The NSW Government has a sustained focus on regional NSW.

We have recently rolled out a series of Regional Plans across the State making it the first time the entire State is covered by strategic land use plans. These plans provide the framework, vision and direction for strategic planning and land use across the State, planning for the region’s future need for housing, jobs, infrastructure and a healthy environment.

The Hunter Regional Plan 2036 was released in October 2016 and at the same time, a commitment was made to release annual Monitoring Reports.

This is the first annual Monitoring Report, which details the progress made in implementing the Regional Plan since its release.

The Hunter is a fast-growing region with a diverse economy that is well serviced to support the rapidly changing needs of businesses and consumers across Australia and South East Asia.

Key highlights from the first 12 months of this plan in action include: release of the Draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036, the establishment of Employment Land Development Monitor and continued support of local planning which delivers on the Regional Plan.

Implementing our Regional Plans is an important focus for the NSW Government and I am looking forward to reporting our continued achievements in the delivery of Regional Plans across the State in future annual monitoring reports. Engaging our regional partners to implement the Regional Plan initiatives presents exciting opportunities for collaboration and innovation.

Looking forward, it is a great time for regional NSW as we focus on growing regional economies and communities, and investing in catalyst projects to deliver our shared vision from each Regional Plan.

I am very pleased to release the first annual Monitoring Report for the Hunter Regional Plan 2036.

Anthony Roberts MP
Minister for Planning
Minister for Housing
Special Minister of State
Key Achievements

Draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036

A new plan for Greater Newcastle – Australia’s 7th largest City, which supported delivery of 7 of 9 Priority Actions in the Hunter Regional Plan 2036

Residential building approvals

3,768 Greater Newcastle 2016

498 Hunter Region

Hunter Employment Land and Development Monitor

First ever employment development monitor provides data and evidence to inform planning decisions

New Civic Precinct at Forster

+145 new dwellings and community facilities

Newcastle Airport

Upgraded and ready for International flights in 2017

Newcastle City Centre Urban Renewal Project

$650m investment program, Including the new Transport Interchange

Hunter Region Special Infrastructure Contribution

Consulted with community and industry on proposed approach

Urban Development Program

Stage 1 for Greater Newcastle complete – to monitor and manage the supply of housing land in the Hunter
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4 goals

27 directions

126 actions

9 priority actions

Annual Monitoring Report
The NSW Government released the *Hunter Regional Plan 2036* in October 2016. All regions of NSW are now covered by a strategic plan for the first time.

The Regional Plans provide vision and direction for land use planning and decisions across the State, addressing future need for housing, jobs, infrastructure and a healthy environment.

To achieve this vision, the Regional Plan is structured around four goals:

- **Goal 1:** The leading regional economy in Australia
- **Goal 2:** A biodiversity-rich natural environment
- **Goal 3:** Thriving communities
- **Goal 4:** Greater housing choice and jobs

Actions are either identified as immediate actions (0-2 years), short term (3-5 years), medium term (5-10 years) or long term (10+ years) and implemented as strategies or as initiatives. The NSW Government has identified a lead agency and relevant partner stakeholders and priority for each action. The lead agency is responsible for project managing the various tasks required to ensure success.

This report outlines work undertaken by State and local government and other stakeholders to deliver on the *Hunter Regional Plan 2036*, along with the work that will be done over the next 12 months to continue delivering on goals for the region.

**Governance**

The Hunter Development Corporation (HDC) has the responsibility of bringing together all levels of government, industry and the community to ensure the vision and goals of the *Hunter Regional Plan 2036* are achieved.

This new role recognises the unprecedented growth in jobs and new homes across the Hunter, and the need for the HDC to help solve problems quickly and create new opportunities across the region. HDC will use the *Hunter Regional Plan 2036: Implementation Plan* as a key tool to ensure agencies and councils are clear on their roles, responsibilities and timeframes for delivery. HDC will continue to oversee the implementation of the Regional Plan to ensure the goals are met.
The Regional Plans identify a number of priority actions to be delivered over the first two years of implementation. These are focused on housing delivery, employment opportunities, improving the vibrancy of communities and conserving the environment.

