

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

First Nations Guidelines: Hunter–Central Coast

Increasing income and employment opportunities in the Hunter–Central Coast from electricity infrastructure projects

May 2024



Acknowledgement of Country



Department of Climate Change, Energy the Environment and Water acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and pays respect to Elders past, present and future.

We recognise Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to place and their rich contribution to society.

Artist and designer Nikita Ridgeway from Aboriginal design agency – Boss Lady Creative Designs, created the People and Community symbol.

First Nations Guidelines: Hunter–Central Coast

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Foreword

The Hunter–Central Coast First Nations Working Group acknowledges the various Aboriginal clans and language groups throughout New South Wales, and their continued connection to their land, waters, skies and communities.

Since the Dreamtime, the Awabakal, Darkinjung, Wanaruah and Worimi peoples have cultivated and sustained a deep connection with their land, waters and skies, which are central to their spiritual identity, despite the devastating impacts of colonisation and forced removal. Although we are individual communities with our own unique histories, there is strength in unity. Through a shared voice and collective action, we can forge a more resilient region evident in economic, social and environmental aspects, while upholding our cultural values.

The Hunter and Central Coast regions have a rich legacy as the backbone of the NSW energy industry. We are committed to the NSW Government’s ambition of diversifying the Hunter and Central Coast regional economy and realising its full potential in the net zero emissions economy.

These guidelines provide a resource to support meaningful engagement with the Hunter–Central Coast Aboriginal communities. The information outlined in this document has been developed by the working group, made up of community members representing key community-run organisations and government agencies within the Hunter–Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone. At their core the guidelines seek to reinforce the capability and voice of local Aboriginal communities in matters that will directly affect their participation in and contribution to the state’s renewable energy transition.

These guidelines are a strong foundation for the working group to advocate for their communities and achieve shared goals of long-term employment, local business development and increased skills capacity to collectively share in the economic benefits offered by the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap. It is vital active participation and communication between working group members, local Aboriginal community members, proponents and Roadmap entities is prioritised in the planning and delivery of energy infrastructure developments in the region. The working group is motivated to work with key stakeholders to ensure that shared goals are reached. Targets reflect the working group’s priorities for local Aboriginal people and businesses, and respect Traditional Owners’ desire to be proactive in decision-making for their land, waters, skies and resources.

The working group acknowledges the efforts of the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water in ensuring the region-specific guidelines are built on a foundation of engagement and consultation with the Aboriginal community. This is fundamental to building a collaborative and constructive relationship for implementing the First Nations Guidelines under the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020* and achieving the long-term objectives of the Roadmap.

Hunter–Central Coast First Nations Working Group

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country	ii
Foreword	iii
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Purpose of the First Nations Guidelines	1
1.1.1 General guidelines.....	1
1.1.2 Region-specific guidelines.....	1
1.2 Scope of the Hunter–Central Coast guidelines.....	1
1.2.1 Introduction to the Hunter–Central Coast First Nations Working Group.....	2
1.3 Review.....	2
2 Hunter–Central Coast	3
2.1 About the Aboriginal community.....	5
2.1.1 Aboriginal community profile	5
2.1.2 Aboriginal organisations and groups	5
3 Engaging with the Hunter–Central Coast First Nations Working Group	7
3.1 Goals and aspirations of the Hunter–Central Coast First Nations Working Group.....	7
3.1.1 Long-term goals and aspirations of the Hunter–Central Coast First Nations Working Group.....	7
3.1.2 Priority activities of the Hunter–Central Coast First Nations Working Group.....	9
3.2 Hunter–Central Coast engagement protocols	10
3.2.1 Hunter–Central Coast First Nations Working Group.....	10
3.2.2 Working group objectives.....	10
3.2.3 Membership of the working group.....	10
3.2.4 EnergyCo’s First Nations Outcomes team.....	11
3.2.5 Engagement approach.....	11
3.2.6 Recognised annual dates and events of significance.....	12
Appendix A: Glossary	14
Appendix B: General information about the Hunter–Central Coast region	16
Appendix C: Online resources	40

List of figures

Figure 1: Local government areas within the Hunter–Central Coast REZ.....	3
Figure 2: Local Aboriginal Land Council boundaries and Native Title claims and determinations in the Hunter–Central Coast region.....	4
Figure 3: Hunter–Central Coast REZ boundary.....	18
Figure 4: Map of population density in the Hunter–Central Coast REZ region.....	20
Figure 5: Age distribution, Hunter–Central Coast REZ, NSW & Australia, 2021.....	21
Figure 6: Highest level of education attainment, Hunter–Central Coast REZ, NSW & Australia, 2021.....	22
Figure 7: Non-school qualifications, Hunter–Central Coast REZ, NSW & Australia, 2021.....	23
Figure 8: Top 10 occupation groups (2-digit level), Hunter–Central Coast REZ, NSW & Australia, 2021.....	24
Figure 9: Labour force status, Hunter–Central Coast REZ, NSW & Australia, 2021.....	25
Figure 10: Unemployment rate, Hunter–Central Coast REZ, NSW & Australia, 2013–2023.....	25
Figure 11: Personal weekly income, Hunter–Central Coast REZ, NSW & Australia, 2021.....	27
Figure 12: Labour force status by gender of Hunter–Central Coast REZ, 2021.....	28
Figure 13: Industry of employment by gender of Hunter–Central Coast REZ, 2021.....	29
Figure 14: Occupation by gender of Hunter–Central Coast REZ, 2021.....	30
Figure 15: Education attainment level by gender of Hunter–Central Coast REZ, 2021.....	30
Figure 16: GRP growth compared to NSW & Australia, Hunter–Central Coast REZ, 2015–2021.....	35
Figure 17: Industry contribution to GRP, Hunter–Central Coast REZ, \$ millions, 2021.....	36
Figure 18: Industry share of employment, Hunter–Central Coast REZ, NSW & Australia, 2021.....	37
Figure 19: Industry contribution to GRP, Hunter–Central Coast REZ, 2016 & 2021.....	38
Figure 20: Location quotient of industries in the Hunter–Central Coast REZ, 2016–2021.....	39

List of tables

Table 1: Components of REZ profiles.....	16
Table 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, Hunter–Central Coast REZ, NSW & Australia, 2021.....	21
Table 3: Population by work status, Hunter–Central Coast REZ, 2021.....	26
Table 4: Population by work status, NSW, 2021.....	26
Table 5: Population by work status, Australia, 2021.....	27
Table 6: Labour force status by age of Hunter–Central Coast REZ, 2021.....	31
Table 7: Industry of employment by age of Hunter–Central Coast REZ, 2021.....	31
Table 8: Occupation by age of Hunter–Central Coast REZ, 2021.....	33
Table 9: Education attainment level by age of Hunter–Central Coast REZ, 2021.....	34

1 Introduction

The NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap (the Roadmap) is the state's 20-year plan to transform the electricity system into one that is cheap, clean and reliable.

The Roadmap establishes an integrated, whole of system approach to transform the state's electricity system by attracting, securing and coordinating private investment to develop the necessary infrastructure. This involves the investment in transmission, energy generation, storage and firming infrastructure as ageing coal fired generation plants retire over the coming decades.

The Roadmap is enabled by the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020* (EII Act). The EII Act has long-term objects to increase employment and income opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in New South Wales and to promote consultation and negotiation with Aboriginal Traditional Owners of land on which electricity infrastructure projects are proposed to be constructed and operate.

1.1 Purpose of the First Nations Guidelines

The purpose of the First Nations Guidelines is to set out the expectations for increasing employment and income opportunities for Aboriginal peoples and communities in the construction and operation of new electricity infrastructure projects in New South Wales (NSW) delivered under the Roadmap.

There are 2 parts to the First Nations Guidelines, detailed below.

1.1.1 General guidelines

The *First Nations Guidelines: Increasing income and employment opportunities from electricity infrastructure projects* provide details about requirements for and approaches to consultation and negotiation with local Aboriginal communities.

1.1.2 Region-specific guidelines

The region-specific guidelines outline key socio-demographic information about the regions and the communities. They provide guidance on engagement with local Aboriginal communities, and emphasise the communities' key priority areas for employment and income opportunities.

Each renewable energy zone (REZ) declared under the EII Act will have its own region-specific guidelines.

1.2 Scope of the Hunter–Central Coast guidelines

These guidelines have been developed under section 4 of the EII Act and require energy infrastructure proponents to consult and negotiate with local Aboriginal communities about opportunities for increasing employment and income. It is expected that any commitments made will be met by proponents.

While the details in region-specific guidelines are primarily focused on achieving economic and employment outcomes, proponents are not prevented from working with the local Aboriginal community to support other outcomes that have importance for communities.

These guidelines do not replace other consultation obligations with Aboriginal people and communities under NSW and Commonwealth legislation concerning cultural heritage, environmental, social, or other impacts of proposals.

Proponents must exercise due diligence to understand and meet all relevant legislative requirements for proposed projects to ensure consultation with Aboriginal people and communities addresses all relevant matters of concern. If necessary, parties should seek their own independent legal advice.

1.2.1 Introduction to the Hunter–Central Coast First Nations Working Group

A Hunter–Central Coast First Nations Working Group (the working group) was established consisting of Hunter–Central Coast local Aboriginal community representatives. These representatives are the Elders, various knowledge-holders, elected representatives from Aboriginal community groups, and other organisations that provide support and services to the various Aboriginal communities within that region. The working group was established for the purposes of contributing to the development and co-design of the region-specific guidelines, to ensure they reflect the aspirations of the local communities.

The goals, targets and aspirations outlined in this document have been identified by the working group to strengthen economic outcomes for the local Aboriginal community. In addition, the guidelines outline how the local Aboriginal communities wish to be engaged with, and how they want to participate in Roadmap activities.

For further details on the working group’s purpose, objectives and membership, please refer to section 3, ‘Engaging with the Hunter–Central Coast’s First Nations Working Group’.

1.3 Review

The Minister may amend the First Nations Guidelines from time to time, in consultation with the working group.

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water will review the First Nations Guidelines at least every 2 years and will update the guidelines in consultation with the working group if required, to ensure they remain relevant and appropriate for the local Aboriginal community.

2 Hunter–Central Coast

The NSW Hunter–Central Coast region encompasses 2 distinct areas. The Hunter is the largest regional economy in Australia, located around Newcastle and extending to the Hunter Valley, traditionally owned by the Awabakal, Wanaruah and Worimi peoples. The Central Coast is situated just one hour north of Sydney, on the lands traditionally owned by the Darkinjung people.

The Hunter–Central Coast region has played a historically important role in delivering energy across New South Wales and the world, due to the presence of coal mines, power stations and ports, and will continue to deliver energy under the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap.

The Hunter–Central Coast REZ was declared on Friday 5 November 2021 (Figure 1).

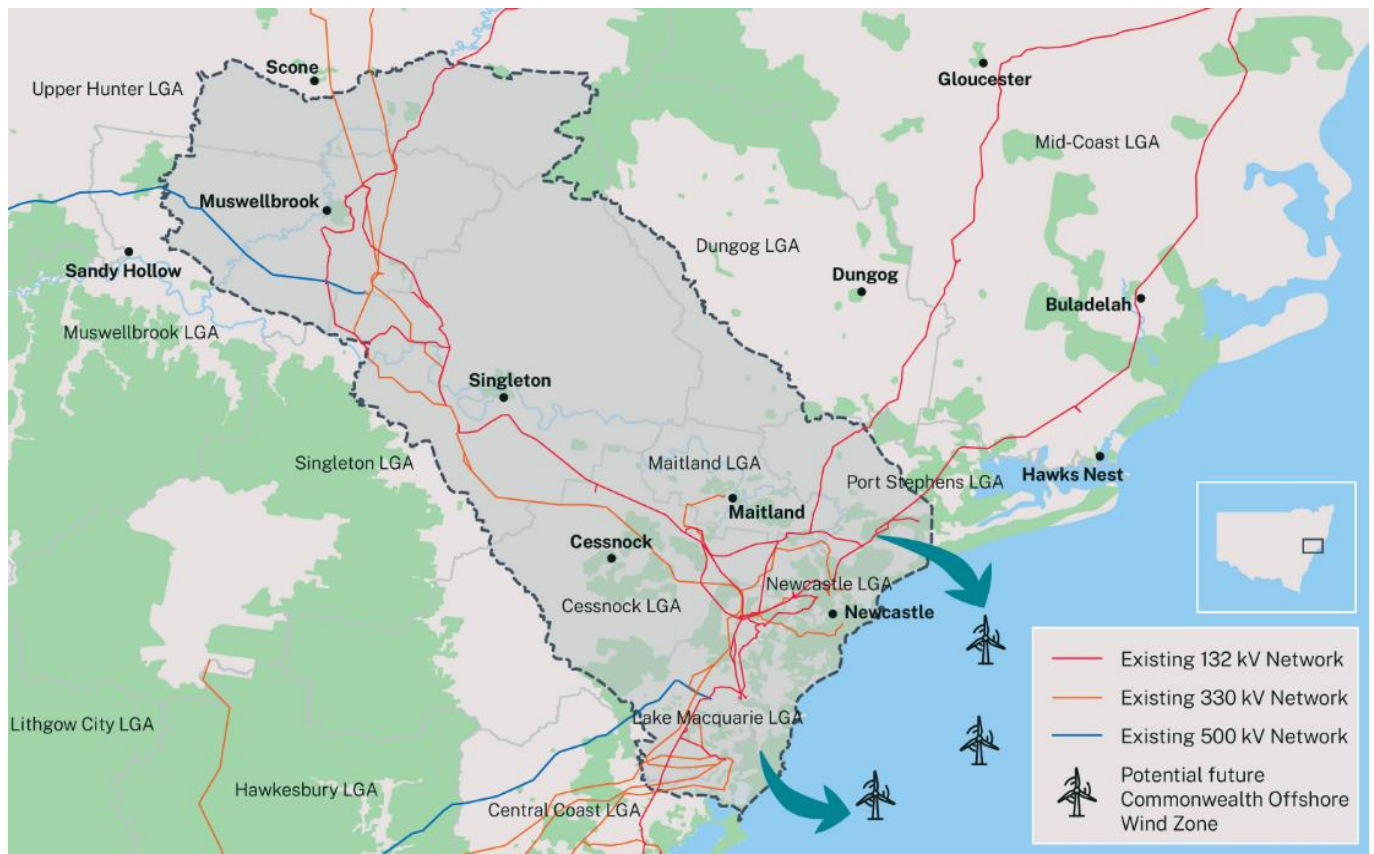


Figure 1: Local government areas within the Hunter–Central Coast REZ

The local government areas (LGAs) within the Hunter–Central Coast REZ region are:

- Central Coast
- Cessnock
- Dungog
- Lake Macquarie
- Maitland
- Muswellbrook
- Newcastle

- Port Stephens
- Singleton
- Upper Hunter.

