



MEETING MINUTES

Committee Name:	Customer and Community Advisory Group (CCAG)
Venue:	Hybrid meeting In Person: Hunter Water Board Room, 36 Honeysuckle Drive, Newcastle West Online: Via MS Teams
Date and Time:	Tuesday 13 September 2022 9.30am – 12noon

MEMBERS PRESENT

Cr Brian Adamthwaite	Lake Macquarie City Council (Chair)
Cr Dr Elizabeth Adamczyk	City of Newcastle
Mr David Beins	
Mayor John Connors	Dungog Shire Council
Mr Ken Edwards	Alternate delegate for Save the Williams River Coalition
Cr Peter Francis	Port Stephens Council
Cr Karen Jackson	Cessnock City Council
Mr Bill Lennox	Maitland Masonic Hall
Mr Douglas McCloskey	Alternate delegate for Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC)
Ms Jean McGarry	Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhoods Alliance

APOLOGIES

Ms Linda Bowden	Save the Williams River Coalition (represented by Mr Ken Edwards)
Mr Glenn Lyons	Hunter Local Land Services
Ms Thea Bray	PIAC (represented by Mr Douglas McCloskey)
Cr Sally Halliday	Maitland City Council
Ms Sue Johns	National Seniors Association

IN ATTENDANCE

Darren Cleary	Managing Director
Emma Berry	Executive Manager Strategy and Engagement
David Derkenne	Group Manager Sustainable Wastewater

Lisa Warren	Senior HR Partner- Diversity and Inclusion
Tahleigha Powell	HR Officer
Declan Clausen	Executive Officer (CCAG Secretary)

WELCOME

The Chair opened the meeting at 9.37am, and noted the apologies.

Alternate members Ken Edwards and Douglas McCloskey were welcomed to the meeting.

CCAG CHARTER

The Group noted the paper on the CCAG Charter and resolved to support the extension of the current CCAG Charter in an unmodified format until 1 July 2023.

AGENDA OVERVIEW AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No Conflicts of Interest were declared.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The June 2022 CCAG meeting minutes were adopted by the CCAG as a true and correct record of the meetings.

MANAGING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr Darren Cleary presented the Managing Director's report to the CCAG, which included:

- Water storage update: storages are currently full, and likely to remain full given weather outlook
- Corporate Scorecard and performance update – including recent performance against trust and water conservation scores, safety (lead and lag indicators), and profitability metrics
- New partnership with Lake Macquarie City Council to provide recycled water for sporting fields
- Cost of living challenges, including increase in Hunter Water's Pension Rebate and hardship support schemes
- Cottage Creek naturalisation and partnership with the Hunter and Central Coast Development Corporation (HCCDC). Work underway on naturalisation in other areas, including with Cessnock City Council.

A copy of the Managing Director's presentation is **attached**.

Members asked questions of the CCAG regarding existing water use for irrigation, and about leakage and non-revenue water.

REGULATORY UPDATE

Mr Darren Cleary and Ms Emma Berry presented the regulatory update. This included:

- Discussion on the reintroduction of developer chargers for Sydney Water and Hunter Water, and upcoming public exhibition
- Hunter Water's new Operating Licence

- IPART's Form of Regulation Review
- Role of the CCAG in Hunter Water's regulatory processes
- Commencement of customer and community engagement, including listening posts.

A copy of the presentation provided is **attached**.

INNOVATE RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

Lisa Warren, Senior HR Partner – Diversity and Inclusion, and Tahleigha Powell, HR Officer

Ms Warren and Ms Powell presented on Hunter Water's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). The Reconciliation Action Plan is our promise to move to a place of equity, justice and partnership together. This RAP reflects Hunter Water's commitment to create improved economic, health and social outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Innovate RAP builds on achievements since Hunter Water adopted its first RAP in 2019. New initiatives in the Innovate RAP include an Indigenous Engagement Plan, development of a Cultural Learning Strategy and Indigenous Procurement Policy.

Ms Warren briefed the CCAG on partnerships including the Clontarf Foundation supporting First Nations students at Newcastle, Hunter River, Irrawang and Toronto High Schools, and the work on the 'Where's Our Water?' book.

Members were complementary of the work undertaken, and asked to be kept updated on Hunter Water's RAP journey.

Members asked questions regarding Hunter Water's employment targets, and noted that the Port Stephens Lions of the Year is a Clontarf Foundation Alumni.

A copy of the presentation is **attached**, including links to the two videos shown during the discussion.

HUNTER RIVER ESTUARY WASTEWATER MASTERPLAN

Mr Dave Derkenne, Group Manager Sustainable Wastewater

Mr Derkenne presented on Hunter Water's Hunter River Estuary Wastewater Masterplan, including the challenges and opportunities posed by environmental change and development growth in the Hunter River catchment.

Mr Derkenne explained that a quarter of all Hunter Water customers live in catchment areas where treated wastewater is discharged to the Hunter River, and this number is growing. 60% of all population growth within the region is forecast to occur within these catchments.

Mr Derkenne discussed the partnership approach being undertaken with local councils, including to support the development of a joint Coastal Management Plan for the estuary.

Members asked questions about how they could support disseminating information publicly, on the health of the estuary, the impact of Hunter Water's operations during dry periods, and the role of treated wastewater in providing baseflow in creeks and rivers.

The group discussed the Paxton Catchment Improvement Program, and how the project helped reduce costs to Hunter Water and its customers, while delivering improved environmental outcomes.

A copy of the presentation is **attached**.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE AND GENERAL BUSINESS

Nil questions on notice were placed on the agenda.

Several items of general business were raised by members, including:

- A question regarding the possible provision of backlog sewer services to North Rothbury. In response, Hunter Water shared a copy of a letter recently sent to Cessnock City Council providing an update on current regulation and decision making around future schemes.
- Groundwater / paleochannel opportunities. In response, Ms Berry provided an update on exploratory bore work undertaken to date. Noting the CCAG's interest, it was agreed that Hunter Water would provide further updates to the group.
- Regulation of onsite wastewater systems. Mr Derkenne responded advising onsite wastewater systems are principally regulated by local councils.
- Stone Ridge Quarry, and impact on the Balickera Canal and Grahamstown Dam. This project is currently being considered by the Department of Planning and Environment. In June 2020, the Department issued Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs). These requirements included several water related conditions, including "*an assessment of the likely impacts of the development on aquifers, watercourses, riparian land, water-related infrastructure, the Grahamstown Dam drinking water catchment, Balickera Channel, Balickera Tunnel and any other related infrastructure, and other water users*". Hunter Water will continue to monitor this project, including providing advice to the consent authority under the *Hunter Water Act* and *Hunter Water Regulation*. Further information on the planning assessment is available on the DPE website:
<https://pp.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/stone-ridge-quarry-project>

MEETING CLOSE

Meeting closed 11.50am

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Draft minutes to be considered by CCAG at meeting on 7 December 2023.



Hunter Water Customer and Community Advisory Group

Tuesday 13 September 2022



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Hunter Water acknowledges the Traditional Countries of the Awabakal, Geawegal, Darkinjung, Wonnarua and Worimi peoples on which we operate and the Countries beyond where our water flows.

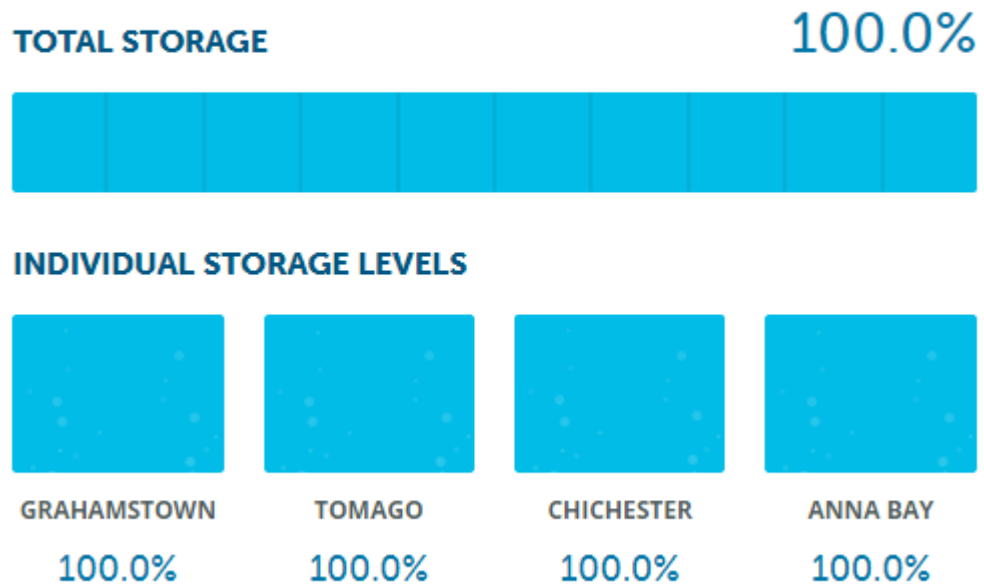
We recognise and respect the cultural heritage, beliefs and continuing connection to the lands and waters of our Traditional Custodians and pay respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.



Operational update



Water Storage Levels



All Hunter Water storages are currently at 100.0% capacity

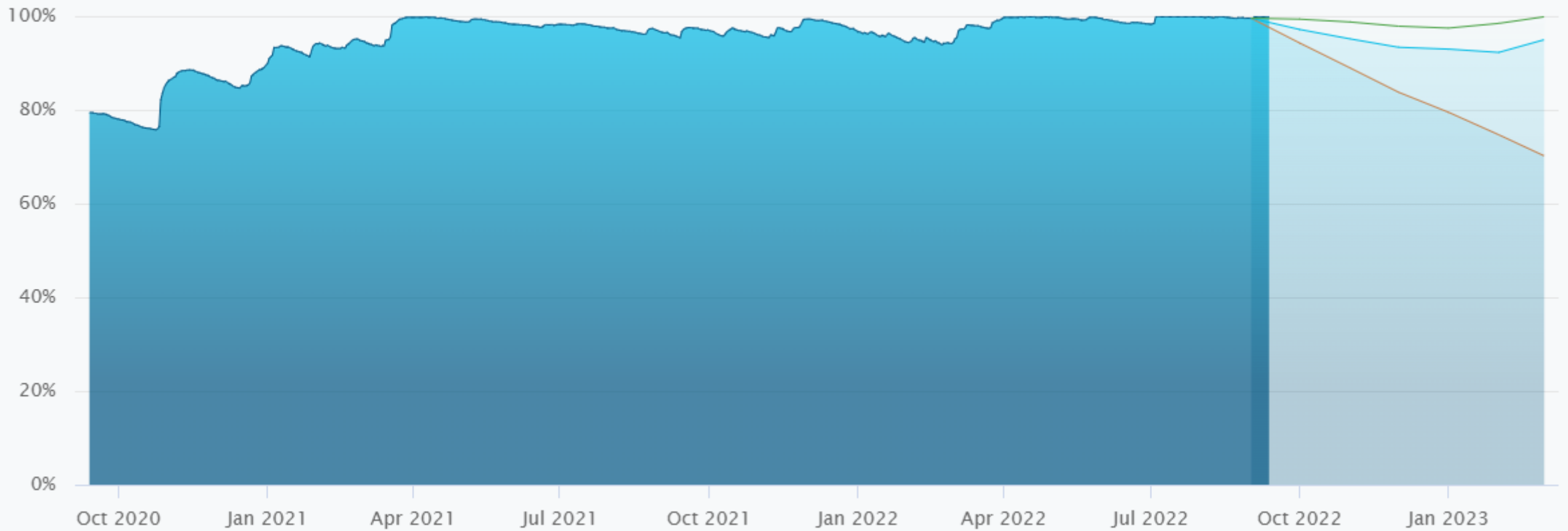
This is slightly more than after the Pasha Bulker storm in 2007 and the April Super Storm in 2015.

As Grahamstown Dam's wall was raised in 2005, our potential capacity increased, **we are currently holding our largest volume of water across our four sites (total of 270 billion litres).**



Historical storage levels and outlook

AS AT 11 SEPTEMBER 2022





Hunter Water teams up with Lake Macquarie City Council to drought-proof sports fields



Hunter Water, in collaboration with Lake Macquarie City Council, is investing \$6 million to ensure community parks and sporting fields are kept green even in drought through a new recycled water irrigation scheme.

