



JOINT STATEMENT

HUNTER REGION MAYORS CALL FOR STATE GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

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As more and more people choose to live in the Hunter and our coal-economy evolves, the ten Mayors of the region are calling on the next NSW Government to step up and work with us for the future of our communities. We need a clear plan for the region's economic evolution beyond coal. All levels of government need to be aligned in their efforts to achieve this vision.

The Hunter is a region on the precipice of change. It is a powerhouse whose future will shape the NSW and National economies and radical intervention is required to maintain the liveability and economic prosperity of the Hunter as we approach one million people by 2040.

The Hunter has the largest regional economy in Australia and drives around 28% of regional NSW's total annual economic output - \$23 billion of which can be attributed to coal exports.

We need to work together, with all levels of government, to build our region's resilience to changing global energy demands and maintain its significant contribution to Australia's economies.

The economic opportunity and value contributed by every individual needs to be maintained and improved as the region diversifies away from coal. Urgent support and investment from all levels of government is imperative to address these changing needs and the growing population of the Hunter.

The ten Councils of the Hunter, collaborating for the benefit of our region through the Hunter Joint Organisation, plays a critical role in addressing these economic challenges; however, Local Government cannot do this alone.

We want our communities to continue to grow and prosper. Agreement on where we are heading and how to get there, supported by commitments, collaboration and funding across all levels of government is critical for helping coal regions transition to new economic opportunities and ensuring that communities are not left behind in this shift.

While there are many issues Councils are collectively advocating for (set out in the Hunter JO Advocacy Priorities), we are calling on the next NSW Government to work with us on five key commitments necessary to build momentum towards a more prosperous future for our region.

1. The region needs a clear and place-based policy and planning approach to drive the region's economic evolution that is integrated across all levels of government. This includes a commitment that the next NSW Government will partner with the region's Councils, through the Hunter JO, to jointly approach the Commonwealth Government to explore a city-region partnership, including the establishment of a place-based entity to lead this economic evolution.

2. We are asking for a commitment to the establishment of a clear and properly resourced process to provide recommendations on policy and legislative change to provide a clear planning pathway to encourage the adaptation and reuse of mining and industrial lands.
3. The development of an Integrated Transport Plan is integral to supporting and unlocking housing and employment outcomes for the region and a commitment needs to be made to fund, resource, and complete a study to establish a clear vision for this.
4. While we need to plan for future connectivity, we also need to deal with current connectivity issues. We are seeking clarification from the Minister for Transport around the disparity of funds from the Regional and Local Roads Repair Program between rural and regional and Greater Sydney and Outer Metropolitan Councils. The distribution of these funds has seen Greater Sydney and Outer Metropolitan areas receive 540% more funding per kilometre of road than rural and regional areas. We are also seeking a commitment that the next NSW Government will provide fair and equitable roads funding for rural and regional areas.
5. Similarly, significant funding and investment is needed to implement circular economy and waste management initiatives as a key driver for new jobs, economic growth and sustainability for the Hunter region. Currently, the Waste Levy is collected for the State Government, with only a very small percentage returned directly to Councils for improvements to waste services. This leaves our region missing out on millions of dollars that could be driving investment in our region. Council's need the ability to determine where this funding is best placed and used for the benefit of their communities. We need the next NSW Government to commit to a process to return 100% of the Waste Levy fund to Local Government for reinvestment in Local and Regional communities.

The time for action is now. Change is upon us, and we need to work together with NSW Government for the benefit of the Hunter and MidCoast region and the State. The region cannot address these challenges alone.

The region's Councils, through the Hunter JO, call upon the next NSW Government to commit to supporting the Hunter with these critical priorities, to maintain a prosperous city-region resilient to changing global energy demands that continues to power NSW into the future.

From the Mayors of the Hunter Joint Organisation:

- Cr Sue Moore, Mayor Singleton Council & Chair Hunter JO
- Cr Jay Suvaal, Mayor Cessnock City Council & Deputy Chair Hunter JO
- Cr John Connors, Mayor Dungog Shire Council
- Cr Kay Fraser, Mayor Lake Macquarie City Council
- Cr Philip Penfold, Mayor Maitland City Council
- Cr Claire Pontin, Mayor MidCoast Council
- Cr Steven Reynolds, Mayor Muswellbrook Shire Council
- Cr Nuatali Nelmes, Lord Mayor City of Newcastle
- Cr Ryan Palmer, Mayor Port Stephens Council
- Cr Maurice Collison, Mayor Upper Hunter Shire Council



4 Sandringham Avenue, PO Box 3137,
Thornton NSW 2323. 02 4978 4040
www.hunterjo.com.au

Contact Details

Please direct media inquiries to Kali Somerville, Media and Communications Officer, Hunter Joint Organisation. M: +61 429 564 111, E: kalis@hunterjo.com.au

Images are available for immediate use, please email request to Kali Somerville

About the Hunter JO

The Hunter Joint Organisation is a collaborative body that brings together the ten councils in the region to provide a united and local voice for our communities. As the hub for local intergovernmental collaboration, our statutory mandate includes identifying key regional strategic priorities, advocating for these priorities, and building collaborations around these priorities with other levels of government, industry, and community. Find out more at www.hunterjo.com.au

