



MEDIA RELEASE

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\$25,000 EMERGENCY GRANT TO HUNTER REGION BOTANIC GARDENS

A \$25,000 donation to the Hunter Region Botanic Gardens from Hunter Water has arrived just in time to prevent the popular tourist site from shedding its employees and reducing the number of days it's open to the public less than 12 months from their 30 year anniversary.

Hunter Region Botanic Gardens Chairman Kevin Stokes said that the donation would allow the Gardens to continue to operate as normal until at least the end of the year, including hosting thousands of local school and university students, and tourists.

"As a volunteer run not-for-profit, we rely on takings at the gate, visitors to the café, the Hunter business community and the generosity of local and State Governments to keep trading.

"Fortunately Hunter Water, which has supported the Gardens since before our first day of operation in 1986, has provided a \$25,000 grant which allows us to hold onto our employees and keep the gates open 7 days a week," he said.

Hunter Water Interim CEO Jeremy Bath said the utility had good reason in ensuring the Hunter Region Botanic Gardens remained in business.

"The Gardens are situated on 133 hectares of land that sits above the Tomago Sandbeds.

"Supplying 20 per cent of the Lower Hunter's drinking water needs, protecting the Tomago Sandbeds is critical to maintaining the supply of high quality drinking water to our customers.

"The environmental activities of the Gardens make its volunteers ideal custodians for protecting the health and quality of the Tomago Sandbeds, therefore safeguarding our region's drinking water.

"Hunter Water is committed to providing our expertise to reduce the Gardens' costs as well as assist the Gardens secure a long term future that the entire community can enjoy and appreciate," he said.

Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter Scot MacDonald said the Gardens is a genuine community asset.

"The Hunter Region Botanic Gardens is the only community botanical garden between Sydney and Coffs Harbour, providing locals and visitors a tranquil place to experience nature.

"The Gardens' volunteers have been steadily growing the site for almost 30 years, cultivating a home for more than 150 species of native plants and wildlife, including kangaroos and a small koala population," he said.

The Hunter Region Botanic Gardens is a not-for-profit organisation that depends heavily on donations from the public and businesses.

Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible and can be made via cheque or money order payable to Hunter Region Botanic Gardens Limited, 2100 Pacific Highway, Heatherbrae NSW 2324.

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