

# SINGLETON ADVOCACY AGENDA

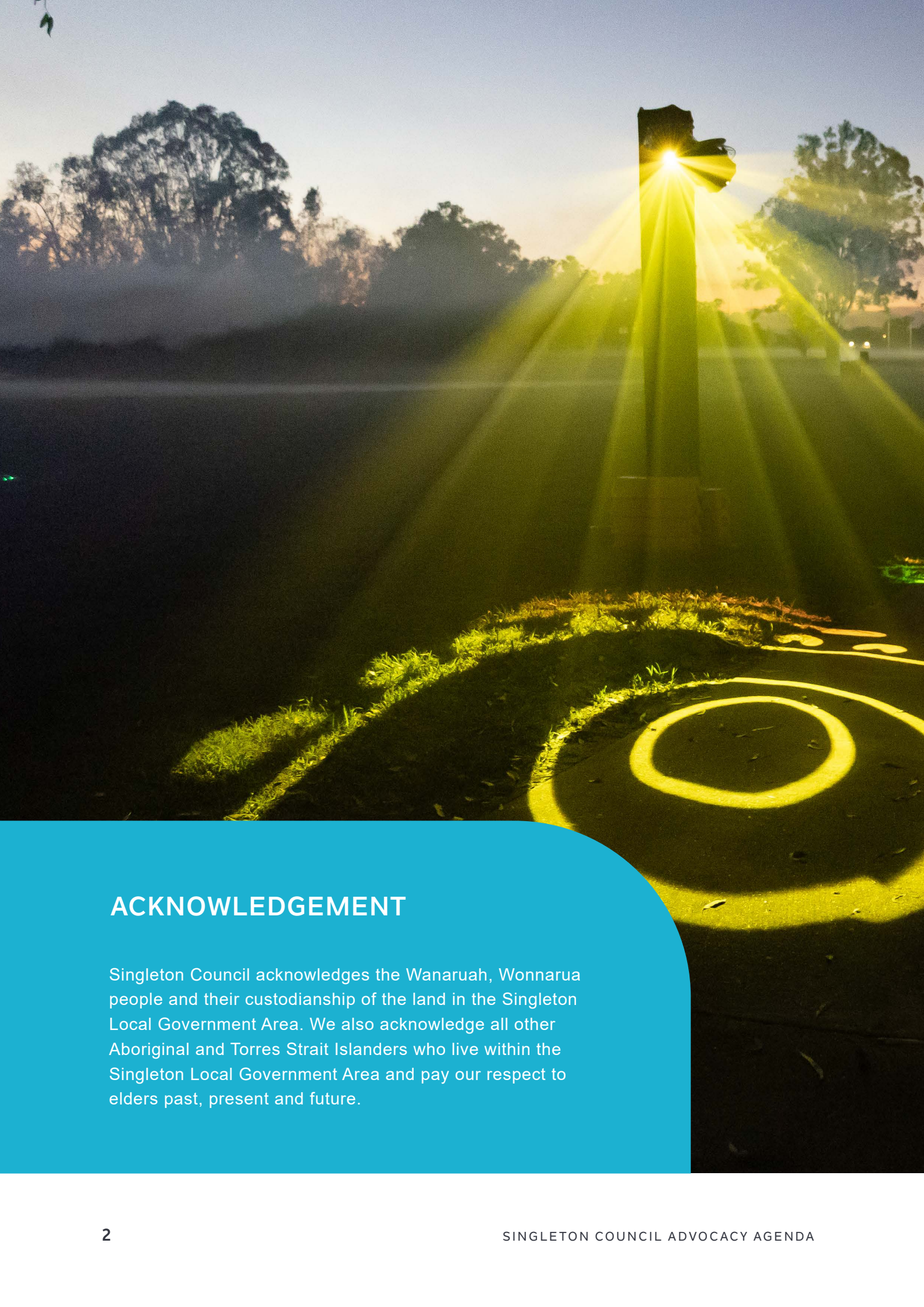
SEPTEMBER 2022

2022 / 2023

[W singleton.nsw.gov.au](http://singleton.nsw.gov.au)







## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Singleton Council acknowledges the Wanaruah, Wonnarua people and their custodianship of the land in the Singleton Local Government Area. We also acknowledge all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who live within the Singleton Local Government Area and pay our respect to elders past, present and future.





## WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED

- ✓ **Improved Resources for Regions funding program**  
with a fixed allocation of funds based on the impact to mining communities; the removal of Benefit Cost Ratio and co-contribution requirements; and increased flexibility.
- ✓ **Increased passenger train services to and from Singleton**  
with a commitment to fully fund an increased level of service on a trial basis.
- ✓ **Upgrades to Police facilities in Singleton**  
with a commitment of \$12 million for a new, fit-for-purpose police station.
- ✓ **Singleton Bypass**  
design improved with a full interchange now planned for the Putty Road.
- ✓ **Revision of Roads and Maritime contract to improve maintenance of New England Highway**  
to include the entire New England Highway corridor in Singleton.



# SINGLETON ADVOCACY AGENDA







# ADVOCACY THEMES



01 | Future-Proofing Singleton



02 | Economic Development



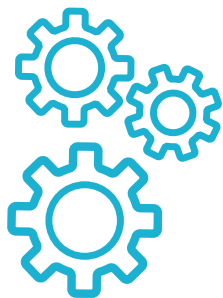
03 | Liveability



04 | Sustainability



# FUTURE-PROOFING SINGLETON



## COMMITMENT TO A STATUTORY BODY TO DRIVE A WHOLE OF REGION APPROACH TO ECONOMIC EVOLUTION

**Seek commitment to a statutory body that has appropriate legislative powers and resources to provide holistic leadership, strategy, policy, governance and accountability to drive a whole of region approach to economic evolution.**

Council has taken a proactive stance in regard to economic evolution, opportunities and prosperity both for our own LGA and the wider Hunter Region through the Hunter Joint Organisation.

