



An Australian Government Initiative



Regional  
Development  
*Australia*

**HUNTER**

# Settling in the Hunter:

Your Guide to Australian Life

March 2026

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the many lands and waterways that make up the Hunter Region, including the Awabakal, Wonnarua, Worimi, Darkinjung, Biripi and Geawegal peoples.

We recognise their deep and enduring connection to Country, to the land, waters, skies and all living things, and we honour the wisdom, strength and cultures that have been shared across these places for tens of thousands of years.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging, who continue to guide their communities and keep culture strong.

As people from many different places come to call the Hunter home, we celebrate the richness that comes from these diverse histories and cultures living side by side. We extend our respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who live, work and contribute to life in the Hunter Region.

# From Coast to Country: Discover Australia and the Hunter

Australia is a vast and vibrant country celebrated for its unique landscapes, diverse wildlife, and easy-going way of life. From its sunlit beaches and tropical rainforests to dynamic cities and wide-open outback, there's something here for everyone. Shaped by many cultures, Australia values equality, opportunity, and community spirit. Whether you've come to build a career, study, or seek new adventures, you'll find a safe and welcoming place to make your home.

Stretching from coastlines to valleys and rolling inland hills, the Hunter Region offers a welcoming blend of natural beauty and opportunity. The region combines vibrant communities with relaxed regional living, supported by a strong economy and access to quality education, health care, and community services. Residents enjoy a lifestyle that balances work, family, and leisure, with beaches, vineyards, national parks, and cultural experiences all close by. Known for its friendly, community minded people and rich cultural heritage, the Hunter Region offers a great start to life in Australia.



# Table of Contents

<b>Working and Building Your Future</b>	<b>5</b>
Tax & Super	5
Workplace Rights and Entitlements	5
Finding Employment	5
Money & Banking	6
Housing	7
Connecting Services	8
<b>Staying Healthy and Safe</b>	<b>9</b>
Emergency Services	9
Doctors and Health Services	9
Medicare	9
Public Hospitals	10
Private Health Insurance	11
Mental Health Support	11
Enjoying the Outdoors	12
<b>Everyday Life in the Hunter</b>	<b>16</b>
Getting Around	16
Shopping	17
Education & Schooling	19
Post Office	21
<b>Where to Find Help and Support</b>	<b>22</b>
Support Services	22
Settlement Guides	23
Useful Apps and Websites	24
<b>Getting to Know Your Local Area</b>	<b>26</b>
Joining Local Clubs and Groups	26
Staying up to Date With Local Events	26
Your Local Government Area (LGA)	27

# Working and Building Your Future

## Tax & Super

All workers in Australia are required to pay income tax, as well as having the right to superannuation payments from their employer. Tax is taken from your wage or salary by your employer and paid to the Australian Tax Office (ATO). Most people need to lodge a yearly tax return with the ATO to confirm they have paid to correct amount of tax.

Your Tax File Number (TFN) is a unique, personal identifier issued by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) to individuals and organisations. It's used to manage tax and superannuation records efficiently and securely. Having a TFN ensures that your income, tax, and superannuation contributions are correctly tracked and reported. Without one, you may end up paying higher tax rates, miss out on certain government benefits, or face delays in processing your tax returns. Protecting your TFN is also essential, as it helps prevent identity theft and misuse of your personal information.

To apply for a TFN visit [www.ato.gov.au/individuals-and-families/tax-file-number/apply-for-a-tfn](https://www.ato.gov.au/individuals-and-families/tax-file-number/apply-for-a-tfn)

For translating and interpreting service call 13 14 50 or visit [www.ato.gov.au/other-languages](https://www.ato.gov.au/other-languages)

Superannuation, often called super, is money set aside during your working life to help you live comfortably in retirement. Your employer is required by law to pay a percentage of your earnings into a super fund, which is then invested to grow over time. Superannuation is important because it provides financial security when you stop working and reduces your reliance on the Age Pension.

For more information about tax and super visit [www.ato.gov.au/individuals-and-families](https://www.ato.gov.au/individuals-and-families)

## Workplace Rights and Entitlements

Australia has strong laws, generally applied equally to anyone working in Australia. In addition to ensuring they comply with workplace laws, employers engaging foreign workers must also ensure they comply with immigration laws. The Fair Work Ombudsman provides information about rights and entitlements, as well as setting out the National Employment Standards.

For more information visit:

[www.fairwork.gov.au/find-help-for/visa-holders-migrants](https://www.fairwork.gov.au/find-help-for/visa-holders-migrants)

[www.fairwork.gov.au/employment-conditions/national-employment-standards](https://www.fairwork.gov.au/employment-conditions/national-employment-standards)

## Finding Employment

Finding a new job can be an overwhelming experience. It is common in Australia for jobs to be posted online or be filled using a recruitment agency.

## Employment Websites

The below websites make searching for a job easier by gathering lists of job openings in one place:

Seek: [www.seek.com.au](http://www.seek.com.au)

Indeed: [www.au.indeed.com](http://www.au.indeed.com)

LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/jobs](http://www.linkedin.com/jobs)

## Recruitment Agencies

There are many local recruitment agencies that can help match your skills with available jobs. Recruitment agencies include but are not limited to:

### **Hudson, Newcastle**

5/2 Dick Street, Newcastle

(02) 4927 2220

[www.au.hudson.com](http://www.au.hudson.com)

### **People Fusion**

Level 1, 169-173 King Street, Newcastle

(02) 4929 1666

[www.peoplefusion.com.au](http://www.peoplefusion.com.au)

### **Verve Partners**

Suite 2C/54 Clyde Street, Hamilton North

(02) 4967 5236

[www.vervepartners.com.au](http://www.vervepartners.com.au)

### **Recruit Personnel**

Unit 2, Level 1, 14 Bulwer Street, Maitland

(02) 4934 9900

[www.recruitpersonnel.com.au](http://www.recruitpersonnel.com.au)

### **Core Staff**

2/6 Castlereagh Street, Singleton

(02) 5504 4500

[www.corestaff.com.au](http://www.corestaff.com.au)

### **Hays, Newcastle**

Suite 301A, Level 3, 251 Wharf Road, Newcastle

(02) 4925 3663

[www.hays.com.au](http://www.hays.com.au)

### **ASR Recruitment**

Level 1, 122A Hannell Street, Wickham

(02) 4088 8150

[www.asr.com.au](http://www.asr.com.au)

### **Hunter Recruitment Group**

19 Church Steet, Maitland

(02) 4936 6537

[www.hunterrecruitmentgroup.com.au](http://www.hunterrecruitmentgroup.com.au)

### **Rarekind, Hunter Valley**

2/162 John Street, Singleton

(02) 6572 6700

[www.rarekind.com.au](http://www.rarekind.com.au)

### **Harvey Recruitment**

Suite 3/2 Market Street, Muswellbrook

(02) 6541 0426

[www.hrecruitment.com.au](http://www.hrecruitment.com.au)

## Money & Banking

Australia's national currency is the Australian Dollar (AUD, \$), divided into 100 cents. Even though cards are widely accepted, it can be useful to carry some cash on you. Coins currently in circulation include 5, 10, 20, and 50 cent as well as \$1 and \$2. Notes currently in circulation include \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, and \$100.