Nine priority actions have been identified for implementation in 2016-2018. These actions respond to strong representations made in feedback to the draft Regional Plan or are areas where initial investigations or planning is required to establish baseline data for planning and monitoring. These priorities are being overseen by the Hunter Development Corporation and require a collaborative effort involving multiple agencies, councils and stakeholders. Substantial progress has been made on these immediate actions. The focus over the next 12 months will be on completing these actions and continuing to deliver on immediate and short-term actions.

1. **Prepare a metropolitan plan for Greater Newcastle**
   - **Status:** Draft plan released late 2017. Following extensive consultation with stakeholders and investigations, the draft plan was exhibited from late 2017 to early 2018. Submissions made on the draft plan will inform preparation of the final plan and supporting implementation and delivery framework.
   - **Next steps:** Final plan to be delivered in 2018.

2. **Develop and review strategies and masterplans for the Global Gateways and surrounding lands to support their growth and diversification.**
   - **Status:** Strategies are identified in the *Draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036* and incorporated into draft masterplans for the port and airport.
   - **Next steps:** Engage with the port and airport to ensure their respective masterplans align with the final *Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036*.

3. **Prepare a strategy for land along the Hunter Expressway that considers its region-shaping potential.**
   - **Status:** Project commenced as part of the *Draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036*.
   - **Next steps:** More detailed strategy to be completed in 2018.
Investigate new housing opportunities in urban areas to maximise the use of existing infrastructure.

**Status:** Investigation undertaken to support preparation of Draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036.

**Next steps:** The database established through the housing opportunities work will be refined through the Urban Development Program and supported by housing delivery strategies identified in the final Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036.

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Review and finalise the Hunter Special Contributions Plan

**Status:** Consultation on proposed approach undertaken in 2017.

**Next steps:** Determination to be complete in 2018.

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Establish and implement an Employment Lands Development Program to develop data on existing and future planned stocks of employment lands.

**Status:** Employment Land Development Monitor (ELDM) was published late 2017.

**Next steps:** Methodology to update and refine ELDM to be used in 2018 and beyond.

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Take steps to secure the long-term protection of regionally significant biodiversity corridors (led by Office of Environment and Heritage)

**Status:** Commencing 2018, as part of implementation of the new biodiversity legislation.

**Next steps:** The project will be progressed in 2018 through the identification of conservation measures to support biocertification under the new Biodiversity Conservation Act.

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Establish and implement an Urban Development Program to develop data on existing zoned land supply and servicing status of land available, to monitor dwelling production, take up rates and coordinate the staged release and rezoning of land.

**Status:** Consultation undertaken on Urban Development Program process and baseline data.

**Next steps:** Urban Development Program to be established in 2018.

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Develop a local planning toolkit to assist council in implementing the Regional Plan

**Status:** Commenced, to be progressed in 2018.

**Next steps:** The Local Planning Toolkit will be delivered through the provision of additional information to support local planning across NSW, the Hunter Regional Plan 2036 and final Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan.
Highlights
of the leading regional economy in Australia

The Hunter has entered an exciting new phase of growth. The economy is increasingly diversified and positioned to respond to and capitalise on the macro trends affecting the Australian economy, including the ageing population and growing exposure to the global economy.

The focus of the first 12 months has been to enable growth and change in areas that benefit the entire Hunter. These include Greater Newcastle, the port and airport and education, agriculture, mining and tourism industries. Projects supporting the monitoring and delivery of infrastructure and land for housing and employment have also been delivered.

Greater Newcastle

Significant development has occurred over the past 12 months. This has been stimulated in part, by the ongoing Newcastle Mines Grouting Fund ($17m) as well as the $650 million Revitalising Newcastle program. Both programs are activating economic activity and investor confidence and enhancing the public domain and services.