As a community, we have established the Community and Economic Development Fund in partnership with local coal mining companies to plan and resource a range of programs to deliver economic and social wellbeing outcomes to the Singleton LGA now and into the future. As a member of the Hunter JO, we have proactively supported initiatives to address potential changes to the region's industry base, notably thermal coal mining, to foster new industries and businesses now. Singleton is also a paid member of the Committee for the Hunter.

The NSW Government announced in June 2021 that an Expert Panel would be established to help oversee its Royalties for Rejuvenation Fund, providing \$25 million per year to support mining communities to develop and diversify their industry base in the long-term. It is Council's position that the direction this initiative has taken is not what is desperately needed for our region. Further, the allocation of \$25 million which is to be shared across the State is grossly inadequate for the challenges and opportunities we will have to manage.

We will continue to advocate for a statutory body that has the appropriate authority and resources to provide the leadership, strategy, policy, governance and accountability for the economic evolution of this region.



## COMMITMENT TO CONTINUATION OF RESOURCES FOR REGIONS FUNDING PROGRAM FOR MINING COMMUNITIES

**Seek long-term commitment to the Resources for Regions funding program to continue to recognise and provide certainty for mining communities alongside the Resources for Rejuvenation program.**

Following significant advocacy by Singleton Council, the NSW Government introduced much-welcomed reforms to the Resources for Regions program to link funding allocations for particular areas with the proportion of mining contribution and level of impact in that area.

The reforms also removed Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) and co-contribution requirements, simplified the application process and expanded the program to allow funding for programs to help communities manage the impacts of mining. This has enabled greater certainty for mining communities to plan for and deliver infrastructure projects and programs to benefit people who live in the mining areas that help to support NSW. For Singleton Council, it has enabled us to develop and implement a real partnership approach with our community.

More recently in April 2021, the NSW Government announced the Royalties for Rejuvenation Fund, to provide \$25 million per year to support mining communities to develop and diversify their industry base in the long-term. This is being undertaken in conjunction with a proposed Expert Panel.

It is Council's position that both programs are vital for mining communities and the Resources for Regions program should co-exist in the current format on an ongoing basis. The Resources for Regions program exists to assist communities who are impacted every day, here and now. It would be a travesty to these communities if it was to be removed. The proposed Royalties for Rejuvenation program, which we support subject to further improvement, is about the long-term and has a geographical remit much broader than those communities who are at the "coalface".





## CHANGES TO THE COST SHIFTING MODEL IMPOSED BY NSW GOVERNMENT

Seek commitment that no new, increased or transferred responsibilities will be imposed on local government without a sufficient corresponding source of revenue or revenue-raising capacity.

Seek commitment to review and properly engage with the local government industry regarding the accounting treatment of the Rural Fire Service “Red Fleet”.

Cost shifting is one of the most significant problems faced by councils in NSW because it undermines the financial sustainability of our sector by forcing councils to assume responsibility for more infrastructure and services without sufficient corresponding resourcing. Examples include local government elections, waste management, the Emergency Services Compensation Scheme and most recently the accounting treatment of Rural Fire Service (RFS) assets.

Council is required to record \$13 million worth of assets on Council’s accounting books for RFS assets, which are clearly not Council’s.

The issue has been raised in multiple forums including with Government ministers, members of the Opposition and members of Parliament.

We will continue to support Local Government NSW in its efforts to address issues at a strategic level, while advocating our local needs with all sides of politics.





## IMPROVED PROCESSES FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Seek expedition of emergency declarations to speed up the recovery process in emergency events.

Seek commitment for recurrent and proper funding of Local Emergency Management Officer (LEMO), Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) and broader planning and preparedness activities to help manage impacts of events on the local community.

Seek commitment to a properly resourced centralised agency to take holistic responsibility and accountability for the recovery phase in emergency events.

Seek commitment to expand recovery resourcing to respond to the uniqueness of each event, build back better as well as cater for the hidden costs for communities from emergency events.

Seek greater communications resourcing at a local level to assist combat agencies and Police during the response phase.





The Singleton LGA is in the unique position as having experienced five floods in just 16 months between March 2021 and July 2022. During the latest event, much of the township of Broke was affected by the flooding waters of the Wollombi Brook with houses inundated, major roads decimated and more than 30 erosion holes that required to be filled.

Acknowledging and praising the efforts of NSW Police, State Emergency Service, NSW Rural Fire Service and all agencies involved at a local level, similar issues in both the response and recovery phases surfaced that impacted their capacity, although not their capability.

There are significant opportunities to better manage all aspects of emergency management which are currently limited by lack of resourcing. Issues around the proper resourcing for the LEMO and LEMC functions arise with pressures on personnel to fill these demanding roles in addition to their “normal” jobs.

Additional funding for these roles by the State or an ability for councils to fund these via a simplified Special Rate Variation (SRV) process is essential.

A centralised approach to communications during emergency events also delays the distribution of vital local information while approval or direction is sought from officers in Sydney or other regional commands.

In the recovery phase, delayed disaster declarations causes unnecessary delays to access funding and resourcing to kickstart recovery and repairs. Further, funding limitations restrict the scope of roads projects without the provision to rebuild infrastructure to an improved standard. This is a nonsensical approach that negatively impacts on public confidence and increases exposure to further costs in the future.

The recovery process is further hampered by uncertainty in terms of responsibilities and resourcing. It is Council’s position that a centralised agency that is properly resourced with appropriate delegations and experience would be a good start.

Council will continue to lobby the Federal and NSW governments for a quicker, more streamlined process in the response and recovery of natural disasters, with a greater emphasis on local needs and information. Council will also advocate for a centralised approach to drive the recovery phase, with a focus on rebuilding “better”.





