



Regional
Development
Australia
H U N T E R

HUNTER REGIONAL PLAN *2012–2022*

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An Australian Government Initiative



A NSW Government Initiative

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Regional Development Australia Hunter

Level 3, 251 Wharf Road
Newcastle NSW 2300
Ph +612 4908 7300

Website: www.rdahunter.org.au

The Hunter Regional Plan is prepared by RDA Hunter in consultation with stakeholders

“ This report was produced by RDA Hunter and does not necessarily represent the views of the Australian Government, its officers, employees or agents. ”

2. Highlights

The ***Hunter Regional Plan*** describes the strategic approach for the Region to achieve the Vision for the Hunter. The regional plan outlines strategies to achieve outcomes in the short term (1 – 2 years), medium term (around 5 years) and long term (at least 10 years).

2.1 Vision for the Hunter region

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

The Hunter ' s productive, innovative, diversified, growing and sustainable economy maximises the benefits of the region ' s natural resources and competitive advantages.

- Capacity to support global industries, manufacturers, small businesses, niche-market agricultural producers and expand the economies of State and Nation beyond regional borders.
- Committed to nurturing high-value export-oriented industries in energy, manufacturing, education, IT, health research, medical practice, science, tourism, arts, culture, sports and recreation.
- A recognised supporter of innovation; home to internationally recognised research and knowledge centres.
- The smart place to develop, and from which to launch, new business concepts, products and services.
- An employment rate above the national average.



- Sustainable population growth above trend. The Hunter is ' home ' to people choosing their own lifestyle in the greater urban area, country centres, rural townships and private retreats.
- Equitable access to high quality health services, excellent educational institutions, a diversity of job training schemes, and an active creative industries network.
- An integrated, efficient, safe and intensively coordinated transit network of expressways, rail lines, airport, deep water sea port and public transport services.
- A ' must-see ' destination and emerging tourist origin market.

2.2 Overview of the region

KEY DRIVERS

- Existing locational and infrastructural advantages (e.g. port & coastal environment).
- Substantial energy resources in terms of coal reserves used both locally and internationally.
- A higher proportion of skilled trade workers supported by strong job growth – jobs growth has outpaced population growth in recent years.
- Proximity to Sydney and relative low cost structure may prove attractive for future faster public transport links.

KEY STATISTICS

- The Hunter is the most populous region outside the Sydney metropolitan area with an estimated resident population of 620,500 (9% of NSW's population).

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

- Most of the population of the Hunter Region lives within 25 km of the coast, with 54% of the entire population living in the urban centres of Newcastle and Lake Macquarie. Hunter's proximity to Sydney and existing key infrastructure makes the area a prime location as a **major regional activity hub**.
- The Hunter as defined by the Hunter *Statistical Division* incorporates 11 Local Government Areas (LGAs), see map (page 3)

- The majority of the Hunter's population is located in the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Lake Macquarie (189,006), Newcastle (148,535), Maitland (67,478) and Port Stephens (64,807) LGAs in 2011.
- These Hunter LGAs comprise approximately 29,000 *sq km* in area – Newcastle is the Hunter's most densely populated LGA with 795 persons *per sq km*, followed by Lake Macquarie (291 persons *per sq km*) and Maitland (172.3 *per sq km*) in 2011.
- The Hunter Region has a number of locational and natural advantages:
 - Newcastle port
 - range of attractive natural features contributing to the region's tourism industry and an increasing residential population (see discussion of population trends).
 - energy resources in the form of substantial reserves of black coal, primarily used for electricity generation.
 - relatively reliable water resources and a healthy agricultural sector with grapes, beef cattle, horses and an important fishing and oyster sector.

2.3 Key Issues

Coal mining is the largest primary industry, with production in the Lower Hunter and Upper Hunter. Coal is produced for **local power generation**, but mostly for **export** from the Region's international gateway, the Port of Newcastle. The Hunter Valley Coal Chain is the largest coal logistics operation in the world, carrying more than 80 coal products from over 40 mines, on over 16,000 train trips per year, to three coal terminals (with a fourth in planning) and onto around 1,200 ships annually.

With such a strong economic spotlight on the coal mining industry, the imperative to continue to **diversify the economic base** and provide conditions to grow the population, participation levels and improve productivity across the Region activates goals and challenges.

Issues related to supporting the Region's major industries fall generally into the categories of: land use; workforce; energy / power supply; water; and, community health.

There is ongoing **competition for land resources**, both within primary industries, such as agricultural uses versus mining, or between primary industries and urban development.

There is growing **competition for the skilled workforce** of the Region, with an increasing number of skilled workers transferring into the mining sector. **Affordable housing** in close proximity to jobs is increasingly an issue of concern for many communities in the Region.

Energy supply to support growth, given current incentives to use renewable sources and reduce carbon / greenhouse gas pollution, impacts all industries, with a particular 'sting' for the Aluminium industry in the Region which produces 36% of the nation's aluminium.

There is continued **competition for water** between land based industries and other industries such as power generation and agricultural industries. An integrated regional approach to sustainable use of land water and surface water resources is required to meet the demands of industries (including proposed Coal Seam Gas extraction), residents (existing and in future urban developments) and the natural environment.

The **largest employment sector** in the Region is **Health Care & Social Assistance**. As the population ages the demands on this sector will increase with a greater focus on the availability of services being delivered in an acceptable, effective, timeframe. Impacts on the health of workers and communities located nearby to industry activity regularly appear in the media and are regularly heard in public discourse.

2.4 Key Goals and Priorities

1. Improved transit network connectivity for the Port of Newcastle, Kooragang Island, Tomago Enterprise Zone and Newcastle Airport – freight, commuter, local passenger and tourism.

- Current congestion is hampering productivity growth. Industries in this area are planning to expand with increased employment levels and Port export volumes double by 2020.

2. Development of a Hunter future directions statement and greater Hunter regional strategy, informed by the outcomes of studies supported by Liveable Cities Program and Regional Infrastructure Fund grants.

- The collaborative planning efforts that are in progress will provide valuable evidence and data on which to develop a whole-of-region strategy and shared vision for the future.

3. **Freight rail bypass of Newcastle** between Fassifern and Hexham

- Improve productivity of freight transport; support future growth plans and separate passenger trains from freight trains, with commuter experience improvements at Newcastle suburban level crossing gates.

4. **ME Program** – expansion of the Manufacturing and Engineering Program

- Pro-active and innovative program in the Hunter to support growth in the skilled workforce. Encourage more high school students to take science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects and follow manufacturing career paths.

5. **Scone rail over-pass** at New England Highway

- Coal trains are becoming more frequent and lengths are increasing. Need to improve cross-town connections and enable emergency services to respond to calls within expected timeframes.

6. **Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange**. Stage 1 supported through Round 2 of the RDAF.

- This construction of a new railway station, access roads, intersections, pathways and bridges will improve passenger and freight mobility by creating a new transport interchange strategically located on the main rail line to the Port of Newcastle.

3. Introduction & Background

RDA Hunter acknowledges the feedback to the previous *Regional Plan for the Hunter* from Federal, State and Local governments. Simon Crean, Minister for Regional Australia and Local Government observed that, “ *The Hunter Regional Plan until 2020*

is living proof of the importance of a whole-of-government approach to regional development. ”

In December 2011, Gaye Hart AM, Chair of RDA Hunter wrote to all Councils in the Region to invite responses to the *Regional Plan 2010 – 2020* and to also put forward suggestions for this plan, also for comment. During the review period, Chair of the Board of Hunter Councils Inc., Cr Martin Rush delivered a presentation on planning to the RDA Hunter Committee.

RDA Hunter has coordinated a series of consultations, public events and research initiatives to inform this regional plan (see Appendix 1). These activities include:

- Leadership Series presentations;
- Strategic Conversations to discuss current concerns and devise ways to shape our future;
- Connecting the Hunter and Hunter ' s Future publications; and
- Collaborative delegations to influence government policies and decisions.

The *Hunter Regional Plan 2012 – 2022* is endorsed by the RDA Hunter Committee.

4. The Region and RDA Hunter

4.1 Geographic coverage - The Hunter region

The Hunter offers steadily growing employment and investment opportunities 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 years.

The economy of the Hunter enjoys a number of strengths and makes a significant contribution to the Australian economy. The Hunter is positioning itself strongly as an internationally competitive regional economy.

Located on Australia's eastern seaboard, between Melbourne and Brisbane, and a two hour drive from Sydney, together with an impressive transport infrastructure, gives the Region a competitive edge in accessing Australian and International markets.

The Region is rich in resources and is 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 Hunter also boasts leading research and education facilities, world class wine and equine industries, a growing mining sector, vibrant cultural and tourism opportunities and a quality lifestyle for its population.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has identified 18 Major Australian Cities. One of these cities is located in the Hunter and comprises five local government areas: Cessnock, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Newcastle and Port Stephens.