The investment increases recycled water capacity at the Edgeworth Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTW), to make recycled water available for Jack McLaughlan Oval / Edgeworth Oval in Edgeworth and the Pasterfield Sports Complex in Cameron Park.

The expansion will prepare the Edgeworth plant to deliver an additional 20 megalitres of recycled water per year for public open space irrigation.





Supporting our customers as water bills increase from 1 July



Water bills increased in July 2022, consistent with national CPI (an increase of \$21 for the average household)

Pensioner rebates increased to \$354 per eligible property, a boost of \$900,000 across the Lower Hunter. Hunter Water provides \$15 million in rebates annually.

In addition to the increased Pension Rebate, tailored support is available for any customer or water bill-paying private tenant experiencing financial difficulties, including account extensions, interest-free payment relief and flexible payment options such as Easy Pay.



Foreshore promenade and reimagined Cottage Creek opened



HCCDC's Chief Executive Valentina Misevska said the newly completed promenade joins Honeysuckle Park to an architecturally designed pedestrian and cycle bridge over Cottage Creek.

"Cottage Creek is a crucial part of the Honeysuckle landscape, and we were delighted to partner with Hunter Water to deliver improved public open space and a more natural looking creek between the harbour and light rail.

"Together we've reimagined the 100-year-old stormwater channel, replacing concrete walls with attractive tiered sandstone and bringing in native plants to soften the creek's edge and create a welcoming community space," Ms Misevska said.

In an interesting first for the region, Hunter Water installed a collection of 3D printed tiles at the southern end of the creek to create a living seawall. Hunter Water's Managing Director Darren Cleary said the textured tiles mimic natural rocky shores, creating new habitat for aquatic life to thrive.

"The work we've completed at Cottage Creek is part of Hunter Water's commitment to deliver higher liveability and environmental services for our customers and community," Mr Cleary said.

Regulatory update

Reintroduction of Developer Charges



Background and Context



- Hunter Water invests \$180 million each year in the delivery of infrastructure.
- Historically, a portion of this (~\$20million) was funded by developer charges
- Developer contributions are location specific upfront charges that water utilities levy to recover the costs of providing infrastructure for new developments.
- In 2008 the NSW Government set developer charges for Hunter Water to zero.
- In November 2020 the NSW Productivity Commission published a report making the recommendation to reintroduce developer charges.
- In October 2021 Hunter Water commenced planning to develop our transition plan towards the reintroduction of these charges.
- In October 2022 Hunter Water will publicly exhibit charges.

Hunter Water's Role



- Reintroduce developer charges for water and wastewater across our area of operations
- Publish robust and defensible developer charges in line with the NSW Government's timeline
- Achieve an appropriate balance of cost sharing between developers and the wider community
- Provide a price signal that reflects the difference in cost to develop in different locations
- Minimise the administrative effort for all parties

Key Dates and Activities



- **1 January 2022** – Policy Change date
- **October 2022** – Hunter Water Public Exhibition of Charges
- **October/November 2022** – Developer Roundtable/Q&A sessions
- **June 2023** – Final Charges registered with IPART
- **1 July 2023** – Developer Charges take affect
- Phased approach:
25% of the full charge from 1 July 2024, 50% from 1 July 2025 and full charges will only be paid from 1 July 2026.

**Preparing for our next price
submission**



IPART Regulatory Framework Review

Relies on genuine and meaningful engagement

Hunter Water's responsibility and challenge is to do this well, capturing service levels, customer experience and costs: our customer value proposition

Customers

Deliver services and expenditures that:

- Are **customer centric**
- Reflect **customer engagement** feedback
- Promote better **customer outcomes**
- Meet **community** needs
- Support **environmental** sustainability
- Promote **choice of services**



Costs

Pricing proposals demonstrate:

- **Confidence in costs**
- **Balance of risk and long-term performance**
- **Commitment to improve value**
- **Equitable and efficient cost recovery**

Credibility

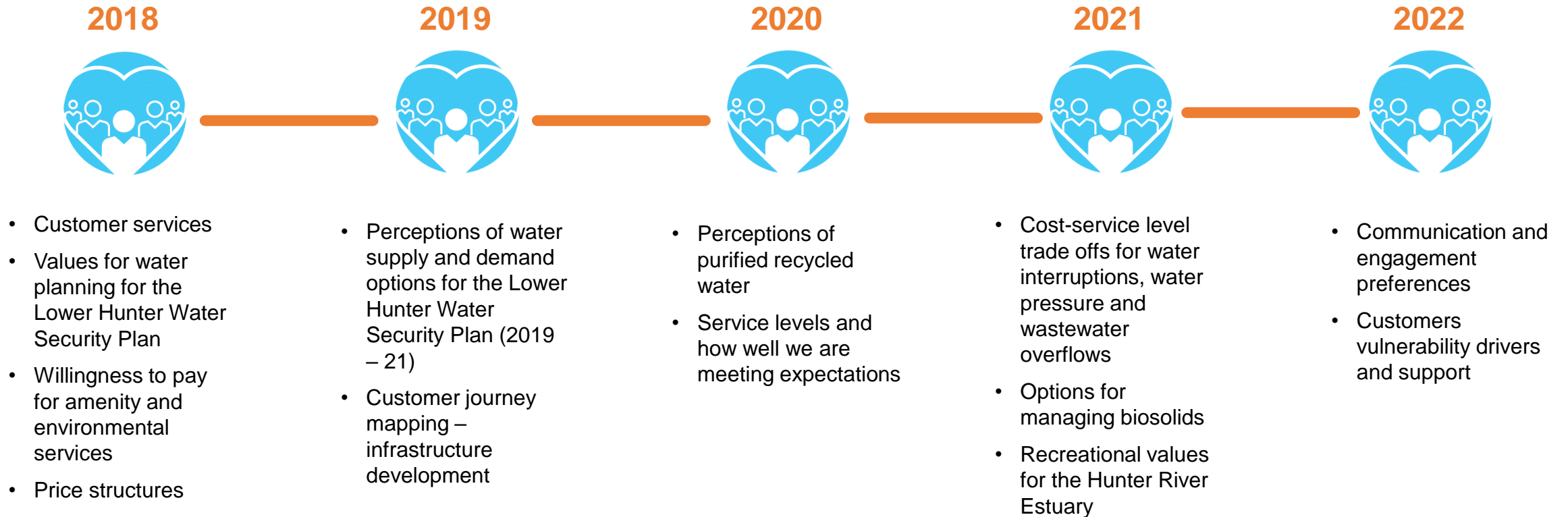
Provide assurance your proposal is:

- **Deliverable**
- Demonstrating **continuous improvement**



Conversations with customers

Over the past few years we have been engaging with our customers and community to understand what's most important about the services we provide, their journeys and what they want from Hunter Water. Below is a snapshot of some of this work.



← Corporate reputation tracker customer experience monitoring surveys, and mystery shopper →



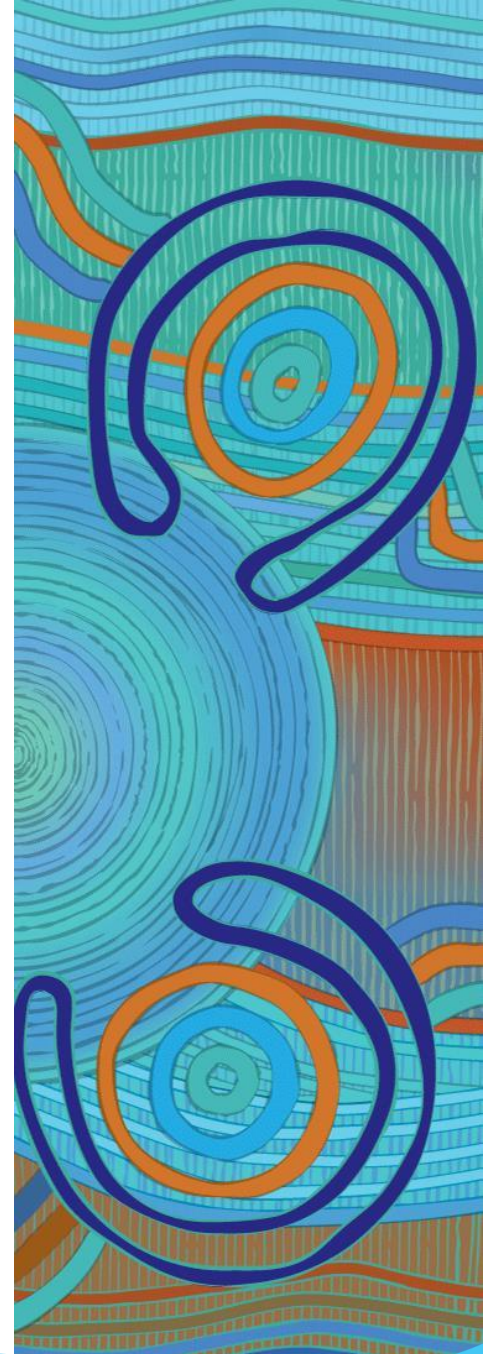
Hunter Water's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan July 2022 – June 2024

CCAG Meeting 13th September 2022



Welcome to Country

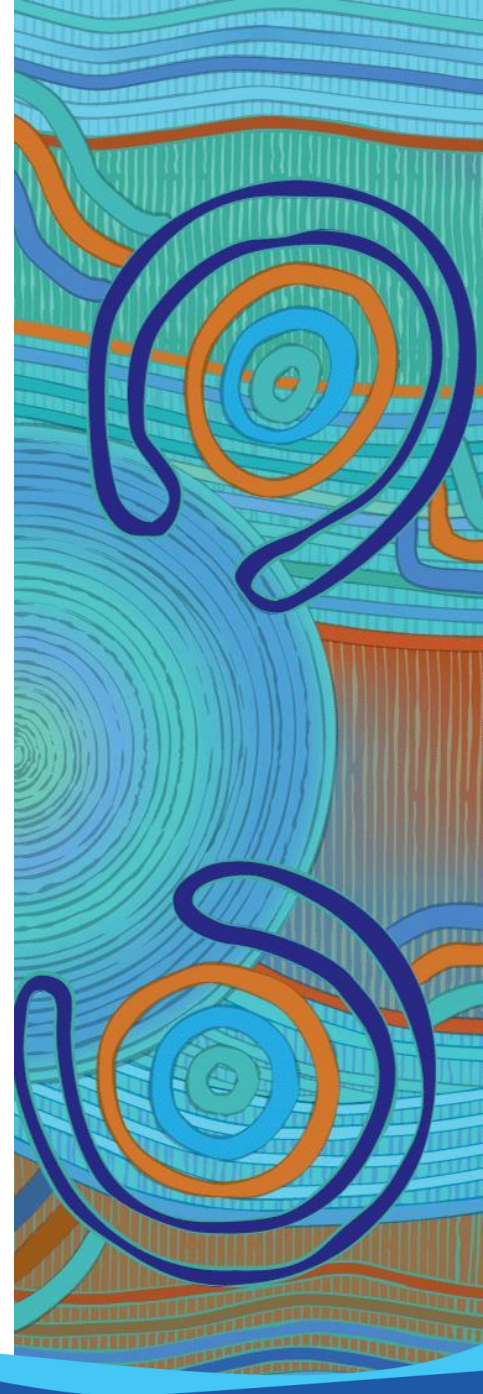
<https://youtu.be/m-H390zNIp0>





Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan

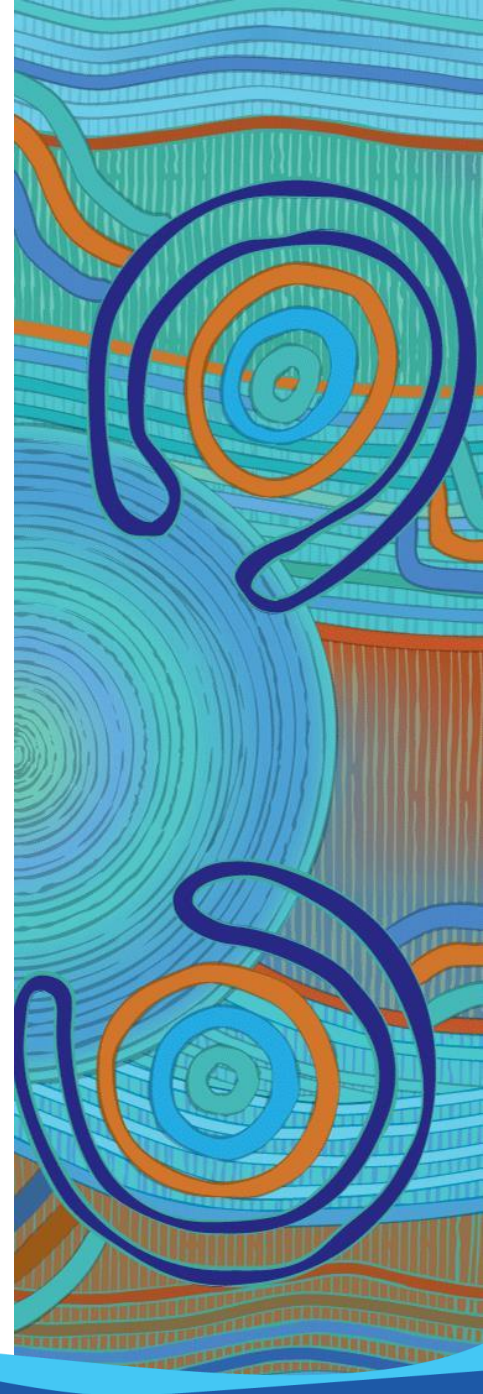
- Launched July 2022 for NAIDOC Week
- Our second RAP – our Reflect RAP (first) was released in July 2019
- Driven by the RAP working group





Our Vision for Reconciliation

'Our vision for reconciliation is a truly inclusive and equitable future for First Nations peoples in the communities where we operate, a future where First Nations knowledge is embedded in caring for our country and water. We will listen and learn from our First Nations peoples, and will incorporate their knowledge into the way we provide water and wastewater services to our region. Through partnership, we will create meaningful change by providing employment, procurement, and community engagement opportunities for First Nations peoples.'





