

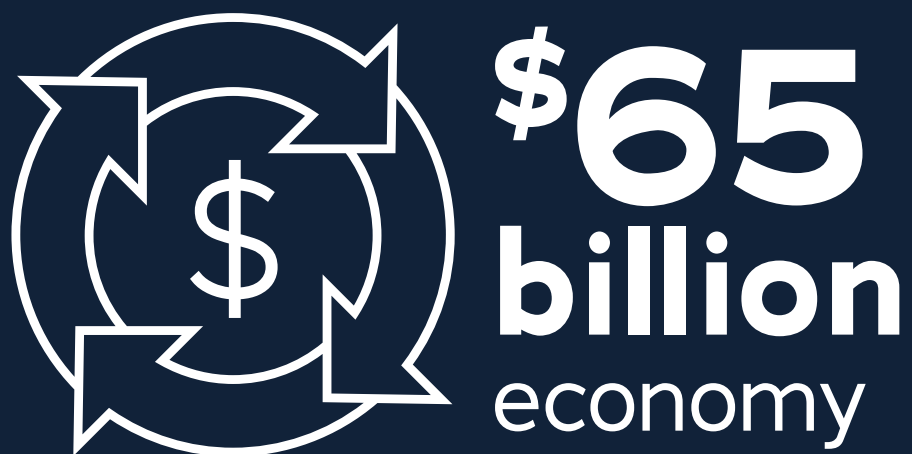
COMMITTEE
FOR THE
HUNTER

HUNTER 2023: A NEW ENERGY

Invitation to lead the most exciting
growth frontier in Australia



THE HUNTER IN 2023



NEW International Airport

1.27 million
passengers
A YEAR



Home to **Australia's largest**
electricity
users & greenhouse gas emitters

\$71.3 billion
trade
through Port of Newcastle



\$84.1
GRP per person

\$80.1
AUSTRALIAN
GRP per person



University of Newcastle
World-class top
200
University



28%
of regional NSW's
total
economic
output

2
defence
bases



4,000
personnel
+ their families



UP
TO **60%**
NSW **electricity**
generation
capacity



10M+
p.a. visitors injecting
\$3.2B IN
THE
economy

10
Councils



- Cessnock
- Dungog
- Lake Macquarie
- Maitland
- MidCoast
- Muswellbrook
- Newcastle
- Port Stephens
- Singleton
- Upper Hunter

6 Federal
Electorates

- Newcastle
- Lyne
- Hunter
- New England
- Shortland
- Paterson

Population 2021
774,587

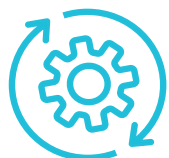


THERE IS A NEW ENERGY IN THE HUNTER



AUSTRALIA'S LARGEST REGIONAL ECONOMY

- Partner of significant scale and capacity in delivering national priorities
- Big enough to experience the benefits and challenges of a large economy and population, smart enough to create solutions for the world



EMBRACING DISRUPTION WITH AN ORIGIN STORY LIKE NO OTHER

- Transforming our industrial and coal foundations into a diverse and highly specialised economy
- Driving Australia's clean energy and low carbon future, with hands-on opportunities to make a difference on the most significant challenge of our generation



A SMART REGION WHERE PEOPLE ARE OUR MOST IMPORTANT RESOURCE

- Our unique innovation signature is applied and technical
- Education, research, industry and government colocated, accelerating innovation, enterprise and partnerships between Australia and the region.
- Envious liveability and affordability for our talent

THE HUNTER: THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S PARTNER OF SCALE & CAPACITY

The Hunter is a \$65 billion economy entering transition. Despite these challenges, the region's future is one of growth and optimism. Investment demand is high across a diverse range of sectors and population growth has surpassed projections.

The past decade has seen stronger investment in the region. However the level of focus and funding has not reflected the Hunter's size, strategic significance or economic contribution.

Ultimately this comes at great opportunity cost to the nation. We are a partner of significant scale and capacity in delivering national priorities, including secure jobs, climate and clean energy, manufacturing and industry, regional economic transitions, and housing.

This region is not asking for a handout or a 'fair share'. With our size, assets and competitive advantages, there is natural momentum in our growth and capacity for much, much more.

We are inviting the Australian Government to partner with the region to scale and accelerate this growth to provide more to the economy and communities during a time of considerable disruption and tight budgets.

