SECURING THE FUTURE OF THE HUNTER

Planning Minister Rob Stokes and Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter Scot MacDonald today announced the draft Hunter Regional Plan which will, for the first time, contain a long-term plan for a combined Hunter City regional centre.

Mr Stokes said the plan was the NSW Government’s vision for Australia’s largest regional economy, setting out an agenda for the next two decades for new homes and jobs, and to protect the local environment.

“This draft plan introduces the concept of Hunter City for the first time, recognising the benefit of coordinated planning for the area stretching from Lake Macquarie to Maitland and Newcastle,” Mr Stokes said.

“Together, these centres make up Australia’s seventh largest city and the second largest in NSW. This new plan sets out a vision for Hunter City as a whole, while maintaining the unique character of each centre.”

Mr MacDonald said the plan offered an exciting new vision for the region.

“The Hunter region has a range of proud communities with a terrific lifestyle and a diverse natural environment. This draft plan is about building on the region’s advantages and creating opportunities for future generations,” Mr MacDonald said.

Member for Upper Hunter Michael Johnsen welcomed the plan.

“Having a strong, well-planned Hunter City is intrinsically linked to the success of the wider Hunter region,” Mr Johnsen said.

The community can make submissions on the draft Plan until 28 February and can also provide feedback via an online survey and interactive map.

Once the exhibition closes, feedback will be assessed and will help inform the final Hunter Regional Plan.

The draft plan can be viewed at [www.planning.nsw.gov.au/hunter](http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/hunter)
Four goals for the Hunter region

• **Grow Australia’s next major city**

More than 60% of Hunter residents live in the area identified as Hunter City.

The draft plan proposes concentrating jobs in strategic centres and transport gateways including Broadmeadow, Central Maitland, Charlestown, Newcastle Airport and the Port of Newcastle.

Connections between these centres and across the city will be improved to allow more access to jobs, shops and services.

• **Grow the largest regional economy in Australia**

The draft plan proposes diversifying export industries, and creating strong centres that attract investment.

Coal mining will be an ongoing priority industry in the region. The draft plan also proposes developing alternative energy sources in the Hunter.

Priority will be given to protecting valuable agricultural lands with the right conditions for industries to operate, including for wine production and the equine industry.

The region’s skills base and infrastructure will also be strengthened to allow better connections to national and world markets.

Transport corridors will be improved to allow easier movement around the region.

• **Protect and connect natural environments**

The Hunter’s diverse natural environments are some of the most unique ecological systems in the country.

Regional habitat corridors will be identified and protected, and more private conservation schemes will be encouraged to invest in the area.

There will also be greater monitoring of the Hunter’s water supplies and quality.

• **Support robust regional communities**

New homes and services will be focused towards Hunter City and the region’s existing towns and villages, taking advantage of existing infrastructure and services.

More housing options for these areas will be investigated, including apartments and terraces, to suit students, elderly residents and a variety of budgets.

The draft plan proposes investigating options to integrate the delivery of infrastructure with new homes, such as improving rural telecommunications.

The need for more schools and health facilities will also be investigated.