



Program Report

Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils
Environment Division

MARCH – MAY 2017

Hunter Councils

Environment Division

Our Mission Statement

1. To facilitate collaborative planning and delivery of cost effective environmental research, protection and management initiatives to enhance the local and regional environment
2. Assist member councils to be environmental leaders in their local communities, the region and NSW.
3. Attract funding and resources to the region to design, deliver and embed innovation and environmental best practice.

Our Member Councils



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1 CURRENT PROGRAM FOCUS

Regional Representation

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

- NSW Biodiversity Conservation Reforms
- NSW Revised Bushfire Environmental Assessment Code
- NSW Travelling Stock Reserves Review

Contaminated Land

1. Assisting Councils adapt and endorse as a local Council policy the *Model Regional Policy Template (Land Use Planning)*, including development of a suite of guideline resources to support Councils with implementation
2. Finalising template “Requests for Information” and “Conditions of Development Consent” to support Council staff when assessing and conditioning development applications involving contaminated land
3. Design and delivery of two regional forums on:
 - Engaging and informing communities around developing / upgrading Contaminated Land Information Systems, and on issues where contamination poses a potential risk to local community health and the environment
 - Managing contamination arising from asbestos

Natural Disaster Resilience

1. Stakeholder consultation to inform and engage participation in project delivery
2. Development of a guideline resources identifying key focus areas, opportunities and actions for integrating disaster resilience into Council functions and services
3. Design of regional forums (for delivery across NSW) focusing on the importance and opportunities for integrating disaster resilience into Council functions and services
4. Collating an “All Hazards” Preparedness Resource Kit to support Business Continuity Planning activities by Community Service Organisations

Waste

1. Developing a new Hunter – Central Coast Regional Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy for the 2017-21 period
2. Delivering a baseline study to identify Council costs and governance arrangements around litter management

Biodiversity

1. Directly supporting Councils to develop Camp Management Plans for local Flying Fox populations and to facilitate more consistent and effective community education and engagement around Flying Fox issues
2. Delivering 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
Michael Neville Regional Waste Program Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Waste Program • Regional Waste Managers Group • Regional Litter Plan Implementation
Anna Lundmark Regional Program Manager - Contaminated Land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Contaminated Land Program
Eva Twarkowski Senior Ecologist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flying Fox Ecology • Natural Resource Management • Restoration and Rehabilitation projects • Ecological assessment
Ian Turnbull Regional Project Manager – Disaster Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disaster Resilience Projects
Chantelle Sage Regional Waste Education Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hunter Waste Educators Group (HWEG) • ‘Small Acts Big Change’ Campaign
Ellen Saxon GIS Project Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spatial Data Analysis and Mapping • GIS Mapping and Support
Lorne Gurney Research & Project Support Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Flying Fox Education • Regional Litter Baseline Study
Brooke Willmott Executive Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Assistant to Director and support to Environment Division Team

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 Environment Protection Authority	Regional Litter Baseline Study	\$20,000	Successful
Local Government NSW	Flying Fox Camp Management Plan (Murrurundi)	\$5,000	Successful
Roadside Reserves Environmental Grant Program	Roadside assessment and mapping of environmental values in the Upper and Lower Hunter region	\$100,000	Pending
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 REPRESENTATION

Introduction

As part of its role in the Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils, the Environment Division prepares, in collaboration with member Councils, regional submissions on a range of Commonwealth and NSW Government draft legislation, regulations, policies and processes. Environment Division staff also participate in a number of regional, state and national committees and reference groups to represent the interests of member Councils, and to attract investment, resources and research into the Region.

Current Program Focus

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

- NSW Biodiversity Conservation Reforms
- NSW Revised Bushfire Environmental Assessment Code
- NSW Travelling Stock Reserves Review

Activity during the reporting period

4.1 Regional Submissions

Energy from Waste Technology

In May 2017 the Environment Division, in collaboration with the Councils of the Hunter Waste Region, provided a submission to the NSW Legislative Council Inquiry into matters relating to the waste disposal industry in New South Wales, with particular reference to Energy from Waste (EfW) technology.

