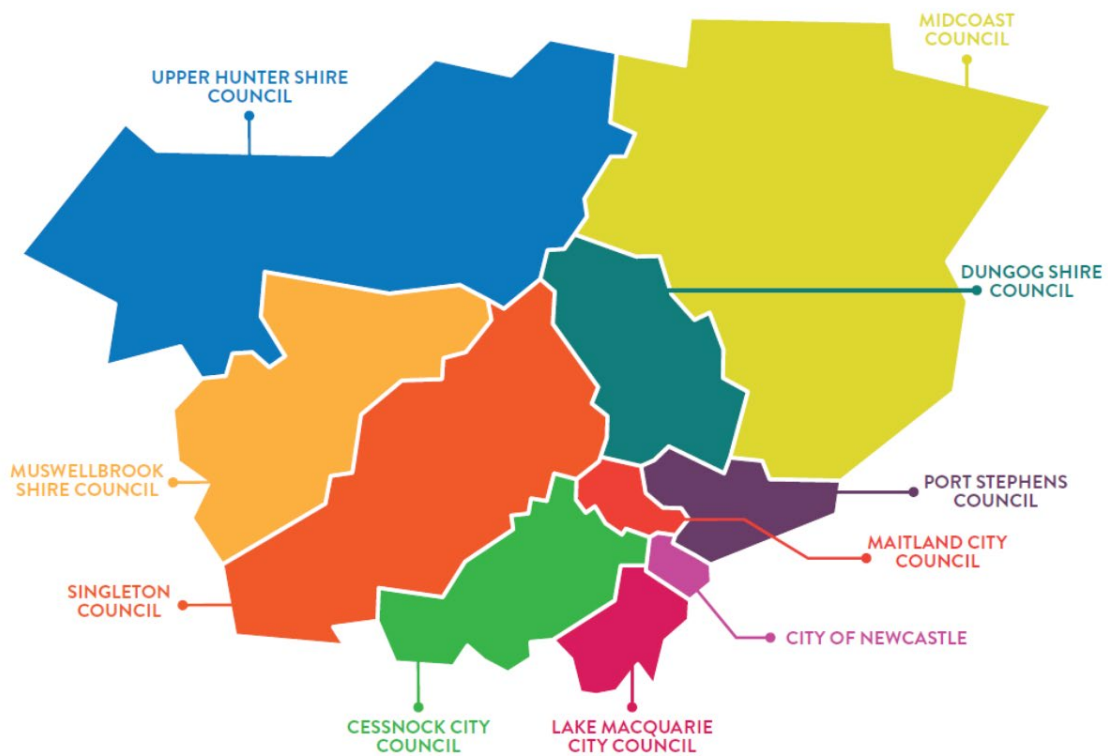


## Hunter JO Board Meeting

1:00pm, Thursday 14 December 2023



## HUNTER JO AGENDA: 14 December 2023

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## 1. Welcome and Apologies

### 1.1 Acknowledgement of Country

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*We acknowledge the country and history of the traditional custodians of the lands upon which we meet today. We pay our respects to the Elders past, present and emerging, of our region, and of Australia.*

### 1.2 Conflicts of Interest

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<b>Hunter JO Strategic Theme / Advocacy Priority:</b>	Governance and Leadership
<b>Objective(s):</b>	5.1.2 Support effective leadership, decision making and good governance by the Hunter JO Board.
<b>Report Author:</b>	Louisa Bulley, Executive Officer
<b>Responsible Manager:</b>	Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO

#### **Executive Summary:**

This report proposes, for approval, a process and register for Board Members to declare actual, perceived, or potential conflicts of interest. It is proposed that this process and register become a standing item for the Hunter JO Board Meeting Agendas.

#### **Recommendations:**

- **That the Board endorse the proposed Hunter JO Conflict of Interest Declaration Form, Hunter JO Conflict of Interest Register, and the Hunter JO Gifts & Benefits Register be endorsed for future use in reporting**
- **That any Conflicts of Interest be declared**
- **That the Hunter JO Gifts & Benefits Register for the 2022-23 financial year be received and noted**

#### **Background**

The Hunter JO audit for the 2022-23FY identified a key risk relating to the organisation's risk and compliance management processes and framework. While conflicts of interest have historically been identified by Board Members previously on the basis of specific agenda items, this report proposes a standing process and register for any conflicts to be identified in each meeting.

The proposed Conflict of Interest Declaration Form provided at Annexure B has been based on NSW Government Board and Committee declaration forms, including the Local Land Services Board Member Declaration Form. It is also consistent with the form and process used by the Arrow Board Members, and therefore aligns to the Arrow-Hunter JO Governance Framework.

**Discussion:** N/A

#### **Financial / Resourcing Implications:**

No material impacts anticipated.

#### **Next steps:**

In line with the proposed recommendations, implementation of the process and register is suggested to follow the below structure:

1. At the start of each meeting, the Chair will call for any conflicts from Board Members
2. If any conflicts are declared within the meeting;

- a. the Board Member making the declaration will complete the form included at Annexure B, and provide a copy to the Secretariat within 10 business days of the meeting, for record-keeping
  - b. The declaration will be added to the register, included at Annexure A, to be kept as a record for the course of the financial year within which the declaration was made.
3. The Conflict of Interest Register will be noted at each meeting of the Hunter JO Board

It is also proposed that the Hunter JO Gifts & Benefits Register be noted and adopted on an annual basis, following the conclusion of each financial year (i.e. aligned to the August meeting of the Board).

**Appendices\* / Attachments\*\*:**

- Appendix 1.2-A: Hunter JO Conflict of Interest Register
- Appendix 1.2-B: Gifts & Benefits Register for 2022-23FY (A copy of the Gifts and Benefits Register has been included as a confidential item to the Board, separate to the public papers)
- Appendix 1.2-C: Conflict of Interest Declaration Form

\*Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

\*\*Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.



**Appendix 1.2-A: Hunter JO Conflict of Interest Register**

*The Chair asks for any potential Conflicts of Interest to be declared from members of the Board.*

*That, if any potential conflicts are declared, the interest be included in the below Register at Appendix A, and the Director in question complete the Arrow Conflict of Interest Declaration form to submit to the Secretariat.*

Board Member Name:	Standing or Agenda-Specific Conflict?	If Agenda-Specific, provide the date of the meeting:	Agenda Paper Item No.:	Subject Matter of Agenda Paper:	Nature of Interest:	Significance of Interest:	Please describe the nature of the interest that you have:	Function affected:	Action taken in relation to conflict:	Reason for course of action:	Declaration

## 1.2-C: Conflict of Interest Declaration Form

Link to online form: [Hunter JO Conflict of Interest Form](#)

1. Board Member Name: \*

Enter your answer

2. Is this a standing conflict, or in relation to items on the agenda for a particular meeting of the Hunter JO Board? \*

☐ Standing conflict of interest

☐ Related to items on agenda for Board Meeting

☐ Both

☐ Other

3. If related to an agenda item, please provide the date of the meeting:

Please input date (dd/MM/yyyy)



4. Agenda Paper Item No.:

Enter your answer

5. Subject Matter of Agenda Paper:

Enter your answer

6. Nature of Interest: \*

☐ Pecuniary

☐ Non-pecuniary

7. Significance of Interest: \*

- ☐ Significant:
- ☐ Non-significant

8. Please describe the nature of the interest that you have: \*

Enter your answer

9. Function affected (please describe the function or decision you are required to undertake that is affected by the interest): \*

Enter your answer

10. Action taken in relation to conflict (describe the action you have decided to take): \*

- ☐ Take no action
- ☐ Limit involvement
- ☐ Remove the source of the conflict
- ☐ Have no involvement
- ☐ Other

11. Reason for course of action (provide an explanation for why you consider this course of action to be appropriate): \*

Enter your answer

12. Declaration: I confirm that the answers I have provided are a true and accurate record at the time of submission \*

- ☐ Yes

## 2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

### 2.1 Minutes of Meeting 10 August 2023

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#### **Hunter JO Board Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday 10 August 2023**

**Coquun-Hunter River Boardroom, 4 Sandringham Ave Thornton NSW**

#### **Voting Directors Present**

Cr Jay Suvaal,	Cessnock City Council
Cr John Connors,	Dungog Shire Council
Cr Kay Fraser,	Lake Macquarie City Council
Cr Philip Penfold,	Maitland City Council
Cr Claire Pontin,	MidCoast Council
Cr Nuatali Nelmes,	City of Newcastle
Cr Steve Reynolds,	Muswellbrook Shire Council
Cr Sue Moore,	Singleton Shire Council (Chair)

#### **Non-Voting Members Present**

Ken Liddell	General Manager, Cessnock City Council
Gareth Curtis,	General Manager, Dungog Shire Council
Morven Cameron,	CEO, Lake Macquarie City Council
Jeff Smith,	General Manager, Maitland City Council
Adrian Panuccio,	General Manager, MidCoast Council
Jeremy Bath,	CEO, City of Newcastle
Derek Finnegan,	General Manager, Muswellbrook Shire Council
Tim Crosdale,	General Manager, Port Stephens Council
Greg McDonald,	General Manager, Upper Hunter Shire Council
Jason Linnane,	General Manager, Singleton Council

#### **Apologies**

Cr Maurice Collison,	Upper Hunter Shire Council
Cr Ryan Palmer,	Port Stephens Council
Scott Goold,	Deputy Director Regional Development, Regional NSW

#### **Staff in attendance**

Joe James, CEO,	Hunter Joint Organisation
Louisa Bulley,	Executive Officer, Hunter JO (Secretariat)
Steve Wilson,	Director Regional Policy and Programs, Hunter JO
Kali Somerville,	Media and Communications Officer, Hunter JO
Lisa Lord,	Manager of Finance and Administration, Arrow & Hunter JO
Bonnie Gradwell,	Business Administration and Events, Hunter JO

#### **Also Present**

James Patterson	Managing Director, JMP Consultants
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*The formal meeting opened at 10.51am.*

#### **Item 1 Welcome and Apologies**

##### **1.1 Acknowledgements of Country**

*The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the Board with an Acknowledgement of Country.*

***Resolved: That the apologies be noted.***

***Moved: Steve Reynolds, Seconded: John Connors. Carried.***

##### **1.2 Conflict of Interest**

*The Chair called for any conflicts of interest to be registered by members of the Board.*

##### **1.3 Closed Session**

*Board closed session from 10.00am to 10.51pm. At the direction of the Chair, the Board held a closed session for confidential matters. It was agreed the matters discussed would remain in closed council.*

#### **Item 2 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

##### **2.1 Minutes of 8 June 2023**

***Resolved: That the minutes of the previous meetings of 8 June 2023 be adopted***

***Moved: John Connors, Seconded: Jay Suvaal. Carried.***

#### **Item 3 Confirmation of Minutes & Business Arising from Minutes**

***Resolved: That the Action Registers be noted, and that items HJO-20-65, HJO-20-71 and HJO-23-007 be***

***Removed***

***Moved: Jay Suvaal, Seconded: Steve Reynolds. Carried.***

##### **3.1 Hunter Joint Organisation Board Action Register**

*The report was taken as read.*

##### **3.2 Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan Action Register**

*The report was taken as read.*

##### **3.3 Subcommittee for Economic Evolution**

*The report was taken as read.*

#### **Item 4 Presentations**

*Nil.*

#### **Item 5 Correspondence**

***Resolved: That the update report be received and noted.***

***Moved: Jay Suvaal, Seconded: John Connors. Carried.***

#### **Item 6 Items for Hunter JO Board – For Decision**

##### **6.1 Hunter JO Interim Leadership Arrangements [Confidential Item]**

*The item was discussed in confidential session.*

***Resolved:***

***1. The Board notes the contents of this report.***

***2. That the Board supports the delay in recruitment of a CEO until such time as a further report is provided to address items including but not limited to:***

***a) HJO purpose,***

***b) objectives,***

***c) priorities,***

- d) success measures,*
- e) structure,*
- f) systems/processes and*
- g) staffing.*

**3. That the Board endorses the interim leadership model until such time as a decision is made on further leadership structure, including;**

- a) Endorsement of the draft Hunter JO Delivery Plan for the Interim Leadership Model period; and,*
- b) That, in line with this interim leadership model, the Director Hunter JO be given delegation in line with the CEO role for this period, as outlined in the delegations register.*

**Moved: Cr John Connors, Seconded: Cr Steve Reynolds. Carried**

## **6.2 Royalties for Rejuvenation: Ministerial Appointment [Confidential Item]**

*The item was discussed in confidential session.*

**Resolved:**

- ***That the Hunter JO Board request the Director Hunter JO and Chair of GMAC to support the Chair of the Hunter JO in making the necessary enquiries with the Department of Regional NSW and, if the Hunter JO Chair determines appropriate, the Minister, regarding the Hunter JO have direct representation on the Expert Panel, in position rather than in person.***
- ***That the Director Hunter JO and Chair of GMAC report back to the Hunter JO Board on these enquiries.***

**Moved: Cr Steve Reynolds, Seconded: Cr Jay Suvaal. Carried**

## **6.3 Hunter JO Procurement Issue**

*The report was taken as read.*

**Resolved:**

- 1. That GMAC be asked to report to the next meeting of the JO on the feasibility of transferring all staff engaged in the regional policy and program delivery unit from Arrow to the JO.***
- 2. That as an interim measure pending a consideration of the report anticipated in 1 above and advice from the Minister for Local Government (3 below), the circumstances set forth in confidential annexure 'A' to this recommendation be considered as extenuating circumstances pursuant to s.55(3)(i) of the Local Government Act.***
- 3. That a copy of this recommendation (including confidential annexure 'A') be forwarded to the OLG referencing our earlier meetings and correspondence and seeking concurrence to the action now taken and requesting advice on the current position with respect to the request to the Minister as to the possible breach(s) of s.55 of the Local Government Act.***
- 4. In accordance with Section 10A (2)(a) Local Government Act 1993 Annexure A remain confidential as deals with 'personnel matters concerning particular individuals (other than councillors)'***

**Moved: John Connors, Seconded: Steve Reynolds. Carried.**

## **6.4 Hunter JO Funding and Grant Opportunities**

*Steve Wilson Director Regional Policy and Programs, Hunter JO spoke to this report providing an update and seeking endorsement from the Board.*

**Resolved:**

- 1. Note the outcomes of previous grant applications endorsed by the Board***
- 2. Endorse submission of the new "Resilient Hunter Central Coast Platform" funding proposal.***

**Moved: Jay Suvaal, Seconded: Kay Fraser. Carried.**

## **6.5 Major Event Feasibility Study**

*Kim Carland, Program Lead, Hunter JO spoke to this report providing an update and sort endorsement from the Board.*

**Resolved:**

- 1. The Board receive the Major Events Feasibility Study and note its findings and recommendations.**
- 2. The findings and recommendations of the Study be considered and, where appropriate, integrated into the Accelerating Event Economies Report and Presentation requested on resourcing options (i.e Action Item HJO-23-009).**

**Moved: Steve Reynolds, Seconded: Claire Pontin. Carried.**

## **Item 7 Items for Hunter JO Board – For Noting**

### **7.1 CEO Report**

*The report was taken as read and noted. Cr Jay Suvaal, Mayor Cessnock City Council thanked the Mayors for being present and engaging on his and the Chair's behalf at the ALGA Conference and the CEO Joe James for his support at that time.*

**Resolved: That the report be received and noted.**

**Moved: Jay Suvaal, Seconded: Sue Moore. Carried.**

### **7.2 Hunter JO Financial Report**

*The report was taken as read and noted.*

**Resolved: That the Income Statement for period ending June 2023 be received and noted.**

**Moved: John Connors, Seconded: Jay Suvaal. Carried.**

### **7.3 Hunter JO Advocacy Update**

*The report was taken as read and noted.*

**Resolved: That the Hunter JO Advocacy Report be received and noted.**

**Moved: John Connors, Seconded: Kay Fraser. Carried.**

### **7.4 Hunter JO Sub-Committees Standing Update**

*The report was taken as read and noted.*

**Resolved: That the Board receive and note the updates on the Hunter JO Sub-Committees.**

**Moved: Kay Fraser, Seconded: Steve Reynolds. Carried.**

### **7.5 Progress Report: Hunter JO Strategic Plan, Communications & Engagement Strategy**

*The report was taken as read and noted.*

**Resolved: That the Board receive and note the six-monthly progress reports for the Hunter JO Strategic Plan and Communications and Engagement Strategy.**

**Moved: Steve Reynolds, Seconded: Claire Pontin. Carried.**

### **7.6 Environment Program Annual Report**

*The report was taken as read and noted.*

**Resolved: That the Board receive and note the annual Environment Program report.**

**Moved: Kay Fraser, Seconded: Jay Suvaal. Carried.**

### **7.7 Hunter JO Program Status Report & Highlights**

*The report was taken as read and noted.*

**Resolved: That the report be received and noted.**

**Moved: Claire Pontin, Seconded: Jay Suvaal. Carried.**

### **7.8 Regional NSW Standing Update**

*No update to be provided to the August 2023 Hunter JO Board Meeting, due to staffing change within Regional NSW.*

## **Item 8 Matters Raised by Members**

*Nil.*

**Item 9 General Business**

**9.1 Compliance & Governance Calendars**

*The report was taken as read and noted.*

***Resolved: That the report be received and noted.***

***Moved: Jay Suvaal, Seconded: Steve Reynolds. Carried.***

*Meeting closed 11.21am.*



### 3. Confirmation of Minutes & Business Arising from Minutes

**Recommendation: That the minutes of the Hunter JO Board Meeting held on 10 August 2023 be received and noted.**

#### 3.1 Hunter JO Board Action Register

I.D	Action	Mtg Date		Due	Notes
HJO-19-013	That a discussion of Audit, Risk and Improvement Committees be added to the agenda for the HJO for discussion at a later date	29 Aug 2019	In progress	Revised Due date: March 2021  Revised Status: On Hold (no update since March 21)	Aug2023: With the final draft of the guidelines now provided by OLG (while still in draft), GMAC have asked that an update be provided to the Hunter JO Board at its October 2023 Meeting.  Mar2021: GMAC have discussed and indicated to put on hold until the framework is finalised and provided from OLG.  GMAC 25 March 2021 meeting resolution is as follows: That no further investigation of shared resourcing of ARICs be completed until the OLG Framework has been finalised, and at that point only if member councils' express interest in sharing resources (if this option is allowed within the Framework).
HJO-23-009	HJO-23-009: Accelerating Event Economies (A2E) in the Hunter: The Hunter JO Board would like this item to be brought back to the next meeting as a detailed report around Option 1 – Business As Usual (BAU) + A2E tools and Option 2 – collaborate	8 June 2023	Complete	<del>Aug 2023</del> 14 Dec 23	Nov23: Referenced in Item 8.3.  Aug2023: Item deferred to accommodate following report (and presentation) in August meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hunter JO Interim Management Arrangements</li><li>• Outcomes and recommendations from the Major Events Feasibility Study, which provides important context prior to the Board considering the report on regional event attraction models.</li></ul>

I.D	Action	Mtg Date		Due	Notes
HJO-23-016	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Board notes the contents of this report.</li> <li>2. That the Board supports the delay in recruitment of a CEO until such time as a further report is provided to address items including but not limited to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) HJO purpose,</li> <li>b) objectives,</li> <li>c) priorities,</li> <li>d) success measures,</li> <li>e) structure,</li> <li>f) systems/processes and</li> <li>g) staffing.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. That the Board endorses the interim leadership model until such time as a decision is made on further leadership structure, including; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Endorsement of the draft Hunter JO Delivery Plan for the Interim Leadership Model period; and,</li> <li>b) That, in line with this interim leadership model, the Director Hunter JO be given delegation in line with the CEO role for this period, as outlined in the delegations register.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	10 Aug 23	Complete	28 Sep 23	
HJO-23-017	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the Hunter JO Board request the Director Hunter JO and Chair of GMAC to support the Chair of the Hunter JO in making the necessary enquiries with the Department of Regional NSW and, if the Hunter JO Chair determines appropriate, the Minister, regarding the Hunter JO have direct representation on the Expert Panel, in position rather than in person.</li> <li>2. That the Director Hunter JO and Chair of GMAC report back to the Hunter JO Board on these enquiries.</li> </ol>	10 Aug 23	Underway	14 Dec 23	Nov23: Letters to the Hon Tara Moriarty MLC, Minister for Regional NSW and the Hon Courtney Houssos MLC, Minister for Natural Resources included in Correspondence. Reply pending.
HJO-23-018	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That GMAC be asked to report to the next meeting of the JO on the feasibility of transferring all staff engaged in the regional policy and program delivery unit from Arrow to the JO.</li> </ol>	10 Aug 23	Complete	14 Dec 23	Nov23: Report provided at Item 7.1

I.D	Action	Mtg Date		Due	Notes
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. That as an interim measure pending a consideration of the report anticipated in 1 above and advice from the Minister for Local Government (3 below), the circumstances set forth in confidential annexure 'A' to this recommendation be considered as extenuating circumstances pursuant to s.55(3)(i) of the Local Government Act.</li> <li>3. That a copy of this recommendation (including confidential annexure 'A') be forwarded to the OLG referencing our earlier meetings and correspondence and seeking concurrence to the action now taken and requesting advice on the current position with respect to the request to the Minister as to the possible breach(s) of s.55 of the Local Government Act.</li> <li>4. In accordance with Section 10A (2)(a) Local Government Act 1993 Annexure A remain confidential as deals with 'personnel matters concerning particular individuals (other than councillors)'</li> </ol>				
HJO-23-020	That the Hunter JO Board endorse submission of the new "Resilient Hunter Central Coast Platform" funding proposal.	10 Aug 23	Complete	14 Dec 23	Nov23: Funding proposal submitted. Given recent changes in relation to the Greater Cities Commission, it is not anticipated that funding will become available.
HJO-23-019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Board receive the Major Events Feasibility Study and note its findings and recommendations.</li> <li>• The findings and recommendations of the Study be considered and, where appropriate, integrated into the Accelerating Event Economies Report and Presentation requested on resourcing options (i.e Action Item HJO-23-009).</li> </ul>	10 Aug 23	Complete	14 Dec 23	Nov23: Referenced in Item 8.3.

#### 4. Hunter JO Risk Register & Reporting

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<b>Hunter JO Strategic Theme / Advocacy Priority:</b>	Governance & Leadership
<b>Objective(s):</b>	5.1.1 Demonstrate a high standard of transparency and accountability through Hunter JO Board involvement and timely reporting practices.
<b>Report Author:</b>	Louisa Bulley, Executive Officer
<b>Responsible Manager:</b>	Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO

##### **Executive Summary:**

This report proposes, for approval, the format and current identified high risks on the Hunter JO Risk Register, and that inclusion of this register become a standing item for the Hunter JO Board Meeting Agendas.

##### **Recommendation(s):**

- That the Hunter JO Board note the Hunter JO Risk Register
- That the Hunter JO Board identify any new risks for inclusion on the Risk Register
- That the Hunter JO Board note and endorse the consequence and likelihood tables as part of the Enterprise Governance and Risk Register, as the basis for assessment of risks on the Hunter JO Risk Register
- That the Hunter JO Risk Register be reported as a standing item for Hunter JO Board Meeting agendas

##### **Background:**

The Hunter JO audit for the 2022-23FY identified a key risk relating to the organisation's risk and compliance management processes and framework. While an Enterprise Risk Register has been in place spanning both Arrow and the Hunter JO for the last 12 months, separation of those risks that are specific to the Hunter JO for inclusion in the Board Pack has now being actioned to resolve this issue.

The risks included on the register have been identified by the Hunter JO Director, Executive Officer, and the Arrow Chief Operating Officer, as well as through the Hunter JO Audits.

##### **Discussion:**

The identification and analysis of risks included on the register have used the Likelihood and Consequence tables developed as part of the Enterprise Governance & Risk Framework (across both Arrow and the Hunter JO). Development of this framework has taken place over the past 18 months as a priority project within Arrow, executed by the Executive Officer in collaboration with the Leadership Team and the General Managers of the ten Councils.

While it was always intended within the project plan that the Governance & Risk Framework be brought to the Hunter JO Board for formal endorsement, this had been delayed by other key projects being managed within Arrow.

The following have been included in the Appendices for consideration and approval by the Hunter JO Board;

- Hunter JO Risk Register
- Hunter JO-Arrow Governance & Risk Framework, including the Enterprise Governance & Compliance Calendar

##### **Financial / Resourcing Implications:**

The Governance & Risk Framework is managed by the Executive Officer, and is overseen by both the Hunter JO Director and the Arrow Chief Operations Officer.

**Next steps:**

1. In line with the Interim Leadership Arrangements, the Organisational Risk Register is reviewed monthly between the Executive Officer, Hunter JO Director, and Arrow Chief Operations Officer to identify any new risks, and evaluate those already on the register.
2. The Register is also brought for review monthly to a meeting of the Leadership Team, and to a meeting of the Hunter JO Policy & Programs Team.
3. The Register is then reported bi-monthly to the Arrow and Hunter JO Boards, with an invitation for any new risks to be identified within the meeting for inclusion on the register.
4. An annual review of the Governance & Risk Framework has been included on the Hunter JO-Arrow Governance & Compliance Calendar

**Appendices\* / Attachments\*\*:**

- Appendix 4-A: Hunter JO Risk Register (A copy of the Hunter JO Risk Register has been included as a confidential item to the Board, separate to the public papers)
- Attachment 4-1: Hunter JO-Arrow Governance & Risk Framework
- Attachment 4-2: Hunter JO Board Forward Planner & Governance Calendar 2023-25
- Attachment 4-3: JO-Calendar-of-Compliance-and-Reporting-Requirements-2023-24

\*Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

\*\*Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

## 5. Presentations

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*Nil presentations planned for December meeting.*

## 6. Correspondence

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<b>Hunter JO Strategic Theme / Advocacy Priority:</b>	Governance & Leadership
<b>Objective(s):</b>	5.3.1 Facilitate Intergovernmental collaboration to identify and take up opportunities that align with our strategic regional priorities, Advocacy Framework and Priorities Document and Hunter JO Board and Subcommittees.
<b>Report Author:</b>	Louisa Bulley, Executive Officer
<b>Responsible Manager:</b>	Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO

### Executive Summary:

This report provides an update on correspondence sent and received in relation to GMAC and the Hunter Joint Organisation Board.

### Recommendation(s):

**That the correspondence be received and noted.**

**Background:** N/A

**Discussion:** N/A

**Financial / Resourcing Implications:** N/A

**Next steps:** N/A

**Appendices\* / Attachments\*\*:**

### Correspondence Sent:

- Attachment 6-1: Correspondence to Brett Whitworth re Audit Engagement
- Attachment 6-2: Correspondence to Brett Whitworth from Hunter JO Chair re August Meeting
- Attachment 6-3: Correspondence to Brett Whitworth from Director Hunter JO re Items Raised in Audit
- Attachment 6-4: Correspondence to NIER re Letter of Support for New Energy Skills Hub
- Attachment 6-5: Correspondence to Brett Whitworth re Arrow Board
- Attachment 6-6: Correspondence to Cessnock Council re Funding Proposal for Shiraz to Shore
- Attachment 6-7: Correspondence to Minister Moriarty re Regional Development Road Map
- Attachment 6-8: Correspondence to Minister Moriarty re Hunter Expert Panel
- Attachment 6-9: Correspondence to Minister Houssos re Hunter Expert Panel

### Correspondence Received:

- Attachment 6-10: – Correspondence from Minister Aitchison re Roads Repair Funding

\*Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

\*\*Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

## 7. Items for the Hunter JO Board: For Decision

### 7.1 Hunter JO Annual Performance Statement 2022-23

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<b>Hunter JO Strategic Theme / Advocacy Priority:</b>	Governance & Leadership
<b>Objective(s):</b>	5.1.4 Undertake robust integrated planning and reporting underpinned by effective consultation and delivery of strategic regional priorities.
<b>Report Author:</b>	Louisa Bulley, Executive Officer
<b>Responsible Manager:</b>	Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO

#### **Executive Summary:**

This report provides, for retrospective endorsement, the Hunter JO Annual Performance Statement for the 2022-23 financial year. The final document was provided to the Board for consideration as a circular resolution, in order to be submitted to the Office of Local Government on the due date of 30 November.

