop.

### Priority:

- Hunter Innovation Festival

### Support:

- Smart infrastructure, skills and innovation capabilities in the Region;
- Capitalise on medical, environmental and other leading research capabilities; and
- Encourage development of sustainable technologies which promote water and energy efficiency and the take-up of cleaner/greener technologies.

## 6. Enriching the Natural and Built Environment to Create Liveable Places

Liveable places are an essential part of a community's success, and characteristically involve thoughtful enhancement of the natural and built features of existing communities. Liveable places also need strong core business and retail centres to support sustainable economic activity, to attract residents and visitors and to retain their expenditure within the Hunter.

The Hunter already benefits from its reputation for pleasant, beachside living, as well as the agri-tourism, eco-tourism and tree-change opportunities in the Upper Hunter. Recognising, protecting and enriching the built and natural environment will underpin the attractiveness of the Hunter as a destination for tourists, existing and potential residents and investors, in turn supporting plans to attract skills, investment and visitors.

### Interaction with other strategic areas

Liveable places intersect with all strategic areas. It is most closely connected to supporting growth through new investment and emerging industries, through ensuring that commercial environments within the Hunter's population centres are supportive of emerging service sectors, including tourism and hospitality.

Similarly, these actions critically support our efforts to build the Hunter brand and reputation in Australia and overseas. Pleasant natural and built environments are critical in attracting new residents and skills, investors and tourists.

### Priorities:

- Newcastle CBD as a connected international port city;
- University presence in the CBD; and

- Population hubs connected via public transport.

**Support:**

- Growth of Region as an important and expanding service centre;
- Offering quality lifestyle choices;
- Encourage responsible land-use planning to address growing pressure from urban, industrial, resource extraction and infrastructure development, population growth and predicted impacts from climate change; and
- Encourage further research, development and investment in renewable energy technology.

## 4. Next steps – living document, shared work

Over the next 10-15 years the Hunter will need to anticipate and plan for the effects of significant structural change that will flow from the way Australia addresses international and national challenges such as climate change.

It is important for the nation and the Region that the Hunter community, its businesses and decision-makers, work together with a shared vision. Change in the Hunter in the next decade will be driven by investment in people, resources and infrastructure. That investment will come from both public and private sources. This Regional Plan is intended to shape the priorities for investment and action so that resources are used most effectively to achieve shared aims and objectives.

This Plan will remain a living document. During 2011–2012, RDA Hunter will develop a more comprehensive regional strategic plan. Founded on developing a clearer vision for the future, the work planned for the next year will augment RDA Hunter's detailed understanding of the wider opportunities and context, the Region's strengths and the challenges that need to be addressed. Local, State and national stakeholders will play an ongoing role in the evolution of this Plan, and comments relating to it or any other aspect of RDA Hunter will be welcomed.

In addition to developing a more comprehensive strategic plan, the RDA Hunter Board and its staff will monitor progress and evaluate outcomes of activities relating to this Regional Plan during the next 12 months. As part of the strategic planning process, RDA Hunter will establish robust measures for monitoring the achievement of key outcomes and for regular evaluations of its overall programs.

While working closely with private and public sector partners, RDA Hunter will communicate the findings from our strategic planning work to the Region, via its website and other mechanisms deemed appropriate to reach its target audience. This may include email, media, workshops or direct consultation.

## ***APPENDIX 1 – Consultation***

RDA Hunter has worked closely with community members and regional stakeholders to develop this plan, through workshops, meetings and face-to-face consultation. Those consulted include individuals and representatives of key organisations:

- Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services, Deputy Premier of NSW, Andrew Stoner MP
- Minister for the Hunter, Mike Gallacher MP
- Federal Member for Newcastle, Sharon Grierson MP
- Federal Member for Shortland, Jill Hall MP
- Federal Member for the Hunter, Joel Fitzgibbon MP
- State Member for Newcastle, Tim Owens MP
- State Member for Cessnock, Clayton Barr MP
- State Member for Charlestown, Andrew Cornwell MP
- Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government
- Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE)
- Department of Infrastructure and Transport
- Infrastructure Australia
- Major Cities Unit
- NSW Trade & Investment
- NSW Innovation Council
- NSW Department of Planning
- NSW Department of Premiers & Cabinet
- Property Council NSW
- RDA Central Coast, Mid-North Coast, Illawarra, Sydney and Orana
- Hunter Councils
- Hunter Development Corporation
- Hunter Business Chamber
- Hunter Tourism
- Hunter Medical Research Institute
- Hunter Valley Research Foundation
- Newcastle Port Corporation
- University of Newcastle
- Hunter TAFE
- Hunter Net
- Tocal Agricultural Centre and College
- Tom Farrell Institute
- Arts Upper Hunter
- Australian Bureau of Statistics

