

Nature Conservation Council Regional Conference 2024 Program – Hunter Central Coast



Saturday 1 June and Sunday 2 June (field day) 2024.

The broad theme of the Conference encompasses:

Hunter and Central Coast at the coalface of transition, biodiversity in the balance

Co-hosts: Hunter Community Environment Centre (HCEC), Hunter Jobs Alliance (HJA), Community Environment Network (CEN), Central Coast, Hunter Environment Lobby, Rising Tide, Climate Action Newcastle (CAN), Hunter Renewal, National Parks Australia (NPA), Hunter Branch, Coal-Ash Community Alliance Inc (CCA), Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance and special thanks to EcoNetwork Port Stephens

Register here: <https://events.humanitix.com/2024-regional-conference>

RSVP on Facebook: <https://fb.me/e/23865GtTf>

Day 1 - Saturday 1 June (Glenrock Scout Camp)

8:30am	REGISTRATION - Tea and coffee on arrival (biscuits and fruit)
9am	Welcome to Country Aunty Tracey Hanshaw
9.10am	Welcome, overview, theme aims and housekeeping – NCC Chair Carolyn Loton
9.20am	Opening performance by Ecopella Choir Conducted by Miguel Heatwole The choir "causes harmony to the environment" by providing activists and audiences with topical a cappella singing at a high standard.
9.35am	NCC Chief Executive Officer Address – Jacqui Mumford
9.40am	Showcasing local nature, climate and sustainability action Co-hosts and key groups share with the audience a snapshot of the activities they are involved in and what they are aiming to achieve. Celebrating wins, acting in new ways, what they are focusing on next <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hunter Community Environment Centre (HCEC) – Johanna Lynch• Hunter Jobs Alliance (HJA) – Justin Page• Community Environment Network (CEN), Central Coast – Jackie Pearson• Hunter Environment Lobby – Jan Davies• Rising Tide - Zack Schofield

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Action Newcastle (CAN) – James Whelan • Hunter Renewal – Danielle Coleman • National Parks Australia (NPA), Hunter Branch + Friends of Tomaree NP – Ian Donovan • Coal-Ash Community Alliance Inc (CCA) – Ingrid Schraner • EcoNetwork Port Stephens – Sue Olsson • Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance – Gabrielle Clappison • Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) - Justine Emmerson
10.50	The Hon Yasmin Catley MP, Member for Swansea, Minister for Police and Counter terrorism and Minister for the Hunter - TBC
11am	MORNING TEA
	KEYNOTE AND PLENARY PANEL SESSION – Hunter/CC at the Coalface of transition, biodiversity in the balance
11.30pm	Keynote speaker – Tim Buckley, Founder and Director, Climate Energy Finance
12 noon	<p>PLENARY PANEL - Hunter/CC at the Coalface of transition, biodiversity in the balance Facilitated by Jacqui Mumford, CEO Nature Conservation Council NSW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark Diesendorf, Honorary Associate Professor in Environment & Society at UNSW Sydney • Johanna Lynch, Coordinator of Hunter Community Environment Centre • Aunty Tracey Hanshaw, Founder of Justice Aunties • Heidi McElna, Regional Coordinator for Community Power Agency • Ian Donovan, President of the National Parks Association of NSW (Hunter Branch) • John Drinan, Author of “The Sacrificial Valley”
1.00pm	LUNCH – over lunch, two short films will be screened: The First Wave and Nguura Muruy (Forest Camp) - A Front Line Story
2.00pm	WORKSHOP STREAM 1
	<p>Workshop 1A – Protecting nature from logging, clearing and invasives Facilitator: Jackie Pearson, Central Coast Community Environment Network (CEN)</p> <p>Panel 1B – What is the role of the Hunter in the transition? – ending coal, building renewables Facilitator: by Jo Lynch – Hunter Community Environment Centre (HCEC)</p>
3.10pm	AFTERNOON TEA
3.30pm	WORKSHOP STREAM 2
	<p>Workshop 2A – How can we protect and restore nature through the renewable energy transition? Facilitator: Jacqueline Mills, Senior Climate and Energy Campaigner, Nature Conservation Council NSW</p> <p>Workshop 2B – The campaign to save the Pilliga from coal seam gas Facilitator: Peggy Smith, Pilliga Campaign Organiser, Maritime Union Australia</p>

	Workshop 2C – Building the movement for nature – past wins and where to next? Facilitator: Zack Schofield, Rising Tide
4.40pm	Summaries and closing
5.00pm	CLOSE
6pm	Conference Dinner – Conference dinner – from 6pm - Firesong Indigenous Connection We are thrilled to be partnering with The Hunter Region Landcare Network for the Conference Dinner which will be onsite. You will be provided with an introduction to local native bush tucker and tips on how to set up a bush tucker garden at home. You will also sample native fruits, berries and herbs followed by a sumptuous bush tucker dinner prepared by local First Nations Chef Peter from Firesong Indigenous Connection . The conference dinner is subsidised but not included in the conference price.