Figure 2 shows the Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) boundaries that sit across the Hunter–Central Coast REZ. LALC boundary lines can be used to visualise the Local Aboriginal Land Council areas within New South Wales, as provided under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* (NSW).¹ Boundary lines differentiate the many different Aboriginal nation groups, clans or communities across the state. However, it should be noted that the boundary lines on the map may not necessarily align with traditional or cultural connections to Country. The LALC boundary map may be helpful for proponents and Roadmap entities to identify a LALC when engaging, planning or proposing a project under the Roadmap.



Figure 2: Local Aboriginal Land Council boundaries and Native Title claims and determinations in the Hunter–Central Coast region

¹ *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* (NSW) Part 1 section 4.

2.1 About the Aboriginal community

2.1.1 Aboriginal community profile²

The data below is from the 2021 Census, the latest publicly available at the time of development of this document. The data relates to the Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Muswellbrook, Newcastle, Singleton, Cessnock and Port Stephens LGAs only, and is provided to give a general overview of the Aboriginal statistics for the region. Further data may be obtained on these and other LGAs within the REZ by visiting the [Australian Bureau of Statistics](#).

According to the 2021 Census:

- Of the 652,786 residents of these LGAs, 41,213 or 6.3% said they had Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origins, or both.
- The Aboriginal community is significantly younger than the non-Aboriginal population, with a median age of 22 years versus 40 years. Notably, a larger proportion of individuals under the age of 25 is observed in the regional areas outside of Newcastle.
- The median income of Aboriginal adults over 15 years of age was about \$624 a week, compared to \$778 for non-Aboriginal adults aged over 15.
- The labour force participation rate among Aboriginal adults over 15 years of age stands at 61.4%, slightly below the corresponding rate of 62.8% among non-Aboriginal adults over 15.
- The total number of Aboriginal residents attending an education institution is 17,087 (42% of the Aboriginal population) compared to 149,424 (24% of the non-Aboriginal population).

2.1.2 Aboriginal organisations and groups

Listed below is a brief range of community organisations, businesses and government agencies that provide various services to local Aboriginal people and communities within the Hunter–Central Coast region.

Aboriginal community organisations and businesses

- Local Aboriginal Community Working Party and/or Advisory Groups
- Aboriginal Legal Service (ALS)
- Aboriginal Education Consultive Group (AECG)
- Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs)
 - Awabakal LALC – Newcastle
 - Bahtabah LALC – East Lake Macquarie
 - Biraban LALC – West Lake Macquarie
 - Mindaribba LALC – Maitland/Cessnock

² Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile (Lake Macquarie LGA14650, Maitland LGA15050, Muswellbrook LGA15650, Newcastle LGA15900, Singleton LGA17000, Cessnock LGA11720 and Port Stephens LGA16400).

- Wanaruah LALC – Muswellbrook/Singleton
- Worimi LALC – Port Stephens
- Darkinjung LALC – Central Coast
- Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS)
- Privately owned and recognised Aboriginal businesses as identified by the Hunter–Central Coast Working Group

State-wide organisations

- NSW Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC)
- NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce (NSW ICC)

Government agencies and entities

- NSW Department of Communities and Justice
- Department of Regional NSW, including Department of Primary Industries and Local Land Services
- Premier’s Department (Aboriginal Affairs NSW)
- NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, including the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and the NSW Environment Protection Authority
- NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, including Crown Lands
- National Indigenous Australians Agency
- Training Services NSW
- TAFE NSW
- Aboriginal Housing Office

3 Engaging with the Hunter–Central Coast First Nations Working Group

These guidelines have been co-designed with the Hunter–Central Coast First Nations Working Group. Through consultation and discussion, the working group identified key goals and aspirations on behalf of their communities that proponents should consider when planning for and submitting projects under the Roadmap. The goals and aspirations detailed below are designed to help proponents and Roadmap entities understand the needs of local Aboriginal communities in the Hunter and Central Coast when engaging, negotiating and consulting with them. They are intended to be built upon over time to remain relevant and appropriate to community priorities.

3.1 Goals and aspirations of the Hunter–Central Coast First Nations Working Group

The Aboriginal communities in the region include the Awabakal, Darkinjung, Wanaruah and Worimi peoples, who aspire to have constructive relationships with proponents to achieve positive outcomes through Roadmap projects. Meaningful engagement and proactive conversations will be welcomed and will drive collaboration between the working group and other stakeholders involved in delivering projects in the Hunter–Central Coast REZ to develop practical pathways to shared goals and aspirations.

The working group recognises there is a strong willingness from local Aboriginal communities to pursue and advance opportunities generated by the renewable energy transition. The operation of coal fired power stations in the region has established employment networks that can be leveraged through capability uplift to provide the roles and skills needed in the renewable energy sector. The working group is especially focused on ensuring local Aboriginal communities are equipped with the necessary skills to participate and excel in such opportunities.

The working group has developed the following goals and aspirations as the basis of collaboration with proponents. They are designed to enable them to participation in and benefit from the renewable energy transition.

3.1.1 Long-term goals and aspirations of the Hunter–Central Coast First Nations Working Group

Closing the Gap

- Proponents to contribute to outcomes under the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*³ that are relevant to the region including:

³ Under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the targets for the outcomes are:

- Outcome 6 – by 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–34 years who have completed a tertiary qualification (Certificate III and above) to 70%

- Outcome 6 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students reach their full potential through further education pathways
- Outcome 7 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth are engaged in employment or education
- Outcome 8 – Strong economic participation and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities

Capacity development

- Build Aboriginal business capability and capacity to tender for work opportunities and/or income opportunities
- Proponents to ensure timely and adequate training and pre-employment programs to support local Aboriginal people into employment opportunities within the REZ
- A long-term aspirational goal of 7.5%⁴ of the contract value to be subcontracted to First Nations businesses
- A long-term aspirational goal of 7.5% of the project workforce (FTE) that directly contributes to the contract to be First Nations employees
- Collaboration with proponents to address and overcome pre-employment challenges and other barriers faced by local Aboriginal community members

Long-term and meaningful relationships

- Meaningful, constructive, proactive and long-term relationships between local Aboriginal communities, proponents, Roadmap entities, government agencies and other stakeholders throughout the delivery and operation of REZ infrastructure projects

Improving energy security and affordability for Aboriginal communities

- Hunter–Central Coast REZ energy generation to provide lower cost, reliable and resilient electricity to local Aboriginal community- and organisation-owned properties and households

Caring for Country and cultural support

- Community and employment benefit funds sourced from infrastructure projects support cultural awareness and cultural heritage activities and/or projects
- Support and prioritise caring for Country and managing cultural heritage impacts throughout the project lifecycle of REZ infrastructure projects
- Wellbeing and cultural safety for Aboriginal people working on REZ infrastructure projects

-
- Outcome 7 – by 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (15-24 years) who are in employment, education or training to 67%
 - Outcome 8 – by 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25-64 who are employed to 62%.

⁴ This target is reflective of the local Aboriginal population of the REZ and the long-term ambitions of the working group.

3.1.2 Priority activities of the Hunter–Central Coast First Nations Working Group

To assist in achieving the long-term goals and aspirations of the working group several priority activities have been identified that can be used to monitor progress, promote accountability and measure success.

Aboriginal communities invite proponents to engage with them about these priority activities to understand how they could be achieved and built into Industry and Aboriginal Participation Plans (IAPPs) and business planning.

Implementation of an Industry and Aboriginal Participation Plan

The IAPP is a requirement for both generation and network infrastructure proponents and will be assessed by both the Consumer Trustee, AEMO Services Limited and the Infrastructure Planner, EnergyCo. As a starting point, proponents should design and implement an IAPP with existing training, employment and support mechanisms. Where support mechanisms are limited or unavailable, proponents should consider designing and creating them to meet their participation plan commitments.

The working group encourages proponents to consider the following priority activities when designing an IAPP:

- Prioritise the use of Aboriginal-owned land for project development to promote Aboriginal ownership and income generation from electricity infrastructure projects. This should follow relevant local community advice about respectful and appropriate use of the land, as well as land rights, planning, cultural heritage, and environmental laws and regulations.
- Where adequate capacity and capability allows, procure goods and services from Aboriginal-owned businesses and employ Aboriginal people in short-term roles, long-term roles and recurring work.
- Consider joint ventures or partnership opportunities to support Aboriginal participation while building skills, capability and capacity.
- Provide transparency about the skills, training and qualifications required for roles so people can prepare for upcoming opportunities.
- Advance specific opportunities in employment and training for Aboriginal women, Aboriginal people with disabilities, youth and persons facing pre-employment challenges.
- Invest in pre-employment training and upskilling opportunities to promote skills development and transferability. To achieve this, proponents are encouraged to:
 - prioritise Aboriginal group training and recruitment organisations to provide a range of workforce solutions, personnel services and supports to employees
 - use local training and employment support agencies and providers to match local Aboriginal job seekers to new positions
 - support existing or establish new community education and training programs as required to increase workforce skills, capabilities and work readiness
 - involve local Aboriginal community members in the tender process for Aboriginal consultants or service providers to seek their support for any appointment.

3.2 Hunter–Central Coast engagement protocols

3.2.1 Hunter–Central Coast First Nations Working Group

The working group will support local Aboriginal community engagement and negotiations during the project tendering stage and through the ongoing activities of the infrastructure project lifecycle in the REZ. It will provide a consistent voice for the Hunter–Central Coast REZ in relation to Aboriginal economic and employment opportunities.

3.2.2 Working group objectives

The objectives for the working group are:

- Achieve a consistent approach to engaging with and involving local Aboriginal communities in Roadmap projects within the Hunter–Central Coast REZ.
- Ensure the inclusion of local Aboriginal people in decision-making processes that may affect them.
- Act as a source of information and connection between proponents and local Aboriginal communities to achieve shared goals.
- Support the development of long-term employment strategies to ensure Aboriginal people in the region are equipped with necessary skills to work and participate in opportunities under the Roadmap.
- Increase proponents' cultural competency by prioritising cultural awareness and best practice during the development, construction and maintenance of renewable energy projects.

3.2.3 Membership of the working group

The working group currently comprises representatives from the organisations listed below. This current membership reflects the organisations that developed the Hunter–Central Coast REZ First Nations Guidelines.

Working group members

- Individual community members
- Aboriginal Corporations
- University of Newcastle
- NSW Aboriginal Land Council
- Premier's Department (Aboriginal Affairs NSW)
- Department of Regional NSW
- National Indigenous Australians Agency
- Training Services NSW

The working group membership may be amended during implementation of the guidelines to ensure appropriate representation of the local Aboriginal community. Amendments require the working group's endorsement of any such changes to its terms of reference.

3.2.4 EnergyCo's First Nations Outcomes team

EnergyCo has established a First Nations Outcomes team with dedicated staff to coordinate consultation, engagement and implementation of programs and initiatives that deliver outcomes to the local Aboriginal communities within the Hunter–Central Coast REZ.

As part of this program, EnergyCo's First Nations Outcomes team will support the Hunter–Central Coast First Nations Working Group in:

- liaising with proponents during the development of their IAPPs
- coordinating and supporting the working group to engage and negotiate with proponents from project inception through project delivery and operation
- maintaining a feedback loop with the working group and proponents on best practice, lessons learnt and positive experiences from other REZs
- providing information from proponents to the local Aboriginal communities on matters that affect them, for example, through social media, community meetings and information days.

EnergyCo's First Nations Outcomes team is the first contact point for proponents seeking to engage, consult and negotiate with local Aboriginal communities about Roadmap projects. Proponents who contact the working group members will be redirected to the First Nations Outcomes team.

The team will coordinate and prioritise requests to meet with the working group according to working group availability.

The team can be contacted at firstnationsoutcomes@energyco.nsw.gov.au.

3.2.5 Engagement approach

This section provides proponents and EnergyCo with steps and information to prepare themselves to engage with the working group. It is expected that proponents will refer to these guidelines during engagement and negotiations when tendering for or developing an infrastructure project within the Hunter–Central Coast REZ. Proponents are encouraged to contact the First Nations Outcomes team at EnergyCo as early as possible to arrange consultation and engagement within project timeframes and the working group's availability.

The engagement approach is:

- The proponent contacts EnergyCo's First Nations Outcomes team to advise of possible activities or projects within the Hunter–Central Coast REZ area.
- The proponent should be ready to provide EnergyCo and the working group with detailed and relevant information in writing, about:
 - the proposed project, including the type of infrastructure proposed
 - the timeframe for negotiations and engagement
 - the estimated project timeline, if successful
 - where possible, the estimated project cost and resources, if successful
 - the proposed IAPP, if available
 - the specific support and input requested from the working group.

