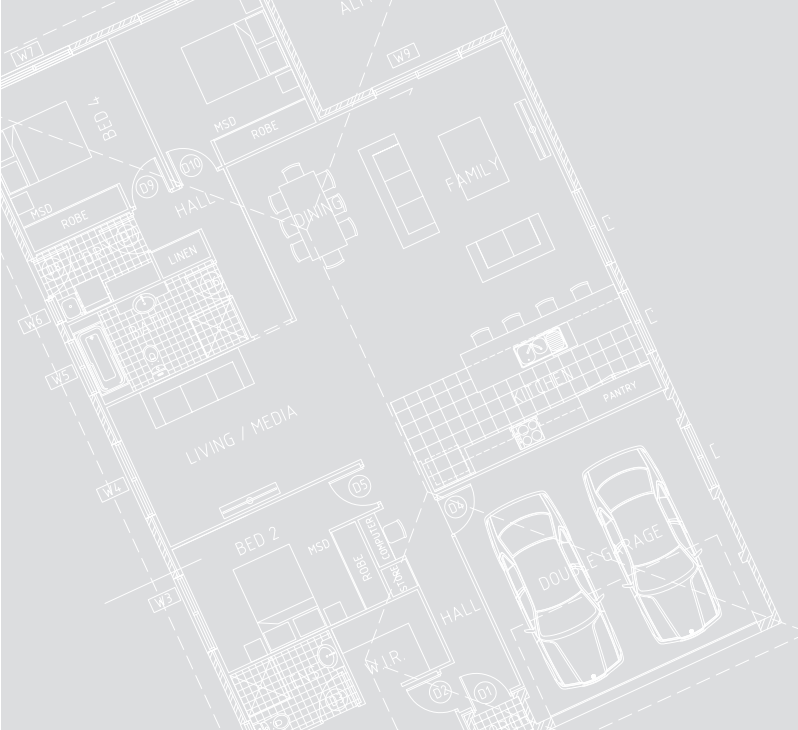


THE HUNTER REGION



made for living

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The Hunter Region – Overview

Population

The Hunter region of New South Wales is an impressive economic growth story that spans over 200 years, the last ten of which could be described as the most spectacular. With a population of over 610,000, it is the largest regional area in Australia and home to more people than the state of Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory or the Gold Coast. The last decade has seen strong population growth as people relocate to the region from other parts of Australia. Covering an area of 31,000 square kilometres, the Hunter is administered by eleven local government councils centred on the City of Newcastle. It has emerged from a largely industrial, coal and wine producing past to become the diverse industrial base, with its rapidly growing services and commercial sectors, that it is today.



Natural Resources

The Hunter is rich in natural resources with proven potential for ongoing economic and population growth. The landscape provides an extensive contrast in environments, from highly urbanised areas, to extensive rugged mountain ranges to the coastal and estuarine environments of the Hunter River and Lake Macquarie. Similarly, there is a sense of place that binds and creates a healthy and vibrant community. With such attractions, this ensures that the Hunter can continue to be a place of strong population and economic growth.

Competitive Advantages

Being the sixth largest urban area in Australia and one of the State's major centres of economic activity, The Hunter is responsible for 60% of the states power generation and it maintains presents on the world stage in Tourism, Winery and Equine industries and is home to the largest coal port by tonnage in the world. Attracted by its lifestyle and opportunities people in the Hunter continue to thrive and represent an area in demand and a viable form of investment.

