

Your future Lower Hunter



Planning &
Infrastructure

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Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT IS 'THE LOWER HUNTER OVER THE NEXT 20 YEARS' DISCUSSION PAPER?

- The discussion paper will encourage Lower Hunter residents to have an informed say about how their region should grow through to the year 2031.
- By 2031, the Lower Hunter is expected to grow from 540,000 people to between 650,000 and 670,000 people.
- This means we need to plan for jobs, housing, transport and infrastructure for both our existing population and up to 130,000 additional people over the next 20 years.
- The discussion paper outlines some of the recent trends in the region's housing and employment supply, as well as transport and infrastructure improvements and environment and resource initiatives.
- The Lower Hunter region covers the local government areas of Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Port Stephens and Cessnock.

HOW DOES IT RELATE TO THE EXISTING LOWER HUNTER REGIONAL STRATEGY?

- The discussion paper is the first step in a review of the existing Lower Hunter Regional Strategy, which was released in late 2006.
- Feedback on the discussion paper will be used to help develop a draft Lower Hunter Regional Strategy. We will also release this for consultation with the community to help inform the development of the final strategy.
- The final strategy will provide the blueprint for the region's growth over the next two decades.

WHAT ARE THE KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR HOUSING?

- Over the next 20 years, up to 75,000 new homes will be required. Approximately 2,500-3000 dwellings will need to be built each year to keep up with the growing population.

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- Land has been rezoned for more than 35,000 residential lots since 2006. However, only 11,200 new dwellings have been constructed.
- Since 2006, the majority of new housing constructed has been in existing urban areas.
- The discussion paper seeks feedback about potential new locations for urban infill development, as well as the best options to promote housing supply.

WHAT ARE THE KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR EMPLOYMENT?

- The Lower Hunter region employs 293,000 people and has had a three per cent increase in jobs growth over the last decade, compared to two per cent for the rest of NSW.
- The discussion paper identifies Newcastle Airport and the Port of Newcastle as continuing job magnets.
- It also identifies cruise ship tourism, sustainable energy and defence-related industries and the city centre's expansion of the University of Newcastle as among a number of other job opportunities.
- The discussion paper seeks feedback on how to best plan for employment growth, including the location of possible new industrial clusters and how to support emerging industries.

WHAT ARE THE KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE?

- Car travel continues to be the region's dominant transport mode.
- Feedback is being sought on a range of transport infrastructure issues, including how this revised strategy should encourage public transport and improve access to major activity centres such as the Port of Newcastle and Newcastle Airport.
- It also encourages feedback on how walking and cycling should be promoted.
- The draft regional strategy will be prepared alongside a proposed Regional Transport Plan to be developed by Transport for NSW.

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WHAT ARE THE KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT?

- A number of coastal areas around Lake Macquarie, inner Newcastle and Port Stephens have already been identified as being susceptible to flooding and extreme weather events in the future.
- The Lower Hunter regional strategy will be supported by a Strategic Assessment, which will consider the environmental impacts of development on a region-wide basis. This is currently being undertaken by the NSW and Australian Governments.
- The region's green corridors, which are areas of high conservation value, will be reviewed to improve mapping and more clearly define the activities that can take place within them.
- The discussion paper seeks feedback on how to protect the environment and biodiversity while also meeting the region's economic and housing needs.

WHAT ARE THE KEY RESOURCE ISSUES?

- Access to safe and reliable drinking water, as well as food from agriculture, are important issues for the Lower Hunter.
- The discussion paper seeks feedback as to the best way for the draft strategy to protect water catchments.

WHAT ARE THE KEY ISSUES FOR THE AGEING POPULATION?

- The percentage of the region's population aged 65 years or older is expected to increase from 16 per cent in 2011 to 24 per cent by 2031.
- A 2010 survey by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute found that more than one-third of elderly people across Australia had modified their existing home to make it more suitable for their needs.
- We are seeking feedback about how to provide the appropriate housing and services needed by the region's ageing population.

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WHAT OTHER WORK IS BEING DONE TO SUPPORT THE REVISED REGIONAL STRATEGY?

- The Department of Planning and Infrastructure is currently researching region-specific information on housing markets and growth scenarios and opportunities to assist the revised regional strategy.
- This research will be publicly available during the exhibition of the discussion paper.

HOW DOES THIS REVIEW RELATE TO OTHER GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES?

- The new Lower Hunter Regional Strategy will be integrated with the Regional Transport Plan and the Hunter Infrastructure Plan, ensuring planning for housing and jobs growth is better aligned with the delivery of transport and other infrastructure.
- Additionally, the existing Regional Conservation Plan will be updated following the completion of this strategy.

HOW DOES THIS FIT WITH THE NEW PLANNING SYSTEM FOR NSW?

- The NSW Government's White Paper on the New Planning System will create a new series of strategic plans that provide the ground rules for better upfront planning.
- The Lower Hunter Regional Strategy will be one of the first Regional Growth Plans that will be delivered under the new planning system.

HOW ARE YOU CONSULTING WITH THE COMMUNITY?

- The discussion paper was released for feedback on 8 March 2013 for eight weeks of community consultation. The consultation finishes on 3 May 2013.
- Residents can have their say by:
 - joining our online discussion forums
 - registering for a local community event
 - emailing comments to lowerhunter@planning.nsw.gov.au
 - writing to the Department of Planning & Infrastructure, PO Box 1226 Newcastle, NSW 2300