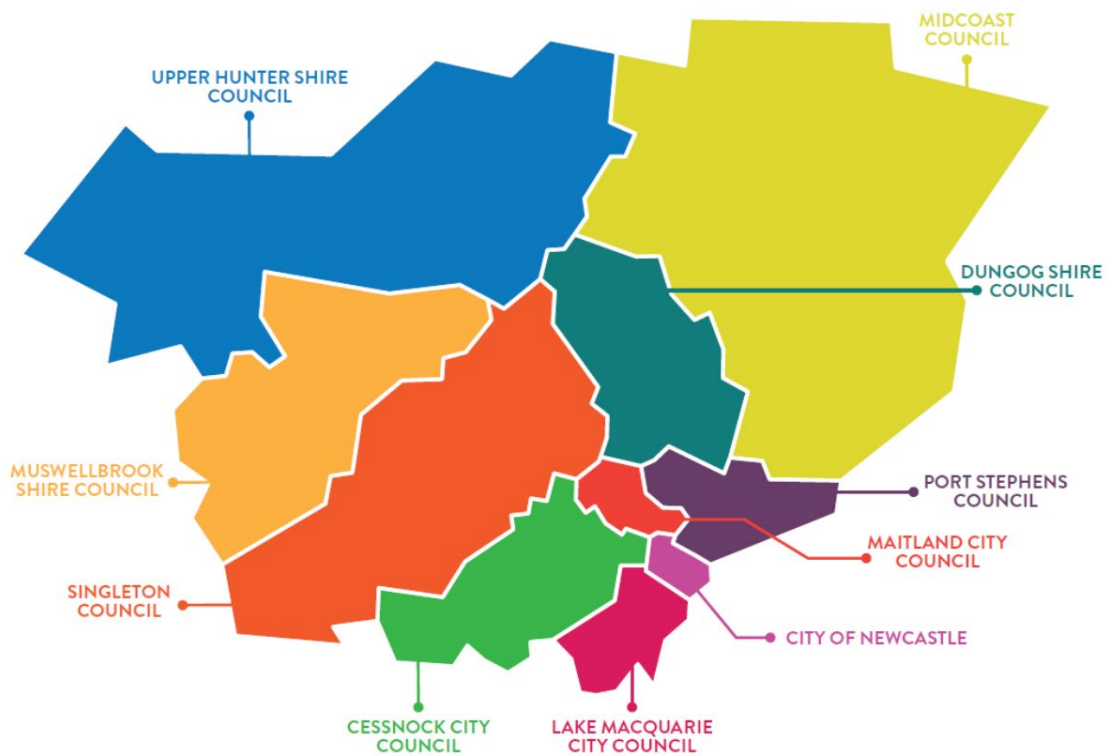


Hunter JO Board Meeting 12:30pm, Thursday 15 February 2024



HUNTER JO AGENDA: 15 February 2024

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| HUNTER JO AGENDA: 15 February 2024 | 2 |
| 1. Welcome and Apologies | 3 |
| 1.1 Acknowledgement of Country | 3 |
| 1.2 Conflicts of Interest..... | 3 |
| 2. Minutes of Previous Meeting | 5 |
| 2.1 Minutes of Meeting 14 December 2023 | 5 |
| 3. Confirmation of Minutes & Business Arising from Minutes..... | 9 |
| 3.1 Hunter JO Board Action Register | 9 |
| 4. Hunter JO Risk Register & Reporting | 12 |
| 5. Presentations..... | 15 |
| 6. Correspondence | 15 |
| 7. Items for the Hunter JO Board: For Decision | 17 |
| 7.1 Planning for 2024 ALGA National General Assembly..... | 17 |
| 7.2 Hunter JO Funding and Grant Opportunities | 21 |
| 8. Items for the Hunter JO Board: For Noting | 23 |
| 8.1 Hunter JO Financial Report | 23 |
| 8.2 Hunter JO Program Status Report..... | 26 |
| 8.3 Hunter JO Program 6-Monthly Program Report | 28 |
| 8.4 Regional NSW Standing Update | 29 |
| 9. Matters Raised by Members | 32 |
| 10. General Business | 32 |
| Hunter JO Board Agenda Attachments: | 33 |

1. Welcome and Apologies

1.1 Acknowledgement of Country

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

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

Executive Summary:

This report calls for any conflicts of interest to be declared and noted by the Hunter JO Board.

Recommendations:

- **That any Conflicts of Interest be declared and noted**

Background

The following process was endorsed by the Hunter JO Board at its December 2023 meeting, for declarations of any conflicts;

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 [Hunter JO Conflict of Interest Form](#) within 10 business days of the meeting, for record-keeping (on submission, a copy of the completed form is provided to the Secretariat and the Chair)
 - 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

Discussion:

If discussion is required for any conflicts of interest declared, the Chair will lead this discussion.

Financial / Resourcing Implications: N/A

Next steps: N/A

Appendices* / Attachments**:

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

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 |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|--|------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---|--------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------|
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

2.1 Minutes of Meeting 14 December 2023

Hunter JO Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday 14th December 2023

MidCoast Council, Yalawanyi Ganya, 2 Biripi Way, Taree

Voting Directors Present

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| Cr Sue Moore | Singleton Council |
| Cr Jay Suvaal | Cessnock City Council |
| Cr Kay Fraser | Lake Macquarie City Council |
| Cr Claire Pontin | MidCoast Council |
| Cr Nuatali Nelmes | City of Newcastle |
| Cr Steve Reynolds | Muswellbrook Shire Council |
| Cr Maurice Collison | Upper Hunter Shire Council |
| Cr Ryan Palmer | Port Stephens Council |

Non-Voting Directors Present

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Jeff Smith, | General Manager, Maitland City Council |
| Adrian Panuccio, | General Manager, MidCoast Council |
| Jeremy Bath | CEO, City of Newcastle |
| Greg McDonald | General Manager, Upper Hunter Shire Council |
| Jason Linnane | General Manager, Singleton Council |
| Tim Crosdale | General Manager, Port Stephens Council |

Apologies

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Cr John Connors | Dungog Shire Council |
| Cr Philip Penfold | Maitland City Council |
| Morven Cameron, | CEO, Lake Macquarie City Council |
| Derek Finnegan, | General Manager, Muswellbrook Shire Council |
| Ken Liddell | General Manager, Cessnock City Council |
| Gareth Curtis | General Manager, Dungog Shire Council |
| Karen Minto | Regional NSW |
| Steve Wilson | Director Hunter JO |

Staff in attendance

| | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| Tim Askew | Director of Programs, Hunter JO |
| Louisa Bulley | Executive Officer (Secretariat) |
| Lisa Lord | Chief Operating Officer (Arrow) |
| Eloise Lobsey | Program Lead - Circular Economy |
| Kali Somerville | Media & Communications Officer |

Also Present

The formal meeting opened at 1.02pm.

Item 1 Welcome and Apologies

1.1 Acknowledgements of Country

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

1.2 Conflict of Interest

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

Resolved:

- *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.*

Moved: Ryan Palmer, Seconded: Kay Fraser, Carried.

Item 2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

2.1 Minutes of Meeting 10 August 2023

The minutes of meeting 10 August 2023 were taken as read.

Item 3 Confirmation of Minutes & Business Arising from Minutes

3.1 Hunter JO Board Action Register

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

Moved: Nuatali Nelmes, Seconded: Claire Pontin, Carried.

Item 4 Hunter JO Risk Register & Reporting

Resolved:

- *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*

Moved: Jay Suvaal, Seconded: Nuatali Nelmes, Carried.

Item 5 Presentations

Nil.

Item 6 Correspondence

Resolved: That the correspondence be received and noted.

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

Item 7 Items for the Hunter JO Board: For Decision

7.1 Hunter JO Annual Performance Statement 2022-2023

Tim Askew A/Director Policy and Programs, Hunter JO spoke to this report providing an update and sought endorsement from the Board.

Resolved:

- *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***

Moved: Kay Fraser, Seconded: Claire Pontin, Carried.

7.2 Submission to NSW Waste Levy Review Process

Tim Askew A/Director Policy and Programs, Hunter JO spoke to this report providing an update and sought endorsement from the Board.

Resolved: 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***

Moved: Nuatali Nelmes, Seconded: Ryan Palmer, Carried.

7.3 Hunter JO Funding and Grant Opportunities

Tim Askew A/Director Policy and Programs, Hunter JO spoke to this report providing an update and sought endorsement from the Board.

Resolved: 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.***

Moved: Nuatali Nelmes, Seconded: Claire Pontin, Carried.

Item 8 Items for the Hunter JO Board: For Noting

8.1 Hunter JO Financial Report

The report was taken as read and noted.

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

Moved: Jay Suvaal, Seconded: Maurice Collison, Carried.

8.2 Hunter JO Advocacy & Strategic Priorities Update

The report was taken as read and noted.

Resolved:

- ***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***

Moved: Jay Suvaal, Seconded: Ryan Palmer, Carried.

8.3 Events10 Continuation

The report was taken as read and noted.

Resolved:

- ***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.***

Moved: Jay Suvaal, Seconded: Ryan Palmer, Carried.

8.4 Hunter JO Program Status Report

The report was taken as read and noted.

Resolved: That the report be received and noted.

Moved: Kay Fraser, Seconded: Claire Pontin, Carried.

8.5 Regional NSW Standing Update

Regional NSW have advised that they would not be providing a report for the November GMAC / December Hunter JO Board Meeting. The Chair thanked Michael St Hill, Deputy Director Regional Coordination – Hunter, Regional NSW for his attendance.

Item 9 Matters Raised by Members

Nil.

Item 10 General Business

Cr Jay Suvaal put the following motion forward:

Motion: That the Hunter JO write to the Minister for Tourism, Destination NSW and Supercars 500, supporting maintaining a Supercars event in the Hunter Region. Noting the decision for City of Newcastle not to hold the event and the expiration of the contract with Destination NSW and Supercars 500.

Moved: Jay Suvaal, Seconded: Ryan Palmer, Carried.

Meeting closed 1:14pm.

3. Confirmation of Minutes & Business Arising from Minutes

Recommendation: That the minutes of the Hunter JO Board Meeting held on 14 December 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) | Jan24: JO Network has written to OLG as a collective re seeking an exemption from ARIC for JOs. Refer Hunter JO Workshop item and briefing paper for February 2024 re JO v. ROC structure. 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-23-017 | <ol style="list-style-type: none">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.2. That the Director Hunter JO and Chair of GMAC report back to the Hunter JO Board on these enquiries. | 10 Aug 23 | Underway – further direction required | 14 Dec 23 | Jan24: Response received from Hon Courtney Houssos, as per Correspondence. 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. |

| I.D | Action | Mtg Date | | Due | Notes |
|------------|--|-----------|------------------------------|-----|---|
| HJO-23-018 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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)' | 10 Aug 23 | Complete – awaiting response | | <p>Jan24: No response yet received from Office of Local Government from Hunter JO correspondence sent September 2023. Initial report re transfer of staff was provided to Board Workshop in December 2023.</p> <p>Nov23: Report provided at Item 7.1</p> |
| HJO-23-020 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | 14 Dec 23 | Complete | | <p>Jan24: The Hunter JO Annual Performance Statement for 2022-23 has been submitted to OLG, and published on the Hunter JO Website here: Hunter JO Annual Performance Statement 2022-23</p> |
| HJO-23-021 | <p>That the Board:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Endorse the draft submission and/or provide advice on further amendments. | 14 Dec 23 | Complete | | <p>Jan24: Waste Levy Submission has been finalised and sent, as per Correspondence.</p> |

| I.D | Action | Mtg Date | | Due | Notes |
|------------|---|-----------|----------|-----|---|
| | <p>2. Endorse writing to the following representatives to provide a copy of the submission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 | | | | |
| HJO-23-022 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 | 14 Dec 23 | Complete | | Jan24: It is anticipated that the first monthly digest will be sent in February 2024, following the Hunter JO Board Meeting. The digest is designed to provide a summary of advocacy actions on a monthly basis, and also to be able to be forwarded on to Councillors in each of the Member Councils. |
| HJO-23-023 | That the Hunter JO write to the Minister for Tourism, Destination NSW, and Supercars 500, supporting maintaining a Supercars event in the Hunter Region. Noting the decision for City of Newcastle not to hold the event and the expiration of the contract with Destination NSW and Supercars 500. | 14 Dec 23 | Complete | | Jan24: Refer Correspondence. |

4. Hunter JO Risk Register & Reporting

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

Executive Summary:

This report provides, for noting, a copy of the Hunter JO Risk Register, and asks that the Board raise any additional risks for noting within the meeting, to be added to the register.

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

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 been 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:

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. The Organisational Risk Register is reviewed monthly between the Hunter JO Director, Executive Officer 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 (Confidential)
- Appendix 4-B: Hunter JO Compliance Checklist 2023-24FY
- Attachment 4-2: Hunter JO Board Forward Planner & Governance Calendar 2023-25

*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 4-B: Compliance Checklist: 2023-23FY

Note: Highlighted actions require further guidance from the Arrow and Hunter JO Boards following the Interim Leadership Structure Period.

[illegible]

[illegible]

5. Presentations

Nil presentations planned for February meeting.

6. Correspondence

| | |
|---|---|
| Hunter JO Strategic Theme / Advocacy Priority: | Governance & Leadership |
| Objective(s): | 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. |
| Report Author: | Louisa Bulley, Executive Officer |
| Responsible Manager: | 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.**
- **In response to the correspondence from City of Newcastle, that the Hunter JO host a Hunter Region Ministerial Roundtable that:**
 - **Broadens the list of Ministerial invitations to include the Hon. Tara Moriarty, MLC Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional New South Wales, and other Ministers holding portfolios that link directly to the Hunter JOs core advocacy priorities**
 - **Is delivered in place of an existing scheduled Hunter JO Board meeting.**

Background: N/A

Discussion: N/A

Financial / Resourcing Implications:

The allocation of Hunter JO staff resources to the planning and delivery of a Hunter Ministerial Roundtable would be somewhat offset by delivering the Roundtable in place of an existing scheduled Hunter JO Board meeting. The City of Newcastle has offered to provide a space for any meetings to take place.

Next steps: N/A

Appendices* / Attachments**:

Correspondence Sent:

- Attachment 6-1: Correspondence to Brett Whitworth re: JO Network request for ARIC exemption, 3 January 2024
- Attachment 6-2: Correspondence to Royal Newcastle Aero Club re: Letter of Support Facility Upgrades, 12 January 2024
- Attachment 6-3: Correspondence to Royal Newcastle Aero Club re: Letter of Support Aviation Gallery and Multi-Purpose Hub, 12 January 2024

- Attachment 6-4: Correspondence to Minister Bowen re: Hunter Region Evolution Advocacy, 22 January 2024 (cc:ed to all Federal local members)
- Attachment 6-5: Correspondence to Greg Combet – Chair Net Zero Economy Agency Board re: Hunter Region Evolution Advocacy, 22 January 2024
- Attachment 6-6: Correspondence to Minister Housses re: Future Jobs & Investment Authorities, 22 January 2024 (cc:ed to all State local members)
- Attachment 6-7: Correspondence to Minister Sharpe & EPA Board re: Waste Levy Submission, 23 January 2024 (cc:ed to all State local members)
- Attachment 6-8: Correspondence to Minister Moriarty re: Regional Development Act & Trust Fund Submission, 31 January 2024
- Attachment 6-9: Correspondence to Minister Graham re: Supercars Event in the Hunter Region, 8 February 2024 (cc:ed to Supercars and Destination NSW)

Correspondence Received:

- Attachment 6-10: Correspondence from Regional NSW re: new boundaries and Regional Directors, 19 December 2023
- Attachment 6-11: Correspondence from City of Newcastle re: NSW Ministers Roundtable in the Hunter Region, 12 January 2024
- Attachment 6-12: Correspondence from Minister Houssos re: Royalties for Rejuvenation Panel representation, 15 January 2024
- Attachment 6-13: Correspondence from NSW Reconstruction Authority re: EOI successful and progress to Stage 2, 19 January 2024

*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 Planning for 2024 ALGA National General Assembly

| | |
|---|---|
| Hunter JO Strategic Theme / Advocacy Priority: | Governance & Leadership |
| Objective(s): | 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. |
| Report Author: | Louisa Bulley, Executive Officer |
| Responsible Manager: | Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO |

Executive Summary:

This report seeks to confirm the regional advocacy approach by the Hunter JO for the ALGA 2024 Annual General Assembly, including the potential to prepare regional Hunter JO motions for submission.

Recommendation(s):

That the Hunter JO Board confirm interest in the Hunter JO team:

- **Commencing planning to convene meetings of Federal Members and Local Government Councillors during the 2024 Annual General Assembly between 2-4 July 2024**
- **Coordinating a process to develop a list of shared regional motions to be put forward on behalf of the ten Member Councils (due date for all motions is 29 March 2024)**

Background:

Each year the Hunter JO has requested meetings with key Federal Ministers and Members of Parliament during the ALGA National General Assembly.

