



ABN 19 949 536 343

59 Bonville Avenue | PO Box 3137 | Thornton NSW 2322
P (02) 4978 4040 | F (02) 4966 0588

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MEDIA RELEASE - LOCAL LEADERS TO GET THE CHANCE TO DEAL WITH HUNTER ENERGY INDUSTRY CHANGES

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The NSW Deputy Premier John Barilaro's announcement yesterday that the Government will establish an Expert Panel to assist the Hunter region's changing energy economy represents a welcome step towards dealing with the real risks to the region's economy and jobs as local industries change. This announcement once implemented will help to ensure that local leaders will guide the investment of the proposed \$25m annual Royalties for Rejuvenation fund.

"The whole Hunter will be impacted by changes to energy industries. A response that is guided by local leaders must begin immediately if we are to avoid a bad outcome for the community" said Cr Bob Pynsent, Chair of the Hunter JO and Mayor of Cessnock. "Through the Hunter JO, the Hunter's ten councils have prioritised working with the NSW Government and industry to make sure we deal with this challenge before it impacts our communities. This announcement is a great step towards a solution and we look forward to playing an active role in the Panel."

The immediate priorities for the panel will be to guide the Royalties for Rejuvenation funds into new industry development to further diversify the economy and to support local businesses and workers impacted by changes to move into new opportunities in the region.

"With the new fund and its locally led governance structure in place, we will also need to ensure the regions secures the substantial private sector investment needed to drive future jobs and industry growth for the region," said Cr Sue Moore, Mayor of Singleton. "I'm encouraged to see the State Government supporting the Hunter JO's push for action and investment, to ensure that we are planning for the future of our region."

The Hunter Joint Organisation is currently awaiting a State Government decision on an application for a Bushfire Local Economic Recovery funding to establish the Hunter 2050 Foundation, an initiative designed to drive the private sector investment needed in the region.

Contact details

Please direct media inquiries to Louisa Bulley, Executive Officer, Hunter Joint Organisation.

M: +61 413 891 320 or email comms@hunterjo.com.au