



Hunter Councils Environment Division

Program Report

NOVEMBER 2016 – FEBRUARY 2017

Hunter Councils Environment Division

Our Mission Statement

1. Lead change, through evidence based research, information, programs and advocacy, to support member Councils to be environmental leaders in their local communities, the region and NSW.
2. Facilitate collaborative and cost effective research, planning and management initiatives to enhance the local and regional environment
3. Build the capacity of Councils to continue to design, deliver and embed innovation and environmental sustainability into their business operations and strategic plans

Our Partner Councils



CONTENTS

1	CURRENT PROGRAM FOCUS	1
2	THE ENVIRONMENT DIVISION TEAM	3
3	REGIONAL FUNDING APPLICATIONS.....	4
4	REGIONAL SUBMISSIONS	5
4.1	NSW Climate Change Fund Draft Strategic Plan	5
4.2	Federal Parliamentary Inquiry into Flying-fox Management in the Eastern States.....	6
5	CONTAMINATED LAND	7
5.1	Regional Forum – Underground Petroleum Storage Systems (UPSS)	7
5.2	In House System Reviews.....	8
5.3	Regional Contaminated Land Policy Template	9
5.4	Regional Register of Conditions of Consent (Contaminated Land)	9
6	DISASTER RESILIENCE.....	11
6.1	New Regional Projects	11
6.2	Local Council “Beat Heat” Initiatives	12
7	WASTE.....	15
7.1	Evaluation of Regional Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy	16
7.2	Litter Governance Project.....	16
7.3	Regional Illegal Dumping Campaign	17
7.4	Small Acts Big Change Website.....	17
7.5	Waste Less at Christmas	18
7.6	Household Battery Campaign	18
7.7	The Waste Wrappers	18
7.8	Love Food on Campus.....	19
8	BIODIVERSITY	20
8.1	Flying Fox Camp Management Plans	20
8.2	Flying Fox Community Engagement.....	21
8.3	National Flying-fox Research Project	22
8.4	Hunter Regional Vegetation Map	22
8.5	Hunter Valley Dry Rainforest Project.....	22
9	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	23

1 CURRENT PROGRAM FOCUS

Regional Submissions

Collaborating with member councils to synthesise and prepare regional submissions on a range of Commonwealth and NSW Government draft legislation, regulations, policies and processes. The focus of current or anticipated regional submissions include:

- *Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment Act*
- NSW Flying Fox Recovery Plan

Contaminated Land

1. Finalising and disseminating to Councils the following publications:
 - Regional Contaminated Land Policy and Procedures Template
 - Regional Register of Development Consent Conditions – Contaminated Land
2. Providing direct “in house” support for Councils to:
 - Adapt and endorse the Regional Contaminated Land Policy Template into a local Contaminated Land Policy
 - Effectively identify, assess and manage contamination through the planning process
 - Develop new or review existing Council contaminated land information systems to ensure their focus and content meets current legislative and policy requirements
3. Facilitating joint Council – EPA service station audits to build Council staff preparedness for the transfer of UPSS regulatory responsibilities from the EPA to Councils in 2019
4. Design and delivery of a regional forum focusing on the identification and management of contamination located on public land.

Disaster Resilience

1. Actively planning the design and delivery of two new projects (one State-wide and one regional) to be delivered during 2017–18 focusing on:
 - Integrating natural disaster preparedness into Council functions and operations using the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Framework
 - Supporting Community Service Organisations across the Hunter, Mid Coast and Central Coast region develop Business Continuity Plans

Waste

1. Evaluating delivery of the first three years of the Regional Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy
2. Commencing development of a new Regional Waste Strategy for the 2017-2021 period
3. Final technical review and evaluation of regional waste modelling output (including spatial data representation) that will inform long term waste service and infrastructure opportunities
4. Delivery of region wide community awareness campaigns focused on:
 - Illegal dumping,
 - Battery recycling
5. Promoting the recently redesigned and relaunched “Small Acts Big Change” website
6. Delivery of the Recreational Parks Litter project in the Port Stephens, Cessnock and Newcastle Council areas
7. Planning and implementing a regional baseline study of Council costs and governance arrangements around litter management
8. Finalising delivery of the “Love Food on Campus” project in partnership with the University of Newcastle.

Biodiversity

1. Directly supporting Councils to develop Flying-fox Local Camp Management Plans and to facilitate more consistent and effective community education and engagement on Flying Fox issues.
2. Facilitating collaborative review and update, by the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) and Councils, of the Hunter Region Vegetation Mapping to resolve previous issues of scale and accuracy.
3. Engaging partners and resources to strategically target the delivery of on ground restoration and rehabilitation activities in areas of regional conservation priority.