The Committee presents a set of advocacy priorities to the Australian Government for focus over the term. These initiatives have been identified through significant consultation, evidence and expert advice.

One dollar spent in the Hunter will deliver more benefits, quicker and at scale than any other place in Australia

They have been selected because they:

- Support the diversification and sustainability of the Hunter economy
- Deliver significant employment, economic and social benefits
- Promote equitable development, benefiting communities across the Hunter region and beyond
- Leverage significant partner funding
- Align with and deliver national priorities
- Enjoy stakeholder support.

These priorities align to the Committee for the Hunter's Strategic Plan; the key industries identified for development, the policy, planning and key issues that cut across all sectors of the economy and geography of the region, and the outcomes we want to achieve for our region.

A JOINED UP AGENDA FOR THE HUNTER

Consistent themes have emerged through the identification of regionally significant priorities:

- **For continuity between terms of government**, not reinventing the wheel. The region is significantly aligned on what needs to be done and the foundations are in place. It's about making it happen while providing stability for business and councils to coordinate their resources and multiply the impact of government policy and funding.
- There are a few new priorities. The focus is to **deliver on commitments** made especially where projects have stalled, and for funding, projects and benefits to hit the ground.
- **Shared infrastructure and precincts** continue to be priorities for public investment to deliver on Federal goals in the Hunter. Complementary policy and programs that leverage and extend the benefits from existing capital commitments are also proposed.

The Committee has not prepared a wish list of ad hoc projects. We know we get better outcomes when public investment is coordinated across departments, levels of government and sectors in a long-term plan for the Hunter's future

The Hunter has the burning platform to galvanise stakeholders into a coherent, urgent plan of action. The calls to arms are clear as our large economy enters structural adjustment, and energy security and a safe climate depend on what happens in the Hunter.

We present three unifying concepts that connect priorities and provide focus for a **New Partnership** between governments, with the diversification of the Hunter economy at the centre of this deal.

There is significant overlap between these opportunities – that's what makes the recommended actions priorities. If actioned as an integrated program, the prize for Australia is substantial.

A POPULATION OF ONE MILLION AND BEYOND

Population growth in the Hunter continues to exceed NSW projections. There is capacity for further growth that doesn't rely on high rises or cutting down every tree. But growing pains such as housing affordability, congestion, overcrowding and inadequate services must be managed so we get the benefits that come with scale and resident's quality of life is not diminished.

There can be a far bolder vision for the Hunter economy and population than current planning documents indicate. Instead of a 'predict-and-provide' approach to planning and infrastructure, there is an opportunity to set an ambition for a bigger, better Hunter and prioritise what is needed to achieve this.

The Newcastle to Sydney fast rail project may not be the most urgent project on the Hunter's list of priorities. Our region is relatively self-contained and benefits from proximity to Sydney but is not dependent on it. Reducing the time between these city-regions will continue to benefit both places and NSW.

If planned and delivered smartly, fast rail will not only reduce travel times. It can be truly region-shaping and set the structure for a population of over one million in the Hunter and more diversified economy. That's what makes it one of the most important projects on the agenda.

A Hunter interchange will establish a new or renewed centre west of Newcastle, connecting workforce across the region to a dense, knowledge jobs-rich precinct. Fast rail will catalyse a necessary restructure of the Hunter transport system across modes to improve services across the region. The development capacity of surrounding suburbs and connected centres will lift, providing opportunities for new housing linked to jobs, education and services. A commitment to Net Zero in construction and operations will promote the Hunter region as a global centre for clean energy and technology, and provide opportunities for local producers, suppliers and service providers.

Fast rail offers a scaled-up framework that gives coherency to diverse Hunter priorities and provides a vehicle for their planning and delivery.

LINKED PRIORITIES



A PLACE-BASED INNOVATION AGENDA FOR THE EMERGING CLEAN ECONOMY

The Hunter is a centre of innovation and can do more heavy lifting to improve productivity and living standards. It is big enough to experience the benefits and challenges of a large economy and population, and smart enough to create solutions for the world. The region's unique innovation advantage is technical and applied, while we are also a leader in service improvement for example regional health.

Global shifts to sustainability, renewable energy and Net Zero are increasing demand for innovation, particularly clean technology.

The NSW Innovation and Productivity Council found that the environmental goods and services sector is growing at a faster rate than the wider economy. Much of demand is from our global trading partners. This is playing out profoundly in the Hunter through the \$100 billion response to the Renewable Energy Zone EOI, visits from international delegations and clean tech manufacturers establishing here to service domestic and global markets.