Day 2 – Sunday 2 June - FIELD DAY

8.30am	START
8.30 - 9.15am	Glenrock Conservation area, history and tree planting – John Le Messurier
9.15- 9.45am	Travel via carpooling to view the coal Port at Cormorant Road, Kooragang (30 minutes)
9.45am	Visit to view the coal port and discussion
10.15am	Travel to Hunter Wetlands Centre (15 minutes) – 1 Wetlands Place, Shortland
10.30am	Morning Tea at Hunter Wetlands Centre
10.50am	Tour of Hunter Wetlands Centre – James Wilson
12pm	Travel to Hexham Swamp Reserve (20 minutes) - Kau-ma Park, Threlkeld Cres, Fletcher
12.20pm	Visit to Hexham Swamp - Amanda Hyde - Local Lands Services, Greg Little - Hunter Birds Observers Club and Mick Roderick BirdLife Australia
1pm	CONFERENCE END

This year the Nature Conservation Council NSW (NCC) is partnering with 11 Environment Groups across the Hunter and Central Coast to present the annual 2024 NCC Regional Conference in Newcastle.

The co-hosts are:



Conference Dinner: We are thrilled to be partnering with The Hunter Region Landcare Network for the Conference Dinner which will be onsite. You will be provided with an introduction to local native bush tucker and tips on how to set up a bush tucker garden at home. You will also sample native fruits, berries and herbs followed by a sumptuous bush tucker dinner all prepared by local First Nations Chef Peter from Firesong Indigenous Connection. The conference dinner is subsidised but not included in the conference price. Please let us know whether you would like to join us for the conference dinner so that it can be properly catered. The cost on the night is \$25, so please bring cash or a credit card with you.

We acknowledge the Awabakal people as the traditional custodians of the land on which this conference is held, on land that was never ceded. The Awabakal peoples have a rich history and deep connection to the region, which encompasses wetlands, rivers, creeks, and coastal environments which extends back tens of thousands of years.



Presenter Biographies

Welcome to Country

Aunty Tracey

Aunty Tracey Hanshaw, an Awabakal/Gaewegal woman who heads the advocacy organisation Justice Aunties

Overview, themes and aims

Carolyn Loton

Chair of the Nature Conservation Council Board, Carolyn is passionate about nature and Australia's biodiversity. She believes that immediate action to address climate change is imperative. Prior to becoming the Chair of NCC in 2022 she held the role of Treasurer. As Treasurer, she led the formalisation of the NCC Evans Wetlands Bequest policy and associated initiatives; and was also involved in developing clearer internal reporting formats. Carolyn is a co-founder of Professionals Advocating for Climate Action, established in response to the 2019/2020 Australian Bush fires, and with a membership of over 400 people in NSW and across the country. Carolyn works fulltime in the marketing agency she founded in 2006. She is a Qualified Practising Researcher (Australian Research Society) and a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. She originally trained and worked as an Occupational Therapist and holds an MBA from the University of Edinburgh Scotland

NCC Chief Executive Officer Address

Jacqui Mumford

Jacqui first joined NCC in 2017 as Network Organiser. She has since run multiple regional and annual conferences, member trainings, and visited regional communities and member groups on the frontline of climate and environmental destruction. Jacqui Mumford has a diverse background in strategic leadership, philanthropy, organising and environmental compliance. She brings this wealth of experience into her new role as CEO of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW, alongside a passion for climate action and environmental protection. "My focus as CEO is to continue the great work we are already doing, protecting the Murray Darling Basin, ending native forest logging, and ramping up NSW's commitments on climate action"

Opening performance

Ecopella Choir

Ecopella is an environmental choir that sings about the beauty of our world and the struggle to protect it from exploitation and degradation. The choir "causes harmony to the environment" by providing activists and audiences with topical a cappella singing at a high standard. Our strong environmental message encourages positive change in people's thoughts and actions, and we offer support to a wide variety of green organisations.

Founded in 1998 by musical director Miguel Heatwole, Ecopella spread from its base in Sydney to form branches in the Blue Mountains, Illawarra, Southern Highlands, Canberra, the Central Coast and Newcastle. We have 883 performances to our credit, embracing a wide range of events: benefit concerts, protests, campaign launches, community gatherings and folk festivals.