The submission identified that the Councils of the Hunter Waste Region are generally supportive of the use of EfW technologies that assist with minimising waste to landfill and which comply with all relevant requirements and guidelines. It also noted that EfW technologies may provide a mechanism for councils in the region to ultimately meet the state-wide targets stipulated in the NSW Waste and Resource Recovery (WARR) Strategy 2014, although no plans currently exist to do so. The submission also noted that:

- Significant landfill capacity exists within Council facilities in the Hunter Waste Region and this ensures local and regional municipal waste disposal options over the medium to long-term.
- Only one major EfW facility currently operates in the vicinity of the Hunter Waste Region and it receives only limited tonnages of untreated wood waste.
- Councils will continue to support processes and technologies consistent with the waste hierarchy that ensure best value use of resources.
- Councils do not support the development of any facility which may lead to exposure of air-borne contaminants and adverse public health impacts to the community.
- It is recommended that the current NSW Policy is reviewed to consider an allowance for no limit by weight on residual waste materials that have already undergone processing treatment through an alternative waste technology (AWT) process.

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4.2 Advisory Boards and Committees

In recent months Environment Division staff have been appointed to a number of committees to represent member Councils and Regional Projects:

- Bradley Nolan (Director) has been appointed to the National Project Steering Committee for the ARC Flying-fox Linkage Grant. Appointment to this committee will assist with having Flying-fox research undertaken directly in the Hunter region, and provide Councils with direct access to research staff and project findings. The appointment is for 3-years.
- Bradley Nolan (Director) has been appointed to the Sydney Coastal Councils Flying-fox Management Advisory Committee to provide assistance and advice on the development of Flying-fox Management Plans and Regional Strategies. Participation in this Committee will facilitate direct resource sharing between regions, and feed into an “early warning” system notifying when Flying-fox migration is moving through the Sydney region towards the Hunter.
- Steve Wilson (Deputy Director) has accepted an invitation to participate on the Advisory Board of CIFAL (Centre International de Formation des Autorités et Leaders) Newcastle. This is one of 16 International Training Centres that form the Decentralised Cooperation Programme of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). CIFAL Newcastle is hosted by the University of Newcastle in the School of Architecture and Built Environment, in partnership with Newcastle City Council. Involvement in the CIFAL will contribute directly to the regional disaster resilience initiatives being delivered by the Environment Division.

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5 REGIONAL CONTAMINATED LAND

Introduction

The Regional Contaminated Land Program aims to improve access for Council staff to contaminated land technical expertise, provide regional policy and procedure templates for land use planning and information management, and increase the awareness and technical capacity of Council staff to identify and manage contaminated sites. Funded by the NSW Environment Protection Authority, the Hunter program is one of four being delivered in rural and regional areas across NSW. Councils currently 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. Assisting Councils adapt and endorse as a local Council policy the *Model Regional Policy Template (Land Use Planning)*, including development of a suite of guideline resources to support Councils with implementation
2. Finalising template “Requests for Information” and “Conditions of Development Consent” to support Council staff when assessing and conditioning development applications involving contaminated land
3. Design and delivery of two regional forums on:
 - Engaging and informing communities around developing / upgrading Contaminated Land Information Systems, and on issues where contamination poses a potential risk to local community health and the environment
 - Managing contamination arising from asbestos.

Activity during the reporting period

5.1 Program Extension

With current grant funding for the Regional Contaminated Land Program scheduled to finish on 31st August 2017, all nine participating Councils have committed to invest in a twelve-month extension of the program. This will enable further support to be provided to Councils in the following areas:

- Establishing Contaminated Land Information Systems to enable identification, management and communication of contaminated land information both within Council and to the community
- Adequately managing contaminated land through the land use planning processes
- Appropriately and proactively managing contamination on Council land
- Preparing Councils for the handover of the Underground Petroleum Storage System (UPSS) regulatory responsibilities, scheduled to commence in 2019
- Appropriately communicating contamination to the public and other stakeholders, and building networks between them that foster collaboration
- Providing continued access to regional forums and training events to promote on-going upskilling of staff and consistent skill levels across the region

- Continued provision of in-house technical support to Council staff, for example in specific projects or for particular issues relating to contaminated land.

The Environment Division is also liaising with Newcastle and Central Coast Councils (given that grant funding eligibility criteria no longer limit their involvement) and the NSW Environment Protection Authority to encourage additional investment in the program, and to explore further grant funding opportunities. Any additional funding of this nature will be used to increase the extent of outputs and/or duration of the program.