RISE Framework

Elevate – leadership in reconciliation

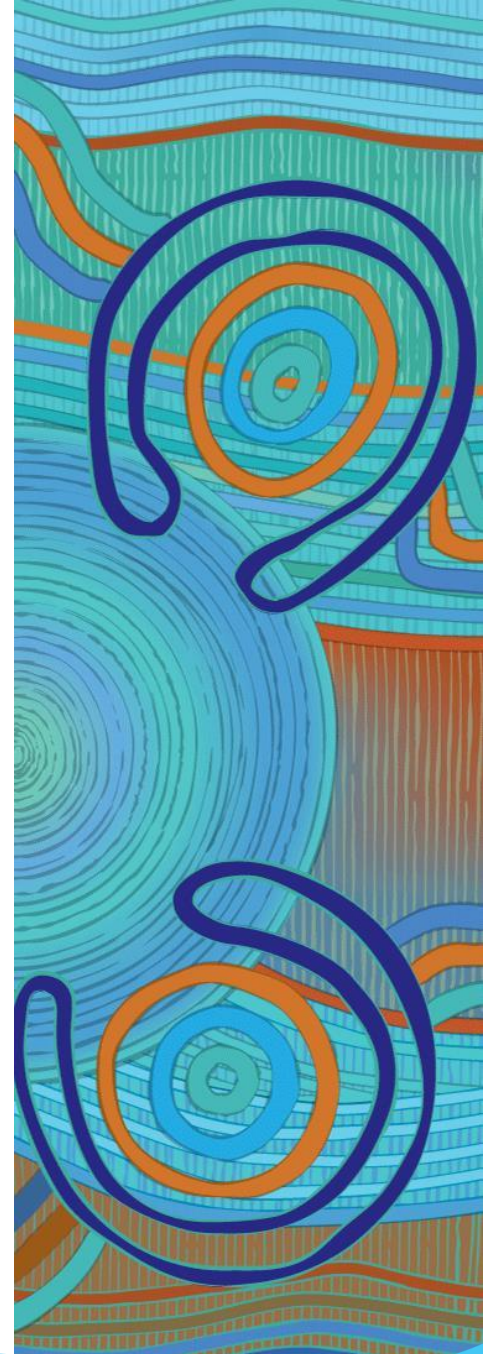
Stretch – embedding reconciliation

Innovate – implementing reconciliation initiatives

Reflect – Scoping capacity for reconciliation



RECONCILIATION
AUSTRALIA





New RAP Actions

Indigenous Engagement Plan

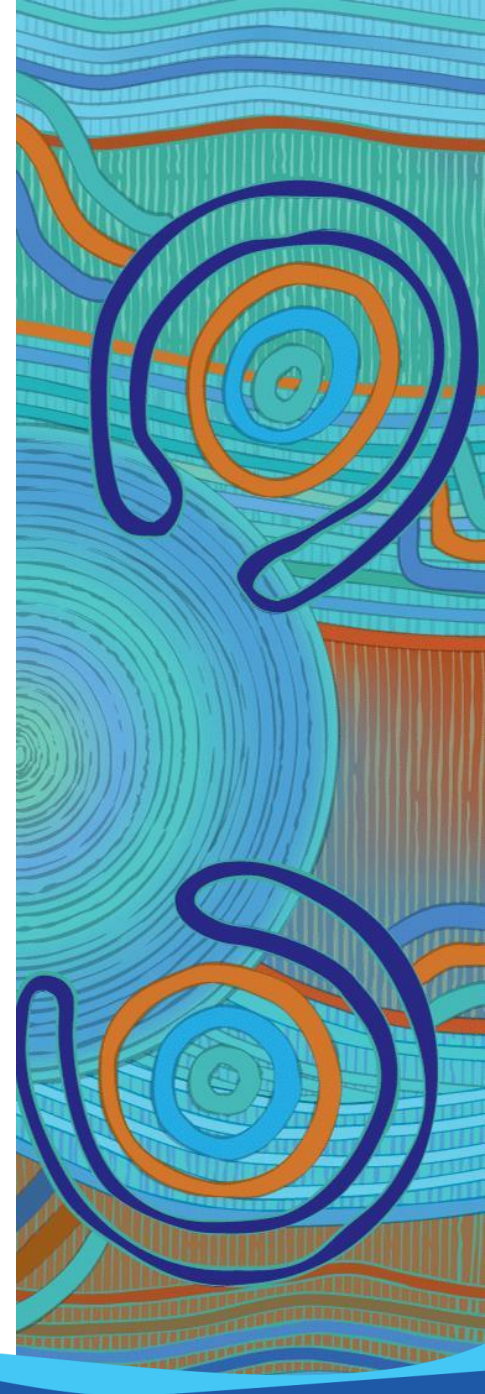
- Establish an informed and coordinated approach for Hunter Water to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders across several business areas and functions that are currently doing so on an ad-hoc basis

Cultural Learning Strategy

- Build staff awareness of and capacity to employ an Indigenous cultural lens and systems thinking

Indigenous Procurement Policy Framework

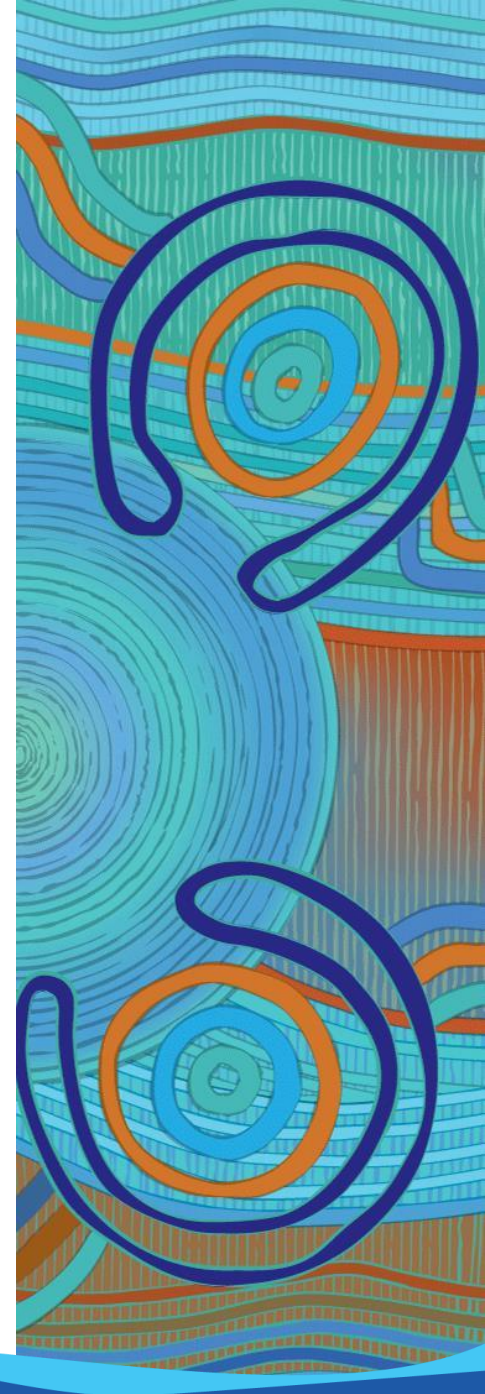
- Establish the activities to formalise our commitment to increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement and supplier diversity





Continued RAP Actions from first RAP

- Aboriginal Employment Strategy
- Build relationships through celebrating National Reconciliation Week & NAIDOC week
- Promotion and training on cultural capacity
- Understanding Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands on which we operate
- Connections and Partnerships with local schools
- Expanding classroom resources related to 'Where's Our Water?' books





Other good stuff

- Clontarf sponsorship commenced

AN OPPORTUNITY TO SUCCEED

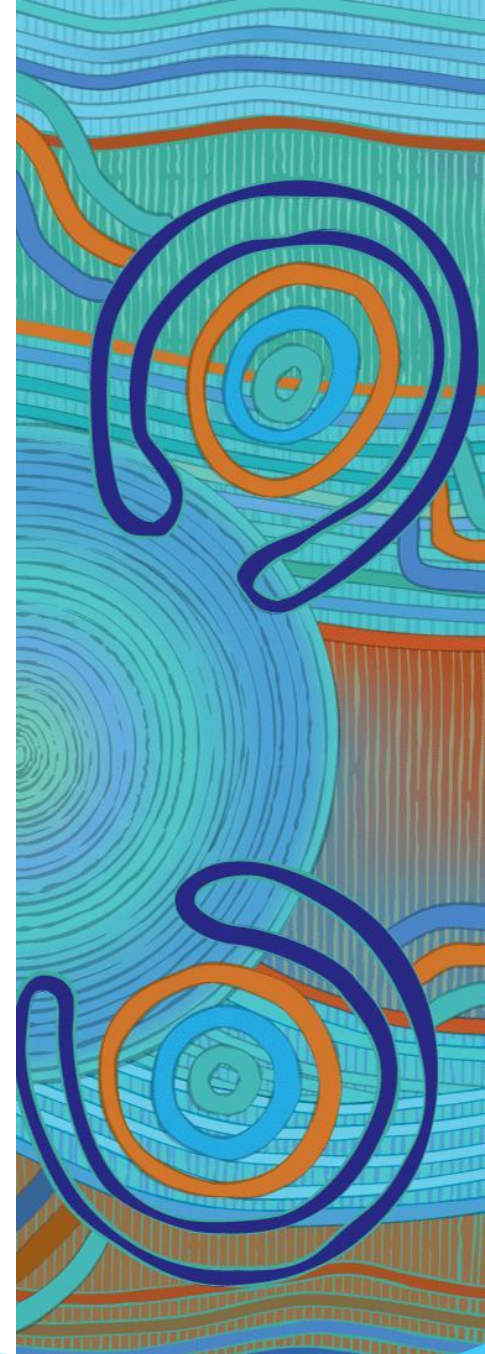
The Clontarf Foundation exists to improve the education, discipline, life skills, self-esteem and employment prospects of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and by doing so equips them to participate more meaningfully in society.



Clontarf helps young men to attend school, finish Year 12 and enter employment.