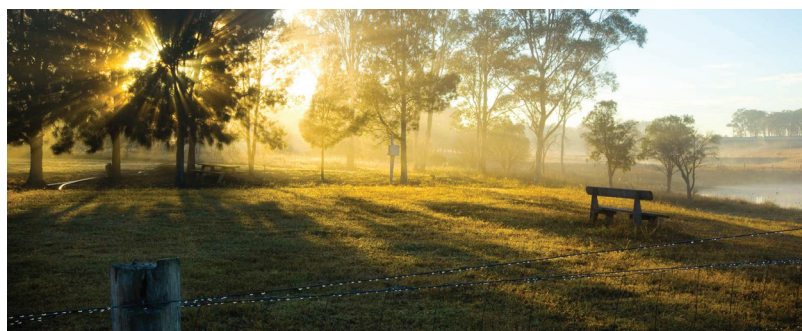
The Hunter Valley & its capital of Newcastle have successfully shaken off their Steel City image, transforming into a vibrant, innovative, sophisticated and diverse place in which to live and work. The transformation is ongoing & shows no signs of slowing, during the past few years the Hunter has experienced unprecedented growth across all sectors of its economy!

The Hunter Economy

The Hunter currently comprises around 8% of economic activity in New South Wales, with regional output of approximately \$36.9 billion in 2012 — making it Australia's largest regional economy.

The Hunter economy has quite distinct industry bases. With strong foundations in mining and agriculture it has also undergone substantial structural changes over the past two decades, including considerable expansion in broad service sectors.

In an overall sense, the Hunter economy is projected to grow by nearly 75% with output of around \$64.8 billion in 2036. Average annual growth for the region over the next two decades is around 2.4%. Economic performance is projected to be similar across the upper and lower Hunter regions and is higher than the rest of New South Wales where annual economic growth is expected to be around 2.1% over the same period. Importantly, the economic advancement of the Hunter over this period will involve a steady rise of incomes and living standards.



Employment Drivers

Power Generation

The Hunter is a vital asset to NSW and the entire east coast of Australia having four power stations that generate over 60 per cent of the State's electricity and 15% of the total eastern seaboard. The Hunter's power generation industry currently employs approximately 2,200 people. It is a major contributor to meeting the electricity needs of NSW, with 5 major coal-fired power stations generating the cheapest electricity in Australia. It is this that has attracted manufacturing industry to the region, including aluminium producers. Macquarie Generation, located 14 kilometres south of Muswellbrook is the largest electricity generator in Australia, producing 40 per cent of the power for NSW.



Macquarie Generation is proposing to construct 75km in pipelines to supply mine waste methane gas as supplementary fuel to Liddell Power Station. The gas would be collected from nearby Hunter Valley underground coal mines. The project would provide mines with the means to dispose of methane gas, therefore reducing the greenhouse gas impact and enable Macquarie Generation to use the gas for electricity generation. It says: "The proposal would be the first known large-scale implementation of supplementary methane gas fuel in an Australian coal-fired power station." The company has invested \$50 million to upgrade water treatment facilities at Bayswater Power Station to improve the reliability of Liddell and Bayswater Power Stations.

Liddell Power Station has undergone a \$100 million technology upgrade to provide additional capacity and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. By replacing all the generating unit turbines, efficiency of the power station is improved about 3% (therefore producing more electricity from the same amount of coal). A major new power station is now in planning, with Macquarie planning to spend \$2 billion creating the Bayswater B power station. The State Government announced in October 2009 it was backing the 2000mw facility, which will be fired by either gas or coal. In March 2010 the State Government announced formal approval for the new power station

Coal

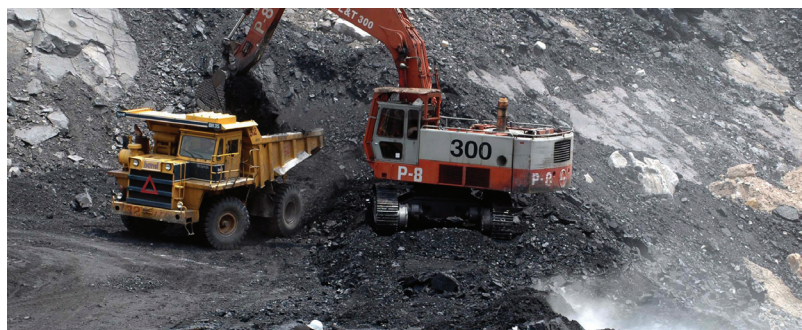
The Hunter is home to a \$10 billion a year coal industry and 121 million tonnes exported annually. Having a vast array of different natural resources the Hunter is also responsible for production of over 36% of Australia's Aluminium with a host of current and proposed projects in the pipeline.