## COMMITMENT TO THE AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY + RESILIENCE

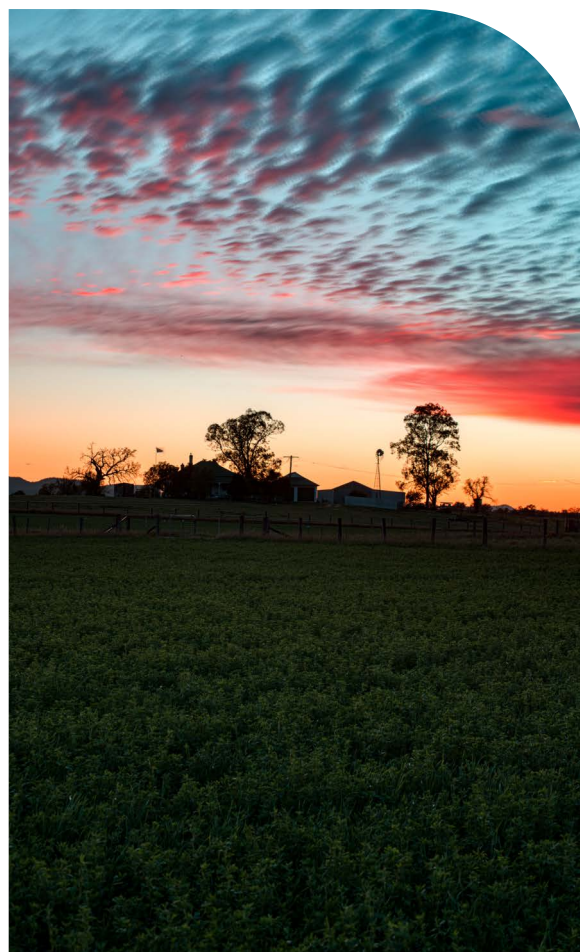
**Seek commitment to support the resilience of the agricultural industry.**

**Seek commitment to fund identified infrastructure projects to aid rural communities.**

The issue of supporting resilience of the agriculture industry was covered widely in local, State and national news with government assistance available to drought-declared regions. Yet despite neighbouring LGAs meeting the criteria for funding and support, Singleton has continued to miss out (except for \$4.25 million from the NSW Government's emergency drought support for local infrastructure projects).

It is Council's position that there needs to be a better process that focuses on the level of real impacts rather than lines on a map. This issue has been raised in correspondence and conversations with the previous Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management. Discussions have also been held with local members of Parliament and the NSW Opposition.

We will continue to lobby the Federal and NSW governments for recognition of our local farmers who continue to suffer just the same as other primary producers in neighbouring LGAs and other drought-affected regions.







## ONGOING FUNDING OF HUNTER JOINT ORGANISATION

Seek commitment to the ongoing funding of \$300,000 annually for Joint Organisations.

Joint Organisations (JO) are an important NSW Government initiative recognised in the *Local Government Act 1993* as having three principle functions: to establish strategic regional co-operation on matters relating to the JO area and to establish strategies and plans for delivering those strategic regional priorities; to provide regional leadership for the JO area and to be an advocate for strategic regional priorities; and to identify and take up opportunities for inter-governmental co-operation on matters relating to the JO area.

In late 2019, the NSW Government announced \$150,000 for the Hunter JO. While much welcomed, this needs to be provided as an ongoing allocation built into legislation to support the long-term development of JOs. Council supports the NSW Government's plan for JOs and must see that support returned. We will continue to partner with the other councils of the Hunter Region and Local Government NSW to drive this agenda with the NSW Government.





## IMPROVEMENT OF STATE- DELIVERED GRANT PROGRAMS

Seek commitment to provide a four-year structured grant funding allocation for economic and social infrastructure that is distributed to each LGA based on an agreed formula.

Seek commitment to progress the following opportunities for improvement in how grant programs are managed:



Key priorities for the improvement in how grant programs are managed include:

1. Continue to reduce (not in total) the number of “competitive” grants programs
2. Simplify application processes
3. Simplify milestones for payments
4. Make it easier for councils to support community groups through more user-friendly program requirements
5. Better articulation and direction on the issue of not funding “core business”
6. Acknowledgment of capacity issues
7. Commitment from OLG to enable an easier SRV process when making a co-contribution to State/Federal grants (as proposed in the Government’s own rating review report)



Council is very appreciative of the progress that the NSW Government has made in regard to the amount of funding made available to Regional NSW. We do appreciate that and very much look forward to it continuing.

The NSW Government offers a wide and diverse range of grant funding programs that are vitally important to councils' abilities to upgrade economic and social infrastructure in line with pressures from the numbers of people moving to the region.

However, while important to councils' works programs to deliver outcomes for communities, it is difficult to prepare quality funding applications due to short notification periods, available resources, the number of various programs and submission deadlines. Equally, in the absence of information around how much funding is available for particular LGAs, it is difficult to prepare and nominate suitable projects, and then to deliver those projects in accordance with program guidelines.

A four-year structured grants program would provide councils with greater certainty and ability to plan for medium-term projects, as well as align with the Integrated Planning and Reporting process to deliver improved outcomes for the community. Councils may also undertake more meaningful engagement with their communities about priority projects.

As councils continue to increase collaboration with our community groups, we need to ensure that grant programs facilitate this rather than limit such. Issues such as documentation, milestones articulation, cash flow and allowable project management costs need to be improved.

Grant programs and their timing need to be cognisant of capacity constraints in the micro and macro environment. Across the country, there are major staff, contractor, plant and materials supply issues. These are exacerbated for those who have suffered natural disasters. Timing for applications and completion of projects needs to recognise this.





# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT





## SUPPORT FOR EVENTS TO GENERATE TOURISM + BOOST THE VISITOR ECONOMY

**Seek ongoing support and resourcing for major events to promote Singleton as a destination and boost the visitor economy.**

As part of Council's proactive approach to an economic evolution, our vision for tourism is to double the value of the Singleton Visitor Economy by 2036, building on our reputation and attraction as one of Australia's premier visitor destinations for quality food and wine experiences and the expansion of experiences in the areas of nature, adventure, sports tourism, culture and heritage.

In 2021/2022, we began work on the draft Destination Management Plan in partnership with Cessnock City Council and the Hunter Valley Wine and Tourism Association to set the overarching strategic direction for infrastructure and product development for sustainable growth in the tourism sector over the next five years.

In addition, Council has recognised the importance of events as an attractor for interregional visitation and beyond, and has become a leader in developing new and innovative concepts for events. In May 2022, the first expanded Firewalk Festival was delivered using a Regional NSW event acceleration grant that included the illumination of historic Dunolly Bridge and an unforgettable laser lights spectacular.

The festival culminated with the Firelight event on 21 May 2022 which included vibrant fire performers, live entertainment including laser and light shows, entertainment for children and teenagers, live music and some of the region's best food stalls, food trucks and laneway bars. The festival drew 23,195 registered visitors – almost equal to the population of the entire Singleton LGA – with a mix of local residents and visitors from across NSW.

We will continue to work with government agencies to identify and attract opportunities for funding and resourcing to uphold the high level of events and help achieve our vision for tourism.



**FIREWALK  
FESTIVAL**

**13,733 registrations for Firewalk**

**9,462 registrations for Firelight**



## ONGOING COMMITMENT TO AND EXPANSION OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN SINGLETON

Seek commitment to increase resources, staffing and services to improve provision of vocational training and integration with local school network and other providers.

Seek ongoing commitment for resourcing and staff training to continue the successful delivery of the Outcomes of Trade Training Program.

Seek commitment for ongoing support for the TAFE campus in Singleton to provide a range of adult learning.





Singleton has a unique secondary school network that allows students to study the courses they require to pursue their career ambitions, regardless of the school they attend. Students have options to study under Vocational Education that will help address growing skills shortages (especially in hospitality, primary industries and tradespeople), fostering and promoting pathways for students to achieve adequate qualifications and opening opportunities for young people to study and work in Singleton.

Council will work collaboratively with our local high schools to secure continued resource support, staff training and accreditation to enable our students to benefit from these programs and achieve vocational certification without having to look elsewhere.

Council and local high schools will also work with TAFE to enhance high quality post-secondary pathways for local students.

Furthermore, Singleton's TAFE campus is equipped with a connected learning centre and, given the capacity to screen any course provided by TAFE NSW, it is Council's position there is scope to run an expanded program to meet the aspirations of our community and support adult learning.

As it stands, the limited course offering forces Singleton students to travel to other areas to continue their education. The importance of this institution is reinforced by 2016 Census data which shows 76 per cent of qualifications achieved by Singleton residents are completed through TAFE or other registered training providers.

The Singleton TAFE campus is an opportunity to provide fit-for-purpose education to prepare our residents for new jobs with new skills delivered through up-to-date courses and tools.

Through Council's socio-economic programs, we will engage with TAFE NSW, our local school network, Member for Upper Hunter, Member for Cessnock, relevant ministers and shadow ministers to determine the most effective actions to progress this matter.





## PLANNING BEYOND MINING AND USE OF CURRENT BUFFER LANDS

**Seek commitment to resource and develop a transparent land use-based policy position on final mining land use that aligns with local strategic land use planning outcomes and ensure current and future socio-economic considerations are managed appropriately.**

**Seek commitment to resource a program to develop masterplans for all mining sites that provides clear articulation of the next highest and best use options for the sites individually and as a system.**

**Seek commitment to work with all stakeholders to increase ability to explore the next highest and best use of mining land without putting at risk approved mining operations.**

A holistic approach to planning and resourcing for opportunities for post mining land use is required to ensure the communities that supported resource extraction are not left with the scars on the landscape and economic and social challenges for decades to come.

The current approval process for mining projects creates a disconnect between local land use planning outcomes and community expectations for post mining land use. Council has raised these issues in multiple forums, including with Government ministers, members of Parliament, the Minerals Council of Australia, industry, the Independent Planning Commission, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, and executive staff of the NSW Government.

Council's submissions to the Independent Planning Commission include requests for improved conditions to help gain better process and outcomes for local communities. Whilst we have made progress to establish better conditions of consent that require more focus on post mining land use, there is still more to be done and further opportunities to take action sooner rather than later, including the release of rehabilitated mining land no longer required for operation for other uses before the final closure of the total lease.

We will continue to call for government support to resource and support investigations and proper planning process regarding opportunities for post mining and buffer lands, as well as provide for the pursuit of those opportunities to benefit communities now and in the decades to come.





## EQUITABLE GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE TO ALLOW DEVELOPMENT-READY LAND

**Seek NSW Government commitment to expand eligibility and target infrastructure funding programs to support development-ready housing and employment lands in regional areas.**

In response to the Regional Housing Taskforce (RHT) recommendations to implement measures to improve infrastructure planning, delivery and coordination in the regions, the NSW Government has made two commitments following representations by Singleton Council.

The NSW Government has committed to expanding the Greater Newcastle Urban Development Program (UDP) to include the Upper Hunter (Dungog, Mid-Coast, Muswellbrook, Singleton and Upper Hunter LGAs) in recognition of the different yet important role these areas play in the future of housing in the Hunter Region. Singleton Council advocated for this recognition and our inclusion in the program in the submission to the Hunter Regional Plan, noting that critical infrastructure provision to support housing development outside metropolitan areas falls to local council to provide and there is a lack of funding support at this level to accelerate the provision of such infrastructure.