- Once adequate information has been provided, the First Nations Outcomes team may convene a meeting with the working group members as soon as practicable to review the proposal and commence engagement and negotiations about the employment and income opportunities and targets, and the project plan in general.
- The Hunter–Central Coast First Nations Working Group may:
 - guide the proponent through a constructive consultation process, agreed by the working group and proponent. Consultation processes may include advising the proponent of specific Aboriginal communities who need to be consulted, or respectful customs that should be adhered to
 - collaborate with the proponent to identify and access the local Aboriginal workforce, businesses and services as required, to contribute to the content of a tender proposal
 - provide support and engagement throughout the project lifecycle to ensure the IAPP activities and targets are achieved
 - provide support and local insight to the development of proposals that will contribute to the tender’s employment and procurement targets, as well as the proponent’s proposed IAPP targets
 - maintain a feedback loop between the working group and the local Aboriginal communities to keep them updated and informed on matters that affect them.

3.2.6 Recognised annual dates and events of significance

Aboriginal people meet regularly throughout the year to celebrate their ongoing culture and connection and to acknowledge and share their local history at various community gatherings, events and festivals.

Proponents seeking to engage with Aboriginal organisations and groups should be aware of these events as communities and organisations may be unavailable to meet on these dates or leading up to them. Seeking to meet with the Aboriginal community at times when cultural festivities are occurring could delay community decisions or affect future relationships.

Dates and periods to be considered when planning engagement and negotiations include, but are not limited to:

- 26 January
- National Sorry Day (26 May)
- National Reconciliation Week (27 May – 3 June)
- NAIDOC week (first full week in July, Sunday to Sunday)
- Koori Knockout (Indigenous NSW Rugby League carnival) (October long weekend).

Aboriginal communities can also enter periods of mourning called Sorry Business, without warning, after the loss of a community member. It is requested that proponents who have planned or are expecting to meet with a local Aboriginal community ‘check-in’ with a local contact a day or so in advance, to confirm availability and suitability to attend. This is an act of respect for the community, but also a way to prevent waste of resources in attending a meeting that has been cancelled due to the unavailability of the community.

There may be other dates when local Aboriginal community groups and organisations are not able to engage. Proponents can avoid these by contacting and submitting their engagement requests to the First Nations Outcomes team as early as possible. This would allow time for the working group to respond and advise of the availability of local Aboriginal community groups and stakeholders to meet, and any other relevant information that could impact the success of the consultation.

Proponents may also refer to the NSW Department of Communities and Justice website, which lists dates of significance to NSW Aboriginal people.

Appendix A: Glossary

Term	Description
Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, First Nations	An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which they live. First Nations, or First Nations people, is commonly used to refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a collective term for the first sovereign people of Australia.
Caring for Country	Caring for Country refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's role as custodians of their ancestral land and their inherent responsibility to safeguard and nurture it. See <i>Country</i> below.
Consumer Trustee	The independent Roadmap entity responsible for planning the level, timing and type of investment that will take place under the Roadmap. It designs, plans and implements a schedule of competitive processes to award long-term energy service agreements and access rights. AEMO Services Ltd, a subsidiary of the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO), has been appointed as the NSW Consumer Trustee.
Country	Country is often used by Aboriginal peoples to describe the lands, waterways, skies and seas to which they are connected. The term contains complex ideas about law, place, custom, language, spiritual belief, cultural practice, material sustenance, family and identity.
Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo)	A company established under section 7 of the <i>Energy and Utilities Administration Act 1987</i> (NSW) to coordinate energy infrastructure, e.g. transmission, generation, firming and storage projects, to ensure the right infrastructure is built at the right time, to meet energy needs. Under this Act, EnergyCo is appointed as the Infrastructure Planner for the 5 proposed REZs. ⁵
Industry and Aboriginal Participation Plan (IAPP)	A written agreement outlining a prospective supplier's activities to employ and offer training to Aboriginal people or use Aboriginal-owned businesses to procure goods and services. The commitments in the participation plan may form part of the contractual agreement if an authorisation or agreement is awarded.
Local Aboriginal community	As per the <i>Electricity Infrastructure investment Act 2020</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an Aboriginal person or a person who has native rights and interests, within the meaning of the <i>Native Title Act 1993</i> (Cth), in relation to the land to which the relevant project relates • the LALC for the area to which the relevant project relates • other Aboriginal persons prescribed by the regulations.

⁵ Section 23(5) EII Act

Term	Description
Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs)	LALCs are councils established under the NSW <i>Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983</i> . These councils are representative bodies that play a crucial role in advocating for and managing land rights and interests on behalf of Aboriginal communities.
Roadmap proponents / project proponents / proponents	A person or organisation that is carrying out a REZ network infrastructure project, a Priority Transmission Infrastructure Project, or a generation or storage infrastructure project seeking a long-term energy service agreement or access rights under a REZ access scheme.
Renewable energy zones (REZs)	Areas in New South Wales that combine renewable energy generation such as wind and solar, storage such as batteries, and high-voltage electricity network infrastructure to deliver electricity to users. The EII Act contemplates at least 5 such zones to be located in the Central-West Orana, Illawarra, New England, South West and Hunter–Central Coast areas. REZs are declared under the EII Act.
Storage	Storage refers to the collection and retention of energy generated from renewable sources, such as solar or wind power, for later use. Common storage technologies include batteries, pumped hydro storage, and thermal energy storage, enabling the efficient integration of renewable energy into the overall energy grid.
Transmission	Transmission in the context of renewable energy refers to the system of interconnected components, such as power lines, substations and transformers, that transport electricity from the generation source (such as a wind farm or solar facility) to distribution networks and ultimately to consumers. It plays a crucial role in delivering electricity efficiently over long distances, connecting renewable energy resources to areas with high energy demand.

Appendix B: General information about the Hunter–Central Coast region

Introduction

This section provides more information about the Hunter–Central Coast region, and is taken from Appendix 1 of the *Employment, Skills and Supply-Chains: Renewable Energy in NSW – Final Report* (referred to in this section as ‘the report’).⁶

Appendix 1 of the report examines the economic structure and performance of each REZ region within its broader economic context. The objective is to establish region-specific baselines that collectively describe the region’s progress on a transition to renewable energy. This is indicated by their integration within local and global supply chains, industry composition, the depth of training and development opportunities available to local and incoming workforces, and current labour market capacity.

‘Region’ refers to a spatial approximation of the REZ region. For the purposes of this analysis, regions are defined by concurrence between Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) administrative boundaries and the best approximation of the REZ’s geographic extent. For this analysis of the REZ, concurrence is based on Statistical Area 1 (SA1s) and the indicative site boundaries that are published online by the NSW Government, and by Statistical Area 2 (SA2s) for place of work data. While the administrative boundaries do not perfectly align, they are the best fit for the purpose of Census data collection and analysis.

Using a combination of ABS and qualitative data, this chapter profiles each region as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Components of REZ profiles

Baseline theme	Elements
Demographic profile	Population size in 2021 and projected population to 2041 Population density Age distribution Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population Educational attainment Non-school qualifications Occupational profile Labour force status Labour force status and First Nations status Personal weekly income Employment and education profile by gender Employment and education profile by age

⁶ Briggs C, Gill J, Atherton A, Langdon R, Jazbec M, Walker T, Youren M, Tjondro M, Rutovitz J, Cunningham R, Wright S and Nagrath K (2021) *Employment, Skills and Supply-Chains: Renewable Energy in NSW – Final Report*, University of Technology Sydney and SGS Economics and Planning, Sydney.

Baseline theme	Elements
Economic structure	Gross regional product (GRP) growth, compared to state-wide and national GRP growth Industry mix and contribution to the region's GRP Shifts in the industries' share of production, 2016–2021 The region's competitive strengths
Institutional endowments and industry specialisations	Major educational institutions and their course mix, in terms of highest attainment level and industry pathway

Statistical and economic concepts

The following terms and concepts are used to describe the economic structure of the regions and have been defined by the ABS:

- **Statistical Areas (SAs)** refers to the statistical areas, reflecting the location of people and communities, used by the ABS for the publication and analysis of official statistics and other data. They are updated every 5 years to account for growth and change in Australia's population, economy and infrastructure.⁷
 - **Statistical Areas Level 1 (SA1s)** are designed to maximise the geographic detail available for Census of Population and Housing data while maintaining confidentiality. SA1s are built from whole Mesh Blocks and have a population between 200 and 800 people. SA1s are designed to represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as accurately as possible, particularly in remote areas.
 - **Statistical Areas Level 2 (SA2s)** refers to medium-sized general purpose areas built up from whole Statistical Areas Level 1 (SA1s). Their purpose is to represent a community that interacts together socially and economically.
- **Location quotient (LQ)** is a ratio that compares the region to a larger reference region (for this analysis it is New South Wales) according to some characteristic. In the bubble charts, a position to the far right indicates specialisation while a larger bubble size indicates the average annual employment growth between 2016 and 2021.
- **Gross regional product (GRP)** is a measure of size or net wealth generated by the local economy. Changes in this figure can indicate employment shifts, changes to productivity and/or industry mix.

Hunter–Central Coast REZ regional summary

The Hunter is Australia's largest regional economy and contributes over \$34 billion to the NSW economy (DPIE, 2018). The region has an established specialisation in mining and emerging industries, including construction, manufacturing, and wine and food tourism. These are expected to

⁷ For more detailed information on this classification, see the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Edition 3.

drive employment and economic growth in the future, despite recent economic disruptions from the 2019–20 bushfires and the pandemic.

The Hunter–Central Coast is also strategically positioned to leverage connections to major shipping ports across the Asia–Pacific, presenting opportunities for domestic and international export markets.

The Hunter region profiled for this analysis is shown in Figure 3.

The Hunter region was home to 2 major coal fired power plants, Liddell and Bayswater, which together supplied around 30% of New South Wales’ energy needs, as well as coal mines (REDS, 2018). However on 28 April 2023, Liddell Power Station was decommissioned because it reached the end of its operational life. Bayswater Power Station is expected to cease operation by 2030.

The Eraring power plant on the Central Coast is set for closure in August 2025, so to ensure a reliable energy supply the Waratah Super Battery (WSB) is being delivered by the NSW Government. The WSB is a System Integrity Protection Scheme (SIPS) designed to act as a shock absorber in the event of sudden power surges.

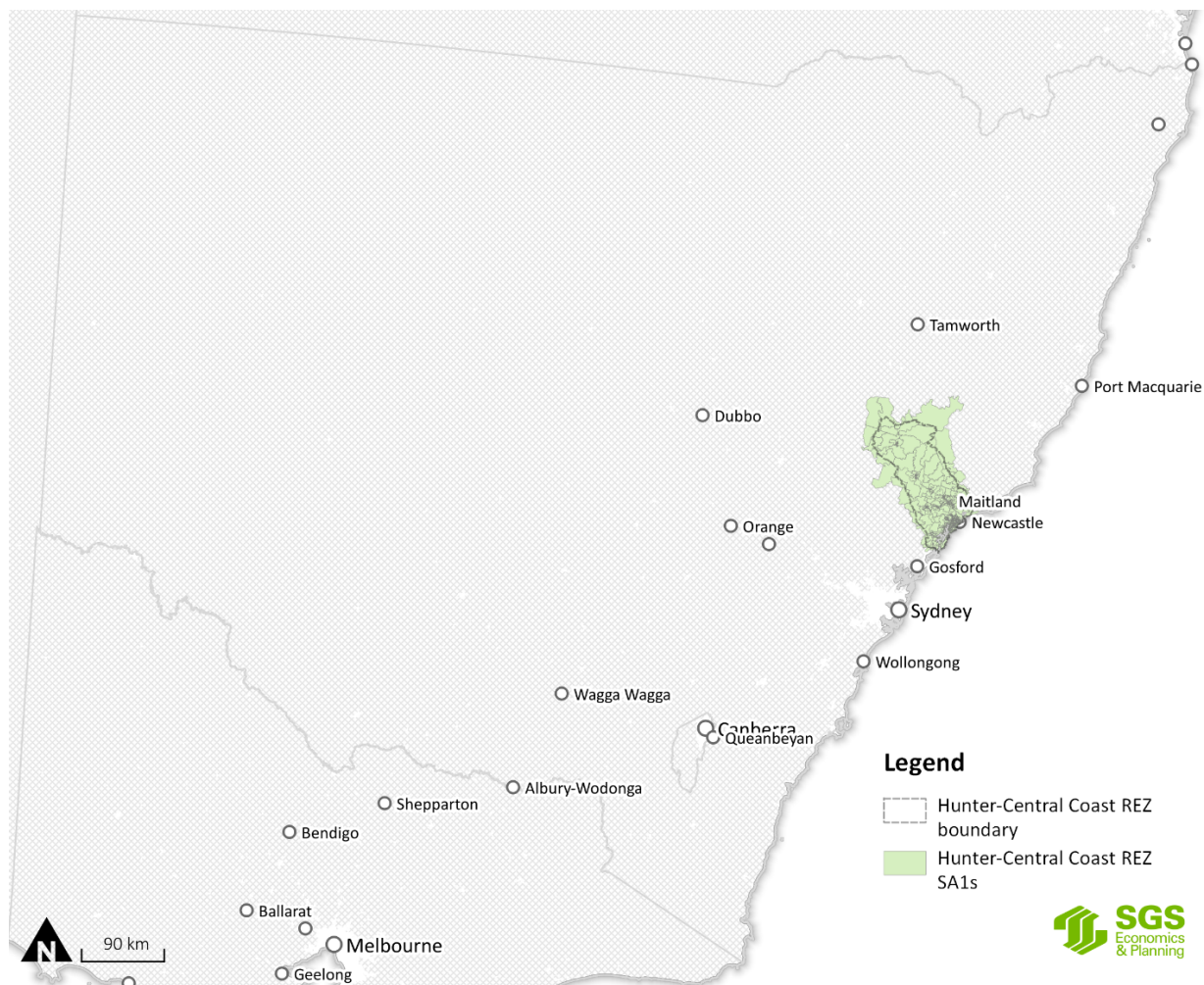


Figure 3: Hunter–Central Coast REZ boundary

Source: SGS Economics and Planning, 2021

The Hunter Transmission Project (HTP) is a 500 kV double circuit transmission line between Bayswater and Eraring that will help to create a ring of transmission infrastructure to strengthen the state’s electricity grid. Electricity supply from the Central-West Orana and New England REZs

will be imported to the Bayswater grid allowing delivery to Hunter, Sydney and Illawarra electricity consumers.