4.2 Regional snapshot & profile

The Hunter is responding to four megatrends referenced by Access Economics (2010) in *The NSW Economy in 2020* that will have major positive and varied impacts on NSW's future economy.

1. National and global policy actions to address climate change

The Commonwealth's policy to price carbon, effective from 1 July 2012, is an example of national policy action to address climate change. The Newcastle Institute for Energy and Resources (NIER) researches low pollution and renewable energy sources and the Smart Grid, Smart City initiative provides a clever way to better manage electricity networks.

2. The widespread adoption of new information technologies

By 2015, the National Broadband Network will be rolled out across much of the Hunter. The benefits of access to high speed broadband have been promoted by RDA Hunter. The Region has opportunities to adopt new business models and practices, enjoy improved communications platforms and devices, and to build an environment that welcomes and supports innovation.

3. Demand and competition from emerging economies – especially China and India

Hunter coal being shipped to China and India is a well known story with a long history. The regional economy is intertwined with these emerging economies and susceptible to any reduction in demand and, or price of coal.

At present, the mining industry is planning to expand operations in the Hunter and the Newcastle Port Corporation (NPC) is working with coal exporters to double the coal export capacity of the port. According to Financial Analyst Alan Kohler (11 May 2012), the value of exports from Australia to China has steadily and consistently grown from around \$1bn in 2000 to almost \$20bn in 2012, regardless of fluctuations in growth of China's GDP.

This strong export experience has not stopped NPC from also strategically maintaining a diversified port operation. RDA Hunter also continues to support a diversified economy for the Region.

4. Demographic changes across Australia, especially a growing and ageing population

RDA Hunter sees benefits for the Region of a population growing at a rate faster than the current trend of 1.1% per annum. This will assist industries to meet shortfalls in a skilled workforce and provide a larger base of income earners (and tax payers) as the 'baby boomer generation' moves into retirement.

INDUSTRY BASE AND ECONOMY

Key Industries: key industries include coal (\$10 billion per year or nearly 90% of NSW's), agribusiness (\$1 billion per year or 13% of NSW's), and wine (\$203 million per year or 13% of NSW's).

Commodities and Exports: The Hunter region is home to the world's largest coal export port, the Port of Newcastle. The port exported 122 million tonnes in 2011-12. The port accounts for around 90% of NSW's coal export in volume terms. Aluminium is another key commodity produced in the region, accounting for over 36% of Australia's aluminium. The Hunter accounts for more than 32% of NSW export, in value terms, including coal, mining, manufacturing, and food and wine.

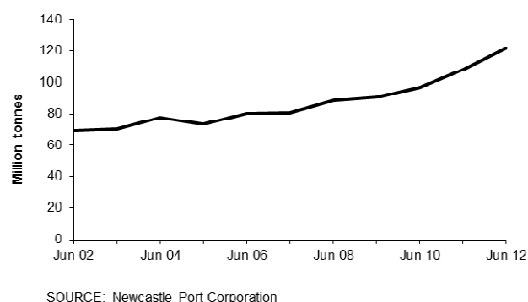
Industry profile compared to NSW: in 2012 the Hunter region had a relatively greater share of employment in the mining, electricity and gas, public administration & safety, and 'other' industries compared to the State. The Hunter has a relatively small share of employment in the information media & telecommunications, finance & insurance and professional, technical & scientific industries relative to NSW profile.

Growth industries: Significant gains in employment have been achieved in last five years within Mining (plus 1,530), *Health Care & Social Assistance* industry (plus 1,590 from 2006 to 2011), which is the largest industry in the Hunter by employment share today. Employment also grew in Professional, scientific and technical services (plus 1,600) and *Manufacturing* (plus 1,600). Declines have been chiefly recorded in *Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing*, *Retail Trade*, *Construction* and *Public Administration & Safety* over the last 5 years.

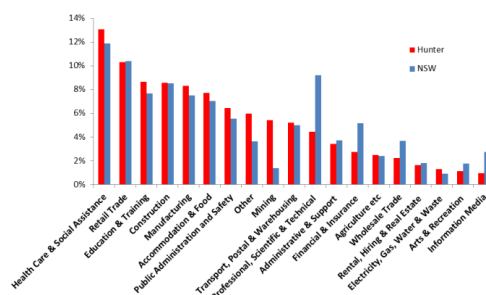
Economic diversity: The region has a diverse employment base with an employment profile similar to Australia, and the Hunter has seen increasing

economic diversity in the last 5 years. The Hunter Region has a growing service sector with a developed University and health research cluster.

Newcastle Port Statistics, Coal Exports 2002-12



Hunter and NSW % Employment by Industry Sector, May Qtr 2012



SOURCE: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Monthly Labour Force Survey 2011.

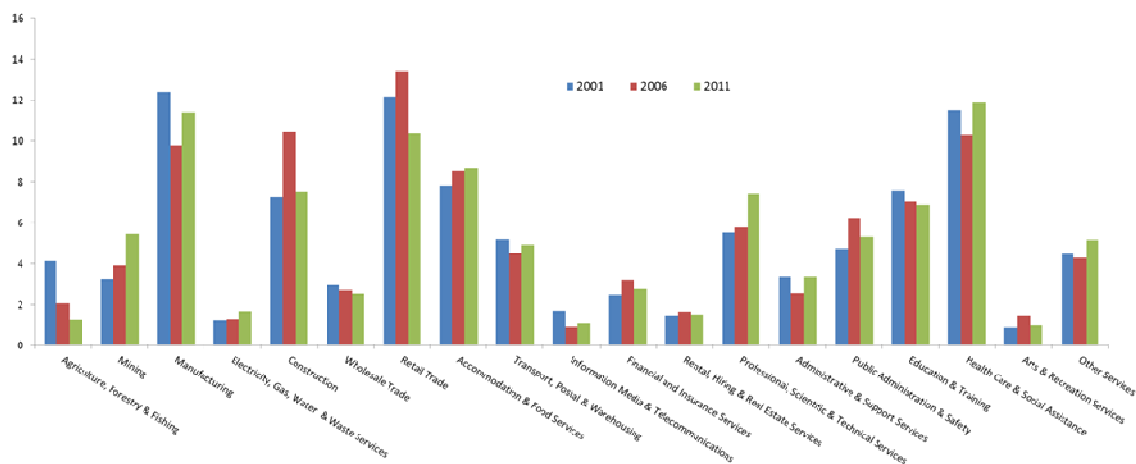
Hunter % Employment by Industry Sector (Location Quotients), May Qtr 2012



SOURCE: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Monthly Labour Force Survey 2011.

Note: location quotient is the relative share of employment in a region's industry to the same industry share in NSW – a higher quotient indicates a higher employment share relative to NSW.

Hunter Employment (Annualised) by Industry - 2001, 2006 and 2012.



POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

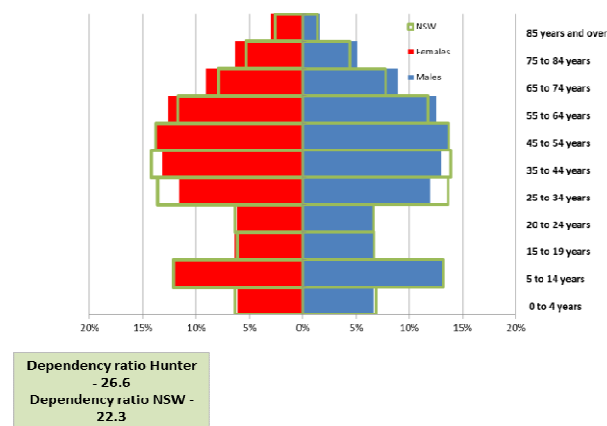
POPULATION

- The 2011 Census records a population of 620,530 for the Hunter Region.
- The Hunter 's average annual population growth over the period 2006-2011 was 1.1%, in line with the NSW profile.
- The Hunter has an older population when compared to NSW however there are significant variations within the region.
- The *old age dependency ratio* is the ratio of the number of people aged 65 years and over to the number of working age people between 15 and 64 years. The Hunter in 2011 has a higher dependency ratio (27) than the figure recorded for NSW (22), reflecting the higher share of persons aged 65 years and over relative to the working age population for the Hunter.

