



# Draft Hunter Region Special Infrastructure Contribution

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NSW Department Planning & Environment

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## Introduction

The Hunter Business Chamber is the largest regional business chamber in Australia and was established in 1886. The Chamber independently represents almost 2,000 member organisations to all levels of government and is the peak industry association in the region, reflecting the interests of all business sectors.

The Hunter Business Chamber works as an integral part of the NSW Business Chamber network and represents business at local, state and federal level to advocate for an improved operational climate for businesses in this region.

The Hunter is well recognised as the home to Australia's most resilient and diverse regional economy. The Hunter region in NSW just north of Sydney covers over 31,000 square kilometres and has over 660,000 people or 9% of the state's population.

An unparalleled cross section of industry calls the Hunter region home. Newcastle is the eighth largest city in Australia and is renowned for being the world's largest coal export port. The Port and Newcastle Airport are significant global gateways and have grown exponentially over the past ten years.

Newcastle, as the second largest city of NSW and the capital of the Hunter, has the ability to be a world-class city, given its coastal location and access to infrastructure. It is home to world-class health, research and education facilities as well as a range of complementary and emerging industries such as renewable energy technologies, the defence industry, tourism and the digital economy.

## Key Points

The Hunter Business Chamber (the Chamber) welcomes the Draft Hunter Region Special Infrastructure Contribution (SIC) Plan.

The Chamber previously made submission to the Draft Hunter Region Special Infrastructure Contribution Plan in 2016 and was involved in the SIC Plan Discussion Paper workshop on 23 November 2016.

This Plan has an important role to play in the future of supporting the timely provision of appropriate infrastructure that supports a growing region.

In its 2016 submission the Chamber noted that there should be a direct nexus between development investment and supporting infrastructure in order for it to be an appropriate contribution value as well as ensuring contribution funds from particular economic zones will be used to feed infrastructure for that zone.

The Chamber notes that the Hunter Region SIC is proposed to apply to residential and industrial development in greenfield areas and is not yet proposed to cover infill development. If the Greater Newcastle Metro Plan 2036 is intended to guide future infill development opportunities it would seem appropriate to be planning for those levies in the current SIC plan.

In considering the list of identified infrastructure to be partially funded through the SIC the Chamber acknowledges that there is enabling infrastructure that has not yet been reflected or if the intention is that these will be delivered through State and Local Government Plans and programs then these should be identified.

In applying levies it is important that agencies are not double dipping on projects or considering projects that should otherwise form part of the annual state budget process.

The Chamber notes the contribution types and the calculations for the SIC on page 15 of the plan and there is a concern that the \$10,664/lot rate in the Lower Hunter is too high and will negatively impact investment and affordability. Further review is required on the contribution and how this is applied to specific areas as well as how it is meeting its objectives in providing the needed infrastructure for these areas.

Finally, it is important that there is a robust governance process around the collection, monitoring, distribution and reporting of funds.

### **Conclusion**

The Hunter Business Chamber appreciates the opportunity to provide these comments on SIC plan and would welcome any further engagement around this matter.

### **Contact**

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