Wind and solar facilities have been proposed for the Upper Hunter region, as well as a bio-refinery in Muswellbrook (REDS, 2018).

CSIRO's Renewable Energy Integration Facility (REIF) in Newcastle has a solar field and together with other education institutions is exploring how electricity networks will need to adapt to a more diverse energy mix. The region's key assets for energy generation include established power stations, transmission lines, grid infrastructure and gas infrastructure (REDS, 2018).

The region's traditional industrial strengths of steel and aluminium manufacturing and processing and allied heavy engineering, particularly around the Port of Newcastle, are also shifting towards increasingly clean technology opportunities such as heavy vehicle battery manufacturing (3ME Technology) and steel recycling. Innovative new businesses, such as Mineral Carbonation Australia are seeking to base operations in the region, providing co-location opportunities for other businesses along the supply chain. Additionally, the Williamstown Special Activation Precinct will be located near Newcastle Airport and the Royal Australian Air Force base in Williamstown, reinforcing the region as a national and international hub for defence and aerospace.

The Port of Newcastle is also a major export gateway for coal to international markets, as well as an import gateway for bulk liquids and mining machinery. Notwithstanding the focus on transitioning to a low carbon economy, in the short term there is a need to tailor the right energy mix and community supports in certain regions in the leadup to coal fired stations reaching their end of life.

There is also some small-scale electrical equipment manufacturing, and mining and construction machinery manufacturing, taking place in the region. The Central Coast also has some basic metal manufacturing activities; for example, fabricated metal manufacturing, which makes up only 1% of regional employment but remains a regional specialisation mainly due to the lack of similar operations in other areas.

Demographic profile

Population size and density

In 2021, the population in the REZ was 660,924 based on the identified SA1s according to the definition shown in Figure 3 and ABS 2021 Census data. Population in the broader Hunter region (beyond the REZ) as defined by the former NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment in its planning region projections is estimated to grow at an annual average rate of 1.2% between 2021 and 2041, from 762,919 to 949,834. The main population centres in the Hunter–Central Coast REZ region are Newcastle, Maitland, Singleton and Cessnock (Figure 4).

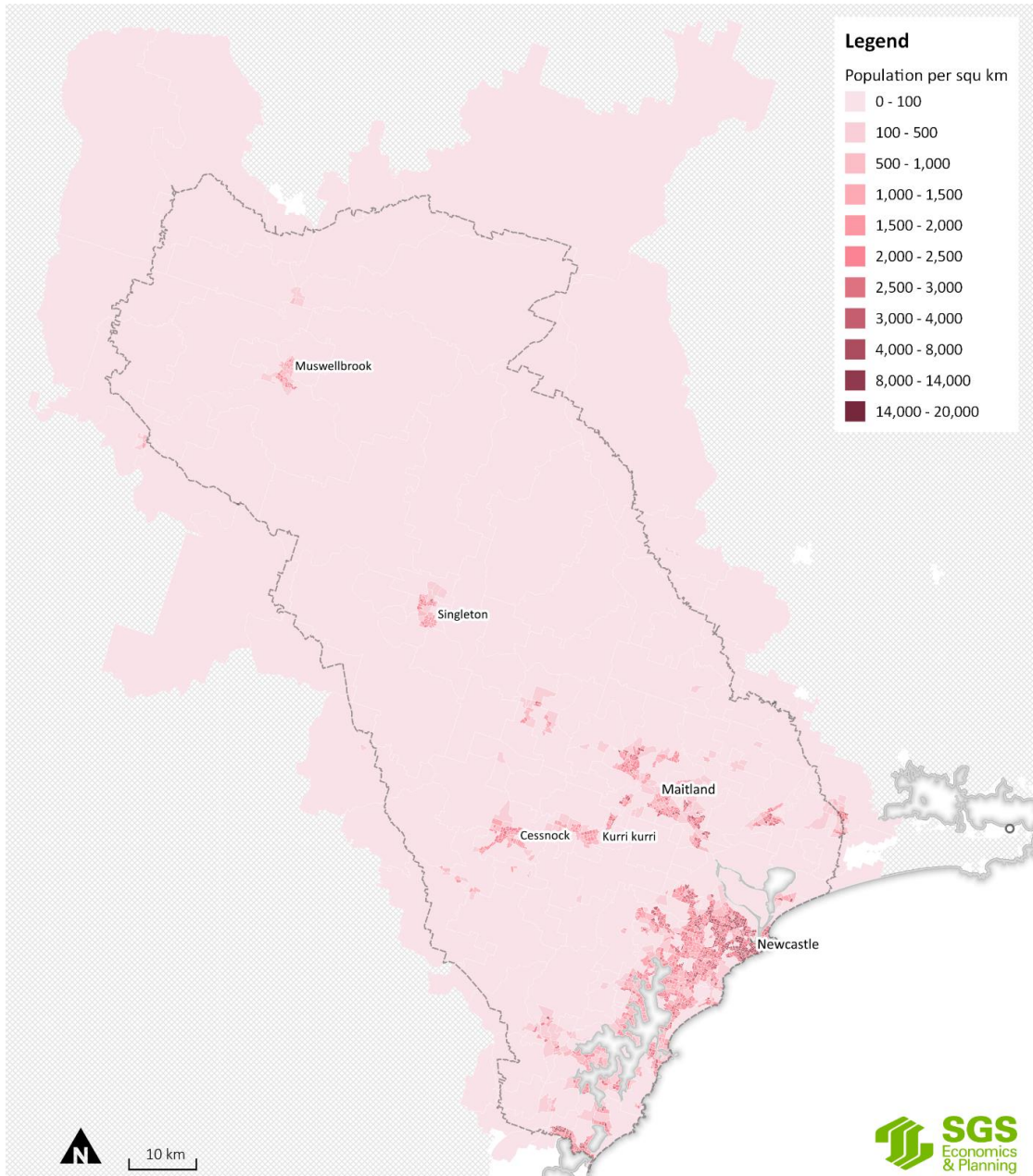


Figure 4: Map of population density in the Hunter-Central Coast REZ region

Source: SGS Economics and Planning, 2023

Age distribution

The Hunter-Central Coast REZ population is skewed to slightly older than the NSW average. There are some signs of out-migration, with lower shares of university and working aged residents between the ages of 20 and 39 compared with the NSW average, whereas shares of retirement and school aged populations are relatively higher (Figure 5).

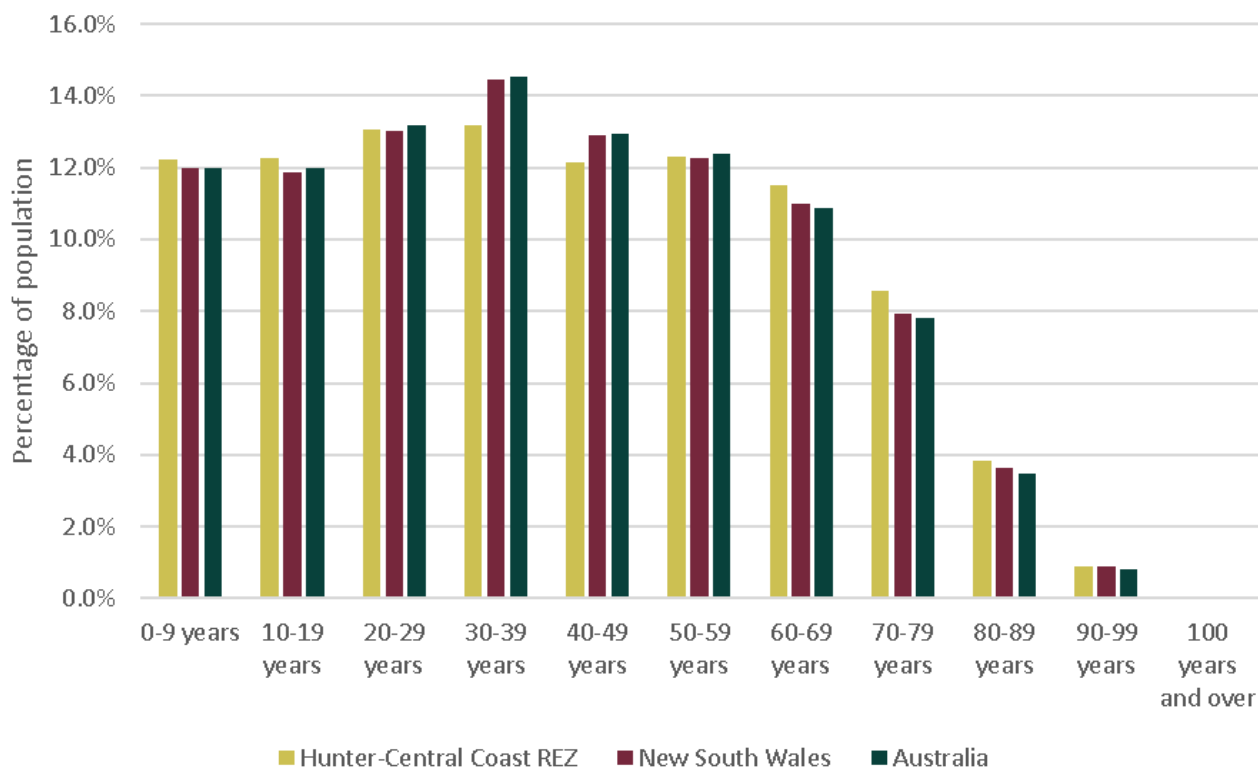


Figure 5: Age distribution, Hunter-Central Coast REZ, NSW & Australia, 2021

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in the Hunter-Central Coast region is 6.7% (Table 2), which is higher than the NSW proportion of 3.6% and Australian proportion of 3.4%.

Table 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, Hunter-Central Coast REZ, NSW & Australia, 2021

	Hunter-Central Coast REZ	New South Wales	Australia
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	6.7%	3.6%	3.4%
Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	93.3%	96.4%	96.6%

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Educational profile

The population of Hunter-Central Coast region has a higher share of people with Certificate III and IV qualifications compared to both New South Wales and Australia overall, as well as a higher share of people with a secondary education. The region has a commensurately lower proportion of people with qualifications at the Bachelor Degree or higher level compared to New South Wales and Australia (Figure 6).

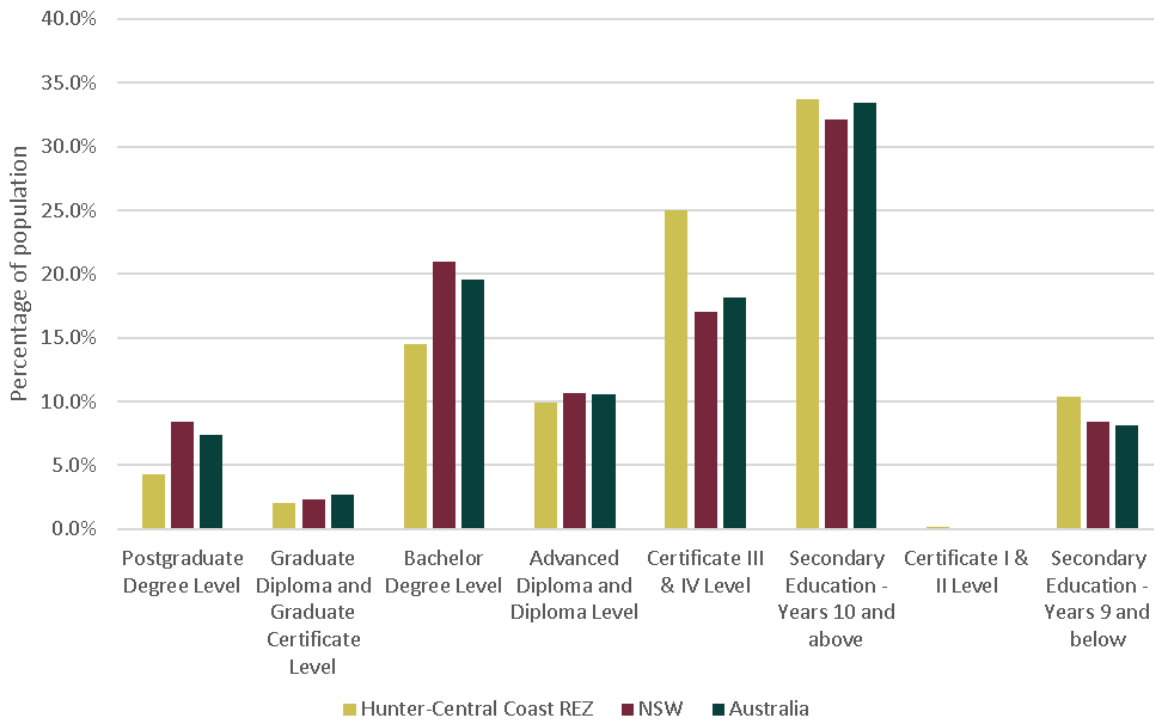


Figure 6: Highest level of education attainment, Hunter–Central Coast REZ, NSW & Australia, 2021

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

The most common qualifications held in the Hunter–Central Coast area are related to Engineering, Management and Commerce, and Health (Figure 7). The region has a higher share of residents with engineering related qualifications than the NSW average. This may be due to the dominance of mining in the regional economy – in terms of contribution to GRP and regional exports – and indicates an opportunity to leverage these skills for future renewable energy construction, operations and maintenance.