2 THE ENVIRONMENT DIVISION TEAM

Team Member	Areas of Responsibility
Bradley Nolan Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divisional Management • Regional Flying Fox Program • Waste Management • Review of Hunter Vegetation Mapping
Steve Wilson Deputy Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divisional Management Support • Regional Contaminated Land Capacity Building Program • Natural Disaster Resilience • Climate Change Adaptation • Professional Development Series
Michael Neville Regional Waste Program Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of Regional Waste Program • Regional Waste Managers Group • Regional Recycled Organics • Regional Litter Plan Implementation
Anna Lundmark Regional Program Manager - Contaminated Land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Contaminated Land Capacity Building Program
Chantelle Sage Regional Waste Education Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hunter Waste Educators Group (HWEG) • Regional Illegal Dumping Awareness Campaign • ‘Small Acts Big Change’ Campaign
Emma Grezl Regional Waste Project Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Love Food on Campus project
Eva Twarkowski Senior Ecologist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flying Fox Ecology • Natural Resource Management • Restoration and Rehabilitation projects • Ecological assessment
Ellen Saxon GIS Project Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spatial Data Analysis and Mapping • GIS Mapping and Support
Brooke Willmott Administration Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Assistant to Director and support to Environment Division Team • Professional Development Series

3 REGIONAL FUNDING APPLICATIONS

Grant applications / funding proposals submitted by the Environment Division in recent months and their current status include:

Funding Organisation	Project	Funding Amount	Status
NSW Office of Emergency Management	Community Resilience Innovation Program: Evaluating Innovative Technology for Communicating Natural Disaster Scenarios	\$89,913	Unsuccessful
NSW Office of Emergency Management	Integrating Disaster Preparedness into Local Government Operations through the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework	\$229,548	Successful, project planning commenced
NSW Office of Emergency Management	Community Resilience Innovation Program: Six Steps to Resilience for Community Organisations across the Hunter Region	\$202,336	Successful, project planning commenced
NSW Environmental Trust	Restoration & Rehabilitation: 9 Valley's Wildlife Trail	\$97,178	Pending
NSW Environmental Trust	Restoration & Rehabilitation: Weeping Myall Woodland (Stage 2)	\$79,230	Pending

4 REGIONAL SUBMISSIONS

Introduction

As part of its role in the Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils, the Environment Division is increasingly directed to prepare, in collaboration with member Councils, regional submissions on a range of Commonwealth and NSW Government draft legislation, regulations, policies and processes.

Current Program Focus

The focus of current or anticipated regional submissions being prepared by the Environment Division include:

- *Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment Act*
- NSW Flying Fox Recovery Plan

Activity during the reporting period

4.1 NSW Climate Change Fund Draft Strategic Plan

In late 2016 the NSW Government placed on exhibition its *Draft Climate Change Fund Strategic Plan*. This sets out priority investment areas and potential actions for up to \$500 million of new funding between 2017–18 and 2021–22. The exhibited plan proposed three priority investment areas:

1. Accelerating advanced energy: supporting a transition to a net-zero emissions future
2. National leadership in energy efficiency: boosting energy productivity and putting downward pressure on energy prices for households, businesses and industry
3. Preparing for a changing climate:
 - Reducing costs to public and private assets arising from climate change
 - Reducing the impacts of climate change on health and wellbeing, particularly in vulnerable communities
 - Managing the impacts of climate change on natural resources, ecosystems and communities.

In collaboration with Councils the Environment Division prepared a regional submission on the draft plan in December. This identified key areas that are supported by Councils of the region, as well as potential issues, concerns and opportunities for consideration. Key points included:

- Recognising that areas like the Hunter, which feature a high degree of energy intensive / emissions generating industries, will require specific, tailored planning support to assist them transition, in a planned and orderly manner, toward a more advanced energy / low emissions future
- The need for adequate resourcing of local government to support the sector implement actions identified in the draft plan
- Joint Organisations provide a significant opportunity to facilitate achievement of the objectives and actions included in the draft Climate Change Fund Strategic Plan.

A copy of the full submission can be viewed on the [HCCREMS website](#)

MORE INFORMATION:

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4.2 Federal Parliamentary Inquiry into Flying-fox Management in the Eastern States.

During November 2016 The Commonwealth House of Representatives Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy conducted a short inquiry into the impact of nationally protected flying-foxes on communities in the eastern states of Australia, with regard to the following terms:

- The circumstances and process by which flying-foxes are listed and delisted as threatened species at both the state and Commonwealth levels
- The interaction between the state and Commonwealth regulatory frameworks;
- Strategic approaches to managing species at a regional scale
- Opportunities to streamline the regulation of flying-fox management
- The success or otherwise of management actions, such as dispersal of problematic flying-fox camps.

In collaboration with member Councils, the Environment Division prepared a submission to the inquiry detailing the issues and concerns of the Councils of the region. Key issues identified were:

- **Inadequacy of the consultation, due to the extremely short period available in which to provide submissions.** To offer such a short window to provide submissions on a technically complicated issue with little regard to Council approval processes and timelines was identified as unreasonable. A longer submission period would have ensured the Committee members have access to the best possible information and scientific advice to fully consider the matter
- **The need for greater research** to understand roost site selection preferences of flying foxes to ensure protection (or creation) of appropriate sites to enable the viability of these important nomadic pollinators
- **The need for regional cumulative impact assessments** on development and clearing activities to reduce the chance of new conflict sites being created due to increased habitat loss. This includes significant concern that the reduced regulation on clearing activities included in the Local Land Services Amendment Act 2016 will further restrict habitat for flying foxes.