Projects include the \$1.1 billion Mangoola coal mine development (formerly known as Anvil Hill) near Muswellbrook in the Hunter Valley. The mine will be one of the largest in NSW, generating 10.5 million tonnes of coal a year for the next two decades. Construction of the mine will create 400 jobs, with 300 personnel required for the ongoing operation.

Xstrata says a further 700 jobs will be created indirectly by the development. The mine will be an open-cut operation on 3,700ha about 20km west of Muswellbrook. The coal reserve is estimated to contain 150 million tonnes. The project has long-term contracts to supply 30 million tonnes to Macquarie Generation's Bayswater and Liddell power stations for 12 years.

Xstrata started its Early Works program at the start of 2009 and says the construction phase will be completed early in 2012. Xstrata has other coal interests in the Hunter Valley, most clustered near Muswellbrook and Singleton. There are potentially major economic benefits from coal seam gas in the nearby Gunnedah Basin. The backers of a \$1 billion coal seam gas export terminal in Newcastle say the overall project will cost \$2.5 billion if a feasibility study gives the go-ahead.

Eastern Star Gas is proposing a \$500 million pipeline from Narrabri to Newcastle, on a different route from the Hunter-to-Queensland pipeline promoted by a consortium of Hunter business people. Eastern Star hopes to start exporting gas by 2014. The Queensland Hunter Gas Pipeline



Employment Drivers - *Continued*

Wine

There are about 120 wineries and cellar doors in the Hunter Valley and no other wine region in Australia comes even remotely close to this. Most of these are boutique operations, producing 500 tonnes or less. There are approximately 3500ha of vines in the Hunter today and an annual crush of 35,678 tonnes. Built on the solid foundations of Semillon and Shiraz, the wine range is expanding, with excellent Verdelho and Chardonnay and, more recently, Chambourcin, a variety that has had only a limited following to date. The wines reflect the temperate climate, healthy rains and fertile soils, which are set below the dramatic backdrop of the Brokenback Ranges. It's the cellar door experience, of course, that brings people to the Hunter. Part of the fun is discovering an excellent drop that you can't buy just anywhere. And, with its myriad boutique producers, this is the Hunter's ace card: there's nothing like tasting a wine on the site where the wine was made and with the person who made it. Hunter Valley Wine Country sees over 1.5 million visitors per year to the region.

Agribusiness

Valued at over \$1 billion annually, the agribusiness industry of the Hunter includes agriculture, horticulture, timber/paper products, aquaculture, food processing and manufacturing of products such as fertilisers.

Historically, the Hunter Region is an important agricultural region, although production varies considerably from year to year, particularly due to weather conditions. In normal conditions, production would be expected to be well above a billion dollars per annum. The region is strong in the production of wheat, sorghum, barley and other grain cereals, vegetables, grapes, olives, sheep, cattle, pigs, horses, poultry, eggs and milk.

Employment in agriculture and agriculture-related industries in 2011 was 4,860. Approximately 10% of all businesses in the Hunter are in the agriculture sector. The latest available ABS livestock estimates for the Hunter included 280,614 sheep, 4,276,572 chickens for meat, 243,327 laying chickens, 387,788 turkeys, 407,583 meat cattle, 40,049 dairy cattle and 10,835 goats.



Employment Drivers - *Continued*

Manufacturing

Since the early days of coal and steel production in Newcastle, the Hunter Region has grown to be at the forefront of manufacturing and engineering excellence. As a major economic driver, sectors include metals processing, transport, machinery and equipment manufacture, chemical processing, mining, defence and light industry.