We support the academies at:

- Newcastle High School
- Hunter River High School
- Irrawang High School
- Toronto High School



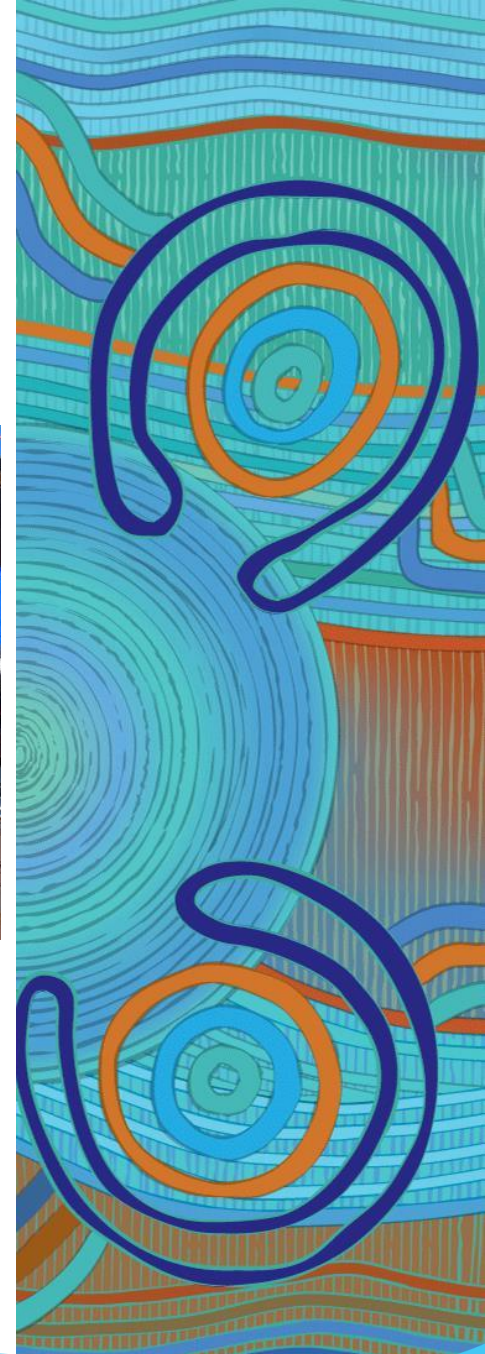


Other good stuff

- Sponsoring community events – Awabakal Ltd and Biraban LALC for NAIDOC week
- Indigenous scholarships and paid work experience
- Traditional boundaries map (in current RAP)
- Collaboration with Worimi artist Tyson Jolly – released for National Reconciliation Week this year

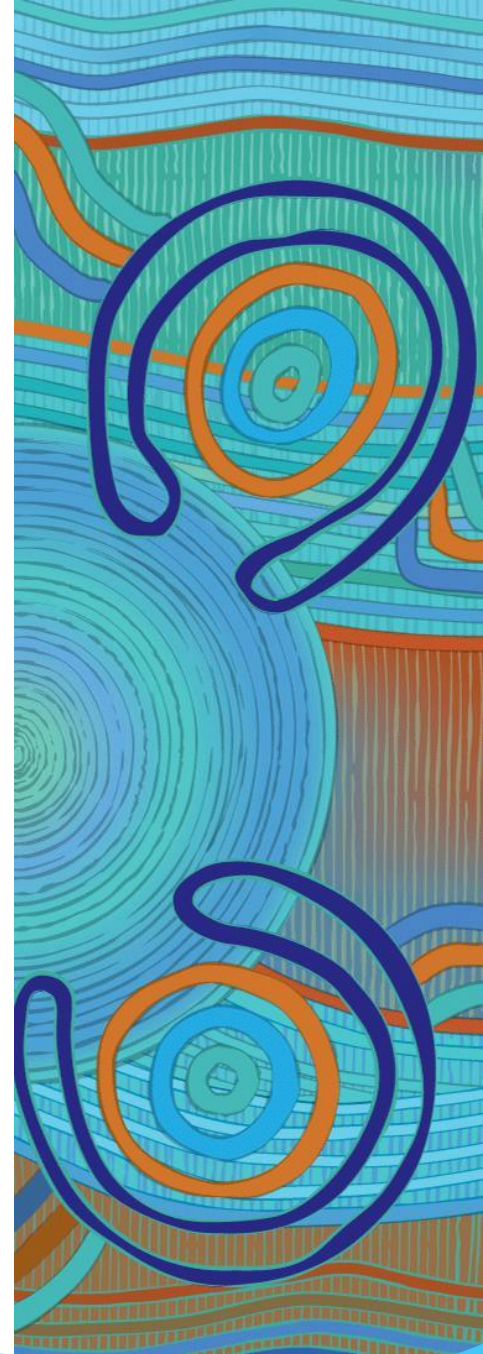


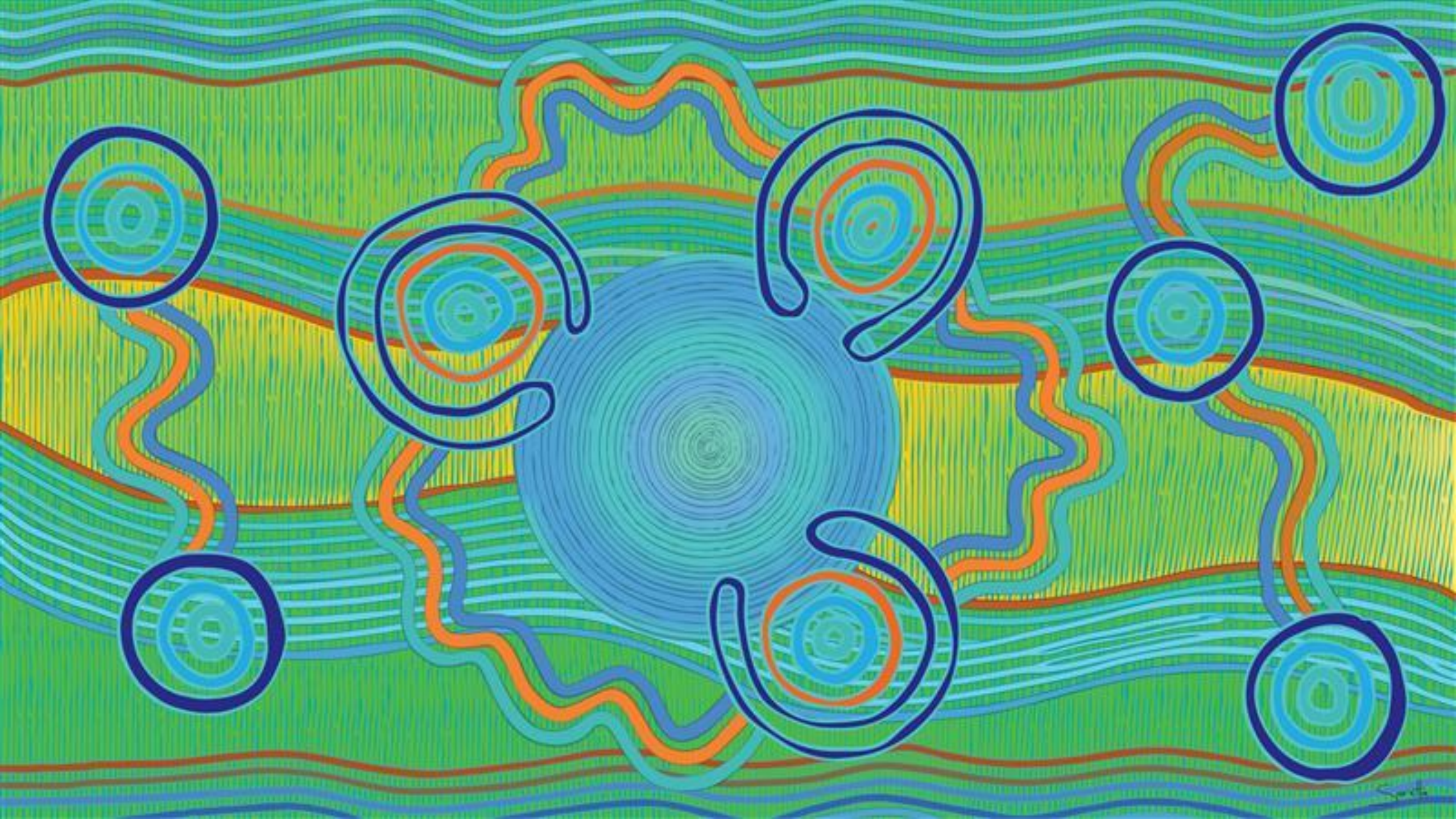
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0rO3m9Xw6zo>





- Traditional Boundaries map







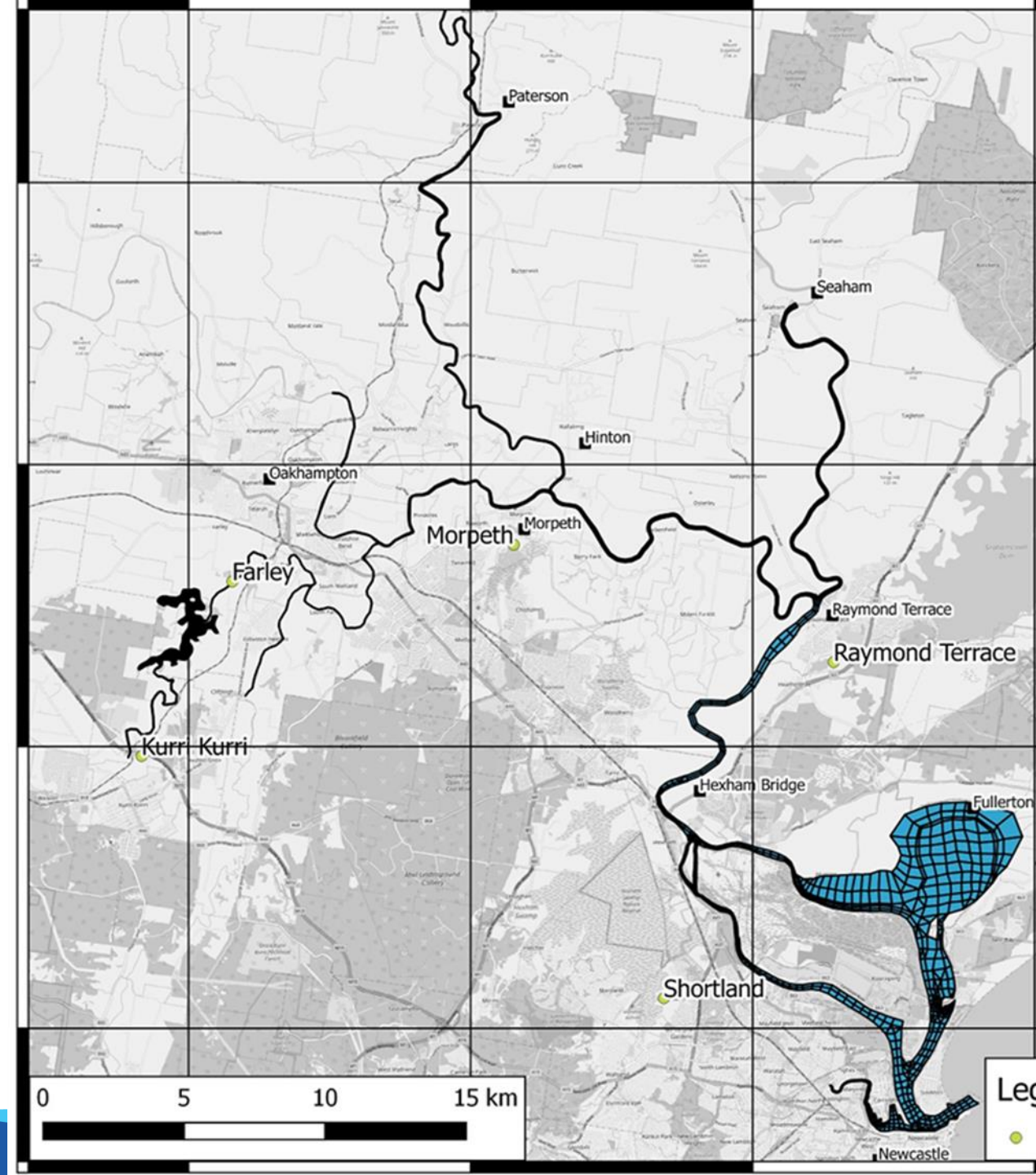
Hunter River Estuary Wastewater Masterplan