In order to be more proactive in advancing the Hunter JO's Advocacy Priorities, we are looking at opportunities that can enhance outcomes from attendance at ALGA, including considering what motions the Member Councils may want to submit to the Assembly as a collective of Hunter Councils.

Discussion:

In order to amplify the Hunter JO's Advocacy Priorities on a national scale, there is the potential to develop regionally consistent motions that could be put forward by all of the Hunter JO's Member Councils (or by the Hunter JO), where alignment can be identified.

To this end, the below table sets out as a starting point, the Priority Areas identified in the ALGA Call for Motions (and associated prompting questions), that could also provide potential focus areas for the development of regionally consistent motions.

Financial / Resourcing Implications:

Preparation of draft motions and accompanying consultation with the Board would be completed by the Hunter JO Director, who would initially be supported in the planning of meetings with Federal Members and Local Government Councillors by existing Hunter JO project staff until the roles of Administration Officer (currently vacant) and Intergovernmental Relations Officer come on line over the coming months.

Next steps:

1. Pending confirmation from the Board, Director Hunter JO will develop draft motions drawing on the feedback of the Board and the core Hunter JO advocacy priorities

2. Once drafted, these will be circulated out of session for review, refinement and endorsement by the Board Members
3. Those motions on which there is consensus will be submitted by the Hunter JO to ALGA, on behalf of the ten Member Councils (or through the individual councils if preferred) prior to 29 March 2024
4. Hunter JO staff will begin process of planning meetings with key Ministers and Members of Parliament during ALGA National General Assembly, aligned to Hunter JO Advocacy Priorities

Appendices* / Attachments:**

- Appendix 7.1-A: ALGA Call for Motions Alignment to Hunter JO Advocacy Priorities
- Attachment 7.1-1: ALGA National General Assembly Call for Motions

*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 7.1-A: ALGA Call for Motions Alignment to Hunter JO Advocacy Priorities

| Priority Area (Call for Motions) | Prompting Questions (Call for Motions) |
|---|---|
| 1. Intergovernmental Relations | <p>Given the importance of trust in governments, between governments and its citizens, how can intergovernmental arrangements be further improved in Australia?</p> <p>Are there ways of maintaining and enhancing the community's trust in local government?</p> <p>Are there new initiatives and programs that could be adopted to improve the level of cooperation and collaboration between the Australian Government and local government?</p> |
| 2. Financial sustainability | <p>What improvements are needed to the intergovernmental financial transfer system, particularly the Commonwealth transfers to local government, to enhance the community's trust in local government and by extension all governments?</p> <p>Noting that Commonwealth tied funding is provided with detailed requirements how can this system be improved to provide flexibility and maximize the benefit to local communities?</p> |
| 3. Roads and infrastructure | <p>Are there programs or initiatives that the Australian Government could adopt to improve the long term sustainability of local government infrastructure?</p> <p>Are there programs or initiatives that the Australian Government could provide to improve the sector's capacity to manage local government infrastructure and to integrate these plans into long-term financial plans?</p> <p>Are there programs or initiatives that the Australian Government could develop to maintain, strengthen and enhance the reputation of Australia's infrastructure providers, including local government?</p> |
| 4. Emergency management | <p>What new programs, or improvements to existing programs, could the Australian Government develop to partner with local government to improve the current natural disaster management systems to further assist in recovery and build resilience?</p> |
| 5. Housing and homelessness | <p>What new programs and policies could the Australian Government develop to partner with local government to support the provision of more affordable housing?</p> <p>How can the Australian Government work with councils to address the causes and impacts of homelessness?</p> |
| 9. Data, digital technology and cyber security | <p>Drawing upon your council's experience, and your knowledge of other councils within your state or territory, are there programs and initiatives that the Australian Government could implement to help local government develop its digital technology services and infrastructure?</p> <p>Are there actions the Australian Government could take to improve cyber security within the local government sector?</p> |
| 10. Climate change and renewable energy | <p>Noting the Australian Government's approach to reducing emissions, are there partnerships, programs, and initiatives that local government and</p> |

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| | <p>the Australian Government can form to achieve Australia's 2050 net zero emissions target?</p> <p>Are there initiatives that could assist local governments to build trust in the community for implementation of key climate change and emissions reduction initiatives?</p> |
| 11. Environment | <p>How could the Australian Government partner with local government to strengthen Australia's environmental services and infrastructure?</p> <p>What new programs could the Australian Government partner with local government in to progress local regional and national objectives?</p> |
| 12. Circular economy | <p>How could the Australian Government further strengthen product stewardship arrangements to support local governments in their endeavours to increase recycling and reduce the volume of waste?</p> <p>How could the Australian Government partner with local government to advance the circular economy?</p> |

7.2 Hunter JO Funding and Grant Opportunities

| | |
|---|---|
| Hunter JO Strategic Theme / Advocacy Priority: | Strategic Theme(s): Governance and Leadership and Resilience |
| Objective(s): | 5.3 We build strong collaborative partnerships and encourage innovation 2.3 Our region is resilient to environment risks, natural hazards and climate change |
| Report Author: | Tim Askew, Director of Programs |
| Responsible Manager: | 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.

Recommendation(s): That the Board

- **Note the update provided on the status of previously endorsed funding applications**
- **Endorse the Hunter JO seeking Letters of Support from each member Council to support the Round 2 DRF Final Proposal being prepared**

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:

The Expression of Interest submitted by the Hunter JO to the Disaster Ready Fund has been successful, with an invitation to submit a full project proposal under Round 2 now received. The closing date for full proposals is 20 March 2024.

If successful, the project will build disaster resilience capacity and capability within 11 Hunter and Central Coast councils and their communities by:

- supporting development and implementation of local and regional Disaster Adaptation Plans
- embedding resilience into councils' next IP&R cycle
- facilitating ongoing regional collaboration through a regional resilience network
- continuing community engagement and support using Simtables.

The project would run for 3 years, approximately July 2024 to July 2027

The total value of the project (including DRF funding and co-contribution) is \$1,738,383, comprising \$851,271 of grant funds and the remainder in-kind or voluntary cash contributions from participating Councils and project partners. Identified through consultation with Council staff when preparing the EOI, Council in-kind contributions are expected to be equivalent to approximately three days of staff participation per month per council, to be spread across one or multiple staff members. For councils who choose to opt-in to continued use of the Disaster Dashboard, 50% of the subscription fee will also need to be provided as cash contribution.

Letters of Support from Mayors and General Managers

NB The process of submitting the full project proposal will require signed letters of support from all Mayors and General Managers, to confirm involvement and the in-kind contributions that are identified in the final proposal.

Status of Board Approved Grant Applications

The following table provides the outcomes of grant applications previously endorsed by the Board that have been determined since the last meeting:

| Status | Application | Amount |
|---|--|------------------------------|
| Round 1 EOI successful. Full proposal to be submitted by 20 March 2024. | <u>Getting Local Government Disaster Ready – Disaster Resilience Capacity Building for the Hunter and Central Coast</u> Focus: Building disaster resilience capacity and capability within Hunter and Central Coast councils and their communities. This will be achieved by supporting development and implementation of local and regional Disaster Adaptation Plans, embedding resilience into councils' IP&R framework, facilitating a regional resilience network, and supporting community engagement. | \$851,271 (over three years) |
| Not proceeding due to dissolution of Greater Cities Commission | Resilient Hunter Central Coast Platform Focus: 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. | \$655,000 (over 2 years) |

New Opportunities / Proposals:

The team is currently exploring funding opportunities through the NSW EPA [Local Government Waste Solutions Fund](#) Round 2, for which applications close on 15 March 2024. The fund aims to support local councils, collaborations of councils, and regional waste groups in the levy paying areas to deliver innovative waste and recycling solutions to help NSW transition towards a circular economy.

Financial / Resourcing Implications: N/A

Next steps: N/A

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

| | |
|---|---|
| Hunter JO Strategic Theme / Advocacy Priority: | Governance & Leadership |
| Objective(s): | 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. |
| Report Author: | Lisa Lord, Chief Operations Officer (Arrow) |
| Responsible Manager: | 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 December 2023 be received and noted.
- That the summary of Credit Card expenditure for Hunter JO for Q1 and Q2 of the 2023-24FY be received and noted.
- That the Board note that the Member Contributions for the 2024-25FY, for both the Hunter JO and Environment Program will be calculated and presented to the Board at the April 2024 meeting.

Background: N/A

Discussion:

A copy of Credit Card Expenditure for the Hunter JO since 1 July 2024 has been included at Appendix 8.1-A for noting. This is to provide greater visibility of all expenditure, as an outcome of the Hunter JO Audit 2022-23 (see Risk Register Item R22-036). This report has not been provided to the Board previously, and feedback is welcome on how to provide this report in the future.

In response to audit feedback, a review and update of relevant policies will be conducted. This aims to align policies, where appropriate, with audit recommendations, enhance compliance and governance standards. By proactively addressing the audit recommendations, the HJO aims to strengthen the risk management framework and uphold integrity and accountability.

Income Statement Summary

| SUMMARY | ACTUAL | ACTUAL | BUDGET | YTD | YTD | ANNUAL |
|---|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| INCOME STATEMENT HIGHLIGHTS | Current Month | YTD | YTD | VARIANCE | PRIOR YEAR | BUDGET |
| HJO GROUP | | | | | | |
| HUNTER COUNCILS INCORPORATED | (845) | 3,295 | 5,663 | (2,367) | 50,331 | 8,073 |
| HUNTER JOINT ORGANISATION | 5,243 | (47,364) | (36,895) | (10,469) | (18,488) | 4,955 |
| TOTAL NET PROFIT / (LOSS) - OPERATIONS | 4,398 | (44,069) | (31,232) | (12,836) | 31,843 | 13,028 |
| HJO Subsidy | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Extraordinary Expenses | - | (49,500) | (49,500) | - | - | (49,500) |
| TOTAL GROUP NET PROFIT / (LOSS) | 4,398 | (93,569) | (80,732) | (12,836) | 31,843 | (36,472) |

The current month's Net Profit for Hunter Joint Organisation (HJO) surpasses budget expectations by 23%. However, the Year-to-Date (YTD) Net Loss stands at (\$47,364), trailing budget expectations by 28% (\$10,500). The primary factor influencing this YTD financial outcome is the loss on the sale of Joe's vehicle, as outlined in the October 23 board report.

On the other hand, Year-to-Date Net Results for Hunter Councils Incorporated (HCI) are lagging behind budget projections. This is primarily attributed to necessary repairs and maintenance, causing timing issues in the budget.

Audit and insurance planning meetings have commenced early February.

Balance Sheet Summary

| SUMMARY | HUNTER COUNCILS INC | HUNTER JOINT ORGANISATION | HJO GROUP TOTAL |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| BALANCE SHEET HIGHLIGHTS | | | |
| ASSETS | | | |
| Cash | 6,430 | 175,271 | 181,701 |
| Trade Debtors | 39,092 | 408,210 | 447,303 |
| Property, Plant & Equipment | 1,573,498 | 23,615 | 1,597,113 |
| Intercompany Loans | (609,675) | (388,094) | (997,769) |
| Other | 10,110 | 5,695 | 15,805 |
| | 1,019,456 | 224,697 | 1,244,152 |
| LIABILITIES | | | |
| Trade Creditors | 17,184 | 91,225 | 108,409 |
| Employee Leave Entitlements | - | 35,188 | 35,188 |
| Unspent Grant Funding | - | - | - |
| Intercompany Loans | 226,000 | - | 226,000 |
| Other | 4,419 | 314,409 | 318,828 |
| | 247,603 | 440,822 | 688,425 |
| NET ASSETS | 771,853 | (216,126) | 555,727 |
| | 1 | - | |
| BALANCE SHEET METRICS | | | |
| Working Capital | 55,633 | 589,176 | 644,808 |
| Current Ratio [Target >1.5] | 2.6:1 | 1.4:1 | 1.4:1 |
| Liabilities to Assets % | 24% | 196% | 55% |
| Cash Ratio [Target >1] | 0.3:1 | 0.4:1 | 0.4:1 |

Cashflow Summary

| SUMMARY | HUNTER COUNCILS INC | HUNTER JOINT ORGANISATION | HJO GROUP TOTAL |
|---|---------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| CASHFLOW HIGHLIGHTS | | | |
| OPENING BALANCE - CASH ON HAND | 9,166 | 17,666 | 26,832 |
| Net Cash - Operating | (2,736) | 54,613 | 51,877 |
| Net Cash - Investing | - | 30,992 | 30,992 |
| Net Cash - Financing | - | 72,000 | 72,000 |
| Cash - Net Increase / (Decrease) | (2,736) | 157,605 | 154,869 |
| CLOSING BALANCE - CASH ON HAND | 6,430 | 175,271 | 181,701 |
| Plus Trade Debtors / Creditors | 21,909 | 316,985 | 338,894 |
| AVAILABLE WORKING CAPITAL (CASH) | 28,339 | 492,256 | 520,594 |
| LESS RESTRICTED FUNDS | | | |
| Employee Leave Entitlements | - | 35,188 | 35,188 |
| Unspent Grant Funds | - | - | - |
| UNRESTRICTED FUNDS | 28,339 | 457,068 | 485,406 |

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.

Appendices* / Attachments:**

- Appendix 8.1A – Hunter JO Ledger of Credit Card Expenditure: Q1 & Q2 2023-24FY (Confidential)
- Attachment 8.1-1: Hunter JO Monthly Financial Report: December 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 Program Status Report

| | |
|---|---|
| Hunter JO Strategic Theme / Advocacy Priority: | Relevant to all four strategic themes |
| Objective(s): | 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. |
| Report Author: | Tim Askew, Director of Programs |
| Responsible Manager: | Tim Askew, Director of Programs |

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 8.2-A: 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.

Appendix 8.2-A: Program Status Update Report

| Program Status Report | | | | |
|--|--|--|-----------|---------------|
| Strategic Themes | | Project | Funding | Delivery Date |
| 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 | 15-12-2023 |
| <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | | Act Now on Coastal Adaptation | Grant | 30-09-2023 |
| <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 | 01-06-2023 |
| <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | | Disaster Waste & Resource Recovery Preparedness | Grant | 30-06-2024 |
| <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | | Regional Transport and Connectivity Vulnerability Assessment | Grant | 30-06-2024 |
| JOBS AND A GROWING ECONOMY | | | | |
| <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | | Circular Economy Ecosystem | Grant | 30-06-2024 |
| <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | | Circular Precincts and Futures Hub | Grant | 31-03-2024 |
| <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | | Hunter Circular Knowledge Hub | Grant | 30-06-2023 |
| <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | | Hospitality Circularity Project | Grant | 31-03-2026 |
| <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | | Hunter Global Tourism | Grant | 31-03-2024 |
| <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | | Priority Infrastructure List | Hunter JO | 30-06-2024 |
| <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | | Circular Data Project | Grant | 30-06-2024 |
| <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | | Cert III & IV Waste Management Training | Grant | 30-06-2024 |
| <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | | Circular Textiles | Grant | 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> | | Community Recycling Centres | Grant | 30-06-2024 |
| <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> | | Contaminated Land Program | Grant | 15-12-2023 |
| <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | | Net Zero Acceleration | Grant | 30-06-2024 |

8.3 Hunter JO Program 6-Monthly Program Report

| | |
|---|---|
| Hunter JO Strategic Theme / Advocacy Priority: | Relevant to all four strategic themes |
| Objective(s): | 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. |
| Report Author: | Louisa Bulley, Executive Officer Tim Askew, Director of Programs |
| Responsible Manager: | Tim Askew, Director of Programs |

Executive Summary:

The Hunter JO 6-Monthly Program Report provides an update on all of the Hunter JO's programs, projects, and strategic objectives for the past six months.

Recommendation(s):

That the report be received and noted.

Background:

In addition to providing the Hunter JO Board with information on the focus and status of advocacy activities, intergovernmental collaboration and programs being delivered by the Hunter JO team, the program report provides a vehicle for readily communicating this information to a range of both internal and external stakeholders, including council officers, state and commonwealth government agencies, and regional bodies.

Key information provided by the report includes:

- Regional Advocacy Update
- Intergovernmental Collaboration Highlights
- Program & Projects Update

Discussion: N/A

Financial / Resourcing Implications: N/A

Next steps: N/A

Appendices* / Attachments:**

- **Attachment 8.3-1: Hunter JO 6-Monthly Program 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.

8.4 Regional NSW Standing Update

| | |
|---|--|
| Hunter JO Strategic Theme / Advocacy Priority: | 5. Governance and Leadership |
| Objective(s): | 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 |
| Report Author: | Shaun O'Sullivan, Director Hunter New England, Regional Coordination & Delivery, Department of Regional NSW |
| Responsible Manager: | N/A |

Executive Summary:

To provide an update on the Department of Regional NSW including the Regional Development Roadmap and changes to the Regional Development Group.

Recommendation:

- **That the Board note the Department of Regional NSW update.**

Background:

Regional Development Roadmap

The NSW Government is taking a fresh approach to how it invests in regional NSW to ensure it meets the needs of all communities. This process is part of the new Regional Development Roadmap (Attachment A), which includes three key elements:

1. Investing in the Regional Development Trust Fund
2. Appointing a Regional Development Advisory Council
3. Modernising the Regional Development Act 2004.

