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### **Hunter Water planning for region's long term future**

Hunter Water is working together with its community and the NSW Government to plan for the region's long term future, with a review of the Lower Hunter Water Plan underway.

Hunter Water is updating the Plan, alongside the NSW Government's water team and Central Coast Council, to ensure there is a sustainable supply of water in the long term, as well as during times of drought.

Two workshop-style deliberative forums will be held in Newcastle tonight and Maitland tomorrow night, with invitations extended to 160 people from a cross-section of the Lower Hunter community. The forums aim to understand their values and attitudes to different supply and demand option types to inform our water planning decisions.

Hunter Water Managing Director Jim Bentley said it's important that as a community we manage our precious resource well and protect it for future generations.

"In a time when most of NSW is in drought, we need to be vigilant about how we're using water and how we're conserving it. With our storages at a 13-year low and the potential for water restrictions in the coming months, we must use and manage this precious resource wisely, both now and in the future.

"We're reviewing the Lower Hunter Water Plan to ensure we meet our region's long term water supply needs and so that we're prepared to respond to drought. We don't know what the future holds, which is why we're planning now and working with our community so that we can understand what our options are.

"This week's deliberative forums will play a key role in helping shape our decision making. Through a series of exercises and discussions, we want to understand our community's preferences and attitudes to seven options types including conservation, recycling, dams and desalination options.

"Following the forums, we'll build on the feedback we receive to develop specific schemes and proposals. We'll continue to work and engage with our community throughout the entire review process.

"It's really important to Hunter Water that we develop our plans for the future with the community that we serve. It's also important we're bringing our expertise together with the values of our community so that we develop a future that meets their expectations and aspirations," said Mr Bentley.

Member for Upper Hunter Michael Johnsen said the Lower Hunter Water Plan is a whole-of-government initiative that would ensure the sustainable supply of water for the region.

"Water is critical to life. Not only is it essential that the Lower Hunter has a safe and secure water supply for years to come, but it's vital we protect this resource for the community's health, wellbeing and liveability," Mr Johnsen said.

"The Lower Hunter Water Plan confirms Hunter Water's and the Nationals in Government's commitment to sustainable long term water management in the region. We'll be working closely together throughout the review process, before the new Plan is released in 2021."