The NSW Government also provides funding to accelerate housing growth through two important infrastructure funding streams, the Housing Acceleration Fund (HAF) and the Infrastructure Acceleration Fund (IAF). In total, almost \$2 billion of infrastructure funding has been provided through these programs since 2012. In the Hunter, the HAF has provided \$38.6 million of infrastructure to support housing growth within the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Area, but no

funding under this program has been provided to support infrastructure outside these areas including Singleton.

The expansion of the Infrastructure Acceleration Fund to include regional councils, including those within the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Area, is welcome. However, it is Council's position that funding should be directed towards LGAs where existing infrastructure funding streams are not currently available and to councils outside the Hunter Water/Sydney Water catchment areas, where there is greater capacity to support significant housing thresholds. Councils outside these areas rely on their own rate base to support infrastructure development ahead of significant housing growth.

In Singleton, there are more than 5,700 development-ready lots, of which more than 2,800 will require access to critical water and sewer infrastructure to realise delivery. This infrastructure has been identified as a critical constraint to housing growth in Singleton. Without access to the regional scale funding support or significant risk sharing between developers and Council, these developments are unlikely to progress.

We will call on the NSW Government to reconsider eligibility requirements or alternative programs for critical infrastructure to support regional councils to provide development-ready land.





# LIVEABILITY







## SINGLETON BYPASS

**Seek commitment on the project plan and timing for construction of the New England Highway bypass of Singleton, including the dual interchange at Putty Road.**

**Seek commitment for provision of dual lanes.**

**Seek commitment to upgrades to the State road network to ensure flood evacuation and access is improved.**

**Seek commitment for funding and assistance for the equitable transfer of responsibility and opportunities for George Street as a result of rerouting of the New England Highway.**

**Seek commitment for funding and assistance to enhance the vibrancy and appeal of Singleton's town centre as a destination following completion of the bypass.**

**Seek commitment for fair funding and assistance to relocate Council's water and sewer depot as a result of the preferred route for the bypass.**

Construction of the Singleton bypass is regarded as a significant outcome for our community and is welcomed and supported. However, there is a strong call from the community for the inclusion of dual lanes at both the Putty Road interchange and the Whittingham section.

The preferred route also has impacts for Council including the need to relocate the water and sewer depot as a result of land acquisitions responsibility and opportunities for George Street once the New England Highway bypass is complete; and to encourage motorists to Singleton town centre.

With the assistance of the NSW Government's Resources for Regions program, Council has already made a significant investment in the Singleton town centre as a modern destination

for boutique retail, dining, recreation and leisure. In preparedness for the bypass construction, we are developing a campaign showcasing the Singleton town centre as a destination to motorists and commuters, incorporating the ease of entering and exiting the bypass at the Putty Road.

We are also exploring opportunities for the enhancement of George Street, particularly in and around Burdekin Park, as a community space following the removal of heavy traffic.

Council will seek further funding opportunities to develop these opportunities, as well as to assist the relocation of the water and sewer depot to temporary premises in the short-term and to develop a purpose-built replacement facility in the long-term.



# INCREASED PASSENGER TRAIN SERVICES TO AND FROM SINGLETON

**Seek commitment to permanently fund an increased level of service.**

The provision of a metro level of service for passenger trains is a critical liveability and economic evolution issue for our community. Our proximity to Maitland, Newcastle, Sydney, and all they have to offer, is optimised to an incredible extent by the right level of service.

Led by the “Two More Trains for Singleton” group and supported by Council, our community has campaigned for decades for increased passenger rail services between Singleton and Newcastle.

In recent years there has been ongoing communication with Government ministers, members of Parliament and Transport for

NSW executive staff that resulted in a trial of two new direct train services in early 2020.

The trial timetable provides six return options from Sydney and Newcastle on weekdays and four on weekends, to be reviewed after 12 months.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions that took effect in March 2020, which severely affected public transport patronage, the trial was extended to the end of 2021.

Council appreciates this action but will advocate for a further extension of services as COVID-19 continues to affect our way of life, and particularly the use of public transport.







## UPGRADES TO POLICE AND JUSTICE FACILITIES IN SINGLETON AND APPROPRIATE STAFFING

**Seek continued commitment on the scope of works, timing and budget allocation for a new police station for Singleton.**

**Seek commitment for the appropriate allocation of staffing numbers to enable 24-hour operation of the station.**

**Seek certainty on the timeline for refurbishment of the Jerrys Plains police residence to restore a full-time police presence in the village as soon as possible.**

In May 2021, the NSW Government announced \$12 million for a new police station in Singleton to replace the current heritage-listed building that has been serving the community since 1867, and which poses challenges to the size of the Singleton community and complexities of modern policing.

The Jerrys Plains Lock Up Keeper and his family were relocated to Singleton in 2020 for refurbishment works to commence on the police residence. However, to date no progress has been made. The lack of a permanent police officer in residence impacts community connection and involvement in local activities in Jerrys Plains, and heightens community angst about issues in relation to the Golden Highway and rural crime.

In addition to working with the NSW Government on the delivery of the new fit-for-purpose station to meet the needs of the growing Hunter Valley Police District, Council will continue to lobby for staffing level increases and 24-hour operation for Singleton as well as a full-time police presence for Jerrys Plains in partnership with the Police Association of NSW and local police officers.





## UPRADES TO SINGLETON FIRE STATION

**Seek commitment for upgrades to Singleton Fire Station to provide appropriate facilities for firefighting personnel as well as accommodate up-to-standard practices for modern firefighting.**

Singleton Fire Brigade was formed on 16 April 1816, consisting of 20 firefighters. The current building on Pitt Street was completed and occupied by Singleton Fire Brigade on 29 October 1915, prior to its official opening on 31 March 1916.