The approach of people and businesses working in the Hunter is unlike that of any other region. Manufacturers who could ordinarily be classed as competitors work together on joint ventures, and share technology and new ideas – allowing projects completed in the Hunter to be of a world-class standard, with unrivalled multi-faceted talent at the fore. The region's technical expertise covers a wide range of disciplines including:

- Aeronautical Engineering
- Asset Management
- Biomedical Technology
- Chemical Engineering
- Civil Engineering
- Defence Equipment
- Electrical Engineering
- Environmental Services
- Mechanical Engineering
- Mining Engineering
- Vehicle Assembly

Aluminium

Aluminium smelting, processing and manufacturing is a core Hunter strength. With around 30% of Australia's aluminium output, the Hunter Region is a major player in the Australian aluminium industry. With around 950 employees and contractors and annual production of 540,000 tonnes, Tomago Aluminium is one of the largest employers in the region and the second largest aluminium smelter in Australia.



Tomago Aluminium is a joint venture owned by the following Australian and overseas companies; Rio Tinto Alcan at 51.55%, Gove Aluminium Finance Ltd at 36.05% and Hydro Aluminium at 12.4%. Tomago Aluminium produces aluminium ingots, extrusion billet and rolling slab, which are mostly exported to markets in Asia, but the majority of the 530,000 tonnes produced is in the form of ingots that are sold and remelted by the customer as value added items.

Tomago Aluminium Pty Ltd has a business value above \$1.5 billion (AUS\$) and contributes around \$500 million to the Hunter Region each year alone.

EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY	Hunter % of total	Australia % of total
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	1.8	2.5
Mining	5.0	1.8
Manufacturing	10.0	9.2
Electricity, gas, water and waste services	1.8	1.2
Construction	8.2	8.4
Wholesale trade	3.0	4.1
Retail Trade	11.3	10.8
Accommodation and food services	7.6	6.6
Transport, postal and warehousing	4.3	4.9
Information media and telecommunications	0.9	1.8
Financial and insurance services	2.7	3.8
Rental, hiring and real estate services	1.6	1.6
Professional, scientific and technical services	5.5	7.4
Administrative and support services	3.1	3.3
Public administration and safety	6.3	7.0
Education and training	7.9	8.2
Health care and social assistance	13.4	11.9
Arts and recreation services	1.2	1.5
Other services	4.4	3.8

Employment Drivers - *Continued*

Tourism

Tourism is a significant contributor to the Hunter Region's economy, directly employing around 12,000 people and attracting around \$1.3 billion annually in visitor spend. It offers almost limitless opportunities for investors due to the Hunter's close driving proximity to Sydney, easy air access from major domestic centres, great diversity of attractions and its appeal to all market segments. All areas are supported by excellent road access. According to Destination NSW, visitor numbers for the year ending 30 June 2012 included over 2.1 million domestic overnight visitors, 113,100 international overnight visitors and over 5.4 million domestic daytrip visitors.

The Port of Newcastle is also increasingly being visited by luxury cruise liners. In 2009/10, there were 9.5 million visitors to the Hunter region – the highest of any NSW region.

The Hunter includes the towns, vineyards and national parks of the Hunter Valley, the Upper Hunter and Barrington Tops. If you enjoy good food and wine, you'll enjoy the Hunter where you can join a winery tour, a cooking school, and sample wines from boutique winemakers to the "bluebloods" of the industry. Others things to do include pampering at a day spa or spa retreat, teeing off from a championship golf course or taking a hot-air balloon ride over the vineyards. Just follow the Legendary Pacific Coast touring route to uncover the best of the region.

To top it off, Travel commentator "Lonely Planet" has listed Newcastle as the 7th "hottest" city on the planet for tourists.

Defence and Aerospace

The Hunter and Central Coast Region is defence-oriented with the location of RAAF Williamtown with Air Combat Group and Surveillance and Response Group (SRG). Other elements include Singleton's Lone Pine Army Barracks School of Infantry (SOI) and the Special Forces Training Centre (SFTC).