You might expect a choir that sings about the environment to be a gloomy ensemble, but Ecopella's sense of fun fills each performance with positive and satirical messages. Even when the mood becomes serious the beauty and solemnity of the music is uplifting. Many of the pieces are original compositions and most of the arrangements are ours also. Stylistically our influences include folk, classical, and popular songs. The choir welcomes new members and opportunities to perform. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you would like to sing with us, or us to sing for you! [Miguel Heatwole](#)

Showcasing local nature, climate and sustainability action

Jo Lynch

Jo Lynch is a Novocastrian hailing from Maitland in the Hunter Valley, passionate about biodiversity protection, the power of story-telling and a well-facilitated meeting. She's a Fine Arts graduate from TAFE and Newcastle University where she was involved in fossil-fuel divestment and anti-refugee detention campaigns.

Jo has been organising with Newcastle's grassroots climate and environment movement since 2015, including the Break Free from Fossil Fuels Flotilla in 2016 and the Students of Sustainability Conference in 2017.

Jo has been the Coordinator at the [Hunter Community Environment Centre](#) since 2018, where she works with communities campaigning to reduce pollution impacts of coal-power on waterways and prepares for community-led transition planning. Jo is also Secretary of the Hunter Jobs Alliance and an avid supporter of community led action and alliances for social change. Jo was a Director on the Nature Conservation Council Board from 2021 to 2023.

Justin Page

Justin Page is the coordinator for the [Hunter Jobs Alliance](#). Justin has extensive experience in leading and developing strategy, marketing, governance & stakeholder engagement within member focused organisations and has practical knowledge of government policy and industrial relations. Justin was previously Secretary of the ETU NSW & ACT. The Hunter Jobs Alliance aims for full employment, with good union jobs, a thriving and healthy living environment, an equitable society, a stable climate, and renewable prosperity in the Hunter region.

Jackie Pearson

Jackie has been working as the [Central Coast Community Environment Network's](#) Liaison Officer for almost four years. She has been a journalist and editor for around 37 years including a former editor at Choice Magazine and long-term contributor for Fairfax (now Nine) publications. She now runs her own independent digital news sites and is a published poet.

Jan Davies

Jan has been the President of Hunter Environmental Lobby Inc for over 15 years. She was a founding member from 1992. Jan has a medical background and is interested in all things scientific. Jan has a particular passion for the environment and natural habitat. She became active because of the threat to natural habitat from open cut mining. Jan was on the Hunter River Management Committee (amongst others), representing HEL, and she learnt a lot about how important water is to habitat, agriculture and power production. HEL was established to promote environmental protection in the Hunter Valley.

Zack Schofield

Zack is from Rising Tide and was one of the organisers of the Newcastle port blockade, which was part of one of the biggest climate protests in Australia's history. During this civil disobedience action, protesters paddled into the Port of Newcastle on kayaks, surfboards, and pontoons to stop coal exports from leaving the harbor. [They aimed to call on the government to tax fossil fuel export profits at 75% and halt new coal projects](#)

James Whelan

James Whelan lives and works on Awabakal country. He's a big believer in community action and is secretary of Climate Action Newcastle and co-chair of the Hunter Community Alliance.

Dan Coleman

Dan Coleman heads up the Hunter Renewal Project - bringing people of the Hunter together to have crucial conversations about how our region can achieve a fair and sustainable transition to a future beyond coal. Dan has an extensive background, both here and overseas, in organising communities and empowering everyday people to campaign and advocate for positive change.

Ian Donovan

Ian is President of the National Parks Association of NSW (Hunter Branch), and is an Executive member of NPA at the State level. He spent most of his working life in urban and environmental planning with state and local government authorities. A particular interest continues to be with the proper consideration of natural processes in planning decisions, particularly in relation to biodiversity and natural hazards. He also lectures in planning at the University of Newcastle. A bushwalker since his teens, he has an intimate knowledge of the natural areas of the Hunter and surrounding regions.

Dr Ingrid Schraner

Ingrid is the research coordinator of the Coal-ash Community Alliance. She presented at the NCC Annual Conference last November, introducing the Taskforce on Nature-based Financial Disclosures TNFD tool, that has developed a set of disclosure recommendations and guidelines for corporations to report and act on to shift global financial flows away from nature negative outcomes and toward nature positive outcomes. This international accounting tool was launched by the UN in September 2023 to measure actual progress and call out greenwashing.