The current building is a single-story structure with the engine (truck) bay attached to the main facilities. A second appliance (fire truck) is stored at the back of the station, along with another shed where the historical Bedford appliance is kept.

Singleton Fire Station now has 16 firefighters attached to the station, two of whom are female. Both male and female firefighters are required to change into their uniforms and protective equipment in full public view on a busy thoroughfare with two dance schools, a public car parking area, a senior citizens hall and a youth venue due to lack of appropriate amenities.

In addition, recent peer-reviewed research has concluded that it is no longer best practice, nor is it safe to store firefighting Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and uniforms in the same area as the appliance as it is easily covered with diesel fumes and particulates ejected from the appliance.

This greatly heightens the risk of cancer to firefighters. Singleton Fire Station currently has no viable choice than to store PPE and uniforms in the engine bay increasing the potential for exposure for the 16 members attached to the station.

The types of incidents that firefighters respond to has also changed, as structures and vehicles are now built of materials that pose much greater carcinogenic risks. Firefighters are therefore exposed to further cancer-causing hazards. It is therefore strongly recommended that firefighters 'shower within the hour' upon returning to their station. The absence of appropriate amenities makes it impossible for firefighters to adhere to safety protocols due to inadequate showering facilities for women and men.

With several modifications, the current premises would be able to continue to serve its purpose as a Fire Station that is fit for purpose and able to mitigate these hazards and risks.





# UPGRADES TO SINGLETON AMBULANCE STATION

**Seek commitment for upgrades to Singleton Ambulance Station to ensure it is fit-for-purpose and can grow with the Singleton local government area.**

Singleton Ambulance Station originally opened on 3 October 1979 and since then has been utilised not only as an Ambulance Station but a Regional Radio Centre, Education Centre, Residence and Zone Office. It is currently the primary General Land Rescue response unit and, as a result of a doubling in staff numbers on 26 June 2021, now means 12 of the 24 staff are specialised Ambulance Rescue Operators.

Recent analysis conducted by the NSW Ambulance Service indicated the number of Rescue Operators should be maintained at 17 staff to ensure adequate coverage for natural disasters such as flood and fire as well as maintenance of staff numbers in circumstances of extended leave and training. At times, the number of staff at the Ambulance Station fluctuates to 27 with the addition of trainee paramedics.

The number of vehicles and equipment housed at the site have also increased, particularly following approval for a new Rescue Truck and Swift Water Rescue Vessel (in addition to the current Rescue Truck) granted in August 2022.

Personnel growth combined with the addition of general and rescue vehicles means the Singleton Ambulance Station is at capacity.

Facilities and amenities have also failed to cope with staff increases. Both male and female amenities are not sufficient in size to accommodate staff now or into the future, with particular concern for female staff who are using an impractical room for changing with a makeshift screen for privacy.

The plant room, located directly off the dining and working areas of the station, is not fitted with lockable doors and/or windows, meaning staff areas are often exposed to exhaust emissions and dust particles.

In addition, recent changes in the development of new ambulance stations have seen the addition of dedicated secure outdoor facilities to be used as both a meeting area and to improve the mental health of staff. Singleton Ambulance Station is bound by high traffic main arterial roads and at the current time staff are unable to leave the building unless on a call.

**To ensure the Singleton Ambulance Station can continue to serve its purpose and grow with the local government area, the station requires:**

- Updated amenities, particularly in relation to the makeshift female change facility;
- Addition of two further bays to the plant room to ensure adequate storage of vehicles;
- Purpose-built outdoor area;
- Purpose-built rescue training facilities, ensuring staff skills are maintained with less time lost to travelling. The facility could also be used to train and maintain rescue staff from neighbouring stations such as Tamworth and Rutherford as well as for Howes Valley community responders.



## IMPROVEMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES IN SINGLETON

**Seek commitment to maintaining and expanding health services in Singleton.**

**Seek commitment for mental health services in Singleton.**

Singleton Hospital serves a large regional population and aims to be a first-class district hospital providing health services to local residents and those from surrounding areas such as the rapidly expanding Huntlee and Lochinvar suburbs, as an easier alternative to Maitland and Newcastle.

While maternity services were significantly upgraded recently due to a very generous private donation, the main facility, including patient accommodation and the busy surgical department, needs urgent renovation – the last renovation was approximately 30 years ago. The main inpatient ward has only two bathrooms for 22 beds, aged infrastructure, and a lack of contemporary patient comforts.

The surgical department is the busiest in the Hunter Valley Sector and was able to provide 2,734 operations during 2021 with only one operating room. With the installation of new gastroscopes it is hoped that a custom-built intervention suite can be created to provide patients, surgeons, and staff with the environment required to provide excellent patient care.

The emergency department has experienced an 18 per cent increase in presentations over the past two years and has now outgrown the space. This issue has been exacerbated recently due to the lack of isolation rooms required for infectious patients.

Patients have reported that lack of privacy, comfort and accessibility are issues with the dated layout and staff have concerns that the department is no longer able to provide safe and contemporary care to the sick and vulnerable.

Adult mental health services in Singleton are currently delivered as part of outreach programs, and there are no specific mental health services for children and adolescents. It is Council's position that more direct mental health services, particularly for the younger generations should be increased to provide face-to-face care and treatment for vulnerable people in our community.

At a minimum, a headspace outreach would provide vital services and support for young people in Singleton aged 12 to 25 years who are experiencing difficulties, have concerns about drug and alcohol use, mental and physical well-being, sexual health and more.

We will continue to lobby the NSW Government for a commitment to improving health services in Singleton and will work with the Local Member to ensure Singleton Hospital is in line for capital works improvements in the near future to deliver a first-class district hospital serving the growing regional population in partnership with local health practitioners.