#### **Recommendation(s):**

- **That the Board endorse the Hunter JO Performance statement for the 2022-23 period, and its submission to the Office of Local Government on 30 November 2023**
- **That the Board endorse publication of the Hunter JO Performance Statement for the 2022-23 period on the Hunter JO website**

#### **Background:**

Under the *NSW Local Government Act*, Joint Organisations must prepare an annual performance statement within five months after the end of the financial year. For JOs the report should identify their progress in implementing strategies and plans for delivering strategic regional priorities.

Attachment 7.2-1 includes the draft Hunter JO Performance statement for the 2022/23 period.

**Discussion:** N/A

**Financial / Resourcing Implications:** N/A

#### **Next steps:**

In line with the JO Calendar of Governance and Compliance the following steps will be taken following endorsement;

1. Hunter JO Annual Performance Statement 2022-23 has been provided to the Office of Local Government, following its circulation to the Board for review in the last week of November
2. The Statement will be published on the Hunter JO Website by 30 December 2023

#### **Appendices\* / Attachments\*\*:**

- Attachment 7.1-2 – Hunter JO Annual Performance Statement 2022-23

\*Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

\*\*Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

## 7.2 Submission to NSW Waste Levy Review Process

<b>Hunter JO Strategic Theme / Advocacy Priority:</b>	Strategic Theme: Jobs and a Growing Economy  Advocacy priority: Significant funding and investment is needed to implement circular economy and waste management initiatives to unlock economic growth and sustainability for the Hunter region.
<b>Objective(s):</b>	3.4 A region that is built around Circular Economy principles as a driver of future jobs
<b>Report Author:</b>	Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO
<b>Responsible Manager:</b>	Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO

### Executive Summary:

A review of the NSW Waste Levy has been approved by the NSW Minister for the Environment, the focus and scope of which is currently being formulated by the NSW Environment Protection Authority, in consultation with stakeholder organisations across NSW. The NSW EPA has approached the Hunter JO and all Member Councils directly, with an invitation to meet to discuss the proposed focus and process for the review. This paper provides a draft submission for the Board's consideration, which aims to articulate the key priorities and underlying principles that the Hunter JO believes should be included in the focus and scope of the review process.

### Recommendations:

#### That the Board:

1. Endorse the draft submission and/or provide advice on further amendments.
2. Endorse writing to the following representatives to provide a copy of the submission:
  - The Hon Penny Sharpe MLC, Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy & Minister for the Environment
  - Rayne de Gruchy, Chairperson of the NSW EPA Board
  - Tony Chappel, CEO – NSW EPA

### Background

The NSW EPA is currently in a phase of evidence-gathering, with council consultations ongoing, to understand how best to engage with Councils over the course of this review process, and to seek the views of Councils on a broad range of subjects including the scope of the review and issues or feedback regarding the waste levy and waste related issues. In response to the invitation from the EPA, the following initial briefings and meetings have been organised at the regional level with EPA representatives:

Date	Focus
30 <sup>th</sup> November 2023	Briefing to General Managers Advisory Committee meeting
13 <sup>th</sup> December 2023	Briefing and discussion with Regional Waste Managers Network

### Discussion

The purpose of preparing the regional submission is to, as an initial step, provide a regional position statement to the EPA that communicates the Hunter JO Regional Hunter Advocacy position that:

- Significant funding and investment is needed to implement circular economy and waste management initiatives to unlock economic growth and sustainability for the Hunter region.
- That the NSW Government commit to, and implement in partnership with Local Government, a process that ensures transparency of waste levy funds and explores the feasibility and mechanisms to



return 100% of Waste Levy contributions for reinvestment in local and regional Circular Economy initiatives and waste avoidance infrastructure and services.

**Financial / Resourcing Implications:**

Preparation of the submission and communication to Ministers and key agency representatives will be undertaken within existing Hunter JO staff resources.

**Next steps:**

1. Correspondence to identified Ministers and key agency representatives providing a copy of the submission.
2. Dissemination of the final submission to all member Councils to support individual communications with the EPA regarding the waste levy review.
3. Dissemination of the submission to all Hunter-based NSW MPs

**Appendices\* / Attachments\*\*:**

- Appendix 7.2A – Draft Submission – Recommendations to inform focus and scope of NSW Waste Levy review

\*Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

\*\*Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.



The Hon. Penny Sharpe, MLC  
Minister for the Environment  
52 Martin Place  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

14<sup>th</sup> December 2023

### **Re: Recommendations to inform focus and scope of NSW Waste Levy review**

The Member Councils of the Hunter Joint Organisation (JO) welcome the recent invitation from the NSW Environment Protection Authority to meet to discuss the proposed review of the NSW Waste Levy and look forward to actively collaborating with the EPA on the review process. The ten Member Councils of the Hunter JO strongly support a review of the Waste Levy, with a view to:

- Delivering Local Government's long-standing position that the waste levy should be fully hypothecated for waste minimisation and management programs.
- Delivering the level and sustainability of funding that is needed to drive the transition at local and regional scales to circular economy, net zero and waste reduction policy targets.
- Increasing the level of local government representation in decision-making governing the prioritisation and expenditure of waste levy funds in local and regional communities.
- Determining a more equitable approach to the determination of waste levy charges across Local Government Areas.
- Analysing the broader economic and social benefits and returns that could be generated by reinvesting all waste levy revenue back into the local and regional communities from which it is collected, for circular economy and waste management initiatives.

I refer you to the following submission providing further detail on our recommendations for reform of the NSW Waste Levy, which we encourage you to consider in determining the focus and scope of the current review process.

Should you have any further queries please don't hesitate to contact Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO at [steve@hunterjo.com.au](mailto:steve@hunterjo.com.au) or on 0448 401 436.

Yours Sincerely

Cr Sue Moore  
Chair Hunter JO

cc Rayne de Gruchy, Chairperson of the Board - NSW Environment Protection Authority;  
Tony Chappel, CEO - NSW Environment Protection Authority



## **Submission: Recommendations on the focus and scope of the review of the NSW Waste Levy, December 2023**

### **The Hunter Joint Organisation**

The Hunter Joint Organisation is the statutory local government entity established by the NSW Government, through the *NSW Local Government Act 1993*, to support the Councils of the Hunter Region work together for better rural and regional outcomes, and to enhance the way local and state governments work together to plan and deliver important regional infrastructure and investment.

Member Councils of the Hunter JO include:

- Cessnock City Council
- Dungog Shire Council
- Lake Macquarie City Council
- Maitland City Council
- MidCoast Council
- Muswellbrook Shire Council
- City of Newcastle
- Port Stephens Council
- Singleton Council
- Upper Hunter Shire Council

The core statutory functions established by the NSW Government for the Hunter JO include:

1. **Strategic planning and priority setting** – to establish strategic regional priorities for the Joint Organisation area and to establish strategies and plans for delivering those priorities.
2. **Intergovernmental collaboration** - to identify and take up opportunities for inter-governmental cooperation on matters relating to the Joint Organisation area.
3. **Shared leadership and advocacy** - to provide regional leadership for the Joint Organisation area and to be an advocate for strategic regional priorities.

### **Strategic Priorities**

The Hunter is recognised as one of the leading regions in Australia in developing and implementing circular economy and waste management initiatives. This effort is being led by the Councils of the region who are committed to transitioning the Hunter region toward a circular economy, as a key component of our transition to net zero, and to evolve the Hunter and NSW economies beyond their current dependence on coal exports. The transition to a circular economy is widely recognised as a key foundation on which the investment and innovation needed to create the new industries and jobs that will underpin this economic evolution will be built.

At a more immediate level, this transition to a circular economy is also seen as the primary opportunity through which to address a multitude of waste and recycling challenges currently facing the region. If not addressed, some of the region's domestic landfills will be full this decade, which will present communities across the region with significant and costly issues for the disposal of waste.

These aspirations of the ten Hunter JO Member Councils to transition toward a Circular Economy are reflected in the following shared strategic directions (Source: [Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2032](#)):

Objective	Strategic Direction
3.4 A region that is built around circular economy principles as a driver of future jobs.	3.4.1 Support knowledge sharing and embed circular economy principles in our strategies and plans to provide a pathway to future jobs creation in our local supply chains and services.
	3.4.2 Support implementation of the Hunter Central Coast Circular Economy Roadmap.
4.2 Making use of our opportunity to drive circular evolution of our region's economy.	4.2.1 Support meeting our future regional infrastructure and operations for circular outcomes.
	4.2.2 Reduce carbon emissions through better waste and materials management.
4.4 Supporting our region to be on the path to net zero emissions and paving the way with smart innovative solutions that increase liveability.	4.4.2 Support regional collaboration around clean energy and future energy initiatives and industries.

The Hunter and Central Coast Regional Circular Materials Strategy 2022-27 further defines these priorities. It provides the Hunter JO's strategic direction as a regional response to the NSW EPA Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2021-41 (WaSM), including a 20-year vision and initial five-year implementation plan that will require substantial, sustained and strategically targeted investment to deliver. Endorsed by both the NSW EPA and all Hunter Mayors (via the Hunter JO Board), the strategy focuses on four priority themes:

1. **Collaboration** - Identifying and delivering on opportunities for strategic collaboration to solve regional problems for greatest positive impact. Through regional knowledge sharing, communication and engagement, advocacy, education and behaviour change, and procurement.
2. **Circularity** - Enabling and influencing the circular economy by understanding the full material supply chain creating cradle-to-cradle solutions. Focused on transforming upstream and downstream material flows to become more circular.
3. **Resource Recovery** - Maintaining regional continuity and enhancement of core waste and resource recovery infrastructure, operations, and services.
4. **Protecting the Environment** - Creating a regionally coordinated approach to protect our environment and human health through problem waste management. As well as improving regional disaster resilience and environmental regeneration.

These regional directions identified for the Hunter are consistent with and have the capacity to significantly support delivery of a number of NSW and Australian Government legislative and policy objectives (refer Attachment 1), including:

- *National Waste Policy (2018)*
- *National Waste Action Plan (2019)*
- *NSW Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2001*
- *NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041*
- *NSW Circular Economy Policy (2019)*
- *NSW Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020-2030*
- *The NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041*

### **Investing in the Circular Economy Transition - the Challenge for Local Government**

While there exists substantial and increasingly strong alignment in the policy directions of Local, State and Commonwealth Governments to the approaches needed to drive the transition to a circular economy, current government funding and investment frameworks to support this change are not effective in driving the step-wise and sustained change in systems and investment that is needed.

Key challenges in this regard include:

- Local Councils, working either individually or at regional scales to drive this change are largely reliant on competitive based grant programs delivered through the NSW EPA. While these programs provide assistance, they are neither strategic enough nor adequate in their level of funding to facilitate the strategic and sustained planning and investment that will be required over longer-term planning and investment cycles. For example, while the Hunter JO has developed a Regional Circular Materials Strategy for the Hunter and Central Coast, produced at the direction of the NSW EPA, there exists no sustained or core pipeline of funding to deliver on the priorities it identifies.
- Transitioning to a circular economy is complex. A collaborative and intergovernmental approach to structural and systems change across all levels of government and industry will be central to achieving the transformation to circularity that is required. Regions provide the most appropriate scale for the collaboration and action needed to successfully achieve this objective. However, investment in regional scale, multi partner collaboration, strategic planning, business case analysis and sustained facilitation of the circular economy ecosystem is currently limited compared to the scale of activity that is needed to drive the change necessary.
- Councils continue to face significant challenges from ever changing consumer behaviours, changes to legislative and policy settings, and increasing levels of waste generation. Local government needs support, critically from State Government, to plan and deliver the services that have been mandated. While the Hunter region has been working innovatively in this space, Councils are finding it increasingly challenging to adapt. In the

absence of considerable funding and support from other levels of government, Local Government will not be able to achieve established waste reduction targets.

## A Way Forward

The NSW Waste Levy was originally imposed on Councils across New South Wales by the NSW Government to divert waste from landfill and create a financial incentive to recycle through landfill drop-off charges. A substantial amount of the Waste Levy contributions was intended to fund resource recovery activities including infrastructure and projects.

In line with that policy intent, the increasing level of revenue collected from the NSW Waste Levy, provides the ideal opportunity to provide a substantive and sustained level of investment in place-based local and regional circular economy and waste avoidance and reduction initiatives. Returning Waste Levy funds to local and regional communities via local government and industry would provide a stable source of revenue to address both immediate waste management challenges and to support the strategic and sustained delivery of local and regional circular economy initiatives and waste avoidance infrastructure and services that are needed to meet local, state and national waste reduction and net zero targets. This includes investing in collaborative regional approaches, which are considered the most appropriate scale for the structural and systems change across all levels of government and industry that are needed to drive the transformation to circularity.

Currently however, only a small portion of funds collected through the levy are reinvested back to local government, with this occurring via contestable grants. This approach does not provide the extent, security and sustainability of funding that is necessary to support local government to strategically invest in the local and regional circular economy initiatives and waste avoidance infrastructure and services that are required to meet established targets.

Additionally, since its establishment the proportion of funds returned to councils from the Waste Levy over time has changed significantly, with less and less funding being proportionately reinvested directly back into local communities. In the Hunter Region alone, during the 2022/23 financial year, around \$70 million in waste levy contributions were collected and provided to the NSW Government, however only around \$1.2 million of this has been returned to Councils to fund resource recovery projects. This is symptomatic of a broader trend over the past decade where the proportion of waste levy funds returned to local communities (both in real and percentage terms) has been declining, despite substantial increases in the amount of revenue collected (refer Attachment 2). Across the ten Hunter JO Member Council areas this trend includes:

- Total funding collected by the waste levy has increased from \$29.7M (2011/12) to \$71.4M in (2021/22).
- The proportion of funding returned to Councils has decreased from 9.9% of total waste levy collected in 2011/12, to 3.04% in 2021/22.
- The total value of funding returned to Councils has decreased from \$2.95M in 2011/12 to \$2.17M in 2021/22.



The loss of these funds from the region's communities, from whom it was collected, represents a considerable level of investment that could otherwise be utilised to prioritise and strategically invest in circular economy and waste management initiatives in the Hunter, as a key driver of the region's new jobs, economic growth and sustainability.

At a broader level across NSW, analysis has shown that (WSROC Funding Waste Infrastructure Report, 2022):

- Between 2010 and 2020 the NSW State Government has been investing less than the national average (of 25%) back into the NSW waste and resource recovery industry, with just less than 15% of total waste levy revenue redirected into waste and resource recovery projects each year.
- Similarly to the Hunter Region, the proportion of funds returned to NSW councils more broadly has continued to decline. This is inconsistent with the original intent of the NSW Waste Levy to divert waste from landfill and create a financial incentive to recycle, with a substantial amount intended to fund resource recovery activities. This reduction in funding being provided to Councils:
  - directly impacts local government's crucial role in enabling and preparing their local communities for the transition to a more circular and resilient waste future
  - is directly inhibiting strategic and sustainable investment and innovation by Councils, thereby leaving the state reliant on landfills for waste disposal.

This deficit in funding local place-based initiatives is also reflected in the *The NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041*. Published in 2021, this state-wide strategy confirms that:

- *"One-third of the waste levy revenue collected is returned to the environment portfolio, with more than half of that funding going to waste and circular economy programs and activities"*. This appears to confirm that that just over half of one third of the revenue collected from the waste levy is actually reinvested to waste and circular economy initiatives, of which even less is invested in place-based local government initiatives.
- *"Over the last 9 years, the waste levy has funded the \$800 million Waste Less, Recycle More program, and will continue to fund the implementation of this strategy"*. However, funding of the strategy's implementation moving forward will be predominantly via contestable grants open to both local government and the private sector. This makes it increasingly challenging to establish and sustain the collaborative local and regional ecosystem needed to drive the circular economy, and to establish and sustain a pipeline of local government led projects and initiatives at the scale necessary to drive the transition to circular outcomes.

Further context for the recommendations provided in this submission are also reflected in the outcomes of seven previous reviews of the Waste Levy that have been undertaken since 2010. These include:

1. The Richmond Review, NSW DECCW (now the NSW EPA) 2010;
2. Impact of the waste levy on commercial and industrial recycling, CIE 2011;
3. Review of the NSW Waste and Environment Levy, KPMG 2012;
4. NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into 'Energy from waste' technology, 2018;
5. Inquiry into waste and recycling industry in Australia, The Senate, 2018;

6. Paper Review of Waste Levies in Australia, National Waste and Recycling Industry Council, 2019; and,
7. [Waste levy and grants for waste infrastructure - Performance Audit Report](#), NSW Auditor-General, 2020.

Key findings from these reviews include (WSROC Funding Waste Infrastructure Report, 2022):

- While the waste levy has worked to increase diversion of waste from landfill, the rate of return of levy funds back into the resource recovery industry to support necessary waste infrastructure is historically low.
- The waste levy is applied inconsistently across LGAs. The list of exempt and levy-paying LGAs requires review and updating according to a transparent and objective decision-making process.
- The rate of hypothecation of levy funds back into local government is low and disproportionate to the amount of levy paid.
- A very low rate of hypothecation of levy funds back into the waste and recycling industry exists and grant program requirements need to be reviewed.
- Grants are inflexible and time-bound making it difficult to work in with the planning framework. There is no ability for one-off grants for large amounts of money, and grants cannot be used to buy land for waste infrastructure hindering development. Grants also often impose overly administrative burdens on council, and it can be difficult to justify the time for small amount of funds received.

### **Recommendations on the Focus and Scope of the Review of the NSW Waste Levy**

The ten Member Councils of the Hunter JO strongly support a review of the NSW Waste Levy, and that the focus and scope of this review should encompass the opportunity and pathways for:

- All revenue generated by the waste levy to fund the significant and sustained level of investment required to drive the implementation of circular economy and local and regional waste management initiatives. For the Hunter, this would directly support key NSW policy and regional strategic directions to become a region built around circular economy principles, to drive progress toward net zero objectives, to deliver on established waste reduction targets, and to create the region's future jobs as our economy evolves beyond coal.
- Decision-making authority for the prioritisation and expenditure of waste levy funds to be delegated to regional place-based decision-making processes, to actively enable strategic and sustained investment in circular economy initiatives and waste avoidance infrastructure and services. Local government representation in such decision-making processes would ensure all funding from the waste levy is returned to the communities from which it is collected.
- A more equitable approach to the determination of waste levy charges. For example in the Hunter region, the City of Newcastle is categorised as a metropolitan area and must pay a higher levy rate than the other councils of the region, despite some councils in the Greater



Sydney region being categorised under the regional levy. This has resulted in Newcastle ratepayers paying additional fees of almost \$20 million in a single year.

- That a comprehensive Cost Benefit Assessment be commissioned by the NSW EPA to explore the broader economic and social benefits and returns, compared to Business as Usual, that would be generated from reinvesting all waste levy revenue back into the local and regional communities from which it is collected, for circular economy and waste management initiatives.

These recommendations are based on the following principles, which are recommended to underpin the review process:

- Wherever possible and appropriate, delegation and decision-making authority to place-based mechanisms will strengthen social fabric and empower communities to achieve waste reduction targets.
- Increasing the authority of local decision making and the capacity of regions to successfully achieve waste reduction targets is only possible if supported with appropriate resourcing. Local government is in the best position to determine where funding is best placed and used for the benefit of their communities.
- The current system of reinvesting a small portion of funds collected through the NSW Waste Levy back to local government via contestable grants does not provide the extent, security and sustainability of funding that is necessary to strategically invest in local and regional circular economy initiatives and waste avoidance infrastructure and services.
- Returning Waste Levy funds to local and regional communities will provide a stable source of revenue to support the strategic and sustained delivery of local and regional circular economy initiatives and waste avoidance infrastructure needed to meet local, state and national waste reduction and net zero targets.
- All councils in NSW use the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Framework to guide their planning and reporting activities, including 10-year Community Strategic Plans, 4-year Delivery Program, Annual Operational Plan, Resourcing Strategy and Annual Report. The IP&R Framework provides the planning and accountability mechanism through which investment by the NSW Government (including 100% of waste levy funding), should be directed and aligned to strategically plan, resource and deliver local and regional place-based circular economy and waste management initiatives.
- Transitioning to a circular economy is complex. A collaborative approach to structural and systems change across all levels of government and industry will be central to achieving the transformation to circularity that is required. Regions provide the most appropriate scale for the collaboration and action needed to successfully achieve this objective. Resourcing the collaboration to facilitate and build the circular economy ecosystem will be critical to achieving the pace and scale of transformation that all levels of government are aiming for.

#### Attachments:

1. Commonwealth and State legislative and policy context
2. Decline in waste levy funds collected in the Hunter Region (2011 – 2022)

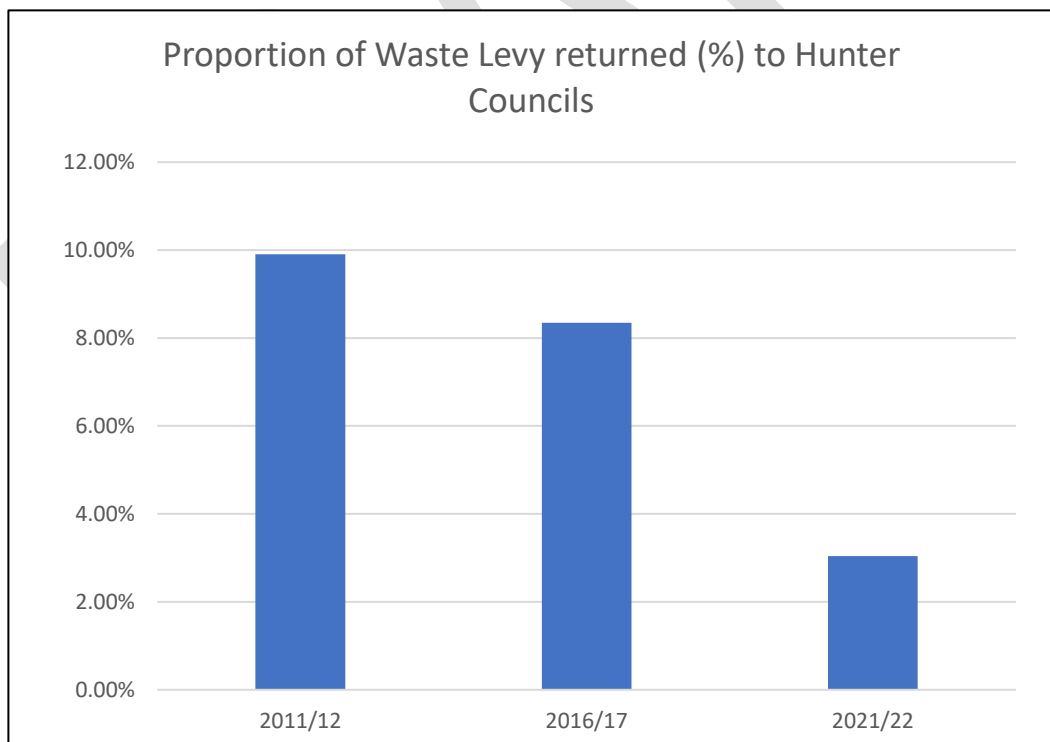
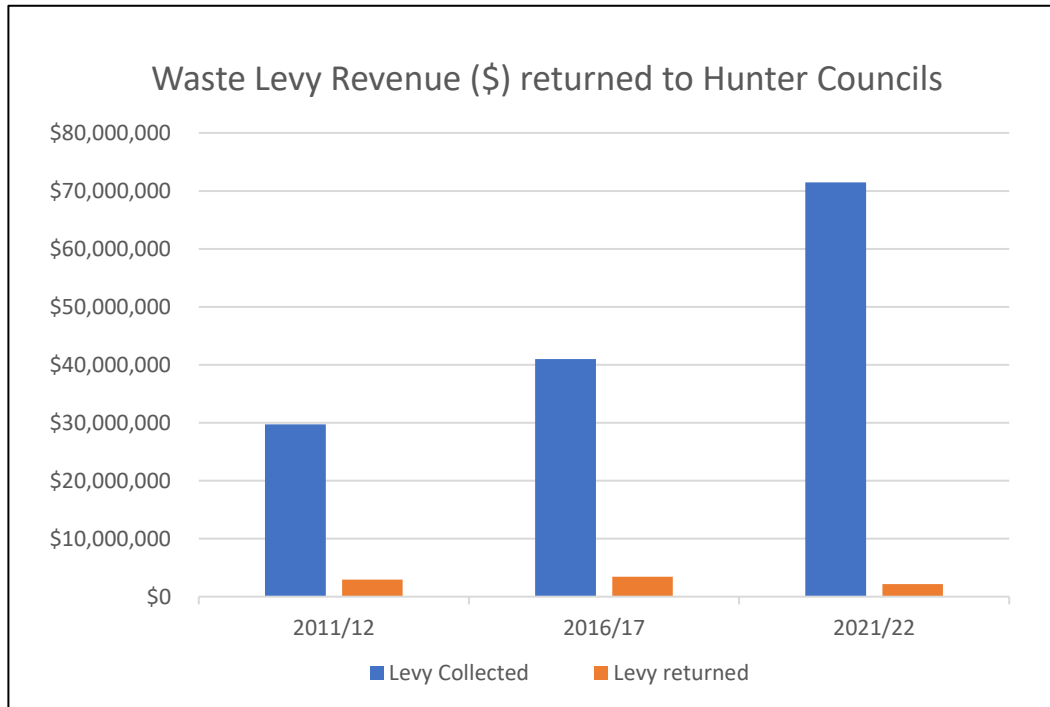
## Attachment 1 - Commonwealth and State legislative and policy context