Sue Olsson

Sue Olsson is Vice President EcoNetwork Port Stephens and coordinates the National Parks Association Port Stephens group, including the Friends of Tomaree National Park and the Port Stephens Walking group. Sue has been appointed to the NPWS Hunter Central Coast Area Regional Advisory Committee, the Worimi Conservation Lands Board (deputy member, Conservation) and the Port Stephens Council Environment Advisory Group. Sue's interests are anything connected with nature — walking, photography, land care, gardening, camping and travel, plants, wildlife, family and young grandchildren

Gabrielle Clappison

Gabrielle is the Chair of the Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance. The Alliance aims to empower neighbourhoods to live sustainably and foster a healthy environment in Lake Macquarie. There are 10 local groups in the Alliance. In 2023 they together delivered 70 events and engaged with more than 8500 people through their projects and campaigns.

Justine Emmerson

Justine is the coordinator of Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) National Intake program. Justine and her team provide people at the frontline of environmental harms a place to seek access to the legal system, through legal information, free short legal advice and referrals. The National Intake program is the only service of its kind in Australia where community members can seek free legal advice on environmental laws.

Keynote Speaker**Tim Buckley**

Tim is Founder and Director with Climate Energy Finance, Sydney. Climate Energy Finance (CEF) is a think tank established in 2022 that works pro bono in the public interest on accelerating decarbonisation in line with the climate science.

Tim has 30 years of financial market experience covering the Australian, Asian and global equity markets and is a highly influential energy finance commentator. He has written more than 100 reports on the global energy transition, and the roles of finance and policy in accelerating critical decarbonisation trends.

Tim was previously the Australasian Director of the global Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis, 2013-2021. Prior to this, Tim was a top-rated equity research analyst, including Head of Equity Research in Singapore at Deutsche Bank, Managing Director, Head of Equity Research at Citigroup for 17 years, Head of Institutional Equities at Shaw & Partners and co-Managing Director of Arkx Investment Management P/L, a global listed clean energy investment start-up jointly owned with Westpac.

When not studying energy markets, Tim enjoys bushwalking in Kurrungai national park in on the north shore of Sydney with friends, concurrently recharging, exercising and railing about our politicians.

Plenary Panel – Hunter Central Coast at the Coalface of transition, biodiversity in the balance

Mark Diesendorf

Dr Mark Diesendorf is Honorary Associate Professor in Environment & Society at UNSW Sydney. Originally trained as a theoretical physicist, he broadened out into researching and campaigning for the transition to ecologically sustainable energy and subsequently to a sustainable society. From 1996 to 2001 he was Professor of Environmental Science and Founding Director of the Institute for Sustainable Futures at University of Technology Sydney. His most recent book is *The Path to a Sustainable Civilisation: Technological, Socioeconomic and Political Change*.

Johanna Lynch, Aunty Tracey, Ian Donovan

See above

Heidi McElna

As a Regional Coordinator for Community Power Agency, Heidi McElna brings stakeholders together to proactively address the potential social and environmental impacts of a renewable energy zone (REZ) context and identify regional opportunities in the shift to clean energy. In her most recent collaboration, *Building Better Biodiversity on Solar Farms*, Heidi worked with farmers, developers, ecologists, researchers, Landcare and Cultural Knowledge Holders to explore and document shared land-use opportunities in the New England REZ, and which has broader applicability for any region where solar developments are planned.

John Drinan

John has lived most of his life in the Hunter Valley. Over that time, he has witnessed the devastating impacts of the lucrative coal mining industry on the Valley's landscapes, its native wildlife and ecosystems, and its people. As an agriculturist and environmentalist who has worked as a farmer, researcher and educator, he has not only observed the effects of coal mining from many different perspectives but experienced them firsthand. John is retired and continues to advocate for the wellbeing of the Hunter Valley. In 2022 he published a book – “The Sacrificial Valley” that explores how such damage was not only allowed but facilitated, through often opaque cooperation between government and the mining industry. While he outlines the legacy mining has and will have on the Valley's natural resources for generations to come, he utilises his lived experience in system-based thinking and proposes how a repaired and reinvigorated Valley might be brought into being.

LUNCH – two short films will be screened

The First Wave (19 mins) – a film of the people's blockade of the world's largest coal port. At the end of the hottest year in human history, a Rising Tide of everyday people shut down the world's largest coal port for 32 hours. Here's how they did it.

Revisit the epic People's Blockade with footage from the beach, the water, and the sky - and hear from Rising Tide organisers and blockaders about how this historic event came together.

Nguura Muruy (Forest Camp) - A Front Line Story (26 mins). From the "Front Line" in Newry State Forest in 2023, "Nguura Muruy" tells a powerful story about Gumbaynggirr custodians and local allies working together to protect Country from the imminent threat of Native forest logging. Through this historic alliance, a local community celebrate a victory.