- NBNCo.
- Catchment Management Authority

## **APPENDIX 2 – RDA Hunter Committee Members**

### **Chair - Gaye Hart AM**

Gaye Hart has lived in the Hunter for 15 years. She is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and has held leadership positions in government, business and the community sector. For more than 20 years Gaye has served on not-for-profit, government and business boards, in fields as diverse as health, banking and export education. These include Newcastle Port Corporation, the Australian National Maritime Museum and the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Committee.

Gaye is a former director of Hunter TAFE. She has had lengthy involvement in overseas aid and development including chairing the Australian Council for International Development, and as a member of the Foreign Minister's Aid Advisory Council.

In 1989 Gaye was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for her contribution to Australia's Bicentennial celebrations. In 1999 she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Newcastle and in 2003 was awarded a Centenary of Federation medal for leadership in overseas aid and development.

### **Deputy Chair - Cr John Tate**

John Tate has been the Lord Mayor of Newcastle since 1999 and has served as a councillor on Newcastle City Council since 1980. Born and raised in Newcastle, he operated a family automotive business and attributes his success in local government and business to focusing on what is best for the people of Newcastle and the Hunter Region. His commitment is to see the region develop and prosper.

In 2003, Cr Tate was appointed chair of the Hunter Economic Development Corporation and has served as a board member of Honeysuckle Development Corporation, Regional Land Management Corporation and Hunter Region Tourism Organisation. He is chair of the Newcastle Tourism Advisory Committee.

### **Dr Cameron Archer**

Cameron Archer was raised on a grazing property in the southern tablelands of NSW. He initially undertook studies in Agricultural Science at the University of Sydney and worked as a research and extension agronomist in the Northern Territory. He moved to the Hunter following his appointment as a lecturer in agronomy at the then CB Alexander Agricultural College, Tocal, Paterson.

Cameron was appointed principal of the college in 1987 and still holds the position. He has undertaken two degrees in education at the University of Newcastle and more recently completed a Doctorate in Environmental History. He is a board member of the University of Newcastle's Tom Farrell Institute.

Cameron is president of the Paterson Historical Society and serves as a member of the Royal Agricultural Society (NSW) Foundation. He was a member of the former Hunter Economic Development Corporation, chair of the Belgenny Farm Trust and is also the inaugural and current chair of the Primary Industries Education Foundation, a national company established as a joint initiative between rural industry, education and the Federal Government.

### **Paul Hughes**

Paul Hughes has been chief executive officer of Newcastle Airport since 2005. Previously he spent 20 years working for Port Stephens Council, including 15 years in the senior executive management team. Prior to this Paul spent seven years in chartered accountancy, having attained a Commerce Degree at the University of Newcastle.

Paul is a board member of Hunter Region Tourism Organisation, Petersons Champagne House in the Hunter Valley, YMCA Sydney and Fighter World Aviation Museum. He is also a representative on the NSW Air Combat Capability Hub - Hunter Region Advisory Council and Williamtown Consultative Forum – Department of Defence and the Port Stephens Council Economic Development Advisory Panel. Paul is a qualified member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD). He grew up in Raymond Terrace, where he still lives, and attended high school in Maitland.

### **Susan Ivens**

Susan Ivens is the managing director of Toronto and Maitland Private Hospitals. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree and Diploma in Teaching from the University of Newcastle. Susan completed a Master of Business Degree at the University of Newcastle in 1999. In 2005 she graduated from Macquarie University having undertaken a Bachelor of Law degree via distance learning. Susan was awarded the Louis and Marjorie Karpin Memorial Prize for best performance in business policy in 2000.

In 2006 Susan received the prestigious Hunter Businessperson of the Year award. This award is conferred by the Hunter Business Chamber and recognises outstanding achievements in business.

### **Gary Kennedy**

Gary Kennedy was born in St Andrews, Scotland, and immigrated to Australia in 1973. He originally lived in Sydney and was employed by the then Post Master Generals Department. Gary was the NSW president of the Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union Telecommunications and Services Branch from 1989 until elected as the secretary of Newcastle Trades Hall Council in August, 2000.