Legislation / Policy	Description
<i>National Waste Policy (2018)</i>	<p>Provides a national framework for waste and resource recovery in Australia. The policy outlines the five key principles for waste management to enable Australia to transition to a circular economy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Avoid waste.</li> <li>2. Improve resource recovery.</li> <li>3. Increase use of recycled material and build demand and markets for recycled products.</li> <li>4. Better manage material flows to benefit human health, the environment and the economy.</li> <li>5. Improve information to support innovation, guide investment and enable informed consumer decisions.</li> </ol>
<i>National Waste Action Plan (2019)</i>	<p>This National Action Plan presents targets and actions to implement the 2018 National Waste Policy, to guide investment and national efforts to 2030 and beyond. The plan aims to address impediments to a circular economy for waste in Australia—to support businesses and households realise the full value of recyclable materials and work towards more sustainable resource use. National targets established by the Plan include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ban the export of waste plastic, paper, glass and tyres, commencing in the second half of 2020.</li> <li>2. Reduce total waste generated in Australia by 10% per person by 2030.</li> <li>3. 80% average resource recovery rate from all waste streams following the waste hierarchy by 2030.</li> <li>4. Significantly increase the use of recycled content by governments and industry</li> <li>5. Phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics by 2025.</li> <li>6. Halve the amount of organic waste sent to landfill by 2030.</li> <li>7. Make comprehensive, economy-wide and timely data publicly available to support better consumer, investment and policy decisions.</li> </ol>
<i>Circular Economy Ministerial Advisory Group</i>	<p>The Circular Economy Ministerial Advisory Group has been established by the Commonwealth Government to guide Australia's transition to a more circular economy, by 2030. The Advisory Group advises the Australian Government, through the Minister for the Environment and Water, on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• opportunities associated with Australia's circular economy transition (nationally, and within specific sectors)</li> <li>• regulatory, commercial and other barriers to a more circular economy</li> <li>• best practice initiatives that show promise for adoption and/or expansion in Australia</li> <li>• circular economy research, development and innovation needs</li> </ul>

Legislation / Policy	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>effective measurement and communication about progress towards Australia's circular economy.</li> </ul>
<i>NSW Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2001</i>	Commits the NSW Government to refreshing and updating its waste strategy every five years – to review and continually improve the state's policies and targets for waste reduction and landfill diversion.
<i>Protection of Environment Operations Act 1997</i>	Section 88 of the Protection of the Environment Operations (POEO) Act applies a financial levy (the Waste Levy") to scheduled (ie EPA licensed) waste management facilities. The Levy is intended to serve as the NSW Government's main economic instrument for waste management and resource recovery. Its primary purpose is to make recycling more competitive (i.e. cheaper) than landfilling, so that the value of resources and their embodied emissions can be retained within the economy. Reinvestment of revenue from the waste levy was intended to drive significant advances in the waste industry by supporting jobs, fuelling innovation and cleaner technologies, and reducing investment risk around the development of resource recovery facilities.
<i>NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041</i>	<p>As well as waste reduction and recycling, this strategy focuses on the environmental benefits and economic opportunities from managing waste. The strategy identifies the actions to be implemented during the first stage of the strategy through to 2027. The strategy commits the NSW Government to the following targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reduce total waste generated by 10% per person by 2030.</li> <li>have an 80% average recovery rate from all waste streams by 2030.</li> <li>significantly increase the use of recycled content by governments and industry</li> <li>phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics by 2025</li> <li>halve the amount of organic waste sent to landfill by 2030.</li> <li>introduce a new overall litter reduction target of 60% by 2030 and a plastic litter reduction target of 30% by 2025, as set out in the NSW Plastics Action Plan</li> <li>set a goal to triple the plastics recycling rate by 2030, as set out in the NSW Plastics Action Plan</li> <li>reaffirm the State's commitment to the goal of net zero emissions from organic waste by 2030, as laid out in the NSW Net Zero Plan</li> <li>establish new indicators to help us track our progress on infrastructure investment and the cost of waste services</li> <li>develop a new measure of the emissions performance of waste and materials management.</li> </ul>

Legislation / Policy	Description
<i>NSW Circular Economy Policy (2019)</i>	<p>The NSW Circular Economy Policy Statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provides a common language and direction for a circular economy, through a definition and seven circular economy principles</li> <li>• defines the NSW Government's role in implementing circular economy principles across the state.</li> <li>• provides clear principles that assist the NSW Government to embed circular economy principles in Government decision making, policies, strategies and programs.</li> <li>• outlines immediate next steps and sets focus areas to guide planning and implementation.</li> </ul> <p>Key focus areas identified in the policy for guiding government action include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support innovation</li> <li>• Sustainable procurement</li> <li>• High quality, consistent recycling</li> <li>• Value organics</li> <li>• Mainstream product stewardship</li> <li>• Responsible packaging</li> <li>• Support reuse and repair</li> <li>• Circular design</li> </ul>
<i>NSW Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020-2030</i>	<p>The Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020-2030 is the foundation for NSW's action on climate change and goal to reach net zero emissions by 2050. It outlines the NSW Government's plan to protect the future by growing the economy, creating jobs and reducing emissions over the next decade.</p> <p>From a waste management perspective the Plan commit the NSW Government to a target of net zero emissions from organic waste by 2030. The strategies identified to deliver on this goal include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting local councils to provide communities with best-practice food and garden waste management infrastructure.</li> <li>• ensuring composts or other organic soils are of the highest quality for land application.</li> <li>• facilitate the development of 'waste to energy' facilities in locations that have strong community support, provided those facilities meet strict environmental standards.</li> <li>• update regulatory settings to ensure residual emissions from the organic waste industry are offset.</li> </ul>

## Attachment 2. Decline in waste levy funds collected in the Hunter Region (2011 – 2022)



## 7.3 Hunter JO Funding and Grant Opportunities

<b>Hunter JO Strategic Theme / Advocacy Priority:</b>	Strategic Theme(s): Governance and Leadership and Resilience
<b>Objective(s):</b>	5.3 We build strong collaborative partnerships and encourage innovation 2.3 Our region is resilient to environment risks, natural hazards and climate change
<b>Report Author:</b>	Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO
<b>Responsible Manager:</b>	Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO

### Executive Summary:

This paper provides an update on the status of previously submitted funding applications endorsed by the Board and seeks endorsement of new funding proposals submitted since that time.

#### Recommendations: That the Board:

1. Note the update provided on the status of previously endorsed funding applications.
2. Endorse the recent Expression of Interest submitted to the NSW Disaster Ready Fund – Round 2.

### Background

Grant funding is a key source of revenue for the Hunter JO, underpinning the delivery of a range of capacity building, business case assessment and strategic planning projects and initiatives that contribute directly to implementation of both the Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2032 and the Board's core Advocacy Priorities.

### Discussion

#### *New grant funding opportunities*

##### 1. NSW Disaster Ready Fund – Round 2

In close collaboration with staff from across the Hunter JO Member Councils, an Expression of Interest (EOI) for a regional disaster resilience project was submitted on 8<sup>th</sup> December to the NSW Disaster Ready Fund – Round 2. The focus of the project EOI includes:

- Building capacity within Member Councils to embed disaster resilience through the development of local and regional Disaster Adaptation Plans (DAPs), the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) process and strategic planning resources including the State Disaster Mitigation Plan and NSW Recovery Plan
- Developing and coordinating implementation of regional cross-council opportunities and actions identified in the above plans.
- Developing a matrix to track resilience maturity for councils and use this to monitor progress in local and regional capability and capacity over time.
- Enhance councils' capacity to prepare for disasters through education, training, implementation and embedment of support resources to assist less resourced councils build a case for and access to resilience funding.
- Continue the Simtables program for community engagement to increase prevention and preparedness for disasters in the Hunter and Central Coast region.
- Continue funding for Disaster Dashboards for participating councils.

The total value of the project (including DRF funding and co-contribution) is: \$1,738,383



DRF funding requested for the project: \$851,271

Co-contribution is made up of in-kind participation from councils, cash contribution towards disaster dashboard subscription, and recognition of previous grant expenditure

#### *Status of Existing Grant Applications*

Status	Grant	Amount
Not proceeding	Shiraz to Shore (EOI) – key route detailed design and construction <i>NB This grant funding program was cancelled by NSW Government</i>	\$10,000,000
Pending	Resilient Hunter Central Coast Platform - to establish a common data platform for the Hunter and Central Coast to provide councils access to consistent, up to date datasets, develop evidence-based policy and collaborate on pathways towards net zero emissions. <i>NB While not yet confirmed, given recent changes to the Greater Cities Commission it considered unlikely that this project will now proceed.</i>	\$655,000 (over 2 years)

#### **Financial / Resourcing Implications:**

Should the EOI and then a full project application to the NSW Disaster Ready Fund (Round 2) ultimately be successful, it will directly resource the delivery of a pipeline of planning and capacity building projects and programs over three years (commencing 2024/25) that align with the Hunter JO Strategic Plan, and address the specific needs and opportunities identified by staff from across the Hunter JO Member Councils.

#### **Next steps:**

1. Pending the Disaster Ready Project EOI being successful (tbc January 2024), a full project application would need to be prepared and lodged in February 2024 (actual date tbc).
2. Successful projects will be announced from June 2024.

#### **Appendices\* / Attachments\*\*:** Nil

\*Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

\*\*Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

## 8. Items for the Hunter JO Board: For Noting

### 8.1 Hunter JO Financial Report

<b>Hunter JO Strategic Theme / Advocacy Priority:</b>	Governance & Leadership
<b>Objective(s):</b>	5.1.3 Ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the Hunter JO, including sound financial decisions that are consistent with our risk management framework.
<b>Report Author:</b>	Lisa Lord, Chief Operations Officer (Arrow)
<b>Responsible Manager:</b>	Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO

#### Executive Summary:

This report provides, for noting, the year-to-date financial statements for the Hunter Joint Organisation.

#### Recommendation:

**That the Income Statement for period ending October 2023 be received and noted.**

**Background:** N/A

#### Discussion:

#### Income Statement Summary:

SUMMARY	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	BUDGET	YTD	YTD	ANNUAL
INCOME STATEMENT HIGHLIGHTS	Current Month	YTD	YTD	VARIANCE	PRIOR YEAR	BUDGET
<b>HJO GROUP</b>						
HUNTER COUNCILS INCORPORATED	1,013	5,590	4,587	1,003	32,047	8,073
HUNTER JOINT ORGANISATION	(4,646)	(12,319)	(890)	(11,429)	(28,300)	54,455
<b>TOTAL NET PROFIT / (LOSS) - OPERATIONS</b>	<b>(3,633)</b>	<b>(6,729)</b>	<b>3,697</b>	<b>(10,426)</b>	<b>3,747</b>	<b>62,528</b>
HJO Subsidy	-	-	-	-	-	-
Extraordinary Expenses	-	(49,500)	(49,500)	-	-	(49,500)
<b>TOTAL GROUP NET PROFIT / (LOSS)</b>	<b>(3,633)</b>	<b>(56,229)</b>	<b>(45,803)</b>	<b>(10,426)</b>	<b>3,747</b>	<b>13,028</b>

YTD, the Hunter Joint Organisation (HJO) has incurred a Net Loss of (\$12,319), with the following key factors influencing this month's financial outcome:

#### 1. Loss on Sale of Asset: CEO's Motor Vehicle

- The vehicle was sold to wholesalers for \$31,000 (incl. GST).
- Despite attempting auctions, the reserve of \$30,000 wasn't met, and the best offer at auctions was \$28,640 (incl. GST).
- The budget assumed the asset sale would meet the book value (WDV) at the time of sale, with the WDV being \$35,300.

#### 2. Facilitator Cost for HJO Strategy Workshop (October)

- The October results include the cost of a facilitator for the HJO strategy workshop.
- The revised budget did account for this workshop facilitator expense, but within the Hunter JO Policy & Programs budget, so the expense will be journalled correctly following the report (at time of writing change is still being made).

In contrast, YTD Net Results for Hunter Councils Incorporated (HCI) are performing positively, sitting 14% ahead of the budget. For a more detailed breakdown of the Income Statement, Balance Sheet, and Cash Flow by company, please refer to the attached documents accompanying this report.



## Balance Sheet Summary

SUMMARY	HUNTER COUNCILS INC	HUNTER JOINT ORGANISATION	HJO GROUP TOTAL
<b>BALANCE SHEET HIGHLIGHTS</b>			
<b>ASSETS</b>			
Cash	18,604	411,525	430,129
Trade Debtors	20,244	285,811	306,055
Property, Plant & Equipment	1,607,811	25,166	1,632,977
Intercompany Loans	(609,675)	-	(609,675)
Other	13,480	7,399	20,879
	<b>1,050,464</b>	<b>729,901</b>	<b>1,780,365</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
Trade Creditors	10,905	60,808	71,713
Employee Leave Entitlements	-	34,967	34,967
Unspent Grant Funding	-	-	-
Intercompany Loans	226,000	253,914	479,914
Other	40,299	610,793	651,092
	<b>277,204</b>	<b>960,481</b>	<b>1,237,685</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>773,260</b>	<b>(230,581)</b>	<b>542,679</b>
	-	-	
<b>BALANCE SHEET METRICS</b>			
Working Capital	52,328	704,735	757,063
Current Ratio [Target >1.5]	2.2:1	1:1	1.1:1
Liabilities to Assets %	26%	132%	70%
Cash Ratio [Target >1 ]	0.8:1	0.6:1	0.6:1

## Cashflow Summary

SUMMARY	HUNTER COUNCILS INC	HUNTER JOINT ORGANISATION	HJO GROUP TOTAL
<b>CASHFLOW HIGHLIGHTS</b>			
<b>OPENING BALANCE - CASH ON HAND</b>	<b>9,166</b>	<b>17,666</b>	<b>26,832</b>
Net Cash - Operating	9,438	290,868	300,305
Net Cash - Investing	-	30,992	30,992
Net Cash - Financing	-	72,000	72,000
Cash - Net Increase / (Decrease)	9,438	393,859	403,297
<b>CLOSING BALANCE - CASH ON HAND</b>	<b>18,604</b>	<b>411,525</b>	<b>430,129</b>
Plus Trade Debtors / Creditors	9,339	225,003	234,342
<b>AVAILABLE WORKING CAPITAL (CASH)</b>	<b>27,943</b>	<b>636,528</b>	<b>664,471</b>
<b>LESS RESTRICTED FUNDS</b>			
Employee Leave Entitlements	-	34,967	34,967
Unspent Grant Funds	-	-	-
<b>UNRESTRICTED FUNDS</b>	<b>27,943</b>	<b>601,561</b>	<b>629,504</b>

**Financial / Resourcing Implications:** N/A

**Next steps:** N/A

**Appendices\* / Attachments\*\*:**

- Attachment 8.1-1: Hunter JO Monthly Financial Report: October 2023

\*Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

\*\*Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

## 8.2 Hunter JO Advocacy & Strategic Priorities Update

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<b>Hunter JO Strategic Theme / Advocacy Priority:</b>	Governance and Leadership
<b>Objective(s):</b>	5.2 A trusted and transparent organisation 5.2.3 Proactively share clear, consistent, accessible and relevant information
<b>Report Author:</b>	Louisa Bulley, Executive Officer
<b>Responsible Manager:</b>	Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO

### Executive Summary:

This report provides, for feedback, the proposed format for a 'monthly digest' to be provided as a circular to the Hunter JO Board, to summarise key actions and highlights against the Hunter JO's Advocacy and Strategic Priorities.

### Recommendation(s):

- That the Hunter JO Board provide feedback on the proposed format for the monthly email digest
- That this format be used for monthly circular reporting to the Board on progress against Strategic and Advocacy Priorities

### Background:

In response to the feedback of the Board during the Hunter JO Review Process, it is proposed to initiate a brief monthly circular to the Board, that provides an overview of key actions and outcomes against each of the five core advocacy priorities and four strategic planning themes.

### Discussion:

Distribution of the monthly circular aims to not only inform Board Members of the activities and outcomes being delivered by the JO in a more timely manner, but to also prompt greater levels of two way communication (ie Councils alerting the JO to related activities they are undertaking), to enhance practical opportunities for alignment, collaboration and value adding between Member Councils and the JO.

An example of the proposed format and level of information that would be included in the monthly circular is provided in Appendix 8.2A. Feedback is sought from the Board as to whether this focus and level of information is suitable to address the identified need for more regular, but concise outcomes focused communication that has been identified.

### Financial / Resourcing Implications:

The monthly circular would be prepared using existing JO staff resources, however, will be offset reducing the frequency of the existing Hunter HO newsletter targeting external stakeholders from monthly to bi-monthly.

There are no direct financial implications.

### Next steps:

In line with feedback and advice provided from the Board, a monthly circular will be initiated in 2024.

### Appendices\* / Attachments\*\*:

- Appendix 8.2A – Hunter JO Monthly Circular Update: Advocacy & Strategic Priorities

\*Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

\*\*Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

## Appendix 8.2A – Example of Proposed Hunter JO Monthly Circular Update: Advocacy & Strategic Priorities

Advocacy Focus & Asks	Progress / Actions / Outcomes Achieved
<b>1.1 &amp; 1.2 Economic Evolution Authority</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting held with representatives from Commonwealth Net Zero Economy Agency (Emily Martin – A/ First Assistant Secretary, Regions and Workers Division and Angus Robertson – Advisor) to communicate regional priorities and opportunities of the Hunter JO.</li> <li>Regional advocacy document targeting Commonwealth Net Zero Economy Agency and NSW Future Jobs and Investment Authority prepared for Board consideration at December 2023 meeting.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Reuse of Mining &amp; Industrial Lands</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Priorities incorporated in meeting with Net Zero Economy Agency representatives and draft regional advocacy document (see above)</li> </ul>
<b>3. Transport Connectivity</b>	<p>Workshop held between Hunter JO Board and senior Transport for NSW representatives on 19th October 2023. Key outcomes included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commitment from Senior Transport Executives to engage on regular basis with Hunter JO Board (appropriate frequency to be determined)</li> <li>Commitment for TfNSW Planning team to engage directly with Councils to better identify local priorities and address local data gaps to inform preparation of SRTIPs.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Roads Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reply from the Hon Jenny Aitchison, Minister for Regional Transport and Roads to Hunter JO correspondence regarding the roads funding formula (see attached).</li> <li>New funding allocations announced for the RERR Fund in the NSW State Government budget</li> </ul>
<b>5. Return of Waste Levy Funds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NSW Minister for the Environment has approved a review of the NSW Waste Levy. EPA staff are engaging with councils and stakeholders late 2023 to inform the focus and scope of the review. EPA briefings have been organised for GMAC and Hunter JO staff (30 November) and Hunter Regional Waste Managers Group (13 December).</li> <li>Regional submission prepared providing recommendations on focus and scope of the review, to be considered by Board at 14 December Board Meeting.</li> </ul>

Strategic Planning Themes	Progress / Actions / Outcomes Achieved
<b>Connectivity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nil to report</li> </ul>
<b>Jobs and a Growing Economy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hunter Circular website (<a href="http://www.huntercircular.com.au">www.huntercircular.com.au</a>) launched at “International Insights for a Circular Hunter” Forum convened by Hunter JO on 26 October.</li> <li>Hunter Circular Hub project awarded winner in its divisional category at the 2023 Local Government NSW Excellence in the Environment Awards, held 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023.</li> </ul>

Strategic Planning Themes	Progress / Actions / Outcomes Achieved
<b>Resilience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch of draft “Resilience IP&amp;R package” to state-wide audience for peer review. <a href="#">More Information</a></li> </ul>
<b>Liveability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power Purchasing Agreement (PPA) Information Session held for Member Councils to explore interest in collaborating on a renewable energy PPA in 2024.</li> <li>• Applications now open for the Council Net Zero Accelerator 2024 training program. Hunter JO, the NSW Government, and Accelerate Zero have partnered to develop and deliver NSW’s first net zero course designed for local government. <a href="#">More Information</a></li> <li>• Regional “Plugging into the Future: Electrifying Council Fleets” Forum scheduled for 30 November 2023 in Port Stephens. <a href="#">More Information</a></li> </ul>

### 8.3 Events10 Continuation

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<b>Hunter JO Strategic Theme / Advocacy Priority:</b>	Liveability
<b>Objective(s):</b>	4.1.1 Support a coordinated approach and collaborate around events and tourism.
<b>Report Author:</b>	Kim Carland, Program Lead
<b>Responsible Manager:</b>	Tim Askew, Director of Programs

#### Executive Summary:

To provide an update to the Board, for noting, on the Events10 collaborative approach to event attraction, specifically in response to Action Items HJO-23-009 and HJO-23-019.

#### Recommendation(s):

- That the report be received and noted.
- That the Hunter JO Board recognise the efforts of Council staff in contributing to a regional approach for an ongoing Events10 program to achieve our strategic vision - to be recognised as a destination for hosting and attracting world class events that align with our unique offering.

#### Background:

The Hunter JO delivered an Accelerating Event Economies program valued at \$860K through the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund (BLERF). Commencing in January 2022, A2E delivered a suite of initiatives designed to build a foundation for events attraction to the region.

At the request of the Board, at its meeting of 10 August 2023, the Hunter JO has explored options for continuation of the program (as per Action Items HJO-23-009 and HJO-23-019).

#### Discussion:

We have six councils contributing in-kind activities to continue Events10, positioning our region as an events destination. Councils have committed to a 12-month pilot approach to determine the feasibility of the Events10 approach.

#### Collaborative activities

- Events10 website provides information about the Hunter region to assist event planners in deciding to host their event in our region.
- Customers (event planners) can call or email for advice to one point of contact who will speak on behalf of the region.
- Venue recommendations and local knowledge will be provided to event enquiries based on customer needs, for the customer to make direct contact with venues.
- A e-newsletter will be sent to a database of event planners highlighting venues and destination information from the Hunter.
- Occasional marketing content may be shared on the Events10 social channels.

#### Financial / Resourcing Implications:

The councils that have opted-in to continue the program through their own resourcing have determined the following split of resourcing and responsibilities;

- Port Stephens – Events10 website
- Maitland – email enquiries
- Singleton – phone enquiries
- Cessnock – bi-monthly newsletter
- Lake Mac - marketing content/occasional social posting

- Upper Hunter – bi-monthly Events10 meetings and agenda
- All councils – contribute content to the newsletter

Tony Chadwick from Cessnock City Council will oversee responsibilities and accountability.

**Next steps:**

1. Hunter JO will cease to have a funded resource to contribute to Events10 activities post December 2023.
2. Until this time the Hunter JO will continue to support the roll-out of the resources and website through its social channels, led by the Program Lead, and supported by the Media & Communications Officer.
3. The website will then be managed by the participating councils after this point.
4. Evaluation

**Appendices\* / Attachments\*\*:** Nil

\*Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

\*\*Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

## 8.4 Hunter JO Program Status Report

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<b>Hunter JO Strategic Theme / Advocacy Priority:</b>	Relevant to all four strategic themes
<b>Objective(s):</b>	5.3.3 Build regional capacity and expertise in Councils through the development of program resources, provision of technical support and expertise, and facilitation of collaborative knowledge-sharing forums.
<b>Report Author:</b>	Tim Askew, Director of Programs
<b>Responsible Manager:</b>	Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO

### Executive Summary:

The Program Status Report included in Appendix 8.4A provides the Board with an “at-a-glance” overview of the range of operational projects currently being delivered by the Hunter JO.

### Recommendation(s):

**That the report be received and noted.**

### Background:

Key information provided by the report includes:

1. Alignment of each project to the strategic themes included in the Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2032
2. Project name
3. Source of project funding
4. Status of project delivery in relation to project schedule, resourcing and scope
5. Scheduled delivery date.
6. A brief update where any impacts on project schedule, resourcing and scope are being experienced.

**Discussion:** N/A

**Financial / Resourcing Implications:** N/A

**Next steps:** N/A

### Appendices\* / Attachments\*\*:

- **Appendix 8.4A – Program Status Update Report**

\*Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

\*\*Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

# Hunter JO Regional Programs and Capacity Building

Program Status Report - November 2023							
Strategic Themes	Project	Funding	Schedule	Resourcing	Scope	Delivery Date	Updates by Exception
CONNECTIVITY							
<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Cycle Tourism Strategy (Shiraz to Shore)	Grant				31-03-2024	
<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Airports Strategy (Freight and Logistics)	Grant				31-03-2024	
RESILIENCE							
<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Transforming Resilience with the IP&R Framework	Grant				31-12-2023	
<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Act Now on Coastal Adaptation	Grant				30-06-2023	
<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Disaster Risk Reduction	Grant				30-06-2024	
<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Simtables for Community Empowerment	Grant				1-06-2023	
JOBS AND A GROWING ECONOMY							
<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Circular Economy Eco-System	Grant				30-06-2024	
<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Hospitality Circularity Project	Grant				30-06-2024	
<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Circular Economy Precincts and Futures Hub	Grant				31-03-2024	
<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Hunter Circular Knowledge Hub	Grant				31-12-2024	
<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Hunter Global Tourism	Grant				31-03-2024	
<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Priority Infrastructure List (Stage 2)	Grant & Hunter JO				30-06-2024	
LIVEABILITY							
<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Accelerating Event Economies	Grant				31-12-2023	
<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Illegal Dumping Program	Grant				31-03-2027	
<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Landfill Emissions Data Project	Grant				30-06-2024	
<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Small Acts Big Change	Grant				30-06-2023	
<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Community Recycling Centres	Grant				30-06-2024	
<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Net Zero Acceleration	Grant				30-06-2024	
<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Contaminated Land Program	Grant				15-12-2023	

ON TRACK

MODERATE IMPACT

CRITICAL IMPACT

COMPLETED



#### 8.5 Regional NSW Standing Update

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**Regional NSW have advised that they will not be providing a report for the November GMAC / December Hunter JO Board Meeting.**

#### 9. Matters Raised by Members

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#### 10. General Business

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## Hunter JO Board Agenda Attachments:

- Attachment 4-1: Hunter JO-Arrow Governance & Risk Framework
- Attachment 4-2: Hunter JO Board Forward Planner & Governance Calendar 2023-25
- Attachment 4-3: JO-Calendar-of-Compliance-and-Reporting-Requirements-2023-24
- Attachment 6-1: Correspondence to Brett Whitworth re Audit Engagement
- Attachment 6-2: Correspondence to Brett Whitworth from Hunter JO Chair re August Meeting
- Attachment 6-3: Correspondence to Brett Whitworth from Director Hunter JO re Items Raised in Audit
- Attachment 6-4: Correspondence to NIER re Letter of Support for New Energy Skills Hub
- Attachment 6-5: Correspondence to Brett Whitworth re Arrow Board
- Attachment 6-6: Correspondence to Cessnock Council re Funding Proposal for Shiraz to Shore
- Attachment 6-7: Correspondence to Minister Moriarty re Regional Development Road Map
- Attachment 6-8: Correspondence to Minister Moriarty re Hunter Expert Panel
- Attachment 6-9: Correspondence to Minister Houssos re Hunter Expert Panel
- Attachment 6-10: – Correspondence from Minister Aitchison re Roads Repair Funding
- Attachment 7.1-2 – Hunter JO Annual Performance Statement 2022-23
- Attachment 8.1-1: Hunter JO Monthly Financial Report: October 2023



# Hunter JO-Arrow

## Governance & Risk Framework

### **Context:**

This document sets out the framework within which the Hunter JO and Arrow identifies, assesses, and manages risk organisationally.

### **Background:**

The different components of the Governance & Risk Framework have been developed in consultation with the Hunter JO-Arrow Leadership Team, and the General Managers of the ten Member Councils.

### **Principles:**

In developing the framework, the Hunter JO and Arrow have sought to comply with the principles of risk management, as detailed in ISO 31000:2018 *Risk management –Guidelines*:

- a) Integrated  
Risk management is an integral part of all organisational activities.
- b) Structured and comprehensive  
A structured and comprehensive approach to risk management contributes to consistent and comparable results.
- c) Customised  
The risk management framework and process are customised and proportionate to the organisation's external and internal context related to its objectives.
- d) Inclusive  
Appropriate and timely involvement of stakeholders enables their knowledge, views and perceptions to be considered. This results in improved awareness and informed risk management.
- e) Dynamic  
Risks can emerge, change or disappear as an organisation's external and internal context changes. Risk management anticipates, detects, acknowledges and responds to those changes and events in an appropriate and timely manner.
- f) Best available information  
The inputs to risk management are based on historical and current information, as well as on future expectations. Risk management explicitly takes into account any limitations and uncertainties associated with such information and expectations. Information should be timely, clear and available to relevant stakeholders.
- g) Human and cultural factors  
Human behaviour and culture significantly influence all aspects of risk management at each level and stage.
- h) Continual improvement  
Risk management is continually improved through learning and experience.