The Hunter is home to key Defence companies Boeing, Thales, Varleys, Forgacs, Lockheed Martin, L3 & Raytheon and serves as a maintenance base for major aerospace company BAE and Jetstar airline. There are also many Defence capable SMEs, technically capable people and supporting organisations in the region.

Local industry, community and government are supportive and both understand and enjoy the benefits of Defence in the area. The University of Newcastle, TAFE and schools are based on supporting engineering, commercial, industrial and Defence-focused education and training.

This creates the foundations for an area that readily meets the requirements and ethos for the development and expansion of the Defence industry.

Equine Industry

The Hunter Valleys equine industry produces some 70% of Australia's thoroughbred foals, generating \$100 million in yearling sales annually. The area is acknowledged as the second largest thoroughbred nursery in the world behind Kentucky, USA and has attracted some of international racings leading breeders to establish studs with substantial investment. This has led to the establishment of world-class infrastructure including modern training and racing complexes. Scone is the home of the Hunter Valley Equine Research Centre and the valley also holds one of the largest specialist veterinary hospital complexes in Australia. The 65 studs in the Hunter Valley, including Emirates Park, Coolmore Stud and Widden Stud, directly employ approximately 900 staff and draw on many support services including veterinary, feed, farrier, fuel, transport and fertilizers.



Infrastructure

Transport and Access to Markets

The Hunter's location and impressive transport infrastructure provide it with a competitive edge in accessing Australian and international markets. Centrally positioned on Australia's eastern seaboard between Melbourne and Brisbane, and within a two hour drive of Sydney, the Hunter is ideally situated to service the nearly 11 million people living in these cities (ABS ERP June 2010).

Well over half of Australia's population is within a 12 hour drive from Newcastle. The Hunter has a highly efficient transport infrastructure, providing fast and integrated links within the region and to the rest of NSW, Australia and the world. This infrastructure includes the Port of Newcastle, Newcastle Airport and a comprehensive road and rail network.



Roads

The Hunter has a highly developed network of highways and arterial roads. This combined, with over 100 national and regional transport companies operating in the region, allows for fast and efficient movement of freight. All major industrial estates in the region, as well as those planned, are located on or close to national highways or on main arterial roads with fast links to the highways. A core road network consisting of a freeway and three main highways facilitate the smooth flow of traffic into and out of the Hunter.

The Sydney to Newcastle F3 Freeway is part of the National Highway network. It is the main corridor linking Newcastle to Sydney, providing a driving time of less than two hours between the two cities. The F3 has links to the New England and Pacific Highways.

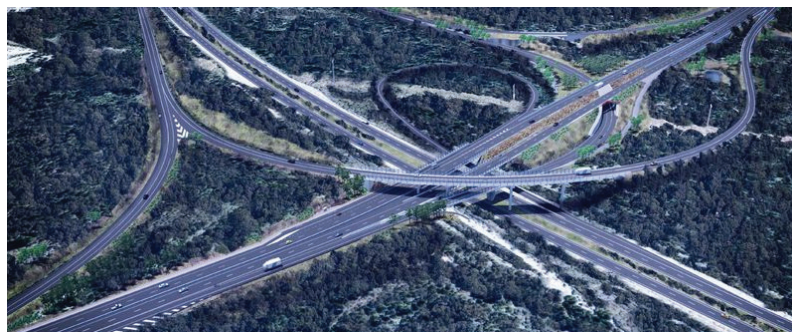


The Hunter Expressway

The Hunter Expressway will provide about 40 km of dual divided carriageway between the F3 Freeway at Seahampton and the New England Highway west of Branxton. Interchanges will be located at the F3 Freeway, Buchanan, Kurri Kurri, Loxford, Allandale and Branxton.

The Australian Government announced in the May 2009 Budget Statement that it will provide \$1,451 million (plus earned interest income) towards the cost of construction. The NSW Government is committed to contributing up to \$200 million if required. Construction commenced in 2010 and the expressway is scheduled to open in late 2013. The expressway is designed to relieve congestion on the New England Highway and provide an east-west connection between the Newcastle regional centre and urban centres in the Lower Hunter.