The Hunter, with the world's largest coal export port and national dominance in energy R&D, is already a global energy superpower engaged in discussions with our trading partners on what comes next. The question is how much of the growing international demand for clean energy and technology do we want to capture?

A knowledge-based economy requires a different investment than a resource-led economy

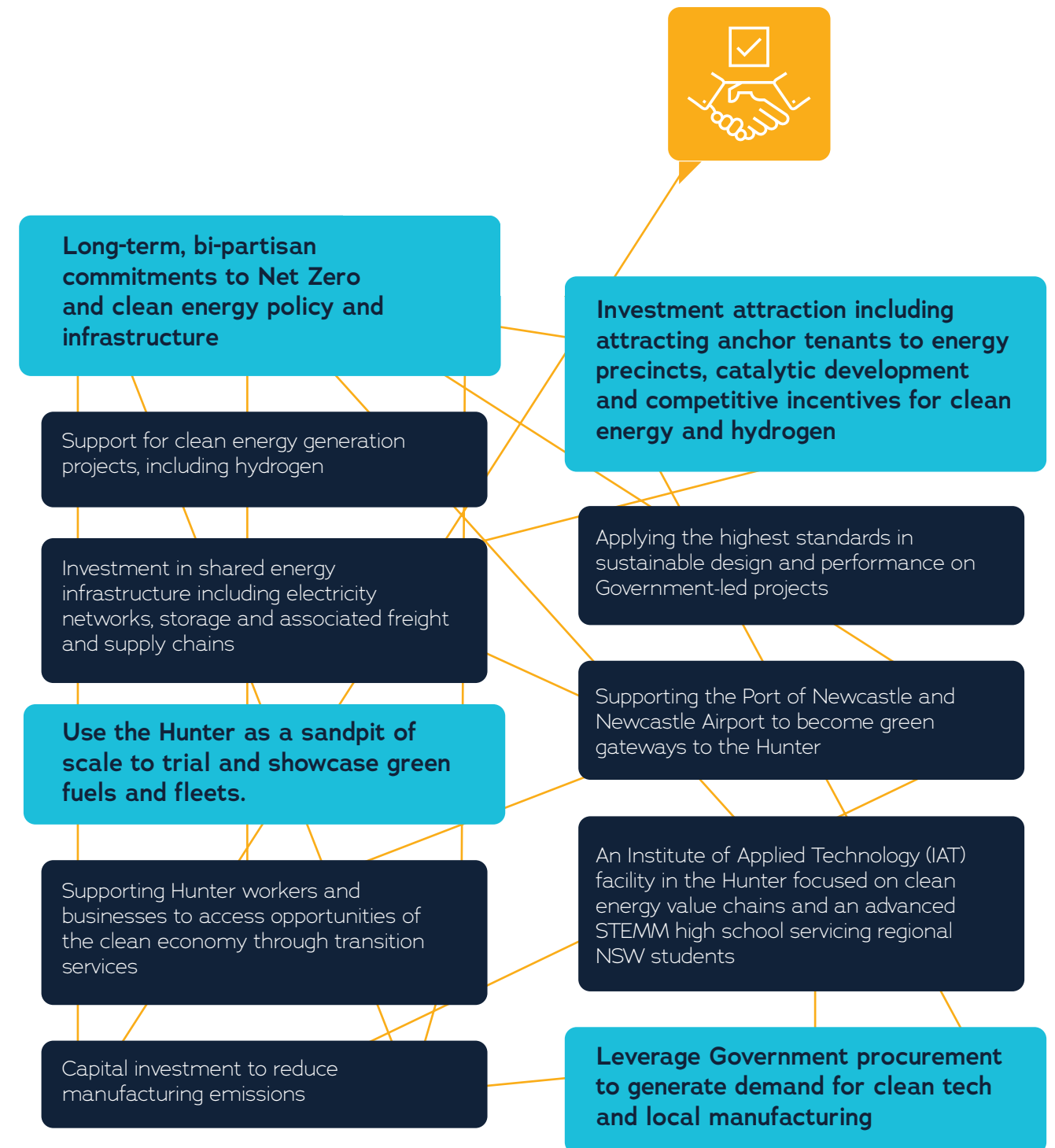
People – their ideas and ingenuity – are the most important asset for innovation. Making the Hunter a better place to live than other places is now a matter of economic imperative as we engage in a global war for talent. This includes retention of our youth.