For more information visit

[www.ramint.gov.au/collect/national-coin-collection/circulating-coins](http://www.ramint.gov.au/collect/national-coin-collection/circulating-coins)

[www.banknotes.rba.gov.au/australias-banknotes/banknotes-in-circulation/](http://www.banknotes.rba.gov.au/australias-banknotes/banknotes-in-circulation/)

## Setting up a Bank Account

Most Australians keep their money in banks, building societies or credit unions. Your income is usually paid directly into a personal bank account. Many people use debit cards linked to their accounts for everyday purchases and for taking out cash.

To set up a bank account in Australia, you will require 100 points of identification. Some documents are worth more than others, so it's important to check with your chosen bank which documents they require.

The major four banks in Australia are:

CommBank	<a href="http://www.commbank.com.au">www.commbank.com.au</a>	ANZ	<a href="http://www.anz.com.au/personal">www.anz.com.au/personal</a>
NAB	<a href="http://www.nab.com.au">www.nab.com.au</a>	Westpac	<a href="http://www.westpac.com.au">www.westpac.com.au</a>

Hunter Region based banking institutions include, but are not limited to:

Greater bank – [www.greater.com.au](http://www.greater.com.au)

Newcastle Perm – [www.newcastlepermanent.com.au](http://www.newcastlepermanent.com.au)

The Mutual – [www.themutual.com.au](http://www.themutual.com.au)

For more information on opening a bank account as a non-resident visit [www.finder.com.au/bank-accounts/foreigners-open-a-bank-account-in-australia](http://www.finder.com.au/bank-accounts/foreigners-open-a-bank-account-in-australia)

## Housing

Whether you're new to the Hunter or simply looking for a change, there are plenty of housing options to suit every lifestyle and stage of life.

### Temporary accommodation

Temporary accommodation can be helpful if you need somewhere to stay while looking for a longer term home. The below are some good places to start:

[www.stayz.com.au](http://www.stayz.com.au)

[www.airbnb.com.au](http://www.airbnb.com.au)

[www.booking.com](http://www.booking.com)

### Renting or Purchasing a Home

Renting gives you flexibility and fewer upfront costs, plus you don't have to worry about maintenance or repairs. It's great if you like to keep your options open or aren't ready to settle down just yet. Buying, on the other hand, can be a smart long-term move. You're building equity, putting down roots, and creating a space that's truly your own. The below websites list properties available for both rental and sale:

[www.domain.com.au](http://www.domain.com.au)

[www.realestate.com.au](http://www.realestate.com.au)

[www.allhomes.com.au](http://www.allhomes.com.au)

For information on your rights and responsibilities as a tenant, as well as how renting property in NSW works, visit [www.tenants.org.au](http://www.tenants.org.au)

# Connecting Services

If you are buying or renting a house, you will need to ensure services such as power, water, and internet are connected and billed correctly.

## Energy

Energy supply is not automatically connected when you move in, so it's important to arrange this before your move-in date to avoid arriving to a home with no power. Most energy retailers can organise a same-day or next-day connection, though you may need to be present if the property requires a meter reading or manual activation.

To compare energy plans visit [www.energymadeeasy.gov.au/](http://www.energymadeeasy.gov.au/) or [www.canstar.com.au/energy/](http://www.canstar.com.au/energy/)

## Water

Water services will ordinarily be connected; you will just need to ensure Hunter Water have contact information for you or set up an account. If you are renting, you will generally only be responsible for water usage charges, while owning your home will come with service fees as well.

For more information visit [www.hunterwater.com.au/accounts-and-billing](http://www.hunterwater.com.au/accounts-and-billing)  
For simplified Fact Sheets visit [www.hunterwater.com.au/accounts-and-billing/easy-english-documents](http://www.hunterwater.com.au/accounts-and-billing/easy-english-documents)

## Internet

Home internet in the Hunter region is mostly delivered through the National Broadband Network (NBN). Most suburbs already have NBN access, and many areas are currently being upgraded to faster fibre connections. When moving into a new home, it's helpful to ask the landlord or agent what type of connection is available at that address. Once you know the connection type, you can compare plans from national providers as well as local companies based in the Hunter, many of which offer personalised customer service or region-specific packages.

For help comparing options visit [www.finder.com.au/broadband-plans](http://www.finder.com.au/broadband-plans)

## Phone

Mobile coverage across much of the Hunter is generally strong, with all major Australian mobile networks (Telstra, Optus and Vodafone/TPG) operating in the area. A prepaid SIM card allows use of a phone immediately without signing a long-term contract. There are also many low-cost mobile providers known as Mobile Virtual Network Operators (MVNOs), which use the major networks but often offer cheaper plans and flexible options.

Compare options at [www.finder.com.au/mobile-plans](http://www.finder.com.au/mobile-plans) or [www.canstar.com.au/mobile-phone/](http://www.canstar.com.au/mobile-phone/)

# Staying Healthy and Safe

## Emergency Services

In Australia, the **emergency services number is 000 (triple zero)**. This can be called from any phone in Australia for free to contact Police, Ambulance and Fire services.

### Police

If a life-threatening crime is in progress, or an offender is still in the area, **call 000**. For non-urgent matters you should phone 13 14 44 or your local police station. Some crimes can also be reported online via [www.police.nsw.gov.au](http://www.police.nsw.gov.au). Police assistance is free.

### Ambulance

If someone is seriously injured, unwell, or in need of urgent medical help, **call 000**. Trained operators will assess the situation and dispatch an ambulance if needed. Ambulance emergency assistance is free to call, however a fee may be charged for using an ambulance. Medicare does not cover ambulance costs, but some private health insurance does.

### Fire Brigade

If there is a fire, hazardous gas or chemical emergency, or you see smoke and lives or property are in danger, **call 000**. Do not try to handle large or spreading fires on your own. For general fire safety information, community education, or non-emergency enquiries, contact your local NSW Fire and Rescue station or visit [www.fire.nsw.gov.au](http://www.fire.nsw.gov.au). Fire assistance and emergency response are free services.

State Emergency Services (SES) can also be contact for help during natural disasters such as flooding and storms on 132 500, visit [www.ses.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ses.nsw.gov.au) for more information

## Doctors and Health Services

In Australia, it is common for people to have a General Practitioner (GP) as their first contact for non-emergency health and medical matters. GPs typically practice in offices or clinics, rather than hospitals. For help finding a GP, visit [www.hotdoc.com.au](http://www.hotdoc.com.au).

For 24-hour, non-emergency health advice you can also contact HealthDirect on 1800 022 222 or visit [www.healthdirect.gov.au](http://www.healthdirect.gov.au)

## Medicare

Medicare is Australia's universal health insurance scheme, providing access to a wide range of medical services and helping cover the cost of essential health care. It allows eligible people to

receive free or subsidised treatment from doctors, specialists, and other health professionals, as well as reduced costs for hospital care and prescription medicines under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

You may be able to enrol in Medicare if you are an Australian permanent resident, applying for permanent residency, or a temporary resident covered by a ministerial order. Some visitors from countries that have a Reciprocal Health Care Agreement with Australia may also be eligible for Medicare benefits during their stay.