As part of the process to modernise the *Regional Development Act 2004*, all stakeholders and regional NSW residents could make a submission to the review of the Act online using the *Have Your Say* platform, accessed via the link www.haveyoursay.nsw.gov.au/regional-development-act-review. Submissions on the review of the Act closed on Wednesday 31 January 2024.

Feedback received through the consultation will help inform how the Government supports the sustainable growth of regional NSW now and into the future.

Regional Development Trust Fund

The NSW Government announced an initial investment of \$350 million into a Regional Development Trust Fund for sustainable and strategic investment with a focus on priorities that make a real difference to regional communities.

The Regional Development Trust Fund will be invested in regional and rural communities through four focus areas:

- Sustainable regional industries, including emerging and engine industries
- Aboriginal economic development and enterprise
- Community infrastructure and capacity building
- Improving regional service delivery

Regional Advisory Council

On 22 December 2023, the Minister for Regional NSW, Tara Moriarty, appointed seven members to the Regional Development Advisory Council for an initial 12-month term. The Advisory Council is a body of experts that provide advice to the NSW Government and Minister on regional investment and economic development.

The Regional Advisory Council Members include Alison Sheridan (Chairperson), Alison Stone, Carol Vale, Danica Leys, Dianna Somerville (Ex-officio member), Rebecca Fox (Ex-officio member) and Thomas McKeon.

The Advisory Council will play an important role in supporting the modernisation of the Regional Development Act 2004. The Advisory Council will also advise the Minister on establishing a robust governance framework to support the delivery of the \$350 million Regional Development Trust Fund.

Regional Development Roundtable Maitland

The Hon. Tara Moriarty, MLC, Minister for Regional NSW hosted a Roundtable on Wednesday 20 December 2023 at Maitland Town Hall, providing local and regional stakeholders the opportunity to discuss challenges and opportunities within the region. Twenty-six stakeholders, representing the interests of community, business and local government, attended the Roundtable.

Changes to the Regional Development Group

Following a review, changes have been made to better reflect the Regional Development Group's core functions within the Department of Regional NSW, including support for regional Ministers and the delivery of government's regional priorities.

As of 11 December 2023, the Regional Development Group is made up of three areas: Regional Coordination & Delivery; Regional Programs & Partnerships; and Regional Strategy, Policy & Evidence.

The Regional Coordination & Delivery team embeds the Cross-Border Commissioner role alongside six Regional Directors that cover Hunter New England; North Coast; Central Coast; Illawarra South East; Riverina Murray; and Western NSW. The Executive Director for this team is Harriet Whyte.

The Regional Coordination & Delivery team will continue to work across the whole of regional NSW, with no change to the overall regional footprint. To better align and support different parts of the state, and reflect the group's new structure, some changes were made to the geographic coverage of the Regional Director roles. Shaun O'Sullivan is the new Director, Hunter New England.

The Department of Regional NSW's office locations remain unchanged, with staff remaining committed to the regions, drawing on their local experience and connections to the community. The Regional Development team continues to work across all levels of government and with local stakeholders to deliver improved social and economic outcomes for regional NSW.

Business Case and Strategy Development Fund

The Hunter Joint Organisation successfully secured \$2,266,100 from the DRNSW Business Case and Strategy Development Fund (BCSDF) for the following projects:

- Shiraz to Shore Business Case and Cycle Tourism Strategy \$387,500
- Strategy and Business Case for Circular Economy Precincts and Futures Hub \$878,600
- Hunter Global Tourism Business Case \$500,000
- Integrated Regional Airports' Strategy - Passenger, Airfreight and Transport and Logistics Infrastructure Plan \$500,000

This fund was designed to support strategies and initiatives that will strengthen community infrastructure, regional prosperity, and planning for future projects.

Discussion: N/A

Financial / Resourcing Implications: N/A

Next steps: N/A

Appendices* / Attachments:**

- **Attachment 8.4-1: Regional Development Roadmap**

*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

9. Matters Raised by Members

Nil

10. General Business

Nil

Hunter JO Board Agenda Attachments:

- Attachment 4-2: Hunter JO Board Forward Planner & Governance Calendar 2023-25
- Attachment 6-1: Correspondence to Brett Whitworth re: JO Network request for ARIC exemption, 3 January 2024
- Attachment 6-2: Correspondence to Royal Newcastle Aero Club re: Letter of Support Facility Upgrades, 12 January 2024
- Attachment 6-3: Correspondence to Royal Newcastle Aero Club re: Letter of Support Aviation Gallery and Multi-Purpose Hub, 12 January 2024
- Attachment 6-4: Correspondence to Minister Bowen re: Hunter Region Evolution Advocacy, 22 January 2024 (cc:ed to all Federal local members)
- Attachment 6-5: Correspondence to Greg Combet – Chair Net Zero Economy Agency Board re: Hunter Region Evolution Advocacy, 22 January 2024
- Attachment 6-6: Correspondence to Minister Housses re: Future Jobs & Investment Authorities, 22 January 2024 (cc:ed to all State local members)
- Attachment 6-7: Correspondence to Minister Sharpe & EPA Board re: Waste Levy Submission, 23 January 2024 (cc:ed to all State local members)
- Attachment 6-8: Correspondence to Minister Moriarty re: Regional Development Act & Trust Fund Submission, 31 January 2024
- Attachment 6-9: Correspondence to Minister Graham re: Supercars Event in the Hunter Region, 8 February 2024 (cc:ed to Supercars and Destination NSW)
- Attachment 6-10: Correspondence from Regional NSW re: new boundaries and Regional Directors, 19 December 2023
- Attachment 6-11: Correspondence from City of Newcastle re: NSW Ministers Roundtable in the Hunter Region, 12 January 2024
- Attachment 6-12: Correspondence from Minister Houssos re: Royalties for Rejuvenation Panel representation, 15 January 2024
- Attachment 6-13: Correspondence from NSW Reconstruction Authority re: EOI successful and progress to Stage 2, 19 January 2024
- Attachment 7.1-1: ALGA National General Assembly Call for Motions
- Attachment 8.1-1: Hunter JO Monthly Financial Report: December 2023
- Attachment 8.3-1: Hunter JO 6-Monthly Program Report
- Attachment 8.4-1: Regional Development Roadmap

HUNTER JO BOARD FORWARD PLANNER & GOVERNANCE CALENDAR

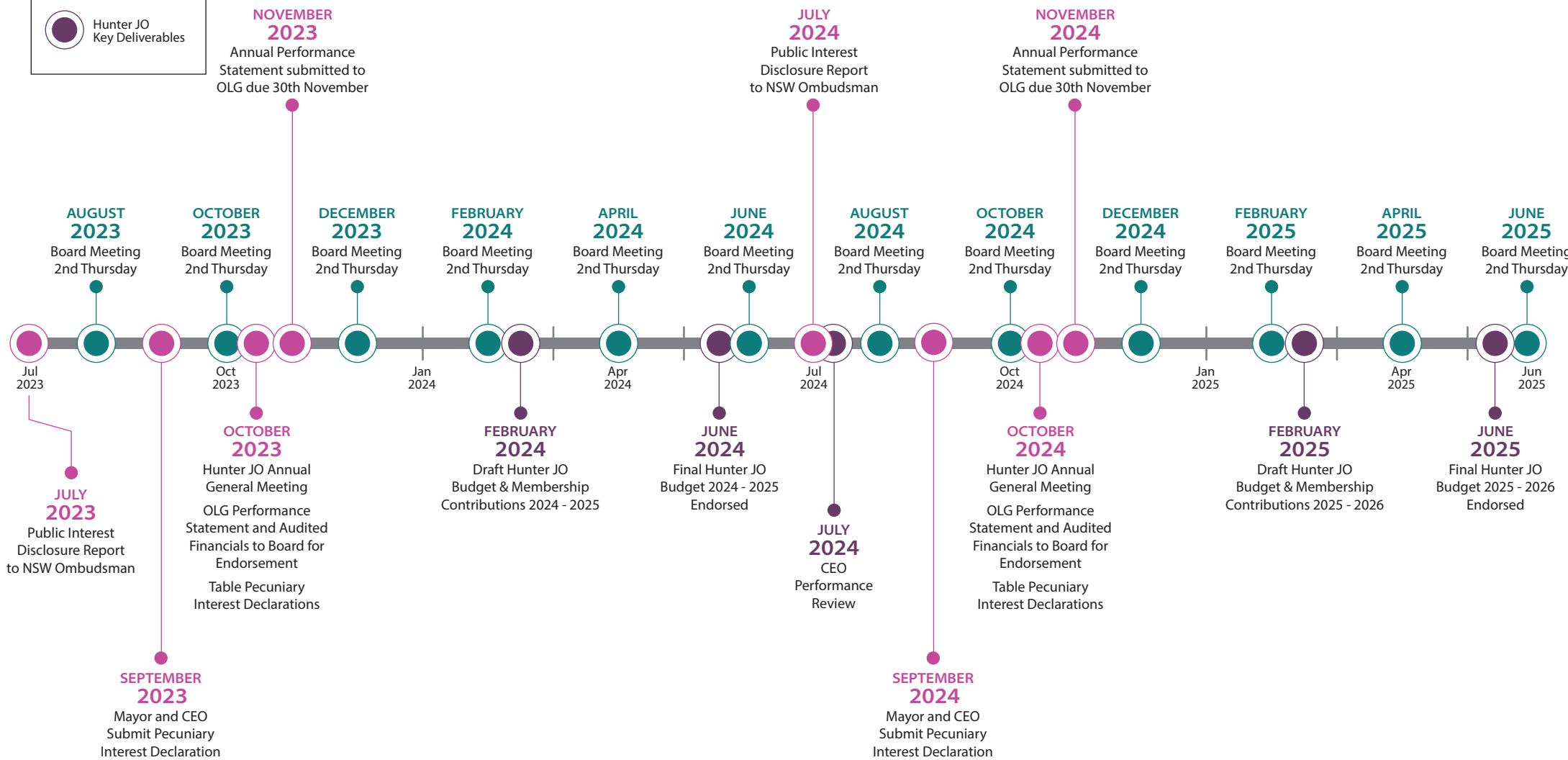


KEY

Statutory Dates

Board Meetings

Hunter JO Key Deliverables



FINANCIAL YEAR 2023 - 2024

FINANCIAL YEAR 2024 - 2025

From: [Jenny Bennett - Central NSW Joint Organisation](#)
To: [Brett Whitworth](#)
Cc: [Brad Cam](#); [Eo](#); [eo@farnorthwestjo.nsw.gov.au](#); [Nicole Reeve](#); [executiveofficer](#); [info](#); [Jay Nankivell](#); [jbriggs@reroc.com.au](#); [Jenny Bennett - Central NSW Joint Organisation](#); [Liz Fairweather](#); [Mark Griffioen](#); [Roger Stephan](#); [Steve Wilson](#); [Tim Askew](#); [Warwick Bennett](#); [Yvonne Lingua](#)
Subject: Exemption for Joint Organisations from Audit Risk and Improvement (ARI) framework
Date: Wednesday, 3 January 2024 12:36:44 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Dear Brett,

On behalf of the Joint Organisation Executive Officers' Network I hope you have had a very merry festive season. You may recall when meeting with JOs at the end of last year that you asked for advice to be sent from the meeting re the Audit Risk and Improvement Framework.

Please find this following.

Executive Officers have been provided this advice and feedback has been supportive.

Re: Exemption for Joint Organisations from Audit Risk and Improvement (ARI) framework

On behalf of Joint Organisations, I write regarding the exemption from the ARI framework (the framework) as described by the Office of Local Government Guidelines-for-Risk-Management and Internal Audit Framework for Local Councils in NSW (the Guidelines).

Throughout the development of the regulation and guidance for the framework JOs have consistently provided feedback that the business of JOs and the business of Councils differ markedly. Where the framework is designed for the complex business of councils including the management of a substantial asset base, JOs are comparatively simple businesses with a completely different risk profile. JOs have few staff, few if any assets, no rate payers and little if any income outside of grants.

It is noted that JOs have a robust compliance framework and are audited by NSW Auditor General including having to provide advice on the management of fraud. It is noteworthy that the compliance burden on JOs is significantly higher than on what was once a ROC.

Estimates of the costs of the framework to JOs vary from additional direct funding \$20K to \$150K depending on a variety of factors including number of members, fees and other costs of internal auditors as well as the extent of the internal audit program.

Add to these direct costs the indirect costs to manage the program when having to comply with the following advice in the Guidelines:

Commencing 1 July 2024, councils' general managers must appoint a member of staff of the council (the internal audit coordinator) to direct and coordinate internal audit activities for the council (section 216P).

→ Councils are not required to appoint a member of staff to direct and coordinate their internal audit activities if the council has entered into an agreement with other councils to share the internal audit function and one of the participating councils has appointed a member of staff to direct and coordinate internal audit activities on behalf of all the participating councils (section 216P).

→ A council's internal audit activities are to be undertaken under the oversight and direction of the council's

audit, risk and improvement committee (sections 216M, 216P and 216R).

→ The member of staff appointed by the general manager to direct and coordinate internal audit activities is to report to the audit, risk and improvement committee on those activities (section 216P).

→ The member of staff of a council appointed to direct and coordinate internal audit activities is not to be subject to direction in the performance of internal audit activities by anyone other than the audit, risk and improvement committee (section 216P). Guidelines for Risk Management and Internal Audit for Local Government in NSW 12

→ All internal audit personnel must have direct and unrestricted access to council staff, the audit, risk and improvement committee and council information and resources necessary to undertake their role and responsibilities (section 216Q).

→ The general manager must consult with the chairperson of the council's audit, risk and improvement committee on any decision affecting the employment of the staff member appointed to direct and coordinate the council's internal audit activities and must consider the chairperson's views before making the decision (section 216P).

The ARIC has the unfettered capacity to direct a resource of the JO. Given that for most JOs there are few if any staff engaged that are not part of grant funded programs – it must become the EOs role to do this work if that is permitted under the Act where the independence of the EO must be questionable, unless another staff member is engaged to do this work specifically. It is difficult to imagine this costing less than \$50Kpa.

This direct and indirect resourcing of a minimum of \$70K per JO is neither practical nor proportionate where membership fees to JOs vary from zero for those “in hiatus” through to under \$600Kpa. It should be noted that membership fees vary due to a variety of factors including the number of members and other income streams. It is inconceivable that there would be any acceptable ROI of a minimum of 20% of a JO's membership fee income being spent on one compliance function. One JO has reported that the cost of audit and ARIC is conservatively 43% of membership fees.

Typically, the greater proportion of funding coming into JOs is from state and federal funding where this is a good fit with the purpose of JOs in delivering intergovernmental cooperation. State and federal funding is typically highly administered and audited where any number of examples can be provided.

In a nutshell – JOs are primarily funded from local, state and federal government all of which operate in highly regulated, audited and administered environments. The extent to which requiring another significant level of assurance is questionable. In reality, this cost burden is a significant disincentive to the overall JO model and has a high likelihood of leading to some JOs seeking to de-proclaim – if they haven't already.

Having said that, improvement in practice and risk management ought to be the core business of any publicly funded entity. Indeed, JOs have been collaborating for some time in this area, for example the Best Practice in Aggregated Procurement Program developed across 4 JOs in 2019/2020. There is scope for an alternative model based on leading practice.

JOs have consistently sought to codesign an appropriate ARI framework with the OLG.




Accordingly , JOs request exemption from the framework where their membership fee income is under \$1.5m. Further, we ask that there be opportunity for JOs to work collaboratively with the OLG on an appropriate and proportionate audit risk and improvement framework including the opportunity for JOs to share an ARIC.

JOs would welcome an opportunity to progress this request with you.

Kind regards on behalf of the Executive Officers' Network

Jenny

| | |
|---|---|
|  | <p>Jenny Bennett Executive Officer Central NSW Joint Organisation (CNSWJO)</p> <p>PO Box 333 Forbes 2871 P. 0428 690 935 E. jenny.bennett@centraljo.nsw.gov.au W. www.centraljo.nsw.gov.au</p> |
|---|---|

Please note that I work flexibly – if I'm sending this message to you outside normal working hours, its because it suits me, and I do not expect that you will read, respond to or action it outside of your normal working hours.

The CNSWJO member councils are; Bathurst Regional, Blayney Shire, Cabonne, Cowra Shire, Forbes Shire, Lachlan Shire, Lithgow City, Oberon, Orange City, Parkes Shire and Weddin Shire. Associate members are Central Tablelands Water, Upper Macquarie County Council, Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) and Regional Development Australia, Central West.

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Richard Morrissey
ROYAL NEWCASTLE AERO CLUB
12 January 2024

Re: Letter of Support – GROWING REGIONS PROGRAM – ROYAL NEWCASTLE AERO CLUB

I write to confirm support for the above funding application being submitted through the GROWING REGIONS PROGRAM

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.