The Newcastle Transport interchange is open and work on the light rail has commenced. Once complete, the light rail will deliver frequent and reliable connections to key activity precincts in the city centre.

The University of Newcastle’s NeW Space campus ($95m) is now open to students and the public, delivering a world-class student experience. NeW Space will continue to attract international students to Greater Newcastle and activate the city centre.

Newcastle Port continues to contribute to the regional economy through the international export of goods and commodities (including grains and coal) from the Hunter and regional NSW. The construction of the new cruise ship terminal is expected to be completed by the end of 2018 and will support the Port’s ongoing growth and diversification.

Newcastle Airport is also strengthening regional tourism and is expected to cater for up to five million annual passengers by 2036. Work is complete on a customs and immigration office fit out to support future international flights.

The new cruise ship terminal and airport upgrades will support the growth of domestic and international visitors to the Hunter Region’s iconic tourist destinations.
The Department of Planning and Environment has released the Draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036 which involved:

- delivery of workshops and meetings with business and industry stakeholders;
- delivery of community outreach events across Greater Newcastle and consultation on the draft plan;
- development of profiles identifying the people, environment and economy of Greater Newcastle;
- hosting a public lecture by Professor Greg Clark and releasing an international case studies report for Greater Newcastle;
- release of the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Strategy – Economic Prospects to 2036, prepared by MacroPlan Dimasi; and
- release of the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan Consultation and Engagement Outcomes Report,

Strategies and masterplans for the Global Gateways (Newcastle Port and Newcastle Airport) and surrounding lands have been advanced through the:

- completion of the Williamtown Defence and Aerospace Related Employment Zone Feasibility Assessment to support the establishment of a defence and aerospace hub;
- masterplanning underway for Newcastle Port and Newcastle Airport to align with the Hunter Regional Plan 2036 and Draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036 and support growth of an internationally competitive economy; and

- Principles for land use planning along the Hunter Expressway have been incorporated into the Draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036, which will protect its role in the national freight network.

The Department of Planning and Environment has investigated housing opportunities within the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Area to identify issues impacting on the delivery of housing and strategies to address these impacts. This work has informed housing strategies in the Draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036 and the establishment of the Urban Development Program.

Preparation of a Hunter Region Special Infrastructure Contribution Plan to provide funding towards delivery of State and regional infrastructure required to support greenfield residential and industrial development has involved:

- exhibition of a Discussion Paper: Hunter Special Infrastructure Contribution Plan;
- consultation with councils, agencies and the development industry;
- analysis of development blockages, staging, servicing and economic viability; and
- preparation and exhibition of the proposed approach for the Special Infrastructure Contribution (SIC).

The Department of Primary Industries has prepared a guideline on identifying important agricultural land. The guideline will be used to identify and map important agricultural land, which will inform planning decisions, local environmental plans and infrastructure investment.
Figure 1: Hunter Regional Plan Strategy Map

- Indicative Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Area
- Metropolitan Centre
- Strategic Centre
- Centre
- Newcastle Airport - Global Gateway
- Newcastle Port - Global Gateway
- Inter-regional Connection
- Biodiversity Corridor
- Railway
- Inter-regional Road
- Major Road
- Residential and Employment Land
- Waterway
The Department of Planning and Environment has established the Employment Land Development Monitor which consists of baseline data and mapping layers which will provide an important tool for ongoing monitoring of employment land and planning decisions that enable job creation.

The Department of Premier and Cabinet has implemented the Upper Hunter Economic Diversification Action Plan to support the ongoing transformation in the Upper Hunter’s economy.

The following projects have been progressed within the Upper Hunter, Muswellbrook, Singleton, Cessnock and Dungog Local Government Areas:

- Muswellbrook Local Environmental Plan 2009 review discussion paper, which was released mid 2017;
- Muswellbrook Town Centre Strategy was released early 2017;
- Endorsement by the Department of Planning and Environment of the Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy 2017; and
- Endorsement by the Department of Planning and Environment of the Branxton Sub-Regional Land Use Plan.