13 Sep 2022

David Derkenne



The Hunter River Estuary





The Hunter River Estuary





Hunter River Estuary in 1828

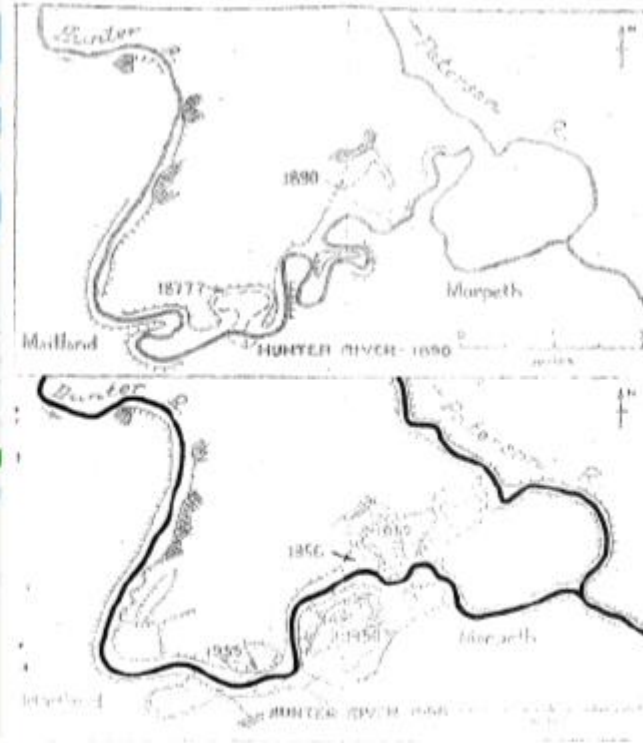




Hunter River Estuary in 1828



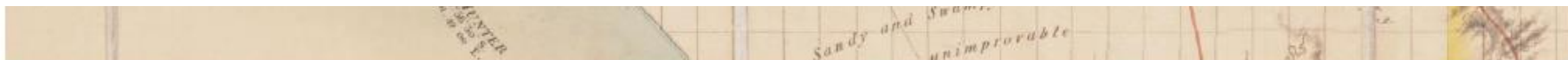
Figure 3.1 The river channel change from Morpeth to Maitland



LOWER HUNTER RIVER
HISTORY OF LEVEES AND CUTOFFS 1860 to 1962

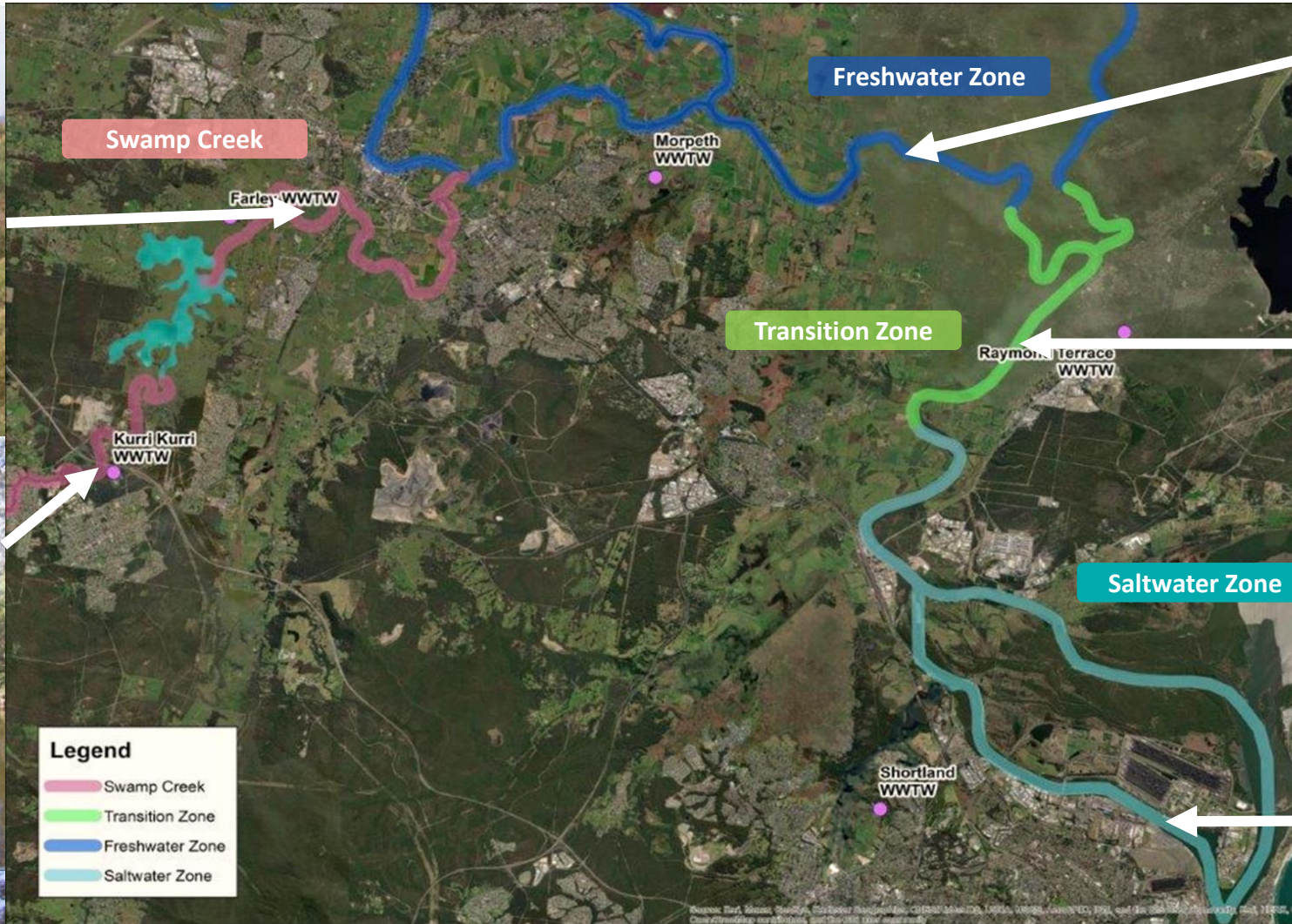
Changed tidal prism:

- Altered velocities
- Shorter residence times
- Sediment/scour
- Turbidity
- Ecological function
- Fishing/Swimming