On completion The Hunter Expressway will establish a direct transport link from Newcastle to Branxton (near Singleton) shaving 25 minutes of driving time most importantly providing vital access to the Hunter regions continued urban sprawl.



Infrastructure - *Continued*

Port of Newcastle

The Port of Newcastle is the largest export port in Australia and the world's largest coal tonnage port. It is also a growing cargo and general container hub, with further major expansion plans currently in development. Excellent transport infrastructure and ongoing efficiency measures at the Port contribute to a lack of congestion and rapid turnaround compared with Australia's metropolitan ports.

The ongoing expansion of facilities at the port, with a \$1 billion upgrade completed in May 2010 and more to come from major mining entities such as BHP Billiton, is significant for the region's economy. It's expected that the port's coal-loading capacity will triple (to 300 million tonnes a year) once expansions under way or planned are completed. These entail investment totalling about \$9 billion. The expansions are needed as demand exceeds capacity.

In November 2011 the queue of ships off Newcastle reached 55 vessels and Port Waratah Coal Services asked coal miners to cut back production. The current upgrade of port facilities will provide a new coal loader being built on Kooragang Island on the Hunter River.

In September 2009 it was revealed BHP Billiton and other coal exporters had reached agreement with the NSW Government for the expansion. The State Government said the agreement would trigger \$5 billion of investment in port and rail infrastructure over the next four years, boosting export revenue by \$6.5 billion per year by 2016. Then Premier Nathan Rees said construction of new coal infrastructure would generate 1,700 direct jobs and 2,400 indirect jobs each year up to 2015. The Port Waratah coal terminal announced in February 2010 it will invest a further \$670 million into infrastructure at the Newcastle wharf, adding another 20 million tonnes of capacity to the facility. The Port Waratah Coal Services (PWCS) board has approved the spending, taking total expenditure on coal loading infrastructure over the past 12 years to more than \$1.6 billion. The operator says the expansion will help manage ongoing demand for Hunter Valley coal and honour long-term coal export contracts recently signed by PWCS and Hunter Valley coal producers.

The Newcastle Port Corporation released details in July 2010 of its concept plan for a major new container terminal facility on the former BHP Steelworks site in Mayfield. The plan for the 60 hectare site includes a container terminal with a capacity to move one million containers a year. There would also be a precinct for dry cargo such as grain, as well as a bulk liquids precinct for storage and distribution of fuels and bio-fuels.

Also important is the ongoing diversification of the trade through the port, with over 40 different cargoes now handled by the port. There is also a growing cruise ship industry in Newcastle, with 11 cruise ships to visit Newcastle in the 2011-12 cruise ship seasons.

The Hunter Economic Zone (HEZ)

On 21st of March 2002, the NSW Government announced the \$2 billion employment project in the Hunter region, rezoning industrial, 871 hectares of a total of 3200 hectares of land, which makes up the Hunter Economic Zone.

The HEZ property, which has been integral in many ways in the history of the region, is substantial to the Hunter and its future. HEZ now provides Australia's largest contiguous industrial zone, which will supply NSW for the first time with the ability to offer a home to large scale industrial occupiers, previously forced to go to other states or overseas.

The Hunter's natural resources, industrial workforce, transport, services and infrastructure combine with an outstanding lifestyle to offer the perfect working and living environment. The addition of HEZ to this already outstanding mix will serve to further attract major national and international industries and ensure the creation of new opportunities for this rapidly expanding, vibrant region. The Hunter Economic Zone is Australia's largest contiguous industrial zone.

