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## State Infrastructure Strategy recommends major investment in the Hunter

Major investment in roads, rail and freight networks to support economic growth of the Hunter region are among the key recommendations in the State Infrastructure Strategy released today.

Infrastructure NSW has outlined \$2.5 billion worth of priority projects for the Hunter alone in the 20-year Strategy prepared to help guide future infrastructure investment by the Government.

The Strategy identifies an urgent need to invest in the Hunter to support mining and other industries as well as improving quality of life. It also includes faster train services for commuters from Newcastle.

Key projects recommended as priorities for Government consideration include:

- Construction within 10 years of the F3 Extension to Raymond Terrace, improving connections between Sydney and Northern NSW. This is estimated to cost around \$900 million.
- Around \$500 million in investment in road and rail improvements for coal communities, to manage congestion, improve community safety and amenity and to enable efficient freight movements.
- A \$500 million program of improvements to the passenger rail link aimed at accelerating mainline train speed, reducing the Newcastle-Sydney journey to two hours over the longer term.
- An improved rail connection through the Liverpool Ranges to the port of Newcastle, supporting the mining industry and regional jobs.

Infrastructure NSW Chief Executive Paul Broad said the Hunter was critical to the future economic prosperity of NSW, with coal the State's top export and the port the largest coal port in the world.

"NSW's economic performance has declined in the last decade compared with other States and spending our infrastructure dollar on the most important economic activities will help turn this around," Mr Broad said.

"Analysis by Deloitte Access Economics for Infrastructure NSW shows that the Hunter is one of the fastest growing regional areas in the State both in terms of population and gross regional profit value to NSW.

"Coal communities in the Hunter are facing some specific transport challenges as a result of rapid population growth and increased through traffic. Infrastructure NSW recommends priority be given to addressing congestion, safety and amenity impacts for towns like Scone, Singleton and Muswellbrook."

The Strategy also supports greater connectivity between Newcastle and the Hunter Valley.

"The Strategy identifies the Hunter Coal Chain as a major priority for investment and considers a number of options for delivering much needed improvements to rail through the Liverpool Ranges in cooperation with federal agencies," Mr Broad said.

Many of the projects identified in the Strategy emphasise improving the Hunter's links to ports and to Sydney.

"We also need to develop better passenger transport links. While the existing lines north and south of Sydney will never be able to be adapted to true high speed operation because of the topography, a target average speed of 80 km/h is achievable.

"Current travel times between Sydney and Newcastle are around two hours and 40 minutes which is actually slower than the pre-war "Newcastle Flyer" steam train.

"Getting the trip time down to two hours would be a massive improvement and is achievable. Infrastructure NSW has recommended staged improvements with the Sydney-Newcastle route included in the program after year 10 of the Strategy.

"There are some additional key projects at the Sydney end such as completing the F3-M2 link that will directly benefit the Hunter by reducing travel times."

Infrastructure NSW has also concluded that Hunter will need a major new water supply source by around 2020.

The State Infrastructure Strategy 2012-2032 is Infrastructure NSW's independent advice to the NSW Government on the priority infrastructure investments and reforms required to drive productivity and economic growth.

The Strategy's recommendations have been provided to the Government for its consideration in developing plans for infrastructure investment. For further information, the Strategy can be found on [www.insw.com](http://www.insw.com)

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