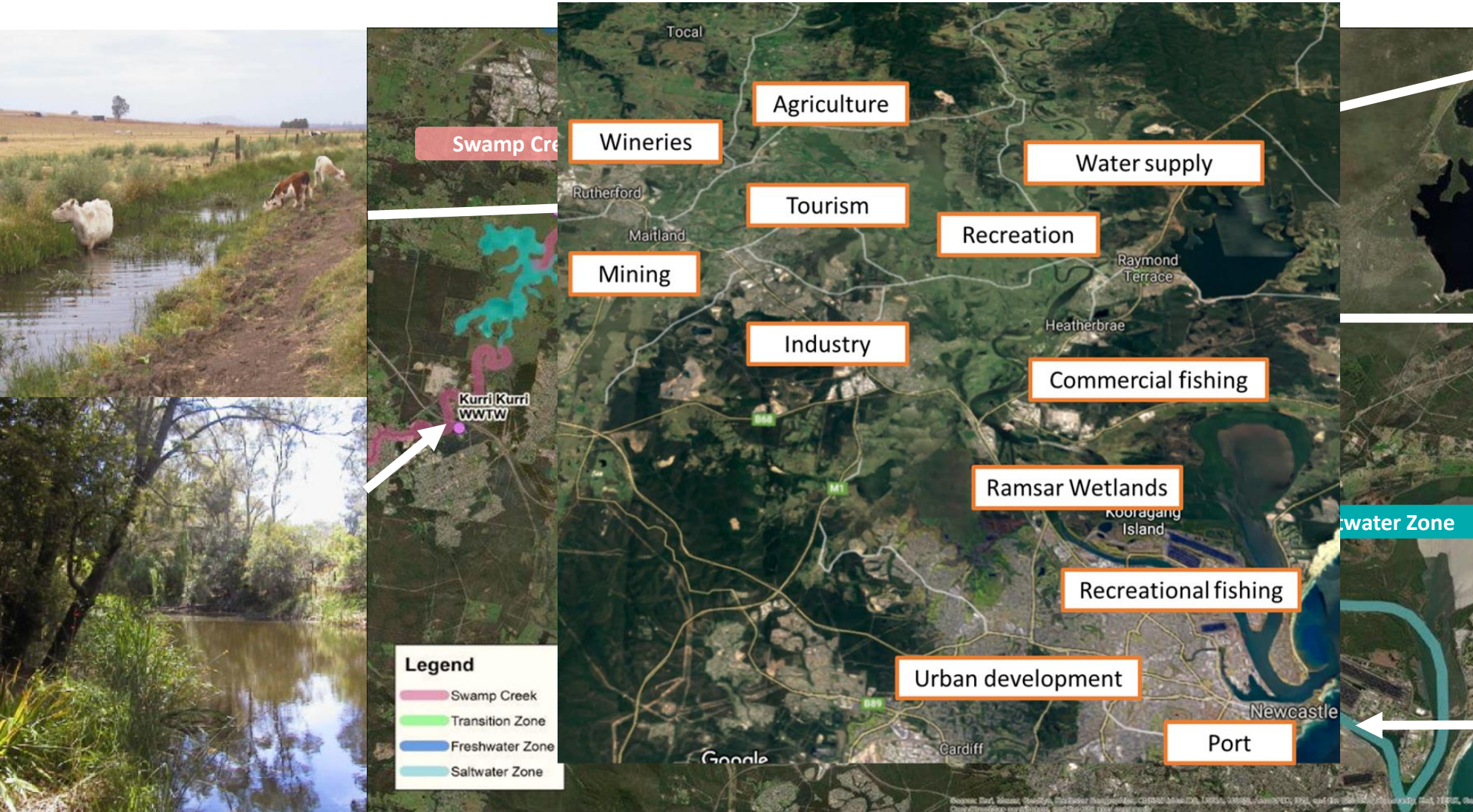


Hunter River Estuary today



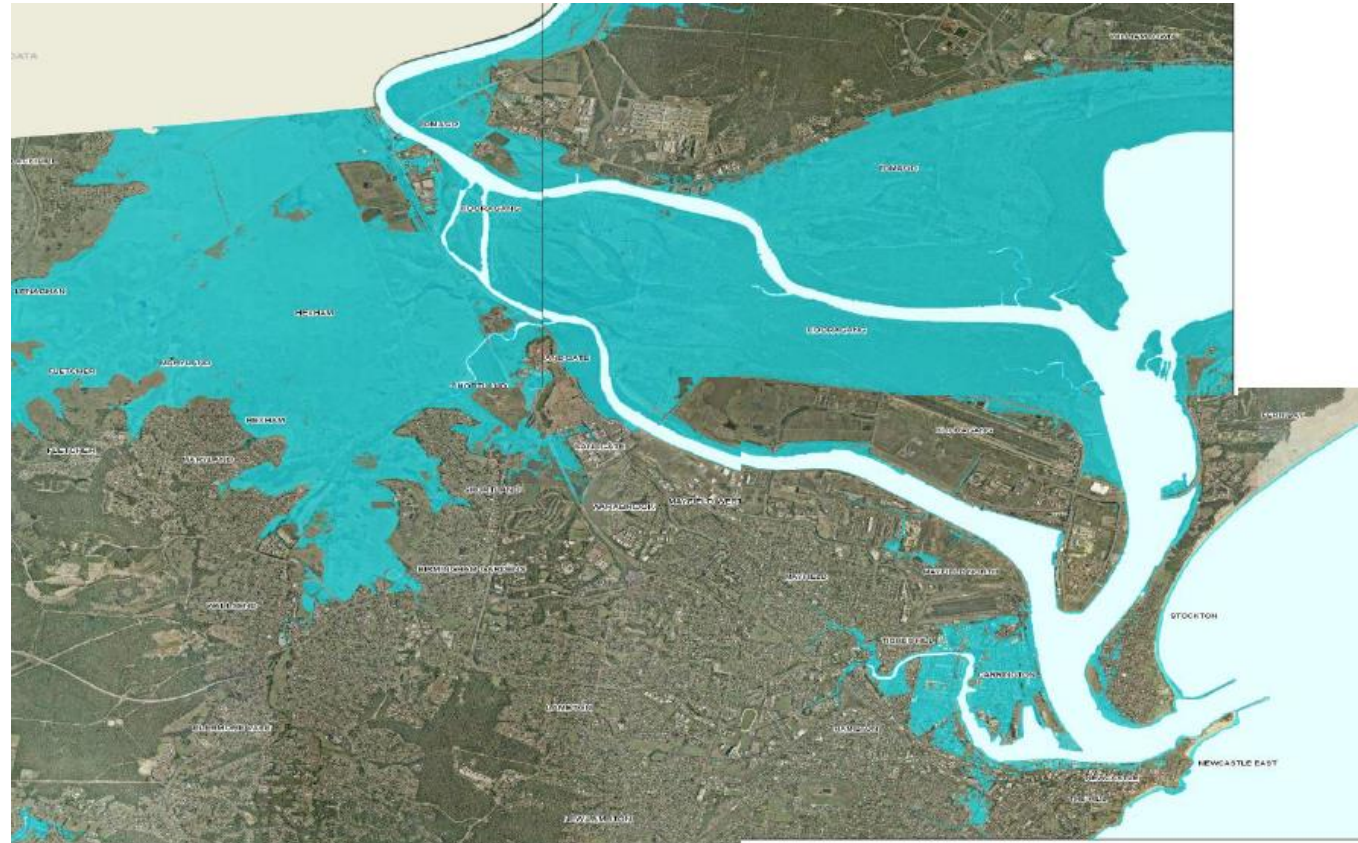


Hunter River Estuary today



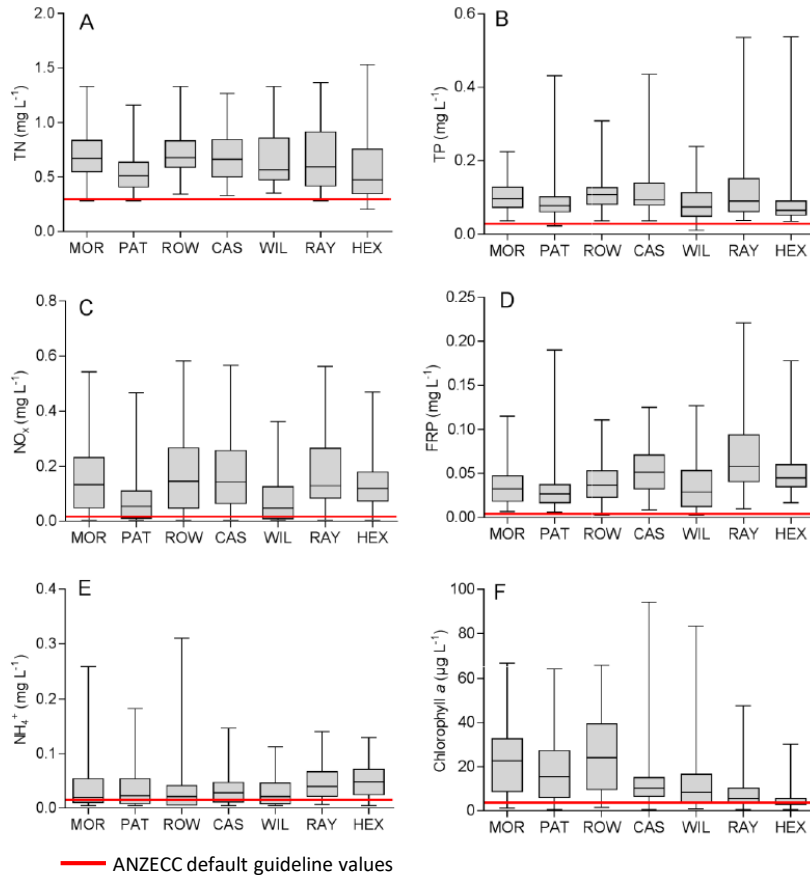


Hunter River Estuary - in 2100?





Water quality in Hunter River compared to all estuaries in NSW



Site	Rank	Site	Rank
Wagonga Inlet*	1	Tuross River	16
Dalhousie Creek	2	Oyster Creek	17
Wapengo Lagoon	3	Manning River	18
Pine Brush Creek**	4	Woolgoolga Lake	19
Jerusalem Creek	5	Deep Creek	20
Wallis Lake	6	Station Creek	21
Cudgen Creek	7	Meringo Creek	22
Conjola Lake	8	Lake Mummaga	23
Narrawallee Inlet	9	Hearns Lake	24
Darkum Creek	10	Lake Macquarie	25
Cuttagee Lake	11	Pittwater	26
Corindi River	12	Myall Lake**	27
Merimbula Lake	13	Smiths Lake	28
Macleay River	14	Tilba Tilba Lake	29
Bega River	15	Moonee Creek	30

Hunter River

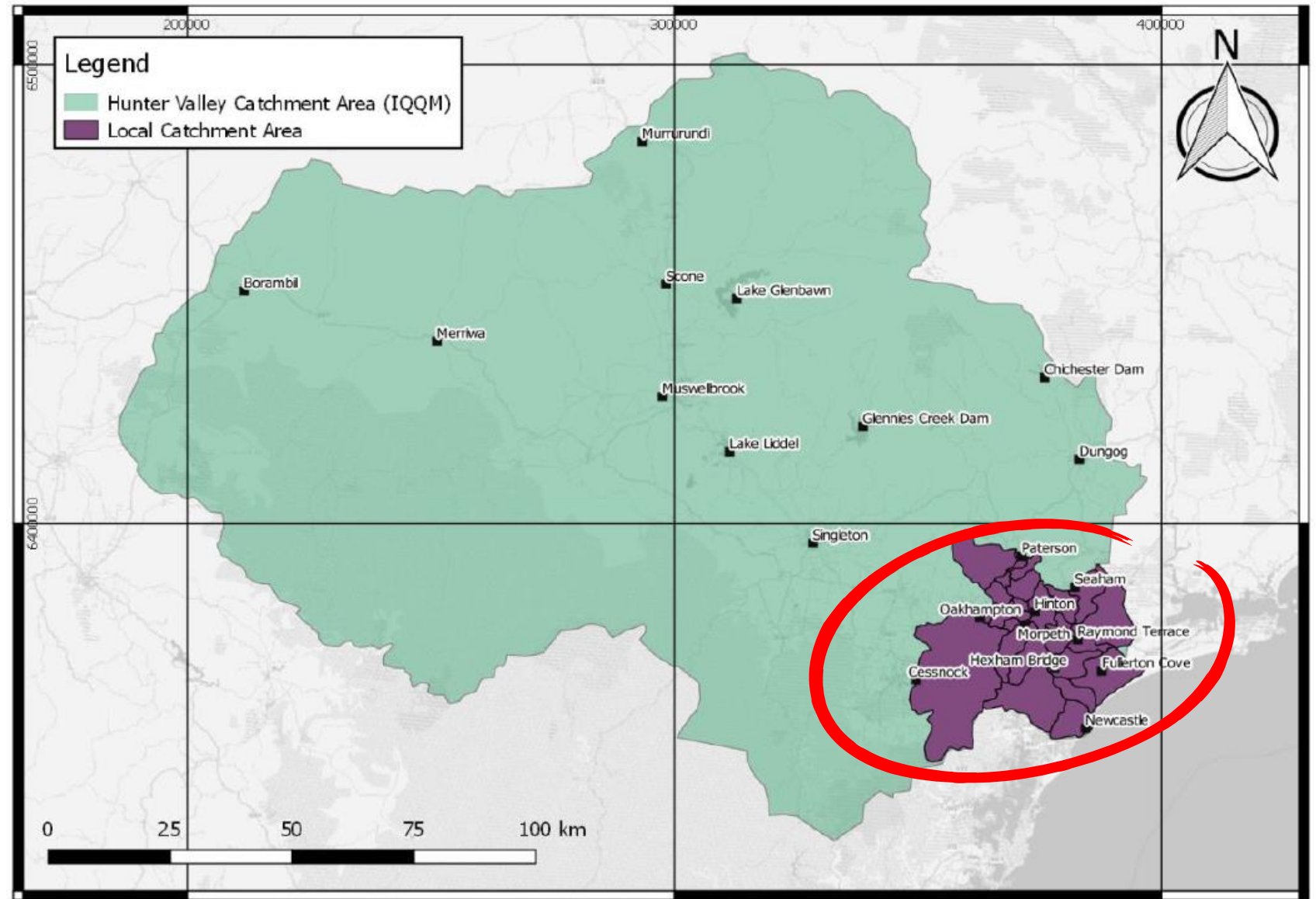
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Water quality in Hunter River compared to all estuaries in NSW

Fresh water tidal zone:

Site	Rank	Site	Rank
Myall Lake	1	Fairy Creek	16
Pine Brush Creek	2	Karuah River	17
Richmond River	3	Bullengella Lake	18
Racecourse Creek (Old Bar)	4	Bellambi Gully	19
Manning River	5	Middle Camp Creek	20
Hawkesbury River	6	Lake Macquarie	21
Myall Broadwater	7	Salty Lagoon	22
Hastings River	8	Bengello Creek	23
Meroo Lake	9	Hunter River	24
Black Head Lagoon	10		
Spring Creek	11		
Shoalhaven River	12		
Termeil Lake	13		
Minnamurra River	14		
Wamberal Lagoon	15		





HREWM

Goals and objectives

Key stats

- Lower Hunter population: 25%
- Discharges to inland waterways: 80%
- Population growth forecast to 2050: 60%
- Projected capital investment: \$300m

OUR VISION

To be a valued partner in delivering the aspirations for our region

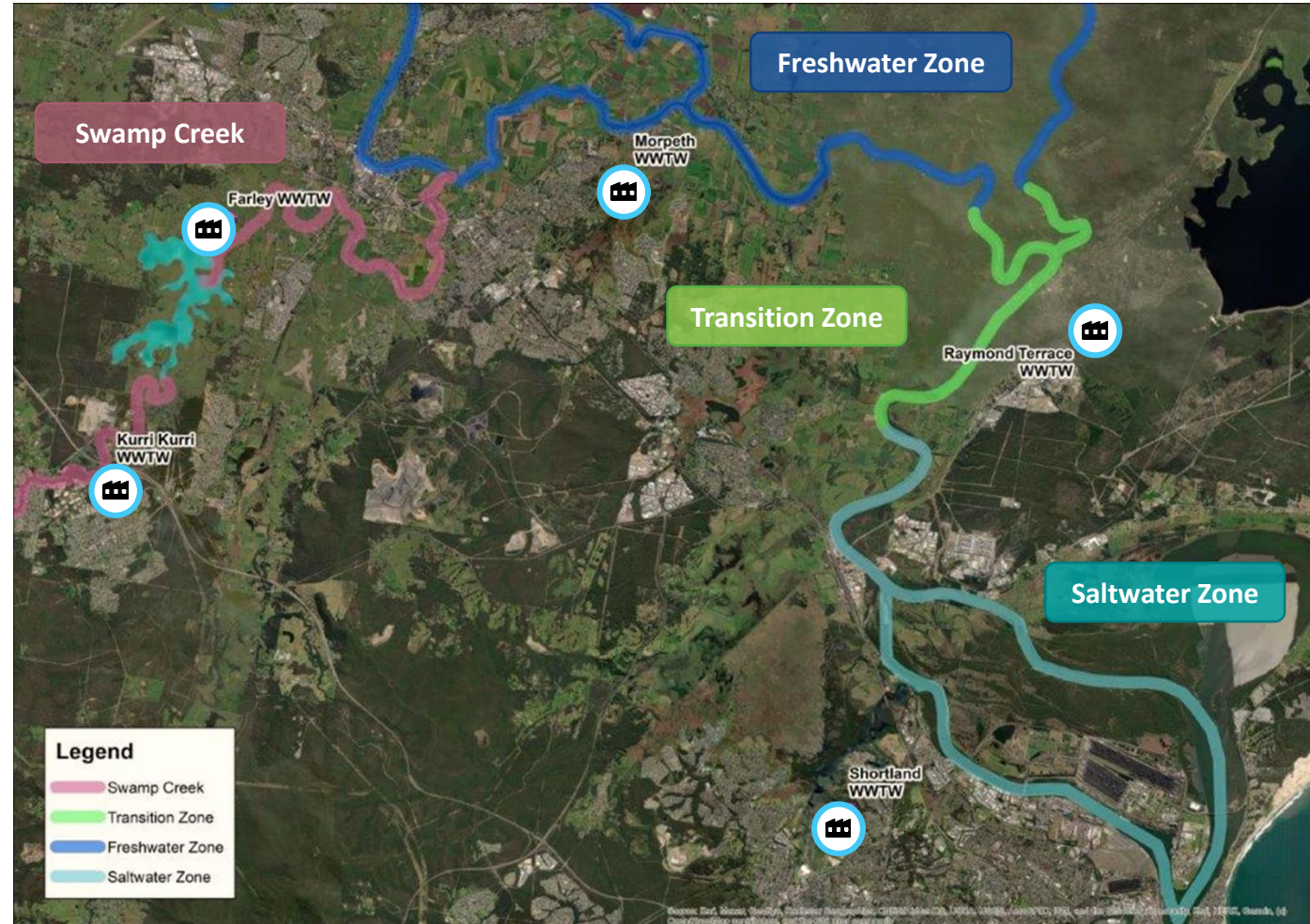
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Reduce impact on waterways