For more information visit [www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/medicare](http://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/medicare)

## Public Hospitals

### **Belmont Hospital**

16 Croudace Bay Road  
Belmont NSW 2280  
(02) 4923 2000

[www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/nsw-health/service-directory/belmont-hospital](http://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/nsw-health/service-directory/belmont-hospital)

### **John Hunter Hospital Emergency**

Lookout Road  
New Lambton Heights NSW 2305  
(02) 4921 3000

[www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/nsw-health/service-directory/john-hunter-hospital](http://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/nsw-health/service-directory/john-hunter-hospital)

### **Maitland Hospital**

51 Metford Road  
Metford NSW 2323  
(02) 4087 1000

[www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/nsw-health/service-directory/maitland-hospital](http://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/nsw-health/service-directory/maitland-hospital)

### **Singleton Hospital**

Dangar Road  
Singleton NSW 2330  
(02) 6571 9222

[www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/nsw-health/service-directory/singleton-hospital](http://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/nsw-health/service-directory/singleton-hospital)

### **Cessnock Hospital**

24 View Street  
Cessnock NSW 2325  
(02) 4991 0555

[www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/nsw-health/service-directory/cessnock-hospital](http://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/nsw-health/service-directory/cessnock-hospital)

### **Kurri Kurri Hospital**

434 Lang Street  
Kurri Kurri NSW 2327  
(02) 4936 3200

[www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/nsw-health/service-directory/kurri-kurri-hospital](http://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/nsw-health/service-directory/kurri-kurri-hospital)

### **Muswellbrook Hospital**

Brentwood Street  
Muswellbrook NSW 2333  
(02) 6542 2000

[www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/nsw-health/service-directory/muswellbrook-hospital](http://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/nsw-health/service-directory/muswellbrook-hospital)

### **Tomaree Hospital**

2 Trevally Street  
Nelson Bay NSW 2315  
(02) 4984 0700

[www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/nsw-health/service-directory/tomaree-hospital](http://www.nsw.gov.au/departments-and-agencies/nsw-health/service-directory/tomaree-hospital)

# Private Health Insurance

Some people choose to take out private health insurance for additional coverage and flexibility when it comes to health care. Depending on your visa, it may also be a requirement to have private health insurance. Private health insurance can help with the cost of services not fully covered by Medicare, such as dental, optical, physiotherapy, and ambulance transport. It may also give you shorter waiting times for elective surgery.

There are two main types of cover: Hospital cover, which helps pay for treatment as a private patient in hospital, and Extras (or General) cover, which contributes to costs for services outside of hospital care. You can choose to have one or both types depending on your needs.

For more information, visit [www.health.gov.au/topics/private-health-insurance](http://www.health.gov.au/topics/private-health-insurance)

To compare policies, visit [www.privatehealth.gov.au/dynamic/search/start](http://www.privatehealth.gov.au/dynamic/search/start)

# Mental Health Support

Moving to a new country or area can be exciting, but it can also feel overwhelming at times. It's completely normal to feel this way. In Australia, there are many free and confidential services available to support your wellbeing, including options for people from multicultural backgrounds.

## NSW Mental Health Line – 1800 011 511 (24/7)

The NSW Mental Health Line connects you with trained mental health professionals any time of day or night. You can call for support, advice, or help accessing local mental health services. Interpreters are available through the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National).

## Lifeline – 24/7 Crisis Support

If you are feeling overwhelmed or in crisis, Lifeline is available every day, at any time, with all conversations being kept confidential.

- Phone: 13 11 14
- Text: 0477 13 11 14
- Online Chat: Visit [www.lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat/](http://www.lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat/)

## 1800RESPECT

If you or someone you know is experiencing, or at risk of, domestic, family, or sexual violence, 1800RESPECT is there for you. All conversations are free, confidential, and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- Phone: 1800 737 732
- Text: 0458 737 732
- Online Chat: Visit [www.1800respect.org.au/](http://www.1800respect.org.au/)

## Embrace Multicultural Mental Health

Embrace Multicultural Mental Health supports the mental health and wellbeing of people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. It aims to make Australia's mental health system more accessible, culturally safe, and responsive to the needs of migrants and refugees.

Embrace is especially helpful for new arrivals who may be unfamiliar with Australia's health system or who prefer information in their own language. The goal is to ensure that everyone, no matter where they come from, can access compassionate, culturally sensitive mental health support. For more information visit [www.embracementalhealth.org.au/](http://www.embracementalhealth.org.au/)

Translated information can be found at [Embrace - Translated Information](#)

### Looking After Your Wellbeing as a New Arrival

Moving to a new country or area is a big life change. These tips may help during your transition:

- Stay connected – Talking with family, friends, or community groups can help reduce feelings of isolation.
- Join local activities – Community centres, libraries, and cultural groups often run free social events.
- Keep a routine – Regular sleep, meals, and activities can help you feel settled.
- Ask for help early – Reaching out for support is normal and encouraged in Australia.
- Look after your physical health – Exercise, fresh air, and a balanced diet contribute to better mental wellbeing.

## Enjoying the Outdoors

Australia's natural environment is incredibly beautiful, offering stunning beaches, unique wildlife, and diverse landscapes. While exploring these landscapes can be an unforgettable experience, it's important to do so with awareness and care to protect yourself, and the delicate ecosystems and wildlife that make Australia so distinctive.

### Water Safety

The hunter region boasts a range of beautiful water ways to experience, from beaches and lakes to rivers and pools.

If you or your family don't already know how to swim, taking lessons is a great way to ensure you learn key skills. Visit [www.swim.org.au/find-a-swim-school](http://www.swim.org.au/find-a-swim-school) to find lessons near you. You should always supervise children closely around water, even if they can swim.

When visiting the beach, it's important to always pay attention to safety signs and flags, which alert you to local hazards such as strong currents, marine life, or unstable surf conditions. Lifeguards are there to keep everyone safe, so make sure to always follow their directions. Only swim at patrolled beaches, and always stay between the red and yellow flags, where lifeguards are watching the water. Conditions can change quickly, and even experienced swimmers can get caught in rips or strong waves. Before entering the water, take a moment to observe the surf, check for warning flags, and plan where you'll swim.

For tips on how to stay safe at the beach, including information about swimming between the flags, how to spot a rip current, and different types of waves visit [www.beachsafe.org.au/surf-safety](http://www.beachsafe.org.au/surf-safety).

Rivers, lakes, and lagoons are wonderful places to cool off and enjoy nature, but they can also be unpredictable, just like the ocean. Hidden currents, sudden drop-offs, submerged rocks, and changing water conditions can make swimming or wading risky, even for strong swimmers. Always check local conditions before entering the water, never dive into unknown depths, and avoid swimming alone. If you're boating, kayaking, or paddleboarding, always wear a life jacket and keep an eye out for other water users and potential hazards.

