

Partnering for growth



The Hunter is Australia's largest regional economy, servicing a population of over one million. With a GDP of \$60 billion, it is a substantial driver of growth and prosperity in NSW.

The Hunter stands ready to make an even stronger contribution to the State economy. Investment demand is high and population growth is surpassing NSW Government projections.

However, the region's capacity to deliver jobs, growth and housing is constrained by a lack of strategic and joined-up planning and infrastructure delivery.

More than \$20 billion in development is being held up by transport infrastructure delays. Those developments could deliver more than 60,000 jobs,

40,000 homes, and \$37 billion in economic benefits to the region.

More sophisticated approaches to planning and investment are urgently required. Coordination of planning, infrastructure and budgets across agencies, governments and sectors will deliver better outcomes from public investment in the region.

Hunter stakeholders are united on the case for action and the recommendations for reform.

We invite the NSW Government to work with us to provide better employment, housing and economic development outcomes for the communities of the Hunter and support the state of NSW as it rebounds from COVID.



Step one: Clear the development backlog

Since June 2020, Hunter stakeholders have worked with the NSW Government to improve Transport for NSW services to unlock employment and housing developments stuck in the planning pipeline. While improvements have been made, no major development held up by infrastructure has yet progressed. A significant shortfall in housing supply to meet NSW targets is forecast.

STATUS

Government-stakeholder Reference Group formed and Action Plan developed	✓
Dedicated Development Services division created within TfNSW to streamline and expedite development-related assessments and processes	✓
Bank guarantee requirement for Works Authorisation Deeds (WADs) reduced by 50 per cent	✓
Commencement of a review of the WAD process to deliver faster outcomes	in progress
Corridor and network studies to be developed and shared with councils	in progress
Enabling infrastructure delivered	✗
Developments progressed	✗

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continued resourcing of Development Services Division to enable full delivery of the agreed Action Plan.
2. Accelerate transport corridor and network studies in partnership with councils and industry, prioritising Catalyst Areas and Urban Release Areas, reporting to the Hunter Urban Development Program (Hunter UDP) Committee.
3. Extend the Housing Acceleration Fund to support delivery of housing targets in the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan and Hunter Regional Plan. Industry analysis shows that an investment of \$522 million could unlock more than 40,000 homes and 590 hectares of employment land.



The Hunter has **9 per cent** of the NSW population but has received only **\$267 million**, or about **1 per cent**, of the state spend of \$27.8 billion on capital roadworks over the past five years



Hunter projects have received only **\$38.6 million**, or **3.8 per cent**, of the \$1 billion allocated through the Housing Acceleration Fund since 2012

Step two: Better integration of planning and infrastructure

Adapt existing regional governance structures and planning processes to improve the level of integration in the concurrent reviews of the Hunter Regional Plan and the Hunter Regional Transport Plan. Better coordination will deliver more outcomes from government focus and funding in the Hunter.

STATUS

Integration of strategic planning, land use and infrastructure planning (opportunity for reform in current reviews)	✗
Strategic planning for enabling infrastructure	✗

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Synchronise the drafting and release of the Hunter Regional Plan and Hunter Regional Transport Plan reviews to allow more time for consultation on priorities and alignment with council and private sector plans.
2. Provide more transparency on the level of integration between the Hunter Regional Plan and Hunter Regional Transport Plan, taking steps to improve coordination before they are finalised.
3. Increase the mandate and meeting frequency of the Regional Leadership Executive to facilitate whole-of-government input into the development of the Plans and commitment to delivery, and to work as a clearing house to resolve issues.
4. Enable the Hunter UDP to make priority referrals to the Planning Delivery Unit to unlock developments that are stalled and significantly impeding the delivery of the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan and Hunter Regional Plans.



Step three:

Transformational leadership

We share State objectives for recovery and growth and argue that the Hunter has the scale and capacity to make an even stronger contribution.

The level of focus and investment relative to our size and strategic significance will continue to put a handbrake on the State including COVID recovery, and presents a huge opportunity cost to the NSW economy.

The Hunter is also experiencing economic change in the energy, resources and manufacturing sectors, representing one of the largest structural adjustment challenges in the nation. State goals for Net Zero 2050 depend on what happens in the Hunter.

Governance in the Hunter remains fragmented. State-led innovations to integrate planning and investment in the Sydney metro provide a benchmark for best practice. Yet they are not being applied in contemporary planning processes and outputs in the Hunter.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Consider and consult on regional governance models for a more strategic and joined-up approach to land use planning, infrastructure investment and service delivery in the Hunter.

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