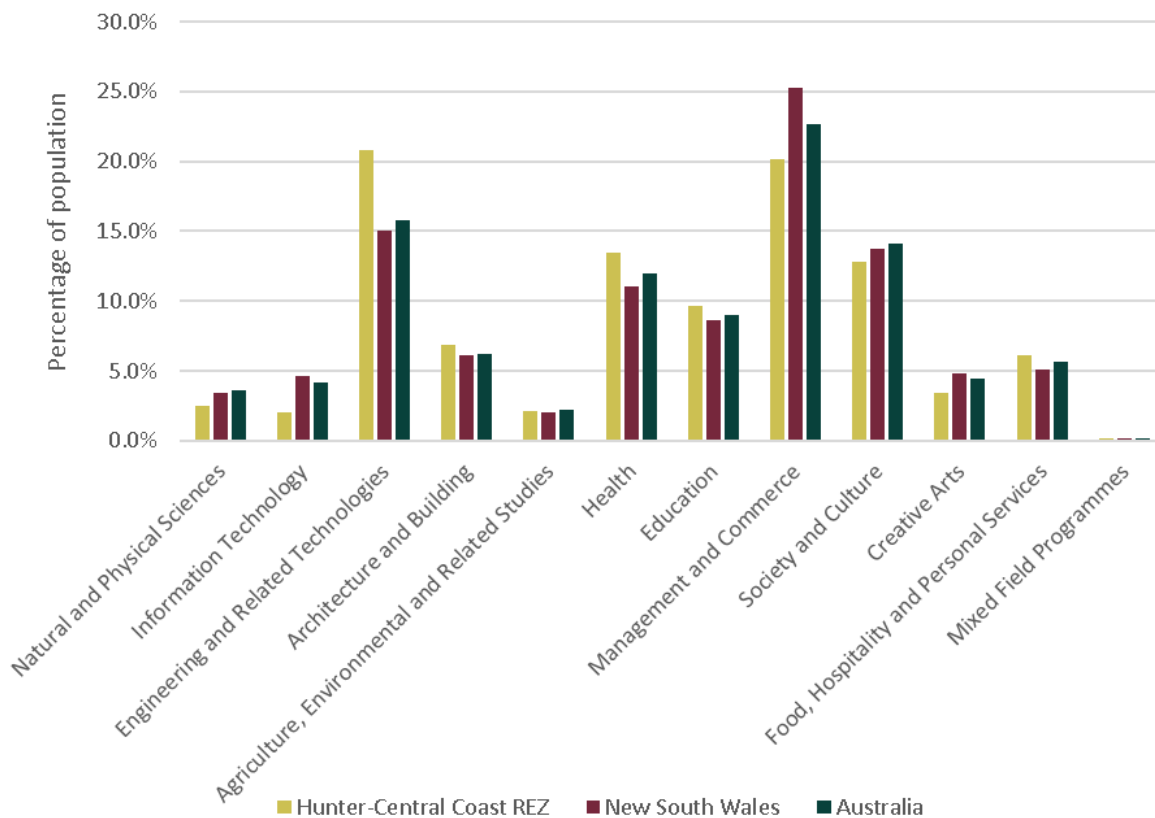


Figure 7: Non-school qualifications, Hunter–Central Coast REZ, NSW & Australia, 2021

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Occupational profile

The Hunter–Central Coast region has a relatively diverse skills base compared to other regional areas, with a fairly even distribution of all occupations. The 3 largest categories are Carers and Aides, Sales Assistants and Salespersons, and Health Professionals (Figure 8). Again, this reflects a region with a large population-serving function, acknowledging that the Hunter has one of the most sophisticated and well recognised tourism brands in regional New South Wales, while health care and social assistance constitute a significant and growing share of employment. Major funding commitment to the John Hunter Health and Innovation Precinct in Newcastle will also attract health and allied professional skills to the region.

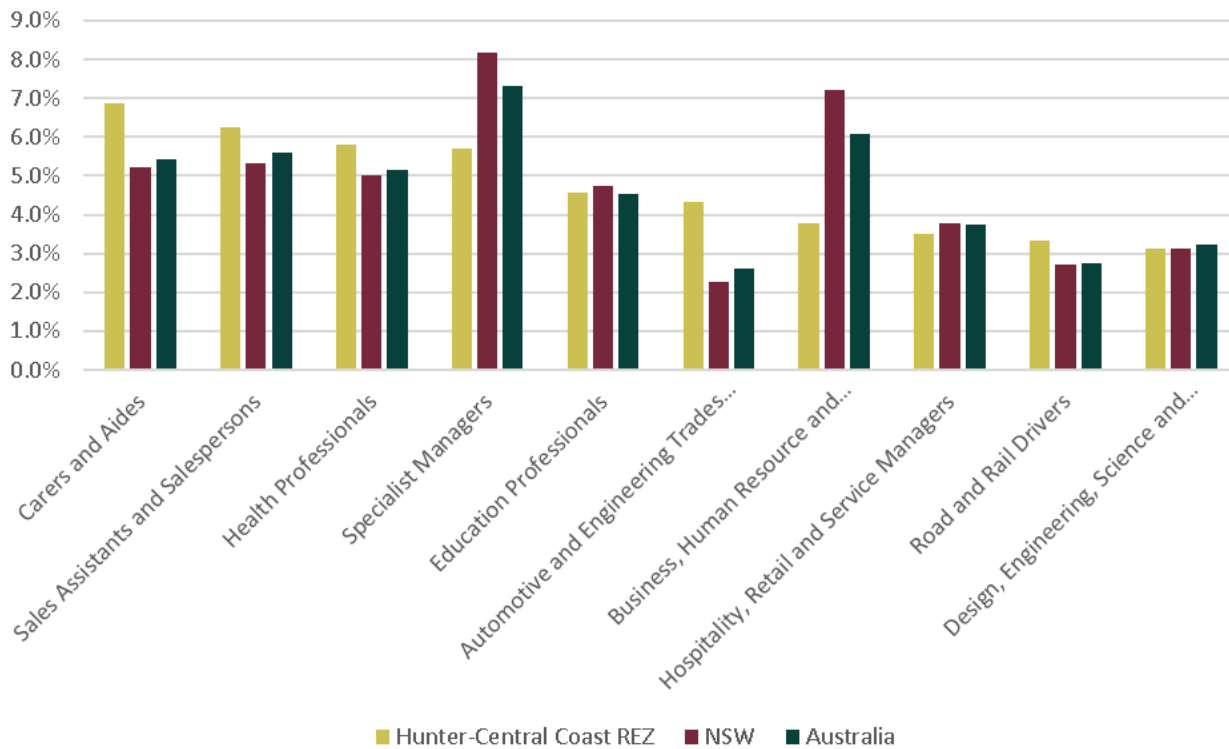


Figure 8: Top 10 occupation groups (2-digit level), Hunter–Central Coast REZ, NSW & Australia, 2021

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Employment status and average income

Compared to New South Wales overall, the Hunter–Central Coast REZ region has a similar share of residents working full-time and a slightly larger share of residents working part-time (Figure 9). As of 2021 there was a similar proportion of residents of the region who were unemployed looking for full- and part-time work as New South Wales and Australia, and a similar share who were not in the labour force.

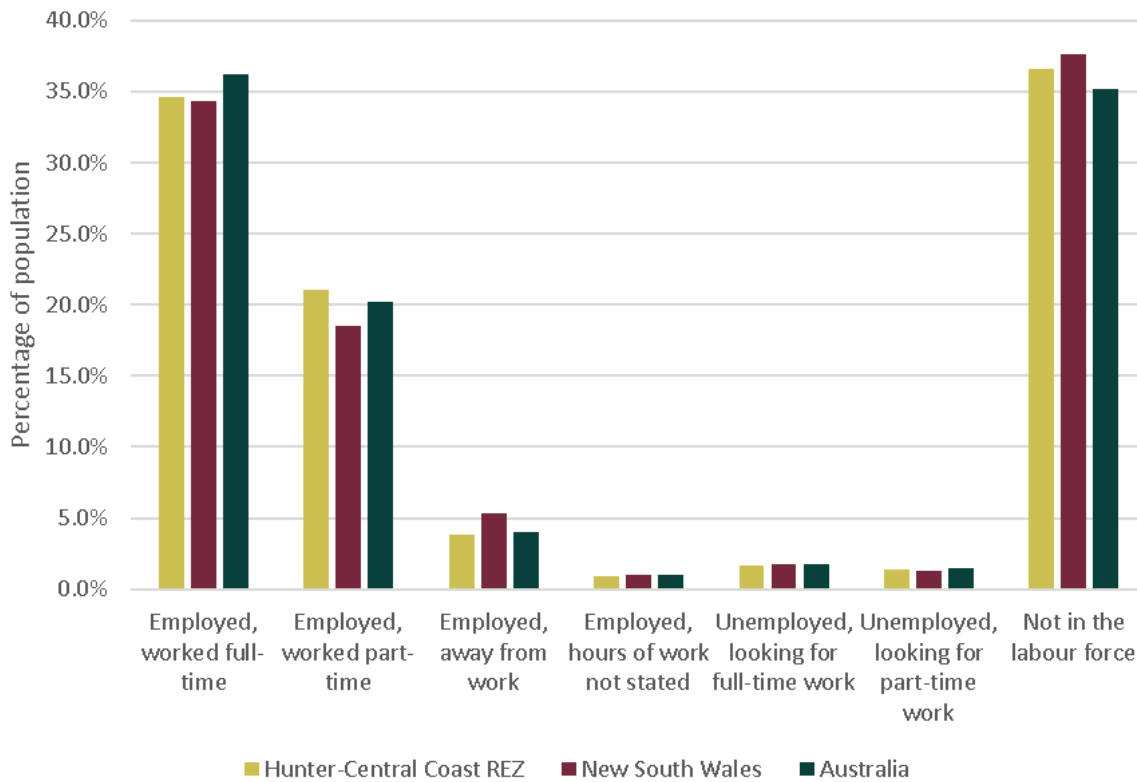


Figure 9: Labour force status, Hunter–Central Coast REZ, NSW & Australia, 2021

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Historically, the unemployment rate in the Hunter–Central Coast REZ region has fluctuated more year to year compared to New South Wales and Australia, however, it largely follows the long-term trend for both (Figure 10). The most recent data from 2023 shows the unemployment rate in the Hunter–Central Coast REZ region is slightly higher than the NSW and Australian rates, at 4.4%.

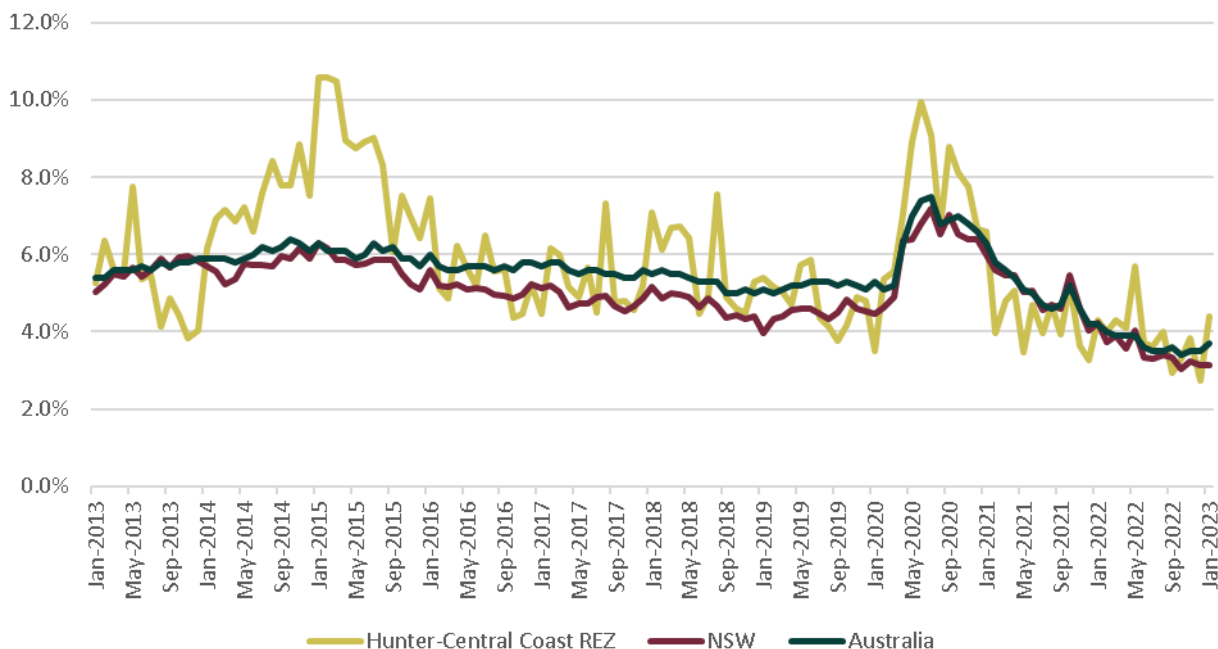


Figure 10: Unemployment rate, Hunter–Central Coast REZ, NSW & Australia, 2013–2023

Source: ABS Labour Force Australia, January 2023

In 2021, the share of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing unemployment in the region was 6.0% (Table 3), slightly higher than the NSW proportion of 5.7% (Table 4), but lower than

the proportion across Australia of 6.8% (Table 5). The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed full-time and part-time was higher in the Hunter–Central Coast REZ region than the respective NSW and Australian rates, while shares of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population recorded as not in the labour force were also lower.