By making the Hunter a great place to live for residents, others will want to be part of it.

Many initiatives recommended here will improve quality of life for existing communities and new residents. This includes investment in a strong culture and entertainment scene, affordable housing, better public transport, cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, a world-class and connected airport, providing strong education services, and improving the amenity of town centres.

LINKED PRIORITIES

A new place-based innovation agenda centred on clean technology and industry is created by joining the dots across priorities in the Hunter. If implemented as a complementary program, this would **position the Hunter and NSW as a global leader in the emerging clean economy:**



A PLAN FOR ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

The Hunter is a \$65 billion economy entering structural adjustment as the contribution of coal to the regional economy declines over time. Over 17,000 jobs in coal mining and energy generation are impacted, along with thousands more in businesses in supply chains.

The task is to create new demand for labour in a diverse range of sectors the Hunter is good at. This includes the engine industries of competitive advantage – health, education, destination, defence and clean energy where skills are readily transferable, and strengthening enabling industries like research and knowledge services, manufacturing, freight and logistics, and construction to service the economy.

The Hunter economy is already diverse and growing. However, the scale and speed of the transition from coal to the new economy exceeds local and national experience.

Valuable assets established by coal industries over decades are being released over time, available to be strategically harnessed for economic development. This includes our international seaport, water licences, land, skilled workforce, energy precincts, infrastructure and transport corridors.

The Hunter will make it through, as it has in previous adjustments. The question is will we make it as good as the opportunity and the scale of our assets offered?

Job losses are not inevitable. That will only occur with a failure of leadership. We should be working towards a multiplication of jobs currently occupied by coal industries. This is only achievable with a vision, plan, and partnerships across levels of government, sectors and the community.

Many initiatives in this agenda provide the pillars for such a plan.

There is strong dialogue in the region and nationally on the role of 'transition authorities'

The focus of the Committee's advice has been on function rather than the type of entity, noting administrative reforms like City Deals have also been effective in aligning priorities and investment across levels of government in a long term place-based plan:

- Don't slow things down in the establishment of institutions, further studies and planning. The region already knows what needs to happen and many activities are underway. Cut through and coordination is what's required now.
- Coordinate fragmented initiatives already underway across departments, levels of government and the private sector to get better efficiencies and outcomes.
- Focus on gaps and opportunities that fall through borders and sector boundaries and are only identified through a higher order lens.
- Set a long-term vision for the Hunter's transformation and commitments to provide direction and certainty for the private sector and the ten councils of the Hunter to back in resources.
- Strengthen the role of expert advice and evidence in informing new policy and picking project winners, because when priorities are based on merit the Hunter will always be at the front of the queue.
- Minimise the noise of politics that only serve to undermine the credibility of decisions, the long-term interests of the Hunter and nation, and diminish public support.

LINKED PRIORITIES



HUNTER PRIORITIES

For the Australian Government over the term

The Committee for the Hunter's [2023-26 Strategic Plan](#) outlines our distinct role to work across stakeholders to identify regional priorities and advocate to all levels of government, political parties and leaders with a unified voice.

The Committee is also an independent think tank, providing an independent view of priorities.

Our unique focus is regionally significant priorities that cut across sectors to deliver long-term ambitions for the Hunter, and require collaborative approaches across industry, business, community leaders and governments.

Our advice is supported by consultation across our members and stakeholders, evidence and expert advice.

AFFORDABLE HOMES FOR ALL

Opportunity

The Hunter is experiencing a jobs and population boom, and new homes aren't keeping up with demand.

This is driving higher house and rent prices, increasing inequality. It is also undermining a key competitive advantage the region has over other places, impeding access to workforce and the Hunter's capacity to meet strong job demand.

Reforms to planning and infrastructure are underway to prevent this situation in the future, but urgent funding is needed now to reduce the backlog of homes.

Solution

- ✓ Direct Government investment to increase the stock of social, affordable and crisis housing.
- ✓ \$500 million Hunter fund to unlock 40,000 homes held up by transport infrastructure delays.

Alignment

- 🎯 The National Housing and Homelessness Plan
- 🎯 National Housing Supply and Affordability Council
- 🎯 Housing Australia Future Fund
- 🎯 Regional First Home Buyer Support Scheme



CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Opportunity

As the Hunter population and economy continues to grow and diversify, transport will need to keep up with demands or risk the competitiveness and liveability that give this region an edge.