POPULATION FORECAST

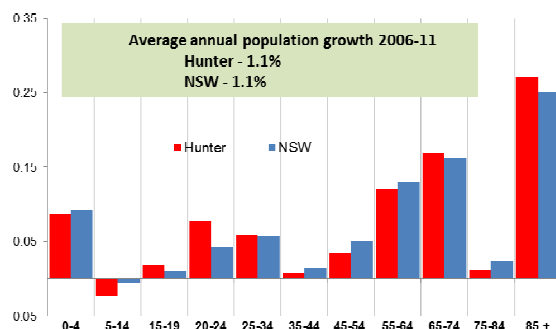
- Irrespective of selected population trajectories the following will represent a key part of the region 's demographic destiny:
- An ageing population is being driven by an increase in the share of Hunter residents 65 years and over.
- This will be slightly offset by an expected increase in the under 15 bracket over the next 20 years.

Hunter and NSW Age Pyramid, 2011



SOURCE: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011.

% Change in population age groups Hunter & NSW, 2006-11.

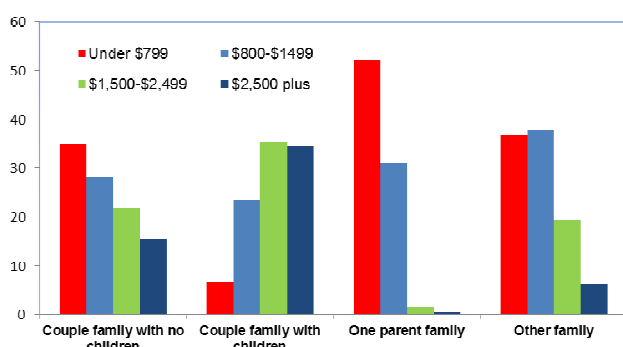


SOURCE: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2006-2011.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE

- In 2011 9.8% of Hunter residents were born overseas, compared to 31.4% of NSW residents.
- 3.3% of Hunter residents are Indigenous in 2011, compared to 2.5% of NSW.
- Median household incomes within Hunter LGAs range from \$1,692 in Singleton LGA to \$729 in Great Lakes LGA. Muswellbrook LGA records a median income of \$1,399, followed by Maitland (\$1,292), Newcastle (\$1,165), Lake Macquarie (\$1,117), Cessnock (\$1,042), Dungog (\$1,005) and Gloucester LGAs (\$801). This compares to the NSW median household income of \$1,237.
- Looking at the breakdown of income by family type within the Hunter in 2011 a relatively large proportion (52%) of one parent families earn under \$799 a week, while couple families with children are more likely than other family types to earn a family income of \$2,500 plus, 34% are in this bracket in 2011

% Families by Weekly Family Income & Family Type, 2011



SOURCE: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011.

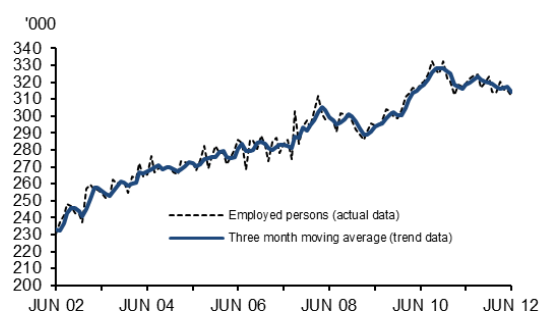
EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION

- **Strong jobs growth:** the Hunter region has a labour force of 312,100 people with an unemployment rate

of 4.5% (July 2012). Over the last decade job growth has outstripped population growth contributing to a substantial fall in unemployment.

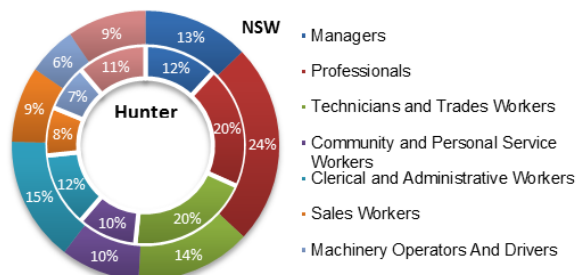
- **Unemployment rate and labour force participation rate:** the Hunter region's robust labour market performance is notable also in a declining unemployment rate and rising labour force participation rate over the last decade.
- **Occupational mix:** the Hunter has a higher share of technical and trades workers and a smaller share of professional workers. A significant share of those employed as community and clerical workers are likely involved in healthcare services which is a major employer within the Hunter.
- **Post-school qualifications:** looking at the latest available data on post-school qualifications (2006) shows the region has a higher proportion of residents with trade certificate qualifications, and a lower proportion of residents with tertiary qualifications relative to the State. The proportion of residents with no qualifications is also above the figure for NSW.
- **Highest year of schooling completed:** the Hunter has a sizeably lower proportion of residents with Year 12 or equivalent qualifications compared to NSW, and a higher proportion of residents with Year 10 or equivalent.

Hunter Employed Persons, June Qtr 2002 - June Qtr 2012



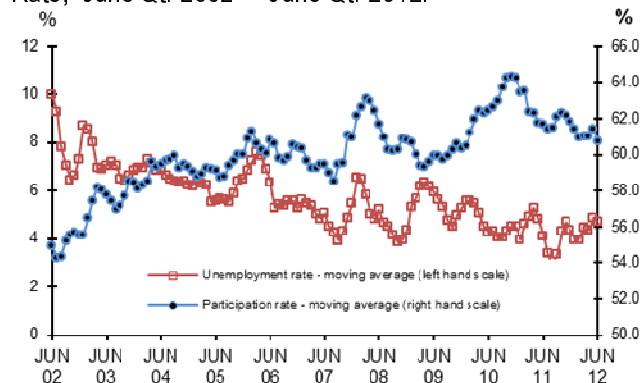
SOURCE: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Monthly Labour Force

% Hunter Employees by Occupation, May Qtr 2012



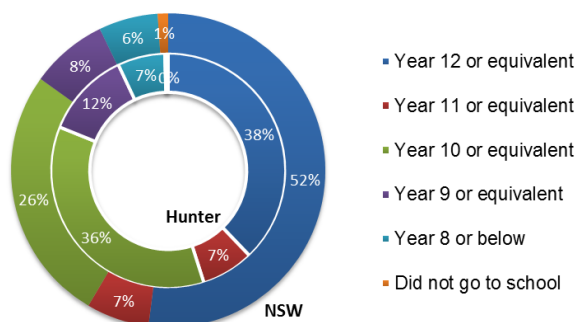
SOURCE: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Monthly Labour Force Survey 2011.

Hunter Unemployment Rate and Labour Force Participation Rate, June Qtr 2002 – June Qtr 2012.



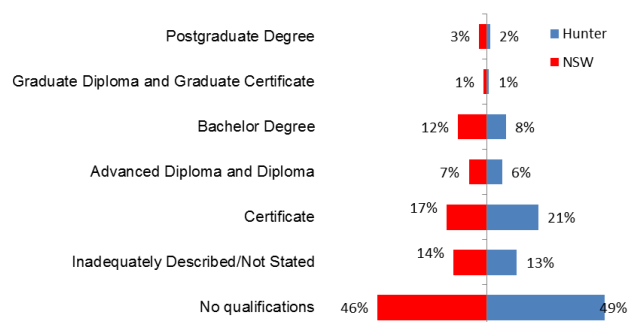
SOURCE: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Monthly Labour Force

% Highest Year of Schooling Completed, Hunter 2011



SOURCE: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Census of Population and Housing 2011.

Level of Post-School Qualifications, Hunter 2006



SOURCE: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Census of Population and Housing 2006

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

- University of Newcastle** is a multi-campus institution located across four sites worldwide: Newcastle, Central Coast and Port Macquarie in Australia, and Singapore in the Asia-Pacific region. Located on a 140-hectare site of natural bushland 12 kilometres west of the city of Newcastle, the University's Callaghan campus is where the majority (around 16,000) of the University's students are based.
- The Hunter Institute of TAFE NSW** is an Australian Registered Training Organisation and member of the TAFE NSW network of Institutes. It has 15 campuses in the Hunter and Central Coast regions.

Campus locations stretch from Gosford in the south to inner city Newcastle and as far north as Muswellbrook in the Upper Hunter.

The Hunter TAFE's education and training has a wide reach with more than 64,000 students enrolled across a range of industry areas. Programs are delivered by 2,500 industry qualified teaching and support staff.

- Research institutes** include Hunter Valley Research Foundation, Hunter Medical Research Institute, Newcastle Innovation, CSIRO Energy Centre and Newcastle Institute for Energy and Resources.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORT

The Hunter region is serviced by major rail infrastructure, an electrified system links the Hunter to Sydney with a non-electrified system providing further links to the North Coast and North West of the State.

The Port of Newcastle is a major bulk export port: one of three major ports in NSW, and one of the largest coal export ports internationally.

The Hunter has 3 major highways (F3, Pacific & New England) – the Pacific sees up to 3,000 freight vehicles per day or 14% of total traffic; the F3 sees up to 7,500 freight vehicles per day or 22% of total traffic.