For tips on how to enjoy them safely visit [www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/safety/water-activities/rivers-lakes-lagoons](http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/safety/water-activities/rivers-lakes-lagoons).

## Wildlife Safety

Australia is home to an incredible variety of wildlife, from colourful birds and curious marsupials to fascinating reptiles and insects. While most encounters are harmless, it's important to stay alert and know how to respond safely.

During spring, some native birds such as magpies and plovers may swoop to protect their nests, giving them space and avoiding nesting areas helps keep both you and the birds safe.

While Australia is home to many spider and snake species, encounters resulting in bites are uncommon. If bitten, try to stay calm and still. For snake bites, apply a pressure immobilisation bandage and seek medical help immediately. For spider bites, first aid depends on the species; keep the bite area clean, use a cold pack to reduce pain, and if you suspect a funnel-web or redback spider bite, call emergency services right away.

For more information on bites and stings, visit [www.stjohn.org.au/fact-sheet/bites-and-stings-quick-guide/](http://www.stjohn.org.au/fact-sheet/bites-and-stings-quick-guide/)

If you find a sick, injured, or orphaned native animal, contact:

**WIRES** for advice and assistance 24/7 on 1300 094 737, or visit [www.wires.org.au](http://www.wires.org.au)

**Hunter Wildlife Rescue** for rescue 24/7 on 0418 628 483 or visit [www.hunterwildlife.org.au](http://www.hunterwildlife.org.au)

If you come across injured wildlife, there are simple steps you can take to help, while keeping yourself and the animal safe.

For your safety, do not approach snakes, goannas, bats, large kangaroos or wallabies, wombats, koalas, or birds of prey. These animals require specialist handling and must be rescued by trained wildlife carers. Instead, keep people and pets away, monitor the animal from a safe distance, and wait for help.

If it's safe to do so, smaller animals such as birds, lizards, turtles, or possums can be gently contained using a towel and placed in a ventilated box lined with a towel. Keep the animal in a quiet, dark place until help arrives, and do not offer food or water unless advised by WIRES or a vet.

All injured wildlife should be seen by a vet as soon as possible; most clinics treat native animals free of charge. Always use gloves or protective clothing when handling wildlife and wash your hands thoroughly afterwards.

## Sun Safety

Australia's sun can be extremely strong, even on cool or cloudy days, so it's important to protect yourself whenever you're outdoors. Overexposure to UV radiation can cause sunburn, skin damage, and increase the risk of skin cancer, but with a few simple precautions, you can stay safe while enjoying the sunshine.

Remember the "Slip, Slop, Slap, Seek, Slide" rule:

- **Slip** on protective clothing,
- **Slop** on broad-spectrum SPF 30+ sunscreen,
- **Slap** on a wide-brimmed hat,
- **Seek** shade whenever possible, and
- **Slide** on sunglasses to protect your eyes.

Try to plan outdoor activities for the early morning or late afternoon, when UV levels are lower, and always check the daily UV index before heading out.

For more information on staying sun safe, visit [www.cancercouncil.com.au/cancer-prevention/sun-protection](http://www.cancercouncil.com.au/cancer-prevention/sun-protection)

## Weather

The Hunter Region experiences a mix of coastal, valley, and highland weather, with warm summers, mild winters, and varying conditions across the area. While the climate is generally pleasant, it's important to be prepared for sudden changes, especially in rural or elevated areas where storms, fog, or ice can occur.

During storms, stay indoors and avoid flooded roads, creeks, or low-lying areas. Never attempt to drive through floodwater and keep clear of fallen trees and powerlines. When driving in heavy fog, slow down, use your headlights on low beam, and increase your following distance. In colder months, be aware that ice and frost can form on roads in the Upper Hunter and highland areas, take extra care when driving early in the morning or at night.

Before heading out, always check the latest weather forecast and road conditions. For up-to-date information, visit [www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au).

During severe weather events, always follow advice from NSW SES. Call the NSW SES on 132 500 for storm and flood assistance.

If you have a loss of power following a storm or severe weather event, you can report it or check for updates by visiting [www.ausgrid.com.au/Outages/Current-Outages](http://www.ausgrid.com.au/Outages/Current-Outages).

## Natural Disasters

Like many areas of Australia, the Hunter Region can experience a range of natural hazards, including bushfires, floods, storms, and heatwaves. Staying informed and prepared is essential for your safety, as well as the safety of others.

To check for warnings and alerts visit [www.bom.gov.au/weather-and-climate/warnings-and-alerts](http://www.bom.gov.au/weather-and-climate/warnings-and-alerts) or [www.abc.net.au/emergency/incidentsearch/australia](http://www.abc.net.au/emergency/incidentsearch/australia)

Throughout bushfire season (typically spring and summer), always check local fire danger ratings and alerts before heading outdoors. Avoid bushland areas on days of extreme or catastrophic fire danger, following instructions from emergency services. If you live in an area prone to bushfires, you should have a personal bushfire survival plan with evacuation routes and emergency contacts ready. For more information and tips on what should be part of your plan, visit [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/bush-fire-survival-plan](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/bush-fire-survival-plan).

Floods and storms can develop quickly, so it's important to act with caution. Whenever possible, stay indoors during heavy rain, strong winds, or lightning storms. Keep clear of creeks, rivers, drains, and low-lying areas, as floodwaters can rise rapidly and be deceptively dangerous. Never drive, walk, or ride through floodwater, even if it appears shallow, it can sweep vehicles and people away. Listen to updates from the NSW SES and local authorities and have an emergency kit ready in case conditions worsen. For tips on what to include in your emergency kit visit [www.ses.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/emergency-kit](http://www.ses.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/emergency-kit).

During heatwaves, extreme temperatures can pose serious health risks, particularly for the elderly, young children, people with medical conditions, and pets. Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water and avoid alcohol or caffeine, which can increase dehydration. Limit strenuous outdoor activity, especially during the hottest part of the day (usually between 11 am and 4 pm), and seek shade or air-conditioned spaces when possible. Check on vulnerable family, friends, and neighbours, and ensure pets have access to water and cool shelter.

# Everyday Life in the Hunter

## Getting Around

### Driving

The Hunter Region is well connected by road, making it easy to travel within the region and to other parts of New South Wales. Major highways include:

- Pacific Motorway (M1): Connects Newcastle to Sydney.
- Hunter Expressway (M15): Links Newcastle to the western Hunter towns like Cessnock and Branxton.
- New England Highway (A15/M15): Runs north–south through the region to inland NSW.
- Golden Highway (B84): East–west route connecting the Hunter to inland areas.

Key destinations in the region include Newcastle, Cessnock, Pokolbin, Singleton, Muswellbrook, and Port Stephens. Capital cities such as Sydney, Canberra, Brisbane, and Melbourne are also accessible by road. Driving routes can be planned, as well as checking for traffic and fuel stops using apps like [Google Maps](#) and [Waze](#).