## Contents

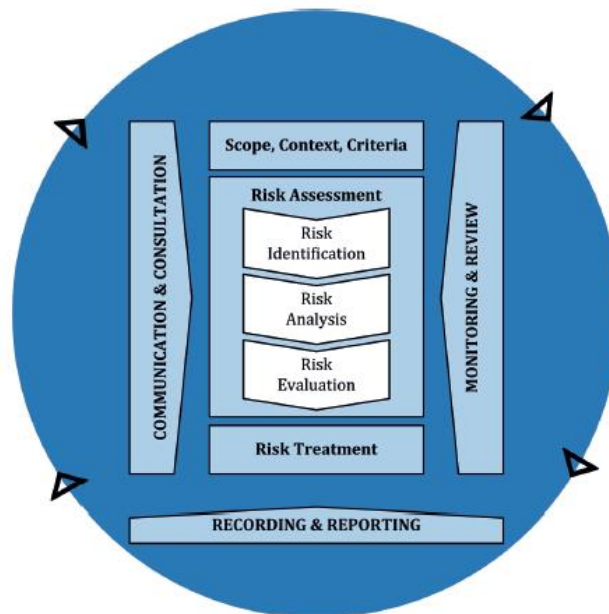
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## Part 1: Organisational Context

### Risk Management Process

As detailed in ISO 31000:2018 *Risk management –Guidelines*, the key steps of the risk management process are:

1. Communication and consultation
2. Establishing the context
3. Risk assessment (identify, analyse and evaluate risks)
4. Treating risks
5. Recording and reporting
6. Monitoring and review



### SWOT Analysis

The below SWOT analysis has been developed through consultation with the Organisation's Leadership Team and with the General Managers of the ten Member Councils, and should serve as a general guide for the organisation's operating context. When identifying and assessing risk, management and staff should consider the context within which they operate.

<b>Strengths:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Alignment with Board on strategy (Arrow)</li><li>• Leadership internally from management</li><li>• Hunter JO brand</li><li>• Organisational structure</li><li>• Alignment of Arrow &amp; Hunter JO Strategies</li><li>• Delegation from councils (RegPro, Hunter JO)</li></ul>	<b>Weaknesses:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Internal systems – Consistent systems &amp; processes still being developed and updated</li><li>• Dependence on grant funding (Hunter JO)</li><li>• Dependence on member funding (Hunter JO)</li><li>• JO model still coming into maturity (OLG)</li></ul>
<b>Opportunities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Capitalise on interrelationships between BUs</li><li>• Growth through Path to Profit (existing businesses)</li><li>• Acquisition of new businesses</li><li>• Prescribed status (RegPro)</li><li>• Board expectations</li><li>• Succession planning &amp; recruitment</li></ul>	<b>Threats:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Multiple regulatory bodies</li><li>• Compliance-heavy industries</li><li>• Inherent political instability of Hunter JO Board (four-year LG cycle, specific personalities or alignments depending on membership)</li><li>• Unforeseen economic changes (COVID)</li></ul>

## Risk Appetite Summary

In the context of the organisation, and in response to that context, the following risk appetite statements have been developed;

- Arrow/Hunter JO has no appetite for risks relating to health and safety of staff, customers, community.
- Arrow has some appetite for financial, operational & strategic risk, particularly where the potential reward relates to for improvement in technology, service delivery, and efficiency
- Hunter JO has no appetite for financial risk
- Hunter JO has a very low appetite for reputational risk, and takes a cautious approach, particularly in protecting the reputation of its council membership
- Hunter JO/Arrow is not willing to accept risks in relation to compliance and has no appetite for behaviours that may knowingly breach legal, regulatory and professional requirements.

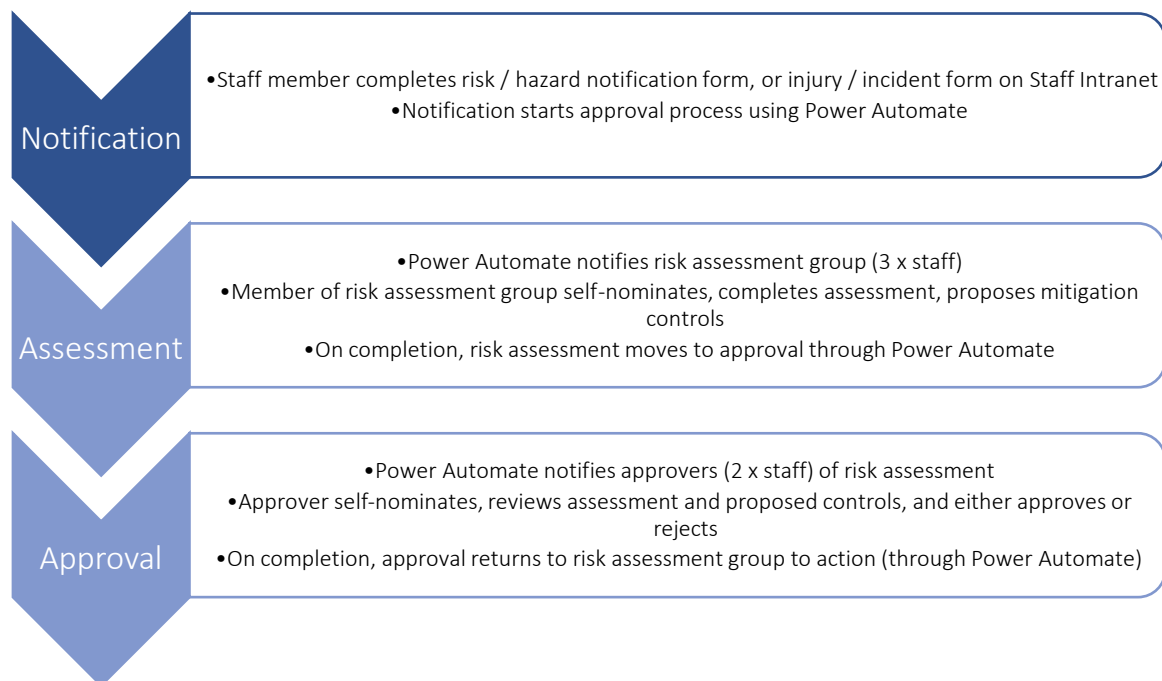
## Part 2: Organisational Risk Identification

### Identification of Risks

A variety of methods are used for identifying risks within the organisation, including;

- workshops
- audits
- physical inspections
- flow charting, business process reviews;
- operational modelling;
- past organisational experience;
- scenario analysis;
- strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis
- periodic reviews of the risk register

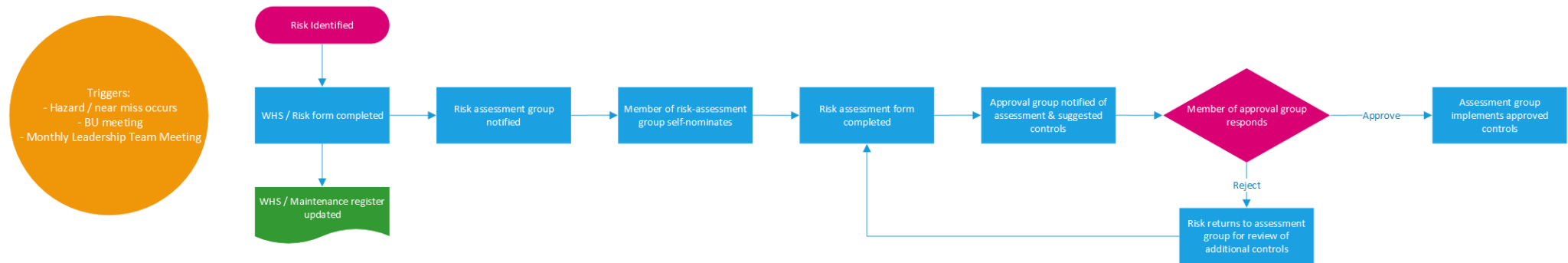
In terms of internal risk and injury identification, the Hunter JO-Arrow process uses Microsoft Power Automate (a powerful cloud-based tool for automating business processes), to automated the notification process, covering notification, assessment, mitigation, and reporting.



## Assessing and Responding to Risks

We have an internal system for assessing and responding to risks that are raised within the organisation. This process, and where a risk is documented, differs depending on the nature of the risk.

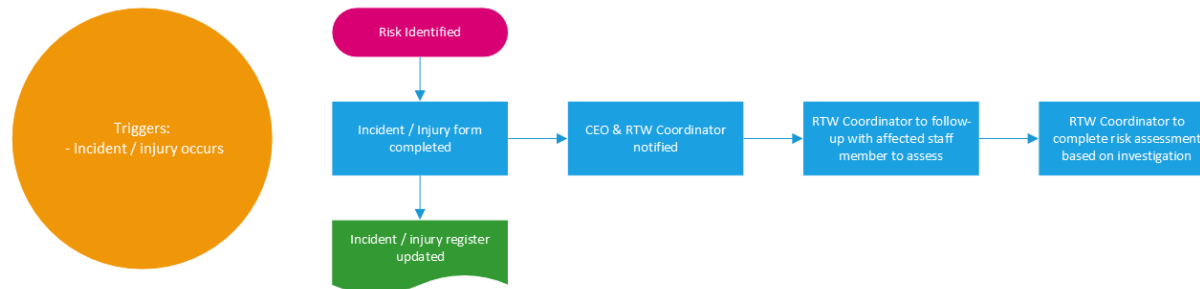
### 1. WHS / Hazard Risk Assessment Process



When we receive notification of a WHS risk or hazard, an automated process notifies our 'risk assessment team'. A member of the team then completes a risk assessment based on your notification, which is then sent for approval for implementation.

Each risk is assessed based on the consequence and likelihood of the event. This means that, even when the consequence of a risk may seem high, if the likelihood of it occurring is minimal, then the resulting risk rating may mean that only minor controls must be implemented.

### 2. Incident / Injury Assessment Process



When an injury or incident notification is received, the process requires more investigation, which is completed by our nominated Return to Work Coordinator.

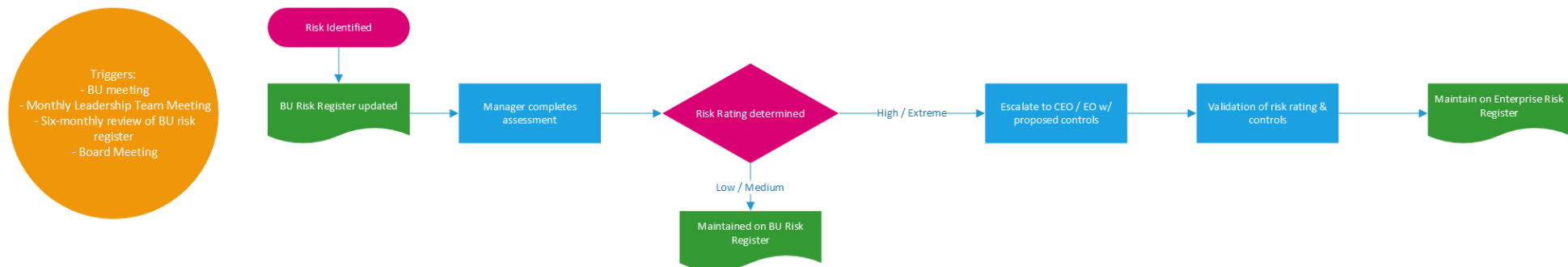
### 3. Enterprise Risk Assessment Process





Our organisation maintains an Enterprise Risk Register for enterprise-wide risks that is managed by the Executive Officer.

#### 4. Business Unit Risk Assessment Process



Each Business Unit maintains its own Risk Register, as part of their Business Continuity Plan. Each business unit's Risk Register is reviewed on a six-monthly basis by the Manager of the business unit. Any risks on a Business Unit register that are rated as High or Extreme are then escalated to the Enterprise Risk Register.

## Part 3: Organisational Risk Analysis Framework

The Organisation's Likelihood and Consequence Tables have been developed by the Leadership Team, in consultation with the General Managers of the ten Member Councils. Member Council frameworks have also been consulted during this process, in particular those of Port Stephens and Singleton Councils.

Once the Likelihood and Consequence have been determined within the risk management process, the risk matrix is used to arrive at an evaluation.

### Likelihood Table

LIKELIHOOD				
	WHS	Event Frequency	Historical	Project
Almost Certain	Expected to occur in most circumstances involving normal operations	More than once per year	Expected to occur, occurs regularly in the industry	Likely to occur in more than 1 in 2 projects of this kind
Likely	Could happen at any time	Once per year	Will probably occur, has occurred many times in the industry	Likely to occur in between 1 in 2 and 1 in 4 projects of this kind
Possible	Could happen sometimes	Once every 10 years	Might occur, has occurred several times in the industry	Likely to occur in between 1 in 4 and 1 in 10 projects of this kind
Unlikely	Could occur at some time, but very rarely	Once every 50 years	Not likely to occur, has occurred once or twice in the industry	Likely to occur in less than 1 in 10 projects of this kind
Rare	Could happen but probably never will	Less than once every 50 years	May only occur in exceptional circumstances, unheard of in the industry	Will not happen

Consequence Table

CONSEQUENCE TYPE	CONSEQUENCE LEVEL					
	Insignificant		Minor	Moderate	Major	Extreme
	Health & Safety	Local first aid may be required	Minor injury that may require medical attention with no ongoing treatment	Injury requiring ongoing medical treatment and/or lost time	Significant injury or long-term illness; hospitalisation	Fatality; permanent disability, illness or disease
	Reputation	Low-level impact on reputation without loss of customers	Minimal customer sensitivity within one business unit, can be sanitised to single business unit, no damage to organisational brand	Moderate customer sensitivity and damage to more than one business unit, minor local or social media interest	Major customer sensitivity and damage to more than one business unit, some level of damage to organisational brand, some impact on business activities, some local or social media interest	Significant customer sensitivity and damage to organisational brand across all business units and both entities; national media and social media attention
	People	Low-level impact on morale and/or staff culture, without loss of any staff. Can be addressed within business unit	Impact on morale and/or staff culture resulting in loss of staff within one business unit. Can be addressed within business unit, but with support from HR or CEO	Impact on morale and/or staff culture resulting in loss of staff in crucial roles within one business unit, or multiple staff across more than one business unit. Requires HR or CEO support in order to address organisationally	Significant impact on morale and/or staff culture resulting in loss of [staff within Management Team, multiple staff in crucial roles, or more than 5% of staff organisationally] requiring immediate action, i.e. change management strategy, immediate handover	Existential impact on morale and/or staff culture resulting in loss of [staff within Management Team, multiple staff in crucial roles, or more than 10% of staff organisationally] requiring immediate action, i.e. change management strategy, immediate handover
	Operations (Service Delivery)	Insignificant disruption to service delivery, short-term inconvenience	Contained impact on service delivery of short term significance. Minor % of customers inconvenienced	Moderate disruption of service delivery of one business unit (1-5 days), Medium % of customer inconvenienced, and will receive complaints	Continuing difficulties in servicing customers over prolonged period (5-10 days) across more than one business unit, resulting in a large number of complaints	Extensive impact/disruption to service delivery for 10+ days across three or more business units; threat to viability of service provision, large number of complaints and loss of customers across multiple business units
	Strategic Risk	Internal misalignment within Leadership Team or staff, can be managed with little to no impact on delivery of strategy	Internal misalignment that is disruptive to delivery of strategy, requiring low-level change management; Strategic misalignment within Board or with one member council, that can be managed with one-on-one consultation	Internal misalignment resulting in loss of key staff; Loss of one Member Council due to strategic misalignment that was unable to be managed	Internal misalignment resulting in loss of key staff that puts service delivery in jeopardy for one or more business units; Loss of more than one Member Council due to strategic misalignment that was unable to be managed	Internal misalignment resulting in loss of strategic direction and loss of confidence from the Board; Loss of three or more Member Councils due to strategic misalignment that was unable to be managed; Existential crisis for organisation and its operations
	Compliance	Isolated non-compliance or breach; minimal failure of internal controls	Contained non-compliance or action with short term significance; some impact on normal operations	Significant claim or breach involving statutory authority or investigation; prosecution possible	Major breach with litigation/fines and long-term significance; critical failure of internal controls	Extreme regulatory consequence which could result in loss of legal status. Non-compliance or breach in legislation with litigation, prosecution and/or penalty or fines
	Financial	Negligible financial loss  Failure to achieve budget within one business unit by 2-4%	Minor financial loss  Failure to achieve budget organisationally by less than 5%	Two business units running at a loss, or; Loss of member contributions from one council  Financial impact resulting in operational redundancies, OR;  Failure to achieve budget by less than 10% organisationally	Failure to achieve budget by more than 10% organisationally  Financial impact resulting in four or more operational redundancies	Extensive financial loss.  Cash reserves depleted, with inability to cover staff entitlements (i.e. trading insolvently)

Consequence Levels	
Consequence Level	Consequence Level Description
Extreme	Consequences are catastrophic
Major	Consequences are very significant or extremely serious
Moderate	Consequences are important
Minor	Consequences are somewhat important
Insignificant	Consequences are not important

## Risk Matrix

		C1	C2	C3	C4	C5
		Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Extreme
L5	Almost Certain	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH	EXTREME	EXTREME
L4	Likely	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH	EXTREME
L3	Possible	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH
L2	Unlikely	LOW	LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH
L1	Rare	LOW	LOW	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	HIGH

## Risk Evaluation

The management and reporting structure for non-safety related risks is as follows:

RISK RATING	ACTION	Responsibility for Action
EXTREME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring to the attention of the Board / Directors for immediate action</li> <li>All possible treatments must be put in place to reduce the risk to an acceptable level</li> <li>Report quarterly to the Leadership Team</li> </ul>	Director
HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring to the attention of the CEO for immediate management action</li> <li>Allocate actions and budget to minimise risk</li> <li>Report quarterly via Business Unit metric reports</li> </ul>	Manager
MEDIUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify management responsibility, monitor and review response action as necessary</li> <li>Allocate resources where existing controls are deemed inadequate</li> <li>Report annually via Business Unit quarterly metric reports</li> </ul>	Coordinator / Supervisor
LOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accept and monitor</li> <li>Manage through existing processes and procedures</li> <li>Report via routine internal reporting mechanisms</li> </ul>	Coordinator / Supervisor

The management and reporting structure for risks assessed under a Work Health & Safety risk assessment is as follows:

RISK RATING	ACTION	Responsibility for Action
EXTREME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DO NOT PROCEED</li> <li>Proposed task or activity <b>MUST NOT</b> proceed at this time</li> <li>A safer method of work is required before work can proceed</li> <li>Manager must review the effectiveness of the implemented risk controls and discuss with the Director before work can proceed</li> </ul>	Manager
HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DO NOT PROCEED</li> <li>Proposed task or activity <b>MUST NOT</b> proceed unless additional controls have been included to reduce the risk to Medium</li> </ul>	Manager
MEDIUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work is safe to proceed</li> <li>Risk controls must be monitored to ensure the risk level does not increase during the task or activity</li> </ul>	Coordinator / Supervisor
LOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work is safe to proceed in line with identified control measures</li> <li>No further action required unless additional hazards arise during the work</li> </ul>	Supervisor

## Part 4: Monitoring and Reporting

A copy of the Risk Register will be reported to the Hunter JO and Arrow Boards as a standing item in their agenda.

1. As risks are identified and assessed, they are added to the Business Unit and/or Enterprise Risk Register.
2. All risks with a Medium, High, or Extreme Risk Rating must be reported to the relevant Board at their next meeting.
3. Mitigating actions should be identified and added to the Risk Register for each risk included, as well as updates on any action taken on the mitigation actions since the risk was identified.
4. A residual Risk Rating can then be determined, based on the actions taken to mitigate the risk.
5. If the residual Risk Rating is lowered to LOW, then after being reported to the Board initially, it can be removed from the report provided at the next Board Meeting.

The Boards also receive a report at each of their meetings on progress against the Hunter JO-Arrow Governance & Compliance Calendar, showing the key compliance and reporting due dates across the financial year.

### Key Documents & Links:

- [Enterprise Governance & Compliance Calendar](#)
- [Organisational Risk Management Policy](#)
- [Work Health and Safety Policy](#)
- [Return to Work Procedure](#)
- [Hunter JO-Arrow Risk Register](#)

### References

ISO 31000:2018 *Risk management – Guidelines*

Work Health and Safety Act, 2011 (NSW)

SA/SNZ HB 436:2013 *Risk management guidelines – Companion to AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009*

Enterprise Governance and Compliance Calendar

Item	Category	Frequency	Responsible	Approval	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Commentary	
Development of new Arrow Master Business Plan (2024-28)	Strategic	Periodic: 4 years (due 2024)	CEO	Arrow Board							x	x	x	x	x	x	Current Arrow MBP set to finish at end of 23/24FY. Next plan will be 2024-28, to be developed from July 2023	
Development of new Hunter JO Strategic Plan (2022-26)	Strategic	Periodic: 4 years (due 2022)	CEO	Hunter JO Board														Current plan runs 2022-26. However, as LG elections will take place at end of 2025, the new Hunter JO strategy will subsequently have to be ready for endorsement for end of 2026
Hunter Joint Organisation Audit (Auditor-General)	Legislative Compliance	Annual	Head of Finance	CEO		x	x										This audit also includes auditing of Hunter Councils Legal Services Audit & Arrow Collaborative Communications	
Request for extension to lodge financial statements prior to 17 October (2023-24)	Legislative Compliance	Annual	Head of Finance	CEO				x										
Hunter JO Annual General Meeting & presentation of audited accounts	Legislative Compliance	Annual	CEO	Hunter JO Board				x										
Submission of Hunter JO Annual Performance Statement to OLG	Legislative Compliance	Annual	Executive Officer	Hunter JO Board						x								
Written returns of interest due for Voting Representatives to EO	Legislative Compliance	Annual	Executive Officer	Hunter JO Board			x											
Tabling of Hunter JO Pecuniary Declarations at Hunter JO Board Meeting	Legislative Compliance	Annual	Executive Officer	Hunter JO Board				x										
Adoption of Statement of Revenue Policy & Budget by 30 June (2023-24)	Legislative Compliance	One-Off	Executive Officer	Hunter JO Board												x		
Arrow Collaborative Services Audit (DFK Crosbie)	Legislative Compliance	Annual	Head of Finance	CEO		x												
Arrow Annual General Meeting & Presentation of Accounts	Legislative Compliance	Annual	CEO	Arrow Board			x											
Hunter Councils Incorporated Audit (DFK Crosbie)	Legislative Compliance	Annual	Head of Finance	CEO					x									
Hunter Councils Inc. Annual General Meeting & Presentation of Accounts	Legislative Compliance	Annual	CEO	Hunter Councils Inc. Board						x								
Lodgement of Annual Company Statement to ASIC (all to be lodged by Jan)	Legislative Compliance	Annual	Head of Finance	CEO							x							
Hunter JO Strategic Plan Implementation Program	Business Continuity	Annual	CEO	Hunter JO Board												x	This includes an EOFY report on implementation of business unit KPIs	
Arrow Master Business Plan Implementation Review (incl. KPI delivery)	Business Continuity	Annual	CEO	Arrow Board	x													
Presentation of new KPIs for business units	Business Continuity	Annual	Leadership Team	Arrow Board			x											
Arrow Board Strategic Workshop	Business Continuity	Annual	Executive Officer	CEO					x									
Hunter JO Strategic Workshop	Business Continuity	Annual	Director, Hunter JO	CEO									x					
Presentation of indicative Member Contributions to Hunter JO Board	Financial	Annual	CEO	Hunter JO Board								x						
Review of any proposed cost-of-living increase by Arrow Board	Financial	Annual	CEO	Arrow Board									x					
Review and renewal of corporate overheads	Financial	Annual	Head of Finance	CEO									x					
Development of Business Unit forecast budgets	Financial	Annual	Leadership Team	CEO										x				
Presentation of forecast budget (Hunter JO)	Financial	Annual	CEO	Hunter JO Board										x				
Presentation of consolidated forecast budget (Arrow)	Financial	Annual	CEO	Arrow Board											x			
Renewal of Arrow Insurances - Statewide Mutual	Risk	Annual	Head of Finance	CEO												x	Meeting with Chair, CEO, Head of Finance & Broker to be held prior to renewal by 30 June annually	
Renewal of Hunter JO Insurances - Statewide Mutual	Risk	Annual	Head of Finance	CEO														Meeting with Chair, CEO, Head of Finance & Broker to be held prior to renewal by 30 June annually
Review of Enterprise Risk Register	Risk	Biannual	Executive Officer	CEO			x						x					





# HUNTER JO BOARD FORWARD PLANNER & GOVERNANCE CALENDAR

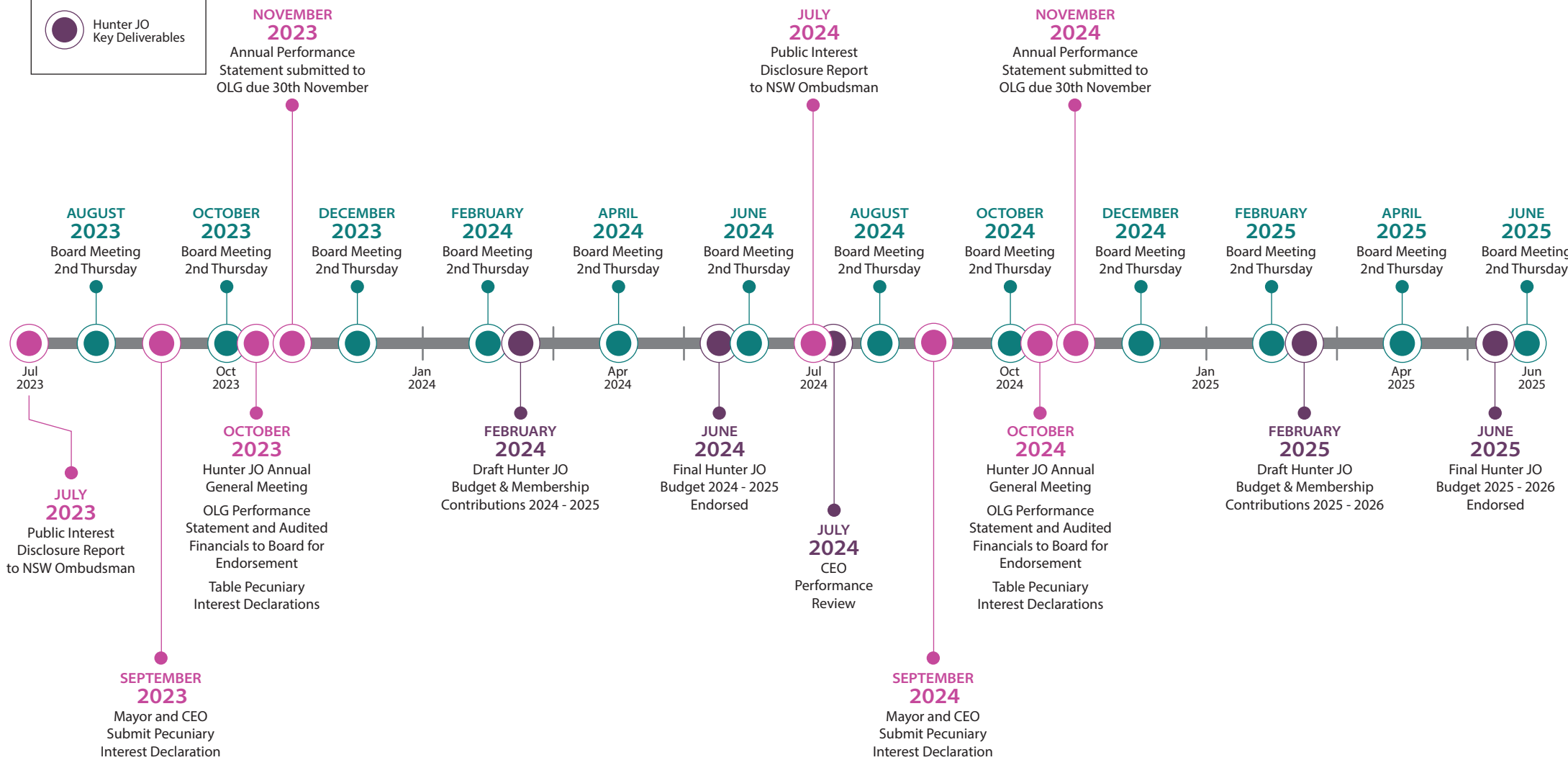


KEY

Statutory Dates

Board Meetings

Hunter JO Key Deliverables



# JO Calendar of Compliance & Reporting Requirements 2023-2024

July 2023

Aug 2023

Sept 2023

Oct 2023

Nov 2023

Dec 2023

Jan 2024

Feb 2024 – May 2024

June 2024

Finance

Financial statements to be audited within 4 months [LGA s416(1)]

**7** Proposed borrowing return to be submitted to TCorp

**17** Request for extension to lodge financial statements due in writing to OLG [LGA s416(2), Code]

**31** Financial Statements to be audited [LGAs416(1), Code] and lodged to OLG [LGA s417(5)] with Financial Data Return

**5** Last day for financial statements to be presented to the public [LGA 418(2)]

Governance

**30** Public Interest Disclosures Report due to NSW Ombudsman [PIDA s6CA]

**30** Written returns of interest due for voting representatives and designated persons who held office at 30 June [MCC cl4.21(b)] to be lodged

EO to table returns at next JO Board meeting [MCC cl 4.25]

**30** Annual Report of obligations under GIPA due to the Minister and the Information Commissioner [GIPA s125]

**30** Annual Report of obligations under PIDA due to the Minister and Ombudsman [PIDA s31]

**30** Annual Performance Statement is to be prepared [Checklist is available on the OLG website]

**30** Model Code of Conduct Complaints Statistics to be reported to Board [MCC 11.1]. Collection form due to OLG [MCC 11.2]

**30** Annual Performance Statement is to be placed on the JO website

**30** Public Interest Disclosure Report due to the NSW Ombudsman [PIDA s6CA]

**30** Last day to adopt Statement of Revenue Policy and Budget 2023-24 [LG Reg cl 397I]

# JO Calendar of Compliance & Reporting Requirements 2023-24

## General

JO should notify OLG ([olg@olg.nsw.gov.au](mailto:olg@olg.nsw.gov.au)) of any senior staff or address changes via email to enable updating of the directory

JO must review its publication guide in relation to the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 and adopt a new publication guide at intervals of not more than 12 months. An agency may update and amend its publication guide at any time

Circulars are emailed to council. Please advise OLG ([olg@olg.nsw.gov.au](mailto:olg@olg.nsw.gov.au)) of any change of council email address. Council Circulars can be downloaded from OLG website at [www.olg.nsw.gov.au](http://www.olg.nsw.gov.au)

OLG = Office of Local Government

LGA = Local Government Act 1993.