Gary worked as an installation technician with Telstra in Sydney from 1973 to 1975 and was re-employed in Newcastle in 1978. He held numerous honorary union positions before becoming a full-time official. Gary has been a delegate to Newcastle Trades Hall Council since 1979 and is still a member of the CEPU T&S branch having been awarded life membership in 2001.

### **Geoff Lilliss**

Geoff was appointed as the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Ampcontrol in January 2011. Geoff is responsible for providing the leadership and direction required to further develop the company's portfolio for sustainable growth. He also provides the guidance to ensure continuous commitment throughout the company to Safety, product quality, customer service and relationship management. Geoff provides leadership and support to the Management teams to assist in reinforcing the commitment to the company's values.

Geoff was appointed Executive General Manager - Engineering, Transmission & Technology at EnergyAustralia in 2008 and remained in this role until December 2010. He has previously held the position of Executive General Manager Networks and has occupied a variety of senior executive positions during a 37 year career.

As Executive General Manager Networks, Geoff developed the investment strategy for EnergyAustralia's major transmission & distribution assets and initiated EnergyAustralia's original intelligent network strategy. Prior to leaving EnergyAustralia he was overseeing the implementation of that strategy, including a \$5 billion infrastructure program that is at the core of future electricity supply for Sydney and its environs. This is the largest transmission capital program ever undertaken by EnergyAustralia.

As the leader of EnergyAustralia's innovation strategy, Geoff led EnergyAustralia's successful bid for the Australian Government's \$100M intelligent electricity network program. He was also a member of the National Smart Metering Steering Committee.

Geoff holds an MBA, Bachelor of Engineering and Conjoint Professorship in the Faculty of Business and Law at Newcastle University, and is a member of the University Council.

#### **Cr Julie Lyford**

Julie Lyford is a Gloucester Shire councillor. She was first elected to council in 1995 and served as mayor between 2007 and 2009. Born in Middlesex, England, Julie moved to Sydney in 1975 where she worked as an accounts clerk while studying as a trainee nurse. She continued to nurse in Australia and England before moving to the Hunter in the mid 1980s. Julie worked in community nursing at Muswellbrook, then managed of a general practice until elected to council.

Julie is an active advocate for the Gloucester community and has been a driving force behind a number of community lobbying activities. She holds committee positions with Gloucester Environmental Group, Gloucester Gallery, Gloucester Arts Council and was the chairperson of Hunter Councils in 2009.

#### **Professor Nicholas Saunders**

Professor Saunders is the Vice-Chancellor and President of the University of Newcastle. Prior to his appointment in October 2004, Professor Saunders was Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Services at Monash University. Over the years he has served on many national committees and councils relevant to higher education and research.

Professor Saunders was chair of the National Health and Research Council (2000-2003) and served on the Higher Education Council, the Prime Minister's Science Engineering and Innovation Council, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Council and the Committee of Deans of Australian Medical Schools (chair 2000-2002).

Professor Saunders was awarded the Centenary Medal by the Federal Government for his contribution to academic medicine in 2002. He is a director of Universities Australia, University of Newcastle Singapore, University of Newcastle Foundation and was appointed to the Hunter Medical Research Institute board in October 2004.

#### **Neville Sawyer AM**

Neville Sawyer trained at BHP Newcastle and Newcastle Technical College in the electrical trade and then electrical/electronic engineering. He worked for Crompton Parkinson/Noyes Bros and Siemens before establishing in 1968, with a partner, the award winning Newcastle company Ampcontrol. Over 38 years, to December, 2005, when Neville retired, the company grew to include electrical, electronic control, power design and manufacturing plus service and repair serving. Exports commenced in 1974 to New Zealand and grew to include PNG, Fiji, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, India, South Africa, China, Hong Kong and the USA.

Neville's work at Ampcontrol saw him involved in national industry associations and regional, state and federal chambers of commerce. He is a past president of the Chamber of Manufacturers of NSW, the NSW Business Chamber (and a Life Governor) and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Canberra).

Neville served as a member on the National Industry Skills Committee and the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council. He was awarded an Australian Honours 'AM' award in January, 2006, for services to business and education. He is involved as a mentor, director and chairman of a number of community and commercial organisations in the innovation and small business field and maintains active roles with Hunter community education and research organisations.

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