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5.2 Model Regional Policy

A Model Regional Contaminated Land Policy – Land Use Planning was endorsed as a “*template for development of local Contaminated Land policies in a regionally consistent manner*” by the Hunter Councils General Managers Advisory Committee (GMAC) on 11th May 2017. A key output of the regional program, the Model Policy was developed to assist Councils with their obligations under the NSW Managing Land Contamination Planning Guidelines – SEPP 55 Remediation of Land 1998.

The Model Policy was developed in collaboration with staff in each participating Council and has been subject to detailed planning, technical and legal review.

The Model Policy has been distributed to all participating Councils and is available on the Environment Division’s website at <http://www.hccrems.com.au/product/2017-model-regional-contaminated-land-policy-land-use-planning/>

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5.3 Regional Forum – Managing Contamination on Council Land

The identification and management of contamination on Council owned and managed land, arising from common historical land uses including former landfills, nightsoil sites, gasworks, mines, council depots, uncontrolled fill, and derelict underground petroleum storage systems (UPSS), is an important issue for Councils.

For this reason, a one day forum “Managing Contamination on Council Land” was delivered on 30th March 2017. Attracting nearly 50 participants representing all of the Councils in the Hunter and Central Coast region, Port Macquarie Hastings Council, the NSW EPA, and NSW Department of Industry (Lands), the forum focused on:

- Councils’ obligations for managing contamination on their land
- Common contamination issues experienced on Council managed lands
- Triggers for Council’s duty to report contamination to the EPA
- The development of systems, procedures, and policies for identifying and managing contamination
- Case studies of management systems implemented by Councils and NSW Department of Lands



Photograph: The “Managing Contamination on Council Land” Forum attracted close to 50 people.

Presentations from the Forum are available on the Environment Divisions’ website at <http://www.hccrems.com.au/managing-contamination-council-land-presentations/>

A key output of the forum included development of a high-level Action Plan to provide initial steps to guide Councils in identifying and assessing contamination risk across their land management portfolio. This framework will now guide more detailed collaboration and planning work to be delivered in 2017/18 that will support Councils:

- Demonstrate compliance with applicable legislation involving the management of contamination on Council land
- Mitigate unacceptable human health, environmental and business risks
- Facilitate the beneficial use of land affected by contamination.

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5.4 In-house Technical Support Program

The in-house technical support program provides each Council with access to the contaminated land expertise of the Regional Program Manager (Contaminated Land), to assist them with specific projects or issues involving contaminated land. Support provided to Councils in recent months has focused on:

- Delivery of ‘in house’ training sessions at each Council focusing on “Assessing Contamination through the Planning Process”. Over 60 Council staff have now participated in these sessions
- Engaging input from Council staff to the review and finalisation of the *Model Regional Contaminated Land Policy (Land Use Planning)*.
- Providing technical advice to Council staff as required on specific planning applications or Council projects involving contaminated sites, including assistance to interpret complex technical reports.

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6 NATURAL 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. Stakeholder consultation to inform and engage participation in project delivery
2. Development of a guideline resources identifying key focus areas, opportunities and actions for integrating disaster resilience into Council functions and services
3. Design of regional forums (for delivery across NSW) focusing on the importance and opportunities for integrating disaster resilience into Council functions and services
4. Collating an "All Hazards" Preparedness Resource Kit to support Business Continuity Planning activities by Community Service Organisations

Activity during the reporting period

6.1 Appointment of Regional Project Manager (Disaster Resilience)

Ian Turnbull, formerly Principal Natural Environment Planner with Cessnock City Council, has recently commenced in the role of Regional Project Officer (Disaster Resilience). Ian will be directly responsible for delivering two projects funded through the NSW Government's Statewide Emergency Management Projects (SEMP) and Community Resilience Innovation Program (CRIP):

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

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*

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.

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7 REGIONAL WASTE PROGRAM

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 currently in the Hunter Waste Region include:

- Cessnock City Council
- Dungog Shire Council
- Lake Macquarie City Council
- Maitland City Council
- Muswellbrook Shire Council
- Newcastle City Council
- Port Stephens Council
- Singleton Council
- Upper Hunter Shire Council

Central Coast Council has recently confirmed that it will also join the Hunter Waste Region from 1st July 2017.