LG Reg = Local Government (General) Regulation 2005

Code = Local Government Code of Accounting Practice and Financial Reporting

PIDA = Public Interests Disclosures Act 1994

MCC = Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW, 2018

MCCP = Procedures for the Administration of The Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW, 2018

GIPA = Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009

IP&R G/L = Integrated Planning and Reporting Guidelines Sept 2021

**From:** [Joe James](#)  
**To:** [Brett Whitworth](#)  
**Cc:** [olg@olg.nsw.gov.au](mailto:olg@olg.nsw.gov.au); [Lisa Lord](#); [Louisa Bulley](#); [Steve Wilson](#)  
**Subject:** Hunter JO reply to correspondence from the Office of Local Government (OLG Ref: A858579)  
**Date:** Monday, 28 August 2023 8:42:35 AM  
**Attachments:** [F1D84B6DEBE94C9BB4FFB3F2F9674B06.png](#)  
[FA1859 Annual Engagement Plan 2023.pdf](#)  
[HJO Final Management Letter 2022.pdf](#)  
[image004.png](#)  
[image006.png](#)  
[image007.png](#)

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Dear Brett

Thank you for your letter of 24 May 2023.

The governance of the Hunter JO, including its audit processes, are in good order.

The principal cause for delay in the submission of the FY21-22 financial statements was: (1) the Auditor General querying whether the Hunter JO was a going concern, and (2) the solution ultimately agreed to address this query.

This matter is now addressed – it did not appear in the Final FY21/22 Management Letter dated 28 June 2023, **attached** as requested, and it is not listed as an issue in the FY22-23 Annual Audit Engagement Plan (**Plan**) dated 2 August 2023, also **attached** as requested.

The attached Plan sets out the key issues and timetable for the FY22/23 audit. Having met with the contract auditor, Alex Hardy of Prosperity, last Thursday, I am comfortable that we are running to schedule with the timetable (see Section 6), no significant issues have been identified and that we will lodge out FY22/23 financial statements on time.

### **Response to request for strategies for on-time lodgement**

Your letter requested that we provide strategies implemented to address compliance with future legislative timeframes. It should be noted that, other than resolution of the issue related to the Hunter JO as a going concern, the balance of the audit was conducted on time. Set out below is an explanation for why this delay in lodgement of the FY21/22 financial statements was unique and, the underlying structural issue now being resolved, why it should not reoccur.

Hunter Joint Organisation (**Hunter JO**) receives some funding from Arrow Collaborative Services Ltd (**Arrow**) – by way of reminder, Arrow runs businesses seeking to service the local government market and Hunter JO and Arrow share the same ten (10) member councils.

Towards the completion of the FY21-22 audit, the Auditor General raised a concern as to whether the Hunter JO board, in forming a view as to whether the organisation was a going concern, could rely on funding from Arrow given that it was not legally guaranteed. Despite the funding relationship being an historic one (that predated the creation of JO's in 2018, when Hunter councils collaborated through an incorporated association) this was the first time the auditor had identified this as an issue.

The delay in finalisation of the accounts was linked to how the auditor wanted to see this addressed, being a three-step process:

1. Finalisation of a funding deed between Hunter JO and Arrow.
2. Declaration by Arrow, under the deed, of the funding amount for FY23/24.
3. Presentation of a finalised FY23/24 budget, approved by the Hunter JO board, that included the declared funding amount and which showed a balanced budget.

While the form of the funding deed took some time to agree with the Auditor General, it was the processes required at steps 2 and 3 which have been the primary source of the delay.

The board of Arrow (which is not within the control of the Hunter JO), had commenced a program of strategic review of its business interests in October 2022. This program has been extensive including, ultimately, decisions to cease operating two of its five businesses. The Arrow board, understandably, was not willing to declare its binding funding commitment for FY23/24 until this review process was substantially complete and the shape of its own budget for FY23/24 had been determined.

The last of these steps to be completed, Step 3, occurred on 8 June 2023, with the approval by the Hunter JO board of the FY 23/24 annual budget, including the declared funding amount for FY23/24 under the funding deed. The auditor was then able to finalise the audit and issue the Final Management Letter.

With the funding deed now in place, there is no reason to expect a recurrence of this issue and, again, we note, the issue does not appear in the FY22/23 Audit Plan. As an aside, we note that we were unable to finalise the FY22/23 Plan until the prior year had been closed (which is why it is only being provided now).

I trust that this appropriately responds to your letter of 24 May 2023 but, should you have any comments or queries, please do not hesitate to contact me or our Responsible Accounting Officer, Lisa Lord (copied).

As a further aside, I note that I have not sought reappointment to my role with Hunter JO and that my last day in the role will be 29 September 2023. Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO (also copied), will be taking over my responsibilities on an acting basis from that time.

Sincerely

Joe



**Joe James**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

[ceo@hunterjo.com.au](mailto:ceo@hunterjo.com.au) | 0405 217 249

4 Sandringham Avenue | PO Box 3137 | Thornton NSW 2322

Follow our progress

[hunterjo.com.au](http://hunterjo.com.au)



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**From:** [Hunter Councils Admin](#)

**Sent:** Monday, 29 May 2023 11:08 AM

**To:** [Joe James](#)

**Subject:** FW: Correspondence from the Office of Local Government (Our Ref: A858579) - Hunter JO

Kind Regards,

**Candace Woodyatt**

Business Administration Trainee

**P:** (02) 4978 4040

**E:** [candacew@arrowco.com.au](mailto:candacew@arrowco.com.au)

**W:** [www.arrowco.com.au](http://www.arrowco.com.au)

**A:** 4 Sandringham Ave | PO Box 3137 | Thornton, NSW 2322



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**From:** OLG Office of Local Government Mailbox <[olg@olg.nsw.gov.au](mailto:olg@olg.nsw.gov.au)>

**Sent:** Friday, May 26, 2023 12:24 PM

**To:** Hunter Councils Admin <[admin@ssalimited.com.au](mailto:admin@ssalimited.com.au)>

**Subject:** Correspondence from the Office of Local Government (Our Ref: A858579) - Hunter JO

Dear Mr James

Please find attached correspondence from the Office of Local Government.

Yours sincerely

**Office of Local Government** | Department of Planning and Environment

**T** 02 4428 4100 | **E** [olg@olg.nsw.gov.au](mailto:olg@olg.nsw.gov.au)

5 O'Keeffe Ave, NOWRA NSW 2541

[www.olg.nsw.gov.au](http://www.olg.nsw.gov.au)



*The Department of Planning and Environment acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land and we show our respect for elders past, present and emerging through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.*

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15 September 2023

Mr Brett Whitworth  
Deputy Secretary, Local Government  
NSW Office of Local Government  
Locked Bag 3015,  
NOWRA NSW 2541  
Email: [brett.whitworth@olg.nsw.gov.au](mailto:brett.whitworth@olg.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Mr Whitworth,

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you on Thursday 31 August 2023 to discuss our proposed resolution of the issues raised in the Hunter JO's audit processes.

With the Hunter JO Audit process for the 2022-2023 financial year now being finalised, we want to ensure that this issue is resolved satisfactorily.

Since the issue was first flagged in the Hunter JO Audit for the 2020/21 financial year, and then noted in the audit report for the 2021/22 financial year, the Hunter JO has taken a number of actions to resolve the issue.

Most recently, at the August 2023 meeting of the Hunter JO Board, the following was resolved to specifically address the concerns raised during the previous audits:

1. *That GMAC be asked to report to the next meeting of the JO on the feasibility of transferring all staff engaged in the regional policy and program delivery unit from Arrow to the JO.*
2. *That as an interim measure pending a consideration of the report anticipated in 1 above and advice from the Minister for Local Government (3 below), the circumstances set forth in confidential annexure 'A' to this recommendation be considered as extenuating circumstances pursuant to s.55(3)(i) of the Local Government Act.*
3. *That a copy of this recommendation (including confidential annexure 'A') be forwarded to the OLG referencing our earlier meetings and correspondence and seeking concurrence to the action now taken and requesting advice on the current position with respect to the request to the Minister as to the possible breach(s) of s.55 of the Local Government Act.*



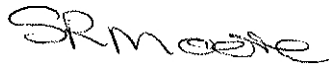
*4. In accordance with Section 10A (2)(a) Local Government Act 1993 Annexure A remain confidential as deals with 'personnel matters concerning particular individuals (other than councillors)'*

The annexure referenced in the resolution is provided below.

Our Hunter JO Director Steve Wilson will be following up with you to address the points raised in our meeting, which we hope will adequately address these issues moving forward.

If you or your office have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Steve at [steve@hunterjo.com.au](mailto:steve@hunterjo.com.au) or on 0448 401 436.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SR Moore'.

Cr Sue Moore  
Chair, Hunter Joint Organisation  
Mayor, Singleton Shire Council

## Annexure A: Hunter JO Board Procurement Report

**Date: 10 August 2023**

**As per the resolution from the FY21/22 Hunter JO Annual General Meeting on 29 June 2023, the report and recommendation on this issue, provided at the Board meeting on 9 June 2022, has been updated the after consideration of legal advice sought by the Board.**

**Note that any updates to the original report and recommendations have been italicised and underlined.**

---

**Report Author: Louisa Bulley, Executive Officer**

**Responsible Officer: Joe James, CEO**

### **Executive Summary**

The Hunter JO Audited Financials and accompanying reports for the 2021-22 financial year were delivered to the Board at its Annual General Meeting on 1 December 2021.

Within the Auditors Closing Report and the Report on the Conduct of the Audit, the Auditor General's Office raised a 'significant audit observation' regarding the Hunter JO directly engaging Arrow Collaborative Services (**Arrow**), an entity owned by the same member councils, to support delivery of both its statutory functions and grant funded projects.

The Management response to the Auditor General, contained with the Closing Report, recommended a solution to the audit observation in the form of a resolution by the Hunter JO Board, under section 55(3)(i) of the Local Government Act, that a satisfactory result to support delivery of both its statutory functions and grant funded projects will not be achieved by inviting tenders in which Arrow competes with third parties.

This report sets out the basis of the recommendation to address the issues raised by the audit observation.

*This issue has also been identified in the FY22/23 Audit Plan issued by the Office of the Auditor General.*

### **Background**

From the beginning of formal local government collaborative, the Hunter region has led the way in developing innovative models to build institutional capacity and operationalise council collaboration.

The architecture of the current relationship between Hunter JO, Arrow Collaborative Services, and other related entities within the structure, has developed organically throughout the significant history of the organisation.

A brief summary of the history of the organisation and its entities is provided below, which the purpose of providing is showing the extensive period of which the current structure has developed and the intimate involvement of the NSW Government throughout that period.

1955	Informal collaboration between councils in the Hunter Region to respond to floods	
1956	Formally constituted as Hunter Valley Local Government Association	
1973	Hunter Region Association of Councils formed	

1990	Hunter Regional Organisation of Councils (HROC) established under 'Integrated Local Area Council' philosophy	
1992	Business Manager employed under HROC	
1996	Lower Hunter Central Coast Regional Environmental Management Strategy (LHCCREMS) program established by HROC	
1997	Additional business services offered through HROC (training, purchasing, etc.)	
2002	HROC establishes Hunter Councils Incorporated (incorporated association)	Constitution under the Associations Incorporation Act 2009
2003	HROC established Hunter Councils Limited (trading company) to house Hunter Records Storage business.  Approval given by Harry Woods, Minister for Local Government to enable HROC to operate Records Business under Hunter Council Limited (Attachment 6)	Constitution under Corporations Act 2001, Company Limited by Guarantee and not having a Share Capital
2012	Hunter Councils Limited established Hunter Councils Legal Services entity	Constitution under Corporations Act 2001, Public Company Limited by Guarantee
2014	Hunter Councils Limited changes name to Strategic Services Australia	As per Hunter Councils Ltd
2015	<b>Boards of Hunter Councils Incorporated and Strategic Services Australia recommend to Paul Toole, Minister for Local Government that all commercial operations and business activities be shifted from Hunter Councils Incorporated to Strategic Services Australia (Attachment 7). This recommendation was supported at the time by both Department of Fair Trading and the Office of Local Government, as per attached report (Attachment 8).</b>  <b>Minister's advice provided that approval is not required (Attachment 9)</b>  <b>Advice sought from DFK Crosbie to support restructure.</b>  <b>Commercial activities shifted out of Hunter Council Incorporated to Strategic Services Australia.</b>	
2016	Hunter Councils Incorporated members undertake trial as a pilot Joint Organisation under 'Fit for the Future'	
2018	Hunter Joint Organisation formally established under Local Government Act	Under Local Government Act
2020	Service Level Agreement developed between Hunter JO, Strategic Services Australia, and related entities	
2021	Strategic Services Australia re-brands as Arrow Collaborative Services	As per Hunter Councils Ltd

## Audit Report FY21/22

The following summary was provided within the Auditor's Report;

***Non-compliance with the procurement regulations under the Local Government Act 1993***

*Since its establishment the Hunter Joint Organisation (HJO) has been engaging Arrow Collaborative Services Limited (Arrow), to deliver entirely all of the HJO's grant programs funded by State and Local Governments.*

*In doing so, HJO has not complied with the requirements of Circular 09-39 Tendering Guidelines for NSW Local Government (Procurement Regulations) issued by the Office of Local Government within the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment under section 23A of the Local Government Act 1993. Procurement activities in Local Government are governed by strict considerations of probity, transparency and accountability, as they involve expenditure of public funds for public purposes.*

Management's view is that the compliance issue raised by the Auditor is fully rectified should the Board pass the recommended resolution by the Hunter JO Board, under section 55(3)(i) of the Local Government Act

*The Board should have regard to the following extenuating circumstances in forming a view that a satisfactory result will not be achieved by inviting tenders:*

- a. *the primary purpose of calling tenders is to ensure ~~in considering~~ probity (transparency and accountability) and value for money in Hunter JO's expenditure of public funds for public purposes; ~~both the Hunter JO Board and the Auditor General should have regard to the following:~~*
- b. *Arrow Collaborative Services shares common ownership and control with the Hunter JO and its objects, as recorded in its Constitution, include providing support to the Hunter JO;*
- c. *The service relationship of Arrow Collaborative Services to the entity charged with regional collaboration and governed by the mayors of member councils, predates the creation of joint organisations;*
- d. All businesses within Arrow Collaborative Services, *including the Regional Policy and Programs team*, comply with the Hunter JO's Procurement Policy, as endorsed by both the Hunter JO and Arrow Boards;
- e. The blended rate for Regional Policy and Program team (including all on-costs) is approximately \$130/hour. This is not a rate that the private sector can compete with.
- f. The Regional Policy & Programs team *contains bespoke competency and capability not available in the open market given that:*
  - i. was borne out of the Lower Hunter Central Coast Regional Environmental Management Strategy (LHCCREMS) program established by HROC in 1996;
  - ii. the specific organisational competency and capability that the team provides has been refined over a 26 year period;
  - iii. Since the piloting of joint organisations, and in a deliberate strategy since February 2020, the Hunter JO has invested in the team expanding its portfolios / policy areas and systemising its operation to be a bespoke and sophisticated service provider, with a unique combination of organisational competency and capability to support

the value chain required to deliver Hunter JO's statutory functions and grant funded projects;

g. If would offend both the principles of probity and value for money for Hunter JO to issue and/or award a tender to a third party where:

- i. such a tenderer would be competing against Arrow, as a related entity of the HJO, without the specific bespoke organisational competency and capability that Arrow has in relation to Hunter JO, and
- ii. even ignoring the bespoke nature of Arrow's capability and competency, Arrow's cost of providing these services is substantially lower than market rates for external service providers.

~~That~~ To avoid sole reliance on the relationship between Hunter JO and Arrow and give assurance to the Board (and any auditor) that the Board is fulfilling its duties with respect to the appropriate expenditure of public funds, Management *also* recommends that the service level agreement with Arrow be amended to explicitly include that:

- Arrow must follow the tendering/procurement policies of HJO; and
- Arrow report to HJO on Arrow's compliance with the tendering/procurement policies;

to enable Hunter JO to demonstrate probity (transparency and accountability) and value for money in the expenditure of public funds (note that this information is already available to member councils in full and that this is simply a formalisation of current operational arrangements).



4 Sandringham Avenue, PO Box 3137,  
Thornton NSW 2323. 02 4978 4040  
[www.hunterjo.com.au](http://www.hunterjo.com.au)

15 September 2023

Mr Brett Whitworth  
Deputy Secretary, Local Government  
NSW Office of Local Government  
Locked Bag 3015,  
NOWRA NSW 2541

Email: [brett.whitworth@olg.nsw.gov.au](mailto:brett.whitworth@olg.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Mr Whitworth,

**Subject: Resolution of Hunter JO Procurement Issue**

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with Cr Sue Moore (Chair Hunter JO) and Morven Cameron (Chair GMAC) on 31 August 2023 to discuss our proposed resolution of the issues raised in the Hunter JO's previous two (2020/21 & 2021/22) audit processes.

I am writing to provide a summary of the key issues raised in that meeting and the initial responses identified, to ensure there is clarity between the Hunter JO and your office moving forward.

After reviewing the information below, could I ask that you please provide any additional clarification that may be required from your office, in respect to the points raised, so that we are able to effectively address them.

Four key issues were identified:

1. [The Office of Local Government are concerned that member Councils of the Hunter JO may have breached tendering guidelines when procuring services from Arrow.](#)  
We have committed to looking into this further and will be raising this matter at the next Arrow Board Meeting, as this can only be answered by our individual member councils. I believe that after consulting with our Arrow Board, I will be able to assure you that our member councils comply with the tendering guidelines outlined in the Local Government Act in procuring services from Arrow.
2. [Concerns were raised that the funds held by the Hunter JO are interspersed with Arrow and, as Arrow is a commercial entity, it is not possible for the Office of Local Government to see their finances or receive annual statements.](#)  
We have committed to looking at this further and will also be raising at our next Arrow Board Meeting in order to provide a response. I believe the Board will be happy to share and discuss with you Arrow's financial statements and audit reports in order to address any concerns. I will be in a position to confirm this after next Arrow Board meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2023.
3. [Questions were raised about Arrow's compliance with s358 and s625 of the Local Government Act in terms of the investment guidelines.](#)  
I have attached a letter from the then Minister for Local Government Paul Toole MP dated 12 November 2015. The Minister was approached at this time regarding an expansion of focus for Strategic Services Australia Limited (now Arrow Collaborative Services). However, as noted by the Minister in this correspondence, "Neither section 358 nor any other

provision of the Local Government Act requires my concurrence to the company extending its business activities". It is our understanding this is still the case, and Arrow is therefore not bound by the investment guidelines outlined in the Local Government Act.

4. The final question related to the CEO position and if having one person as CEO of both entities presents a conflict of interest, and therefore also a potential breach of s353 in the NSW Local Government Act in relation to secondary employment.

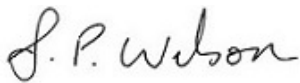
Should this be the case, the situation has existed since the Hunter JO was formed, and has not been raised previously. If a breach has occurred, it has not led to any form of personal gain on the CEO's part or significant gain for any member council. Now that we are aware of this concern/possible breach, we will consider it as part of the current review of the Hunter JO leadership and governance model currently underway.

In order to provide you with a full response addressing the issues raised, I will be consulting our Arrow and Hunter JO Boards respectively, in our upcoming meetings.

Please let me know if the above is a clear summary of the issues raised, and if there are any specific actions that you will be requiring from the Hunter JO to resolve them, beyond what has been proposed.

If you or your office have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me at [steve@hunterjo.com.au](mailto:steve@hunterjo.com.au) or on 0448 401 436.

Yours Sincerely,



Steve Wilson  
Director, Hunter Joint Organisation

Attachment:

Correspondence from the Hon Paul Toole MP, Minister for Local Government (12 November 2015)





Professor Alan Broadfoot  
Executive Director  
Newcastle Institute for Energy and Resources  
Research and Innovation Division  
The University of Newcastle  
University Drive, Callaghan NSW 2308 Australia

E [alan.broadfoot@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:alan.broadfoot@newcastle.edu.au)

20 September 2023

**Re: Letter of Support – University of Newcastle – NSW Energy Skills Hub**

I write to confirm support for the above funding application being submitted to the Federal Government's Priority Community Infrastructure Program (PCIP). I understand that this letter may be disclosed to Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA, the Department).

The Hunter Joint Organisation (JO) is a collaborative body that brings together ten regional councils to provide a united and local voice for communities. Our statutory role includes identifying key regional strategic priorities and supporting collaborations to deliver these priorities with key partners, including other levels of government, industry and community.

The Hunter JO supports the University in their plans to develop a Skills Hub that will bring together new energy skills development, a training ground for education and accreditation, and a testbed to enable the rapid commercialisation of new energy technologies. The Skills Hub aims to bring rapid deployment of innovations and new technologies, with enabling infrastructure to test, train and de-risk new energy systems.

Development of the NSW Skills Hub directly aligns with the following core regional objectives identified by the ten Councils of the region through the [Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2032](#):

1. Coordinated planning and investment by all levels of government that empowers the region and its residents to maintain and grow jobs, economic opportunities and quality of life.
2. Accelerated and market driven investment in innovation that capitalises on the region's existing natural strengths and attributes which create jobs in future industries.
3. A globally focused region that drives talent attraction and retention
4. A region that is built around Circular Economy principles as a driver of future jobs.
5. Making use of our opportunity to drive circular evolution of our region's economy.

6. Supporting our region to be on the path to net zero emissions and paving the way with smart innovative solutions that increase liveability.
7. We take leadership and drive regional best practice in climate action.

The Hunter region has the essential elements to support the new energy economy with a robust asset base, mature supply chain, skilled workforce, and a rich research and innovation ecosystem.

The Skills Hub will enable participants to operate, troubleshoot and grow at pace in clean energy industries. More broadly, there exists a clear identifiable need for a new generation of expertise to test and better understand the dynamics of a new clean energy future.

Industry engaged skills development and training has a major role to play in regional energy solutions and there is much to leverage when a research and industry intensive university is embedded in workforce and skills development. However, practical skills and problem solving require appropriate enabling infrastructure and simulation facilities to support the workforce of the future.

The University aims to build on the existing strengths of the Hunter as a driver for economic activity and inject new and emerging skills into the mix, while supporting industry to grow at pace, and position the Hunter as a major investment destination.

We are committed to working with the University to deliver this important initiative for the region.

Should you have any further queries or require any further information please don't hesitate to contact me at [steve@hunterjo.com.au](mailto:steve@hunterjo.com.au).

Yours Sincerely



Steve Wilson  
Director Hunter JO



4 Sandringham Avenue, PO Box 3137,  
Thornton NSW 2323. 02 4978 4040  
[www.hunterjo.com.au](http://www.hunterjo.com.au)

9<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Mr Brett Whitworth  
Deputy Secretary, Local Government  
NSW Office of Local Government  
Locked Bag 3015,  
NOWRA NSW 2541

Email: [brett.whitworth@olg.nsw.gov.au](mailto:brett.whitworth@olg.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Mr Whitworth,

**Subject: Resolution of Hunter JO Procurement Issue**

Further to my correspondence dated 15<sup>th</sup> September 2023 regarding the above, I write to confirm the outcomes of the recent Arrow Board meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2023, at which the following concerns identified by the Office of Local Government were considered:

1. That member Councils of the Hunter JO may have breached tendering guidelines when procuring services from Arrow.
2. That the funds held by the Hunter JO are interspersed with Arrow and, as Arrow is a commercial entity, it is not possible for the Office of Local Government to see their finances or receive annual statements.