Improve community liveability

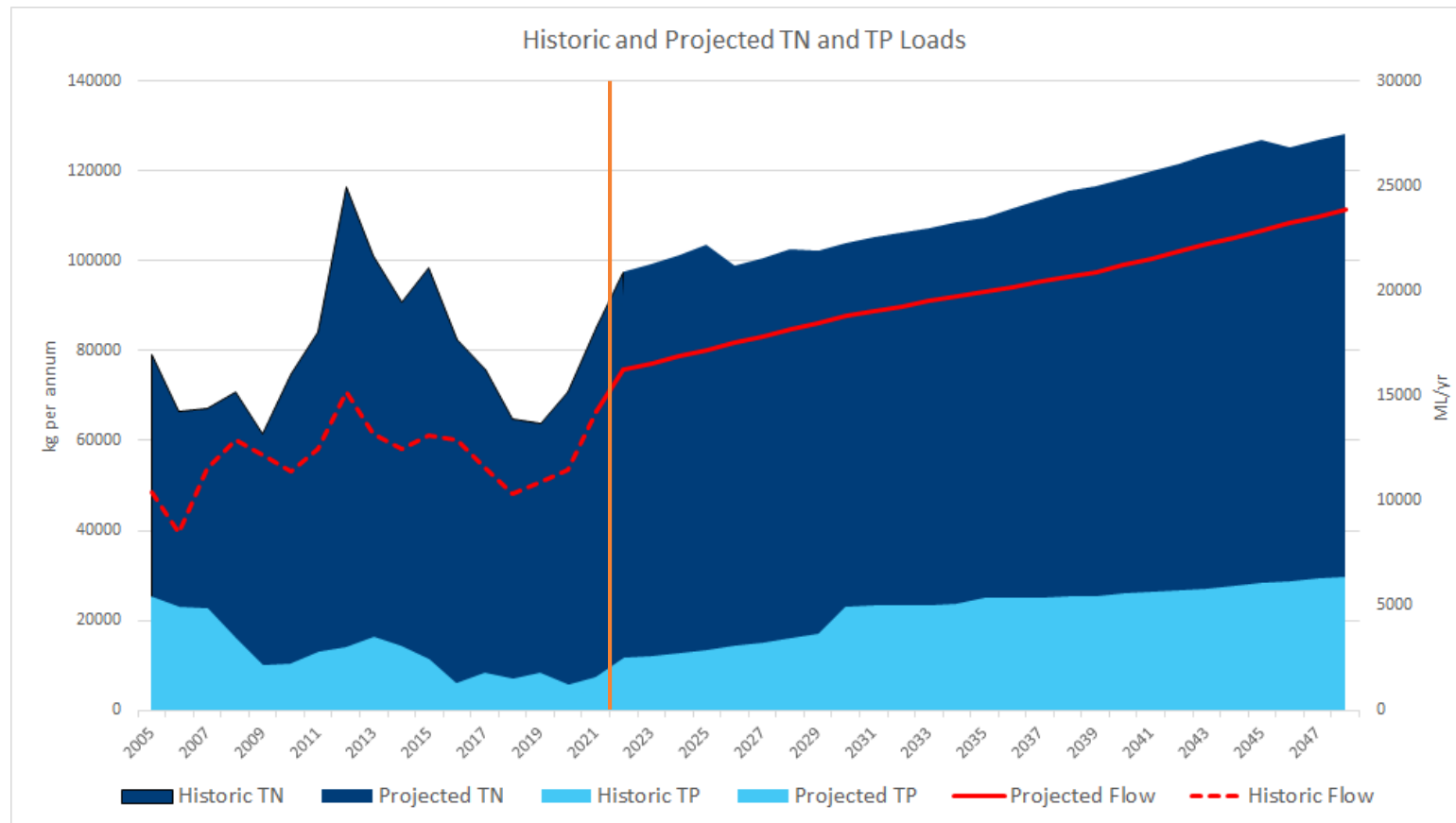
Increase circular economy

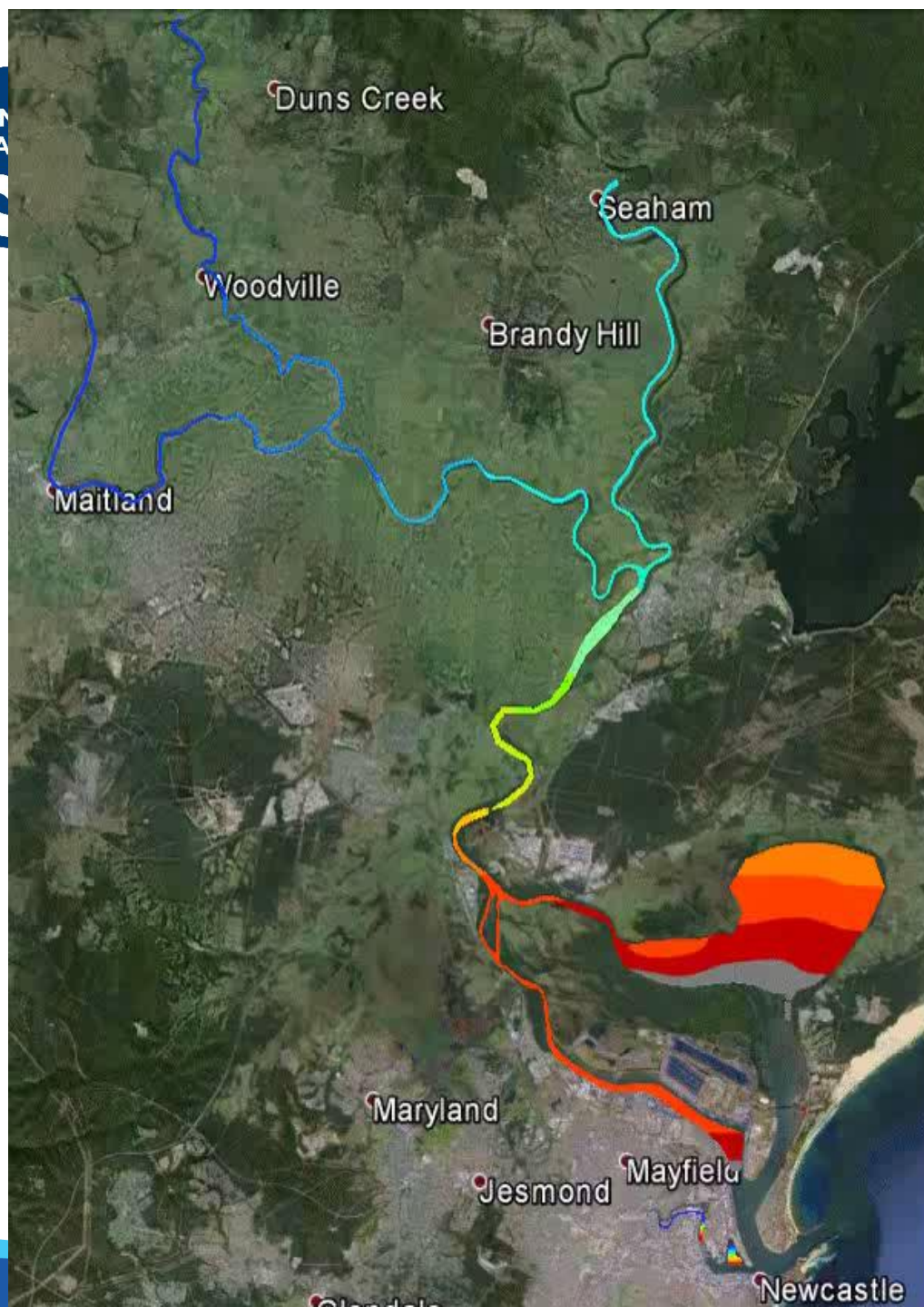
Be a valued contributor to our stakeholders





Servicing a growing population





Hunter River inflow

boundary inflows unknown

Patterson River

High biomass due to long residence times and internal nutrient recycling

Williams River

High biomass due to long residence times and internal nutrient recycling

Hunter River tidal pool

Freshwater biomass peak due to high nutrient concs and moderate residence times

Transition zone

Biomass limited by short residence times

Mid Estuary

Estuarine biomass peak due to high nutrient concs and moderate residence times

Lower Estuary

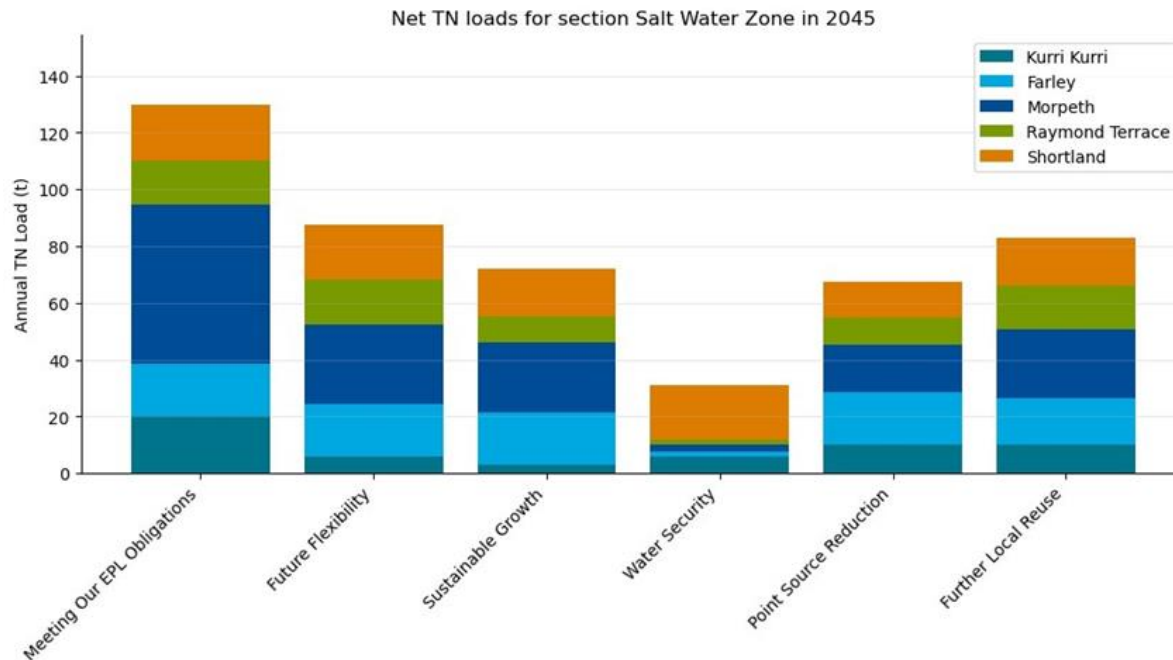
Low biomass due to short residence times

Throsby Creek

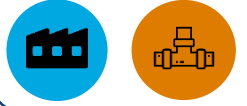
moderate biomass due to high nutrient concs and long residence times



Assessing a range of options



1. Meet current EPL obligations



2. Future flexibility



3. Sustainable growth



4. Water security



5. Point source reduction



6. Further local re-use



KEY:



WWTW



Discharge
pipeline



Wetland
rehabilitation



Wetland
rehabilitation
(demo)