Highway links into Queensland and Sydney GMA:

- Pacific Highway (Newcastle, Port Stephens)
- F3 Highway (Newcastle, Lake Macquarie)
- New England Highway (Newcastle, Cessnock)

Newcastle Airport which directs flights to/from major Australian cities and regional towns.

Newcastle links the Hunter Valley rail corridor and ARTC's North-South rail network for rail services to/from Sydney.

Major hospitals include

- John Hunter,
- Cessnock District,
- Gunnedah District,
- Maitland Hospital,
- Singleton District.

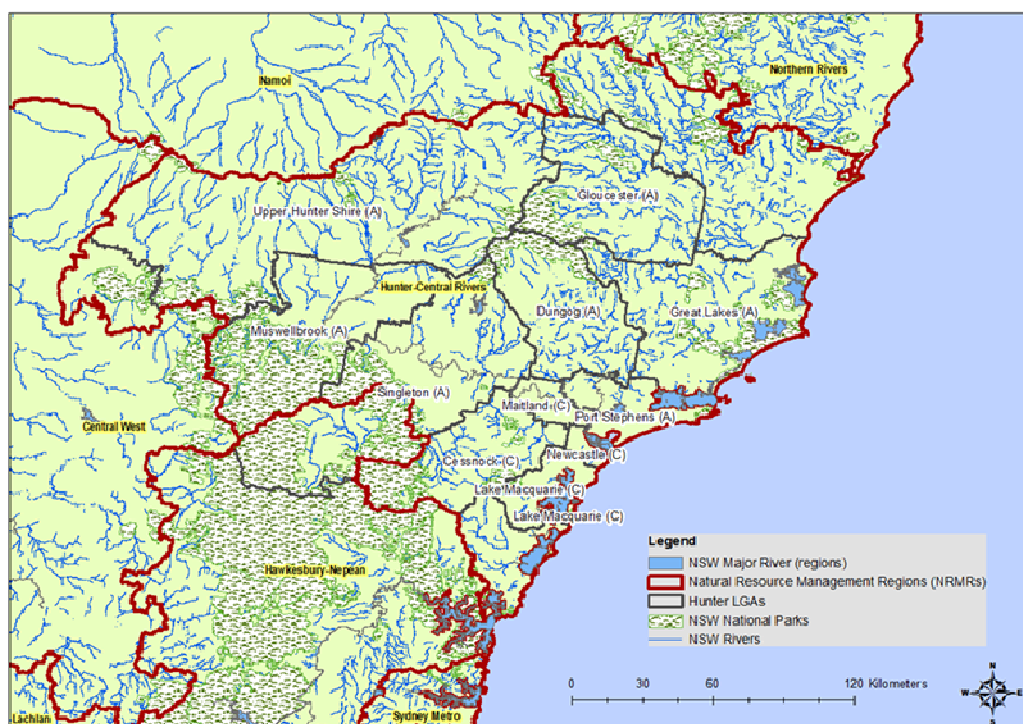
Major defence facilities – Royal Australian Air Force Base at Williamstown & Australian Army Base at Singleton.

ENVIRONMENT

The Hunter Region incorporates a variety of land types and portions of a number of river catchments. The Hunter River drains the largest coastal catchment in New South Wales, covering some 22,000 square kilometres.

The Hunter catchment contains diverse vegetation and landscapes, including:

- Southern outliers of the New England Tablelands
- Sub-alpine regions of the Barrington Tops
- Large areas of temperate forest and rainforest
- Important estuarine areas
- Large coastal lake systems
- Large areas of coastline including coastal sand mass ecosystems.



5. Stakeholders

Throughout the past year, RDA Hunter has worked closely with numerous regional stakeholders and community members to develop this plan, through workshops, meetings and face-to-face consultations. The people consulted include primary decision-makers, individuals and representatives of government departments, agencies and key organisations.

State Government Agencies: Engaged through the Regional Managers Network and coordinated through the Department of Premier & Cabinet. All State Government agencies are represented through this medium, with 35 in total.

- Departmental and Ministerial briefings

Federal Government: Engaged through committees and briefings such as:

- Regional Employment Plan
- AusIndustry
- Departmental and Ministerial briefings

Local Government: Engaged through individual meetings with the 11 LGAs of the Hunter and also through the General Managers Advisory Committee of Hunter Councils Inc.

Business and Industry Leaders Engagement:

Representatives from key business sectors address issues directly with the Committee at Industry Briefing Sessions, Strategic Conversation dinners, forums and during individual appointments. The CEO also represents RDA Hunter Committee at meetings and events arranged by business and industry groups.

Community Engagement: Facilitated discussions on a specific topic eg 'creative industries'. These sessions engage all relevant groups associated with a topic. Additional meetings and participation in sessions throughout the year occur weekly.

See also **Appendix 1** for further information received from stakeholders during consultations to prepare this Hunter Regional Plan.

6. Strategic Framework

6.1 Planning context for RDA Hunter

RDA Hunter, in consultation with the community, business, non-profit organisations and all levels of government articulates local priorities, identifies and aligns resources, engages stakeholders and promotes solutions. Specifically, RDA Hunter is building on existing work, 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, integrating 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 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 COAG 's cities criteria.

National Broadband Network (NBN) – RDA Hunter coordinated the resources of local councils, University of Newcastle, Hunter TAFE, Hunter New England Area Health Services, Hunter Medical Research Institute and local members of governments to present the case for the Region to be a high priority for the roll out of the NBN. This cooperation was supported by a plan to ensure the region is ready and capable to make the most of the opportunities afforded by high speed broadband to education, health, tele-working and online services.

In March 2012, a three year roll out plan for the fibre component of the National Broadband Network was announced by the PM and the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy. By the end

of 2015, fibre will be connected in 55 Hunter suburbs, to over 110,000 households. Further roll outs of the NBN will be announced annually by the Commonwealth.

Skilled migration – RDA Hunter supports a range of initiatives designed to address skills shortages, attract overseas business people to establish new or joint ventures and encourage a more balanced settlement of Australia's skilled migrant intake.

The Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme (RSMS) was developed in an effort to fill employment vacancies in areas that required skilled workers which are deemed to be in critical shortage and to enhance Australia ' s ability to compete globally.

RDA Hunter is a certifying body for skilled migration Visas.

High Speed Rail Network – RDA Hunter has led a delegation of RDAs, Councils and Airport management to Canberra to support the construction of a very fast rail network on the east coast of Australia. This delegation also outlined the productivity benefits of building the Newcastle, Sydney, Canberra stages of this network first.

Facilitating meetings to build consensus between all levels of government on regional issues.

RDA Hunter will continue to work with regional partners and through Local, 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.

6.2 Regional Australia – commitment by governments

Regional Development Australia (RDA) is a partnership between Australian, State, Territory and Local Governments. Since July 2010, the Australian and NSW Governments have increased the emphasis on regional Australia and ‘localism’, which has enhanced the roles and responsibilities of RDA Committees.

Regional Development Australia Hunter (RDA Hunter) is working with all levels of government as well as with other leading regional organisations and the wider community to attract new investment and encourage growth and change which will maximise the potential of the Region. RDA Hunter supports regional stakeholders to deliver the requirements for improving productivity, strengthening economic development and ensuring the Hunter prospers.

Established in 2009 to strengthen regional communities, RDA Hunter is part of a national network of 55 RDA regions across Australia.

On 7 September 2010, the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and Independent members, Robert Oakeshott and Tony Windsor signed an Agreement which included Annex B, ‘*Commitment to Regional Australia*’, outlining the Australian Government’s commitment to regional Australia.

The Regional Australia Institute (RAI) was launched on 28 February 2012. RAI is a national, independent think tank that conducts research into priority policy issues impacting all areas of Australia lying outside capital cities.

NSW 2021: A Plan to make NSW number one also contains a strong regional emphasis, including:

opportunities for people who live in regional NSW; the priority goal to drive economic growth in regional areas; and a regional action plan for the Hunter.

RDA Hunter is working to maximise the benefits to the Region that flow from these initiatives, policies and plans.

6.3 RDA Hunter – working for the Hunter community

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 Committee of community members and business people, who volunteer their time to promote the sustainable development of the Region. See Appendix 2 – RDA Hunter Committee Members.

RDA Hunter collaboratively engages with regional communities and provides advice to Government to address challenges and create opportunities for long-term and sustainable economic growth, while fostering community well being.

The key functions that underpin the role of RDA Hunter include:

- Providing support for informed regional planning;
- Consulting and engaging with regional communities on economic, social and environmental issues, solutions and priorities;
- Liaising with all levels of government and local communities about government programs, services, grants and initiatives for regional development;
- Contributing to business growth plans and investment strategies, environmental solutions and social inclusion strategies in the Hunter.