I am pleased to advise that the outcomes of the Board meeting included:

1. The General Managers of the ten Member Councils of the Hunter JO advised that, when procuring services from Arrow-owned companies, they refer to their own procurement policies which are consistent with the "Tendering Guidelines for NSW Local Government".
2. The Arrow Board endorsed the Chief Operating Officer and the Chair of Arrow engaging directly with the Deputy Secretary for the NSW Office of Local Government and relevant members of the OLG team, to review Arrow Collaborative Services annual financial statements and audit reports for the last two years.

Please don't hesitate to contact me at [steve@hunterjo.com.au](mailto:steve@hunterjo.com.au) or on 0448 401 436 should you have any further queries, or to arrange a meeting with the Arrow Chair and Chief Operating Officer.

Yours Sincerely

Steve Wilson  
Director Hunter JO



Tony Chadwick  
Economic Development and Tourism Manager  
Cessnock City Council  
62-78 Vincent Street  
Cessnock  
NSW 2325

8 November 2023

Dear Tony

**Re: Letter of Support – Shiraz to Shore Trail Hunter Valley Gardens to Abermain.**

I write to confirm support for the above funding application being submitted through the **Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program Grant**.

The Hunter Joint Organisation (JO) is a collaborative body that brings together ten regional councils to provide a united and local voice for communities. Our statutory role includes identifying key regional strategic priorities and supporting collaborations to deliver these priorities with key partners, including other levels of government, industry and community.

The HJO received a \$387,000 grant to develop a concept plan and business case for the Shiraz to Shore Trail under the Regional NSW Business Case and Strategy Development Fund. The successful completion of this project has identified the Hunter Valley Gardens to Abermain section of the trail as highly deliverable and can provide a significant user experience in its own right.

The proposed Shiraz to Shore Trail extends from the Singleton Council area in Hunter Valley Wine Country to the coast in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie. Over 161 km of cycleway and shared trails will put visitors among the beautiful vineyards of the Hunter Valley, take them through heritage towns and rail trails to the beach and lake experiences of the Hunter. The trail includes the council areas of Newcastle, Singleton, Cessnock and Lake Macquarie and includes significant area managed by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The request for funding is to develop a significant section of the Shiraz to Shore from the Hunter Valley Gardens to Abermain, through the heart of the Hunter Valley Wine Country, passing the Visitor Information Centre and Cessnock Airport.

The Shiraz to Shore Trail project directly aligns with the following objectives and strategic directions from the [Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2032](#):

- 1.1.5 Identify and facilitate regional approaches for active transport outcomes that deliver connectivity, health, liveability and economic benefits,
- 3.5.2 Identify opportunities for growth and diversification of employment based in the tourism economy, and
- 4.5.2 Support a healthy and active community.



It also aligns strategically to a number of other regional strategies including:

- Hunter Regional Plan 2041;
  - Strategy 4.1 Connect existing coastal walkways and cycleways to enhance the user experience and link coastal towns and villages. Integrate walking and cycling networks into the design of new communities. Prioritise walking and cycling in areas around schools, health services, aged care facilities, sporting, cultural and recreational facilities.
- Hunter Regional Economic Development Strategy – 2023 Update;
  - Improve infrastructure, services and amenities to fully realise and sustain the region's growth potential.
- Destination Sydney Surrounds North Destination Management Plan 2030;
  - Action 3.3 Provide support for the development of iconic new or improved experiences aligned to nature-based tourism and soft adventure clusters (including cycling, walking).

We are committed to working with Cessnock City Council to deliver this important initiative for the region.

Should you have any further queries or require any further information please do not hesitate to contact Kim Carland, [kimc@hunterjo.com.au](mailto:kimc@hunterjo.com.au) or 0460 034 614.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "J. P. Wilson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Steve Wilson  
Director, Hunter Joint Organisation



24 October 2023

The Hon. Tara Moriarty, MLC  
Minister for Regional NSW  
52 Martin Place  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Minister Moriarty,

**RE: Request for Meeting - Regional Development Roadmap and Trust Fund**

On behalf of the Councils of the Hunter Region, we write to request a meeting with the Minister to discuss the NSW Government's Regional Development Roadmap, which is currently reviewing how the NSW Government invests in regional NSW, including:

- Establishment of the Regional Development Trust Fund
- Appointing a Regional Development Advisory Council
- Modernising the *Regional Development Act 2004*

The Hunter Joint Organisation (JO) is the statutory collaborative body that brings together the ten councils of the Hunter and MidCoast region, to provide a united and local voice for our regional communities. Our statutory role includes identifying key regional strategic priorities and supporting collaborations to deliver these priorities with key partners, including other levels of government, industry and community.

As you will be aware, the Hunter region is on the precipice of enormous economic change as global energy demand shifts away from coal, while at the same time our population is growing faster than ever before. This brings enormous challenges for the region, but also the unique opportunity to shape the future of the region to achieve the best outcomes for our communities, and to maintain the Hunter's considerable contribution to the NSW economy.

It is within this context that we seek a meeting with the Minister to discuss and provide input to the Regional Development Roadmap and Trust Fund, and to understand and discuss the potential implications and opportunities for the Hunter arising from these initiatives.

If you or your office have any questions or to arrange a meeting, please don't hesitate to contact Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO at [steve@hunterjo.com.au](mailto:steve@hunterjo.com.au) or on 0448 401 436.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "SR Moore".

Cr Sue Moore  
Mayor, Singleton Shire Council  
Chair, Hunter Joint Organisation

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J Suvaal".

Cr Jay Suvaal  
Mayor, Cessnock City Council  
Deputy Chair, Hunter Joint Organisation

22<sup>th</sup> November 2023

The Hon. Tara Moriarty, MLC  
Minister for Regional NSW  
52 Martin Place  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Minister Moriarty,

**RE: Hunter Joint Organisation representation on Royalties for Rejuvenation Hunter Expert Panel**

On behalf of the Member Councils of the Hunter Joint Organisation (Hunter JO), I write to request the Minister to appoint a position to the Hunter Royalties for Rejuvenation Expert Panel, from the Hunter JO. To date, this representation has been provided by Joe James, the former Hunter JO CEO who has recently left our organisation.

You will be aware, the Hunter JO is the collaborative body that brings together the region's ten councils to provide a united and local voice for the region's communities. Our statutory functions, established by the NSW Government, include identifying key regional strategic priorities and supporting collaborations to deliver these priorities with key partners, including other levels of government, industry and community. It is the view of the Hunter JO Board, comprising the ten Mayors of the Hunter and MidCoast Region, that ongoing involvement by the Hunter JO in the important work of the Expert Panel is an integral mechanism to deliver these functions and support our shared goals for the region's economic evolution.

Mr James has advised that he intends to continue his involvement on the Expert Panel in line with his Ministerial appointment, until such time as the Hunter JO has a new representative appointed. It should be noted that Mr James no longer has the support of the Hunter JO Board to represent the Hunter JO on the Panel, as he is no longer in a position with an ongoing connection to the Hunter Region or our communities. Mr James departure from the Hunter JO has resulted in our request to you to establish a position on the Expert Panel for a representative of the Hunter JO. This appointment would ensure our continuing direct involvement in the panel's work.

Should you have any questions or to discuss further please don't hesitate to contact me on M 0407 029 341 or at E [smoore@singleton.nsw.gov.au](mailto:smoore@singleton.nsw.gov.au).

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Moore", is positioned below the "Yours Sincerely," text.

Cr Sue Moore  
Chair, Hunter Joint Organisation  
Mayor, Singleton Shire Council

cc: Bob Hawes – Chair, Hunter Expert Panel, Ashley Albury - Executive Director Regional Programs, Regional NSW, Karen Minto – A/ Director, Hunter & Central Coast, Regional NSW





4 Sandringham Avenue, PO Box 3137,  
Thornton NSW 2323. 02 4978 4040  
[www.hunterjo.com.au](http://www.hunterjo.com.au)

28<sup>th</sup> November 2023

The Hon. Courtney Houssos, MLC  
Minister for Natural Resources  
52 Martin Place  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Minister Houssos,

**RE: Hunter Joint Organisation representation on Royalties for Rejuvenation Hunter Expert Panel**

On behalf of the Member Councils of the Hunter Joint Organisation (Hunter JO), I write to request the Minister to appoint a position to the Hunter Royalties for Rejuvenation Expert Panel, from the Hunter JO. To date, this representation has been provided by Joe James, the former Hunter JO CEO who has recently left our organisation.

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Yours Sincerely,

Cr Sue Moore  
Chair, Hunter Joint Organisation  
Mayor, Singleton Shire Council

cc: Bob Hawes – Chair, Hunter Expert Panel, Ashley Albury - Executive Director Regional Programs, Regional NSW, Karen Minto – A/ Director, Hunter & Central Coast, Regional NSW



Ref: 01769167

**Cr Sue Moore**  
**Chair, Hunter Joint Organisation**  
**Mayor, Singleton Shire Council**  
**PO Box 3137**  
**Thornton, NSW 2322**

---

Dear Cr Moore,

Thank you for your correspondence to the Minister for Roads about the previous distribution of funding under the Regional and Local Roads Repair Program (RLRRP) and the inequity of funding between rural/regional and Greater Sydney/Outer metropolitan councils. I am responding to you as this matter falls under my portfolio as Minister for Regional Transport and Roads.

I share your objective for well-functioning road and public transport networks in regional, remote and rural NSW, which are vital to ensuring our communities thrive. Roads and transport are social determinants of health, education, opportunity and jobs.

I understand the enormous impact and challenges of multiple severe weather events, such as those experienced in the Hunter region in the past two years. Residents in my own electorate of Maitland have faced prolonged periods of isolation on multiple occasions in recent years. We must make our network more resilient in the face of natural disasters and build back better when necessary.

As you will be aware, the calculations for road funding under the RLRRP were formulated under the previous government. I intend to address the disparity that has seen metropolitan councils receive five times the funding per kilometre compared to regional councils.

I understand there are complex funding models for Local Government to improve the local roads people use every day. I will be working closely with my Ministerial colleagues to ensure these funding opportunities are clearer, simpler and available across all NSW regional councils.

Regarding the Singleton Council staff's analysis of the disparity of funding, and the methodology and rationale for the fund's distribution, while the dollar per kilometre rate between the regional and metropolitan streams are different, the RLRRP is available to regional councils in addition to several grant funding programs already in place to support councils to manage a safe and efficient road network.

I am advised that the following formula below, based on the road network length in each Local Government Area, was used to determine the funding amounts across 129 entities:

(total funding allocation available per category/total regional and local road kilometres submitted) X (total council area regional and local road kilometres).

The funding within each stream was then split amongst councils on a per kilometre basis.

I have written to all Regional Councils to advise that the new NSW Government will provide an additional \$390 million over the next two years, as part of our new Regional Emergency Road Repair Fund (RERRF). This commitment is an increase on the former Government's RLRRP, of which \$280 million went to regional councils. It will accelerate the vital work of repairing our regional roads. This will bring the total funding to \$670 million for emergency road repair in regional, rural and remote communities and towns, over the next two years.

Thank you for taking the time to write to me. I genuinely appreciate the effort you have made to raise this matter with the Government.

Sincerely,



29/08/2023

**The Hon Jenny Aitchison MP**  
Minister for Regional Transport and Roads





# Hunter JO Annual Performance Statement 2022 - 2023





This document reports on the Hunter JO’s organisational performance and strategic progress through the 2022/2023 Financial Year.

It demonstrates how we are delivering on our four strategic priorities of connectivity, resilience, jobs and a growing economy and liveability.

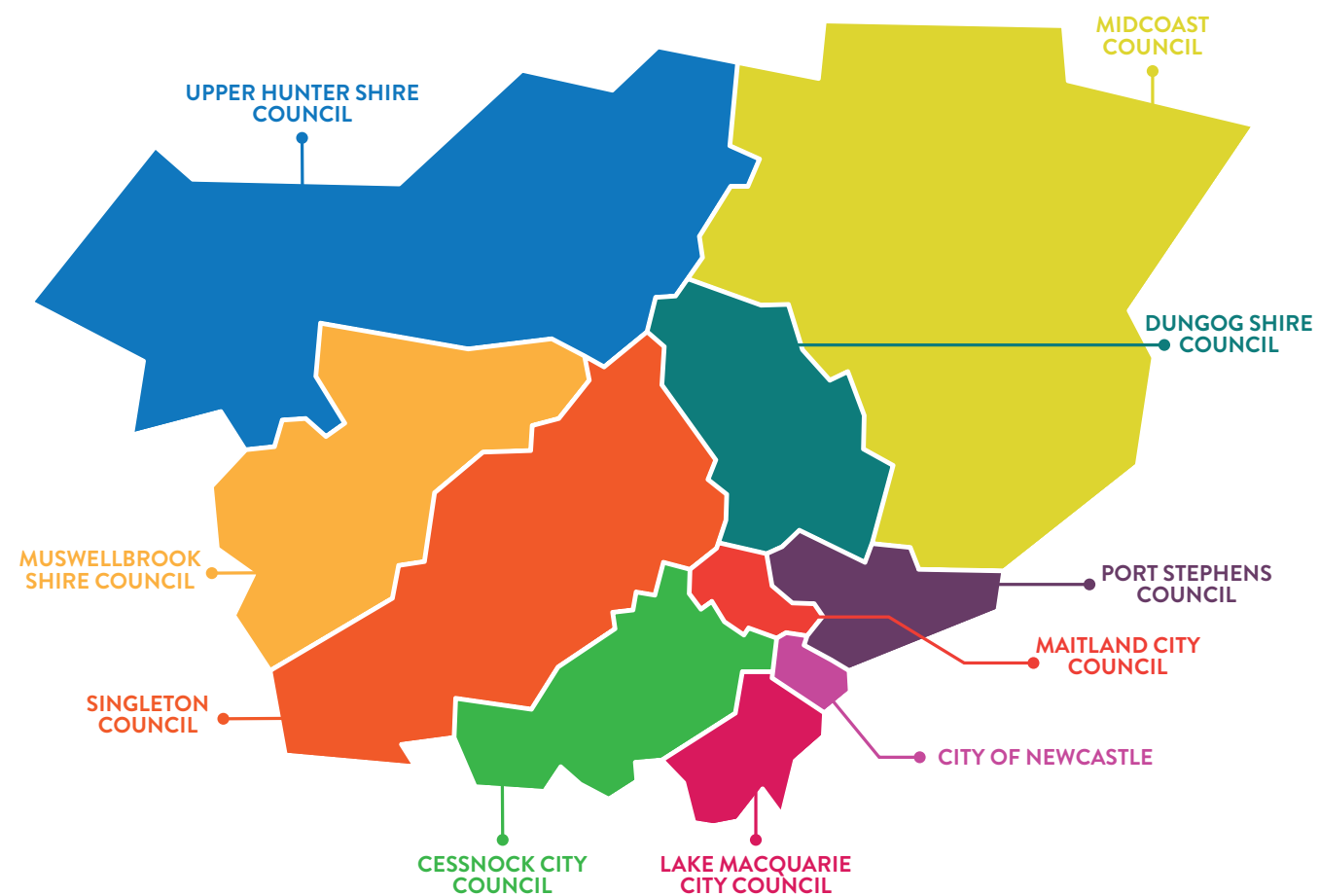
**Acknowledgment of Country**  
The Hunter Joint Organisation acknowledges the country and history of the traditional custodians of the lands upon which we work and live. We pay our respects to the Elders past, present and emerging, of our region, and of Australia.

# Annual Performance Statement 2022 - 2023

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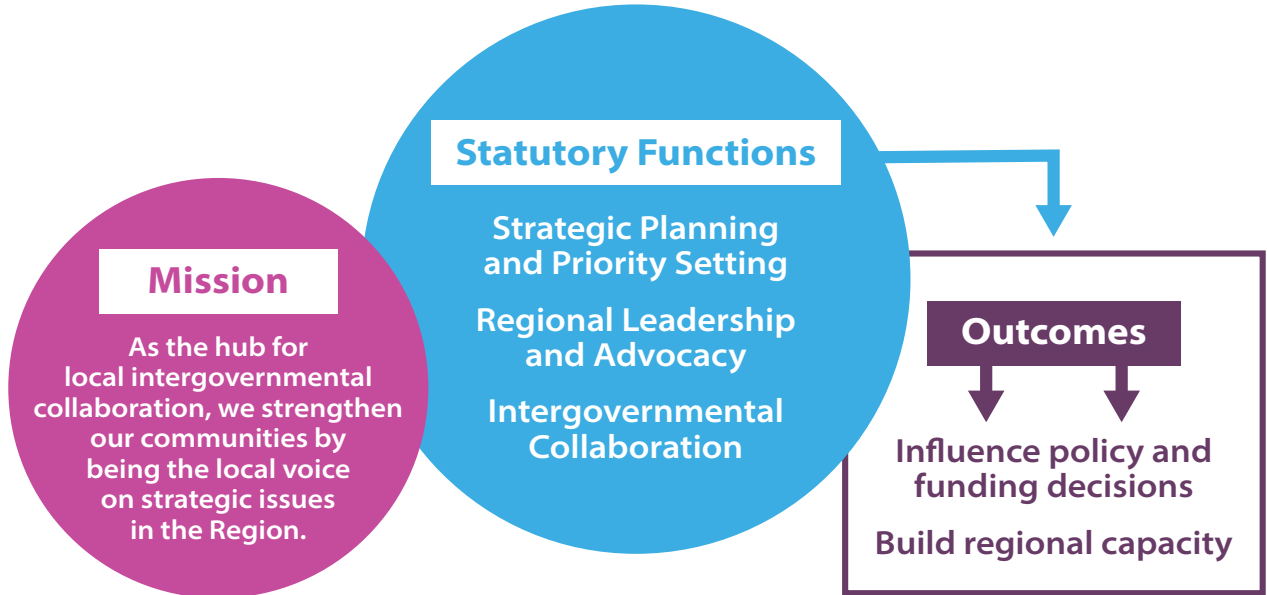


# Who we are and what we do

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.

The Hunter JO Board determines the strategy and oversees the programs and advocacy priorities of the Hunter JO. The Board consists of the Mayor of each Member Council as Voting Representatives, with Non-Voting Representatives including GM's/CEO's of each Member Council and an employee of the public service nominated by the Secretary Department of Regional NSW.

Collaboration across the Hunter region is the cornerstone of the Hunter JO. The connection and coordination between our Member Councils has grown and developed since the 1950s, when local government combined their efforts in the best interests of their communities to respond to floods across the region. Since this time our collaboration has developed and matured, delivering value for councils, our region, and the local government sector as a whole.



The core operations of the Hunter JO are funded by our ten Member Councils and by the affiliated commercial business units of Arrow Collaborative Services which offer shared services to Local Government. The projects of the organisation are also made possible by state and commonwealth grant funding.

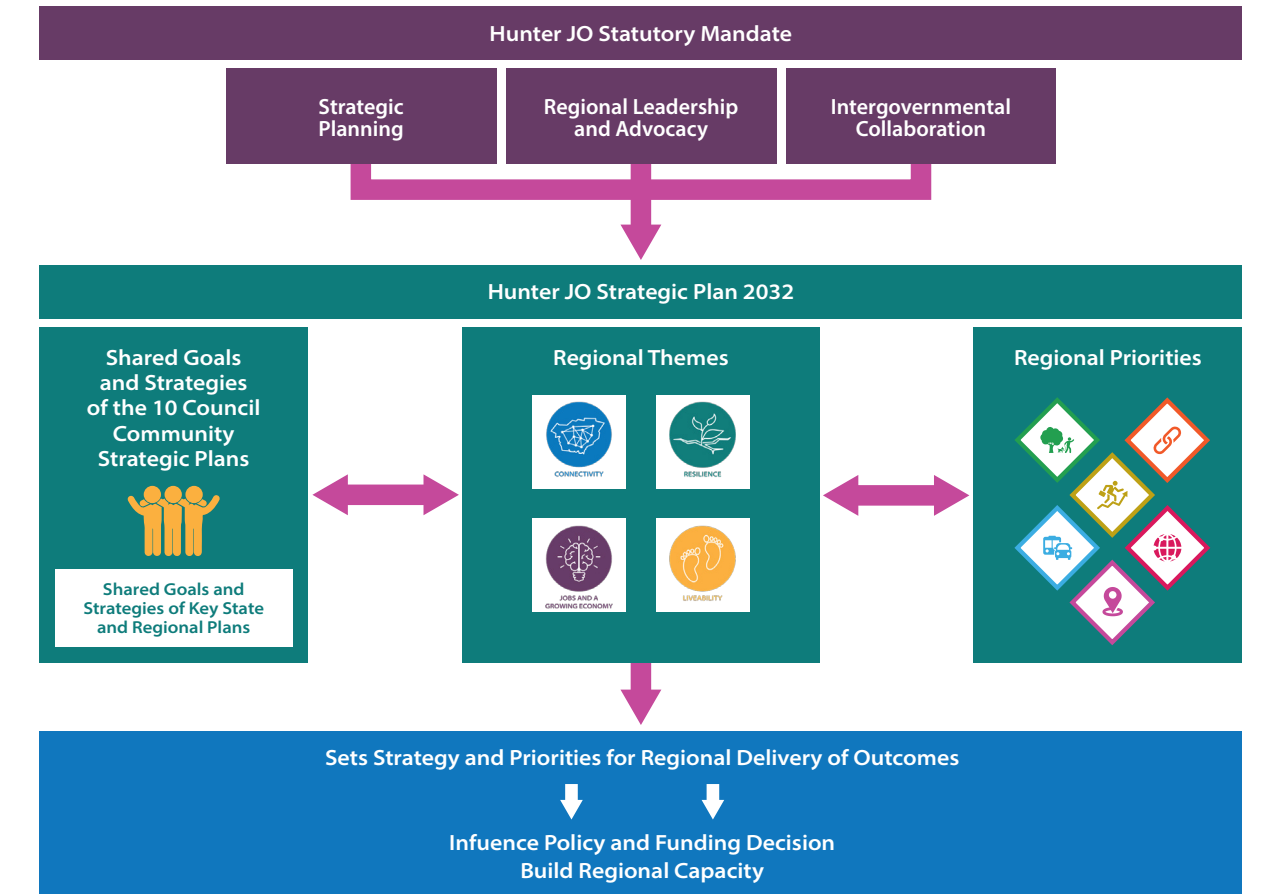
# Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2032

The Regional Priorities in our Strategic Plan are a synthesised, collective view of local communities' voices drawn directly from the extensive community engagement undertaken by Councils in preparing statutory 10-year Community Strategic Plans.

This includes extensive and measurable quantitative and qualitative data from:

- In-person and online community workshops
- Pop-up kiosks
- Online surveys

The Hunter JO and it's Member Councils take a leading role in the implementation of this plan, however collaborating and advocating with other levels of government, industry and key stakeholders is crucial to achieving our long term goals.



# Our Strategic Themes

Our Strategic Themes	
	<b>Connectivity</b> - A globally connected region whose residents enjoy transport and digital infrastructure and systems that enhance their economic and lifestyle opportunities.
	<b>Resilience</b> - We are prepared for change and ready to withstand, adapt and recover from natural and human induced risks.
	<b>Jobs and a Growing Economy</b> - The Hunter economy continues to grow and evolve as a powerhouse of the state and national economies, providing more and higher quality jobs.
	<b>Liveability</b> - Protect, preserve and improve the high standard of liveability and pristine environments that we enjoy in our Region.

Our Advocacy Priorities	
	Our unique lifestyle and attractive environment is protected and enhanced.
	A resilient region prepared for change.
	All levels of government contribute to ensuring the Hunter's successful economic evolution.
	A globally focused Hunter connected to international markets.
	Infrastructure and transport systems that connect the region.
	Improving authority and resourcing for place-led decision-making at a local and regional scale.

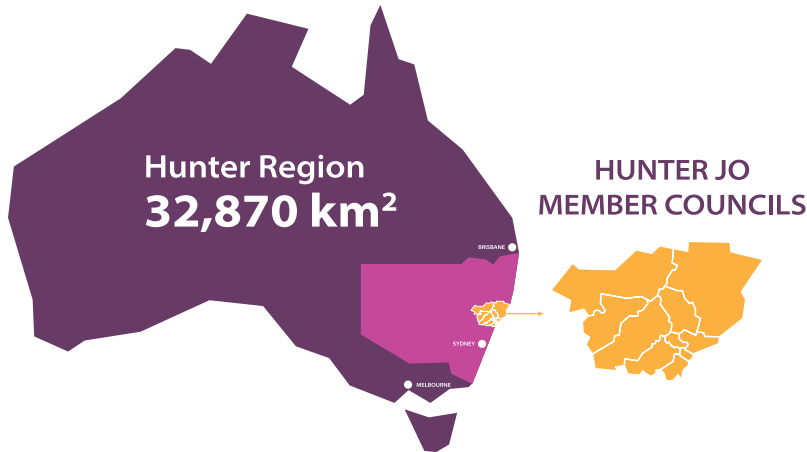




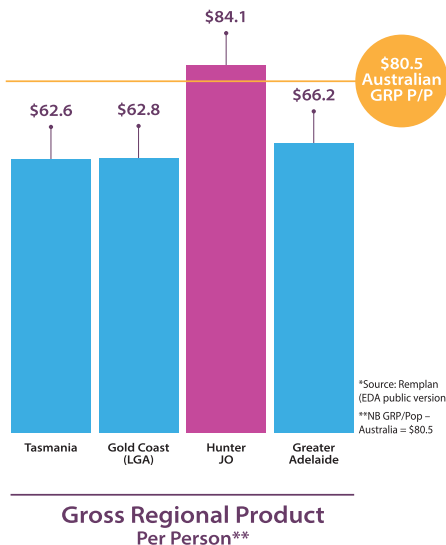
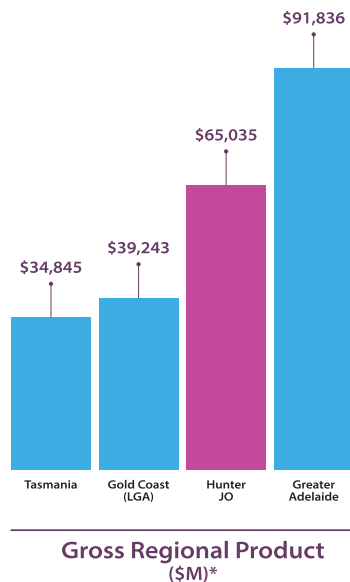
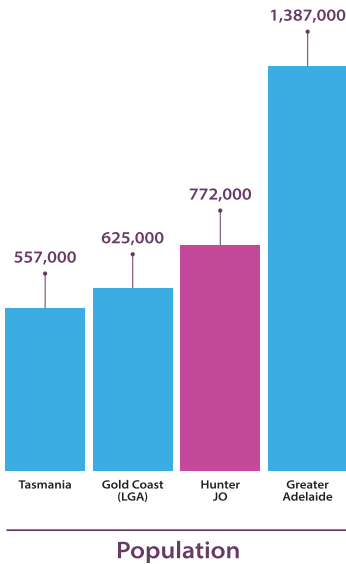
# Our Region

The Hunter is currently experiencing a significant rise in population while also facing the decline of its traditional coal and energy-based industries. The Hunter's economy needs to evolve substantially and rapidly to maintain its considerable contribution to the State and Commonwealth economies, particularly as we approach a population of one million people by 2040. This is required to maintain the region's resilience, liveability, and economic prosperity.