Governments have made commitments to enhance and build capacity in the Hunter's transport networks. Some of these projects have stalled. It's time to expedite these good initiatives, and for communities to see funding, projects and benefits roll out on the ground.

Public transport was identified as a key issue for young people in the Hunter, impeding access to education, jobs and services.

The transport sector is the second highest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in NSW. The Hunter offers a sandpit of scale to trial network solutions to hydrogen fleets, electric vehicles, green fuels and active transport.

Solution

- ✓ Work with the State Government to accelerate delivery of projects:
 - M1 to Raymond Terrace
 - Muswellbrook and Singleton bypasses
 - Lower Hunter Freight Corridor
 - Fast Rail and high speed rail planning
 - Mandalong Road, Morisset
- ✓ Federal funding for State transport projects to be leveraged to drive planning and reform, including:
 - An integrated and sequenced plan for public transport improvements on current and future networks.
 - Emissions reductions from the transport sector.
 - Development of a Hunter Valley emergency management strategy and Strategic Business Case to inform Federal priorities for transport upgrades to enhance access to regional evacuation routes, supply chains and emergency responders.
- ✓ Trial and showcase green fuels and fleets.
- ✓ Partner with councils on a program of upgrades to create a world-class pedestrian and cycling network for residents and visitors.
- ✓ Enhance digital connectivity and service levels.

Alignment

- 🎯 Transport infrastructure programs
- 🎯 National Land Transport Network
- 🎯 National Transport Commission



BRING EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT RATES ON PARITY

Opportunity

Australia's ability to compete in the post-COVID economy depends on a smart and skilled workforce. The Hunter's workforce is one of the nation's best assets, along with a world-class university. Our specialisation is applied and technical.

There is unmet demand for tertiary educated workers across all sectors in the Hunter. The task is to grow and retain our local workforce, and attract new talent to the region.

Tertiary education levels are one of the bluntest indicators of success in regional economies. A quality education system is also a significant factor in attracting working families necessary to meet labour demand.

However high school completions and tertiary education rates remain stubbornly below Australian averages. This disparity is not explained by the Hunter being particularly remote, small or lacking in resources.

Accessibility is frequently raised as a barrier to education by young people in the Hunter.

The Australian and NSW Governments must urgently partner with industry, business, education and research institutions to bring educational outcomes of Hunter communities on parity and build the workforce our changing economy needs.

Solution

- ✓ Institute of Applied Technology to strengthen the delivery of education and training in the region and create a pipeline of job-ready graduates in clean energy value and associated industries.
- ✓ \$3 million p.a. STEMM Academy - a comprehensive high school co-located at the University of Newcastle, servicing regional NSW students with a focus on advanced STEMM including clean energy industries.
- ✓ Leverage Commonwealth commitments to improve education in the Hunter to secure State commitments including TAFE reform and the provision of more fully funded TAFE places targeting growth industries.

Alignment

- 🎯 Job-Ready Graduates Package
- 🎯 National Innovation and Science Agenda
- 🎯 Education Ministers Meeting
- 🎯 Microcredentials Pilot in Higher Education
- 🎯 Regional Education Commissioner
- 🎯 Fee-Free TAFE
- 🎯 National Skills Agreement



POSITION THE HUNTER AS A GLOBAL CENTRE FOR CLEAN TECHNOLOGY AND INDUSTRY

Opportunity

Home to the largest energy users and emissions intensive businesses in the nation, Australia's clean energy and low carbon future depends on the Hunter. The delivery of essential clean energy generation, transmission and storage infrastructure for the National Energy Market obviously relies upon the Hunter given our proximity, gateways and technology.

Clean energy is one of the largest and fastest growing sectors for incoming investment enquiries in the region. \$100 billion of clean energy project proposals were submitted in the EOI for the Hunter Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone. As a major global energy provider, the Hunter is primed to capture significant world-wide demand for clean energy and technology.

These challenges and opportunities have been recognised by both the Australian and NSW governments, with several programs and funding targeting the Hunter. Continuity is essential between terms of government to provide confidence to the private sector to invest off the back of public funding, along with coordination between levels of government.

The scale of the opportunity warrants more focus, resourcing and urgency if the Hunter is to compete with other regions around the world for trade and investment in this fast-growing, high value, trade exposed sector.