Newcastle Airport was upgraded to facilitate international flights, including the $1.9m customs and immigration office fit out.

Projects have been progressed in the MidCoast Council Local Government Area:

- The ongoing Rural Opportunity Land Use Strategy project, which will inform a new Local Environmental Plan for the MidCoast LGA;
- Planning proposal for the Northern Gateway employment node at Cundletown has been issued with a Gateway determination;
- The Forster Civic Precinct planning proposal was finalised, allowing the development proposal to proceed;
- The Taree City Centre and Manning Hospital Health Precinct projects were initiated;
- The MidCoast Housing Diversity and Affordability Strategy was initiated; and
- Multiple planning proposals for tourism associated development in MidCoast areas such as Diamond Beach and Pacific Palms were progressed.

Venues NSW prepared and exhibited the draft Hunter Sports and Entertainment Precinct Masterplan for Broadmeadow.
The Hunter has a unique natural environment with diverse ecological systems. It comprises World Heritage listed areas and internationally recognised wetlands. Protecting and connecting areas of high environmental value through established green corridors is vital to establishing and sustaining habitat connectivity, water quality and resilience to natural hazards. It is also important to recognise and protect these assets to maintain the region’s identity and the health of its communities.

The focus of the first 12 months has been to establish the basis for strategic biodiversity planning, while continuing to plan for increased resilience.

- The Department of Planning and Environment has worked with Lake Macquarie and Maitland councils to progress planning proposals that address flooding issues.
- The Office of Environment and Heritage progressed the Upper Hunter Strategic Assessment to improve the planning of new or expanded coal mines which have the potential to impact on biodiversity by identifying and addressing important biodiversity issues, before mine applications are lodged.
- The Office of Environment and Heritage is working on the Coastal Management Manual and a toolkit of technical resources and advice for coastal managers.
- The Office of Environment and Heritage is finalising the Coastal Management State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) to integrate and improve current coastal-related SEPPs and ensure that future coastal development is appropriate and sensitive to our coastal environment, and that we maintain public access to beaches and foreshore areas.
- The Office of Environment and Heritage is identifying options for the identification and protection of regionally significant biodiversity corridors within Greater Newcastle and broader Hunter.

'High environmental value’ land criteria have been established. This is an important step to ensure all councils apply consistent mapping criteria for lands of high environmental value. Ultimately, areas of high environmental value will be identified through rezoning processes and new development proposals will avoid, minimise and mitigate the impact of development on significant environmental assets.
The Hunter is characterised by natural features, open space and unique cultural heritage. These assets contribute to the quality of life of the region's communities and lifestyles. The focus has been to deliver local planning outcomes that provide great places to live for the Hunter residents.

The Draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036 recognises the role of transport infrastructure, including active transport, in shaping Greater Newcastle and the broader Hunter. The Department of Planning and Environment is working with councils, the community and other agencies to support initiatives that extend the active transport network, including cycling and walking networks.

The Draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036 seeks to integrate the planning of open space in urban environments to improve neighbourhood amenity, community health and increase active green space.

• The Department of Planning and Environment has issued a gateway for the Cessnock Civic Precinct planning proposal to amend the Cessnock LEP to rezone land in the Cessnock Commercial Precinct for medium density mixed use and to introduce a town square or plaza.

• Newcastle City Council is progressing investigations regarding the Richmond Vale Rail Trail and is continuing to establish evidence to support the necessary approvals for the Shortland to Tarro section.

• Cessnock City Council has finalised the Cessnock Main Street Planning Reform Fund project to encourage more mixed use development and revitalise Cessnock Town Centre.

• The Department of Planning and Environment has commenced preparation of an Urban Design Guide for Regional NSW in collaboration with the Office of the Government Architects NSW.

• The Department of Planning and Environment has worked with Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens, Mid Coast and Newcastle councils to progress planning proposals to reclassify land and enable councils to implement their respective approaches to the management of public land.