A copy of the full submission can be viewed on the [HCCREMS website](#)

It is understood a number of Council representatives attended the hearings and participated in round-table discussions to further articulate the issues experienced in the Hunter Region.

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5 CONTAMINATED LAND

Introduction

Funded through the NSW EPA and NSW Environmental Trust until 30 June 2017, this regional program aims to build the capacity of councils to manage non regulated contaminated sites. The Hunter program is one of four being delivered in rural and regional areas across NSW. Councils directly involved in the Hunter program (based on eligibility established by the EPA) include:

- Cessnock
- Dungog
- Mid Coast
- Lake Macquarie
- Maitland
- Muswellbrook
- Port Stephens
- Singleton
- Upper Hunter

Current Program Focus

1. Finalising and disseminating to Councils the following publications:
 - Regional Contaminated Land Policy and Procedures Template
 - Regional Register of Development Consent Conditions – Contaminated Land
2. Providing direct “in house” support for Councils to:
 - Adapt and endorse the Regional Contaminated Land Policy Template into a local Contaminated Land Policy
 - Effectively identify, assess and manage contamination through the planning process
 - Develop new or review existing Council contaminated land information systems to ensure their focus and content meets current legislative and policy requirements
3. Facilitating joint Council – EPA service station audits to build Council staff preparedness for the transfer of UPSS regulatory responsibilities from the EPA to Councils in 2019
4. Design and delivery of a regional forum focusing on the identification and management of contamination located on public land.

Activity During the Reporting Period

5.1 Regional Forum – Underground Petroleum Storage Systems (UPSS)

The Protection of the Environment Operations (Underground Petroleum Storage Systems) Regulation 2014 prescribes the statutory requirements for the management and operation of UPSS infrastructure in NSW. It aims to ensure that UPSS management follows industry best practice to prevent land and groundwater contamination arising from leaking UPSS, which can be complex and costly to remediate.

The NSW EPA is the current regulatory authority for implementing the UPSS Regulation; however this will transfer to local councils in the coming years. To assist Councils with the transition process, a regional forum was delivered on 9th February 2017 to provide councils with:

- An overview of UPSS infrastructure and key contamination issues
- An update on the handover of regulatory responsibility and overview of functions and activities that will be required of Councils
- A case study of the systems and processes developed by Sutherland Shire Council in preparation for the regulatory handover

Councils are also increasingly finding they have a responsibility (and financial liability) for the decommissioning of derelict UPSS located in road reserves. To assist Councils understand their obligations and processes, the forum also provided:



Photograph: The UPSS Forum attracted participants from all of the region's councils

- An overview of the NSW Derelict Underground Petroleum Storage Systems – Council Road Reserve Program
- A case study of the experiences and lessons learned by Dungog Council in remediating a derelict UPSS within a Council road reserve.

The forum attracted over forty participants, with representatives attending from all Councils of the Hunter, Central and Mid Coast region, as well as from the NSW EPA, MIDROC, RAMROC/REROC, and Coffs Harbour, Sutherland, Hastings and Bellingen Councils.

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5.2 In House System Reviews

During December 2016 - January 2017 an internal review of the contaminated land systems and procedures of each participating council was completed in collaboration with Council staff. The outcomes of these reviews are now informing the focus of direct “in house” assistance being provided directly to each Council. The focus of this assistance includes:

- Adaptation and endorsement of the Regional Contaminated Land Policy and Procedures template into a local Contaminated Land Policy
- Identifying, assessing and managing contamination through the land use planning process
- Developing new or reviewing existing Council contaminated land information systems to ensure their focus and content meets current legislative and policy requirements.

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5.3 Regional Contaminated Land Policy Template

The Regional Contaminated Land Policy and Procedures template (currently in draft form) has been developed to assist councils meet their legislative obligations for identifying and managing contaminated land matters. Its application by Councils to formulate and adopt a Local Contaminated Land Policy will facilitate a more consistent approach to contaminated land management across the region. The template focuses on:

- Identification, evaluation and management of contaminated land through the land use planning process
- Recording, managing and disclosing contaminated land information
- Reporting sites considered to pose a “Significant Risk of Harm”
- Preventing or minimising the potential for new sources of contamination.

A final legal review of the draft Regional Contaminated Land Policy and Procedures template was completed in January. The outcomes of this process are now being incorporated into a final version of the document to be disseminated to Councils for their consideration and local endorsement.

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5.4 Regional Register of Conditions of Consent (Contaminated Land)

A Regional Register of Conditions of Development Consent (currently draft) has been developed under the program to support Council staff when assessing and conditioning development approvals involving contaminated land. The register includes template wording and conditions to assist with:

- **Requests for Information** - provides template wording that can be used / adapted by Council staff to request a proponent to complete appropriate investigations, to identify whether contamination is present on the site and whether remediation is required to make the site suitable for the proposed activity. This is consistent with the requirements of SEPP 55 (s7) which identifies that:

*“A consent authority must not consent to the carrying out of any development on land unless:
a) It has considered whether the land is contaminated, and
b) If the land is contaminated, it is satisfied that the land is suitable in its contaminated state (or will be suitable after remediation) for the purpose of which the development is proposed to be carried out, and
c) If the land requires remediation to be made suitable for the purpose for which the development is proposed to be carried out, it is satisfied that the land will be remediated before the land is used for that purpose”.*
- **Template Conditions of Development Consent** - where Council does approve a Development Application based on the information provided from the investigation process, these conditions can be used / adapted by Council staff to ensure that remediation, validation and monitoring of contamination is completed in accordance with the requirements of SEPP55 and the NSW Managing Land Contamination Guidelines.