HEZ Fast Facts:

- 900 ha of zoned developable land
- 2300 ha of surrounding rural/environmental buffer lands
- Australia's largest contiguous industrial zone
- Fully serviced by road, rail, power, gas, sewerage, water and Powertel cable
- Existing industrially-trained, 24 hour culture workforce
- One hour north of Sydney
- 20 minutes West of Newcastle and Australia's longest tonnage port
- NSW Government and Cessnock City Council assistance available to incoming users
- Sites from 5 to 140 ha Highly competitive pricing structure
- Fully developed "turnkey" facilities available to leases



Infrastructure - Continued

University of Newcastle

The University of Newcastle is a world-class institution delivering quality tertiary education and innovative research. The University's priority is to collaborate and engage with business, industry and government at the local, national and international level to deliver high impact, quality research that is valued by the community and which provides solutions to real world problems. Establishing and strengthening relationships with partners is an important driver in the University's research success and in advancing its global reputation.

Engaging with international partners on research provides opportunities for new discoveries, innovations and knowledge exchange. It also ensures that the University's students learn from curricula that are informed by the latest research from Australia and overseas. The University's research includes areas that align to areas of importance for local business and industry, including many areas where it is ranked among the top performers in the country such as in social work and neurosciences.

For example, University researchers are currently working with employers and employees on the impact of disruptive work practices on mental health, which are now becoming more common place in the local mining and transport industries, due to the shortage of skilled workers. These aspects of research application are just as important as the more traditional engineering and technology based collaborations. The Australian Government's 2012 Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) process placed the University of Newcastle's engineering research in the top two in the country and its medical and health research in the top five in the country. The University has also established strengths in applied sciences including chemistry and plant sciences. Internationally, the Academic Ranking of World Universities places Newcastle in the top four per cent of universities in the world, and the Times Higher Education World University Rankings and QS World University Rankings place the University in the top three per cent. Both the Times Higher Education and QS also rank Newcastle in the top 50 universities in the world under the age of 50. The University hosts two world class research institutes – the Hunter Medical Research Institute (HMRI) and the Newcastle Institute for Energy and Resources (NIER), both of which demonstrate the University's commitment to the needs of its communities and partnerships with industry and business. NIER was established to augment the University's existing reputation of research excellence and expertise within the minerals, energy and resources fields. HMRI, which promotes the translation of laboratory-based findings into improved clinical care, opened its new \$90 million world-class clinical research building in September 2012 on the Rankin Park campus adjacent to the John Hunter Hospital.

Through its research achievements, the University of Newcastle is addressing the key challenges of our time, helping to shape the world for future generations.

Future Plans For The University of Newcastle

The university announced plans in February 2010 to become a multi-campus mega university by 2020 under a major program of expansion. Key projections for the university over the coming decade include increasing its student population by a third to 40,000, making it one of the top three regional universities in Australia.

By 2020, the university expects to have moved its business, law and creative arts faculties entirely to the Newcastle CBD and have plans under way to move the education, humanities and social science disciplines in the city. The university wants to move into the top eight for research funding. It wants to strengthen links with industry, including Williamstown air base and Newcastle Port Corporation. In March 2010 the university called for expressions of interest to develop a \$4 million block of land donated by the State Government at Honeysuckle. The 4100m² site is to house 2,500 students from the university's business faculty in a 30m building containing 18,000m² of teaching space. In June 2011 it sought registrations of interest from contractors to build multi-bedroom apartment style units and around 400 car spaces, with construction to start in mid-2012.

University Vice-Chancellor Nick Saunders says it will free up University House in King Street to allow the law school to move into the City. This will be followed by upgrades at the Conservatorium of Music to allow the entire creative arts school to relocate to the city centre. The final stage will see the education and arts faculty move over the next 10-15 years. It will mean, in total, an extra 60,000m² of teaching space in downtown Newcastle. The State Government made submissions to Infrastructure Australia in March 2011 for funding for the city campus. The university says it has committed \$40 million to the project, but needs "significant state and federal support". In July 2011 the university said it would apply to a new Federal Government fund for education facilities to help pay for its proposed inner-city campus. It was reported in July 2011 that the University of Newcastle and Hunter TAFE are key partners in a \$67 million solar energy research grant. They are part of a CSIRO-led consortium that will undertake research for the \$900 Moree Solar Farm. Other Major educational facilities include the TAFE Hunter Institute, the TOCAL CB Alexander College, and a vast array of both primary and secondary school facilities.