Table 3: Population by work status, Hunter–Central Coast REZ, 2021

	Employed, worked full-time	Employed, worked part-time	Employed, away from work	Employed, hours of work not stated	Unemployed, looking for full-time work	Unemployed, looking for part-time work	Not in the labour force
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	30.4%	20.1%	4.2%	1.5%	3.6%	2.4%	37.8%
Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	34.9%	21.1%	3.9%	0.8%	1.5%	1.3%	36.4%

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Table 4: Population by work status, NSW, 2021

	Employed, worked full-time	Employed, worked part-time	Employed, away from work	Employed, hours of work not stated	Unemployed, looking for full-time work	Unemployed, looking for part-time work	Not in the labour force
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	28.4%	17.6%	4.6%	1.6%	3.6%	2.1%	42.0%
Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	34.6%	18.6%	5.4%	1.0%	1.7%	1.3%	37.4%

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Table 5: Population by work status, Australia, 2021

	Employed, worked full-time	Employed, worked part-time	Employed, away from work	Employed, hours of work not stated	Unemployed, looking for full-time work	Unemployed, looking for part-time work	Not in the labour force
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	27.3%	16.4%	3.6%	1.7%	4.3%	2.5%	44.2%
Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	36.6%	20.4%	4.0%	1.0%	1.7%	1.5%	34.8%

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

In 2021, income distribution in the Hunter–Central Coast REZ region was skewed more towards the lower end of income bands than the rest of New South Wales and Australia (Figure 11). The region has lower shares of weekly incomes in the brackets above \$2,000 per week by comparison, with larger proportions of incomes in the \$300 to \$1,249 brackets.

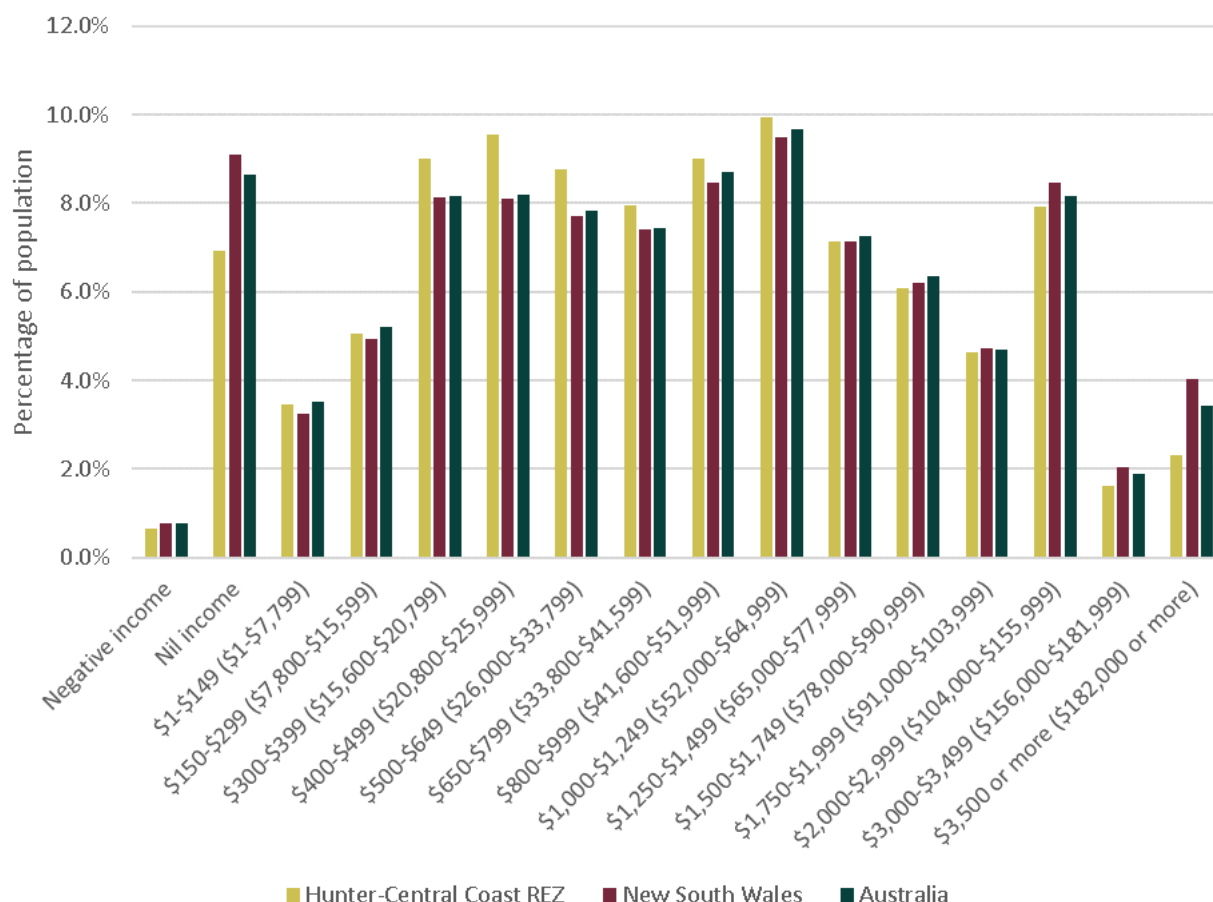


Figure 11: Personal weekly income, Hunter–Central Coast REZ, NSW & Australia, 2021

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Employment and education profile by gender

In the Hunter–Central Coast REZ area, more than half of the residents who are employed full-time are male, at 62.6%, while females make up a large proportion of residents working part-time at 67.3% (Figure 12). The gender breakdown of residents who were unemployed and looking for full- or part-time work is similar to the breakdown of residents employed in the same capacity, with 68.1% of residents looking for full-time work being male and 56.0% of residents looking for part-time work being female. More female residents than male residents were also not in the labour force.

For the Hunter–Central Coast REZ, there are some distinct patterns in the types of industries that are male versus female dominated in terms of employed persons (Figure 13). Male residents make up the majority of those working in industrial-based sectors, such as Agriculture, Mining, Manufacturing, Construction, Transport, Postal and Warehousing, Wholesale Trade, and Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services. Female residents feature more in some of the knowledge intensive industries such as Financial and Insurance Services, Administrative and Support Services, and Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services, though males account for a larger share in IT and Telecommunications, Professional, Scientific and Technical services, and Public Administration and Safety. Female residents heavily account for workers in both Education and Training, and Health Care and Social Assistance industries, at 73.5% and 78.9% respectively.

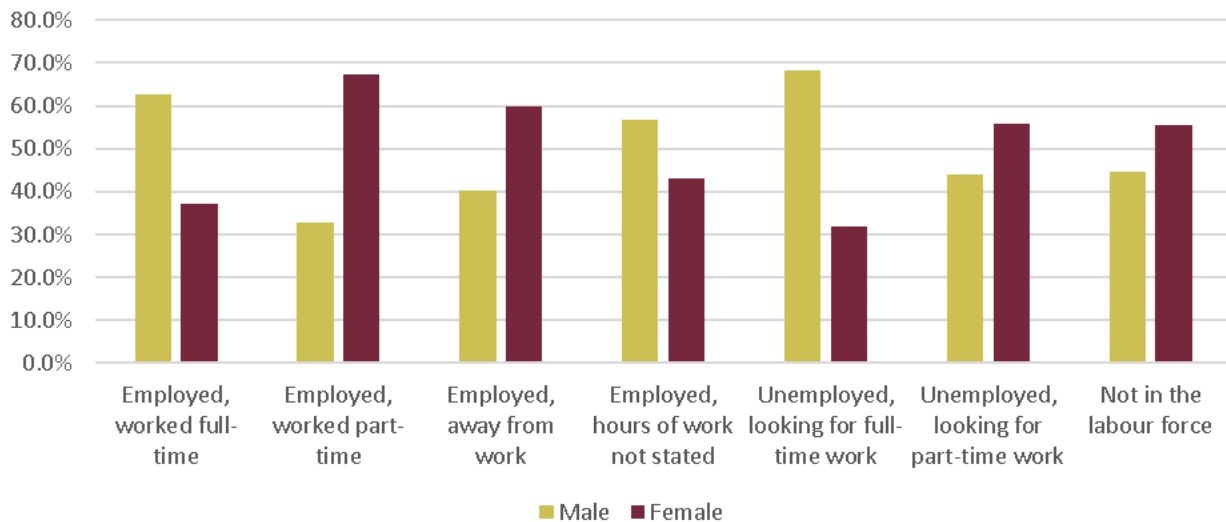


Figure 12: Labour force status by gender of Hunter–Central Coast REZ, 2021

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

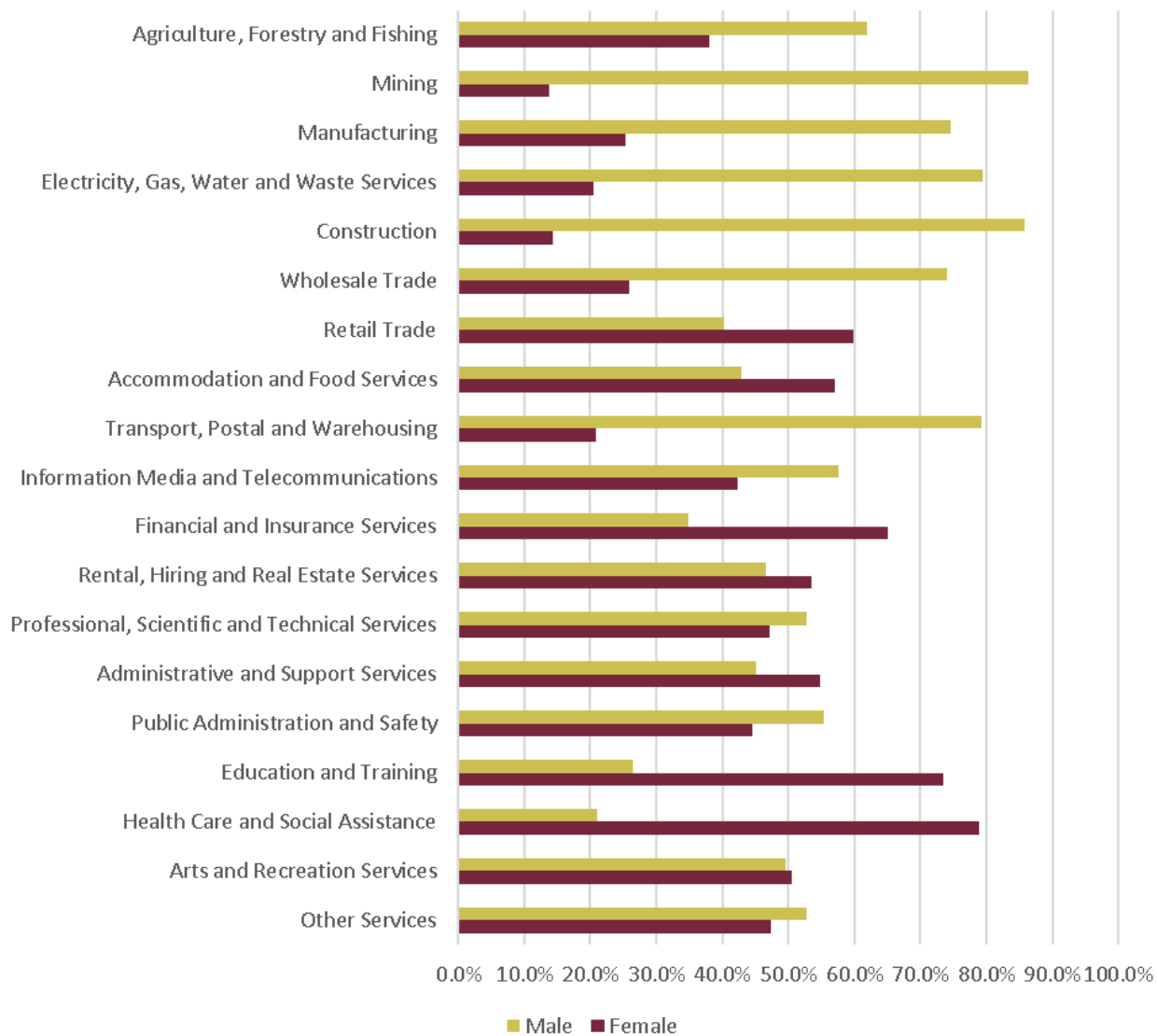


Figure 13: Industry of employment by gender of Hunter-Central Coast REZ, 2021

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Reflective of the industry and gender profile above, occupations that are typically vocational, such as Labourers, Machinery Operators and Drivers, and Technicians and Trade Workers, account for a larger share of male than female workers from the region. More females work in occupations such as Professionals, Sales Workers, Community and Personal Service Workers, and Clerical and Administrative Workers (Figure 14). However, male residents are typically more likely to be Managers than female residents.