### Driver Licence & Vehicle Registration

To drive legally in Australia, you must hold a valid licence and use a registered vehicle. Temporary overseas visitors can drive on your overseas licence for up to six months. After that, you must apply for a temporary NSW licence. If you become a permanent resident of Australia, you may be able to transfer your overseas driver licence.

To find additional information about applying for a temporary licence visit [www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-for-a-nsw-licence-as-a-temporary-overseas-visitor](http://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-for-a-nsw-licence-as-a-temporary-overseas-visitor)

For further guidance on transferring an overseas licence, visit [www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/transfer-an-overseas-driver-licence](http://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/transfer-an-overseas-driver-licence)

If you would like to check your cars registration visit <https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/check-a-vehicle-registration>

#### **Tips for Safe Driving**

- Allow extra travel time on weekends and holidays, especially around wine regions and coastal areas.
- Fuel up before heading into rural or inland areas.
- Watch for wildlife on rural roads, especially at dawn and dusk.
- Stay informed about roadworks or traffic changes.

## Public Transport

Public transport is a safe, cost-effective, and sustainable way to travel around the Hunter, particularly if you don't have access to a car. Transport for NSW (TfNSW) operates train, bus, light rail and ferry services throughout the region. You can find route details, timetables, and fare information at [transportnsw.info](https://transportnsw.info).

The Hunter Line train connects major centres such as Newcastle, Maitland, Singleton, and Dungog, while the CCN line connects Newcastle to Sydney. Bus services link smaller communities with key destinations such as train stations and shopping areas. Many buses in the Hunter now include real-time tracking, allowing passengers to see when a bus is arriving and how full it is. Journeys can be planned using the TfNSW Trip Planner at [transportnsw.info/trip#/trip](https://transportnsw.info/trip#/trip), which provides route options, travel times, and live updates.

In NSW, travel on trains, buses, ferries, and light rail is paid for using the Opal system. You can either use an Opal card or a contactless payment method (such as a debit or credit card, smartphone, or smartwatch), however some concession rates are only available with an Opal Card. Opal cards are sold at many convenience stores, newsagents, and train stations. You can load money onto the card, and the system automatically calculates your fare and deducts it from your balance. Always remember to tap on and off at the Opal readers when starting and finishing your trip. Daily, weekly, and Sunday travel caps apply, helping regular travellers save money over time.

## Airport

Newcastle Airport is located in the Port Stephens Local Government Area at Williamtown, approximately a 30-minute drive from the Newcastle CBD. The airport serves as the region's major air-gateway for both domestic and now international travel, linking the Hunter with not only Australia but the world.

It offers a range of convenient transport options for travellers, including public buses, taxis, rideshare pick-ups and short-term and long-term car parking close to the terminal. Dedicated pick-up and drop-off areas make it easy to meet arriving passengers, and the airport's parking facilities include options to suit short visits or longer stays, with accessible spaces and clear signage to help visitors find the right lot.

## Shopping

As you settle into your new home, you'll find that shopping for everyday essentials is easy and accessible. This guide will help you locate groceries, household items, and local shopping centres where you can explore, relax, and enjoy your new community.

### Groceries

You'll find a wide range of supermarkets across Australia offering fresh food, pantry items, and weekly specials. Use the links below to find the store closest to you:

<b>ALDI</b>	<a href="https://www.store.aldi.com.au/storelocator">www.store.aldi.com.au/storelocator</a>	<b>IGA</b>	<a href="https://www.iga.com.au/stores/#view=storelocator">www.iga.com.au/stores/#view=storelocator</a>
<b>Coles</b>	<a href="https://www.coles.com.au/find-stores">www.coles.com.au/find-stores</a>	<b>Woolworths</b>	<a href="https://www.woolworths.com.au/shop/storelocator">www.woolworths.com.au/shop/storelocator</a>
<b>FoodWorks</b>	<a href="https://www.shop.foodworks.com.au/">www.shop.foodworks.com.au/</a>		

## Homewares & Household Essentials

Need affordable items to set up your new home? These stores offer affordable homewares, kitchen items, bedding, electronics, and more:

<b>BIG W</b>	<a href="http://www.bigw.com.au/store-finder">www.bigw.com.au/store-finder</a>
<b>Fantastic Furniture</b>	<a href="http://www.fantasticfurniture.com.au/store-finder">www.fantasticfurniture.com.au/store-finder</a>
<b>Ikea*</b>	<a href="http://www.ikea.com/au/en/stores/">www.ikea.com/au/en/stores/</a>
<b>Kmart</b>	<a href="http://www.kmart.com.au/store-locator/">www.kmart.com.au/store-locator/</a>
<b>Temple &amp; Webster**</b>	<a href="http://www.templeandwebster.com.au/">www.templeandwebster.com.au/</a>

\* No Hunter-based store but shop online for delivery or Newcastle pick up location

\*\* Online only

## Shopping Centres

Looking for a day out, somewhere to meet friends, or a place to explore? These nearby shopping centres offer retail stores, cafes, restaurants, cinemas, and community events:

<b>Charlestown Square</b>	<a href="http://www.charlestownsquare.com.au/">www.charlestownsquare.com.au/</a>
<b>Glendale City Centre</b>	<a href="http://www.glendalecitycentre.com.au/">www.glendalecitycentre.com.au/</a>
<b>Muswellbrook Marketplace</b>	<a href="http://www.muswellbrookmarketplace.com.au/">www.muswellbrookmarketplace.com.au/</a>
<b>Stockland Green Hills</b>	<a href="http://www.stockland.com.au/shopping-centres/centres/stockland-green-hills">www.stockland.com.au/shopping-centres/centres/stockland-green-hills</a>
<b>The Levee Maitland</b>	<a href="http://www.thelevee.com.au/">www.thelevee.com.au/</a>
<b>Westfield Kotara</b>	<a href="http://www.westfield.com.au/kotara">www.westfield.com.au/kotara</a>

## Second-hand shopping

Are you looking for affordable furniture, clothes, or household items? Second-hand shopping is a great way to save money, find unique pieces, and reduce waste. Shopping second-hand can also be a fun way to discover local communities and support charities at the same time. Below are just some of the wide range of options:

<b>Gumtree</b> (Online marketplace)	<a href="http://www.gumtree.com.au/">www.gumtree.com.au/</a>
<b>Lifeline</b>	<a href="http://www.lifelinedirect.org.au/hunter/shops">www.lifelinedirect.org.au/hunter/shops</a>
<b>Salvation Army</b>	<a href="http://www.salvationarmy.org.au/locations/">www.salvationarmy.org.au/locations/</a>
<b>Vinnies</b>	<a href="http://www.vinnies.org.au/vinnies-shops">www.vinnies.org.au/vinnies-shops</a>

## Markets

Markets are a fun way to explore local culture, find fresh food, and discover unique handmade goods. Farmers' markets offer fresh fruit, vegetables, dairy, meat, and artisanal products directly from local producers, while makers' markets focus on handmade or locally crafted items like jewellery, homewares, and art. Markets are also a great way to meet people and experience the local community.