- Facilitating partnerships between regional development organisations, community groups, the private sector and regional stakeholders to identify strategic responses to issues;
- Managing strategic and regionally significant projects which support the goals of the RDA Hunter 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 for the benefit of the people of the Hunter.

6.4 RDA Hunter – Working with governments

RDA Hunter receives funding from the Australian and NSW Governments, and its activities are supported through project grants and financial contributions from regional partners. The Ministers that RDA Hunter reports to are:

- The Hon. Simon Crean MP
Federal Minister for Regional Australia, and Local Government. Minister for the Arts.
- The Hon. Andrew Stoner MP
NSW Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services, Minister for Trade and Investment.

In addition to formal reports, RDA Hunter works with a range of Federal and State elected representatives to realise the Vision for the Hunter and improve the economic development of the Hunter region.

As an internationally competitive regional centre of Australia, the Hunter services national and international markets. RDA Hunter looks well beyond

regional boundaries when envisioning the Region 's future and takes into account a range of information to develop its plans.

6.5 International Context

The world is rapidly changing. 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 create increased demand for dwindling resources.

Personalisation of services. Australia 's services sector contribution has grown from 30% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1900 to over 70% today.

Urbanisation and increased mobility. Mobilisation impacts lifestyles, housing and transportation needs, and employment markets.

Divergent demographics. People living in wealthy countries face an ageing population and shrinking workforce. Emerging economic super-power, China, will have one-third of its population aged over 60 years by 2030.

Digital and natural convergence. Increases in internet use and functionality point towards a convergence between the natural and digital realms.

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. According to RBA figures, in the year to September 2011, seasonally adjusted total credit outstanding (which is a measure of total debt in the economy) was \$2.03 trillion.

- European market slowdown and recession for some members of the European Union.
- USA economic decline during the 2008 – 2012 credit squeeze and financial crisis, resulting in a sequence of recessions. Some indications of a slow recovery for the USA economy were noted from the end of the third quarter of the 2011 – 2012 financial year.
- Slowing Chinese economy. Total value of trade between Australia and China in 2010 was \$105.3 billion. Trade has grown an average of 22% a year over 10 years. The target growth rate for China's GDP was lowered by 0.5% pa in 2012.
- 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 weather. Through droughts, cyclones and flooding Australia is vulnerable to the effects of extreme weather conditions. Our population is concentrated in coastal areas with high vulnerability to surging seas, high waves and, if predictions by some scientists are correct, rising sea levels. Recent, and future, droughts threaten the viability of agricultural industries, mining operations and the Region's towns and cities.

RDA Hunter monitors the impacts of these megatrends on the local Regional economy and works with government agencies' efforts to manage the impact of megashocks in the Hunter.

6.6 National Context

RDA Hunter understands the importance of the whole-of-government approach to planning that is implicit in the RDA structure. The *Independents' Agreement (Annex B)* provides a national framework for Regional Australia and set out both existing and new regional policy and funding initiatives.

Of particular relevance to infrastructure for the Hunter, are Federal Government reports and plans including the National Broadband Network, the National Port Strategy, the National Land Freight Strategy, the National Aviation White Paper, National Urban Policy, Clean Energy future, and the High Speed Rail Network Feasibility Study.

RDA Hunter has taken on board the challenges in *Communicating the Imperative for Action*, a report to COAG from Infrastructure Australia, in particular four infrastructure related challenges:

1. A decline in the rate of national productivity growth, and the uncertain prospects for future improvements in productivity;
2. 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;
3. 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
4. Continuing weakness in the planning of our infrastructure investment decisions.

RDA Hunter seeks to influence the content of national policies by hosting delegations of stakeholders and writing submissions to relevant panels, agencies and Ministers. RDA Hunter also works with local industries, organisations and groups to develop a regional response to national policies and opportunities for funding submissions.

6.7 State Context

In September 2011 the NSW Government released its policy directive entitled *NSW 2021 A Plan to Make NSW Number One*. This is a 10-year plan to rebuild the economy, provide quality services, renovate infrastructure, restore government accountability and strengthen the local environment and communities. The NSW Government has also written a two-year *Regional Action Plan for the Hunter* in support of *NSW 2021*.

Infrastructure NSW (INSW) is a key advisory body for the Premier and is a catalyst for a coordinated and strategic approach to infrastructure planning in the State. In late 2012, a new 20-year *State Infrastructure Strategy* will be released.

RDA Hunter has been consulted by the Department of Premier and Cabinet on the *Regional Action Plan* and by INSW on the *State Infrastructure Strategy*.

The NSW Economy in 2020, A Foresighting Study, is an Access Economics report for the NSW Innovation Council which 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,
- delivery of smart services, and
- knowledge exports.

During the NSW National Party campaign launch in February 2011, Nationals Leader, Andrew Stoner identified the aim of growing regional communities by working cooperatively with councils through a *Decade*

of Decentralisation. Premier Barry O'Farrell has noted, " *Growing regional communities is a worthy aim, and is an important strategy for taking pressure off Sydney's overstretched infrastructure.* "

To facilitate infrastructure for regional growth, the NSW Government has announced several new infrastructure funding programs including:

Hunter Infrastructure and Investment Fund (HIIF) : \$350 million program to improve the Hunter region's infrastructure to support growth and maintain and enhance liveability.

Resources for Regions: a \$160 million program aimed at assisting communities to address local infrastructure issues and the local impact on mining affected communities.

Restart NSW Fund: announced in August 2011 for the delivery of essential infrastructure, with 30 per cent of funding from this program reserved for projects in regional areas.

Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme: a five year, \$70 million funding program to assist councils pay for large local infrastructure projects by providing interest subsidies to help cover borrowing costs on significant loans to tackle infrastructure backlogs.

RDA Hunter is working with leaders and other lead organisations within the region to secure funds from these schemes for the Region.

In early 2012, the State Government released the Draft Strategic Regional Land Use Plan for the Upper Hunter. The Lower Hunter Regional Strategy has also been scheduled for review during 2012. RDA Hunter has consistently argued for a single Hunter plan and understands this is to be organised after the current reviews have been completed.

7. Immediate Priorities: Strategic action areas for the Hunter

7.1 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 more easily commute to Sydney would transform the potential to attract people and skills, as well as make 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.

Activities and Priority Areas	Lead Agency	Support Agency
High Speed Rail Network between Newcastle, Sydney and Canberra	RDA Hunter	HSRN Working Group
Connectivity of airport, seaport, Tomago and Kooragang Island Enterprise Zone and Newcastle CBD via road and rail	Roads and Maritime Services	Dept Planning & Infrastructure
Fassifern to Hexham freight rail bypass of Newcastle	Northern Sydney Freight Corridor Program. Transport for NSW & Commonwealth Govt.	ARTC
Scone rail over-pass	Roads and Maritime Services	INSW
Glendale Interchange	LMCC	Roads and Maritime Services
High Speed Broadband connectivity	NBN Co	Local Councils
Identification and prioritisation of new regional infrastructure investment opportunities to generate improved productivity and efficiency	INSW, HDC, HIF	RDA Hunter, Hunter Councils,
Water security	Office of Water, NSW Hunter Water	HCR-CMA
Expansion of Newcastle Port capacity	Newcastle Port Corporation	Transport for NSW
Expansion of Airport capacity	Newcastle Airport Limited	RAAF, Newcastle City Council, Port Stephens City Council
Upgrade capacity of Hunter rail infrastructure	Transport for NSW	RailCorp, Country Rail Infrastructure Authority
Continue work on the Hunter Expressway	Roads and Maritime Services	
Pacific Highway upgrade: F3 to Raymond Terrace	Roads and Maritime Services	
Improvements to the Region's hospitals	Ministry of Health	Hunter New England Local Health District

7.2 Grow the Hunter 's economy

The Hunter economy is dependent on a few major sectors, some of which are owned and controlled externally and 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 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.

Activities and Priority Areas	Lead Agency	Support Agency
New and alternate green energy industries	Trade and Investment, Division of Resources and Energy	Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA)
Market the Region	Destination NSW, Tourism Hunter	RDA Hunter
Food security, including The Gloucester Project	Primary Industries, Food Authority	
Defence contracts and related industries	Hunter Net	RDA Hunter
Expanding economy in the Upper Hunter	Trade and Investment, Regional Development	Local Councils: Upper Hunter Shire, Muswellbrook and Singleton
Port of Newcastle and port-related industry	Newcastle Port Corporation	Transport for NSW
Growth of Region as an important and expanding logistics supplier and service centre	Planning & Infrastructure Transport for NSW	IA – National Land Freight Strategy
Tourism industry	Destinations NSW	Tourism Hunter
Wine industry	Primary Industries	Hunter Valley Wine Industry Association
Equine industry	Primary Industries	Hunter Thoroughbred Breeders Association
Angel Investing	Hunter Founders Forum	RDA Hunter
Cultural and creative industries	Trade & Investment, Industry Action Plan	Creative Industries Taskforce

7.3 Comprehensive and cohesive long-term planning

The Hunter has the capacity to manage population growth at a faster than average rate in the near to medium term. This growth will be 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. The Hunter welcomes growth and is planning on the basis of a population of 750,000 by 2031 and one million people by 2050. Adequately catering for the scale and diversity of population increase will be critical to the Region 's 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,

commerce and employment, and investment in infrastructure. In particular, the community and transport infrastructure to support population growth intersects with planned enhancements to the economic 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.