A final legal review of the draft Register of Conditions was completed during January. The outcomes of this process are now being incorporated into a final version of the document to be disseminated to Councils for their consideration and local application.

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6 DISASTER RESILIENCE

Introduction

There is significant opportunity for local government to build the resilience of local communities to natural disasters. Councils provide a range of core functions and services including land use planning, community development and support, infrastructure management, community education, communications, environmental management and local emergency management. Both individually and collectively, these functions can contribute substantially to the creation of inherently more prepared and resilient communities, as well as support more effective and rapid disaster response and recovery efforts.

Current Program Focus

1. Actively planning the design and delivery of two new projects (one State-wide and one regional) to be delivered during 2017–18 focusing on:
 - Integrating natural disaster preparedness into Council functions and operations using the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Framework
 - Supporting Community Service Organisations across the Hunter, Mid Coast and Central Coast region develop Business Continuity Plans

Activity During the Reporting Period

6.1 New Regional Projects

The Environment Division has been successful with two regional funding applications submitted to the State Emergency Management Projects (SEMP) program and Community Resilience Innovation Program (CRIP), which are administered by the NSW Office of Emergency Management. Totalling \$431,884 these projects include:

1. *Integrating Natural Disaster Preparedness into Local Government Operations through the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Framework (\$229,548)*

This project recognises the significant opportunity for local government to build the resilience of local communities to natural disasters, by integrating resilience planning across the range of core functions and services that councils provide (e.g. land use planning, community development and support, infrastructure management, community education, communications, environmental management and local emergency management). It will aim to:

- Substantially raise awareness in Councils across NSW of the opportunities for building organisational and community resilience to natural disasters across their organisational functions and operations
- Directly build the capacity of and resources available to councils to assist them more effectively integrate and co-ordinate emergency preparedness across their functions and operations via the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework.

2. *Six Steps to Resilience for Community Organisations across the Hunter Region (\$202,336)*

This project will provide direct support to Community Service Organisations (CSOs) across the Hunter, Central Coast and Mid Coast region to develop Business Continuity Plans (BCPs), using the “6 Steps to Resilience” framework developed by the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS). Sixteen professionally facilitated workshops (4 within each of the sub regions) will:

- Raise awareness of the role, nature and importance of BCPs in ensuring core services can continue to be provided during and in the aftermath of disasters.
- Directly support CSOs to complete the “6 steps” process within a collaborative workshop environment, to ensure by the end of the project they have successfully completed a BCP.

A cross hazard “Preparedness Resource Kit” for CSOs (bringing together a range of existing resources) will also be compiled to assist with planning and communicating natural disaster hazards and preparedness to local communities and clients.

The Environment Division will soon be recruiting a project manager to deliver these new initiatives.

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6.2 Local Council “Beat Heat” Initiatives

With the Hunter region recently experiencing its hottest summer on record, member Councils have been actively using the regional [“Beat the Heat”](#) communication resources to raise the awareness and preparedness of their local communities and staff to the extreme temperature conditions that were experienced. Examples include:

Council	Local “Beat the Heat” Initiatives
Central Coast Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Beat the Heat” focus included in early childhood centre disaster preparedness workshops.
Cessnock City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting Council libraries as Community Cool Spots, including providing chilled water for patrons, and displaying “Beat the Heat” posters in these facilities • Social media promotion of “Beat the Heat” messages and access to “Community Cool Spots” through Facebook and Twitter • Directly e-mailing all Council staff about managing heat stress in the workplace.
Dungog Shire Council and Dungog Community Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dungog Community Centre has been working with local communities, businesses and clubs across the Shire to identify suitable locations to provide “Community Cool Spots” during heatwaves • Social media campaign through Facebook promoting local “Community Cool Spots”, Alert NSW and NSW “Beat the Heat” websites • Regional “Beat the Heat - Are you Drinking Enough” posters placed in Council trucks and machinery.
Lake Macquarie City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media promotion of “Beat the Heat” messages through Facebook • Inclusion of “Beat the Heat” story on Council’s website and inclusion of “Beat the Heat” banner on Council’s homepage • Promotion of “Beat the Heat” messages through Council’s Community Services Interagency Network