This project focuses on the construction of a wildlife proof fence, taxiway sealing and runway light upgrade at Maitland Airport in Rutherford. The project directly aligns with the following objectives and strategic directions from the [Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2032](#):

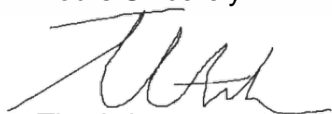
- 1.1.2 Proactively facilitate collaboration with key state agencies to support delivery of connectivity solutions that suit the regions current and future needs.
- 1.1.4 Support a Regional Integrated Transport Plan linking key services and centres.
- 1.2.4 Support a transport access strategy for regional connectivity to and from the airport.
- 3.5.2 Identify opportunities for growth and diversification of employment based in the tourism economy.

The Hunter JO successfully secured funding from the *Regional NSW Business Case and Strategy Development Fund* for a Regional Airports Strategy. This project will develop a Hunter Region Aviation Strategy action plan which will identify priority planning and infrastructure needs and initial work has identified the importance of Maitland Airport to the region.

We are committed to working with Royal Newcastle Aero Club through our member council Maitland 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 Janine Chandler at janinec@hunterjo.com.au

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Askew".

Tim Askew
Acting Director Hunter JO

Richard Morrissey
ROYAL NEWCASTLE AERO CLUB
12 January 2024

Re: Letter of Support – GROWING REGIONS PROGRAM – ROYAL NEWCASTLE AERO CLUB

I write to confirm support for the above funding application being submitted through the GROWING REGIONS PROGRAM

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.

This project focuses the construction of an Aviation Gallery and Multi-Purpose Hub at Maitland Airport in Rutherford. The project directly aligns with the following objectives and strategic directions from the [Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2032](#):

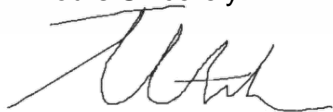
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Tim Askew
Acting Director Hunter JO



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

The Hon. Chris Bowen MP
Minister for Climate Change and Energy
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

22 January 2024

Dear Minister Bowen,

Re: Hunter Region Priorities for our Evolving Economy

I am writing to bring your attention to the great work being carried out by the Hunter Joint Organisation (Hunter JO) and their Member Councils, and to provide you with our 'Blueprint for Evolving the Hunter's Economy'.

The ten Member Councils of the Hunter JO have been committed to and focused on ensuring that the Hunter's economic evolution is well-planned, and supported by all levels of government. In guiding our region through this evolution, we have developed the attached Blueprint, providing a clear list of strategic priorities for the Hunter to evolve to a net zero economy, while safeguarding economic output and liveability for our communities. Those strategic priorities include:

- Creating a clear, place-based, whole of government policy, planning and delivery to drive the Hunter's economic evolution
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- Establishing the Hunter as a world class tourism and events destination



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Recognising the importance of inter-governmental collaboration and knowledge sharing in enabling the transition of our region, we are eager to establish formal connections with the Net Zero Economy Agency.

We therefore would also like to extend an invitation to meet with our Board of local leaders in the Hunter Region to discuss the priorities and opportunities identified within our Blueprint.

We look forward to hearing from you, and hopefully hosting you in our region as we collaborate toward a Net Zero Economy in the Hunter.

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

Yours Sincerely

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

Cc:

*Net Zero Economy Agency Advisory Board
Hunter Region Federal Members*





A Blueprint for Evolving the Hunter's Economy

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The ten Mayors of the Hunter region welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the Commonwealth Net Zero Economy Agency and NSW Future Jobs and Investment Authority, to further shape the region's future.

By working together, we can advance toward a decarbonised future and secure a prosperous and sustainable economy for the Hunter, providing the certainty on decarbonisation that our communities have been calling for.

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Accelerate and amplify market driven investment in the Hunter's economic evolution.



Establish and co-invest in a Hunter Clean Energy and Advanced Manufacturing Commercial Pilot Fund and Hunter Venture Fund and Innovation Entity to:

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- Commit to work with the region's Councils and the NSW Government to fund, resource and complete a study that establishes a clear vision, credible concept plans, and staged delivery plans for:
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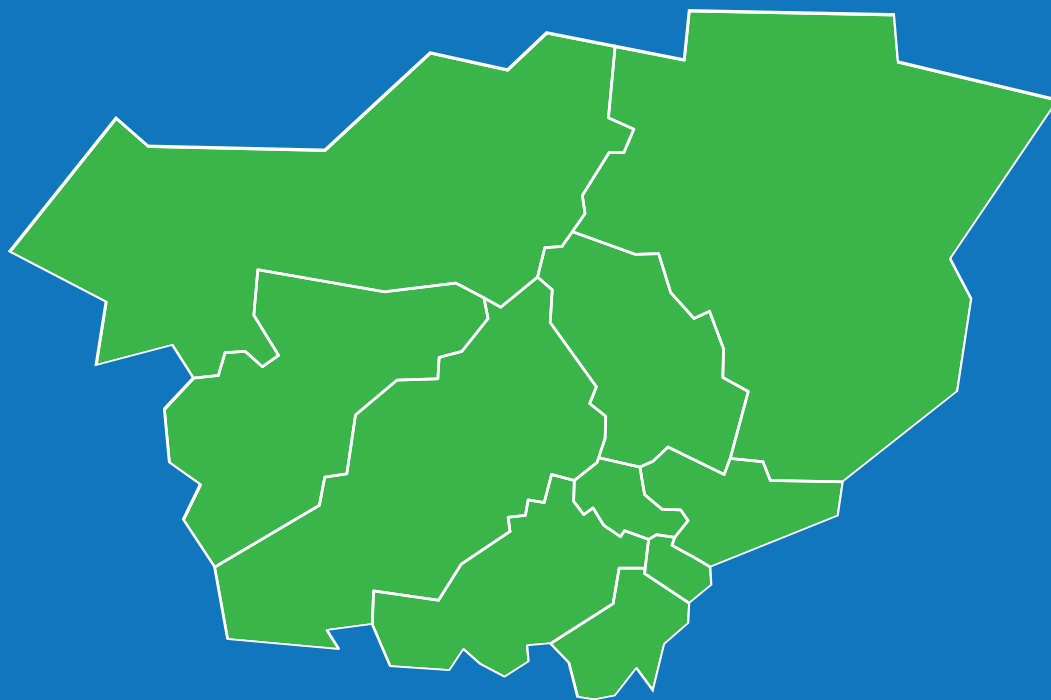


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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Steve Wilson - Director Hunter JO
0448 401 436 • steve@hunterjo.com.au
www.hunterjo.com.au



4 Sandringham Avenue, PO Box 3137,
Thornton NSW 2323. 02 4978 4040
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The Hon. Greg Combet AM
Chair, Net Zero Economy Agency Advisory Board
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Barton ACT 2600

22 January 2024

Dear Mr Combet,

Re: Hunter Region Priorities for our Evolving Economy

I am writing to bring your attention to the great work being carried out by the Hunter Joint Organisation (Hunter JO) and their Member Councils, and to provide you with our 'Blueprint for Evolving the Hunter's Economy'.

The ten Member Councils of the Hunter JO have been committed to and focused on ensuring that the Hunter's economic evolution is well-planned, and supported by all levels of government. In guiding our region through this evolution, we have developed the attached Blueprint, providing a clear list of strategic priorities for the Hunter to evolve to a net zero economy, while safeguarding economic output and liveability for our communities. Those strategic priorities include:

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Yours Sincerely

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

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





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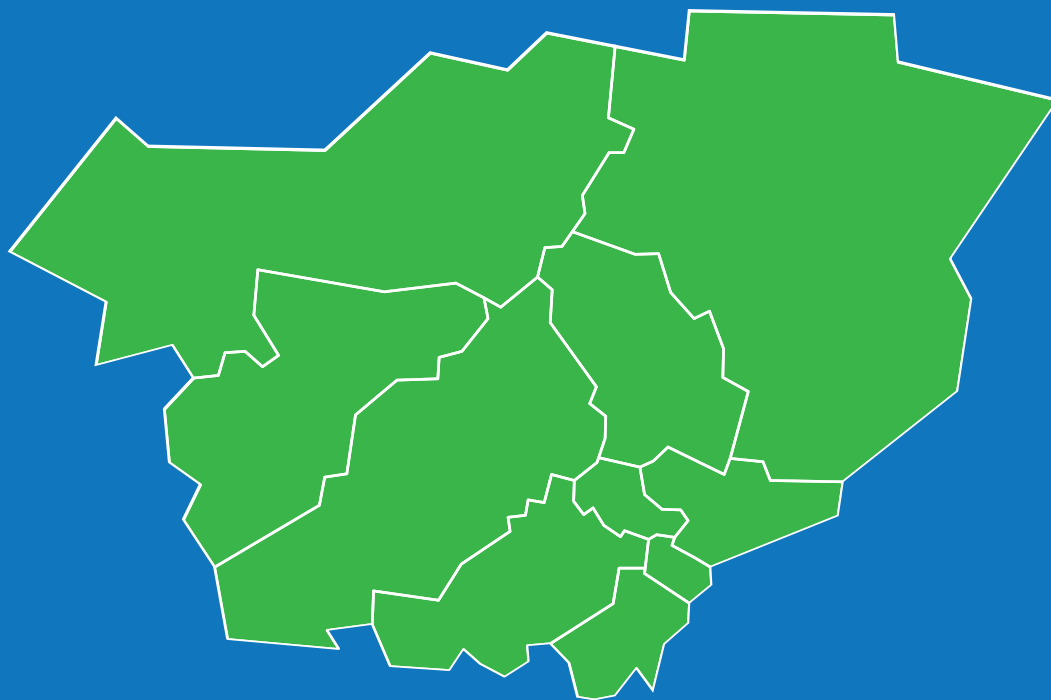


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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Steve Wilson - Director Hunter JO
0448 401 436 • steve@hunterjo.com.au
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4 Sandringham Avenue, PO Box 3137,
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The Hon. Courtney Houssos, MLC
Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement,
and Minister for Natural Resources
52 Martin Place
Sydney NSW 2000

22 January 2024

Dear Minister Houssos,

Re: Hunter Region Priorities for our Evolving Economy

I am writing to bring your attention to the great work being carried out by the Hunter Joint Organisation (Hunter JO) and their Member Councils, and to provide you with our 'Blueprint for Evolving the Hunter's Economy'.

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Yours Sincerely

Cr Sue Moore
Chair, Hunter Joint Organisation
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Cc:

Hon. Penny Sharpe MLC, Minister for the Environment
Hunter Region Members of NSW Parliament





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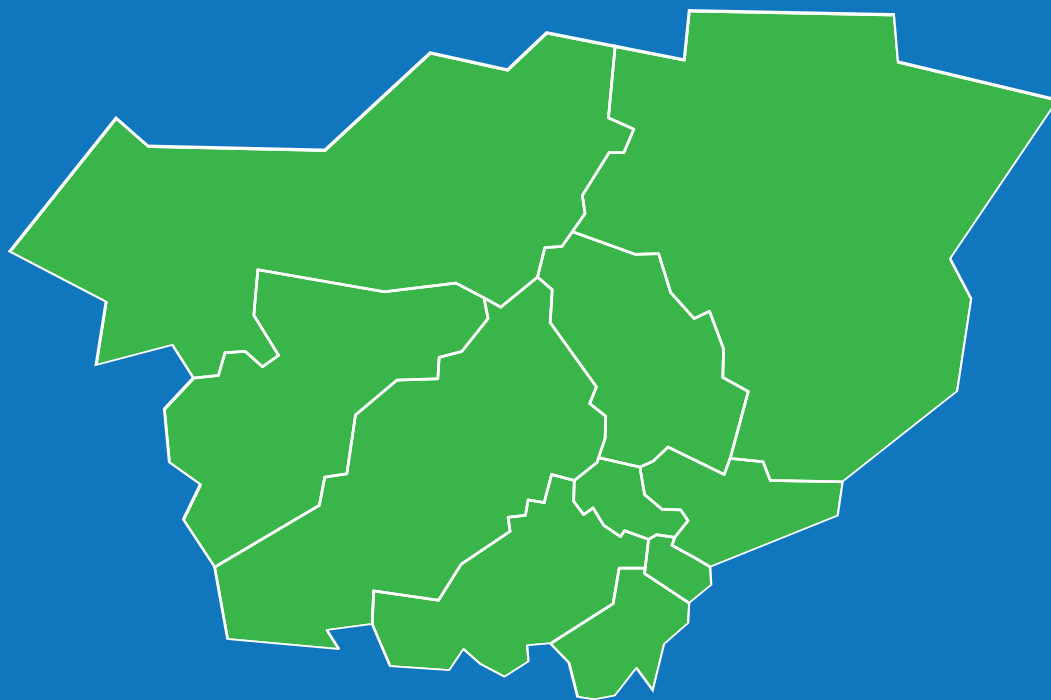


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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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0448 401 436 • steve@hunterjo.com.au
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4 Sandringham Avenue, PO Box 3137,
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www.hunterjo.com.au

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

23 January 2024

Dear Minister Sharpe,

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.

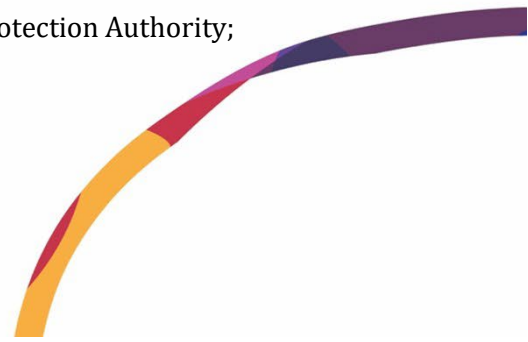
I refer you to the following submission providing further detail on our recommendations for reform of the NSW Waste Levy, which we encourage you to consider in determining the focus and scope of the current review process.

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

Yours Sincerely

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

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



Submission: Recommendations on the focus and scope of the review of the NSW Waste Levy, January 2024

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.

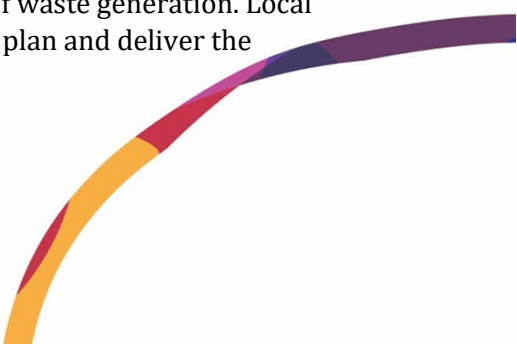
These regional directions identified for the Hunter are consistent with and have the capacity to significantly support delivery of a number of NSW and Australian Government legislative and policy objectives (refer Attachment 1), including:

- *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)