### **Earth Market Maitland**

Fresh, locally grown and seasonal product

[www.thelevee.com.au/event/earth-market-maitland/](http://www.thelevee.com.au/event/earth-market-maitland/)

### **Maitland Community Markets**

Fresh produce, handmade crafts, food and local goods; first Sunday of each month

[www.maitlandshowground.com.au/attractions-events/markets/](http://www.maitlandshowground.com.au/attractions-events/markets/)

### **Newcastle City Farmers Market**

Farm-fresh produce, baked goods, organic items; every Sunday

[www.newcastlecityfarmersmarket.com.au/](http://www.newcastlecityfarmersmarket.com.au/)

### **Homegrown Markets**

Handmade, eco-conscious goods; various locations across the region

[www.homegrownmarkets.com.au/](http://www.homegrownmarkets.com.au/)

### **Markets in Hunter Wine Country**

Country markets with local growers and artisans; various locations across the Hunter Valley

[www.winecountry.com.au/events/markets-in-the-hunter-valley](http://www.winecountry.com.au/events/markets-in-the-hunter-valley)

### **Olive Tree Markets**

Art and design markets

[www.theolivetreemarket.com.au/](http://www.theolivetreemarket.com.au/)

## Education & Schooling

If you're moving into the Hunter Region with children or planning your own further study, you'll be pleased to know there are strong schooling and training options from primary school right through to adult education.

### Enrolling children in school

In Australia, public schools are government-funded and generally low-cost to attend, enrolling students based on local catchment areas. Private schools charge fees and may have religious or specialised educational philosophies, with more flexibility in admissions and additional programs or facilities. Both types of schools follow the Australian Curriculum and offer quality education, but costs, entry requirements, and school culture can differ.

For public schooling, the NSW Department of Education (DE) offers full guidance on how to choose and enrol in a government school in NSW. For more information, visit [education.nsw.gov.au/schooling/parents-and-carers](http://education.nsw.gov.au/schooling/parents-and-carers) or visit [schoolfinder.education.nsw.gov.au/](http://schoolfinder.education.nsw.gov.au/) to get started finding a school. DE International run a Temporary Residents Program, designed for overseas families travelling to Australia. The program offers advice and support to temporary residents looking to enrol in school. For more information visit [deinternational.nsw.edu.au/study-options/study-programs/temporary-residents](http://deinternational.nsw.edu.au/study-options/study-programs/temporary-residents).

For private schooling, there is a comprehensive directory of independent and private schools in NSW, so you can research faith-based, independent and other non-government options. To start your search visit [privateschoolsdirectory.com.au/private-schools-in-nsw](http://privateschoolsdirectory.com.au/private-schools-in-nsw).

## Checklist: Enrolling Children in School (Public or Private)

1. Identify your child's school options
  - Visit the NSW DE's [Find a Public School](#) tool to locate schools near your home.
  - If you're interested in a private or independent school, search the [private schools directory](#).
2. Check eligibility and visa requirements
  - Families on temporary visas should review the [DE International Temporary Residents Program](#) to understand eligibility, fees, and required documents.
  - Permanent residents and citizens can enrol directly through their local school or via the DE's online forms.
3. Prepare required documents, you'll usually need:
  - Your child's passport or birth certificate
  - Visa documents (for non-citizens)
  - Proof of address (e.g. utility bill or lease)
  - Immunisation history and previous school reports (if applicable)
4. Contact the school
  - Reach out to the school directly to confirm enrolment dates and whether they have a placement available.
5. Submit your application
  - Submit your completed enrolment form and supporting documents to the chosen school or DE International
  - Wait for confirmation of acceptance and starting date.
6. Get ready for the school year
  - Purchase uniforms, school supplies, and Opal cards for transport if needed.
  - Attend orientation sessions or meet the teacher days to help your child settle in.

## Adult Learning & Further Education

In Australia, adult learning and further education are delivered through a mix of public universities, government-funded vocational training providers, and community education organisations. Each pathway offers opportunities for upskilling, career change, professional development, or personal enrichment, with differences in cost, entry requirements, course length, and learning style.

The University of Newcastle offers undergraduate, postgraduate, and short-course study options designed for adults returning to education or building on existing qualifications. Many programs offer flexible study modes, including online and part-time options.

TAFE NSW is a major provider of vocational education and training (VET) across the state. It offers practical, job-ready courses ranging from certificates to diplomas, with many programs available online, on campus, or through blended delivery. TAFE NSW is widely recognised by industry for its hands-on teaching and direct employment pathways.

Atwea College (formerly WEA Hunter) is one of Australia's longest-running adult and community education providers. It delivers a wide range of accredited and non-accredited courses, from

foundation skills and vocational training to leisure and lifestyle classes. With a strong community focus and flexible schedules, Atwea is a popular choice for learners seeking accessible, supportive education options.

If you're interested in exploring adult learning options, you can visit:

- [The University of Newcastle](#): course information, entry requirements, and entry pathways.
- [TAFE NSW](#): detailed course listings, fee information, and enrolment guidance.
- [Atwea College](#): vocational and community course options with flexible delivery.

## Post Office

Australia Post is Australia's national postal and logistics service, connecting people, businesses, and communities across the country and around the world. It provides reliable mail delivery, parcel shipping, and express services, along with a wide range of retail offerings such as bill payments, banking services, identity verification, and passport applications. With an extensive network of post offices and delivery routes, Australia Post plays a vital role in supporting everyday communication, e-commerce, and essential services for Australians everywhere.

To find your local Australia Post office, visit <https://auspost.com.au/locate/>

# Where to Find Help and Support

## Support Services

### Adult Migrant English Program

The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) provides free English-language tuition for eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants. Under this program, you can access flexible classes, including face-to-face sessions, online learning, and volunteer tutor support. For families participating in AMEP, childcare is available through specific childcare centres. For example, at Mayfield in Newcastle, KU Children's Services operates a centre that supports AMEP families, allowing parents to attend English classes while their children are looked after.

To learn more visit [immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/settling-in-australia/amep/about-the-program](https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/settling-in-australia/amep/about-the-program)

For information on childcare visit [www.ku.com.au/childcare-centres/newcastle/mayfield-amep](https://www.ku.com.au/childcare-centres/newcastle/mayfield-amep)

### Translating and Interpreting Service

If you need language support beyond English, you can use the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National). This service offers interpreters over the phone or in person, helping you to communicate with government agencies, health services, or any other organisations where language might be a barrier.

Visit [www.tisnational.gov.au](https://www.tisnational.gov.au) for more information or call 131 450 to request an interpreter

### Multicultural Neighbourhood Centre

The Multicultural Neighbourhood Centre (MNC) in Newcastle is a welcoming hub for people from non-English speaking backgrounds. They provide a wide range of services: information and advice, advocacy, referrals, social groups, meeting spaces, and youth programs. Their support also includes free English classes and a playgroup for children aged 0–5, helping families build connections.

Visit [mncinc.org.au](https://mncinc.org.au) for more information

### Hunter Multicultural Communities

Hunter Multicultural Communities (HMC) is another key organisation serving the Hunter Region's culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. They offer settlement support, social programs, and community development work. HMC runs Multicultural Friendship Groups where people can come together, as well as providing practical support, including help with shopping, appointments, and companionship.