Current Program Focus

1. Developing a new Hunter – Central Coast Regional Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategy for the 2017-21 period
2. Delivering a baseline study to identify Council costs and governance arrangements around litter management

Activity during the reporting period

7.1 Regional Coordination Funding 2017-21

In recent months the NSW EPA has confirmed that the level of funding provided to all waste regions to support regional coordination will be significantly reduced during the period 2017-21. For the Hunter region this means that funding for overall coordination will drop by around 40% per annum. The Regional Better Waste and Recycling Fund will also be reduced by approximately 40% per annum, further reducing (i) the activities the Environment Division can deliver, and (ii) the benefits Councils have been able to gain through regional projects.

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7.2 Extension of the Hunter Waste Region

Recent negotiations with Central Coast Council have resulted in it deciding to join the Hunter Waste Region and participate in delivery of the Regional Waste Program. The Region will now be known as the Hunter / Central Coast Waste Region. This decision is timely as staff from Councils and the Environment Division have commenced re-writing the Regional Waste Strategy for the 2017-21 period. The inclusion of Central Coast Council will also increase the level of funding provided by the

NSW EPA (within the overall environment of reduced funding) to support delivery of the new Strategy.

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7.3 Hunter - Central Coast Regional Waste Strategy Revision

The NSW EPA is requiring all Waste Regions in NSW to review and re-write their Regional Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Strategies for 2017-21. In recent months the Environment Division, with significant input from Council staff has finalised an evaluation of the last 5 years of regional waste project collaboration, and has commenced work on updating the Regional Strategy. This has included two workshops with Council staff in March and May to inform the Vision, Objectives and Action Plan for the new strategy.

The new draft 2017-21 Hunter Waste Strategy will be presented to the Hunter Joint Organisation Board in August 2017 for endorsement, following which it will be submitted to the NSW EPA as a Final Draft. Each Council will then have the opportunity to consider local endorsement of the Regional Strategy prior to it being submitted to the EPA as a Final Strategy in December 2017.

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7.4 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 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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7.5 Recreational Parks Litter Project

The Regional Recreational Parks Litter Prevention project, funded through the NSW EPA, has recently been completed. The Environment Division worked with staff from Newcastle, Port Stephens and Cessnock Councils to deliver the following initiatives:

- *Newcastle City Council – Wallsend Park.* The Wallsend Touch Football Club were actively engaged in activities and events focusing on discouraging litter at the site. Installation of signage on goal post pads and balls is also now highlighting the NSW EPA *Hey Tosser* messaging.
- *Port Stephens Council – Medowie Skate Park.* Medowie and Wirreanda Primary Schools participated in litter prevention, clean-up activities and social media competitions at the park, and new bin infrastructure and signage has also been installed. The project ended with

a skateboard demonstration by world champion skaters Poppy Starr and Sam Sutton, a school clean-up, and a litter audit by students from Medowie Public School.

- *Cessnock City Council – The Basin Reserve, Cessnock.* Mount View High School in conjunction with the Cessnock Minor Rugby League and Cessnock Touch Football Association has completed ongoing clean-up activities in the car park and drainage area adjacent to the oval. In a consistent approach across sporting organisations, goal post pads and balls have also been branded with litter prevention messaging.



Photograph: The Medowie Skate Park project included a skateboard demonstration by world champion skaters Poppy Starr and Sam Sutton

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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
- On ground restoration and rehabilitation works across the region to protect and restore biodiversity values.

Current Program Focus

1. Directly supporting Councils to develop Camp Management Plans for local Flying Fox populations and to facilitate more consistent and effective community education and engagement around Flying Fox issues
2. Delivering on ground restoration and rehabilitation activities in areas of regional conservation priority

Activity During the Reporting Period

8.1 Flying Fox Camp Management Plans

The Environment Division has continued to work with seven of the Region's Councils to develop Camp Management Plans for local Flying Fox populations. This work is nearing completion, with the status of each Camp Management Plan including:

Council	Status
Central Coast	Local Management Strategy (addressing 4 Camps) completed and provided to Council.
Cessnock	Final Camp Management Plan completed and provided to Council
Mid Coast	Draft Camp Management Plan (Karlool Reserve) provided to Council for review. Currently awaiting outcomes of community engagement, which will influence the Action Plan to be included in the Strategy. Final Plan to be provided to Council in June 2017.
Muswellbrook	Final Camp Management Plan completed and provided to Council
Port Stephens	Draft Camp Management Plan (Raymond Terrace) provided to Council for review. Currently awaiting outcomes of community engagement, which will influence the Action Plan to be included in the Strategy. Council has requested additional ecological assessment to directly inform site maintenance practices, and an updated s91 licence application (i.e. to harm a threatened species, population or ecological community) for the Camp. It is anticipated that the Plan will be provided to Council in June 2017.
Upper Hunter	Draft Camp Management Plan (Aberdeen & Scone; Murrurundi) provided to Council for review and input. Currently awaiting outcomes of community engagement, which will influence the Action Plan to be included in the Strategy. It is anticipated that final Plans will be completed in June 2017.

Council	Status
Singleton	Final Camp Management Plan completed and provided to Council

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8.2 Regional Flying-fox Community Education Project

Work has commenced 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.

Over recent months the Environment Division has employed a part-time Research Officer to complete desktop research into existing Flying-fox education materials. This has included contacting each Council, Agency and Institution that are known to have been impacted by Flying-fox roosting or foraging. All resources identified have been assessed against a number of parameters and will be used to influence the community education and engagement materials to be developed for the Hunter & Central Coast Region.

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8.3 Regional Flying-fox Strategy

The development of the Regional Flying-fox Management Strategy (facilitated by OEH) is currently on hold, enabling Councils to complete the development of local Camp Management Plans, which will heavily influence the final Regional Strategy to be developed.

The Environment Division has however, successfully negotiated further regional funding (from the local OEH Office) to enable regional Flying-fox foraging modelling to be undertaken. This new funding will be added to current resources to engage Peggy Eby (Adjunct Senior Lecturer, Centre for Ecosystem Science at the University of NSW) and Flying-fox expert, to work with the Environment Division to develop a foraging modelling system that will produce output information for inclusion in both the Regional Management Strategy and local Camp Management Plans.

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8.4 Parliamentary Inquiry in Flying Foxes

The Commonwealth Standing Committee on the Environment & Energy has released the outcomes of the Inquiry into Flying-foxes held on 27th February 2017. This includes the following recommendations:

1. The Committee recommends that the Australian Government propose a national or eastern states flying-fox consultative committee or working group to the Council of Australian Governments. The consultative committee or working group would be responsible for centrally compiling information on referrals and management actions, and identifying priorities for legislative harmonisation, research and funding for future action in the management of nationally protected flying-foxes.
2. The Committee recommends that the Australian Government establish a dedicated funding pool for flying-fox research and conservation actions, to enable:
 - a. Continued funding of the National Flying-fox Monitoring Programme for at least the next 10 years
 - b. Committed funding for the priority actions outlined in the recovery plans for both the Spectacled Flying-fox and Grey-headed Flying-fox;
 - c. Targeted national research into flying-fox roosting behaviours and habitat loss impacts
 - d. Any other research that allows for the timely evaluation of flying-foxes under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, informed by rigorous data, at the earliest opportunity.
3. The Committee recommends that the Department of the Environment and Energy develop, in consultation with relevant state and local governments, a tool that assists councils to make decisions on action, referral and education in the most appropriate way, relevant to the flying-fox impacts in their jurisdiction.
4. The Committee recommends that the Department of the Environment and Energy, in consultation with other relevant organisations, develop a suite of education resources for Australian communities regarding flying-fox ecology, behaviour, environmental significance, health impacts, and management options. These resources should be promoted by the Australian Government to local councils, communities, businesses and all relevant stakeholders in affected jurisdictions and potentially affected jurisdictions.

The Environment Division is in contact with the Commonwealth Department of Environment and Energy to ensure projects in the Hunter Region are leveraged as much as possible in the delivery of the Committee's recommendations.

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8.5 Hunter River Rainforest Restoration

On-ground weed control works have continued to be delivered in recent months at 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. These Stage 1 weed removal works are targeting the removal of Madeira vine and Lantana.

On 10th April a community information session was held at the Reserve. The session was an opportunity for local and interested residents to attend the site, inspect the works and discuss the plans for continued maintenance and management of the Reserve with project staff. Fifteen local residences attended the session (held outdoors in cold and wet conditions) and have signed up to a

community engagement list as they all interested in being involved in ongoing restoration of the Reserve.

MORE INFORMATION:

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