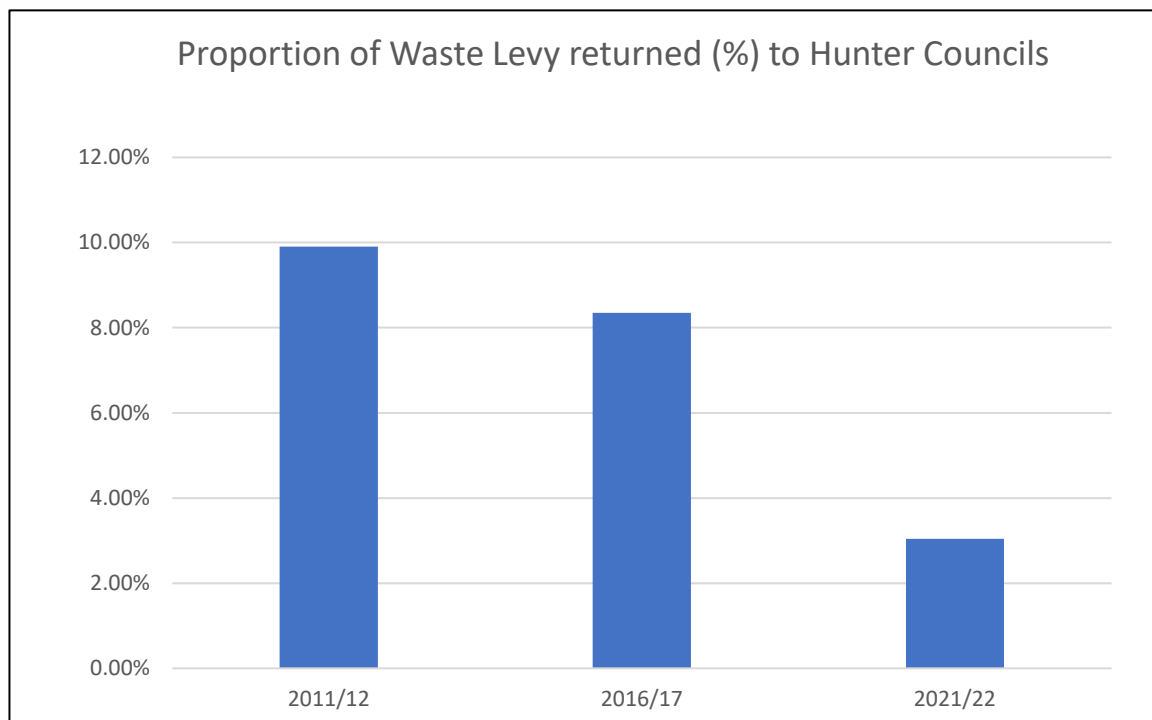
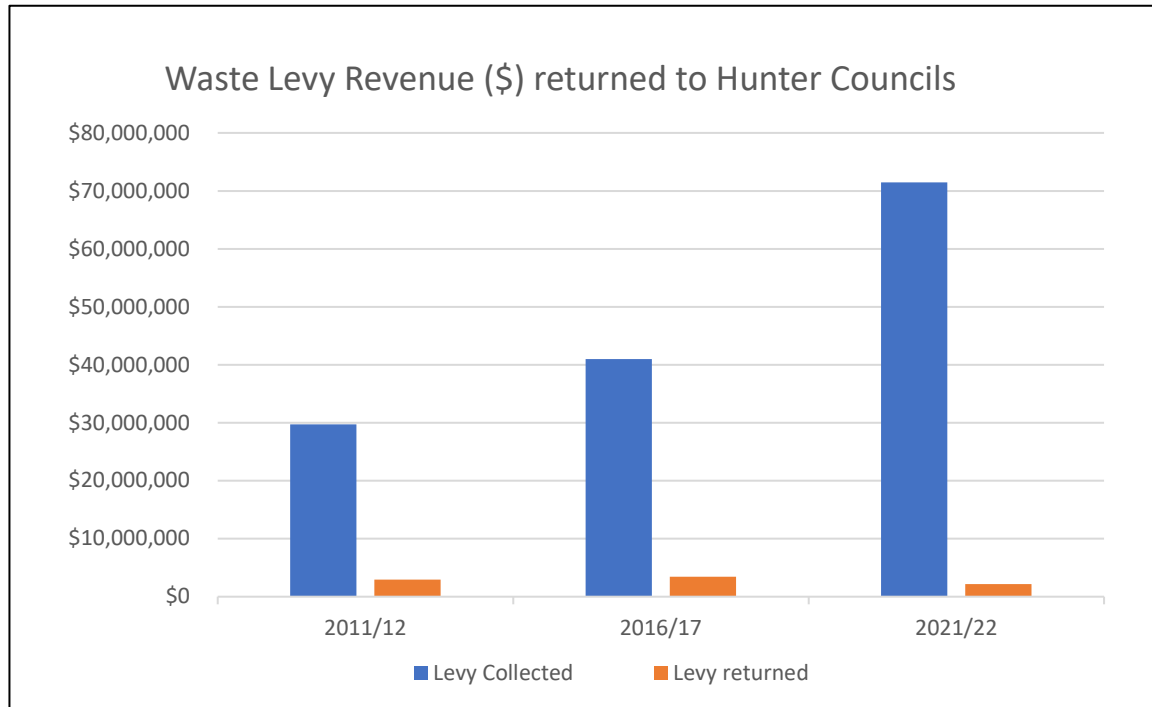
Attachment 1 - Commonwealth and State legislative and policy context

| 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"> 1. Avoid waste. 2. Improve resource recovery. 3. Increase use of recycled material and build demand and markets for recycled products. 4. Better manage material flows to benefit human health, the environment and the economy. 5. Improve information to support innovation, guide investment and enable informed consumer decisions. |
| <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"> 1. Ban the export of waste plastic, paper, glass and tyres, commencing in the second half of 2020. 2. Reduce total waste generated in Australia by 10% per person by 2030. 3. 80% average resource recovery rate from all waste streams following the waste hierarchy by 2030. 4. Significantly increase the use of recycled content by governments and industry 5. Phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics by 2025. 6. Halve the amount of organic waste sent to landfill by 2030. 7. Make comprehensive, economy-wide and timely data publicly available to support better consumer, investment and policy decisions. |
| <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"> • opportunities associated with Australia's circular economy transition (nationally, and within specific sectors) • regulatory, commercial and other barriers to a more circular economy |

| Legislation / Policy | Description |
|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • best practice initiatives that show promise for adoption and/or expansion in Australia • circular economy research, development and innovation needs • effective measurement and communication about progress towards Australia's circular economy. |
| <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"> • reduce total waste generated by 10% per person by 2030. • have an 80% average recovery rate from all waste streams by 2030. • significantly increase the use of recycled content by governments and industry • phase out problematic and unnecessary plastics by 2025 • halve the amount of organic waste sent to landfill by 2030. • 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 • set a goal to triple the plastics recycling rate by 2030, as set out in the NSW Plastics Action Plan • 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 • establish new indicators to help us track our progress on infrastructure investment and the cost of waste services |

| Legislation / Policy | Description |
|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a new measure of the emissions performance of waste and materials management. |
| <i>NSW Circular Economy Policy (2019)</i> | <p>The NSW Circular Economy Policy Statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides a common language and direction for a circular economy, through a definition and seven circular economy principles defines the NSW Government's role in implementing circular economy principles across the state. provides clear principles that assist the NSW Government to embed circular economy principles in Government decision making, policies, strategies and programs. outlines immediate next steps and sets focus areas to guide planning and implementation. <p>Key focus areas identified in the policy for guiding government action include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support innovation Sustainable procurement High quality, consistent recycling Value organics Mainstream product stewardship Responsible packaging Support reuse and repair Circular design |
| <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"> Supporting local councils to provide communities with best-practice food and garden waste management infrastructure. ensuring composts or other organic soils are of the highest quality for land application. facilitate the development of 'waste to energy' facilities in locations that have strong community support, provided those facilities meet strict environmental standards. update regulatory settings to ensure residual emissions from the organic waste industry are offset. |

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





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

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

31 January 2024

Dear Minister Moriarty,

Re: Hunter Region Position on Regional Development and Road Map & Trust Fund

The Member Councils of the Hunter Joint Organisation (JO) welcome the recent invitation from the Minister to provide feedback in the form of a submission to the "Review of the Regional Development Act 2004 Issues Paper".

This comprehensive review of the approach by which funding is invested across regional NSW, via the Regional Development and Road Map process and Trust Fund, is likely to significantly impact the Hunter Region. The Member Councils of the Hunter JO have therefore endeavoured to provide a coordinated response to the review.

The ten Member Councils of the Hunter JO strongly supports the following points;

- Recognition that local government is the primary provider of critical infrastructure and services which underpin economic development and liveability across Regional NSW. Investing in local government and ensuring local government is adequately represented in informing decision making by the Regional Development Advisory Council will be critical to ensuring the success of the Trust Fund.
- Support for incorporating into the NSW Regional Development Trust Fund, a dedicated amount for mining-affected councils, with block funding per affected council preferred. If grants are offered, then weighting should be given to mining affected councils.
- A mechanism needs to be developed to incorporate areas and relationships, currently outside of regional NSW, that are critical to grow, support and underpin regional economic development. For example, the City of Newcastle is often considered outside regional NSW but is important for current and future economic evolution in the Hunter region.




- Block funding preferred to competitive grants. A higher level of predictability (i.e. less variability) in the timeframes and levels of funding delivered through the Trust Fund will provide more certainty and flexibility for councils. Ideally the block funding is aligned to the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework to give The Trust a higher level of assurance of council and community support.
- If any competitive grants are offered, they should be separated into categories for business and local government. We do not want Councils, Joint Organisations and ROCs considered alongside business for the same grant as community infrastructure deliver different levels of benefits when compared to businesses. Transparency in decision making will be important to local government.
- Simplifying and streamlining grant administration processes, to improve consistency and efficiencies for both the funding agency and recipients.
- If any competitive grants are offered, co-contribution should not be a requirement for councils and joint organisations that cannot afford the contribution. Any assessment weighting for co-contribution should only apply to those councils who can afford the contribution.
- Encouraging ongoing availability of funding for business case and strategy development through the Trust Fund, to provide access to funding that is critical to assessing and progressing regionally significant economic development initiatives.

I refer you to the following submission providing further detail on our recommendations, 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 steview@hunterjo.com.au or on 0448 401 436.

Yours Sincerely



Cr Sue Moore
Chair, Hunter Joint Organisation
Mayor, Singleton Council
cc LOCAL STATE MPS AND MINISTERS



Submission: Recommendations from the Hunter Region on the “Review of the Regional Development Act 2004 Issues Paper”

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.

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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 the powerhouse of both the NSW and National Economies, boasting the largest regional economy in Australia. It currently drives around 28% of regional NSW’s total economic output, \$23 billion of which can be attributed to coal exports.

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, and the state’s, resilience, liveability, and economic prosperity.

To help achieve the strategic priorities and economic evolution required for the region ten Hunter JO Member Councils have developed shared aspirations in the following documents;

- [Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2032](#)
 - [Hunter JO Advocacy Framework & Priorities](#)
 - [Hunter JO Blueprint for Evolving the Hunter’s Economy](#)
- 

Response to the “Review of the Regional Development Act 2004 Issues Paper”

Guiding Question 1: Are there any other matters that should be included in the objects of the Regional Development Act?

Hunter JO Response:

The fund should remain focused on the goals of the Regional Development Act, and shouldn't be diverted outside of that.

The Act should include the following additions, to further define the use of the Fund;

- Improve the enabling and community infrastructure needed for regional communities to grow and live well.
- Support mining and mining-affected communities in their ongoing evolution (includes existing and previously mined areas with a wide range of impacts to the immediate and surrounding areas).
- Clear definition of "regional" so that communities that house mining workers and or mining related infrastructure, aren't excluded.

Guiding Question 2: Are there any objects currently in the Act that are no longer relevant to regional NSW and should be changed or removed?

Hunter JO Response: No feedback

Guiding Question 3: What else should the Government consider when making investment decisions to support regional communities and industries?

Hunter JO Response:

Simplifying and streamlining block funding and grant administration processes

To improve consistency and efficiencies for both the funding agency and recipients, and to allow Councils to better plan according to funding. Without block funding it is difficult for Councils to anticipate what funds they may receive for projects under the Act, hampering delivery if and when funding is received.

There should also be consideration of options for co-contributions to delivery on funded programs. For Councils who have the capacity to invest a co-contribution in their grant applications, prior acquittal records should be considered in assessing the application. However, for any Councils that don't have the financial capacity to offer co-contribution, other options should be considered, so that these Councils don't miss out on funding.

A mechanism needs to be developed to incorporate areas and relationships, currently outside of regional NSW, that are critical to grow, support and underpin regional economic development.

For example, the Hunter Region's regional development and economic evolution is and will be supported by critical businesses, infrastructure and services located in the Newcastle LGA – currently considered metro not regional. The Newcastle Port and rail infrastructure, the John

Hunter Hospital are prime examples of key assets in the Newcastle LGA that underpin current and future economic evolution of the region (and beyond).

Guiding Question 4: What factors should drive investment in each region?

Hunter JO Response: The Councils within the region should help to determine and drive where investment is most needed. Local government should be well-represented in the decisions that drive investment in their region, and Joint Organisations can play a key role in this representation in regions such as the Hunter. For instance, in the Hunter Region, councils are already collaborating to shape where investment is needed to support regional growth, through the Hunter JO's 'Blueprint for Evolving the Hunter's Economy'. Where investment is being planned on a regional scale, Joint Organisations can play an important role, bringing local and state governments together to shape investment decisions.

Guiding Question 5: What are the most important areas to you for investment over the next 1-2 years? (Rank in order of most to least preferred.) • Improving community services • Aboriginal business and partnerships • Growth of new industries • Supporting regional supply chains • Local and regional infrastructure • Sustainable food and fibre industries • Capacity-building in local Government • Other (please specify)

Hunter JO Response:

Ranked in order of most to least preferred;

1. Local and Regional Infrastructure
2. Supporting regional supply chains
3. Improving community services
4. Growth of new industries
5. Aboriginal business and partnership
6. Capacity-building in local government
7. Sustainable food and fibre industries

Other areas where investment should be focused, particularly in the Hunter Region include;

- Economic evolution / City-region deal
- Port and Airport expansion
- Pilot, venture and innovation funds
- Improved planning pathways for adaptation and re-use of mining lands
- Inter and intra-regional transport – for people and goods
- Circular Economy
- Tourism and Events

Guiding Question 6: How can Government, through the Trust, help encourage and support investment from other sources (including outside Government) to maximise outcomes for regional communities?

Hunter JO Response:



The government can provide support through special purpose funds that attract private investment or can help underwrite external investment.

This could also include direct funding to areas where geographically unique problems relevant to the Hunter need addressing. Economic transition and the adaptive reuse of mining lands represent a significant threat to the economic prosperity of many Hunter communities. Trust funding directed at resolving the unique legislative and commercial barriers present in the Hunter preventing the rapid reuse of historic employment lands will encourage private equity investment in the economic transition of the region.

For example, by providing low or no interest loans for infrastructure investments or funds for venture capital, like the [Hunter Venture Fund](#) to assist the Hunter's economic evolution. Another example is the mine grouting fund in Newcastle, which allows for the underwriting of/ reduces risks for private investment.

Guiding Question 7: Should investment through the Trust allow for a range of approaches to support regional communities (e.g., joint partnerships, funding agreements, service delivery)?

Hunter JO Response:

Block funding in place of competitive grants

A higher level of predictability (i.e. less variability) in the timeframes and levels of funding delivered through the Trust Fund will provide more certainty and flexibility for councils. Ideally the block funding is aligned to the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework to give The Trust a higher level of assurance of council and community support.

Any competitive grants offered should be separated into categories for business and local government

We do not want Councils/ JOs / ROCs considered alongside business for the same grant as community infrastructure deliver different levels of benefits when compared to businesses. Transparency in decision making will be important to local government.

Joint partnerships should be permitted but opportunity should be made available to all councils within a JO.

Dedicated funding for mining affected communities with block funding preferred or extra weighting in grants.

Mining affected communities include existing and previously mined areas with a wide range of impacts to the immediate and surrounding areas. We cannot have a scenario where more coal royalties are given to the state and current and previous mining communities get no funding. Current mining communities are impacted daily by many elements that require investment (e.g. health, services, roads and traffic impacts). Ex-mining communities need to deal with land rehabilitation, land use changes and old underground mines. For example, the recent removal of the grouting fund in Newcastle is currently blocking the investment in and development of 2000 apartments and ex-mining lands have a very constrained approvals pathway for re-use.

Remove requirement for co-funding where council's can't afford to.



Ensure there is an assessment weighting for co-contribution. However, allow for Councils to apply for an exemption due to their inability to co-contribute to worthwhile projects and note or weight their ongoing financial commitment to maintenance and operations.

Encouraging ongoing availability of funding for business case and strategy development through the Trust Fund, to provide access to funding that is critical to assessing and progressing regionally significant economic development initiatives.

Guiding Question 8: What are some of the key outcomes that would help track the benefits of investment decisions over time?

Hunter JO Response:

Reactivation of former mining lands rather than simple rehabilitation.

Guiding Question 9: Are there any other skills/expertise that Advisory Council members should have to effectively guide investment in regional NSW?

Hunter JO Response:

Local government must be adequately represented on the Regional Development Advisory Council

Recognition that local government is the primary provider of critical infrastructure and services which underpin economic development and liveability across Regional NSW and that local government carry much of the collective intelligence of communities, understanding the economic and social impacts of decisions. To this end, investing in local government and ensuring local government is adequately represented in informing decision making by the Regional Development Advisory Council will be critical to ensuring the success of the Trust Fund.


Guiding Question 10: How can the Advisory Council help build the resilience, capacity and long-term sustainability of communities and industry?

Hunter JO Response:

- Simplifying and streamlining block funding and grant administration processes
- Any competitive grants should be separated into categories for business and local government
- Remove requirement for co-funding where council's can't afford to.

Guiding Question 11: Do you have any further suggestions for how the NSW Government can effectively respond to regional issues as part of this work?

Hunter JO Response: No additional feedback





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

The Hon. John Graham, MLC
Special Minister of State, Minister for Roads, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Music and the
Night-time Economy, and Minister for Jobs and Tourism
52 Martin Place
Sydney NSW 2000

8 February 2024

Dear Minister Graham,

Re: Hunter Region maintaining Supercars 500 Event

I am writing to you on behalf of the Hunter Joint Organisation (Hunter JO) to express the support of the region's ten Mayors for maintaining delivery of a Supercars 500 Event in the Hunter Region.

As you would know, City of Newcastle was not able to support the Supercars 500 event in 2024, however Cessnock City Council are exploring options to retain the event within the Hunter Region as the Wine Country 500.

The ten councils of the Hunter Region would like to voice our support for Cessnock City Council's effort to retain the Supercars event in the Region. The proposed location would be in the picturesque Hunter Valley Wine Country, a similar 2hr drive north from Sydney.

According to an economic impact assessment completed by EY in 2021, the value of Supercars in Newcastle and the Hunter region is approximately \$35 million in direct and indirect economic impact and over 145 jobs every year. Attracting and maintaining world class events that align with the Hunter's unique offering is a core priority for the region's councils. Maintaining and increasing economic activity through growing our events and tourism industries in this way will be an important contributor to facilitating the region's economic evolution beyond coal to a net zero economy, and to safeguarding the economic output and liveability of our region's communities.

