



Hon Tony Kelly MLC  
Minister for Planning  
Minister for Infrastructure  
Minister for Lands  
Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council  
Leader of the House in the Legislative Council

## MEDIA RELEASE

18 February, 2010

### Lower Hunter Regional Strategy

New development proposals for the Huntlee New Town and Catherine Hill Bay sites in the Lower Hunter are expected to be re-lodged in coming months with the NSW Department of Planning.

Minister for Planning, Tony Kelly, said the Government has been looking at the existing regional strategy following legal action in regard to approvals for the two sites.

“That action affected a small number of development sites where memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and deeds were in place,” the Minister said.

“The existing regional strategy, independently of those MOUs and deeds, continues to provide a clear basis for all sites in the strategy to be considered on their merits and assessed according to law.”

The strategy plans for a projected population growth of 160,000 people over the next 20 years, along with an additional 66,000 new jobs and 115,000 new dwellings.

Mr Kelly said conservation land offsets will now be facilitated through the preparation of Voluntary Planning Agreements within the framework of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

“Discussions are ongoing with landowners who signed MOUs with the NSW Government,” the Minister said.

The NSW Government has also made minor amendments to the Lower Hunter Regional Conservation Plan, removing references to MOUs in order to make clear the NSW Government’s position that environmental offsets at development sites can be pursued through voluntary planning agreements.

Minister for the Hunter, Jodi McKay said the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy had to date supported housing, employment and environmental gains, including:

- Approximately 20,000 hectares of land in the Lower Hunter has been set aside for conservation with the commencement on 1 July 2007 of the National Parks Estate (Lower Hunter Region Reservations) Act;
- A State significant site at North Cooranbong has been approved and will provide up to 2,500 new dwellings and a mixed commercial and retail centre;
- A local environmental plan for Greta near Cessnock has been gazetted to rezone 245 hectares of land from rural to a mix of general business and environmental protection zones as well as a residential zone providing more than 1,300 new dwellings;
- The NSW Government has committed to building the Thornton bridge which will assist in the release of land in Maitland;
- A State environmental planning policy has been gazetted for Newcastle port which defines core ports and buffer industrial areas to reduce land-use conflict and allow it to continue its important trade and economic role;
- Approval has been given for a major industrial business park at Beresfield, in an area specifically nominated by the strategy, which will deliver up to 2,100 jobs to the Hunter region; and



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- Port Stephens Council has rezoned an 88 hectare site near Williamtown Airport, allowing for a range of defence and airport related uses with the capacity to generate more than 5,600 jobs.

“The NSW Government’s ongoing support for the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy is good news for the region,” Ms McKay said.

“The Strategy provides the community, local councils, developers and the Government with a clear framework for housing, employment growth and environmental protection in the Hunter.

“With an extra 160,000 people expected to call the Hunter home by 2031, it’s important the Government, community and private sector have a guide to ensure growth happens appropriately.

“The Hunter continues to be a strong contributor to the NSW economy and will benefit greatly from the NSW Government’s support of the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy.”

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