• The Department of Planning and Environment worked with Cessnock, Dungog, Lake Macquarie, Maitland and Singleton councils to progress planning proposals that identify and protect heritage values and sites.

Urban Design Guide for Regional NSW

The Department of Planning and Environment in collaboration with the Government Architect NSW has embarked on the preparation of an Urban Design Guide for Regional NSW (the Guide).

The preparation of the Guide is in response to actions in the Regional Plans to prepare guidelines for urban design and healthy built environments. The Department of Planning and Environment is engaging with councils across Regional NSW to better understand the built form and urban design issues in different communities across NSW, and potential responses to these issues through a new Guide. This has included gathering feedback on a range of urban design issues and challenges occurring in different councils through a survey. It is anticipated that the draft Guide will be made available for feedback in 2018.
Highlights of greater housing choice and jobs

Promotion of new housing opportunities in the region through collaboration with councils on local planning work and assisting councils to develop local planning strategies will enable greater housing choice.

Recent amendments to the planning legislation to require councils to prepare Local Strategic Planning Statements provide the means to ensure a line of sight can be drawn between broader housing needs, social character and the creation of greener places. The Department of Planning and Environment will continue to work with councils to translate the Regional Plan’s goals and directions into local strategic plans. Creating the capacity for jobs and housing will continue to be a focus building on the 4,266 residential approvals.

- Development is progressing in a number of locations within the region including the recent release of land at the Farley Urban Release Area, which will ultimately extend across 175 hectares of land.

- The Department of Planning and Environment progressed planning proposals relating to the delivery of more than 500 additional dwellings in Cessnock, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Mid Coast, Newcastle Port Stephens and Singleton councils.

- MidCoast Council is investigating its housing supply across the three previous local government areas (Taree, Great Lakes and Gloucester), to inform local planning for the new local government area.

- The Department of Planning and Environment has worked with both Cessnock and Maitland councils on local planning strategies which will deliver more housing supply and choice.

- The Department of Planning and Environment has established an Employment Lands Development Monitor to provide data on the existing and future planned stocks of employment land, as well as identifying development servicing status.

- The Department of Planning and Environment completed exhibition of the Hunter Special Infrastructure Contribution Plan Discussion Paper and consulted on the proposed approach for the Special Infrastructure Contribution.

- The Department of Planning and Environment delivered a ‘planning for non-planners course’ to several Local Aboriginal Land Councils in the Hunter to improve awareness of the NSW planning system and its implications for the development of land owned by the land councils.
Our agenda for the Hunter Region

Activities that will be progressed over the next 12 months.

The leading regional economy in Australia

- Finalise the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036 and commence implementation on priority actions. (DPE)
- Develop strategies and masterplans for the Global Gateways (Port of Newcastle and Newcastle Airport) and surrounding lands. (DPE)
- Finalise a review of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Three Ports) 2013 to improve its application to the Port of Newcastle. (DPE)
- Apply principles for land use planning along the Hunter Expressway with relevant stakeholders. (DPE)
- Align the final Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036 and the final Greater Newcastle Future Transport supporting plan. (TfNSW, DPE)
- Continue to revitalise the Newcastle City Centre, including continuing construction of the new light rail and leveraging the Newcastle Interchange at Wickham through an expression of interest for adjoining sites. (Council, DPE)
- Identify important agricultural land and guide its application through local planning. Dungog, Muswellbrook and MidCoast Council will use this information to identify rural economic opportunities and local planning responses. (DOI, Council)
- Implement the Upper Hunter Economic Diversification Action Plan (DPC):
  - Publish and refine the Employment Land Development Monitor to inform investment decision support tools. (DPE)
  - Review the Upper Hunter Strategic Regional Land Use Plan to identify outstanding actions. (DPE)
  - Complete the review of the Synoptic Plan: Integrated Landscapes for Coal Mine Rehabilitation in the Hunter Valley (1999), in conjunction with the Upper Hunter Strategic Biodiversity Assessment to ensure best practice rehabilitation and visual impact management for closed mines. (DPC)
- Assist Upper Hunter, Muswellbrook and Singleton councils to establish the Upper Hunter Economic Development Corporation. (HDC, Council)
- Begin implementation of the review into the Muswellbrook Local Environmental Plan 2009. (Muswellbrook Council)
- Facilitate the Taree City Centre and Manning Hospital Health Precinct project. (Midcoast Council)
- Continue planning for the New England Highway transport corridor. (TfNSW)
- Deliver a scenic analysis of the Hunter Valley vineyards which will inform the ongoing protection of the vineyard’s landscape amenity. (DPE, Council)
- Develop a new planning strategy for Nelson Bay to support its ongoing role as a tourist destination. (Port Stephens Council)
• Finalise the Hunter Sports and Entertainment Precinct Masterplan at Broadmeadow and prepare an implementation plan and strategic business case. (Venues NSW)