Council	Local “Beat the Heat” Initiatives
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication to staff about managing heat stress in the workplace through email and factsheets, an intranet story, and display on Depot televisions of SafeWork NSWs “Working in Hot Conditions” video clip • Purchase and supply of cold bottled water to bulk waste collection and Awaba Waste Management Facility staff, and implementation of a modified work/rest arrangement as required • Commenced program to provide appropriate air conditioning and refrigeration in work site caravans.
Maitland City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional “Beat the Heat” posters and flyers distributed for display in all Council Libraries, Art Gallery and Community Centres. • Communication to staff about managing heat stress in the workplace, focusing on keeping hydrated, early signs of heats stress, and first aid treatment. Methods included toolbox talks for outdoor staff, e-mails and distribution of the regional “Beat the Heat - Are You Drinking Enough?” poster.
Mid Coast Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of “Beat the Heat” messages through Council’s Community Services Interagency Network and Local Health Network • Council libraries promoted as “Community Cool Spots” during normal opening hours • Delivery of “Beat the Heat” education sessions for Ageing & Disability staff and Disability Interagency Network representatives • Distribution of regional “Beat the Heat” printed communication resources through Community Service Network (interagency), Forster Health Committee, Ageing & Disability Services and Disability Interagency Network
Muswellbrook Shire Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of “Beat the Heat” messages through Council’s Community Services Interagency Network • Regional “Beat the Heat – Are You Drinking Enough” poster displayed on toilet doors in the majority of council facilities • Muswellbrook Library promoted as a “Community Cool Spot” through poster displays in that facility.
Newcastle City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting Council libraries as “Community Cool Spots”, including providing water for patrons, and promoting “Beat the Heat” information and materials to the broader local government library network across the region • Social media promotion of “Beat the Heat” messages via Twitter and Facebook • Extended pool hours where demand existed • Extended beach patrol hours until 7.30pm • Promotion of “Beat the Heat” messages through Council’s Community Services Interagency Network • “Beat the Heat” information and materials provided to Council's Leadership Group for distribution to all staff • Regional “Beat the Heat - Are You Drinking Enough” poster adapted to a large magnet and placed on Council trucks and machinery, as well as placed in key locations • Distribution of “Beat the Heat” printed information and materials to outdoor work crews for providing to the community during any interactions
Singleton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of regional “Beat the Heat” communication materials to all local

Council	Local “Beat the Heat” Initiatives
Council	<p>hotels and clubs, GP clinics, pharmacies, child care centres and nursing homes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of local shopping centres, libraries and Visitor Information Centres as “Community Cool Spots” • Social media promotion of “Beat the Heat” messages via Twitter and Facebook and on Council’s webpage • Inclusion of “Beat the Heat” news story in “Up Country Entertainer” • “Beat the Heat” messages seasonally promoted through Council corporate e-mail signature, and daily during heatwave conditions • Promotion of “Beat the Heat” messages through Singleton Show, Broke Fair and Seniors Week 2016, and to community organisations and networks including Singleton Heights Centre Zumba Class, Singleton Welcoming Committee, Friendship Group, University of the Third Age (U3A), Broke Hall, Ungooroo Aboriginal Corporation and Whitmore Enterprises and Challenge Disability Services • Promotion of “Beat the Heat” messages through Council’s Community Services Interagency Network and Disability Advisory Group. • “Beat the Heat” messages and materials incorporated into pilot schools program • Distribution of “Beat the Heat” regional communication resources through Council facilities and depots, including the “Beat the Heat - Are You Drinking Enough” poster displayed in bathrooms.
Port Stephens Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended pool opening hours and provided additional evening life guard and volunteer life savers at patrolled beaches during the 10-12 February heatwave • Promotion of “Beat the Heat” messages through Council social media posts and on Council’s website.
Upper Hunter Shire Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council successfully advocated on behalf of its communities for Ausgrid and Essential Energy to cancel planned disruptions of power during the 10–12 February 2017 heatwave • Development and distribution of a magnet and information flyers on coping with the heat through Council libraries • Ensured Council’s Aged Hostel and Aged accommodation residents had plans in place for coping with the 10-12 February 2017 heatwave • Extended opening hours for Council pools • Promoted via media release, strategies for keeping cool during extreme heat conditions.

MORE INFORMATION:

