



New South Wales
Government

Lower Hunter Regional Strategy – Overview

The Lower Hunter Regional Strategy is a land use planning document that outlines the provision of sufficient, appropriately placed housing and employment land to cater for the Region's predicted growth over the next 25 years. The strategy is based on population growth projections which forecast that there will be an additional 160,000 people in the Region by 2031.

Housing

- The strategy aims to provide for up to 115,000 new dwellings over this period to cater for both the increase in population and changing occupancy rates.
- 60 per cent of these new dwellings will be provided in new release areas, with the remaining 40 percent to be delivered in existing urban areas.
- This 60:40 split represents a shift from the existing trend, whereby 75 per cent of new housing is being built in new release areas.
- This new approach represents a more efficient and effective use of existing infrastructure, placing people, jobs and services closer together. It also reduces the pressure to find large-scale Greenfield sites for development.
- Major priority release areas and areas where planning for release is well advanced are: Thornton North (up to 7,000 dwellings), Cooranbong (up to 3,000), Bellbird (up to 4,000) and North Raymond Terrace (up to 5,000).
- Other major release sites include Lochinvar (up to 5,000 dwellings), Anambah (up to 4,000), Wyee (up to 2,000) and Branxton-Huntlee (up to 7,200).

Jobs and Employment Centres

- The strategy will also provide capacity to accommodate a projected 66,000 new jobs in the Region by 2031. Capacity for 85 per cent of these new jobs will be provided within identified employment zones and larger centres.
- A framework of strong, vibrant centres will be encouraged throughout the Region to further improve access to employment, shopping and other services as well as more sustainable transport and better use of existing infrastructure.
- The existing hierarchy of centres will be reinforced, with the Newcastle City Centre identified as a regional city of national and international importance. The Regional City will be supported by Major Regional Centres, which will have a concentration of business, higher order retailing, employment, professional services and general civic functions and facilities.
- These major regional centres will be: Charlestown, Maitland, Raymond Terrace, Cessnock, Glendale (emerging) and Morisset (emerging).
- The remaining hierarchy will consist of Specialised Centres, town centres and a wide network of smaller neighbourhood centres and villages.
- Focusing greater development within these centres will achieve a more sustainable balance of infill development, as well as encouraging strong, diverse and well connected centres that provide the jobs and commercial space needed to support the Newcastle City Centre.

- The strategy also identifies five renewal corridors which link key centres and are situated along strategic transport routes. The corridors are: Maitland Road (Newcastle West to Mayfield); Tudor Street (Newcastle West to Broadmeadow); Bruncker Road (Nine Ways to Adamstown); Main Road, Edgeworth (Glendale to Edgeworth) and Pacific Highway (Charleston to Gateshead).
- These corridors will present opportunities for economic renewal and/or housing renewal and intensification.

Environment

- Two major green corridors have been identified running through the Region. These are extensive corridors of land with high environmental value which will be managed for conservation purposes. The corridors align with existing public reserves, some of which will be expanded.
- The Watagan to Stockton Corridor is to be protected and enhanced so that it forms a long-term connection between the rugged sandstone areas of the south-west and the wetlands and coastal plain (including the foreshores of Port Stephens) to the north and east.
- The Wallarah Peninsula Corridor is to be protected to provide a natural break between the Central Coast and the Lower Hunter.
- The Region's waterways and associated riparian zones will also be enhanced through the implementation of stormwater management plans and investment via the Catchment Action Plan.
- The protection and management of these corridors for conservation and biodiversity is a key focus of the Strategy and the companion regional Conservation Plan developed by the Department of Environment and Conservation.
- These documents provide a planning and management framework that will enable the expansion of public reserves in these corridors, the protection of their environmental values from inappropriate development and the ongoing management of the land to enhance its biodiversity and conservation values.
- Additions to these reserves will be achieved through the transfer of government lands for management under the National Parks and Wildlife Act, as well as through the dedication by major landholders of significant additional lands.

Key changes from draft strategy

- The forecast regional population increase between 2006 and 2031 has increased from 125,000 in the draft strategy to 160,000 in the final version. This is in response to the accelerated growth rates experienced in the Region in recent years, which are reflected in the latest estimate of residential population released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 2006.
- The population projections in the Regional Strategy are within a similar range to other population projections for the region prepared by the Hunter Valley Research Foundation (*Newcastle and Hunter Region 2005-2006*) and Hunter Water (*Integrated Water Resource Plan 2004-2005*).
- The projection recognises the ongoing increase in annual population growth rates tracked in the Census and by the ABS. This reflects the region's ongoing ability to attract new residents, particularly due to its sufficient supplies of water and land, which create affordable housing and employment opportunities.

- Consequently, the final strategy now allows for a total of 66,000 new jobs for the Region over the same period through the provision of additional lands. This is an increase of 16,000 expected new jobs over the figure of 50,000 in the draft strategy.
- The draft strategy proposed a 50:50 split for the provision of new housing between Greenfield and existing urban areas. This split has been shifted to 60 per cent new release areas and a 40 per cent in existing areas in order to fit more closely with existing trends in the Region, while still delivering a sustainable ongoing balance of infill to new urban development.
- Progress on targets will be monitored annually and the overall strategy will be comprehensively reviewed every five years so that it can adjust appropriately to any demographic and economic changes.