## PROVISION OF SUITABLE HOUSING

**Seek commitment to increase the stock of housing options across the Singleton LGA to cater for all demographics including age and levels of income.**

Adequate shelter is a basic need, and the supply of a range of housing options is essential both to attract people to Singleton as well as ensuring the wellbeing of our community. Council's approach to the provision of a range of housing stock across the LGA is outlined in the draft Housing Strategy 2021-2041.

Adequate housing and reduced homelessness are also key issues under

the Singleton Interagency Action Plan, and Singleton actively supports the Newcastle and Hunter Ending Homelessness Pledge.

We will work with and enlist the support of all stakeholders – both government and private – to identify opportunities for the provision of an adequate range of housing types to cater for all demographics, including financial and stage of life.





# REVIEW OF THE STANDARD INSTRUMENT LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN (LEP) FOR RURAL LANDHOLDERS

**Seek commitment to review the standard instrument LEP for dwelling entitlement to provide certainty and flexibility for rural residents.**

The introduction of a standard LEP has resulted in an inability to provide flexibility to new property owners to build dwellings where it is difficult to ascertain existing property entitlements, creating undue stress on new property owners.

Council's adopted Local Strategic Planning Statement includes a commitment to a new

planned approach to rural dwellings as part of the Housing Strategy 2021-2041, which is currently under development.

We will continue to advocate for the need for flexibility around rural dwelling entitlements to help deliver dreams for local families as well as ensure sound planning outcomes.







## COMMITMENT TO TELECOMMUNICATIONS + CONNECTIVITY

**Seek commitment for the equitable provision of telecommunication infrastructure and services.**

**Seek commitment to improve mobile service levels across the Singleton LGA, including villages and outer areas.**

The importance of reliable regional telecommunications has been underlined by a number of recent events, including natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic. These events have reinforced the value of high-speed, reliable and resilient broadband and mobile networks in regional areas to support public safety, day-to-day business, social contact and access to essential services such as health and education. Connectivity is also a big part of encouraging people to live, work and invest in regional areas. The regions offer attractive lifestyle amenity for many people and regional Australia is experiencing renewed interest from business and government.

In regional areas, issues of the high cost of infrastructure deployment and limited consumer demand have reduced commercial incentives for telecommunications providers to invest in new mobile and broadband infrastructure and expanded coverage, including in areas of importance for regional economies and communities.

Opportunity for regional growth requires residents and businesses to be able to access the same level of telecommunications services available in urban areas.

As an example, the Bulga area is experiencing ongoing issues with reduced service levels for mobile phones and other related devices. As home to important industrial and tourism zones and global businesses, Bulga is a case in point where fast and reliable connectivity is essential for economic growth and development.

We will advocate to government and telecommunications providers for the need for equitable telecommunications infrastructure across our LGA to enhance safety, economic and liveability outcomes for our community.

04



# SUSTAINABILITY







## LEADERSHIP ON WASTE + RECYCLING ISSUES

Seek commitment to actively work with industry and local government to develop a viable strategic policy position.

Seek funding commitment to ensure recycling infrastructure is delivered.

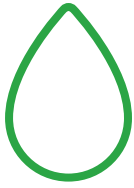
Seek commitment for 100% of the waste levy to be returned to local governments for community waste minimisation and recycling programs.

The uncertain future of the waste and recycling industries in Australia, due to the impacts of foreign policies, requires urgent leadership and investment by the Federal and NSW governments. Council has formally supported Local Government NSW and Australian Local Government Association campaigns calling for action from the top tiers of government and raised this issue in multiple forums including with Government ministers, members of the Opposition, members of Parliament and industry.

Locally, we are working together with other Hunter councils to develop a regional response. As a member of Hunter Resource Recovery (HRR) and the Hunter Joint Organisation, we will continue to work with our partners to deliver advocacy, improved service delivery opportunities and better outcomes for our environment wherever possible.

We will also continue to call on the NSW Government to return waste levies to communities to fund planning and infrastructure to address the changing requirements in waste management, including as part of Local Government NSW's campaign and by actively raising this issue with government ministers, members of the Opposition, members of Parliament and industry.





# UPPER HUNTER WATER SECURITY PLANNING, WORKS + PROTECTION OF WATER UTILITY STATUS

Seek commitment to protect Singleton's local water utility business and services.

Seek commitment to fund Hunter Valley drought minimisation and water security planning.

Seek commitment for equity in progressing projects included in the draft Lower Hunter Water Security Plan, in particular the Lostock Dam to Glennies Creek Dam pipeline to benefit both the Lower Hunter and Upper Hunter.

Seek commitment from Hunter Water Corporation to expand potable water and sewer infrastructure to support economic opportunities in Hermitage Road and Branxton/Belford.

The vulnerability of the supply of water has come into sharp focus during recent years through severe drought. Council supports measures to provide greater certainty for communities across the region, including connecting Lostock Dam to Glennies Creek Dam and a two-way potable water pipeline between Singleton and Hunter Water, in the interests of benefiting both the Upper and Lower Hunter and protecting our community's water security.

However, Council has sought assurance that the ongoing operation of our water utility will not be at risk by current planning or any future works that may be completed. This has been confirmed by the current NSW Government.

Further, Council has raised concerns in its submission to the draft Lower Hunter Water Security Plan about the lack of direct consultation regarding measures proposed by Hunter Water to secure water supply for its customers. In particular, the possible connection of Hunter Water through the

proposed Lostock to Glennies Creek Dam pipeline would provide Hunter Water and Central Coast customers with additional water supplies, but there have been no guarantees it would not come at the cost to Upper Hunter water users.

As a licence holder in the Hunter Regulated River Water Sharing Plan, Council requests more meaningful consultation on matters impacting the supply of water in the Upper Hunter and particularly Singleton. We will continue to advocate and work with all stakeholders on efforts to drought-proof the Hunter Region with a primary focus on ensuring the continued operation of the Singleton local water utility and improvements in water supply and security for our villages.

