



MEDIA RELEASE

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HUNTER WATER, 125 YEARS YOUNG TODAY

One-hundred-and-twenty-five years ago today, the 'Hunter District Water Supply and Sewerage Board' was formed to take control of the water system and support the future of a fast developing region.

Hunter Water Managing Director Jim Bentley said 125 years on, the founding principles of 'The Board' still rang true.

"Hunter Water's original crest read 'For the public health', which was a powerful message for the time given the widespread outbreaks of cholera and typhoid caused by a deficit of clean water and sewerage services in Australia.

"After 125 years, public health is still at the centre of everything we do, but its meaning goes beyond simply providing clean drinking water and sewage services. Our role is to enable a growing, liveable, and environmentally sustainable Hunter region, where our communities have access to high quality and affordable services. Today we're guided by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, we strive for carbon neutrality, and our communities' needs are at the heart of our decision making.

Mr Bentley said Hunter Water has been at the heart of shaping the region over its 125 year history.

"Reliable access to safe drinking water is something we all take for granted, however without it the Hunter would not have been able to grow to the thriving region it is today. Building Chichester Dam in 1926 was a key moment in history as it gave the Hunter the water security it needed to attract investment, preserved by what is now a World Heritage listed catchment.

"Burwood Beach Wastewater Treatment Works upgrade of 1989 transformed Newcastle forever, allowing local tourism to flourish. Whereas beachgoers once had to check for sewage plumes drifting from Burwood, our beaches are now consistently rated the cleanest in the State and the main drawcard for visitors.

"We've made a number of bold and innovative decisions over our 125 year history, and perhaps the most significant is establishing Australia's first 'user pays' pricing system in 1982. Paying for the water you used was unheard of for the time, but this is now the norm across Australia. It's helped keep our water demand down and supplies up over the years, and our average bill is now among the lowest in the country.

"Some of these moments from our history, including never-before seen memorabilia and pictures will be on display at a special 125 year exhibition at Newcastle Regional Museum from September," he said.

Mr Bentley said Hunter Water was using its 125th anniversary year to sharpen its focus on the future.

"Hunter Water has a proud history worth celebrating, however our focus is very much on the future. To mark our 125th anniversary, Hunter Water is partnering with the University of Newcastle to launch an annual innovation award open to students and our employees. The award will encourage new ideas that may one day transform our water and wastewater system, and provide financial incentives to get them off the ground.

"We're at a crucial point in our history, with unprecedented change and growth in the region. In 2017 and beyond, our role is more than making sure there are pipes in the ground for the extra 240,000 people expected to make the Hunter home over the next 30 years. It's about understanding how tomorrow's Hunter residents will want to live, and working to make that future a reality."