To find out more visit [huntermulticultural.org.au](https://huntermulticultural.org.au)

## Oasis Youth Program

If you're a young person or moving with youth, The Salvation Army's Oasis Youth program offers support, social activities, and a safe place to meet others. Their programs are designed to help young people from all backgrounds to feel welcome, get help with challenges, and build connections in the community.

More information can be found at [www.salvationarmy.org.au/oasisyouth/](http://www.salvationarmy.org.au/oasisyouth/)

## Welcome Experience

The Welcome Experience is a free NSW Government service designed to support essential workers and their families as they relocate to the Upper Hunter region, including Muswellbrook, Singleton and the Upper Hunter Shire. The program offers personalised, practical assistance, from connecting newcomers with housing, schools, services and community networks to helping them settle smoothly into regional life.

Learn more or register your interest at [www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au/the-welcome-experience/](http://www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au/the-welcome-experience/)

## Settlement Guides

### Department of Home Affairs

The Department of Home Affairs offers a comprehensive Settle in Australia guide designed especially for newly arrived migrants, humanitarian entrants, and their sponsors. This resource provides essential information on living in Australia, from understanding your visa conditions to accessing housing, education, health care, and work. Through the Department's website, you can also find links to local settlement services, government supports, and other trusted organisations that help you build your life in your new home.

Visit [immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/settling-in-australia/settle-in-australia/overview](http://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/settling-in-australia/settle-in-australia/overview) to find out more

### Australia Explained

SBS's *Australia Explained* is a free, multilingual resource designed to support new migrants as they settle into life in Australia. The content is available in more than 50 languages, and is delivered via articles, podcasts, and videos.

The topics covered are wide-ranging and practical, including housing, health and lifestyle, jobs and money, education, Australian laws, emergency essentials, and more. The aim is to help newcomers understand how things work in Australian society and build a strong sense of belonging.

You can access this in your preferred language by visiting [www.sbs.com.au/language/english/en/australia-explained-language-list](http://www.sbs.com.au/language/english/en/australia-explained-language-list)

# Useful Apps and Websites

## Emergency, Health & Safety

Emergency Services (Police, Fire, Ambulance) – Call **000 (triple zero)**

Police Assistance (Non-emergency) – Call 131 444 or visit [www.police.nsw.gov.au/contact\\_us](http://www.police.nsw.gov.au/contact_us)

NSW SES (Floods, storms, roof damage) – Call 132 500 or visit [www.ses.nsw.gov.au/contact-nsw-ses](http://www.ses.nsw.gov.au/contact-nsw-ses)

Poisons Information Centre – Call 13 11 26 or visit [www.poisonsinfo.nsw.gov.au/](http://www.poisonsinfo.nsw.gov.au/)

HealthDirect (24/7 health advice) – Call 1800 022 222 or visit [www.healthdirect.gov.au/](http://www.healthdirect.gov.au/)

NSW Mental Health Line – Call 1800 011 511

Lifeline 24/7 Crisis Support – Call 13 11 14, Text 0477 131 114 or visit [www.lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat/](http://www.lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat/)

1800RESPECT – Call 1800 737 732, Text 0458 737 732 or visit [www.1800respect.org.au/](http://www.1800respect.org.au/)

Hazards Near Me (Information/warnings) – [www.nsw.gov.au/emergency/](http://www.nsw.gov.au/emergency/) or search your app store

Weather Warnings and Alerts – [www.bom.gov.au/weather-and-climate/warnings-and-alerts](http://www.bom.gov.au/weather-and-climate/warnings-and-alerts)

SunSmart App (UV index & sun safety) – [www.sunsmart.com.au/resources/](http://www.sunsmart.com.au/resources/) or search your app store

BeachSafe App (Beach information) – [www.beachsafe.org.au](http://www.beachsafe.org.au) or search your app store

## Transport in the Hunter

Transport for NSW Trip Planner – [www.transportnsw.info](http://www.transportnsw.info)

Opal Travel (Manage Opal card) – [www.transportnsw.info/apps/opal-travel](http://www.transportnsw.info/apps/opal-travel) or search your app store

TripView (Trip planning and tracking) – [www.tripview.com.au/](http://www.tripview.com.au/) or search your app store

Moovit (Trip planning and tracking) – [www.moovitapp.com/](http://www.moovitapp.com/) or search your app store

NextThere (Nearest stops and next bus/train) – [www.nextthere.com/](http://www.nextthere.com/) or search your app store

Live Traffic NSW (Road closures & accidents) – [www.livetraffic.com](http://www.livetraffic.com) or search your app store

13cabs (Taxi services) – Call 132 227 or visit [book.13cabs.com.au/booking](http://book.13cabs.com.au/booking)

Uber (Ride sharing) – [www.uber.com/au/en/](http://www.uber.com/au/en/) or search your app store

## News & Local Information

ABC Newcastle – [www.abc.net.au/newcastle](http://www.abc.net.au/newcastle) or [www.abc.net.au/upperhunter](http://www.abc.net.au/upperhunter)

Newcastle Herald – [www.newcastleherald.com.au](http://www.newcastleherald.com.au)

NBN News – [www.nbnnews.com.au/hunter-news/](http://www.nbnnews.com.au/hunter-news/)

## Useful Everyday Apps

BOM Weather (Weather & rain radar) – [www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au) or search your app store

myGov (Access Medicare, Centrelink & ATO services) – [www.my.gov.au/en](http://www.my.gov.au/en) or search your app store

Service NSW (Digital licences and gov. services) – [www.service.nsw.gov.au/](http://www.service.nsw.gov.au/) or search your app store

MyAus (Settlement guidance) – [www.myausapp.com/](http://www.myausapp.com/) or search your app store

Banking – Most banks in Australia will have an app you can download to easily check your account on the go. Once you choose a bank, search your app store.

WhatsApp (Messaging and phone calls) – [www.whatsapp.com](http://www.whatsapp.com) or search your app store

Google Maps (live traffic and directions) – [www.google.com/maps](http://www.google.com/maps) or search your app store

Google Translate – [www.translate.google.com.au/](http://www.translate.google.com.au/) or search your app store

Waze (live traffic and directions) – [www.waze.com/en-GB/live-map](http://www.waze.com/en-GB/live-map) or search your app store

EasyPark (Metered parking) – [www.easypark.com/en-au](http://www.easypark.com/en-au) or search your app store

CellOPark (Metered parking) – [www.site.cellopark.com.au/](http://www.site.cellopark.com.au/) or search your app store

Fuel Check (Check fuel prices) – [www.fuelcheck.nsw.gov.au/app](http://www.fuelcheck.nsw.gov.au/app) or search your app store

Return and Earn (Refunds for container returns) – [www.returnandearn.org.au](http://www.returnandearn.org.au) or search your app store

# Getting to Know Your Local Area

## Joining Local Clubs and Groups

### Sports clubs & gyms

Getting involved in sport is a fun way to stay active and make friends. Local clubs offer a wide range of sports, with many welcoming beginners and social players. Gyms and fitness centres often run group workouts, classes and community challenges, which can be a friendly way to get to know others. Visit [www.sport.nsw.gov.au/find-a-sport](http://www.sport.nsw.gov.au/find-a-sport) to search sports or search online for gyms near you.