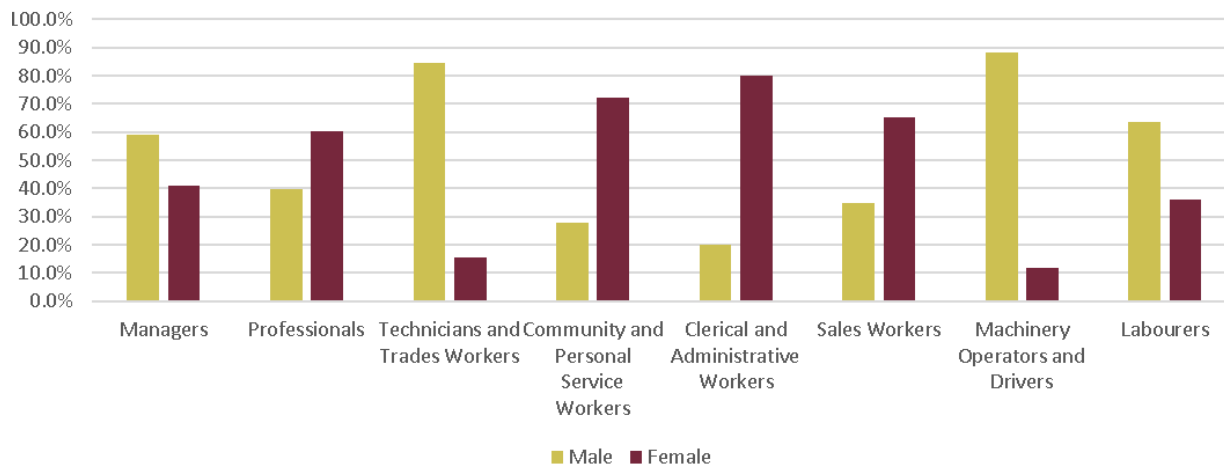


Figure 14: Occupation by gender of Hunter-Central Coast REZ, 2021

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Female residents in the Hunter-Central Coast REZ region have higher levels of education than their male counterparts. Over half of the region’s residents with a qualification at an Advanced Diploma and Diploma level and above were female (Figure 15). Females also account for more than half of the region’s residents with a qualification at the Certificate I and II level. The only education level for which there are more males than females is the Certificate III and IV level.

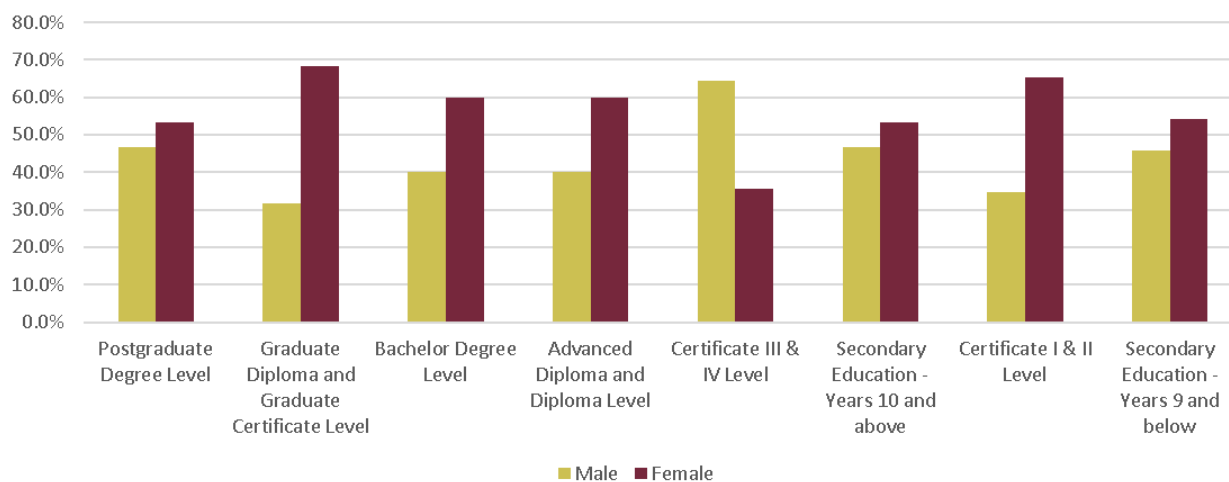


Figure 15: Education attainment level by gender of Hunter-Central Coast REZ, 2021

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Employment and education profile by age

In the Hunter-Central Coast REZ region in 2021, 68.5% of the working residents employed full-time were aged between 30 and 59 years (Table 6). There was a more even distribution between age groups for those employed part-time, with 52.9% of the population aged between 30 and 59 years. With larger shares in the younger and older aged brackets working part-time, this may be influenced

by young students who may be studying or starting their careers and mature aged adults who are looking to work less before retirement. A substantial share (41.4%) of the residents looking for full-time work were aged under 29, while 45.8% of those looking for part-time work were in the same age bracket. Over 4,000 residents aged over 70 were still working in the Hunter–Central Coast REZ.

Table 6: Labour force status by age of Hunter–Central Coast REZ, 2021

Age range	Employed, worked full-time	Employed, worked part-time	Employed, away from work	Employed, hours of work not stated	Unemployed, looking for full-time work	Unemployed, looking for part-time work	Not in the labour force
10–19 years	2.5%	12.4%	11.1%	7.7%	11.3%	31.5%	7.4%
20–29 years	20.7%	21.4%	22.5%	27.6%	30.1%	24.3%	6.6%
30–39 years	24.3%	19.1%	24.1%	23.2%	17.6%	13.3%	6.1%
40–49 years	23.4%	17.2%	13.4%	16.8%	16.9%	10.4%	6.1%
50–59 years	20.8%	16.6%	16.0%	13.4%	16.2%	10.7%	9.3%
60–69 years	7.7%	10.9%	11.1%	7.7%	7.6%	8.6%	23.4%
70–79 years	0.6%	2.2%	1.5%	2.1%	0.2%	1.1%	26.4%
80+ years	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%	1.4%	0.0%	0.1%	14.6%

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

In terms of industries, the Construction, Accommodation and Food Services, Arts and Recreation Services, and Retail Trade industries have larger proportions of workers aged between 10 and 29 years (Table 7). This is reflective of these industries often being entry-level jobs that can suit younger people due to the physical requirements and flexibility to work around studying. Most other industries have a large share of their workers aged between 20 and 49 years, while some of the agriculture-related sectors, such as Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing have a larger share of older workers above the typical retirement age.

Table 7: Industry of employment by age of Hunter–Central Coast REZ, 2021

Industry (1-digit ANZSIC)	10–19 years	20–29 years	30–39 years	40–49 years	50–59 years	60–69 years	70–79 years	80+ years
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	3.5%	16.5%	16.7%	16.4%	18.9%	17.8%	8.1%	2.1%
Mining	1.0%	14.6%	29.8%	26.8%	21.1%	6.3%	0.4%	0.0%
Manufacturing	4.1%	18.2%	22.3%	21.8%	22.9%	9.7%	1.0%	0.1%

Industry (1-digit ANZSIC)	10–19 years	20–29 years	30–39 years	40–49 years	50–59 years	60–69 years	70–79 years	80+ years
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	1.0%	13.7%	24.5%	24.7%	25.6%	9.9%	0.7%	0.0%
Construction	6.0%	24.9%	24.0%	19.2%	17.1%	7.9%	0.9%	0.1%
Wholesale Trade	2.7%	16.9%	23.7%	22.8%	22.2%	9.9%	1.6%	0.2%
Retail Trade	15.9%	27.6%	17.8%	15.3%	15.1%	7.3%	0.9%	0.1%
Accommodation and Food Services	34.6%	28.9%	13.3%	10.0%	8.4%	4.1%	0.6%	0.0%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	1.5%	11.9%	19.4%	22.1%	26.8%	15.7%	2.4%	0.2%
Information Media and Telecommunications	5.5%	22.1%	25.1%	20.4%	18.1%	7.2%	1.2%	0.4%
Financial and Insurance Services	0.6%	18.6%	29.7%	24.5%	18.5%	7.1%	0.8%	0.1%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	2.8%	19.0%	22.1%	21.2%	20.1%	10.7%	3.6%	0.7%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	1.4%	20.7%	27.3%	22.9%	16.7%	8.8%	2.0%	0.2%
Administrative and Support Services	2.4%	20.9%	22.7%	22.1%	20.7%	10.0%	1.1%	0.1%
Public Administration and Safety	1.7%	16.3%	24.7%	25.4%	23.0%	8.2%	0.6%	0.0%
Education and Training	2.2%	17.4%	22.8%	24.4%	20.9%	11.0%	1.2%	0.1%
Health Care and Social Assistance	2.1%	21.4%	23.2%	20.7%	20.9%	10.6%	1.0%	0.1%
Arts and Recreation Services	15.7%	26.7%	18.8%	16.7%	13.0%	6.7%	2.2%	0.2%
Other Services	6.6%	25.0%	22.4%	19.2%	17.1%	8.1%	1.5%	0.2%

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Residents in the region employed as Technicians and Trades Workers, Community and Personal Service Workers, Sales Workers, or Labourers were typically in younger age brackets (Table 8). Workers aged between 30 and 49 make up over 50% of those employed as Managers or Professionals, and account for over 40% of Clerical and Administrative Workers, Technicians and Trade Workers, and Machinery Operators and Drivers.

Table 8: Occupation by age of Hunter–Central Coast REZ, 2021

Age range	Managers	Professionals	Technicians and Trades Workers	Community and Personal Service Workers	Clerical and Administrative Workers	Sales Workers	Machinery Operators and Drivers	Labourers
10–19 years	0.9%	0.7%	6.1%	8.8%	1.9%	24.7%	3.2%	15.8%
20–29 years	11.2%	18.5%	26.6%	30.5%	16.7%	26.2%	15.5%	22.5%
30–39 years	23.9%	28.8%	24.8%	19.1%	21.9%	14.5%	21.7%	16.6%
40–49 years	27.7%	23.5%	18.5%	17.3%	22.8%	12.8%	22.2%	16.0%
50–59 years	23.2%	17.7%	16.6%	16.5%	23.9%	13.8%	24.0%	18.2%
60–69 years	10.4%	9.4%	6.7%	7.1%	11.2%	7.0%	12.0%	9.6%
70–79 years	2.2%	1.4%	0.6%	0.7%	1.5%	1.0%	1.3%	1.2%
80+ years	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Half of the residents in the Hunter–Central Coast REZ region with a postgraduate degree are aged between 30 and 49 years, at 51.4%, while a larger share of residents with a Bachelor degree are aged between 20 and 49 years (around 66%) (Table 9). Nearly 50% of the residents with qualifications at the Secondary Education – Years 10 and above level are aged over 40, and a large share (68.2%) of residents with their highest level of education at Secondary Education – Years 9 and below are over the age of 50. These figures suggest that younger age groups in the region are becoming more educated than previous generations.

Table 9: Education attainment level by age of Hunter–Central Coast REZ, 2021

Age range	Postgraduate degree	Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate	Bachelor degree	Advanced Diploma and Diploma	Certificate III & IV	Secondary education – Years 10 and above	Certificate I & II	Secondary education – Years 9 and below
10–19 years	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.3%	1.6%	15.4%	4.3%	19.1%
20–29 years	8.1%	9.2%	19.1%	11.4%	18.0%	21.2%	11.4%	3.3%
30–39 years	28.0%	19.8%	26.3%	19.3%	20.6%	11.0%	10.9%	4.1%
40–49 years	23.4%	20.4%	20.6%	20.2%	17.6%	11.4%	13.6%	5.2%
50–59 years	17.0%	18.0%	13.3%	19.9%	18.0%	13.5%	16.9%	10.8%
60–69 years	14.1%	20.9%	11.9%	16.8%	13.4%	12.6%	21.6%	18.5%
70–79 years	7.3%	9.2%	6.5%	8.8%	7.7%	10.0%	15.8%	22.0%
80+ years	2.0%	2.2%	2.3%	3.3%	3.1%	4.8%	5.4%	16.9%

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Economic structure

Gross regional product growth

GRP growth in the Hunter–Central Coast REZ region has largely followed the trend of New South Wales and Australia overall since 2015, though this has fluctuated between years (Figure 16). There was a sharp increase in GRP growth between 2015 and 2016 and again from 2017–18 (after a drop in the year prior). From 2018 onwards GRP has declined broadly in line with New South Wales and Australia.



Figure 16: GRP growth compared to NSW & Australia, Hunter–Central Coast REZ, 2015–2021

Source: Australian National Accounts: National Income, Expenditure and Product December 2022 and SGS Economics and Planning's Australian Economic Wellbeing GDP by Industry

Industry mix

Mining contributes the most to the GRP of the Hunter–Central Coast REZ, at 14.3% of GRP in 2021, followed by Construction at 10.0%, and Health Care and Social Assistance at 9.8% (Figure 17). Despite its connection with the Hunter region, the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry only contributes 1.5% of the GRP.