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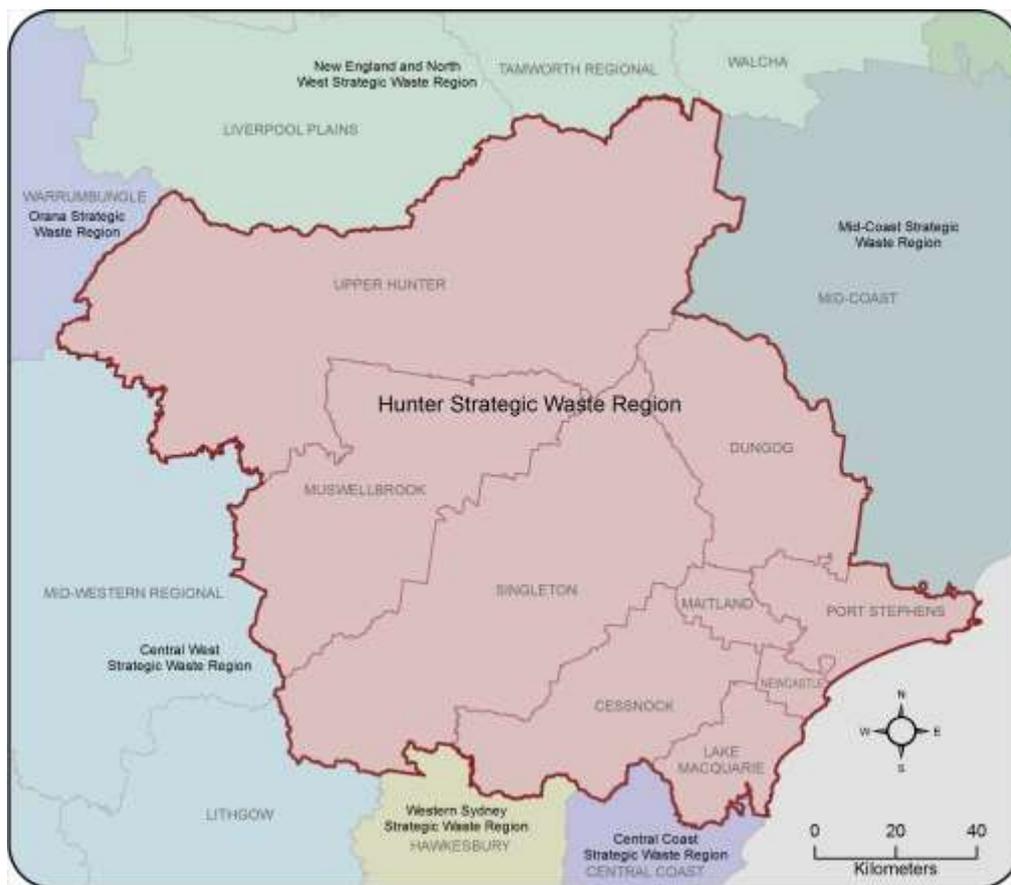
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7 WASTE

Introduction

The Environment Division is contracted by the NSW Environment Protection Authority to work directly with the Councils of the Hunter Waste Region to develop and implement a Regional Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery (WARR) Strategy. The Strategy was adopted in 2014 and since that time the Regional Waste Program Manager and project staff have focused on the delivery of a wide range of initiatives included in the Strategy. The NSW Government has recently announced an extension of the program for the period 1 July 2017 through to June 2021.

Councils in the Hunter Waste Region include:



Central Coast Council is currently not included in any waste region and is individually addressing waste management issues. Mid Coast Council is a member of the MidWaste Waste Region for which a separate waste strategy has been developed. While these Councils are not formally part of the Hunter Strategy, efforts are made to keep them informed of program activities to leverage any possible advantages.

Current Program Focus

1. Evaluating delivery of the first three years of the Regional Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy
2. Commencing development of a new Regional Waste Strategy for the 2017-2021 period
3. Final technical review and evaluation of regional waste modelling output (including spatial data representation) that will inform long term waste service and infrastructure opportunities
4. Delivery of region wide community awareness campaigns focused on:
 - Illegal dumping,
 - Battery recycling
5. Promoting the recently redesigned and relaunched “Small Acts Big Change” website
6. Delivery of the Recreational Parks Litter project in the Port Stephens, Cessnock and Newcastle Council areas
7. Planning and implementing a regional baseline study of Council costs and governance arrangements around litter management
8. Finalising delivery of the “Love Food on Campus” project in partnership with the University of Newcastle.

Activity During the Reporting Period

7.1 Evaluation of Regional Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy

Evaluation of the first three years of delivery of the Regional Waste Strategy commenced in late 2016. Consultants have been appointed to undertake the evaluation which includes a review of regional and local achievements, and face to face interviews with key stakeholders from each member council, from within Hunter Councils, and from the NSW EPA and NSW Circulate Program. The evaluation outcomes will be used to inform the development of an updated Regional Waste Strategy and action plan for the period 2017-21.

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7.2 Litter Governance Project

Planning and design of a baseline study to identify Council costs and governance arrangements around litter management has commenced. Consultants have been appointed who will engage directly with each Council over the coming months to quantify the “whole-of-council” costs associated with litter management. This work will directly contribute to setting a baseline cost for litter management by Councils, and to identifying and planning targeted programs and activities to reduce litter across the region. In doing so it will directly support the objectives of the Hunter Regional Litter Plan to implement a coordinated, strategic approach to litter governance, to raise the profile of litter within the region and shift the current focus of planning, policies and services from litter collection to litter prevention.

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7.3 Regional Illegal Dumping Campaign

An Illegal dumping awareness campaign commenced in December 2016 and will continue through to March 2017. The campaign involves powerful images and messages on billboards, bus backs and signs across the region to appeal to the community's emotional connection with their local landscape, and encourage them not to dump their waste. The campaign aims to complement the Hunter RID squads' enforcement activities with an educational approach.

It is estimated that approximately 60,000 cars a day are travelling past the seven billboard sites across the region. Significant additional media coverage of the campaign has also been generated with articles in the Newcastle Herald, Newcastle Star, Newcastle Weekly and the [Maitland Mercury](#) along with news articles by ABC Radio, 2NUR, NXFM and KOFM.