For further information on why the Hunter is the best destination for this event, please take a look at our Events10 website, and our '10 Whys': www.events10.com.au/about-us/



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

We look forward to hearing from you, and hopefully hosting you in the Hunter Region for the Wine Country 500 in 2025.

Should you have any further queries please don't hesitate to contact Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO at steview@hunterjo.com.au or on 0448 401 436.

Yours Sincerely,

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

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

Cc:

Supercars – Shane Howard, Chief Executive Officer

Destination NSW – Steve Cox, Chief Executive Officer





RVF23/6482
18 December 2023

Mr Louisa Bulley
Hunter Joint Organisation

louisab@hunterjo.com.au

Changes to the Regional Development team, Department of Regional NSW

Dear Mr Bulley

I am writing to let you know of some important changes to the Regional Development team within the Department of Regional NSW. Following a review process, changes have been made to better reflect our team's core functions, including support for regional Ministers and the delivery of government's regional priorities.

As of 11 December 2023, our Regional Development team is made up of 3 areas:

- Regional Coordination & Delivery
- Regional Programs & Partnerships
- Regional Strategy, Policy & Evidence

The **Regional Coordination & Delivery** team embeds the Cross-Border Commissioner role alongside 6 Regional Directors that cover Hunter New England; North Coast; Central Coast; Illawarra South East; Riverina Murray; and Western NSW. The Executive Director is Ms Harriet Whyte, who can be contacted at harriet.whyte@regional.nsw.gov.au. The new NSW Cross-Border Commissioner is Ms Kalina Koloff, who can be contacted at kalina.koloff@regional.nsw.gov.au.

The Regional Coordination & Delivery team continues to work across the whole of regional NSW, with no change to the overall regional footprint. To better align and support different parts of the state, and reflect the team's new structure, some changes have been made to the geographic coverage of our Regional Director roles. To see the updated executive boundaries, please see our [Regional Directors map](#). Contact details for the Regional Directors are:

- Hunter New England: **Shaun O’Sullivan**, shaun.osullivan@regional.nsw.gov.au, 0447 295 011
- North Coast: **Cass Wilson***, cass.wilson@regional.nsw.gov.au, 0475 758 702
- Central Coast: **Karen Minto***, karen.minto@regional.nsw.gov.au, 0423 291 325
- Illawarra South East: **Anthony Body**, anthony.body@regional.nsw.gov.au, 0477 320 822
- Riverina Murray: **Giles Butler**, giles.butler@regional.nsw.gov.au, 0427 201 860
- Western NSW: **Gerry Collins**, gerry.collins@regional.nsw.gov.au, 0412 602 688.

* Acting capacity

The **Regional Programs & Partnerships** team covers the areas of Aboriginal Partnerships and Outcomes; Workforce and Inclusive Communities; Community and Infrastructure Recovery; Economic and Industry Recovery; Regional Youth; Programs and Evaluation; and Grants Management and Compliance. The Executive Director is Mr Ash Albury, who can be contacted at ashley.albury@regional.nsw.gov.au.

The **Strategy, Policy & Evidence** team looks after Policy and Analysis; Regional Resilience and Strategic Projects; and leads the delivery of the Regional Development Roadmap. The Executive Director is Ms Tara Black, who will job-share the role with Ms Julia Ryan until 1 March 2024. Tara can be contacted at tara.black@regional.nsw.gov.au and Julia can be contacted at julia.ryan@regional.nsw.gov.au.

The Department of Regional NSW’s office locations remain unchanged, and we remain committed to having our staff based in the regions, drawing on their local experience and connections to the community. Our Regional Development team continues to work across all levels of government and with local stakeholders to deliver improved social and economic outcomes for regional NSW.

The team and I look forward to working with you in 2024 and beyond.

Yours sincerely,



Jonathan Wheaton
A/Deputy Secretary
Regional Development

23 January 2024

Mr Steve Wilson
Director
Hunter Joint Organisation
PO Box 3137
THORNTON NSW 2322
admin@hunterjo.com.au

Dear Mr Wilson

RE: HUNTER REGION MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLE

Following the 2023 State Election, the elected Council of the City of Newcastle endorsed inviting relevant Ministers to our city for a roundtable discussion.

I believe this would be an important opportunity to broaden the roundtable to include our neighbouring councils and would be grateful if the Hunter JO would consider hosting instead. I confirm that City of Newcastle would be pleased to provide a space for any meetings to take place, with the JO leading the agenda.

Should the invitations be accepted, it would deliver a fantastic opportunity for the region to highlight the opportunities and challenges for Greater Newcastle and the Hunter Region. It would be particularly beneficial should the roundtable occur prior to the 2024 NSW Budget.

It is suggested that invitations be forwarded to the following:

1. The Hon John Graham, Special Minister of State, Minister for Roads, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, Minister for Jobs and Tourism
2. The Hon Daniel Mookhey, Treasurer
3. The Hon Paul Scully, Minister for Planning and Public Spaces
4. The Hon Yasmin Catley, Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism, Minister for the Hunter
5. The Hon Ron Hoenig, Minister for Local Government
6. The Hon Rose Jackson, Minister for Water, Minister for Housing, Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Youth
7. The Hon Jenny Aitchison, Minister for Regional Transport and Roads.

I trust that you will consider this matter and provide a response at your earliest convenience.

Should you wish to discuss the matter further or require any further information please contact Melanie Hill, Policy Advisor in the Lord Mayor's office via mhill@ncc.nsw.gov.au

Yours sincerely



Jeremy Bath
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The Hon Courtney Houssos MLC

Minister for Finance

Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement

Minister for Natural Resources



Ref: MF23/3488

Councillor Sue Moore
 Chair, Hunter Joint Organisation
 Mayor, Singleton Shire Council
 PO Box 3137
 THORNTON NSW 2323

smoore@singleton.nsw.gov.au

Re: Representation on the Royalties for Rejuvenation Hunter Expert Panel

Dear Councillor ^{Sue,} Moore,

Thank you for your letter of 28 November 2023 concerning the representation of the Hunter Joint Organisation on the Royalties for Rejuvenation Hunter Expert Panel. I note your advice that Mr Joe James has recently left your organisation.

The Hunter Joint Organisation is an important stakeholder in the Hunter region, and I value your efforts to work collaboratively on issues affecting the region, and the strategic and proactive approach taken to regional economic development.

Appointments to the Panel were made by the former Government, and I am advised that these were based on the individual rather than the organisations they represent. Mr James was appointed following a competitive, merit-based recruitment process where applicants with a diverse range of skills, gender, expertise, backgrounds and experiences were sought. Although Mr James has left your organisation, this does not vacate his appointment to the Hunter Expert Panel.

The NSW Government has committed to establish Future Jobs and Investment Authorities in coal-reliant communities. My current focus is consultation with regional communities about the role of the Authorities and how they can best support regions like the Hunter Valley as the contribution of the coal sector declines over time. I would welcome and encourage representatives from the Hunter Joint Organisation to be part of this consultation.

I have asked Mr Rob Little, Director Future Jobs and Investment Authorities to be your key contact. Mr Little can be contacted at rob.little@regional.nsw.gov.au.

Thank you for taking the time to bring this matter to my attention.

Sincerely,

Courtney Houssos

The Hon Courtney Houssos MLC

Minister for Finance

Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement

Minister for Natural Resources

11 January 2024

52 Martin Place Sydney NSW 2000
 GPO Box 5341 Sydney NSW 2001

*Thank you for bringing this
 issue to my attention. It is
 useful feedback as we
 consider how to best
 collaborate with local communities
 as we develop our
 Future Jobs + Investment Authorities.
 Best wishes,
 Courtney*

02 7225 6160
nsw.gov.au/ministerhoussos

From: [NSW Reconstruction Authority](#)
To: [Anna Flack](#)
Cc: [Anna Flack](#); [Hunter Councils Admin](#)
Subject: DRF Round 2 - EOI Deemed Suitable for Progression to Stage 2: Final Proposal
Date: Friday, 19 January 2024 9:14:59 AM

DRF242500117EOI

Ms Anna Flack

Hunter Joint Organisation

4 Sandringham Ave Thornton, NSW, 2322

0460 038 199

annaf@hunterjo.com.au

Dear Ms Anna Flack,

Your EOI submission was deemed suitable for progression to the next stage of the Round 2 Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) process. You are invited to submit a final proposal for DRF242500117EOI to be considered for inclusion to the NSW Application.

Final proposal form submission and screening

From **Monday, 22 January 2024**, you will receive a notification email with details of how to access the Stage 2 Final Proposal Form in SmartyGrants. Following the submission of your Final Proposal Form, your proposal will undergo a Material Change and Quality Assurance (QA) check. Any unapproved material changes to the project scope or final proposals that are incomplete or lack basic detail or evidence to support the project, will not progress for consideration into the NSW Application.

The Australian Government is the final decision maker on assessment of projects and awarding of funding.

Key dates

| Item | Date |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Submission for final proposals open | Monday, 22 January 2024 at 9am AEST |
| Submission for final proposals close | Wednesday, 20 March 2024 at 5pm AEST |
| Final proposal screening | Late March – April 2024 |
| Commonwealth Government announcement | From July 2024 |
| DRF Round 2 Funding Delivered | Later in 2024 |

EOI application feedback

The following feedback on your EOI application was collected during the screening process. It is recommended that you incorporate the feedback when writing your project's final proposal:

The final application should articulate:

- How this project builds on the current work funded via the Risk Reduction Fund AND how it differentiates from this scope
- Consultation with DPE planning on statewide adaption work currently underway – to ensure both awareness and alignment where possible
- Explicit DRR outcomes – how will vulnerability and exposure of relevant populations ultimately be reduced?
- Demonstrate how the work will link and align with the proposed process of developing Disaster Adaptation Plans (DAPs) and the State Disaster Mitigation Plan.
- Provide letters of support from all member councils with General Manager and Mayor sign off.

If you have any questions, please send an email to the DRF mailbox, drfnsw@reconstruction.nsw.gov.au

Regards,

Disaster Ready Fund – NSW Application team

NSW Reconstruction Authority

E: drfnsw@reconstruction.nsw.gov.au

W: www.nsw.gov.au/resilience-nsw/disaster-ready-fund

GPO Box 5434, Sydney NSW 2001

2024 NGA

Building
Community
Trust

National Convention Centre
Canberra



AUSTRALIAN
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
ASSOCIATION



2 - 4
JULY
2024

DISCUSSION
PAPER



KEY DATES

29 March 2024 | Acceptance of Motions

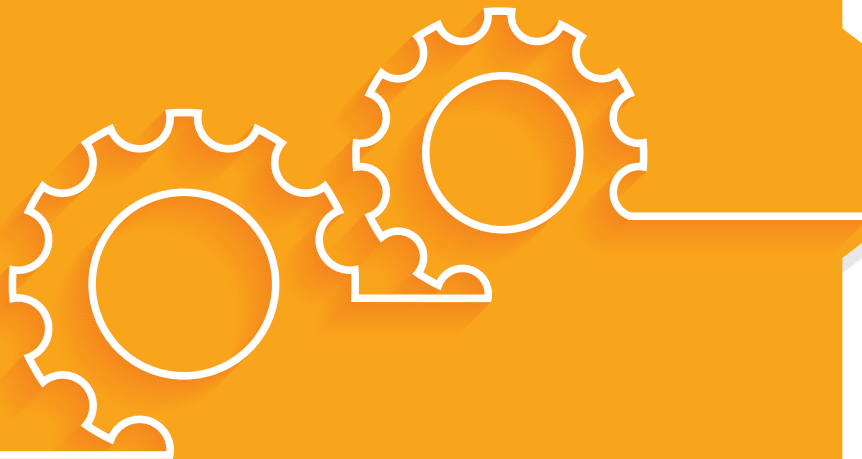
2 July 2024 | Regional Cooperation & Development Forum

3 - 4 July 2024 | National General Assembly

5 July 2024 | Australian Council of Local Government

TO SUBMIT YOUR MOTION

VISIT: **ALGA.COM.AU**





The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) is pleased to convene the 30th National General Assembly of Local Government (NGA), to be held in Canberra from 2-4 July 2024.

As convenor of the NGA, the ALGA Board cordially invites all councils to send representatives to this important national event.

The NGA is the premier national gathering of local governments, and provides councils with the opportunity to come together, share ideas, debate motions, and most importantly unite and further build on the relationship between local government and the Australian Government.

This discussion paper contains essential information for Australian councils considering submitting motions for debate at the 2024 National General Assembly of Local Government (NGA).

It is recommended that all councils and delegates intending to attend the 2024 NGA familiarise themselves with the guidelines for motions contained in this paper on page 6.

BACKGROUND TO ALGA AND THE NGA

ALGA was established 1947. In structure, ALGA is a federation of member state and territory associations. Its mission is to achieve outcomes for local government through advocacy with impact, and maximise the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of councils and our communities.

Since 1994, the NGA has built the profile of local government on the national stage, showcased the value of councils, and most importantly demonstrated - particularly to the Australian Government - the strength and value of working with local government to help deliver on national priorities.

Debate on motions was introduced to the NGA as a vehicle for councils from across the nation to canvas ideas. Outcomes of debate on motions (NGA Resolutions) could be used by participating councils to inform their own policies and priorities, as well as their advocacy when dealing with federal politicians.

At the same time, they help ALGA and its member state and territory associations gain valuable insight into council priorities, emerging national issues, and the level of need and support for new policy and program initiatives.

Given the structure of ALGA, its Constitution, and level of resources, the NGA does not bind the ALGA Board. However, the Board carefully considers NGA resolutions as it determines ALGA's policies, priorities and strategies to advance local governments within the national agenda.

This is your NGA and ALGA is pleased to act as the convenor. ALGA's policies and priorities will continue to be determined by the ALGA Board in the interests of all councils.

The ALGA Board thanks all councils for attending the NGA and those that will take the time to reflect on the purpose of debate on motions outlined in this paper, and to submit motions for debate at the 2024 NGA.

SUBMITTING MOTIONS

Australia is one of the world's great democracies. It is held in high regard across the world but should never be taken for granted.

The theme of the 2024 NGA is – Building Community Trust.

This theme aims to explore the critical importance of trust in governments, between governments, its institutions, and its citizens. This trust is a fundamental building block of our nation's democracy.

While relatively low key, over the past decade there has been increasing public debate by scholars and policy makers about the level of trust in government, its institutions and indeed the operation of our democracy more broadly.

Mark Evans et al (2019) published research in 'The Conversation' indicating that Australians' trust in politicians (our political representatives) and democracy has hit an all-time low. This report indicates 'fewer than 41% of Australian citizens are satisfied with the way democracy works in Australia, down from 86% in 2007.

Public satisfaction has fallen particularly sharply since 2013, when 72% of Australian citizens were satisfied. Generation X is least satisfied (31%) and Baby Boomers most satisfied (50%). Some political authors suggest that these trends in part explain the rise in popularity and the relative success of independents and micro or single-issue parties.

These statistics should be of concern to every level of government and those interested in the future of our communities and Australia's democratic system.

It is said that 'trust is hard-earned, easily lost, and difficult to re-establish – and a key to absolutely everything.' While media and public attention frequently focuses on levels of trust in the national and state governments, local governments have an equally important role in building, maintaining and indeed, often repairing government-community relationships.

At its most fundamental level, the 2024 NGA focusses on the role of local government and how all levels of government can help each other build, maintain and strengthen government-community relationships.

This discussion paper is a call for councils to submit motions for debate at the 2024 NGA to be held in Canberra from 2-4 July 2024.

Motions for this year's NGA should consider:

- how all levels of government in Australia can build trust in each other and earn greater trust from the community;
- practical opportunities for the Australian Government to leverage the trust that local communities have in their local council;
- focus on practical programs that can strengthen the system of local government nationally to provide the services and infrastructure required to support and strengthen our communities; and
- new program ideas that that would help the local government sector to deliver the Australian Government's objectives.

Motions should be concise, practical and implementable and meet the guidelines for motions set out in the paper.

You are encouraged to read all the sections of the paper but are not expected to respond to every issue or question. Your council's motion/s must address one or more of the issues identified in the discussion paper.

Motions must be lodged electronically using the online form available on the NGA website at: www.alga.com.au and received no later than 11:59pm AEST on Friday 29 March 2024.

All notices of motions will be reviewed by the ALGA Board's NGA Sub-committee prior to publishing the NGA Business Paper to ensure that they meet these guidelines. This sub-committee reserves the right to select, edit or amend notices of motions to facilitate the efficient and effective management of debate on motions at the NGA.

All NGA resolutions will be published on www.nationalgeneralassembly.com.au.

As the host of the NGA, ALGA will communicate resolutions to the relevant Australian Government Minister and publish Ministerial responses as they are received on this website.

Please note that if your council does submit a motion, there is an expectation that a council representative will be present at the NGA to move and speak to that motion if required.

We look forward to hearing from you and seeing you at the 2024 NGA.