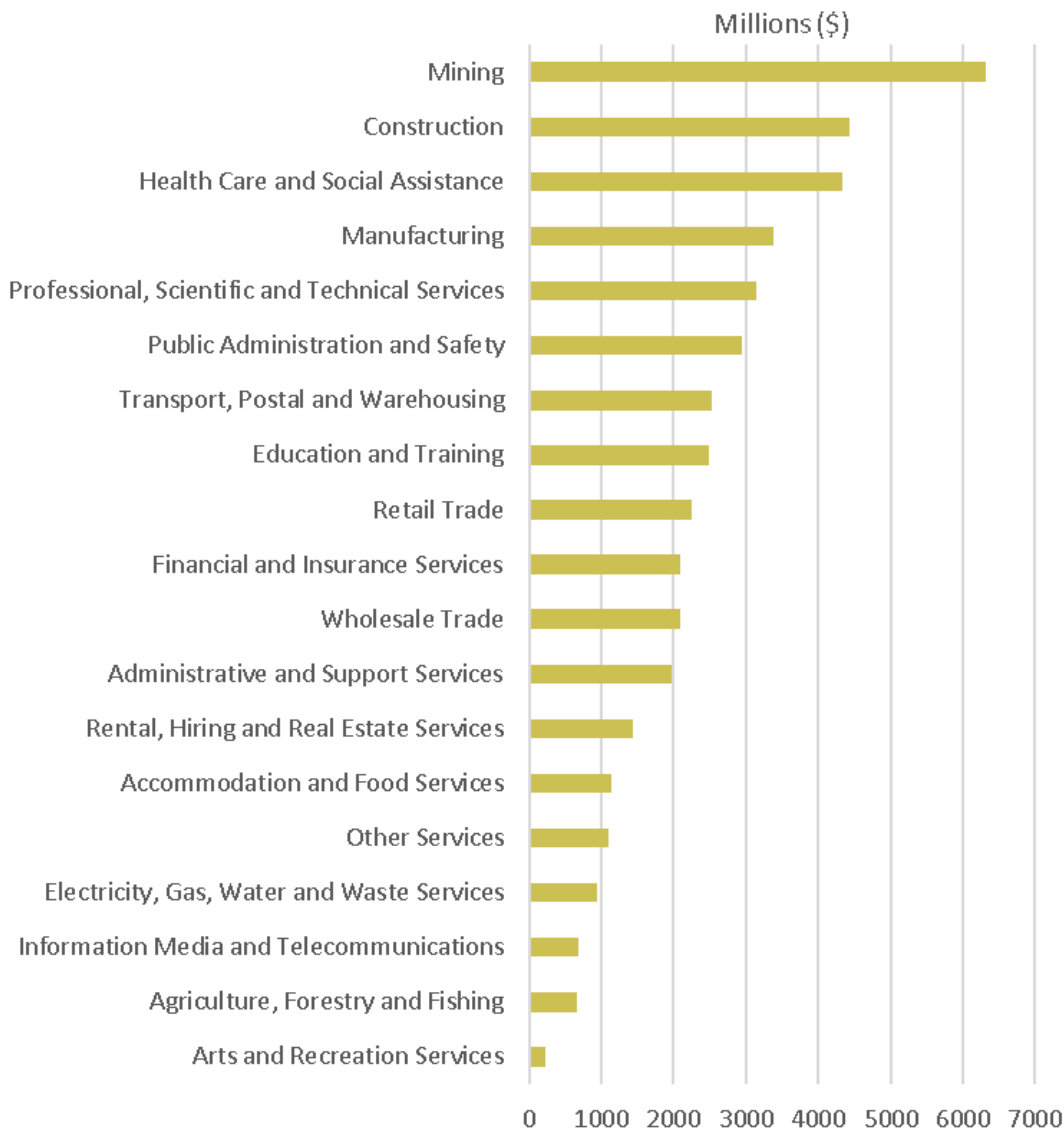


Figure 17: Industry contribution to GRP, Hunter–Central Coast REZ, \$ millions, 2021

Source: SGS Economics and Planning’s Australian Economic Wellbeing GDP by Industry

While Mining accounts for a large share of the region’s GRP, it only accounts for a small proportion of employment in the region, at around 5% in 2021 (though this represents a larger share of employment compared to the shares in New South Wales and Australia overall) (Figure 18). Health Care and Social Assistance is the largest industry in the region, at 18.7% of all employment, which is also a larger share than that observed for New South Wales and Australia. Retail Trade, Education and Training, and Construction are also large employers in the region, each accounting for nearly 10% of jobs.

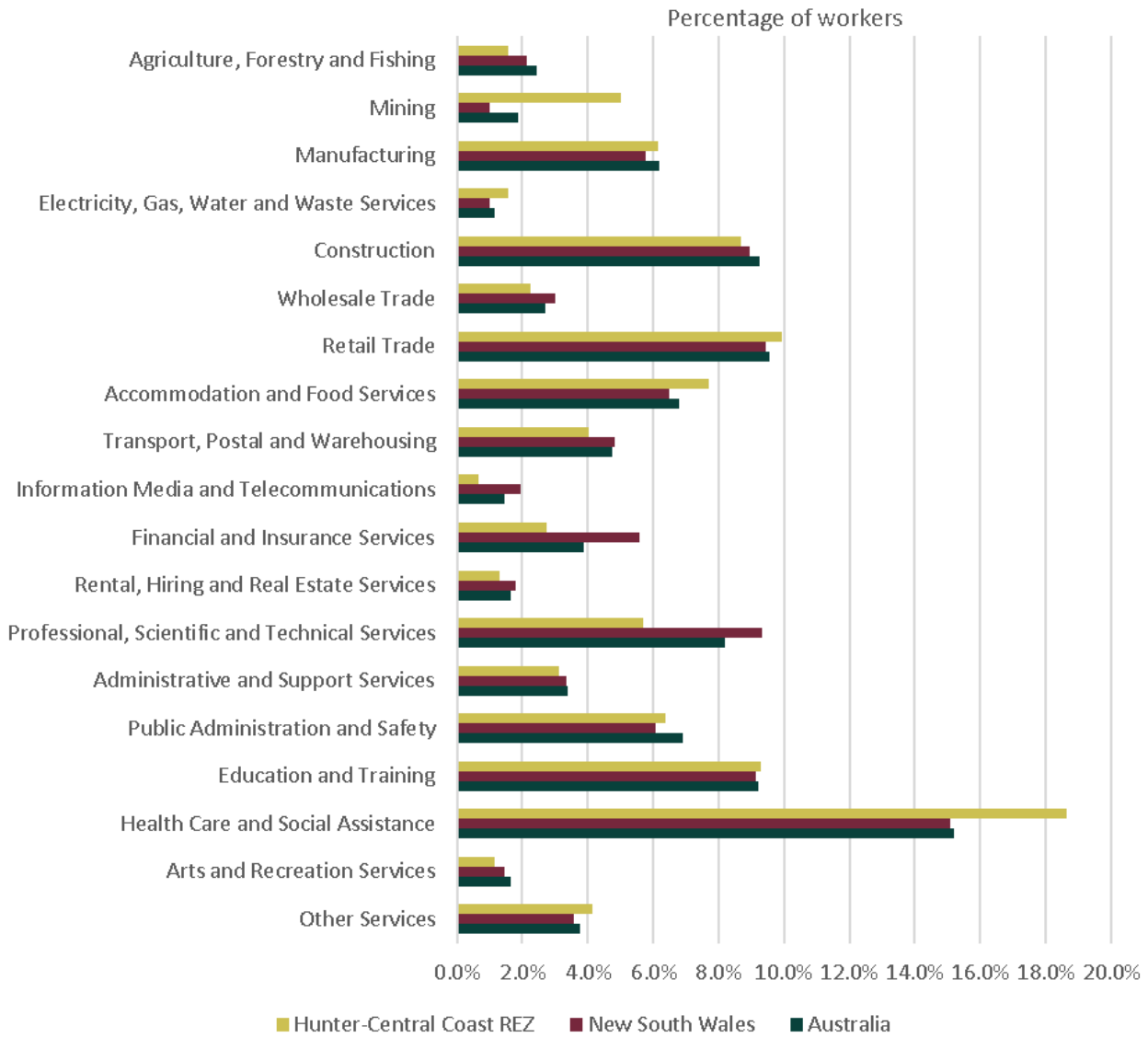


Figure 18: Industry share of employment, Hunter–Central Coast REZ, NSW & Australia, 2021

Source: ABS Census TableBuilder 2021

Shifts in industries' share of production, 2016–2021

In the 5 years to 2021, population serving industries such as Construction and Retail Trade, and professional industries such as Information Media and Telecommunications, Public Administration and Safety, and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services, all grew their share of the region's GRP (Figure 19). The share of GRP from the Health Care and Social Assistance, and Education and Training sectors also grew, while over the same period the share generated from Mining decreased. Other industrial based sectors maintained similar shares in 2021 as in 2016.

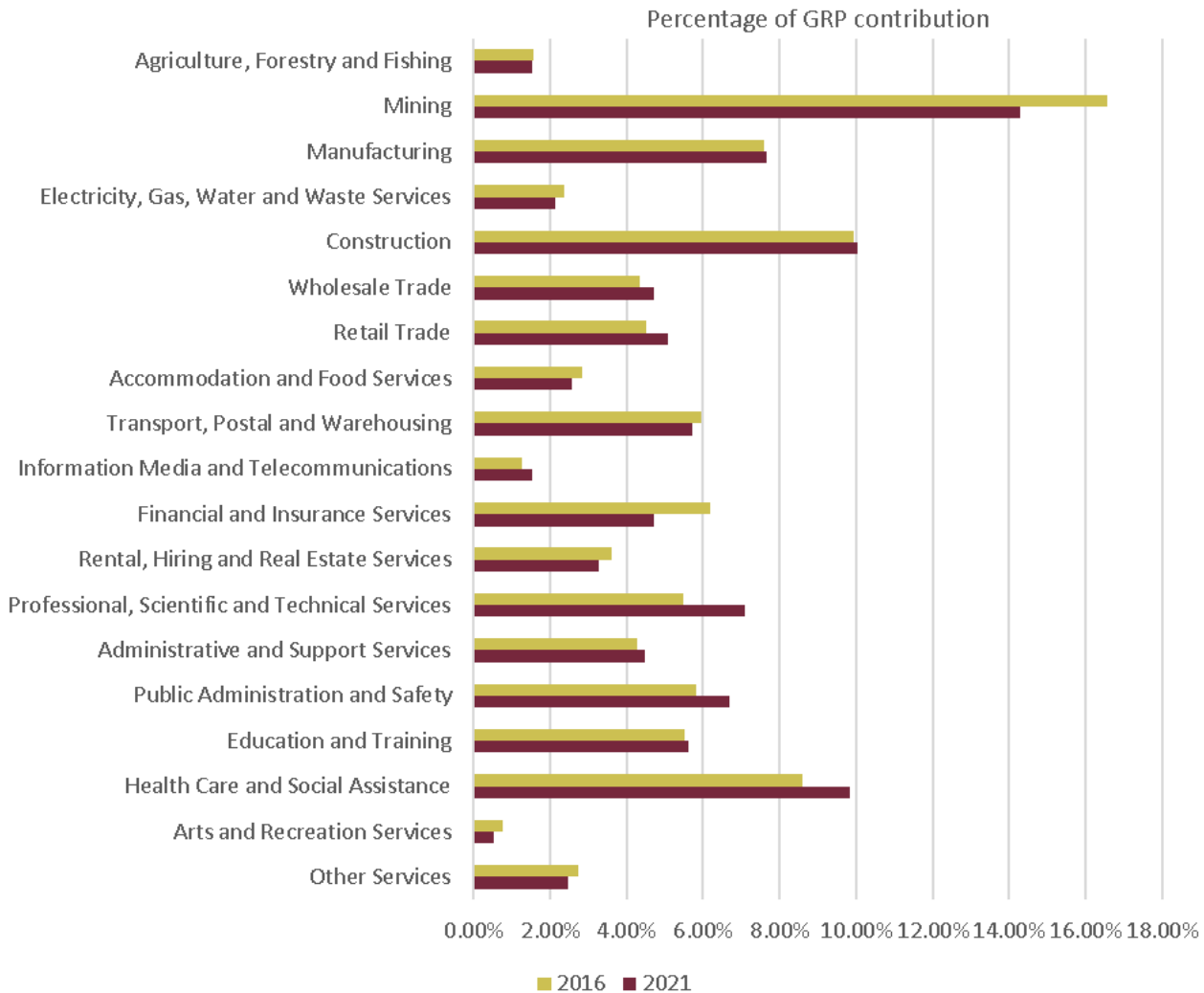


Figure 19: Industry contribution to GRP, Hunter–Central Coast REZ, 2016 & 2021

Source: SGS Economics and Planning's Australian Economic Wellbeing GDP by Industry

Competitive strengths

The location quotient (LQ) analysis shown in Figure 20 provides some insight into the competitive strengths inherent in the Hunter–Central Coast REZ region's economic structure compared to New South Wales. As expected, the mining industry is very specialised as indicated by its position to the far right of the chart.

The LQ also indicates slight specialisations in the Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste services, and Health Care and Social Assistance. Health Care and Social Assistance is also the largest industry by jobs and grew the most between 2016 and 2021. The region is less specialised in knowledge intensive industries compared to New South Wales, though some of these sectors are emerging for the region (in the top left quadrant).

Research Institute and the Renewable Energy Integration Facility – CSIRO Energy Centre, which hosts a solar field and energy research hub.

There are relatively few RTOs offering training directly relevant to renewable energy industries, although there are some offering electrical safety courses. There is also a Master Builders Group Training Organisation targeted at the Hunter workforce, which promotes apprenticeships and traineeships across all levels of building and construction.

Appendix C: Online resources

These resources were referred to in the guidelines:

- [Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 \(NSW\) No 42 – NSW Legislation](#)
- [Australian Statistical Geography Standard \(ASGS\) Edition 3](#)
- [Corporations \(Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander\) Act 2006 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020 \(NSW\) No 44 – NSW Legislation](#)
- [Employment, Skills and Supply Chains: Renewable Energy in NSW \[PDF 4.6 MB\]](#)
- [Dates of significance to NSW Aboriginal people – NSW Department of Communities and Justice](#)
- [First Nations Guidelines](#)
- [First Nations Guidelines: Increasing income and employment opportunities from electricity infrastructure projects \[PDF 2.7 MB\]](#)
- [National Native Title Tribunal – Register](#)
- [Native Title Act 1993 \(Cth\)](#)