Activities and Priority Areas	Lead Agency	Support Agency
Encourage and plan for population growth	DPC, Planning & Infrastructure	Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities
<i>Our Cities: Our Future – A National Urban Policy:</i> present a regional response	RDA Hunter	Major Cities Unit
Update to Lower Hunter Regional Strategy	Planning & Infrastructure	
Finalise Upper Hunter Regional Land Use Strategy	Planning & Infrastructure	
Amalgamation of Upper and Lower plans into a single Hunter Regional Strategy	Planning & Infrastructure	
Growth and expansion of Newcastle Port	Newcastle Port Corporation	Transport for NSW
Growth and expansion of Newcastle Airport	Newcastle Airport Limited	RAAF, Newcastle City Council, Port Stephens City Council
Resolution of issues of land-use conflict	Planning & Infrastructure	Primary Industries
Acquisition and preservation of corridor land for future road and rail expansion	Planning & Infrastructure, INSW, Treasury	Infrastructure Australia
Coordinated approach to regional transport planning	Transport for NSW	
Managed approach to Hunter Region Employment Lands	HDC	Local Councils

7.4 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 promotes parallel actions to assist business development 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 Metropolitan region, and to position the Hunter as a quality place to live and work.

Activities and Priority Areas	Lead Agency	Support Agency
Manufacturing and Engineering Program (ME Program)	RDA Hunter	DMO, HunterNet, Education Dept
Workplace Visa certification	RDA Hunter	Immigration & Citizenship
Expansion in the tertiary education sector, including Vocational Education and Training	University of Newcastle, TAFE	
Improve participation and retention rates in schools	Education & Communities	
Improve school participation by Indigenous school age children	Office of Communities	
Skills development strategies	Hunter TAFE	
Medical services including Doctors available across the Region to meet demand	Ministry of Health, Hunter New England Local Health District	AMA, R&RHA

7.5 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. It is vitally important that we encourage the development of sustainable technologies which promote water and energy efficiency and the take-up of cleaner/greener technologies. RDA Hunter's support for innovation activities is consistent year round, with an annual festival providing a focus period in which to highlight and celebrate achievements in innovation.

Activities and Priority Areas	Lead Agency	Support Agency
Hunter Central Coast Innovation Festival	Innovation Festival Committee	RDA Hunter
CleanTech hub in the Hunter	HunterNet, AusIndustry	RDA Hunter
Smart infrastructure, skills and innovation capabilities in the Region	All educational institutions and providers, CSIRO	Trade & Investment
Capitalise on medical, environmental and other leading research capabilities	Uni of Newcastle, Hunter Medical Research Institute, Hunter & Central Coast Regional Environmental Management Strategy	Ministry of Health

7.6 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 existing natural and built features. 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. Responsible land-use planning for the Region that addresses growing pressure from urban, industrial, resource extraction and infrastructure development, population growth and predicted impacts from climate change is essential.

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 efforts to build the Hunter's reputation in Australia and overseas. Pleasant natural and built environments are critical in attracting new residents and skills, investors and tourists.

Activities and Priority Areas	Lead Agency	Support Agency
Newcastle CBD as a connected international port city	HDC, Planning & Infrastructure, NSW	Newcastle City Council Newcastle Port Corporation
University presence in Newcastle CBD	University of Newcastle, HDC, Commonwealth Govt	Newcastle City Council
Population hubs connected via public transport	Transport for NSW	Local Councils
Offering quality lifestyle choices	Local Councils	Liveable Cities Project Control Group
Responsible land-use planning	Planning & Infrastructure	Local Councils
Further research, development and investment in renewable energy technology	AusIndustry HunterNet	NIER
Initiatives to increase levels of cycling and walking, e.g. Local Council Cycle Strategies	Transport for NSW	Local Councils

Top priorities for the next three years

Following consultations across the Region, the RDA Hunter Committee has identified these regionally significant projects and activities to be its top priorities for 2012 – 2015:

1. Improved transit network connectivity for the Port of Newcastle, Kooragang Island, Tomago Enterprise Zone and Newcastle Airport – freight, commuter, local passenger and tourism.
2. Development of a Hunter future directions statement and greater Hunter regional strategy, informed by the outcomes of studies supported by Liveable Cities Program and Regional Infrastructure Fund grants.
3. Freight rail bypass of Newcastle between Fassifern and Hexham and consequent improvements in traffic flows at suburban rail gates.
4. ME Program – expansion of the Manufacturing and Engineering Program
5. Scone rail over-pass at New England Highway

6. Glendale Transport Interchange – completion of Stage 1 and progress towards Stage 2.

On 6 June 2012, RDAF funding of \$7 million to Lake Macquarie City Council for Stage 1 was announced. NBN TV News (8 May 2012) cited this project as the “ infrastructure project rated the most important in the Hunter. ”

“ The Hunter Region comprises 11 local government areas who presently operate in association through a cooperative called Hunter Councils Inc. While each council develops their own strategic and land use plan there are a number of other State government and regional agencies which also develop regional plans with varying degrees of collaboration and coordination. The ability to **align these plans** and **coordinate implementation** can be a major source of **productivity improvement**. ”

HVRF, 2012, *The Hunter Region: Regional context, issues and challenges. A situational analysis of local infrastructure.*

The following table supports the proposition that the Hunter is in a unique period of research, study and planning for the future.

Plan title	Department / Agency / Organisation	Delivery timeframe
Hunter Regional Plan 2012 - 2022	RDA Hunter (RDAH)	August 2012
Hunter Regional Action Plan (NSW 2021)	Dept Premier and Cabinet (DPC)	September 2012
State Infrastructure Strategy (SIS)	Infrastructure NSW (INSW)	September 2012
Upper Hunter Strategic Regional Land Use Plan	Dept of Planning & Infrastructure (DP&I)	Late 2012
Lower Hunter Regional Strategy	DP&I, (Consultants SGS Economics & Planning)	Early / Mid 2013
Hunter Infrastructure Plan (HIP)	HIIF Advisory Board, HDC, DP&I	Early / Mid 2013
Hunter – Strategic Infrastructure Plan (SIP) <i>Liveable Cities Program</i>	Maitland CC, Hunter Councils, HDC, DP&I, HIIF <i>\$500K grant and \$500K in-kind</i>	Mid / Late 2013
Hunter Economic Infrastructure Plan (HEIP) <i>Regional Infrastructure Fund</i>	INSW, RDAH <i>\$450K</i>	Mid / Late 2013

Completion of these plans, with appropriate community consultation, is a high priority for determining the future directions of the Hunter

Regional Development Australia Fund grants for Hunter projects to date:

Project	Description	RDAF Grant	Total Project Value (Rounded)
Newcastle Regional Art Gallery Redevelopment	The project will expand the established Newcastle Art Gallery, increasing usable space to over 2,300 square metres over two levels. New facilities will include a theatrette, function space, cafe and retail shops. This will encourage further investment in the commercialisation and production of local and regional art.	\$7.0m	\$21.0m
Expanding the capacity of the Hunter Valley Research Foundation	The project will expand the capacity of the Hunter Valley Research Foundation (HVRF), enhancing its capacity to meet the emerging information needs of the Hunter community into the future. By providing a comprehensive understanding of regional economic and social limitations and issues, HVRF helps people to make better decisions about development and expansion.	\$698,000	\$937,600
Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange Stage 1	The LMTI is a catalyst infrastructure project that will better connect the largest employment zone in the Hunter Region, Cardiff/Glendale to the broader region. It will reduce congestion, unlock business investment, encourage property development, & create jobs to support growth across the region.	\$7.0m	\$50m
Affordable Student Accommodation in the Upper Hunter	Provision in Muswellbrook of affordable TAFE-based housing for students and apprentices. This project will enable an increase in skilled labour, reduce housing market pressure and enhance the provision of a relevant centre of educational excellence for the Hunter and broader coalfields basin.	\$2.7m	\$5.72m

8. Review: Next steps – living document, shared work

Over the next 10 years and beyond, 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.