### Craft & hobby groups

If you enjoy knitting, sewing, painting, photography, or other hobbies, local craft groups or makerspaces can help you meet people with shared interests. Your local council's Community Directory page is a good place to start your search.

### Community & volunteer groups

Volunteering is a wonderful way to give back, learn more about your community, and meet locals. Community centres as well as charities often have volunteer opportunities, either as a one-off or on-going program. Visit [www.volunteering.com.au/resources-tools/find-a-volunteer-role/](http://www.volunteering.com.au/resources-tools/find-a-volunteer-role/) to browse volunteer opportunities, or contact groups and charities directly.

### Faith-based groups

A wide range of faith communities exist throughout the Hunter region, offering not only religious services but also social events and programs to engage the local community. With many options available, an online search of places of worship near you for your faith is a great way to start.

### Community Gardens

Joining a community garden is a great way to enjoy gardening, contribute to a shared space, and make friends in your local area. Visit [www.communitygarden.org.au/garden-directory/](http://www.communitygarden.org.au/garden-directory/) to find registered community gardens near you.

### Playgroups and parent groups

If you are moving with small children, playgroups and parent groups offer a relaxed environment for young children to play while parents and carers meet others, share experiences, and build support networks. Visit [www.newywithkids.com.au/newcastle-playgroup-guide/](http://www.newywithkids.com.au/newcastle-playgroup-guide/) for more information.

## Staying up to Date With Local Events

### Local council websites and community boards

Your local council's website is a great place to find out what's happening nearby. Most councils share event calendars featuring markets, festivals, workshops, and cultural activities. Community noticeboards are also useful for discovering local events. See below for links to your council's website.

## Social media groups

Joining local social media groups or community pages is an easy way to stay informed about events, classes, and meetups. Many neighbourhoods have Facebook groups or online forums where residents share what's on and connect with others.

## Libraries and community centres

Libraries and community centres often host free events, workshops, and social gatherings for all ages. These spaces are great for learning new skills, meeting people, and getting involved in your local community.

## HunterHunter

HunterHunter is an online guide to experiencing the Hunter region. It features what's on, where to eat and drink, and ideas for exploring the area. Visit [www.hunterhunter.com.au](http://www.hunterhunter.com.au) for the latest updates.

## Hunter Valley

The Hunter Valley digital magazine showcases local experiences, from food and wine to events and attractions. Check out [www.huntervalley.org.au](http://www.huntervalley.org.au) for inspiration and event listings.

## Visit NSW

Visit NSW provides a comprehensive guide to destinations and events across the state, including the Hunter region. Explore [www.visitnsw.com/destinations/hunter/hunter-valley](http://www.visitnsw.com/destinations/hunter/hunter-valley) for ideas on what to see and do nearby.

## Your Local Government Area (LGA)

Understanding your local government area, also known as council, is an important part of settling into the region. LGAs are responsible for services such as waste collection, community facilities, libraries, parks, and local events. They also provide information on schools, childcare, and support programs for new residents.

See below for details on the LGAs in this region, including links to their websites. These resources can help you connect with your community and access the services you need.

### Cessnock

Located in the heart of the Hunter Valley, Cessnock is known for its vineyards, welcoming communities, and relaxed lifestyle. It offers easy access to world-class wineries, local markets, and outdoor activities such as bushwalking and cycling.

Council website: [www.cessnock.nsw.gov.au/Home](http://www.cessnock.nsw.gov.au/Home)

Tourism information: [www.winecountry.com.au/](http://www.winecountry.com.au/)

## Dungog

Dungog is a small, friendly rural community surrounded by rolling hills and national parks. It's a great place for people who enjoy a peaceful lifestyle, community events, and access to nature, including hiking and riverside picnics.

Council website: [www.dungog.nsw.gov.au/Home](http://www.dungog.nsw.gov.au/Home)

Tourism information: [www.visitdungog.com.au/](http://www.visitdungog.com.au/)

## Lake Macquarie

Centred around one of Australia's largest coastal lakes, Lake Macquarie offers laid-back waterfront living with plenty of beaches, walking tracks, playgrounds, and cultural events. It balances the feel of a lakeside town with the convenience of larger urban areas.

Council website: [www.lakemac.com.au/Home](http://www.lakemac.com.au/Home)

Tourism information: [www.visitlakemac.com.au/](http://www.visitlakemac.com.au/)

## Maitland

Maitland is a growing regional city with a blend of historic charm and modern amenities. It has a lively arts scene, regular markets and festivals, and a wide range of shops, schools, and community facilities. It's popular with families and newcomers.

Council website: [www.maitland.nsw.gov.au/](http://www.maitland.nsw.gov.au/)

Tourism information: [www.mymaitland.com.au/](http://www.mymaitland.com.au/)

## Muswellbrook

Surrounded by countryside and known for its horse-breeding and mining industries, Muswellbrook also has strong local arts, parks, and community programs. It offers a slower pace of life with easy access to the Upper Hunter's natural attractions.

Council website: [www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au/](http://www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au/)

Tourism information: [www.upperhuntercountry.com/](http://www.upperhuntercountry.com/)

## Newcastle

As the region's major city, Newcastle offers beaches, harbour views, live music, restaurants, universities, and diverse cultural communities. It's a vibrant place with excellent public transport, plenty of job opportunities, and year-round events.

Council website: [www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/](http://www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/)

Tourism information: [www.visitnewcastle.com.au/](http://www.visitnewcastle.com.au/)

## Port Stephens

Port Stephens is famous for its beautiful beaches, dolphins, sand dunes, and outdoor activities. The area includes a mix of relaxed coastal towns and busy tourist hubs, offering plenty of opportunities to enjoy water sports, nature, and community events.

Council website: [www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/](http://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/)

Tourism information: [www.portstephens.org.au/](http://www.portstephens.org.au/)

## Singleton

Singleton combines rural living with a strong community spirit. Surrounded by vineyards, farmland, and national parks, it offers local markets, sporting clubs, and community activities, making it a welcoming place for families and newcomers.

Council website: [www.singleton.nsw.gov.au/Home](http://www.singleton.nsw.gov.au/Home)

Tourism information: [www.singleton.nsw.gov.au/Experience/Visit/Singleton-Visitor-Guide](http://www.singleton.nsw.gov.au/Experience/Visit/Singleton-Visitor-Guide)

## Upper Hunter

The Upper Hunter is known for its wide open landscapes, rich agricultural heritage, and thoroughbred horse farms. Towns in this area are friendly and community-focused, offering a peaceful lifestyle with easy access to nature and small-town events.

Council website: [www.upperhunter.nsw.gov.au/Home](http://www.upperhunter.nsw.gov.au/Home)

Tourism information: [www.upperhuntercountry.com/](http://www.upperhuntercountry.com/)

# Contact us

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