CRITERIA FOR MOTIONS

To be eligible for inclusion in the NGA Business Papers, and subsequent debate on the floor of the NGA, motions must meet the following criteria:

1. Be relevant to the work of local government nationally.
2. Not be focused on a specific jurisdiction, location or region – unless the project or issue has national implications.
3. Be consistent with the themes of the NGA.
4. Complement or build on the policy objectives of ALGA and your state or territory local government association.
5. Be submitted by a council which is a financial member of their state or territory local government association.
6. Propose a clear action and outcome ie call on the Australian Government to act on something.
7. Not be advanced on behalf of external third parties that may seek to use the NGA to apply pressure to Board members, or to gain national political exposure for positions that are not directly relevant to the work of, or in the national interests of, local government.
8. Address issues that will directly improve the capacity of local government to deliver services and infrastructure for the benefit of all Australian communities.
9. Not seek to advance an outcome that would result in a benefit to one group of councils to the detriment of another.
10. Be supported by sufficient evidence to support the outcome being sought and demonstrate the relevance and significance of the matter to local government nationally.

Motions must commence with the following wording:

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to ...

Please note that resolutions of the NGA do not automatically become ALGA's national policy positions.

OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

It is important to complete the background section of the submission form. Submitters of motions should not assume that NGA delegates will have background knowledge of the proposal. The background section helps all delegates, including those with no previous knowledge of the issue, in their consideration of the motion. Please note, motions should NOT be prescriptive in directing how the matter should be pursued.

Try to keep motions practical, focussed and capable of implementation to ensure that relevant Australian Government Ministers provide considered, thoughtful and timely responses.

Try to avoid motions that are complex, contain multi-dot points and require complex cross-portfolio implementation.

All motions submitted will be reviewed by the ALGA Board's NGA Sub-committee, in consultation with state and territory local government associations, to determine their eligibility for inclusion in the NGA Business Papers.

When reviewing motions, the Sub-committee considers the criteria, clarity of the motion and the importance and relevance of the issue to local government.

If there are any questions about the substance or intent of a motion, ALGA will raise these with the nominated contact officer. With the agreement of the submitting council, these motions may be edited before inclusion in the NGA Business Papers.

To ensure an efficient and effective debate, where there are numerous motions on a similar issue, the NGA Sub-committee will group these motions together under an overarching strategic motion. The strategic motions will have either been drafted by ALGA or will be based on a motion submitted by a council which best summarises the subject matter.

Debate will occur in accordance with the rules for debate published in the Business Papers and will focus on the strategic motions. Associated sub-motions will be debated by exception only or in accordance with the debating rules.

Any motion deemed to be primarily concerned with local or state issues will be referred to the relevant state or territory local government association and will not be included in the NGA Business Papers.

All motions require:

- a contact officer;
- a clear national objective;
- a summary of the key arguments in support of the motion; and
- endorsement of your council.

**Motions should be lodged electronically using the online form available at www.alga.asn.au.
Motions should be received no later than 11:59pm AEST on Friday 29 March 2024.**

SETTING THE SCENE

The theme for NGA24 'Building Community Trust' aims to focus on the role of local government in the Australian system of government and explore the critical importance of trust in governments, between governments, its institutions, and our citizens.

In a recent essay on Capitalism after the Crisis (2023) the Treasurer the Hon Dr Jim Chalmers MP wrote:

'Our mission is to redefine and reform our economy and institutions in ways that make our people and communities more resilient, and our society and democracy stronger as well.'

The need to strengthen our democracy was also emphasised the Prime Minister the Hon Anthony Albanese MP in a speech at Queensland's Woodford Folk Festival toward the end of 2022:

'I urge anyone who thinks our democracy is unassailable to have a look around the world. Even some of the oldest, most stable democracies have come under attack from a whole range of corrosive, insidious forces. No one is immune. Our democracy is precious, something we have carefully grown and nurtured from one generation to the next. One of our core responsibilities is to make it stronger, and the key to that strength is transparency and accountability.'

In early 2023 the Australian Government established a taskforce to advise government on 'what can be done – practically – to strengthen Australian democracy'.

The 2024 NGA provides you - the elected representatives of Australia's local councils and communities - with the opportunity to engage with the Federal Government and key Ministers.

Further, it is your opportunity to advocate for new or expanded programs and key policy initiatives that could strengthen local governments, its capacity to deliver services and infrastructure to local communities across the nation. This service delivery is critical to build, maintain and strengthen the trust of our citizens.

This year's call for motion focusses on twelve priority areas:

- Intergovernmental relations;
- Financial sustainability;
- Roads and infrastructure;
- Emergency management;
- Housing and homelessness;
- Jobs and skills;
- Community services;
- Closing the Gap and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reconciliation;
- Data, digital technology and cyber security;
- Climate change and renewable energy;
- Environment; and
- Circular economy.



1. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

'Australia's federal structure, built upon reciprocal financial, legislative and policy responsibilities, requires intelligent cooperation on issues of strategic national significance.'

National Cabinet is a forum for the Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers to meet and work collaboratively. National Cabinet was established on 13 March 2020 and is chaired by the Prime Minister. The National Cabinet is a key mechanism in Australia's current intergovernmental architecture.

A representative of local government, the President of ALGA, is invited to meet with National Cabinet once each year. The President of ALGA also attends one meeting per year of the Council on Federal Financial Relations comprising the Commonwealth Treasurer as Chair and all state and territory treasurers.

A substantial body of research, from Australia and internationally, has highlighted that governments that work together are generally more successful in achieving shared national objectives, including economic recovery from events like the COVID-19 pandemic as well as in service and infrastructure delivery.

This research reinforces the need for local government to be included in relevant ministerial forums that support national priorities – from housing affordability to reaching net-zero emissions. ALGA currently participates in National Cabinet (1/year), Council on Federal Financial Relations (1/year), Infrastructure Transport Ministers Meeting, National Emergency Managers Meeting, Local Government Ministers Forum, Joint Council on Closing the Gap, Planning Ministers Meeting, Meeting of Environment Ministers, Energy and Climate Change Ministers and the Road Safety Ministers Meeting, to represent local government views.

Local government input can provide a community voice, enabling our intergovernmental forums to make decisions with greater legitimacy and authority.

Given the importance of trust in governments, between governments and its citizens, how can intergovernmental arrangements be further improved in Australia?

Are there ways of maintaining and enhancing the community's trust in local government?

Are there new initiatives and programs that could be adopted to improve the level of cooperation and collaboration between the Australian Government and local government?

2. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Trust in governments is highly correlated with their ability to fulfill the implicit social contract between government and its citizens by keeping promises.

Local government is the third sphere of government in Australia's system of government. Councils are comprised of locally elected representatives who understand local needs and engage locally on strategies to meet those needs.

Councils are responsible for providing a wide range of critical local area services including planning, libraries, waste management systems, transport and infrastructure (eg roads and footpaths, parks, sporting grounds and swimming pools) and social services.

These services are critical to the wellbeing, liveability and productivity of all local communities, and therefore the nation. Equally important is the sustaining of democratic processes at the local and regional level.

Local government's total annual expenditure in 2021 -22 was approximately \$43.6 billion. Non-financial assets including roads, community infrastructure such as buildings, facilities, airports, water, and sewerage (in some states) including land, are valued at \$539 billion [ABS Government Finance Statistics, Australia, 2021-22].

In 2021-22, the Australian Government provided \$2.6 billion in Financial Assistance Grants funding to councils. This included \$1.3b which was brought forward from the 2021-22 estimate and paid through state and territory governments in 2020-21.

Nationally, local government derives nearly 90% of its revenue from its own sources (including rates and services charges), compared to around 50% for state governments. Grants from other levels of government make up just over 10% of local government's total revenue, however these grants are particularly important in areas with a low-rate base, and/or high growth rates, and rapidly expanding service and infrastructure needs.

In 2021-22 Financial Assistance Grants to local governments was less than 0.6% of Commonwealth taxation revenue (CTR), a significant drop from 1996 when these grants were at 1% of CTR. In 2023-24 Financial Assistance Grants have fallen to 0.5% of Commonwealth taxation.

What improvements are needed to the intergovernmental financial transfer system, particularly the Commonwealth transfers to local government, to enhance the community's trust in local government and by extension all governments?

Noting that Commonwealth tied funding is provided with detailed requirements how can this system be improved to provide flexibility and maximize the benefit to local communities?

3. ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

ALGA's 2021 National State of the Assets Report (NSoA) is currently being updated and expected to be launched in 2024. The most recent NSoA shows that while most local government assets such as roads, bridges, buildings, parks and recreation, stormwater, water and wastewater, and airports and aerodromes are generally in good to very good condition, around 10% are not fit for purpose, and around 20–25% are only fair and over time will need attention.

The last NSoA found that in 2019–20 non-financial infrastructure assets were valued at \$342 billion and were depreciating at \$7.7 billion per year. Replacement costs of these infrastructure assets were in the order of \$533 billion.

Local government assets make up a significant proportion of the physical structure of local communities and often provide critical access to and support for citizens to engage in state and national assets and opportunities.

For example, local roads provide important “first and last-mile access” for communities and industry to road networks, integral to economic development and community connection. Local sporting grounds can provide access for community groups to build community participation that has social, health and economic benefits.

Are there programs or initiatives that the Australian Government could adopt to improve the long-term sustainability of local government infrastructure?

Are there programs or initiatives that the Australian Government could provide to improve the sector's capacity to manage local government infrastructure and to integrate these plans into long-term financial plans?

Are there programs or initiatives that the Australian Government could develop to maintain, strengthen and enhance the reputation of Australia's infrastructure providers, including local government?

4. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

In 2022 alone, 46 disasters were declared across Australia, covering more than 300 different council areas. In recent years, almost every Australian council has been impacted in some way by fires, floods, or cyclones.

Last year's flooding caused a damage bill of approximately \$3.8 billion to local roads across Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. This was just a fraction of the total disaster costs incurred by governments across the country.

There have been numerous NGA motions in recent years regarding natural disasters and this has been a significant priority in ALGA's advocacy program.

In 2022 ALGA successfully advocated for a new \$200 million per year Disaster Ready Fund, with the first round of funding allocated in June 2023. This fund will support councils and communities to mitigate against the risk of future disasters and help address the significant imbalance between mitigation and recovery spending.

Councils are encouraged to draw on their practical experience of the improvements that could be made to managing emergencies.

Please note that many aspects of emergency management are state or territory responsibilities, and your motions should focus on how the Australian Government could assist.

What new programs, or improvements to existing programs, could the Australian Government develop to partner with local government to improve the current natural disaster management systems to further assist in recovery and build resilience?

5. HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Almost every Australian council and community is facing challenges around a lack of affordable housing.

Alarming research by the UNSW City Futures Research Centre shows 640,000 Australian households – or one in 15 households – are under housing stress.

All levels of government, including councils, have a fundamental role to play in addressing this crisis, which is being compounded by high interest rates, rising construction costs and skills shortages.

At a national level, ALGA is a signatory to the National Housing Accord, and in 2023 successfully advocated for a new \$500 million Housing Support Program for state and local governments to deliver supporting infrastructure for new housing developments.

While the provision of affordable housing is not a local government responsibility, councils have a role to play in ensuring there is enough suitably located land available for housing and that a diversity of housing stock is supported. Councils also want to ensure that new housing developments are supported with the necessary services and infrastructure to create liveable and sustainable communities.

Many councils are also addressing thin markets and developing land and housing themselves, delivering local solutions to meet the needs of their communities.

Councils also want to ensure that they engaged with planning decisions that affect local communities. Taking planning powers away from councils does not always support the best local outcomes.

Councils also play an important role addressing some of the causes of homelessness, including social inclusion programs that can assist mental health and family violence issues, as well as providing support for people currently experiencing homelessness.

What new programs and policies could the Australian Government develop to partner with local government to support the provision of more affordable housing?

How can the Australian Government work with councils to address the causes and impacts of homelessness?

6. JOBS AND SKILLS

Local government is a major employer in Australia providing employment, career advancement and training opportunities for more than 190,800 Australians, across an estimated 400 occupations.

However, councils are facing significant jobs and skills shortages that are constraining their capacity to deliver services and build and maintain local infrastructure.

ALGA's 2022 National Local Government Workforce Skills and Capability Survey indicated that more than 90 percent of Australia's 537 councils were experiencing skills shortages.

The survey also showed that for approximately two-thirds of these councils, these shortages were impacting on project delivery.

In particular, councils are facing a shortage of planners, engineers, building surveyors, environmental officers and human resources professionals.

Skills shortages occur for a variety of reasons including an inability to compete against the private sector, worker accommodation, support services for families, ageing of the workforce and geographic isolation.

Are there programs or initiatives that the Australian Government could implement that would enhance local government's capacity to attract and retain appropriately skilled staff now and into the future?

Are there programs or changes to existing programs that would increase local government's ability to employ apprentices and trainees?

Are there other initiatives that the Australian Government could provide to improve the sector's ability to plan and develop skills fit for the future?

7. COMMUNITY SERVICES

Councils provide a wide range of services based on local characteristics, needs, priorities, and the resources of their community. Indeed, it is this level of responsiveness and accountability to the local community that is an essential feature of democratic local governments worldwide.

Some of these services are provided to address market failure, and many of them are provided by councils on behalf of other levels of government.

It is important to note that nationally local government is more than 83% self-sufficient ie funded at the local level either through rates, fees and charges, sale of goods and services, or interest. The Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows that total local government annual expenditure in 2021-22 was \$43.6 billion.

Only 17% comes from grants and subsidies from other levels of government. Unfortunately, many of these grants and subsidies are tied, or require matching funding which restricts the ability to address local priorities in the way the council and community might need.

Arguably there is no greater obligation upon government than to maintain the trust that citizens have in meeting their community services obligations and promises, particularly to society's most vulnerable.

Local government community services are broadly defined, and may include but are not limited to:

- environmental health including food safety;
- childcare, early childhood education, municipal health;
- aged care, senior citizens;
- services to people living with disability;
- programs to address disadvantage, to reduce poverty and homelessness;
- sporting and recreational programs;
- arts and cultural activities, programs and festivals;
- tourism and economic development activities; and
- library services.

Noting the funding arrangements for the provision of local government community services are there programs and initiatives that the Australian Government could implement to improve the delivery of these services?

Are there reforms or improvements in national community services program that would help local governments support the Australian Government to deliver on its national objectives?

8. CLOSING THE GAP AND ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER RECONCILIATION

In 2021, ALGA co-signed a landmark national agreement to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. At the heart of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap Partnership are four agreed priority reform targets and 19 socio-economic targets in areas including education, employment, health and wellbeing, justice, safety, housing, land and waters, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

The Indigenous Voice Co-design Final Report to the Australian Government was released in December 2021. The Local & Regional Voice will contribute to achieving the Closing the Gap outcomes by providing avenues for Indigenous voices to be heard, including to provide feedback to government on Closing the Gap.

As the level of government closest to the people, councils have an essential role supporting and helping to steer the development of policies and programs in partnership with local Indigenous peoples that address closing the gap priorities at the local and regional level.

Local government plays a positive role in reconciliation and celebrating Indigenous culture and identity, and sustainably funded could work effectively to reduce Indigenous disadvantage in all its forms.

On 14 October 2023, Australians voted in a referendum about whether to change the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing a body called the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. The referendum did not pass.

Are there programs or initiatives that the Australian Government could adopt to assist local government to advance reconciliation and close the gap?

Are there practical programs or initiatives that local government and the Australian Government could introduce to maintain, build and strengthen the level of trust between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and governments?

9. DATA, DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND CYBER SECURITY

Provision of information technology to all Australians is vital to innovation, economic growth, and social equity. However, it is potentially even more important to regional Australia where the tyranny of distance increases the inequity of services available – including education, health, economic and social. Innovative technology is becoming more broadly available and could boost productivity and economic growth.

Councils around Australia continue to embrace new technologies to improve their service delivery standards and broaden consultation and engagement with their local communities. However, implementation can be hindered without access to basic technological infrastructure and the necessary IT skills and resources.

In recent times, cyber-attacks on major corporations and other businesses have resulted in significant data breaches. It is a timely reminder as digital information, services and products become an increasing feature of modern business operation including in local government.

Like all risks, local government must manage the risk of cyber-attacks and address cyber security. At a national level, there is limited understanding of local governments' vulnerability to cyber-attacks, preparedness and adequacy of risk management strategies or business continuity planning.

While this is primarily a responsibility of the sector itself, governments at all levels must work together to ensure that the public have confidence in government information management systems and its security.

Drawing upon your council's experience, and your knowledge of other councils within your state or territory, are there programs and initiatives that the Australian Government could implement to help local government develop its digital technology services and infrastructure?

Are there actions the Australian Government could take to improve cyber security within the local government sector?

10. CLIMATE CHANGE AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

Australia's changing climate presents a significant challenge to governments, individuals, communities, businesses, industry, and the environment.

The Australian Government has committed to address climate change and in June 2022 submitted its revised National Determined Contribution (NDC) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The revised NDC included reaffirming a target of net zero emissions by 2050 and committing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 43% from 2005 levels.

Local governments have played an important leadership role in addressing climate change, and councils have supported a wide range of community-based programs and initiatives to lower the carbon footprint of their own business operations and of their local communities.