Solution

- ✓ Strengthen and accelerate implementation of commitments to clean energy, hydrogen, Net Zero and industry decarbonisation policy and programs.
- ✓ Help secure co-funding and streamlined planning pathways from the NSW Government to unlock the Commonwealth's \$100 million commitment to the Energy Precinct at the Port of Newcastle.
- ✓ Prioritise the decarbonisation of heavy industry and manufacturing, including funding for plants, equipment and shared infrastructure, where low emission pathways are not yet at scale or commercial.
- ✓ Continued support for hydrogen projects' feasibility studies and business cases, followed by capital investment in plants, equipment and shared infrastructure as projects move to delivery.
- ✓ Full leverage of Government procurement policy to support local industry participation in clean manufacturing, clean tech and circular economy.
- ✓ Co-invest with regional partners in a world-class investment attraction and business concierge service for clean energy tech and related industry, along with a talent attraction campaign. The scale of the opportunity warrants more focus, resourcing and urgency if the Hunter is to compete for workers, trade and investment.
- ✓ Consider further incentive schemes for investment in hydrogen projects and value chains. The US Inflation Reduction Act 2022 introduces generous subsidies that give it a competitive advantage in attracting hydrogen producers and equipment makers to produce the lowest-cost green hydrogen on the global market.

Alignment

- 🎯 Paris Agreement
- 🎯 National Reconstruction Fund
- 🎯 Powering Australia
- 🎯 National Hydrogen Strategy
- 🎯 Future Fuels Strategy
- 🎯 Offshore Renewable Energy Infrastructure
- 🎯 National Battery Strategy

UNLOCK INTERNATIONAL GATEWAYS

Opportunity

Ports and airports are vital assets for economic development. The Hunter is endowed with both a deepwater port and an international airport which anchor the region's growth and diversification, and NSW trade.

With funding for the runway and terminal upgrades at Newcastle Airport along with the Williamstown Special Activation Precinct, and a pathway to containerised exports and imports at the Port of Newcastle, the Hunter's future is global and connected. These gateways to the Hunter are also planning to be green.

This region understands the extent of the opportunity and is proactively collaborating on what we can do to leverage these significant downpayments.

To realise the full value of these investments requires governments to partner with regional stakeholders on targeted priorities.

Solution

- ✓ Assurances from an incoming NSW Government that NSW Parliament's decision to remove impediments to the \$2.4 billion Container Terminal at the Port of Newcastle will be honoured, allowing the agreed legislative process to continue.
- ✓ Work with the NSW Government to expedite the program of passenger and freight connections to Newcastle Airport and associated Williamstown Special Activation Precinct in time for when international services are operational and making them intuitive for users, including M1 to Raymond Terrace, Nelson Bay Rd, Cabbage Tree Rd, Tomago Rd and public transport services.
- ✓ \$4 million over three years for a route attraction and global marketing campaign, promoting the new international Newcastle Airport.
- ✓ Support for green infrastructure and equipment at the Newcastle Airport international terminal and for airport operations.
- ✓ Future Federal funding for the National Land Transport Network to be informed by a revised NSW Freight and Ports Strategy that incorporates a container terminal at the Port of Newcastle and the new international Newcastle Airport.
- ✓ In partnership with the NSW Government, we are asking for leadership to develop a future-focussed freight and supply chain strategy and sequenced infrastructure plan for the Hunter region that:
 - Services a more diverse industry base, improves linkages between key industrial precincts, international gateways and domestic markets, and expands export capabilities for manufacturers and producers.
 - identifies shared infrastructure requirements and sequences priorities to coordinate public and private investment.
 - reserves and protects critical freight corridors and functions from incompatible development while reducing road movements through urban areas and prioritising rail.
 - explores options for network solutions to green fleets, fuels and circular economy.
 - examines governance options for coordination of a diverse and integrated freight, logistics and supply chain in planning, development and operations. The Hunter Valley Coal Chain Coordinator demonstrates the benefits of an independent body overseeing large and complex supply chains in partnership with producers and service providers.
- ✓ Make a decision on a potential East Coast Submarine base at the Port of Newcastle.

Alignment

- 🎯 National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy
- 🎯 Road and Rail programs
- 🎯 Aviation Programs
- 🎯 NSW Freight and Ports Plan



SUPPORT COAL COMMUNITIES TO DIVERSIFY

Opportunity

The communities of the Hunter region and their businesses are affected more than most as the world moves to low carbon energy and Net Zero. With the right support, these communities and their local economies will strengthen and become more resilient through change.