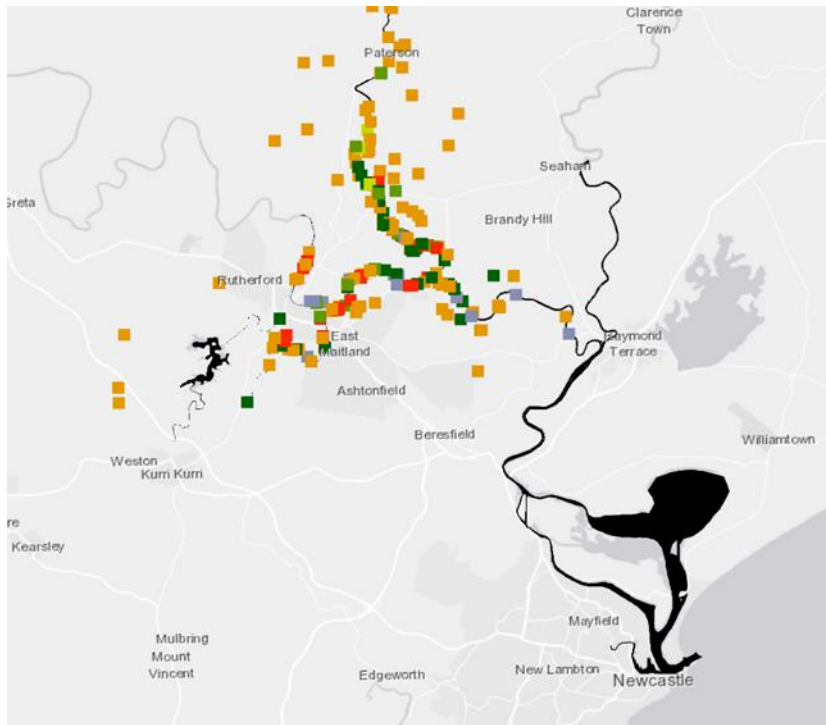
Reuse –
agricultural &
industrial



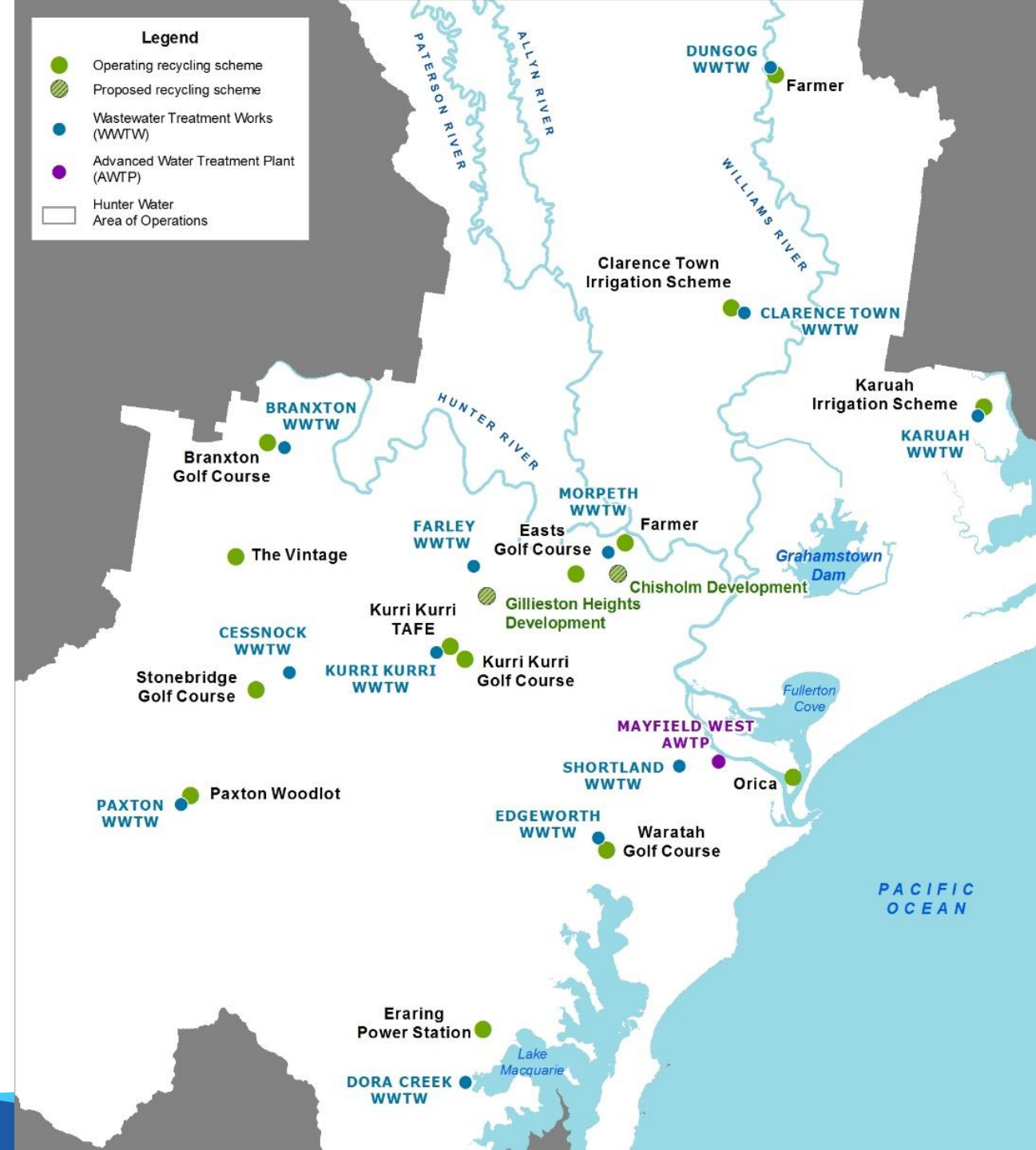
Purified
recycled
water



Exploring opportunities to increase recycled water use



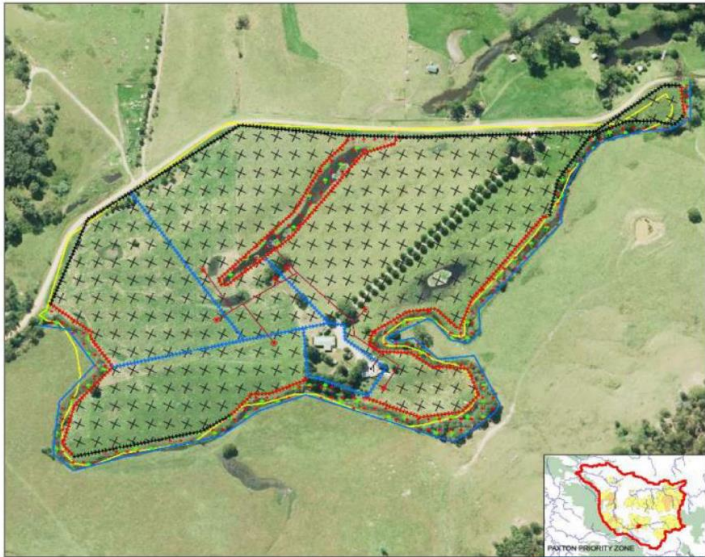
Ref: Extraction licences in the Hunter River Estuary (DPE)





Working with landowners to deliver catchment improvements works

Project: HR 01311 - 2016-2017



Local Land Services
Hunter

Work as Executed

HR01311

ZEAL Kelly Pty Ltd
1564 Congewai Rd
Congewai NSW 2325

Lot 14 DP 11321

Legend

- Trough
- Tank
- Pump
- Fence
- In-kind Fencing
- Existing Fencing
- Piping
- Creek managed
- Management of Vegetation
- Grazing Practices
- Project Location

N
1:2,400

Notwithstanding to whomsoever, the Hunter Water Corporation is not responsible for any loss or damage to any property or person, or any other loss or damage, arising from the use of the information contained in this map. The Hunter Water Corporation is not responsible for any loss or damage to any property or person, or any other loss or damage, arising from the use of the information contained in this map.

Prepared By: Rob Henderson
Date: 16/05/2016



The Congewai and Quorrobolong Catchment Improvement Program

A trial project developed in conjunction with the EPA. Delivered in partnership with HLLS and local landowners

- Riparian zone planting
- Erosion works
- Fencing and off-stream watering

Before



The old fence has been removed.

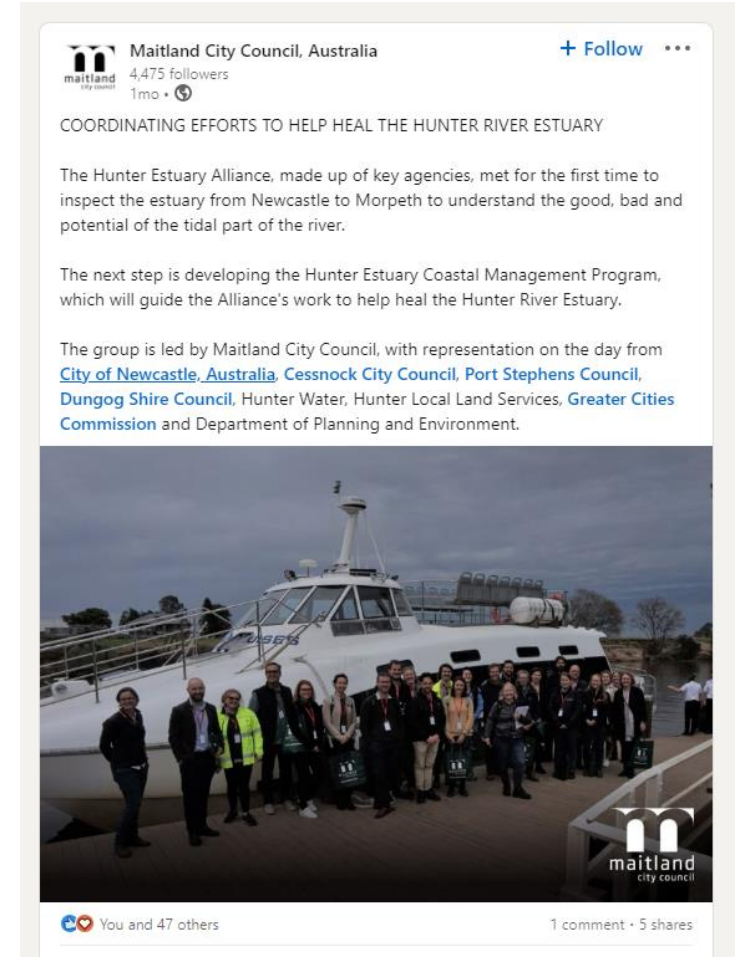
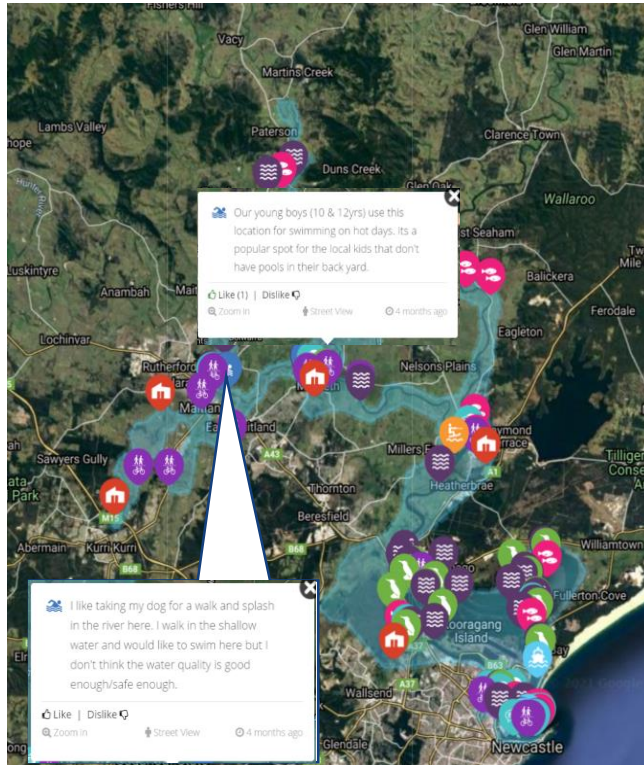
After



The new fence has been installed further back from the creek bank to allow for a buffer. Natural recruitment of native species has already begun.



Working with stakeholders and the community





The challenge ... and opportunity

The Estuary is highly stressed, and pressures are increasing.

Expectations are also increasing...

Calls for more liveable and cooler cities ... increasing demands for recycled water in a hotter and drier climate ... community expectations for environmental protection.

In light of this, the HREWM is exploring:

- How do we make the most of our wastewater investments to deliver community and environmental outcomes and move towards a circular economy?
- How can we work together to protect and restore the Estuary?
- What is the enabling policy and regulatory environment required to support these goals?



Next steps

WE ARE HERE

