

HUNTER CATCHMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Hunter Local Land Services

2019 year in Review



What are Hunter Catchment Contributions?

Hunter Catchment Contributions are derived from a levy on all rateable land valued in excess of \$300 within the Hunter catchment. The actual rate is based on land values of rateable land at the start of the financial year and is approved by the Minister responsible for administration of the *Local Land Services Act 2013* and *Local Land Services Regulation 2014*.

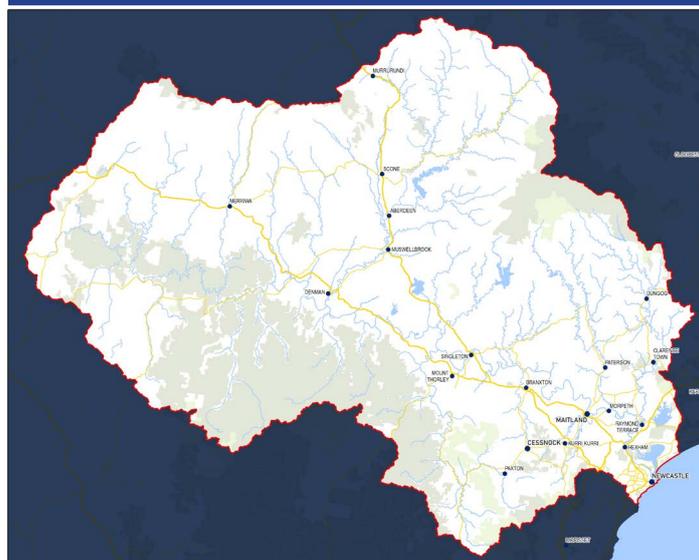
How much does the levy equate to?

Ratepayers in the Hunter catchment pay an average of approximately \$28.51 per rate notice. (2018/19 financial year). In total, more than \$5.036 million was collected in 2018-19, funding a range of projects to improve the health of the Hunter catchment. Catchment Contributions also allow Hunter Local Land Services (LLS) to leverage other sources of investment from NSW and local government, industry and community groups. Catchment Contributions are invested in projects in the Hunter catchment and cannot be spent outside the Hunter catchment.

How long have catchment contributions been collected?

Catchment contributions were first collected by the Hunter Valley Conservation Trust in 1950. In 2014, catchment contributions became the responsibility of Hunter LLS. In addition to catchment health initiatives, a proportion (approximately 30%) of the funds collected is allocated towards maintenance and construction of the Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme. This responsibility was introduced in 1956 with the introduction of the *Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Act (1956)* and now continues under the *Water Management Act (2000)*.

Hunter Catchment Contributions Collections Area

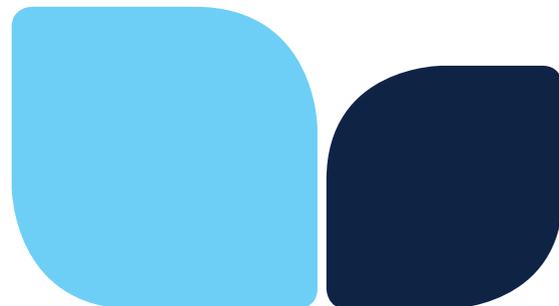


How are catchment contributions collected?

Catchment contributions are collected via local government authorities within the Hunter who collect catchment contributions on behalf of Hunter LLS. This is why you will see a "Catchment Levy" (or similar) line item on your council rates notice.

Why are catchment contributions collected?

Catchment contributions are collected to provide a coordinated approach to the extensive problems of natural resource conservation in the Hunter valley catchment and to undertake flood mitigation works. The revenue generated from this levy enables Hunter Local Land Services to meet its legislative obligations under the *Water Management Act 2000*, as well as meeting resource condition and management targets in the Hunter LLS Local Strategic Plan.



Our Investment in Natural Resource Management, Agriculture and Emergency Management

Our investors are those who support LLS activities but are not directly involved in servicing our customers. The Hunter region receives funding for investment in Natural Resource Management, Agriculture and Biosecurity through the NSW Treasury recurrent allocation, NSW Government Catchment Action NSW program, the Australian Government National Landcare Programme, Hunter Catchment Contribution levied in the Hunter Catchment, the collection of Rates and through external opportunity grants and contributions.

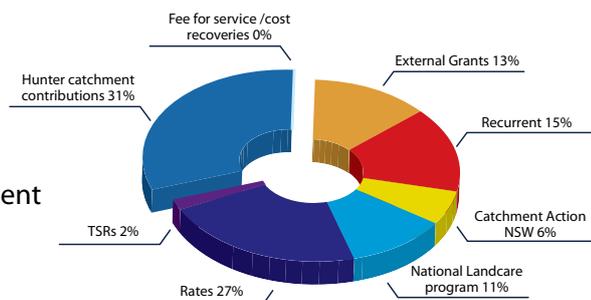


IMAGE: Hunter Local Land Services combined revenue profile for the 2018-19 financial year

Where are catchment contributions spent?