MORE INFORMATION:

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7.4 Small Acts Big Change Website

A redevelopment of the [Small Acts Big Change](#) website has been completed and went live in December 2016. This redevelopment has improved alignment with more recent waste program activities and consistency with both the Hunter Councils Environment Division (HCCREMS) and other member council websites. The new site features an [interactive map](#) of the region, allowing users to locate recycling options in their local government area.

MORE INFORMATION:

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7.5 Waste Less at Christmas

“Waste Less at Christmas” videos that underpinned mainstream media advertising (television and radio) and social media campaigns in 2015 were again promoted via social media over the 2016 festive season. An online promotion company was engaged to promote the video on Facebook and Instagram, where 161,810 views and 2,877 clicks through to the Small Acts Big Change website were realised. The messages promoted by the videos included:

- Avoiding food waste through good menu planning, using left overs and not over catering.
- Avoiding excess waste at Christmas, including a focus on packaging / wrapping / decorations, unwanted gifts and throw away items (such as paper plates, plastic cutlery, and low cost “use once” disposable gifts).

MORE INFORMATION:

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7.6 Household Battery Campaign

A regional household battery education campaign commenced during February 2017 and will continue through March. The campaign aims to encourage the community to manage end-of-life of household batteries appropriately. It includes a [15 second video](#) on Facebook that is aiming to reach \approximately 2,000 residents each day. Print advertisements will also be run in all local papers, providing details of where household batteries can be recycled in each Council area. Tiles have also been distributed to councils for placement on their social media channels.

MORE INFORMATION:

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7.7 The Waste Wrappers

The ‘Waste Wrappers’ are a highly engaging performance troupe delivering performances at a range of high profile festivals and events across the region, to raise awareness of improved recycling practices. Facilities, events and festivals at which the troupe have performed in recent months or are scheduled to perform include:

Event	Date	Audience Reach
Tastes at the Bay (Port Stephens)	5 th November, 2016	250
Newcastle Fair Share Festival	12th November 2016	150
Singleton John Street Markets	25th November 2016	600
Newcastle Foreshore Australia Day Event	26th January 2017	Data not yet available
Maitland Taste Festival at “The Levee”	11 March 2017	Data not yet available

MORE INFORMATION:

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7.8 Love Food on Campus

Funded through the EPA's Love Food Hate Waste Program, this project aims to positively modify behaviours to reduce food waste, by students living in residence on the University of Newcastle's (UoN) Callaghan Campus. Waste audits of the residences have identified that up to 67% of all waste in the red-lidded bins is food waste.

Design and production of a toolkit of resources focusing on budget wise, healthy and low waste cooking for residential students at the UoN has been completed. It includes:

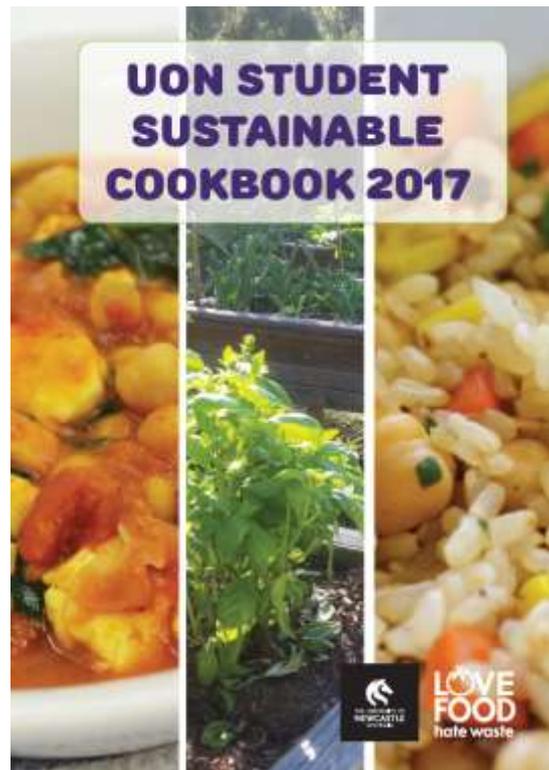
- Student Sustainable Cookbook
- Recipe cards
- Meal Planners
- Shopping Lists.

These products will be distributed during February at "O Week" and "Res Fest" events. A "Love Food on Campus" Long Lunch event is also being delivered to provide students moving into campus accommodation with a range of skills on how to save money by reducing food waste.

The outcomes of the project will also be reviewed by the Hunter Waste Strategy Group to identify potential for adaptation into similar resource kits for low income and other vulnerable communities.

MORE INFORMATION:

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8 BIODIVERSITY

Introduction

The Regional Biodiversity Program continues to be a key focus of the Environment Division, with activities focusing on:

- Identification and mapping of regional biodiversity values and threatening processes
- Identification of regional conservation priorities
- Technical input to local and regional planning and management strategies
- Capacity building of Councils to access and apply technical data and mapping, and to apply legislative compliance and market based instruments to improve local and regional conservation outcomes
- On ground restoration and rehabilitation works across the region to protect and restore biodiversity values.

