

## Media statement

15 December 2010

### Regional development requires coordinated approach

The Hunter Region's 1 million population of 2040 will need a comprehensive fully funded Hunter Infrastructure Strategy that includes a single coordinating authority to guide infrastructure planning and investment, the Chair of Regional Development Australia Hunter (RDA Hunter), Gaye Hart, said today.

RDA Hunter is part of the nationally appointed network whose wider task is to ensure regions are integrated into the national agenda.

Ms Hart handed to the Federal Member for Newcastle, Sharon Grierson MP, the first of a planned series of documents that identifies the region's infrastructure needs both in the short and long term.

The first addresses infrastructure needs as diverse as transport, information technology, water and energy.

"This is not a wish list. It is the considered and collective view of the widest possible range of Hunter people and organisations. It outlines how the region recognizes and plans to integrate the core infrastructure elements that glue together a successful economy."

Ms Hart said that while some specific projects including the roll out of high speed broadband and the inclusion of the region in the proposed very fast train networks were included the document also identified the need for to create a regional approach to Local Government and a focus on competitive advantage and support with infrastructure.

"What we have identified is the need for great connectivity in our region, particularly through our infrastructure. For example we have first class sea and air port facilities but they could and should be much better connected with road and rail networks to ensure their best possible contribution to our economy."

Ms Hart said there was a strong view in the region that the Hunter should establish an overarching Regional Transport Authority to identify, assess and advocate for long term infrastructure and public transport investment priorities.

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“Equally, we think that we could better use Local government services and manage local issues through the regional councils approach.

“None of this is implied or otherwise criticism of what we have. The contributors to this process were not interested in finding fault or attributing blame but they are energetically focused on finding ways to ensure a well connected region internally and to the rest of Australia and internationally.”

Ms Hart said the infrastructure document would be followed by others on the other four major priorities established through the consultation process. These were social inclusion, education and training, economic diversity, energy and environment, innovation and creativity, and regional marketing.

“These are the broad areas which this community has identified as those we should enhance as we move forward. Together they form the fabric on which our region wants to structure its future. These are the messages we will take to Canberra and to Sydney.”

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