• Commence a review of the Lower Hunter Water Plan. (DOI Water, Hunter Water Councils)

• Coordinate a region wide list of economic and housing enabling infrastructure. (HDC)

A biodiversity-rich natural environment

• Identify and protect regionally significant biodiversity corridors within the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Area, and investigate options for biocertification of new housing areas. (OEH, Council, DPE)

• Progress the Upper Hunter Strategic Assessment to provide certainty to the biodiversity outcomes associated with mining activity in the Upper Hunter. (DPC, OEH)

• Continue consultation with Hunter Water Corporation for planning proposals within the drinking water catchment, particularly in relation to Medowie and Grahamstown Dam. (DPE, Council)

• Progress the Hydro, Kurri Kurri planning proposal which will improve access between Cliftleigh/Kurri Kurri and Gillieston Heights during flooding. (DPE, Cessnock Council)

Thriving communities

• Prepare an Urban Design Guide for Regional NSW, including best practice guidance for creating healthy built environments. (DPE)

• Deliver the Cessnock Civic Precinct planning proposal which seeks to revitalise the Cessnock CBD. (Cessnock Council)

• Prepare the Fern Bay/North Stockton land use strategy which seeks to foster new development, improve connectivity and community facilities and examine options for the creation of a commercial centre. (Port Stephens and Newcastle councils)

• Progress the Newcastle Rail Corridor planning proposal to enable the renewal and reuse of the former heavy rail corridor land. (DPE, UrbanGrowth)

• Develop a Greater Newcastle Sport and Recreation Facilities Plan. (NSW Office of Sport)
Greater housing choice and jobs

- Exhibit the *draft Hunter Region Special Infrastructure Contribution* (SIC) to define an appropriate financial contribution that new development should make towards the cost of infrastructure. (DPE)

- Finalise the outcomes of the investigation into housing opportunities within the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Area and finalise the Hunter Urban Development Program. (DPE)

- Prepare a Local Planning Toolkit by finalising local housing strategy guidelines and a standard template, continuing to improve online guidance for local strategic and statutory planning. (DPE)

- Release the Employment Land Development Monitor to improve understanding of the servicing status and constraints impacting on delivery of zoned and underdeveloped employment land. (DPE)

- Finalise the Anambah Investigation Area planning proposal which will provide a range of dwelling types and lot sizes, producing up to 3,000 dwellings and a new neighbourhood centre. (DPE, Maitland Council)

- Finalise the Mosbri Crescent and Kitchener Parade (The Hill) planning proposal which will produce up to 190 infill dwellings on the former television studio site. (DPE, Newcastle Council)

- Progress the Hydro, Kurri Kurri planning proposal which will provide up to 190 hectares of employment land for a mix of general and heavy industry. (DPE, Cessnock Council)
For more information about the Hunter Region, see our current reports at:
Plans-for-your-area/Regional-Plans

**Hunter Regional Plan 2036**
Reviewed every 5 years

**Hunter Implementation Plan 2016-2018**
Updated and released every 2 years

**Hunter Monitoring Report 2018**
Released every year