Current Program Focus

1. Directly supporting Councils to develop Local Camp Management Plans and to facilitate more consistent and effective community education and engagement around Flying Fox issues.
2. Facilitating collaborative review and update, by the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) and Councils, of the Hunter Region Vegetation Mapping to resolve previous issues of scale and accuracy.
3. Engaging partners and resources to strategically target the delivery of on ground restoration and rehabilitation activities in areas of regional conservation priority.

Activity During the Reporting Period

8.1 Flying Fox Camp Management Plans

In October 2016 the Environment Division received \$95,000 from LGNSW to support Councils produce Camp Management Plans for the following flying fox populations:

- Central Coast Council (to develop a Local Strategy to address all Flying-fox Camps)
- Mid Coast Council (Karoo Reserve)
- Muswellbrook Shire Council (Muscle Creek)
- Port Stephens Council (Raymond Terrace)
- Upper Hunter Shire Council (Aberdeen)
- Singleton Council (Revision of the Burdekin Park Camp Management Plan)

Additionally, the Environment Division has been engaged by Cessnock Shire Council to complete work on their Camp Management Plan for the East Cessnock Flying-fox Camp.

Implementation is now well underway, with the following works recently completed:

- Ecological assessment of each flying fox camp
- Initial design of local community engagement plans, the delivery of which will be managed by each participating Council
- Delivery of training to Council staff focused on “Managing Community Outrage: Community Engagement on Flying Foxes”
- Development of the “Flying Fox Engage” online community engagement survey tool. Councils of Upper Hunter, Muswellbrook, Mid Coast and Port Stephens are utilising this survey
- Individual meetings with each Council to commence development of the Local Camp Management Plan



Photograph: Ecological assessments have been completed at each Flying Fox camp

MORE INFORMATION:

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8.2 Flying Fox Community Engagement

Work will soon commence on this \$100,000 Environmental Trust grant funded project to:

- Design and implement a regional communications protocol and supporting educational resources to foster positive community attitudes to ultimately reduce threats to the Flying Fox population in the Hunter Region
- Increase access and understanding of ecological and species information by council professional staff to ensure community engagement, and council decision making processes do not negatively impact on Flying Foxes.

Key activities will include identifying, collating and reviewing the range of Flying Fox communication resources available from Councils and other organisations along the eastern seaboard. These will inform the design and development of a flying fox resource kit (comprising various community engagement / communication resources) to underpin regional flying fox community awareness and engagement programs across the 11 council areas.

This project will link closely with the Camp Management Plan project, to deliver community education materials necessary for Councils to effectively engage with their communities and manage the camps in their areas. Negotiations are presently underway with the NSW Environmental Trust to vary some aspects of the project to ensure these opportunities are maximised for the benefit of Councils.

MORE INFORMATION:

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8.3 National Flying-fox Research Project

The National ARC funded Flying-fox project formally commenced in December 2016. A project committee meeting was held in Melbourne to commence work on the formal determination of what research is required to link existing areas of research, and provide practical resources to effected jurisdictions and communities. Outcomes of the planning session are still to be provided, but initial research activities that will directly support activities in the Hunter Region include:

- Research on effectiveness of various management activities undertaken by Councils and land managers throughout Australia
- Development of a “Citizen Science” phone app that will enable community members to log sightings and issues related to flying foxes in real-time, providing a much stronger ability for Councils to understand the range of the species, and extent of impacts to the community.

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8.4 Hunter Regional Vegetation Map

The NSW Office of Environment & Heritage (OEH) has completed data input for the creation of an updated Upper Hunter Vegetation map. This data is currently being processed to create a detailed PCT (Plant Community Type) map for the region. OEH have indicated that the draft output map should be available for review and comment by Councils during March 2017, at which point the Environment Division will coordinate workshops with Councils to review and provide collated feedback.

MORE INFORMATION:

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8.5 Hunter Valley Dry Rainforest Project

This 3 year, \$99,618 project will restore and rehabilitate areas of the Hunter River Reserve, located at Greta. The Reserve contains Hunter Valley Dry Rainforest, which is listed as an Endangered Ecological Community, and is one of the few examples of intact native vegetation along the Hunter River in the Lower Hunter. Cessnock, Singleton and Maitland Councils are all involved in this 3 year project.

Primary activities undertaken in recent months include:

- Initial stakeholder meetings to devise strategies for managing illegal dumping on the site.
- Stage 1 weed control works
- Release of the Madeira Vine Beetle, a biocontrol agent which specifically attacks and defoliates Madeira Vine, which heavily infests inaccessible gullies located across the site

MORE INFORMATION:

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9 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Environment Division continues to coordinate delivery of professional training to member Councils and partner organisations. This seeks to continue the important training and capacity building services that the Division has provided to member Councils over many years.

Courses recently or currently scheduled for delivery include:

Course	Delivery Date
Landfill Management Training for Operational Staff	13 & 14 February 2017
Effective Price Setting for Council Fees and Charges	22 February
Place Transition – Tactics of Organisational Placemaking	27 & 28 February 2017
Professional Presentation Skills	7 th March 2017

MORE INFORMATION:

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