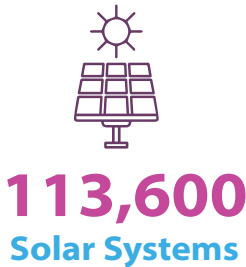
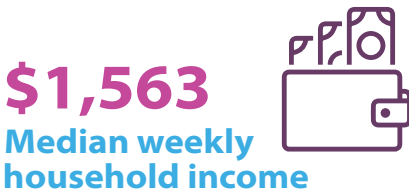
It is a core priority and function of the Hunter JO to support, advocate and collaborate with stakeholders across all levels of government. This helps to ensure the quality of life and opportunities available to our local communities are not eroded as the economic drivers of our region evolve and change. Direct competitive access to international markets will underpin and drive this transition to safeguard the future of the Hunter.



A Powerhouse of the NSW  
and National Economies



Inhabited by the Awabakal, Worimi, Wonnarua, Geawegal, Biripi, Guringai & Darkinjung Aboriginal peoples.



The Hunter River flows 460km and is one of the largest river valleys on the NSW coast with a catchment of 2.2m ha.

## Our Collective Voice



Cessnock, Dungog, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, MidCoast, Muswellbrook, Newcastle, Port Stephens, Singleton, Upper Hunter.



Maitland, Cessnock, Myall Lakes, Swansea, Newcastle, Charlestown, Wallsend, Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens, Upper Hunter, Port Macquarie.



Newcastle, Lyne, Hunter, New England, Shortland, Paterson.





## Message from the Chair

**“It has been a great pleasure to work alongside my fellow Mayors and General Managers over the last 12 months and I thank them all for their dedication and collaborative efforts to deliver outcomes for our region.”**

I am delighted to present this report, and to share the results of our collaboration as ten councils working together at the Hunter JO.

The 2022/2023 Financial Year saw many successes for the Hunter JO and the region. A significant milestone was reached in August 2022, when the Hunter JO Board formally approved the Hunter JO Advocacy Framework and Priorities document. This represents the first time in which all councils in the Hunter region endorsed a formal advocacy document, signifying an important alignment on regional advocacy.

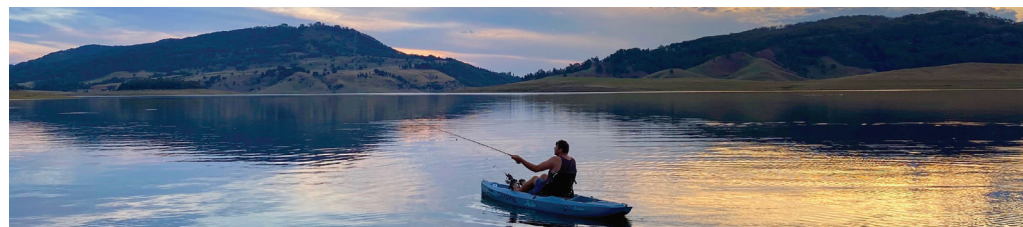
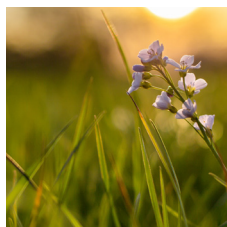
Subsequently in February 2023, the Board committed to concentrating our collaborative efforts on five core advocacy priorities. These five priorities seek action on economic evolution, mining land reuse, integrated transport planning, roads funding reform and waste levy reform. It has been exciting to see such strong alignment between our councils on these issues, and to see that alignment evolve into proactive advocacy for the benefit of the entire region.

We have continued to raise the profile of the Hunter JO through our many programs, projects

and initiatives, and this year became the first region to enter a Regional Partnership with Australia’s largest local government climate network; the Cities Power Partnership. We also received recognition for our Climate Change Integrated and Planning and Reporting package in the Local Government Excellence in the Environment Awards, which has helped to support councils not only in the Hunter, but across the state.

It has been a great pleasure to work alongside my fellow Mayors and General Managers over the last 12 months and I thank them all for their dedication and collaborative efforts to deliver outcomes for our region. We have had a great many achievements over the last 12 months, and I am looking forward to seeing how our collective impact continues to grow into the future.

**Cr Sue Moore**  
**Mayor of Singleton Council**  
**Chair of the Hunter JO**



## Message from the Director

**“Having these systems, processes and shared regional priorities empowers our ability to achieve truly beneficial outcomes, as well as to offer guidance and regional insights to key decision-makers and influencers at all levels of government.”**

A key focus of this year was adopting and commencing implementation of the Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2032, focusing on four brand-new regionally aligned themes: connectivity, resilience, liveability and jobs and a growing economy. Expanding our systems, projects and team resources to deliver on the shared priorities in the new plan has achieved significant beneficial outcomes for our region, including securing a record amount of grant funding for initiatives across each of the four themes. This represents a million dollar increase in grant funds from the previous year.

The clear strategic focus provided within the plan has created significant momentum for the Hunter JO, providing a foundation on which to engage day-to-day with our Member Councils across a range of initiatives and priorities, and to offer guidance and insights to key decision-makers and influencers at all levels of government on behalf of the region’s communities.

Our focus and deliverables for the year span a broad range of areas, with some key highlights including:

- NSW Government election advocacy focusing on the Hunter JO’s five core advocacy priorities
- Establishment of our Net Zero Acceleration program
- Strengthening and expanding our focus on disaster resilience
- Launch of Events10 – our coordinated regional approach to event attraction
- Continuing to lead and facilitate regional efforts to nurture and grow the Circular Economy as a key foundation for the region’s economic evolution.


I thank all of our Member Councils, Mayors, GMs/ CEOs and key regional stakeholders for their passion and dedication to the Hunter region. I am very proud of what we have been able to achieve as a collaboration of councils and am especially grateful for the consistent efforts of our staff to enabling outcomes for our region.

**Steve Wilson**  
**Director Hunter JO**





# Delivery Highlights 2022 - 2023



### Hunter JO Advocacy Framework and Priorities

Member Councils endorsed first regionally aligned advocacy priorities, focusing on economic evolution, reuse of mining and energy lands, integrated transport planning, roads funding reform and the NSW Waste levy.

### Regional Illegal Dumping Program

Established the Hunter Central Coast RID Program with NSW EPA, our ten Hunter JO Member Councils and Central Coast Council.



### Record amount of grant funding

Awarded \$2.55 million in grant funding, an increase of a million dollars from the previous financial year.

17

Ministerial Engagements

Contaminated Land

Accelerating Events

Circular Economy

Resilience

### Hosted eight regionally significant events




The Community Recycling Centre (CRC) Program reached over **1.2 million people across the region**, including the Central Coast contributing to a 10% increase in CRC use from the previous year.




### Net Zero Climate Action

- Initiation of the Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration program to support Hunter councils on their journey to Net Zero by 2050.
- Entered Australia's first Regional Partnership with Australia's largest local government climate network, the Cities Power Partnership.



### Small Acts Big Change


The digital strategy reached **1.3 million people** and had almost **7 million views**.




### Hunter JO Strategic Plan

Endorsed and Implemented.

### Excellence in the Environment Award




Our Climate Change Integrated Planning and Reporting Package received a Highly Commended Award.



### 7 out of 10 Hunter Councils

endorsed net zero or emissions reduction targets.



### Circular Economy Leader

Invited to attend the World Circular Economy Forum in Helsinki as part of the Australian delegation.

Adoption of the Hunter and Central Coast Regional Circular Materials Strategy.


80 hours spent on circular economy knowledge sharing both in and out of the region.

Development and launch of the Hunter and Central Coast Circular Economy Roadmap.




### Regional Contaminated Land Program

Released updated Hunter JO Register of Contaminated Land Consent Conditions.



### Regional Events Acceleration

Established Events 10 - a regional brand to position the Hunter as a destination of choice for hosting events.



### Strengthened Focus on Disaster Resilience in the Hunter Region

Commenced **Disaster Risk Reduction Program** in collaboration with seven other Joint Organisations and the NSW Reconstruction Authority.

**Simtables for Community Empowerment** Delivered 63 community workshops, events and training sessions to help communities better understand, plan, and prepare for natural disasters.





## Part Two

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## Collaboration, Engagement and Advocacy Overview

During the year the Hunter JO Board endorsed the following shared advocacy priorities for the region.

Our Priorities		Our Ask
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.	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 deal for the Hunter, including specifically exploring and progressing opportunities to establish an entity that has the authority and resources from the Commonwealth and NSW Governments necessary to drive and deliver the Region's economic evolution.
2	There is an urgent need for legislation and policy change to provide clarity, certainty and a clear pathway to enable adaptation and reuse of mining and industrial lands to support the region's economic evolution.	A commitment from the next NSW Government that it will establish a clear and properly resourced process, with the necessary support and engagement from relevant government agencies and local government to provide recommendations on policy and legislative change that would change to provide a clear planning pathway to encourage the adaptation and reuse of mining and industrial lands as a key driver to support the region's economic evolution.
3	Development of an Integrated Transport Plan for the region that supports housing and employment outcomes.	A commitment that the next NSW Government, working with the region's Councils, will fund, resource and complete a study within 12 months of the election, that establishes a clear vision, credible concept plans and staged delivery plans for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Integrated public transport solutions for the metropolitan heart of the region</li><li>• Delivery of consistent, rapid services into the metropolitan heart from surrounding strategic centres, with sufficient increased frequency to make them a practical commuter option.</li></ul>
4	Policy and funding should not leave some communities worse off but should address the current structural inequity where regional communities bear an undue road-funding burden compared with capital city counterparts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Request the Minister for Transport to release the rationale and calculation for the distribution of the funds under the Regional and Local Roads Repair Program between Rural &amp; Regional and Greater Sydney/Outer Metropolitan Councils</li><li>• A commitment that the next NSW Government will:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Equalise the per kilometre funding across all areas</li><li>• In collaboration with local government, develop and apply a more equitable model for allocating roads funding across metropolitan and regional areas.</li></ul></li></ul>
5	Significant funding and investment is needed to implement circular economy and waste management initiatives to unlock economic growth and sustainability for the Hunter region.	A commitment that the next NSW Government return 100% of Section 88 Domestic Waste Management Service Charge (the "waste levy") funds to Local Government for investment in local and regional communities.



## Political Engagements

Engagement with newly elected NSW Government	
Focus of Engagement	Political Representatives
Communicating the advocacy priorities of the Hunter JO to newly appointed NSW Government Ministers and understanding the core priorities of the new Government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Hon. Kate Washington MP, Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion (18th May 2023)</li> <li>The Hon Tim Crakanthorp MP, Minister for the Hunter, Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education (8th June 2023).</li> </ul>
NSW Election Advocacy	
Focus of Engagement	Political Representatives
Communicating the shared interests, priorities and directions of the Hunter region's 10 democratically elected Mayors in the lead up to the 2023 NSW Government election	<p><b>NSW Government Ministers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Hon Wendy Tuckerman MP, Minister for Local Government (9th November 2022)</li> <li>The Hon. Rob Stokes MP, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Cities &amp; Minister for Active Transport (17th Nov 2022)</li> <li>David Layzell MP, Member for Upper Hunter &amp; Lachlan Barnsley, Strategy Advisor (representing The Hon Sam Faraway MP, Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) - 10th Nov 2022</li> </ul> <p><b>Shadow Ministers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>David Harris MP, Shadow Minister for Jobs, Investment and Tourism (6th Dec 2022)</li> <li>Paul Scully MP, Shadow Minister for Planning and Public Spaces (29th Nov 2022)</li> <li>Greg Warren MP, Shadow Minister for Local Government, Shadow Minister for Veterans, and Shadow Minister for Western Sydney (23rd Oct 2022)</li> <li>Jihad Dib MP, Shadow Minister for Energy &amp; Climate Change &amp; Shadow Minister for Emergency Services (26th Oct 2022)</li> <li>Tim Crakanthorp MP, Shadow Minister for Skills and TAFE, Shadow Minister for Tertiary Education (23rd October 2022)</li> </ul> <p><b>Hunter based Members of Parliament</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clayton Barr MP, Member for Cessnock (21st October 2022).</li> </ul>
Extension of Regional Contaminated Land Program	
Focus of Engagement	Political Representatives
Request for a continuation of the Contaminated Land Council Regional Capacity Building (CRCB) Program.	Correspondence to The Hon. James Griffin MP, Minister for Environment and Heritage (16 Sept 2022).

Reuse of Mining and Industrial Lands	
Focus of Engagement	Political Representatives
Communicating the Hunter JO's advocacy priorities, focusing on the need for legislation and policy change to provide clarity, certainty and a clear pathway to enable adaptation and reuse of mining and industrial lands to support the region's economic evolution.	Michael Bishop, Director of Policy - Office of the Hon Rob Stokes MP, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Cities & Minister for Active Transport (16th December 2022).
Regional Economic Evolution	
Focus of Engagement	Political Representatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Role and strategic priorities of the Hunter JO</li> <li>Hunter Global initiative and emerging opportunities and priorities</li> <li>The Hunter JOs goals, role and activity in regard to the Region's economic evolution</li> <li>Issues and concerns held by the Hunter JO with the Royalties for Rejuvenation program.</li> </ul>	David Layzell - NSW Member for Upper Hunter (12 August 2022).
Hunter Cycle Tourism (Shiraz to Shore)	
Focus of Engagement	Political Representatives
Introduction and overview of the Hunter Joint Organisation and Regional Cycling Tourism priorities, including the Shiraz to Shore and Richmond Vale Rail Trail.	Correspondence to The Hon. Catherine King MP, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government (16th Sept 2022).
Greater Cities Commission	
Focus of Engagement	Political Representatives
Proposed governance and communication arrangements between the GNMP Mayors and Lower Hunter and Greater Newcastle City Commissioner.	Correspondence to The Hon Rob Stokes, MP Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Cities, and Minister for Active Transport (14th Sept 2022).
Circular Economy	
Focus of Engagement	Political Representatives
Introduction and overview of the the Circular Economy work of the Hunter JO, including expressing interest in contributing to Commonwealth Government Circular Economy initiatives.	Correspondence to the Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP, Minister for the Environment and Water (20th June 2022).

## Media Coverage

Date	Topic
23 May 2023	Live Radio Interview – Shiraz to Shore overview
9 May 2023	Hunter JO Federal budget priorities
15 March 2023	Hunter Clean Energy Transition Authority – Hunter JO position
14 March 2023	Roads funding reform advocacy
13 March 2023	Five advocacy priorities – Mayors’ joint statement for incoming NSW Government
13 March 2023	Bipartisan approach of councils in advocating to state and federal governments around five advocacy priorities
16 February 2023	Advocacy for a statutory body to support the Hunter’s economic transition
1 December 2022	Hunter Expert Panel announcement of Hunter JO CEO appointed as panel member
19 October 2022	Simtables for Community Empowerment training in Noosa
29 August 2022	Live radio interview – Shiraz to Shore overview
27 July 2022	Mayors’ joint statement calling for more disaster support
17 July 2022	Live radio interview – Launch of the circular economy roadmap

## Regional Programs and Capacity Building

Program Status Report			
Strategic Themes	Project	Funding	Delivery Date
CONNECTIVITY			
● ●	Cycle Tourism Strategy (Shiraz to Shore)	Grant	31-03-2024
●	Airports Strategy (Freight and Logistics)	Grant	31-03-2024
● ● ●	Hunter Global: Our International Future Initiative	Grant	30-06-2023
RESILIENCE			
●	Transforming Resilience with the IP&R Framework	Grant	31-12-2023
● ●	Act Now on Coastal Adaptation	Grant	30-06-2023
●	Disaster Risk Reduction	Grant	30-06-2024
●	Simtables for Community Empowerment	Grant	1-06-2023
JOBS AND A GROWING ECONOMY			
● ●	Circular Economy Eco-System	Grant	30-06-2023
● ●	Hospitality Circularity Project	Grant	30-06-2023
● ●	Circular Economy Precincts and Futures Hub	Grant	31-03-2024
● ● ●	Hunter Global Tourism	Grant	31-03-2024
●	Hunter Venture Fund and Innovation Entity	Grant	30-06-2023
● ●	Priority Infrastructure List	Grant	30-06-2023
● ●	Circular Economy Roadmap	Grant	30-06-2023
● ●	Circular Economy Procurement	Grant	30-06-2023
● ●	Hunter Circular Knowledge Hub	Grant	31-12-2024
LIVEABILITY			
● ●	Accelerating Event Economies	Grant	31-12-2023
●	Illegal Dumping Program	Grant	31-03-2027
● ●	Regional Circular Materials Strategy	Grant	31-12-2022
●	Landfill Emissions Data Project	Grant	30-06-2024
● ●	Net Zero Acceleration	Grant	30-06-2024
●	Small Acts Big Change	Grant	30-06-2023
●	Community Recycling Centres	Grant	30-06-2023
●	Contaminated Land Program	Grant	15-12-2023
● ●	Cities Power Partnership	Grant	Ongoing



# Connectivity

A globally connected region whose residents enjoy transport and digital infrastructure and systems that enhance their economic and lifestyle opportunities.

## Objectives - Where do we want to be?

<b>1.1</b> Within the region there is a robust integrated transport solution that underpins the experience/ liveability and productivity of its residents and visitors comparable to its global peers.	<b>1.2</b> Through its port and airport the Hunter is a globally connected and economically prosperous city-region, recognised as a key international gateway, providing its communities with a vibrant and unique lifestyle and growth in products and services to replace the economic output of thermal coal.	<b>1.3</b> Digital connectivity that ensures community access to core services on commuter routes across the region and between Sydney and Newcastle and to enable business development, growth and innovation.	<b>1.4</b> A region that is built around sustainable transport outcomes.
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## Cycle Tourism Strategy (Shiraz to Shore)

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
Significant opportunity exists to link existing and planned cycleway infrastructure across Hunter JO member Councils; to create an integrated region wide network. This would provide both a valuable region wide recreational resource for residents, and the foundation upon which to generate economic and business development by holistically promoting the region as a key cycling destination. The purpose of this project is to prepare and implement a cycle tourism masterplan / Destination Management Plan for the region.	Funding was received through the NSW Government's Business Case and Strategy Development program to commence delivery of this project. Delivery during the year included engagement of project consultants, establishment of the project Steering Committee and initial stakeholder engagement.
<b>Strategic Directions</b>	1.1.2, 1.1.5, 1.4.1, 4.1.2

## Airports Strategy (Freight and Logistics)

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
To develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A strategy and business case for airfreight and passenger infrastructure and connectivity logistics for the region.</li> <li>An integrated airports strategy for the region including assessments of passenger, airfreight and transport links across the region.</li> </ul>	Funding was received through the NSW Government's Business Case and Strategy Development program to commence delivery of this project. Delivery during the year included engagement of the project consultant and initial industry and stakeholder engagement (i.e. all Member Councils, each of the five regional airports, business associations and relevant government agencies).
<b>Strategic Directions</b>	1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3

## Hunter Global: Our International Future Initiative

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
The Hunter JO is leading a collaborative partnership between the Hunter JO, Newcastle Airport, Committee for the Hunter, Business Hunter and the University of Newcastle to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build collaborative processes and systems within the region to collectively identify and actively pursue key international opportunities for expanding the Airport's economic contribution to the Region</li> <li>Directly support the expansion of international Airport related business and industry as a primary contributor to the Hunter Region's economic growth and diversification.</li> </ul>	During the year the Hunter JO completed the "Hunter Global: The Flightpath to our Future" report, which represents a key milestone in the Hunter Global initiative. The report was developed following significant stakeholder participation achieved through the whole-of-region Hunter Global summit in February 2022, and ongoing collaboration and engagement since that time to further explore, refine and prioritise the opportunities identified. The report establishes a vision that "The Hunter is a globally connected and economically prosperous city-region, recognised as a key international gateway, providing its communities with a vibrant and unique lifestyle". It discusses the economic opportunities created by the Airport's upgrade as 'above the wing' – the movement of people between destinations – and 'below the wing' – the movement of goods and freight between destinations. The report also sets out the priority actions necessary to ensure the region is ready for take-off in line with the Hunter Global vision.
<b>Strategic Directions</b>	1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3, 1.2.4, 3.1.5, 3.3.1, 4.4.1, 4.1.2



# Resilience

We are prepared for change and ready to withstand, adapt and recover from natural and human induced risks.

## Objectives - Where do we want to be?

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>2.1</b> We are recognised as innovative leaders in Council capacity building and policy support for climate change action, resilience and disaster preparedness. | <b>2.2</b> We take leadership and drive regional best practice in climate action. | <b>2.3</b> Our region is resilient to environment risks, natural hazards and climate change. |
|---|---|--|

## Transforming Resilience with the IP&R Framework

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
To support Member Councils embed resilience principles and projects into their Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework (IP&R), in order to support their ability to allocate recurrent funds and commit to long term resourcing (financial and staff) for resilience projects.	A draft resilience IP&R Package summary document was prepared, with a view to being released for consultation and review during 2023/24. Progress was also made on engaging a consultant to design and deliver a workshop to explore the idea and opportunities around regional resource sharing across Councils and the logistics and potential governance arrangements that would be needed to support this.
<b>Strategic Directions</b>	2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.3.1, 2.3.2

## Act Now on Coastal Adaptation

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
The objectives of this project are to: 1. Develop an Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Package which embeds resilience to Climate Change into Councils operations through incorporation into the overarching IP&R documents. 2. Provide a coastal adaptation communication framework, media templates and suite of practical resources to directly build the capacity of the coastal councils of the Hunter and Central Coast. 3. Build capacity within Councils to reduce risks, increase resilience and reduce climate vulnerability by collaboratively building community understanding and literacy around coastal management and adaptation issues and bridging the gap between the IP&R framework and prioritisation of Climate Change resilience.	Primary outputs delivered under this project include: 1. Coastal & Estuary Communications Support Package - this provides a resource for the Councils of the Hunter and Central Coast to use to educate and create community awareness of coastal hazards and impacts within the region. The package provides consistent messaging and a regional-scale focus on coastal hazards and impacts. It includes template key messages, frequently asked questions, factsheets, an image library and social media content along with guidance for Council officers. 2. Climate Change Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Package - this provides support and guidance to Councils during the development of their Community Strategic Plan (CSP), Delivery Program and Operational Plan. This guide supports Councils' and their communities' climate change journey by providing user friendly, practical tools and templates to embed climate change throughout the IP&R process.
<b>Strategic Directions</b>	2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.2.1, 4.3.1

## Disaster Risk Reduction

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
To facilitate place-based regional collaboration across four sub projects to empower Councils and communities in the region to reduce disaster risk through early action. The focus of the sub-projects includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional Support and Capacity Building - embedding disaster resilience into Council operations and building capacity to communicate disaster resilience to local communities.</li> <li>Disaster waste management and resource recovery preparedness - assisting Councils to plan place-based solutions for effective disaster waste management and resource recovery systems</li> <li>Delivering a regional transport vulnerability and connectivity assessment and mitigation plan</li> <li>Continued refinement and expansion of the use of Simtables regionally for multi-hazard disaster engagement</li> </ul>	Extensive ongoing collaboration has occurred across the NSW JO network and NSW Reconstruction Authority (RA) to deliver this project. All 4 sub-projects being delivered by the Hunter JO commenced, with key activities initiated including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hunter Resilience Network established involving all Hunter JO Member Councils and Central Coast Council</li> <li>Establishment of JO Simtable working group</li> <li>Flood mapping purchased for integration in Simtable workshops.</li> <li>Data acquired for each LGA through the Emergency Services Spatial Information Library (ESSIL).</li> <li>Commencement of the next stage of community engagement using Simtables, which will expand the focus of community engagement from bushfires to a broader all hazards approach.</li> <li>Joint Organisation DRRF Technology Working Group established and meeting monthly (Hunter JO is chair).</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Directions</b>	2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 2.2.2, 2.3.1, 2.3.2

## Simtables for Community Empowerment

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
Simtables provide a "State of the Art" tool that can be used to engage communities in localised place-based emergency information sessions. This project has purchased two Simtables for the collective use of Member Councils and is providing direct support to Councils in undertaking the extensive community engagement associated with their use.	This project was formally completed on 1 June 2023. Key outputs delivered included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>47 Simtable community workshops/ events - 1,061 attendees total.</li> <li>23 Simtable demonstrations or training sessions.</li> <li>5 Simtable loans.</li> <li>Development of community support / education resources</li> <li>Production of Community Case Study video</li> <li>Completion of a Simtable user guide and workshop outline.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Directions</b>	2.1.2, 2.3.1, 2.3.2





# Jobs and a Growing Economy

The Hunter economy continues to grow and evolve as a powerhouse of the state and national economies, providing more and higher quality jobs.