Infrastructure - Continued

Newcastle Airport

The Hunter has four working airports with Newcastle Airport being the premier regional facility. Newcastle Airport has both civil and defence functionalities and can accommodate large international aircraft such as the Boeing 787 or Airbus A330.

The Hunter's major airport, Newcastle Airport, is located in the Port Stephens Local Government Area at Williamtown, a 25 minute drive from the Newcastle CBD. Newcastle Airport is serviced by Aeropelican, Brindabella Airlines, Jetstar, Regional Express, Qantaslink, and Virgin Australia to Ballina, Brisbane, Canberra, the Gold Coast, Melbourne and Sydney. Newcastle Airport's influence on the Hunter economy is undeniable. An economic impact assessment in 2011 reported that Newcastle Airport supports more than 4,100 jobs and generates almost \$1 billion for the local economy, of which \$253.8 million supports local tourism.

The Airport holds an operating agreement with RAAF Base Williamtown, a land lease of 28 hectares from the Department of Defence, and uses the runway of RAAF Base Williamtown. The runway is 2,438 metres long and 45 metres wide. It is capable of handling B787, A320, and occasionally An-124 sized aircraft. The civil taxiways are capable of handling aircraft up to B787 and An-124 size. Newcastle Airport is an aerospace hub. Jetstar chose Newcastle as the location for its Heavy Maintenance Base in 2005, and BAE Systems recently expanded its facility to build and maintain RAAF fighter jets. Various aerospace industry consultants have also taken advantage of Newcastle Airport's proximity to Defence and utilise the Airport's office facilities.

Future Plans for Newcastle Airport

In 2010, Newcastle Airport invested in infrastructure development. Air BP and Caltex, in a joint venture, constructed a new aviation fuel farm to improve efficiencies for the two companies and released land, both airside and landside, back to Newcastle Airport. In 2011, the Airport undertook a major refurbishment of its landside toilet amenities. The \$900,000 upgrade was completed in response to customer feedback.

Newcastle Airport's 20-year Master Plan provides a framework for ongoing managed infrastructure and development growth. It outlines development of the terminal, car parks, and road network to meet future demand and provide permanent facilities required for international services.

Newcastle Airport currently has plans for the redevelopment of the road network, new taxi and coach parking facilities, and modified entrances to existing car parks lodged for approval with Department of Defence and Port Stephens Council. Newcastle Airport continues to prove itself as an alternate gateway into NSW and a significant transport hub for the region, contributing to business and tourism in the Hunter.

A \$120 million expansion plan for Newcastle Airport was declared a major project for NSW in 2009, meaning it can bypass local councils and go straight to the NSW Planning Minister for approval. The expansion plan includes extending the terminal for domestic and international flights, more car parks and internal roads, and a business park.

In March 2010 details of the expansion, aimed at doubling passenger numbers, were revealed. It is hoped to have flights to Perth, Adelaide, Hobart and Darwin within two years and international travel to New Zealand and Fiji within three years. China, Japan and some Trans-Pacific routes are possible from 2014, with passenger numbers topping two million if all goes well.

Rail

A comprehensive rail network operates within the region. Passenger and general freight train services link the Hunter with Sydney, Brisbane and North Western NSW including Tamworth and Moree. Between Sydney and Newcastle the State Rail Authority operates an electrified heavy rail system. A diesel powered service continues to the North Coast of NSW and to Brisbane as well as to the Northern Tablelands. The rail network is also linked to the Port of Newcastle, providing a smooth transition between sea and land for the movement of bulk items such as coal, alumina, wood chips and containerised cargo. Much of the agricultural produce from the north-west regions is exported through the Port of Newcastle via the rail links to these areas.



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