Director, Sandy Jaimee Greenwood is a Gumbaynggirr, Dunghutti and Bundjalung Traditional Custodian, is an award winning actor and writer. Sandy was a co-winner of the Dunphy Award at the 2024 NCC Environment awards. The Dunphy Award is given to an individual who has demonstrated outstanding commitment to the conservation of the NSW Environment, and courageously challenged Government and non-Government decision-makers.

Workshop 1A – facilitated by Jacqui Pearson

Jacqui will be joined by Megan Benson (Gloucester Environment Group), Paul Winn (HCEC), Susie Russell (NEFA), Ursula DeSilva (Camp Ourimbah) and Gary Chestnut (Chair, Community Environment Network).

Workshop 1B – facilitated by Jo Lynch

Jo will be joined by Justin Page (Hunter Jobs Alliance), Dr Ingrid Schraner (Coal-Ash Community Alliance), Steve Phillips (Hunter Renewal), Gary Blaschke (Future Sooner), Mike Campbell and Joal Pringle (Solar Citizens).

Workshop 2A – facilitated by Jacqueline Mills

Jacqueline Mills

Jacqui has been involved in conservation, animal protection and labour rights campaigning over many years. She shaped the work of The Wombat Foundation to conserve the critically endangered Northern Hairy-nosed Wombat and sat on the board of The Wilderness Society Ltd. In her spare time, Jacqui likes to bushwalk and garden. She is currently Senior Climate and Energy Campaigner for NCC NSW.

Jacqui will be joined by Heidi McElna (Community Power Agency), Jonathon Moylan (Australian Conservation Foundation) and Paul Winn (HCEC)

Workshop 2B – facilitated by Peggy Smith

Peggy Smith

Peggy is a current Registered Nurse, NSWNMA Muswellbrook Branch Delegate and the Maritime Union Australia (MUA) Pilliga Campaign Organiser. She is passionate about health, particularly in rural regional and remote communities. Peggy also has an interest in public health policy.

Peggy has been an active volunteer for native wildlife rescue and rehabilitation and is a committed wildlife, climate and environmental activist

Workshop 2C – facilitated by Zack Schofield

Zack is from Rising Tide and was one of the organisers of the Newcastle port blockade, which was part of one of the biggest climate protests in Australia's history. During this civil disobedience action, protesters paddled into the Port of Newcastle on kayaks, surfboards, and pontoons to stop coal exports from leaving the harbor. [They aimed to call on the government to tax fossil fuel export profits at 75% and halt new coal projects.](#)

Field Day – 8.30 to 1pm

8.30am to 9.15am

Glenrock Scout Camp and Conservation area

John Le Messurier

John is a dedicated Scout member, was named the 2018 Australian Gardener of the Year by Gardening Australia. For over 42 years, he has been giving back to Scouts, transforming the 6.2-hectare former coal mine site at Glenrock Scout Camp into a native garden showpiece. The property now has thousands of plants on site, including lots of correas, grevilleas and a stand of casuarinas that John positioned to stabilise the lagoon foreshore, which was being badly eroded.

John has led generations of scouts to turn a barren, former coal mine into a thriving native plant garden full of colour and wildlife. Glenrock Scout Camp, which is surrounded by a state conservation area on a coastal estuary just south of Newcastle, was a coal mine from the 1860-1890s, with a railway line through the property, across the lagoon and beach, up to Newcastle.

John will give us a history of the site, a tour of the native gardens and John has selected and prepared the ground for a tree to be planted in honour of the 2024 Hunter Central Coast Regional Conference.

9.45am to 10.15am

Viewing of the Hunter Coal Port from Comorant Road, Kooragang

An overview will be given outlining the scale of operations at the world's largest coal port from Coromorant Road

10.30am (including morning tea) to 12 noon

Hunter Wetlands Centre

Following morning tea, James Wilson, General Manager of the Hunter Wetlands Centre, will lead a tour of this restored area that is now a Ramsar listed site internationally recognised wetland. James will be joined by Dr Peter Nelson (Hunter Wetlands Chair) and Sam Johnson (Nature Conservation Council)

12.20pm to 1pm

Hexham Swamp - Kau-ma Park, Fletcher

Our final stop of the day will be a real treat. Join Amanda Hyde, from Hunter Local Land Services, Greg Little from the Hunter Bird Observers Club and Mick Roderick from BirdLife Australia. There will be an overview of the Hexham Swamp Rehabilitation Project, a talk on the monitoring of the Blac Necked Stork and the nest platform for the breeding.