## Objectives - Where do we want to be?

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>3.1</b> Coordinated planning and investment by all levels of government that empowers the region and its residents to maintain and grow jobs, economic opportunities and quality of life. | <b>3.2</b> Accelerated and amplified market-driven investment in innovation that capitalises on the region's existing natural strengths and attributes which create jobs in future industries. | <b>3.3</b> A globally focused region that drives talent attraction and retention. |
| <b>3.4</b> A region that is built around Circular Economy principles as a driver of future jobs.   | <b>3.5</b> We are recognised as a destination of choice for international and domestic visitors.   |   |

## Circular Economy Ecosystem

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Provide and improve circular economy communication for all circular economy eco-system participants in the Hunter and Central Coast</li><li>Build circular economy knowledge through education and capacity building opportunities for Hunter JO member councils and Central Coast Council</li><li>Develop and improve circular economy data and analytics systems for use by all circular economy eco-system participants in the Hunter and Central Coast.</li></ul>	<p>A rebuild of the Hunter Circular website was completed as a core platform for supporting and growing the regions Circular Economy Stakeholder Ecosystem, with the official launch of the new site scheduled for November 2023.</p> <p>Work also commenced on design and delivery of a circular economy event series in the region, commencing with delivery of the Textiles Circularity Think Tank in June 2023.</p>
<b>Strategic Directions</b>	3.4.1, 4.2.2, 4.4.2

## Hospitality Circularity Project

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
The project seeks to engage hospitality SMEs across the region, to build their capacity to evaluate and adopt circular solutions for their business operations and supply chains, focusing on organics and single use items. The project will also seek to create or strengthen existing business networks and assist them to collaborate and co design practical solutions that benefit from network efficiency and scale.	\$498,971 in grant funding was received from the NSW Environment Protection Authority's Bin Trim Program to deliver this new project. Project planning commenced to support project delivery in 2023/24.
<b>Strategic Directions</b>	3.4.1, 3.4.2, 4.2.2

## Circular Economy Precincts and Futures Hub

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
<p>To deliver concept plans and business cases for four multi-element circular economy precincts, that would each represent a key part of the Hunter. Project outputs will outline the potential for circular processing, renewable energy production and value-added businesses, delivering diversified employment opportunities and new industries to the region. Key project deliverables will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A concept plan and strategy for Circular Economy Precincts, including an Anaerobic Digestion component for the circular processing of organics and biogas or energy production for the precinct.</li><li>A concept plan and strategy for establishing a Circular Economy Futures Hub.</li></ul>	<p>Funding was received through the NSW Government's Business Case and Strategy Development program to deliver this project. Project delivery was commenced, including initiating the tender process for a preferred consultant to deliver the project and extending invitations for the establishment of an Expert Panel to provide advice and assistance on project delivery to the Hunter JO and project consultant.</p>
<b>Strategic Directions</b>	3.4.1, 4.2.2, 4.4.2

## Hunter Global Tourism

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
<p>To identify the international tourism opportunities of the Hunter region in preparation of the Newcastle Airport international upgrade. Key elements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Stakeholder engagement to bring all tourism, marketing and economic development organisations across the region together to identify how we want to position, brand and market the region as one to potential visitors.</li><li>Undertaking a review of the region to identify priority tourism infrastructure needed to attract international visitors.</li></ul>	<p>Funding was received through the NSW Government's Business Case and Strategy Development program to commence delivery of this project. Delivery during the year included engagement of consultants to deliver the project, establishment of the project Steering Committee and delivery of an Investment Logic Mapping workshop to guide project design and delivery.</p>
<b>Strategic Directions</b>	1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3, 3.5.1, 3.5.2, 4.1.1

Hunter Venture Fund & Innovation Entity	
Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
<p>To explore the design, feasibility and demand for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A Hunter focused Innovation Entity, to support the commercialisation of research and other innovation in the Hunter region, through incubating, accelerating and activating the innovation ecosystem to attract investors and provide confidence that there is a pipeline of viable Hunter investment opportunities</li> <li>2. A Hunter Venture Fund, a place-focused venture fund with potential to be co-funded by all levels of Government, research and industry partners to accelerate the flow of capital into the Hunter region to support the innovation ecosystem and drive investment; to activate a pipeline of projects that attracts ongoing private sector investment; and to address industry concerns around access to a depth of readily available capital for early-stage ventures in the Hunter.</li> </ol>	<p>This project was completed with the final report and recommendations produced under the project endorsed by the Hunter JO Board in June 2023. This report:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Confirmed there is a need, interest and support for a place-based (Hunter focused) Venture Fund to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support ventures which may leverage opportunities in energy transition or diversify Hunter economic activity away from energy</li> <li>• Address local concerns with depth of readily available capital for early-stage ventures in the Hunter</li> <li>• Address Australia-wide concerns with gaps in available early-stage capital for ventures with specific characteristics.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Identified the need for a Hunter focused Innovation Entity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the commercialisation of research and other innovation generally in the Hunter region</li> <li>• Support ventures which may leverage opportunities in energy transition or diversify Hunter economic activity away from energy</li> <li>• Provide investors in (and managers of) any local fund with confidence that there is a pipeline of viable Hunter investment opportunities</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<b>Strategic Directions</b>	3.2.1, 3.2.2

Priority Infrastructure List	
Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
<p>To develop a methodology for determining regional infrastructure priorities to support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building and advocating a stronger case for investment in infrastructure priorities across the region</li> <li>• Identifying the potential for shared interests and collaboration between Councils and other stakeholders in delivering local and regional scale infrastructure initiatives.</li> <li>• Identifying a longer-term infrastructure investment pipeline, to provide transparency and confidence for potential investors, professional services and contractors to build their presence in the Hunter.</li> </ul>	<p>Phase 2 of this project commenced during the year, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design of a data survey and capture process through which to gather information on priority infrastructure projects from councils and agencies on an annual basis</li> <li>• Development and testing of a model for capturing and analyzing data provided by councils and agencies</li> </ul> <p>The testing process has identified data gaps and variations in the type, level and quality of information collected. Engagement with Councils has commenced to develop a more refined and efficient process for collecting priority infrastructure data.</p>
<b>Strategic Directions</b>	1.1.1, 3.1.5

Circular Economy Roadmap	
Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To develop a common understanding and definition for the circular economy of the region relevant to all stakeholders – government, business and academia.</li> <li>• Gain broad regional support and engagement for the development of a circular economy in the Hunter and Central Coast region.</li> <li>• Develop a strategic roadmap for the region</li> <li>• To create an identity for the region as a leader in the transition to a circular economy and as a place to do Circular Economy activities, providing business attraction and local support for the circular economy</li> <li>• To provide leverage and connect with other key circular economy frameworks and strategies at all levels of government</li> </ul>	<p>The Hunter and Central Coast Circular Economy Roadmap was completed and delivery commenced during the year. The Roadmap showcases successes and sets a path for 12 months for the region to collaborate and accelerate towards our longer term shared vision of being Australia's leading regional circular economy. It knits together the region's progress and sets next steps to accelerate the transition to the collective vision for a circular and sustainable region. With a view to the region's strengths and challenges, the Roadmap has been co-designed with the broader Circular Economy stakeholder ecosystem. It prioritises initiatives based on their feasibility and potential to create local benefits. The Roadmap provides, not only a comprehensive list of initiatives happening across the Hunter and Central Coast region, but also lays out the methodology for adding, maintaining, and prioritising initiatives on a quarterly basis.</p>
<b>Strategic Directions</b>	3.4.1, 3.4.2, 4.2.1, 4.2.2

Circular Economy Procurement	
Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
<p>To support Councils to prioritise recycled materials and circular economy services in their procurement systems and processes, and to collaborate with the Hunter JO and other participating councils to develop a common framework for a joint regional procurement of recycled materials.</p>	<p>Phase 1 of this project to develop a draft framework to support Councils with their Circular Economy procurement efforts has been completed. Finalisation of the draft outputs to support their public release will be completed during 2023/24, subject to resourcing availability.</p>
<b>Strategic Directions</b>	3.4.1, 4.2.2, 4.4.2

Hunter Circular Knowledge Hub	
Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
<p>To create and pilot a digital circular knowledge hub for two distinct user groups – for council staff, and for the community at large. The aim is to address the information accessibility and knowledge barriers that prevail and frustrate uptake of circular services and recovery pathways in the region. By creating tools to broaden participation, these solutions will be supported to scale and increase their impact. The project will gather information on services and solutions available in the region, then deploy tools that will present that information in a user-friendly format designed specifically for that group's needs.</p>	<p>The initial stages of this project were completed including the acquisition of key datasets from Councils, and the building of a test platform and dashboards by the consultant.</p>
<b>Strategic Directions</b>	3.4.1, 3.4.2, 4.2.1



# Liveability

Protect, preserve and improve the high standard of liveability and pristine environments that we enjoy in our region.

## Objectives - Where do we want to be?

4.1 We are recognised as a destination for hosting world class events that align with our unique offering.	4.2 Making use of our opportunity to drive circular evolution of our region's economy.	4.3 Our natural environments including our bushland, estuaries, waterways and beaches are protected and enhanced.
4.4 Supporting our region to be on the path to net zero emissions and paving the way with smart innovative solutions that increase liveability.	4.5 A region with enriched neighborhoods and places supported by planned infrastructure that promotes community cohesion, active living and pride in culture and heritage.	4.6 A region that is connected, inclusive and a fair.

## Accelerating Event Economies

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
To strengthen the region's collective voice and the capacity of Councils to collaboratively pitch for major events for the region. It includes undertaking an events and opportunity audit, and identifying, preparing and implementing shared destination and even management resources including an event managers toolkit, prospectus, website and integrated council shared services, approvals and event data.	This project has been completed. An Events10 brand has been developed to represent the 10 council destinations across the Hunter, supported by a website providing a wealth of information to help position the Hunter region as a destination of choice for events. Key resources and information generated by the project include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Events 10 website</li> <li>KPMG Hunter Event Economic Analysis Report</li> <li>KPMG Event Economic Modelling Tool</li> <li>KPMG Event Prioritisation and Assessment Framework</li> <li>Event Licencing Recommendations Report</li> <li>Event Planning Guide</li> <li>Facilities audit</li> <li>Consistent templates for event management</li> <li>Website to promote the region</li> <li>Hunter Event Prospectus</li> <li>Cross Regional Itineraries</li> <li>Major Event Feasibility Study</li> <li>Regional Marketing until December 2023</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Directions</b>	1.2.1, 1.2.3, 4.1.1, 4.1.2

## Illegal Dumping Program

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
To support Member Councils manage illegal dumping by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivering a regional approach to target illegal dumping</li> <li>Employing skilled officers to undertake compliance action against illegal dumpers</li> <li>Undertaking proactive measures to prevent illegal dumping</li> <li>Targeting problematic and complex illegal dumping incidents.</li> <li>Increasing capacity to target problematic and complex illegal dumping incidents.</li> </ul>	This program officially commenced during the year, with Member Councils entering a Memorandum of Understanding to participate in the RID Program, and the Regional Illegal Dumping Program Coordinator commencing with the Hunter JO in June 2023. The initial focus of the program has included establishing a regional working group/network and codesigning the new regional program with participating councils and the NSW EPA.
<b>Strategic Directions</b>	4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.3

## Regional Circular Materials Strategy

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
To develop a new Hunter Central Coast Resource Recovery Strategy for the period 2022-2027. The new Strategy will align with the recently released NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2021-2041 and associated funding streams and provide improved alignment with the Regional Circular Economy program.	In December 2023 the Hunter JO adopted a Regional Circular Materials Strategy. The purpose of this document is to outline the Hunter JO's strategic direction as a regional response to the NSW EPA Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2021-41 (WaSM). The Strategy embraces a 20-year vision while focusing on the initiatives required in the 5-year period from 2022-2027.
<b>Strategic Directions</b>	3.4.1, 3.4.2, 4.2.1, 4.2.2

## Landfill Emissions Data Project

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
To build capacity and capability within Member Councils to manage contaminated sites on private and council managed land, and to support Councils transition to their new role as regulator of the Underground Petroleum Storage System (UPSS) Regulation.	Funding was received to establish a landfill emission data management program for councils to assist in understanding their baseline landfill emissions, and building a model data management framework and tools to support the collation and interpretation of landfill emission data. Project delivery will commence during the 2023/24 year.
<b>Strategic Directions</b>	4.3.1, 4.3.3



Net Zero Acceleration	
Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
To support Member Councils reduce their carbon emissions to achieve their part in the State's Net Zero target of 50 per cent reduction by 2030 and Net Zero by 2050. This includes employing a staff member dedicated to progressing the JO and its member councils toward net zero emissions, and to provide a link to other NSW government support mechanisms.	<p>The position of Regional Net Zero Coordinator commenced in May 2023. The initial focus of the program included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing the Hunter Net Zero Network comprising strong engagement from councils. This Network provided input and feedback on the Draft Project Plan for the program.</li> <li>Preparation of EV feasibility study reports to support the preparation of Council funding applications.</li> <li>Preparation of three EOIs to the NSW Government to fund feasibility studies for the installation of community batteries.</li> </ul>
Strategic Directions	2.2.1, 2.2.2, 4.4.1, 4.4.2

Small Acts Big Change	
Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
To deliver a regional communication campaign to improve community waste avoidance behaviours at the top end of the waste management hierarchy, along with reuse and recycling habits.	<p>The Small Acts Big Change Campaign continued to deliver a suite of region-wide community waste avoidance education/behaviour change initiatives across a range of digital platforms during the year. However, with ongoing grant funding finishing and no alternative funding opportunities being identified, the delivery of this wide reaching community focused program ended on 30 June. Beyond this date the content of the Small Acts Big Change channels (Facebook, Instagram and Youtube) will be reduced, however will be kept live in the short to medium term to allow other programs to promote through them, such as the Community Recycling Centres Education Program.</p>
Strategic Directions	4.2.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.3

Community Recycling Centres	
Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
To deliver a regionally coordinated approach to promoting community awareness of Community Recycling Centres (CRC's).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuing promotion of CRC videos occurred throughout the year resulting in them being viewed by over 800,000 people in May and June 2023 alone, with people playing the video on 1.5 million occasions. Cessnock, Lake Macquarie, MidCoast, Port Stephens, Singleton and Upper Hunter Shire Council each received a 45second video that promotes their CRC, as well as a 30second video featuring safe battery disposal.</li> <li>Radio ads have continued to be delivered throughout the year promoting CRC's on 2NM and Triple M stations.</li> <li>An online promotion via Facebook and Instagram was undertaken to engage Hunter residents to complete a survey evaluating the 2022-23 CRC Education and Communications plan. The survey was completed by 247 community members, a 1000% increase on the number of responses received in the previous financial year. Of the people who responded 50% had seen or heard promotions about their local CRC.</li> </ul>
Strategic Directions	4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.3

Contaminated Land Program	
Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
To build capacity and capability within Member Councils to manage contaminated sites on private and council managed land, and to support Councils transition to their new role as regulator of the Underground Petroleum Storage System (UPSS) Regulation.	<p>This program continued to deliver a range of initiatives throughout the year to provide practical support to member Councils on contaminated land planning and management issues. Key outputs included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A substantial update to the Register of Contaminated Land Consent Conditions</li> <li>Coordination of a regional contaminated land managers network</li> <li>Delivery of local (individual council) and regional information and training sessions, regional workshops and forums</li> <li>Creation of a podcast series focusing on change management, the Hunter JO contaminated land resource library, and building capacity for better management of contaminated land.</li> <li>Provision of a Contaminated Land Technical Helpdesk for Member Councils</li> </ul>
Strategic Directions	4.3.1, 4.3.3

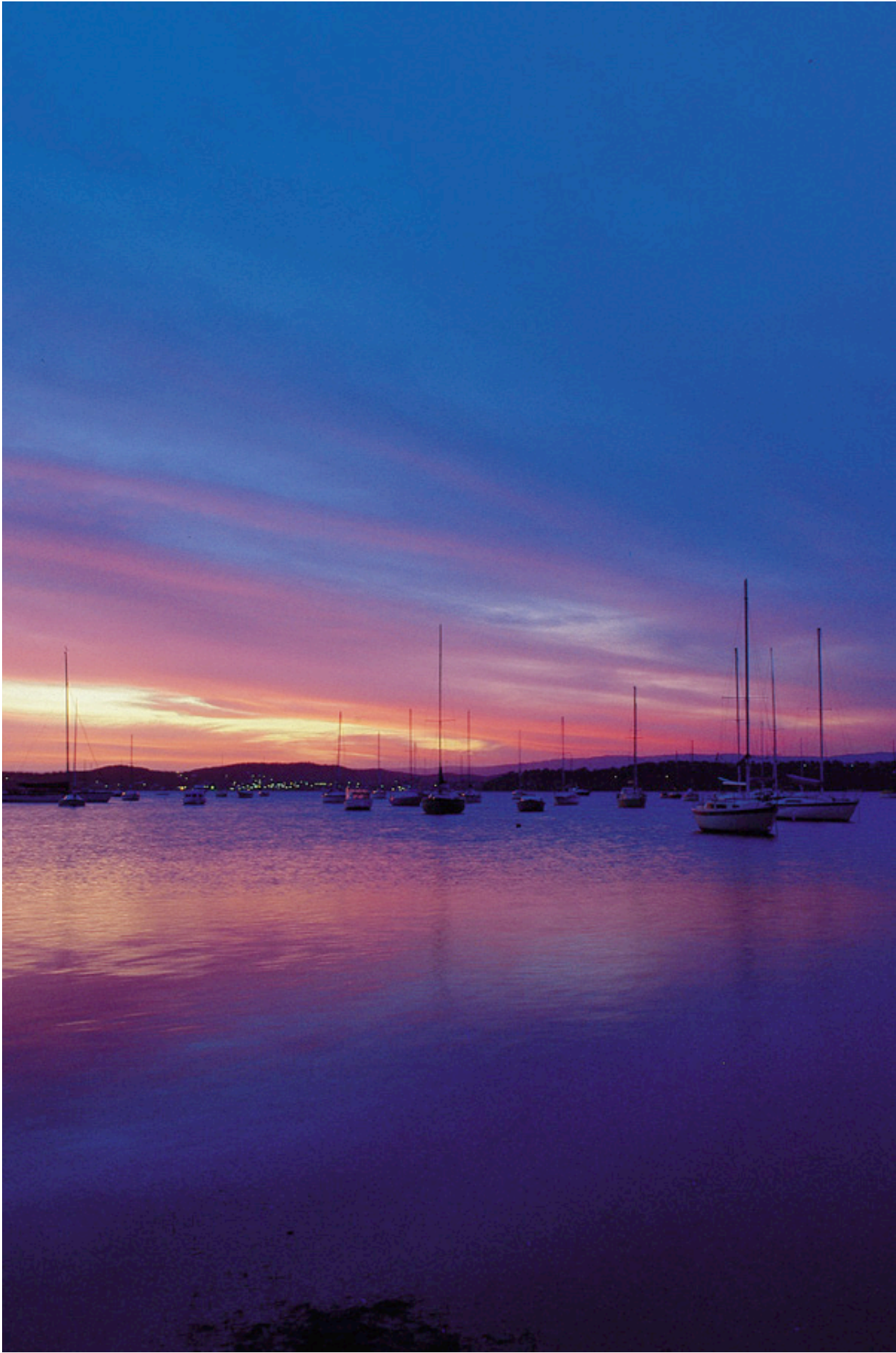




Cities Power Partnership Program

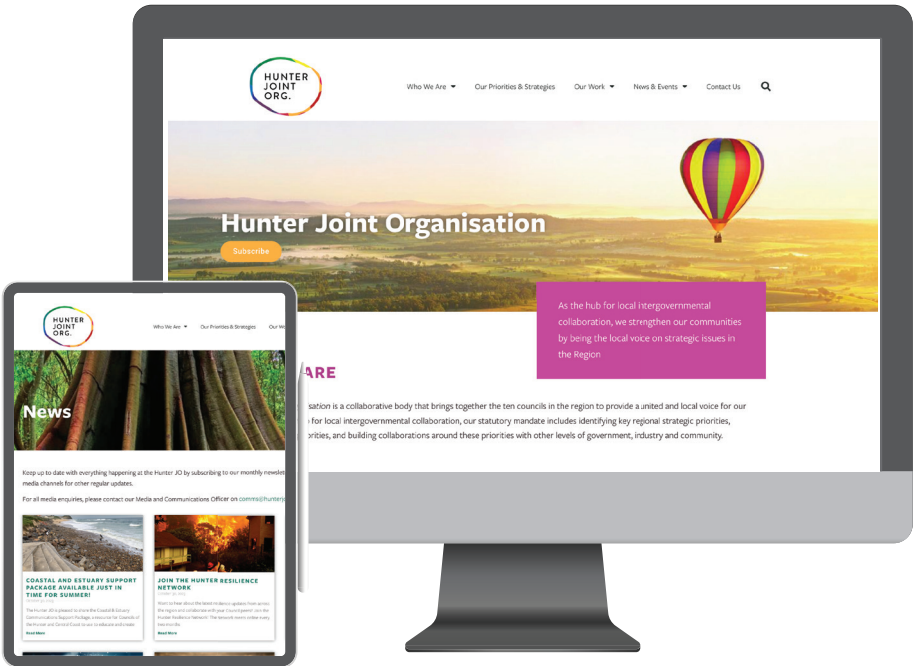
Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
To support regional collaborative efforts by Councils, the Hunter JO and Cities Power Partnership (CPP) in delivery of shared pledges on climate action made by Councils.	<p>In April 2023 the Hunter JO entered into a partnership agreement with the Cities Power Partnership (CPP), that establishes a collaborative relationship identifying aligned goals and objectives and the activities that will be undertaken to achieve these. The priority areas identified include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Regional collaboration - Support regional collaboration around Electric Vehicles by assisting member councils to identify opportunities and work together in delivering solutions.</li><li>2. Regional collaboration - Support the region's evolution to a clean energy future by facilitating regional collaboration, planning and project delivery and/or information sharing.</li><li>3. Advocacy - Work with the Cities Power Partnership to amplify local government priorities and advocate to state and federal government to improve energy efficiency and reduce emissions in the Hunter region.</li><li>4. Knowledge exchange - Support collaboration within and outside the Hunter region by sharing knowledge and learning with the Cities Power Partnership network.</li></ol>
Strategic Directions	2.2.1, 2.2.2, 4.2.2, 4.4.1, 4.4.2





# Part Three

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The Hunter JO's Audited Financials and Statutory Statements  
can be accessed on our website: [www.hunterjo.com.au](http://www.hunterjo.com.au)

## Statutory Statements

### Issues Raised by Anti-Slavery Commissioner

No issues were raised by the Anti-slavery Commissioner concerning the operations of the JO.

### Procurement of Goods and Services

To ensure that goods and services procured by and for the JO were not the product of modern slavery, within the meaning of the Modern Slavery Act 2018, procurement practices of the Hunter JO require vendors operating above thresholds required under the Act to provide their specific Modern Slavery Statement.

### Overseas Travel

The Hunter JO was invited to attend the World Circular Economy Forum in Helsinki as part of an Australian delegation. A staff member accepted the invitation on behalf of the Hunter JO, and attended the conference in Helsinki as it aligned with personal leave being taken in Europe.

The overseas travel was approved by the General Managers Advisory Committee, in line with the Hunter JO delegations policy and framework.

### Expenses & Provision of Facilities to Board Members

Nil

### Details of each Contract Awarded

The Hunter JO engaged the policy and program management delivery services of Arrow Collaborative Services (a related entity of the Hunter JO) via a service level agreement to the amount of \$630,600.

### Summary of amounts incurred in relation to legal proceedings

Nil

### Financial Assistance of Others

Nil

### Statement of all external bodies exercising function of JO

The Hunter JO has not delegated any of its functions. Arrow Collaborative service provides policy and advocacy services, and grant and program management services to the Hunter JO.

### Statement of bodies in which JO held a controlling interest

Nil

### Statement of bodies in which JO participated

Nil

### Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan

Our EEO Policy has undertaken broad consultation and is currently pending approval with the CEO. Staff and Manager training will be conducted once approved.

Associated policies and processes have been updated including Code of Conduct, Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment, Performance Management process, Grievance and Complaint procedures and the Recruitment process.

Additional measures to capture or prevent any EEO contraventions include:

- Systematic review of employment practices to ensure flexibility in accommodating the changing needs of employees
- Annual review schedule of Human Resource policies and procedures to ensure they are non-discriminatory and supportive to all employment groups equally
- Employee Assistance Program provider reports de-identified information on any contraventions
- Confidential reporting for staff and managers
- Exit Interviews
- Staff survey completed in March 2023

Our HR Officer has professional membership with the Australian Human Resources Institute – CPHR (Certified Practitioner), The Australian Sociological Association and the Australasian Legal Practice Management Association and keeps abreast of workplace legislation changes and case law outcomes with consideration to currency and best practice of our workplace practices and procedures.

### Remuneration Executive Officer

The total remuneration package of the Executive Officer for the 2022/2023 financial year was \$346,786.36 inclusive of salary, vehicle allowance, superannuation and fringe benefits tax payable (for the period).

This amount is for total salary, superannuation and FBT payable for the period 1/7/22 to 30/6/23

### Remuneration of Senior Staff Members

Nil.

### Statement of total numbers of persons completing paid work on 23 November 2022

The total number of persons who performed paid work on Wednesday 23 November 2022 was fourteen persons, including:

- Two persons employed by the JO on a permanent full-time, permanent part-time or casual basis or under a fixed-term contract, one of which is a senior staff member
- Fourteen persons engaged by the JO, under a contract or other arrangement with the person's employer, wholly or principally for the labour of the person one of which is a trainee

### Capital works projects

Nil

### Government Information Public Access (GIPA)

Hunter JO received zero formal access and zero informal applications for the reporting year under *Government Information (Public Access) Act, 2009 (GIPA)*.

### Public Interest Disclosure Activity

Hunter JO received zero public interest disclosures for the reporting year under *Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994*.





HUNTER JOINT ORGANISATION



OCTOBER 23	CURRENT MONTH		YEAR TO DATE				APPROVED	FORECAST		
INCOME STATEMENT										
	ACTUAL	BUDGET	ACTUAL	BUDGET	VARIANCE %	PY	ANNUAL BUDGET	ANNUAL BUDGET	VARIANCE %	VARIANCE COMMENTARY
REVENUE										
Membership Subscriptions	48,983	48,983	195,932	195,933	0%	188,232	587,800	587,800	0%	Invoice raised in July
Grant Funding	2,000	767,074	780,789	1,064,324	-27%	543,692	4,307,599	4,307,599	0%	
Management Fees	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Training Revenue	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Consultancy Fees	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Rent & Overheads	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Miscellaneous	-	-	129,644	76,601	69%	95,589	76,601	76,601	0%	
Legal Fees	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Client Fees	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Arrow Contribution	12,499	12,500	49,996	50,000	0%	210,200	150,000	150,000	0%	
Revenue - Total	63,482	828,557	1,156,361	1,386,859		1,037,713	5,122,001	5,122,001		
COST OF SALES										
Cost of Sales	11,199	767,907	792,488	1,067,657	-26%	543,692	4,317,599	4,317,599	0%	
Direct Labour	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	
GROSS PROFIT / (LOSS)	52,283	60,650	363,873	319,202	14%	494,021	804,402	804,402		
Gross Margin	82%	7%	31%	23%		48%	16%	16%		
EXPENSES										
General & Administration	17,427	16,640	65,174	65,361	0%	64,950	205,634	205,634	0%	
Occupancy Costs	1,269	1,269	5,077	5,077	0%	27,133	15,231	15,231	0%	
Depreciation	775	901	6,319	6,821	-7%	7,334	14,029	14,029	0%	
Information Technology	1,412	1,355	5,089	5,418	-6%	1,610	16,255	16,255	0%	
Overhead Labour	11,186	12,852	206,875	152,876	35%	187,058	261,723	261,723	0%	
Employee Costs	-	102	-	1,234	-100%	3,388	2,099	2,099	0%	
Travel & Accommodation	(40)	300	2,864	2,568	12%	4,249	4,968	4,968	0%	
Motor Vehicle	566	456	6,066	8,222	-26%	9,477	12,468	12,468	0%	
Overhead Expenses - Total	32,595	33,874	297,464	247,578	20%	305,199	532,407	532,407		
NET PROFIT / (LOSS) - OPERATIONS	19,688	26,776	66,409	71,624	-7%	188,822	271,995	271,995		
Net Profit Margin	31%	3%	6%	5%		18%	5%	5%		
OTHER INCOME / (EXPENSES)										
OTHER INCOME										
Profit / Loss on sale of asset	(6,206)	-	(6,206)	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Interest	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
OTHER EXPENSES										

HJO Contributions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Other	(18,128)	(18,128)	(72,522)	(72,513)	0%	(217,122)	(217,540)	(217,540)	0%	
<b>EXTRAODINARY EXPENSESS</b>										
Other - Extraordinary	-	-	(49,500)	(49,500)	0%	-	(49,500)	(49,500)	0%	
Redundancy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
<b>Other Income / (Expenses) - Total</b>	<b>(24,334)</b>	<b>(18,128)</b>	<b>(128,228)</b>	<b>(122,013)</b>		<b>(217,122)</b>	<b>(267,040)</b>	<b>(267,040)</b>		
<b>NET PROFIT / (LOSS) BEFORE TAX</b>	<b>(4,646)</b>	<b>8,647</b>	<b>(61,819)</b>	<b>(50,390)</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>(28,300)</b>	<b>4,955</b>	<b>4,955</b>		
<b>EBITDA - NET PROFIT</b>	<b>(3,871)</b>	<b>9,548</b>	<b>(55,500)</b>	<b>(43,568)</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>(20,966)</b>	<b>18,984</b>	<b>18,984</b>		
<i>EBITDA Margin</i>	<i>-6%</i>	<i>1%</i>	<i>-5%</i>	<i>-3%</i>		<i>-2%</i>	<i>0%</i>	<i>0%</i>		

Check to budget

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