Catchment Contributions are used for many types of projects including:

- **Flood Mitigation**
Maintaining the Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme
- **Lower Hunter estuary**
Continuing wetland rehabilitation works at Hexham Swamp and within the Hunter estuary
- **Riparian and river health works**
Undertaking projects in targeted areas to improve riverbank stability, water quality and in-stream habitat
- **On-ground incentives program**
Providing financial incentives to landholders in the Hunter catchment to undertake on-ground works addressing natural resource management priorities listed in the Local Strategic Plan including soil erosion works, protecting native vegetation and improving riparian areas
- **Community education, capacity building and engagement**
Implementing communication and education activities for the community and providing funds to community groups for education and communication activities
- **Aboriginal Engagement**
Supporting Aboriginal engagement and capacity building activities for Aboriginal organisations and individuals

2019 SNAPSHOT



In 2019 Hunter LLS worked with Environment, Energy and Science (EES) Group to maintain and enhance assets across the scheme. We also worked closely with EES to continue the comprehensive review of the scheme and its assets and preparedness for climate change by engaging communities on the floodplains, asset holders and local stakeholders such as Councils, utilities and public land managers and modeling predicted future impacts on the scheme and assets.



Hunter Local Land Services completed the Hunter River Management Plan for the Hunter River and its tributaries. The Plan included a review of all existing information, engagement with stakeholders and development of a decision support tool. The decision support tool holds comprehensive scientific data that enables prioritisation of sub-catchments to inform investment decisions.



After many years of cooperation and working together to improvement land management across the Hunter and Manning Great Lakes regions, Hunter LLS signed a formal Memorandum of Understanding with Hunter Region Landcare Network(HRLN), building on an already strong partnership. We provided financial support to HRLN through the contributions, to build the networks capacity to support local landcare groups in the Hunter Valley areas.



Through HCC funding we provide incentives for landholders and community groups to undertake on the ground works to improve local landscapes. In 2019 we assisted 15 landholders to protect and enhance the environment by providing over \$360,000 in incentives. These funds assisted activities such as riverbank fencing, troughs, planting and erosion management to manage and protect riverbank stability.



Matched investment from Environmental Trust and Hunter Catchment Contribution has enabled a project aimed at eradicating Giant Reed (*Arundo donox*) from the Pages River in the Upper Hunter. The approach utilises the latest innovations to treat the weed infestations using drones, mulching and onground treatments then follow-up plantings once control has been successful.



In 2019 we undertook three successful Cultural Burns in collaboration with Local Aboriginal Land Councils, the Firesticks Alliance, our Aboriginal Land Management Trainees, local communities and the Rural Fire Service. Early monitoring indicates these burns led to significant rejuvenation of the sites, with a reduction in weeds and regrowth of native grasses, shrubs and flowering plants.



We engaged more than 1,500 school students and 100 teachers in the Lower Hunter about the importance of looking after our catchments and protecting water quality in the Lower Hunter. From WaterWatch programs to creating new children's books on the impacts of pests on our local landscapes, our education program reached out to communities across the catchment area.



Halls Creek Catchment Health Improvement project, partnership with Glencore Australia. Key achievements include erosion control, protection of riverbanks, and sustainable grazing practices adjoining Halls Creek. In addition soil moisture probes were installed and woodland bird surveys were conducted, to monitor both soil and biodiversity health in this catchment.

Working with landholders to grow farm productivity and healthy environments.

Hunter LLS worked with a local landholder and Soil Conservation Services to rehabilitate over 350m of Hunter River bank near Millers Forest. This project successfully used environmentally sensitive materials to protect the river bank from ongoing erosion while mangroves and native vegetation establishes. Hunter Local Land Services became involved after the landholder sought help to control erosion on their property that had worsened after the last two floods.

"We identified that removing cattle from the river bank through fencing and planting with native trees would provide a long term benefit, both to the farm and the river environment,"

Project Officer Jenny Weingott said.

"Trees on farms provide valuable shade and wind breaks for cattle and habitat for native wildlife, while tree roots help to bind the soil together and prevent erosion." A low timber wall was also built to protect the bank from wind, tide and boat wave pressures that will also increase the resilience of the riverbank to support native vegetation. This project, primarily funded by Hunter Catchment Contributions, has been used as a case study for estuarine rehabilitation in NSW.



The Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Scheme was built after the disastrous Hunter River flood of 1955. The scheme is designed to mitigate or reduce flood damage and is made up of an integrated system of levees, floodgates and drains (assets).

Scheme assets provide minor flood protection for rural land across the Hunter and moderate flood protection for the townships of Maitland, Lorn, Raymond Terrace, Singleton and Aberdeen.

Hunter Local Land Services supports the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment to operate and maintain the scheme. There are more than 2000 individual

scheme assets maintained along the rivers and floodplains. The scheme is valued at around \$862 million.

The Scheme is currently going through a comprehensive review process looking at all aspects of management; policy; community needs; values-economic, social, environmental and climate impacts to assist decisions for the future management of the scheme.



Connecting community groups, land care organisations and Hunter LLS staff with landholders and customers at the annual Tocal Field Days.

Thanks to support from Hunter Catchment Contributions, Hunter Local Land Services hosts two marquees at the Tocal Field Days each May, reaching more than 20,000 people who visit this event annually - including many smaller landholders and residents who live on the peri-urban fringe in the Lower Hunter and Manning Great Lakes. Our Community Engagement marquee provides space for smaller organisations such as the Native Animal Trust Fund, Local Aboriginal Land Councils, landcare groups and more to connect with

the community and generate new members and support for their programs. Hunter LLS also demonstrates our many projects and diverse range of services, with staff on hand across the three days from all of our teams to answer customer inquiries and encourage them to take part in local programs. It is particularly important event for reaching out to smaller landholders, to make them aware of their biosecurity and land management responsibilities.



To find out more about Local Land Services visit:

www.lls.nsw.gov.au/hunter

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Local Land
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