This extends to advocating to Hunter Water Corporation to expand potable water and sewer infrastructure to areas including Hermitage Road and Branxton/Belford to support economic evolution and growth in the Singleton local government area.





## ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH POWER STATIONS + MINES

Seek commitment to develop a transparent cumulative impact policy position on amenity from mining and power stations that align with local planning outcomes and community expectations.

Seek commitment to undertake an independent review of the impact of coal ash and coal ash by-products on local and regional waterways and catchments.

Seek commitment to research and investigate reuse potential of mining and power generation waste streams to reduce the environmental and social impacts of long-term storage and rehabilitation of coal reject, tailings and coal ash deposits, dams and stockpiles.

Seek commitment for all regional areas to be treated equally with metropolitan areas and for standards to be improved to reflect world's best practice.

Seek commitment for a current Particle Characterisation Study of the pollutants in the Upper Hunter Valley.

The current approval process for mining and power station projects excludes detailed and transparent consideration of the cumulative amenity impacts on communities such as air quality, noise and visual impacts.

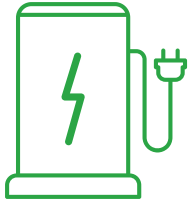
Council made a submission to the Federal Government's review of the National Environmental Protection Measure for Ambient Air Quality that called for the Hunter Region, and all regional areas, to be treated equally with metropolitan areas and for the standard to be improved to reflect world's best practice. In addition, Council's submissions to the Independent Planning Commission have included requests for broader consideration of cumulative impacts and how they should be managed to better understand the potential consequences for communities and provide greater clarity in decision making.

This matter has been raised in multiple forums, including with Government ministers, members of the Opposition, members of Parliament, the

Minerals Council of Australia, industry, Industry and Environment and executive staff of the NSW Government. Formal discussions have also been held with visiting delegations to Singleton.

With the last Particle Characterisation Study now almost 10 years out of date and following the introduction of programs such as "Dust Stop" and "Woodsmoke Reduction", Council is calling for a new Particle Characterisation Study to determine the quantitative measure of the success of these programs and identify what direction should be taken in the continuing improvement of air quality in the Upper Hunter.

Council's position is that the people of the Singleton LGA deserve the same quality of air as anyone else in NSW and Australia. We request the NSW Government, through the EPA, conduct a current Particle Characterisation Study in support of the health of the people living in our LGA and in recognition of those who have been paying the price for the prosperity of NSW and the nation.



## ELECTRIC + HYDROGEN ENERGY FUTURES

**Seek commitment for a Heavy Vehicle Electric Vehicle Charging Station for the Singleton LGA.**

**Seek commitment for a network of EV charging options for light and commercial vehicles across the Singleton LGA.**

Singleton has a unique position on the junction of two highways (New England Highway and the Golden Highway), which experiences a significant volume of heavy vehicle movements between industries and ports. Singleton is also the first major centre on the national highway network outside of Sydney, making it an ideal location to support the infrastructure needed to support a net zero target.

Replacement of diesel with hydrogen fuel would have a significant impact on reducing pollution and improving the health of the people in the Hunter Valley.

Singleton experiences one of the largest number of vehicle movements of any regional LGA in NSW.

Light and commercial fast charging infrastructure to support the visitor and business economy would improve liveability in the Singleton LGA, attract new businesses and create opportunities for existing businesses.

With this in mind, Singleton is an ideal location to introduce both fuel cell charging and electric vehicle charging infrastructure for all vehicles travelling north and northwest of NSW and inland to southern Queensland.

We request that Singleton be considered as a site for a network of varying electric vehicle charging stations and a hydrogen fuel cell charging hub to support the NSW Government's net zero emissions target by 2050.





## OUR ADVOCACY PARTNERS

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**Singleton Council is proud to be a member of these industry organisations:**

- Hunter Joint Organisation
- Country Mayors Association
- Regional Institute of Australia
- Committee for the Hunter
- Cities Power Partnership Program
- LGNSW
- Australian Local Government Association
- NSW Public Libraries Association
- Australian Library Information Association
- Hunter Valley Wine Country Alliance
- Australian Water Association

**Council is also affiliated with many professional networks, bodies and associations including but not limited to:**

- National Local Government Customer Service Network
- Local Government Professionals
- Parks and Leisure Australia
- Institute of Public Works and Engineers Association
- Risk Management Institute of Australia
- ANZ Institute of Insurance and Finance
- Certified Practicing Accountants
- Australian Human Resource Institute
- NSW Water Directorate
- Australian Waste Management Association



## SINGLETON COUNCIL ALSO SUPPORTS: \_\_\_\_\_

### Local Government NSW Advocacy Priorities 2022

1. Enable financial sustainability
2. Protect and invest in social and community infrastructure
3. Support local government in community and economic recovery
4. Improve resilience to natural disasters
5. Address the housing availability and affordability crisis
6. Improve rural and regional health services
7. Support local government in community and economic recovery
8. Invest in better waste, recycling and circular economy solutions

### Australian Local Government Association - Don't Leave Local Communities Behind

#### Financial Assistance Grants

- One-off injection of Financial Assistance Grants
- Restoring Financial Assistance Grants to 1%

#### Transport and Community Infrastructure

- Local roads and community infrastructure
- First and last mile funding
- Sustainable road funding
- Improving regional digital connectivity
- Affordable housing partnerships

#### Building Resilience

- Targeted disaster mitigation
- Building back better
- Disaster Recovery funding arrangements
- Climate change
- Closing the gap

#### Circular Economy

- Unlocking the circular economy
- Bin harmonisation
- Circular waste innovation

#### National Cabinet

- National Cabinet
- Ministerial forums



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