As the contribution of coal to the national economy declines over time, valuable assets including precincts, buffer land, infrastructure, transport, water licences and workforce are being released in the Hunter.

These can be strategically harnessed to grow local business and jobs in industries the Hunter is good at, including clean energy and resources, manufacturing, education and research as well as circular economy.

Adaptive reuse of mining sites and coal fired power plants has been recognised as a regional priority. Positive advancements include provisions for partial relinquishment of mine leases and the Waratah Super Battery at Munmorah Power Station. It remains a complex and evolving area where there is strong support from stakeholders to refine, balancing certainty for asset owners and lessees, maintaining strong rehabilitation and environmental conditions, and providing flexible opportunities for economic development on established infrastructure. This is something the region will need to get good at.

Solution

- ✓ Augment company worker transition programs and establish a central SME transition service, equipping affected communities and businesses to access new industry opportunities and jobs.
- ✓ Showcase keystone sites for adaptive reuse of mining lands, coal fired power plants and related buffer lands.
- ✓ Strategic assessment of coal transport corridors and adjacent lands to augment for future freight, passenger, industry or tourism purposes as industry needs change, including the ARTC network.
- ✓ Funding for the urban renewal and activation of centres in Upper Hunter Councils, and LGAs directly affected by changes in coal industries.

Alignment

- 🎯 National Reconstruction Fund
- 🎯 Net Zero Economy Taskforce

ABOUT THE COMMITTEE FOR THE HUNTER

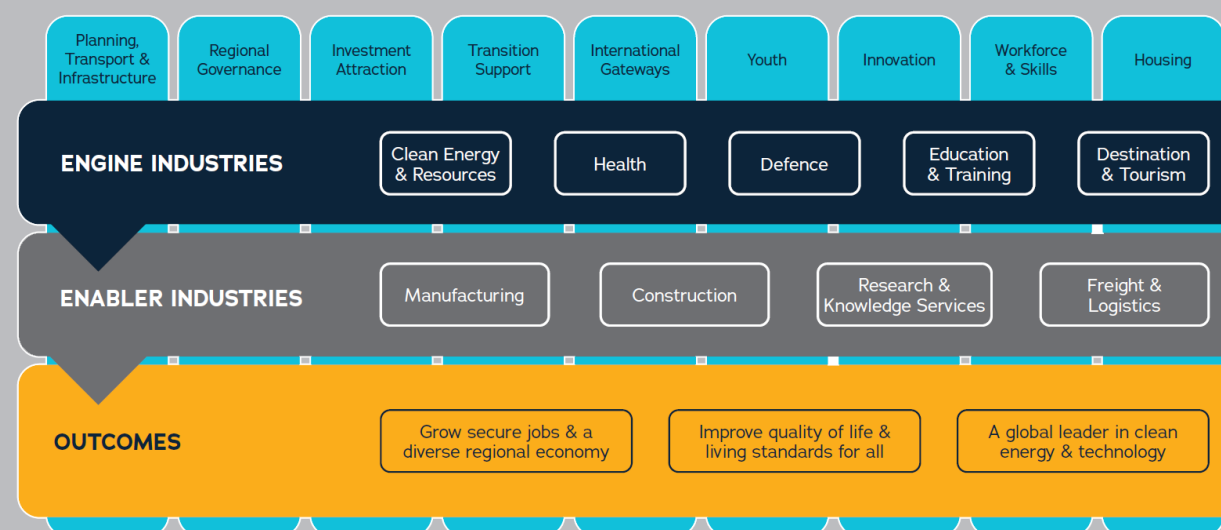
The Committee for the Hunter is an independent and inclusive champion for the people of the Greater Hunter and their enterprises.

Representing over 70 organisations including some of the largest employers and institutions in the region, we come together with a shared interest in building a sustainable, prosperous and equitable future for our region. The Committee delivers through advocacy on regionally significant priorities, thought leadership and partnerships.

The Committee for the Hunter brings together leaders from business, industry, government and the community who are committed to reaching agreement across disparate interests and advocating for the region as a whole.

With a unified voice, the region signals to our partners that we are strategic, organised and collaborating on our future, united in our approach to generate enterprise and investment for the benefit of all.

OUR STRATEGIC FOCUS



For more information about the Committee and our priorities for the Hunter contact Alice Thompson at:

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