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. The Hunter 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 2012 and 2013, RDA Hunter will monitor progress and evaluate outcomes of activities relating to this Regional Plan and continue to develop a comprehensive regional plan. Founded on research and greater insights through analysis of trends and growth indicators, RDA Hunter will develop a deeper understanding of the:

- wider opportunities and contextual position for the Hunter 's economy;
- Region ' s strengths;
- current economic performance; and
- challenges that need to be addressed.

The RDA Hunter Committee has identified the need for a comprehensive, integrated Hunter strategic plan that sets targets for the future of the Region. RDA Hunter will continue to host Strategic Conversations with local business leaders to listen to their knowledge and experiences, which will assist the articulation of the business case for investing in the Hunter. Through engagement with stakeholders a Hunter future directions statement and greater Hunter regional strategy will be developed. This work will be informed by the outcomes of studies supported by grants from the Liveable Cities Program and Regional Infrastructure Fund.

While working closely with private and public sector partners, RDA Hunter will communicate the findings from our strategic planning work to the Region, via our website, emails, media statements, publications, workshops and other mechanisms that effectively reach the target audience.

Local, State and National stakeholders continue to play a crucial role in the evolution of this Regional Plan, and comments relating to it or any other aspect of RDA Hunter are welcome. The Committee will review this Regional Plan and update it where required, before the end of the current financial year.

APPENDIX 1 – Consultation summary

A summary of the projects and strategic activities identified by regional stakeholders during wide ranging and comprehensive consultations are presented under the RDA Hunter strategic action areas. The order of appearance for these contributions that seek to address important economic, social and environmental issues is not a reflection of their priority status.

Strategic action area: Infrastructure to Improve Productivity and Efficiency

Items to include	Reasons
East Coast High Speed Rail Network (HSRN)	Reduce travel times between Major Cities at competitive fares. Support growth corridors outside of capital cities. Improve land links between airports in Newcastle, Sydney and Canberra. Separate freight and passenger rail services. Provide an economically positive alternative to wide-bodied aircraft travel over relatively short distances such as Sydney to the Hunter. Jobs growth potential in the Hunter as the construction centre for high speed trains and carriages.
Improve transport network between airport and urban areas	Project to include link Inner City Road Bypass from Sandgate to duplication of Tourle St Bridge and Cormorant Road, and rail link. Support growth in jobs on Kooragang Island and Tomago zone, accommodate increasing passenger and tourist numbers using Newcastle Airport, and improve long-term access to port, airport and residential areas, including affordable public transport options.
Fassifern to Hexham rail link (Newcastle Bypass)	Support both land freight and urban amenity. Issues with increased freight trains on passenger rail lines into Newcastle. eg Adamstown rail level crossing which is on a Regional Road managed by Newcastle City Council. Northern Sydney Rail Freight Corridor (NSRF) project will increase capacity from 29 to 44 freight trains per day; more freight trains sharing passenger lines and longer waiting times at Newcastle rail level crossings.
Scone rail overpass	Enable emergency services to respond within benchmark timeframes and Scone residents to travel without interruptions by long and frequent coal trains. Regional Infrastructure Funds to plan the project provided in June 2010. Bi-partisan Federal party support for the project.
Lake Macquarie Transport Inter-change	Support growth in a key employment and residential zone of Lower Hunter. A catalyst infrastructure project, with a total project cost in the order of \$50m.
Freight rail lines between coal mines and Port of Newcastle	Support increased capacity of the Port to meet export demand for Hunter coal and other commodities/goods. Capacity to meet increased demand for public transport by rail across the region and to neighbouring economic hubs as well as increased freight rail volumes.
Improve water security	Increase water storage and treatment capacity for community, business and industry resilience during drought periods.
New England Highway improvements	Reduce impact on Singleton, Muswellbrook and Scone in terms of heavy traffic, congestion and in-bound/outbound capacity. Also linked to strategic action area: Grow the Hunter's economy.

Strategic action area: Infrastructure to improve Productivity and Efficiency (continued)

Items to include	Reasons
Freight transport safety and community health improvements	Interference with health and amenity associated with coal transport (both road & rail) including road accident trauma
Expansion of Newcastle Airport capacity	Continual improvement of facilities to meet growing demand and develop the Region 's main airport.
Improvements to regional air network	Support increased demand for air travel across the region, particularly specialist workers/transient contractors in resources sector and tourism growth.
Improvements to Region 's hospitals	Existing hospitals require additional beds and medical staff to meet growing needs and planning required to deliver new medical services in growth areas
High Speed Broad-band	Improve competitiveness of businesses; enable cutting edge education and research practices; redefine working arrangements.
T4 Coal Loader, Kooragang Island	Provide additional 120 million tonnes per annum coal storage capacity near the Port of Newcastle and meet projected export demand for Hunter coal. Subject to approvals, the expected commission date is mid -2017.
Newcastle Inner City Road Bypass – completion	Complete the final sections of Highway 23 (Newcastle inner city road bypass): 1. Sandgate to Shortland and 2. Rankin Park to Jesmond, to increase productivity of north/south freight and commuter travel to the west of Newcastle.
Improve rail link between Sydney and Newcastle	Relieve pressure on housing in Sydney, assist the Hunter 's economy to grow and reduce travel times for commuters.
More Community infrastructure	One of the top priorities for the Hunter raised by community members in Maitland
Maintenance / improvements to Golden Highway	Increase capacity of Golden Highway to accommodate larger road freight vehicles and improve safety for road users.
Urban growth infrastructure	Hunter Strategic Infrastructure Plan to identify priorities and implementation responsibilities for Urban Area development. \$500k Cwith Grant & \$500k in kind
Regional Economic Infrastructure project	Hunter Economic Infrastructure Plan (\$450k Cwith) to analyse options, identify priorities and prepare a Project Proposal Report to " Ready to Proceed " status for appraisal by Infrastructure Australia under the guidelines of the Regional Infrastructure Fund.

Strategic action area: Grow the Hunter 's economy

Items to include	Reasons
Priorities for economic growth	Top priorities for the Hunter raised by community members: diversify the economy, support Clean Tech industries, promote tourism, build critical infrastructure, skills development
New and alternate green energy industries	Proactive response to forecast impacts of climate change and opportunities to develop new industries
Expansion of coal chain and export capacity	Continued demand for coal from the Hunter by India and China supported by alignment of freight train and terminal storage capacities.
Support local food production	Food security for future development. Local sources to reduce transport distances covered and consequent greenhouse gas emissions during distribution.
Air transport improvements	Better air travel links between all parts of the Region, especially to capital cities Sydney and Brisbane.
Port capacity expansion	Meet growing demand for export coal and continue strategy to maintain a diversified handling capability at the port
Defence contracts and related industries	Region is home base for Army, Air Force and naval building/repair capabilities. Continue to support Defence and maintain the Region 's skilled workforce
Research impact of extreme weather conditions on industries	History of droughts and excessively rainy seasons impacting on viticulture and wine industries with flow on impacts on tourism and associated industries to be studied. Research and report on likely impacts of climate change on industries
Hunter Strategy	Document the aspirations for the Region and provide a framework for future plans and action schedules. Including key industries: mining, tourism, wine, agribusiness, equine and health services.
Support Industry Action Plan for Creative Industries	Strategies to foster and retain creative industries as a contributor to diversification of the economic base. Highest number of artists living in Newcastle per capita than any other Australian city.
Capacity enhancement of RAAF Base and Newcastle Airport	Strengthen strategic defence of Australia capability and ability of civilian airport to further contribute to the Region 's economy.
Angel Investing	Example of support for innovation and entrepreneurship in the development of a diversified and growing economic base

Strategic action area: Comprehensive and cohesive long –term planning

Items to include	Reasons
Plans for regional population and demographic changes	Top priorities for the Hunter raised by community members: Better planning for population growth and an ageing population to deliver quality healthcare and education opportunities for the entire region.
Coordinated approach to regional transport planning	Also in the top priorities raised by Hunter community members: improved public transport networks, improved existing road and rail routes and importance of local decisions being made by local authorities.
Hunter Integrated Urban Planning System	Address Federal and State government policies for urban planning and urban areas to facilitate infrastructure funding.
Land use planning, zoning and conflict resolution	Equine, viticulture and other agriculture industries have had a long history of successful operation in the Region and are looking for this to be able to continue. Review zoning for housing development to increase volume of housing, build communities and reduce reliance on drive in- drive out workforce.
Develop a Regional Catchment Action Plan	To identify priority strategies to ensure long-term sustainable management of the region 's natural resources
Improve planning approval processes	Threats to building and construction industries, eg increased costs due to approval delays and disjointed planning. Deliver housing infrastructure essentials in step with land release, re-zoning and construction timeframes.
Review of Local Government	To include finances, staff skill audit and boundaries. NOTE: NSW Local Government Minister appointed Independent Local Government Review Panel in March 2012. Final report to be delivered to the Minister in July 2013.
Acquisition and preservation of corridor land for future road and rail expansion	Forward planning for expansion of freight and commuter networks, including rail from Fassifern to Hexham, High Speed Rail Network, extension of F3 freeway, public transport corridors from Newcastle Airport, HV coal chain.
Managed approach to Hunter Employment Lands	Integrated job site developments with strategic land use and industry action plans for the Hunter.

