

# Hunter and New England

For the Hunter and New England region housing and homelessness, mental health and youth and families were key priorities. Affordable, decent and appropriate accommodation is needed across the region. Currently there is so much competition for rental accommodation, people on low incomes or income support just cannot afford housing in the region. Local people are being pushed out and forced to move away from their support structures, by workers coming in to work for the mines.

“ Income supports just aren't enough to cover the basics. ”

This community wants to see better services and integration of these services with a focus on prevention and early intervention. Currently services are only able to triage the crisis cases. There needs to be investment in early intervention for young people and families and funding for the Mental Health Commission's strategic plan. Early childhood education was also identified as a vital intervention mechanism to break the current cycle, and this is in dire need of more investment.

## Cost of living

- In the year to July 2015 an average yearly electricity bill cost between \$2,100 and \$2,600
- Latest figures show the average annual personal income in the region was \$46,314, which was nearly \$5,000 less than the state average
- Latest median weekly rental figures for 2 bedroom dwellings range from \$188 in Moree/Narrabri, \$200 in the Upper Hunter, \$240 in Armidale, \$250 in Tamworth and the Lower Hunter, \$260 in Cessnock and the Great Lakes area, \$285 in Maitland, \$290 in Port Stephens, \$325 in Lake Macquarie, to \$370 in Newcastle

“ Housing affordability is the number one issue. There needs to be investment in social and affordable housing. ”



- Latest figures show Local Government rate assessments in the region ranged from \$560 in the Upper Hunter, \$598 in Gunnedah, \$667 in Inverell, \$714 in Tamworth, \$747 in Narrabri, \$777 in the Moree Plains, \$781 in Maitland, \$831 in Armidale, \$874 in Newcastle, to \$880 in Lake Macquarie and Cessnock, against a rural average of \$531

## Children and young people

- Latest figures show 65 in every 1000 children were involved in risk of significant harm reports and 18 1000 were in out-of-home care
- The Sustaining NSW Families nurse home-visiting program is currently available in Cessnock, Kurri Kurri, Singleton, Maitland and Newcastle. But there are children in need throughout the district
- 15,996 children live below the poverty line in the Hunter and 6,993 children living below the poverty line in New England. These represented child poverty rates of 13.7% and 19.5% respectively. Gwydir, with 27.4%, and Tenterfield with 28% had some of the highest rates of child poverty in the state

- In 2014-15, 489 young people aged 15-24 were hospitalised due to intentional self-harm

## Dental wait list

- 922 children and 8041 adults are on the NSW public dental waiting list
- Only 62.9% of children age 5-6 years are free of dental caries
- On average, children age 5-6 years have 1.2 decayed, missing or filled teeth

## Social Housing wait list

- Latest figures show there were 17,782 social housing units in the Hunter New England, with 6,551 people still on the list waiting to be housed
- In the 12 months to 30 June 2011, 1,559 people were housed, with expected waiting times for those still on the list exceeding 2-5 years in much of the region, 5-10 years in areas like Maitland and Kurri Kurri, and exceeding 10 years in much of the region, including Foster, Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens, and Cessnock