Strategic action area: Investment in Education, Skills and Workplace Development

Items to include	Reasons
Increase local employment and training opportunities in mining industry, including apprenticeships and traineeships	There is significant local demand for apprenticeships and traineeships in mining. Mining companies appreciate the benefits of hiring locally and are looking for partnership programs in schools and other education / training organisations to improve quality of candidates, with particular emphasis on improving maths knowledge and skills of applicants.
ME Program (Manufacturing Engineering Program)	Expand on successes to date to encourage greater participation in science, technology, engineering and maths subjects at high school to help alleviate shortfall in number of skilled workers and professionals.
Develop the Upper Hunter Workforce Plan	Mining industry to be involved with other employer groups and community representatives to deliver a workforce plan that supports the growth of the Region.
Medical training places to meet workforce shortages	Need to increase the number of pre-vocational (intern) places and specialist expert educators to meet increased number of medical graduates. In 2013 an additional 300 intern places in NSW will be required, a proportion of those in the Hunter.
Increase capacity of schools to meet demand	Construction of classrooms, laboratories, workshops, computer suites and libraries to meet growing demand at both primary and high school levels.
Council staff training	Staff development to improve review and assessment of building / housing application processes to reduce delays and increase certainty
Workplace Visa Certification	Regional body to certify visa applications for workers in agreed fields that are experiencing shortages in the Region.

Strategic action area: Build Knowledge Skills and Innovative capabilities

Items to include	Reasons
Increase investment in Upper Hunter Clean Energy Precinct	Also supports strategic action area: Grow the Hunter 's economy. Directly assists the realisation of the Vision for the Hunter and addresses government policy areas in energy and future sustainability.
Hunter Central Coast Innovation Festival	Build on five years of success of the Innovation Festival to further promote the benefits of innovation and outstanding achievements across the region.
Smart infrastructure, skills and innovation capabilities	Identify incentives and mechanisms to increase up-take of innovative changes and reward skilled practitioners capable of taking clever ideas into applications
Capitalise on medical, environmental and other leading re-search capabilities.	Promote research outcomes and encourage development of practical applications of new knowledge and innovative solutions.
Modernising libraries	Better meet the needs of the community by taking full advantage of high speed broadband and provision of additional services

Strategic action area: Enriching Natural and Built Environments to create liveable places

Items to include	Reasons
Affordable housing	Wages the resource sector pays drive up the cost of purchasing or renting a property. There are individuals who work and contribute to the community in lesser paying jobs who can no longer afford to live in that community. Affordable housing is a specific item on government agendas, which may lead to funding and subsequently, employment in the construction industry to help address the affordable housing shortage.
Revitalisation of Central Maitland	Maitland City Council 's vision for the ' Vibrant River City of the Hunter ' is supported by integrated transport and land use plans, the Central Maitland Structure Plan and implementation strategies, Maitland Urban Settlement Strategy, Maitland Centres Strategy, Community Strategic Plan and 2011 Maitland Local Environment Plan.
Maintain and improve our region's natural re-	Improve liveability, protect bio-diversity and support community wellbeing
Cycling Strategies	Lake Macquarie Cycling Strategy 2021 incorporating ANZAC Memorial Circuit to build a stronger and more diverse cycling culture in Lake Macquarie; improve existing network and build new shared pathways inc. Morisset, Dora Creek, Cooranbong loop. Other examples: Newcastle Cycling Strategy and Action Plan, Port Stephens Shared Cycleways program and Singleton expansion of cycle network
Planning for the Newcastle CBD, inc Hunter St revitalisation	Top priorities for the Hunter raised by community members: revitalise the city, rail decision, all levels of government to work together, remove red tape that works against development. Based on surveys and community feedback, NCC has adopted Hunter Street Revitalisation Masterplan1 and strategic framework, including catalyst projects.
Improved transport links	Reduce congestion. Increase choice of transport mode. Better reliability and safety.
Coastline revitalisation, including Bathers Way project	A well-managed, accessible, tourist-friendly, active coast with patrolled beaches, ocean baths and safe marinas is a major asset for the Hunter. Improvements to the Bathers Way will increase the ' walkability ' of Newcastle, provide a regionally significant tourism attraction and improve the Great Walk linkages to the Central Coast & Sydney.
Attract events to the region	Add to community wellbeing and enjoyment of living in region. Increase tourism opportunities and grow support industries.
Better environmental	Top priorities for the Hunter raised by community members: waterways, food bowls, managing competing land uses.
Regional Aquatic Centres	Quality pool and associated facilities to meet needs of a diverse client base, including Olympic athletes, clubs, State and national level competitions, fitness groups and individuals. Also enhance health services with hydrotherapy pool.
Open space protection and enhancement	Enhance access and viewing facilities in natural settings, with improved visitor amenities and educational facilities and programs, example: Blackbutt Reserve
Mitigate threats to air quality	Threats arising from coal mining, including open cut, underground ventilation, transport to and stockpiles at, coal loading facilities
Mitigate threats to water supplies	Water security measures in particular water storage capacity shortfalls, with increases in demand due to coal seam gas production
Review role of NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA)	Consider regulatory role of EPA to address changes in water and air quality, as well as noise monitoring as mining activity in Region increases. Reconstituted Board appointed in Feb 2012 and new CEO appointed in April 2012.

APPENDIX TWO

RDA Hunter Committee Members

Chair - Gaye Hart AM

Gaye Hart 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 was the Lord Mayor of Newcastle from 1999 to 2012 and 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 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 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 Limited since 2005. Previously he worked for 20 years at 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 Petersons House Limited in the Hunter Valley and YMCA Sydney. He is also a representative on the Williamtown Consultative Forum – Department of Defence. Paul is a qualified member of 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, Diploma in Teaching and a Master of Business Degree from the University of Newcastle. 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 immigrated to Australia in 1973 from Scotland. 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 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 Lillis

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. 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 during which time he developed the investment strategy for EnergyAustralia's major transmission & distribution assets and initiated EnergyAustralia's original intelligent network strategy. As the leader of EnergyAustralia's innovation strategy, Geoff led EnergyAustralia's successful bid for the Australian Government's \$100M intelligent electricity network program.

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.

Julie Lyford

Julie Lyford was a Gloucester Shire councillor from 1995 to 2012 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 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.

John Lyons

Born at Maitland and educated at Maitland Boys High School, with further education at Maitland, Newcastle and Sydney Technical Colleges completing qualifications in Plumbing, Health & Building Inspector and Structural Engineering. After leaving the plumbing industry and Hunter Water Board, his local government career commenced as a Department Head in a small country council, and ended 24 years, and five councils later at Blacktown City Council (today's pop. 300,000) in position of City Health & Building Surveyor.

At Blacktown he was awarded Fellowship of Australian Institute Building Surveyors for research and development of codes practice for residential scale buildings, in collaboration with CSIRO. John left local government to start his own Building Consultancy and completed several developments projects on Central Coast. In 1996 he moved to Millfield to establish Millbrook Estate vineyard, winery and distillery. He has strong community interests being involved with Progress Association on the Central Coast, Millfield and Wollombi Chamber Commerce.

Emeritus Professor Nicholas Saunders AO

Emeritus Professor Saunders has recently retired from the position of 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). Effective July 2012, he is the Chair of the Repatriation Medical Authority.

In 2012 Professor Saunders was awarded Officer (AO) in the General Division for service to medicine and higher education.

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 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). He has 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.

Lee Watts

Lee Watts held the position of mayor of Upper Hunter Shire from 2009 to 2012 and was a councillor since 2005.

She has lived in the Upper Hunter close to 40 years during which time she has become actively involved in the community.

She has a strong commitment and proven track record in Community Service and is highly experienced in a range of roles including administration, management, training, project management and community advocacy.

Providing leadership and advocacy through paid and volunteer roles as Manager of the Neighbourhood Centre, member of various committees and boards and as a Councillor with Upper Hunter Shire Council. A passionate representative of the community who believes in open, inclusive, responsible and viable regional development.

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Notes



RDA Hunter
Level 3, 251 Wharf Road, Newcastle, 2300
Phone: +61 2 4908 7300 Email: admin@rdahunter.org.au
www.rdahunter.org.au

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