As a sector, local government has been an advocate and active participant in the debate for lowering carbon emissions, is sourcing renewable energy, has responded creatively to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from landfills, and facilitated the construction of green buildings and water sensitive design of cities and towns.

Local government has been at the forefront in addressing the impacts of climate change and adaptation to climate change. In particular, councils have a practical understanding of the risk and impact of climate change on Australia's infrastructure and physical assets, natural ecosystems, local economies and their community.

Noting the Australian Government's approach to reducing emissions, are there partnerships, programs, and initiatives that local government and the Australian Government can form to achieve Australia's 2050 net zero emissions target?

Are there initiatives that could assist local governments to build trust in the community for implementation of key climate change and emissions reduction initiatives?

11. ENVIRONMENT

Australia's 537 local councils play an essential role in providing, regulating and managing Australia's environmental services and infrastructure.

Whether it's biodiversity, biosecurity, natural resource management (NRM), contaminated lands, waste management, water resources, sustainability or roadside environments, councils are responsible for educating households and businesses on environment policy, as well as driving environmental programs and initiatives in their local communities.

In recent years the National General Assembly has considered a range of environmental issues, and passed resolutions on biodiversity, biosecurity, conservation, climate change and water security.

How could the Australian Government partner with local government to strengthen Australia's environmental services and infrastructure?

What new programs could the Australian Government partner with local government in to progress local regional and national objectives?



12. CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Local government is responsible for the management of household and domestic waste and has a critical role to play in further developing the circular economy.

Australia's 537 councils manage approximately 26 percent of Australian waste, either directly or through contractual arrangements. Each year, local governments collect around 9.7 million tonnes of waste from kerbside bin services, sort it at material recovery facilities (MRFs), and dispatch what can be recycled to reprocessing facilities in Australia and overseas.

Where waste cannot be recovered it is landfilled, and local governments in most jurisdictions must pay a significant levy per tonne for landfilled waste, as well as incur the operational costs of maintaining and managing a landfill.

Collecting, treating, and disposing of Australian domestic waste costs local government an estimated \$3.5 billion annually. Local government also dedicates resources to administering community waste-education programs, collecting litter, addressing illegal rubbish dumping, and ensuring compliance with waste bylaws.

In November 2023, Australia's Environment Ministers agreed that the Federal Government would establish new regulations for packaging as well as mandate how packaging is designed, develop minimum recycled content requirements and prohibit harmful chemicals being used. These changes are expected to have a positive impact on the amount of waste sent to landfill, and the costs borne by councils and their communities.

How could the Australian Government further strengthen product stewardship arrangements to support local governments in their endeavours to increase recycling and reduce the volume of waste?

How could the Australian Government partner with local government to advance the circular economy?

CONCLUSION

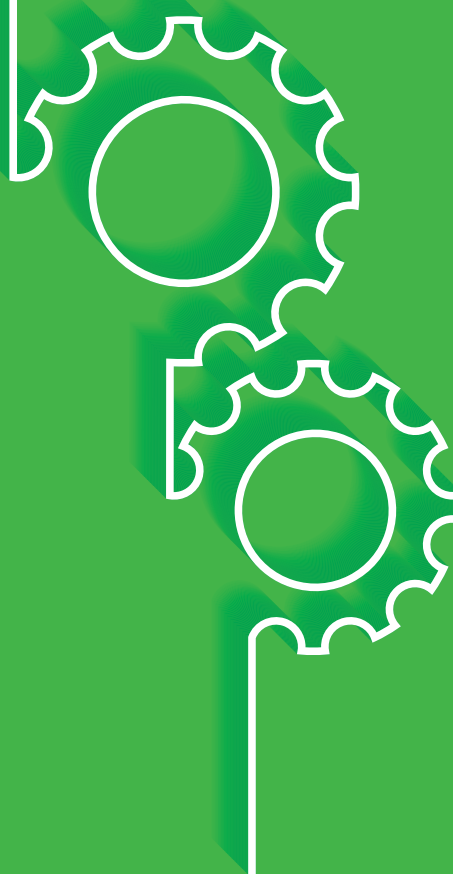
Thank you for taking the time to read this discussion paper and your support for the 2024 National General Assembly of Local Government.

A FINAL REMINDER:

- » Motions should be lodged electronically at www.alga.com.au and received no later than 11.59pm on Friday 29 March 2024.
- » Motions must meet the criteria published in this paper.
- » Motions should commence with the following wording: 'This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to...'
- » Motions should not be prescriptive in directing how the matter should be pursued.
- » Motions should be practical, focussed and relatively simple.
- » It is important to complete the background section on the form.
- » Motions must not seek to advance an outcome that would result in a benefit to one group of councils to the detriment of another.
- » When your council submits a motion there is an expectation that a council representative will be present at the 2024 National General Assembly to move and speak to that motion if required.
- » Resolutions of the National General Assembly do not automatically become ALGA's national policy positions. The resolutions are used by the ALGA Board to inform policies, priorities and strategies to advance local governments within the national agenda.

We look forward to hearing from you and seeing you at the 2024 National General Assembly in Canberra.





AUSTRALIAN
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
ASSOCIATION

8 Geils Court | 02 6122 9400
Deakin, ACT, 2600 | alga@alga.asn.au

www.alga.com.au

HUNTER JOINT ORGANISATION



| DECEMBER 23 | CURRENT MONTH | | YEAR TO DATE | | | | APPROVED | FORECAST | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|------------|-----------|---------------|---------------|------------|---------------------|
| HJO P&L | ACTUAL | BUDGET | ACTUAL | BUDGET | VARIANCE % | PY | ANNUAL BUDGET | ANNUAL BUDGET | VARIANCE % | VARIANCE COMMENTARY |
| REVENUE | | | | | | | | | | |
| Membership Subscriptions | 48,983 | 48,983 | 293,898 | 293,900 | 0% | 282,348 | 587,800 | 587,800 | 0% | |
| Grant Funding | 61,020 | 1,297,430 | 1,128,096 | 2,451,754 | -54% | 634,066 | 4,307,599 | 4,307,599 | 0% | |
| Management Fees | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| Training Revenue | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| Consultancy Fees | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| Rent & Overheads | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| Miscellaneous | - | - | 129,644 | 76,601 | 69% | 136,457 | 76,601 | 76,601 | 0% | |
| Legal Fees | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| Client Fees | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| Arrow Contribution | 12,499 | 12,500 | 74,994 | 75,000 | 0% | 315,300 | 150,000 | 150,000 | 0% | |
| Revenue - Total | 122,502 | 1,358,913 | 1,626,632 | 2,897,256 | | 1,368,171 | 5,122,001 | 5,122,001 | | |
| COST OF SALES | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cost of Sales | 61,853 | 1,298,263 | 1,141,462 | 2,456,754 | -54% | 634,066 | 4,317,599 | 4,317,599 | 0% | |
| Direct Labour | - | - | - | - | | - | - | - | - | |
| GROSS PROFIT / (LOSS) | 60,649 | 60,650 | 485,170 | 440,502 | 10% | 734,105 | 804,402 | 804,402 | | |
| Gross Margin | 50% | 4% | 30% | 15% | | 54% | 16% | 16% | | |
| EXPENSES | | | | | | | | | | |
| General & Administration | 19,079 | 21,040 | 98,819 | 102,442 | -4% | 94,566 | 205,634 | 205,634 | 0% | |
| Occupancy Costs | 1,269 | 1,269 | 7,615 | 7,616 | 0% | 29,441 | 15,231 | 15,231 | 0% | |
| Depreciation | 775 | 901 | 7,870 | 8,623 | -9% | 11,067 | 14,029 | 14,029 | 0% | |
| Information Technology | 1,488 | 1,355 | 9,130 | 8,128 | 12% | 2,398 | 16,255 | 16,255 | 0% | |
| Overhead Labour | 13,608 | 12,852 | 232,650 | 178,580 | 30% | 267,072 | 261,723 | 261,723 | 0% | |
| Employee Costs | - | 102 | 187 | 1,437 | -87% | 3,952 | 2,099 | 2,099 | 0% | |
| Travel & Accommodation | 498 | 300 | 3,363 | 3,168 | 6% | 6,405 | 4,968 | 4,968 | 0% | |
| Motor Vehicle | 560 | 456 | 7,760 | 9,133 | -15% | 12,009 | 12,468 | 12,468 | 0% | |
| Overhead Expenses - Total | 37,277 | 38,274 | 367,394 | 319,127 | 15% | 426,910 | 532,407 | 532,407 | | |
| NET PROFIT / (LOSS) - OPERATIONS | 23,372 | 22,376 | 117,776 | 121,375 | -3% | 307,195 | 271,995 | 271,995 | | |
| Net Profit Margin | 19% | 2% | 7% | 4% | | 22% | 5% | 5% | | |
| OTHER INCOME / (EXPENSES) | | | | | | | | | | |
| OTHER INCOME | | | | | | | | | | |
| Profit / Loss on sale of asset | - | - | (6,862) | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| Interest | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| OTHER EXPENSES | | | | | | | | | | |
| HJO Contributions | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| Other | (18,128) | (18,128) | (108,778) | (108,770) | 0% | (325,683) | (217,540) | (217,540) | 0% | |
| EXTRAORDINARY EXPENSESS | | | | | | | | | | |
| Other - Extraordinary | - | - | (49,500) | (49,500) | 0% | - | (49,500) | (49,500) | 0% | |
| Redundancy | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| Other Income / (Expenses) - Total | (18,128) | (18,128) | (165,140) | (158,270) | | (325,683) | (267,040) | (267,040) | | |
| NET PROFIT / (LOSS) BEFORE TAX | 5,243 | 4,247 | (47,364) | (36,895) | 28% | (18,488) | 4,955 | 4,955 | | |
| EBITDA - NET PROFIT | 6,019 | 5,148 | (39,494) | (28,272) | 40% | (7,422) | 18,984 | 18,984 | | |
| EBITDA Margin | 5% | 0% | -2% | -1% | | -1% | 0% | 0% | | |

HUNTER COUNCILS INCORPORATED

| DECEMBER 23 | | CURRENT MONTH | | YEAR TO DATE | | | | APPROVED | | FORECAST | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|---------------|--------|--------------|--------|----------|---------|---------------|---------------|----------|---------------------|--|
| HCI P&L | | ACTUAL | BUDGET | ACTUAL | BUDGET | VARIANCE | PY | ANNUAL BUDGET | ANNUAL BUDGET | VARIANCE | VARIANCE COMMENTARY | |
| | | | | | | % | | | | % | | |
| REVENUE | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Membership Subscriptions | | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | | |
| Grant Funding | | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | | |
| Management Fees | | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | | |
| Training Revenue | | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | | |
| Consultancy Fees | | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | | |
| Rent & Overheads | | 15,498 | 15,498 | 96,238 | 96,238 | 0% | 110,784 | 189,224 | 189,224 | 0% | | |
| Miscellaneous | | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | | |
| Legal Fees | | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | | |
| Client Fees | | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | | |
| Arrow Contribution | | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | | |
| Revenue - Total | | 15,498 | 15,498 | 96,238 | 96,238 | 0% | 110,784 | 189,224 | 189,224 | | | |
| COST OF SALES | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cost of Sales | | - | - | - | - | | - | - | - | - | | |
| Direct Labour | | - | - | - | - | | - | - | - | - | | |
| GROSS PROFIT / (LOSS) | | 15,498 | 15,498 | 96,238 | 96,238 | 0% | 110,784 | 189,224 | 189,224 | | | |
| Gross Margin | | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | | 100% | 100% | | | | |
| EXPENSES | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| General & Administration | | 5,159 | 4,470 | 29,474 | 26,821 | | 24,310 | 53,642 | 53,642 | 0% | | |
| Occupancy Costs | | 7,382 | 7,113 | 40,688 | 41,145 | | 16,192 | 82,290 | 82,290 | 0% | | |
| Depreciation | | 3,802 | 3,768 | 22,781 | 22,609 | | 19,951 | 45,218 | 45,218 | 0% | | |
| Information Technology | | - | - | - | - | | - | - | - | - | | |
| Overhead Labour | | - | - | - | - | | - | - | - | - | | |
| Employee Costs | | - | - | - | - | | - | - | - | - | | |
| Travel & Accommodation | | - | - | - | - | | - | - | - | - | | |
| Motor Vehicle | | - | - | - | - | | - | - | - | - | | |
| Overhead Expenses - Total | | 16,343 | 15,351 | 92,943 | 90,575 | | 60,453 | 181,150 | 181,150 | | | |
| NET PROFIT / (LOSS) - OPERATIONS | | (845) | 147 | 3,295 | 5,663 | -42% | 50,331 | 8,073 | 8,073 | | | |
| Net Profit Margin | | -5% | 1% | 3% | 6% | | 45% | 4% | 4% | | | |
| OTHER INCOME / (EXPENSES) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| OTHER INCOME | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Profit / Loss on sale of asset | | - | - | - | - | | - | - | - | - | | |
| Interest | | - | - | - | - | | - | - | - | - | | |
| OTHER EXPENSES | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| HJO Contributions | | - | - | - | - | | - | - | - | - | | |
| Other | | - | - | - | - | | - | - | - | - | | |
| EXTRAODINARY EXPENSESS | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Other - Extraordinary | | - | - | - | - | | - | - | - | - | | |
| Redundancy | | - | - | - | - | | - | - | - | - | | |
| Other Income / (Expenses) - Total | | - | - | - | - | | - | - | - | | | |
| NET PROFIT / (LOSS) BEFORE TAX | | (845) | 147 | 3,295 | 5,663 | -42% | 50,331 | 8,073 | 8,073 | | | |
| EBITDA - NET PROFIT | | 2,957 | 3,915 | 26,076 | 28,272 | | 70,282 | 53,292 | 53,292 | | | |
| EBITDA Margin | | 19% | 25% | 27% | 29% | | 63% | 28% | 28% | | | |

HUNTER JOINT ORGANISATION



| BALANCE SHEET | JUL | AUG | SEPT | Oct | NOV | DEC | JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY | JUN |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| CURRENT ASSETS | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cash & Cash Equivalents | 356,931 | 467,660 | 337,921 | 411,525 | 181,021 | 175,271 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Receivables | 1,019,714 | 406,194 | 780,916 | 285,811 | 408,210 | 408,210 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Prepayments | 6,021 | 4,733 | 3,498 | 7,398 | 6,583 | 5,694 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Other Receivables | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| | 1,382,667 | 878,589 | 1,122,337 | 704,735 | 595,816 | 589,176 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| NON CURRENT ASSETS | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Buildings | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Land | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Computers | 1,153 | 1,109 | 1,065 | 1,022 | 978 | 934 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Fixtures and Fittings | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Building Improvements | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Motor Vehicles | 63,878 | 62,074 | 60,270 | 24,145 | 23,413 | 22,681 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| ROU | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Other Non Current Asset | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Intercompany Loans - Asset | (697,153) | (266,812) | (622,936) | (253,914) | (381,647) | (388,094) | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| | (632,122) | (203,629) | (561,601) | (228,747) | (357,256) | (364,479) | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| TOTAL ASSETS | 750,545 | 674,960 | 560,736 | 475,987 | 238,560 | 224,697 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| CURRENT LIABILITIES | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Payables | 80,980 | 119,277 | 66,773 | 60,808 | 70,923 | 91,225 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Accruals | 37,112 | 4,944 | (2,649) | (7,442) | (6,035) | (4,628) | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Intercompany Loans - Liability | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Loans | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Employee Payables | 39,976 | 16,801 | 111,851 | 94,305 | (608) | 1,587 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Other Payables | 3,428 | 2,576 | 2,662 | 881 | 777 | 2,007 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| GST | 90,367 | 86,609 | 113,930 | 112,431 | (1,120) | 2,791 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Employee Entitlements | 62,786 | 67,170 | 17,781 | 18,029 | 17,203 | 17,818 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Unearned Income | 557,567 | 508,584 | 459,601 | 410,618 | 361,635 | 312,652 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Unspent Grant Funding | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| | 872,216 | 805,961 | 769,949 | 689,630 | 442,775 | 423,452 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| NON CURRENT LIABILITIES | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Term Debt | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Employee Entitlements - non current | 42,479 | 43,517 | 16,721 | 16,938 | 17,154 | 17,370 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Lease Liability | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| | 42,479 | 43,517 | 16,721 | 16,938 | 17,154 | 17,370 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| TOTAL LIABILITIES | 914,695 | 849,477 | 786,670 | 706,568 | 459,929 | 440,822 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| NET ASSETS | (164,150) | (174,518) | (225,934) | (230,581) | (221,369) | (216,126) | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| EQUITY | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Retained Earnings | (168,761) | (168,761) | (168,761) | (168,761) | (168,761) | (168,761) | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Current Year Earnings | 4,612 | (5,756) | (57,173) | (61,819) | (52,607) | (47,364) | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| TOTAL EQUITY | (164,150) | (174,518) | (225,934) | (230,581) | (221,369) | (216,126) | - | - | - | - | - | - |

HUNTER COUNCILS INCORPORATED

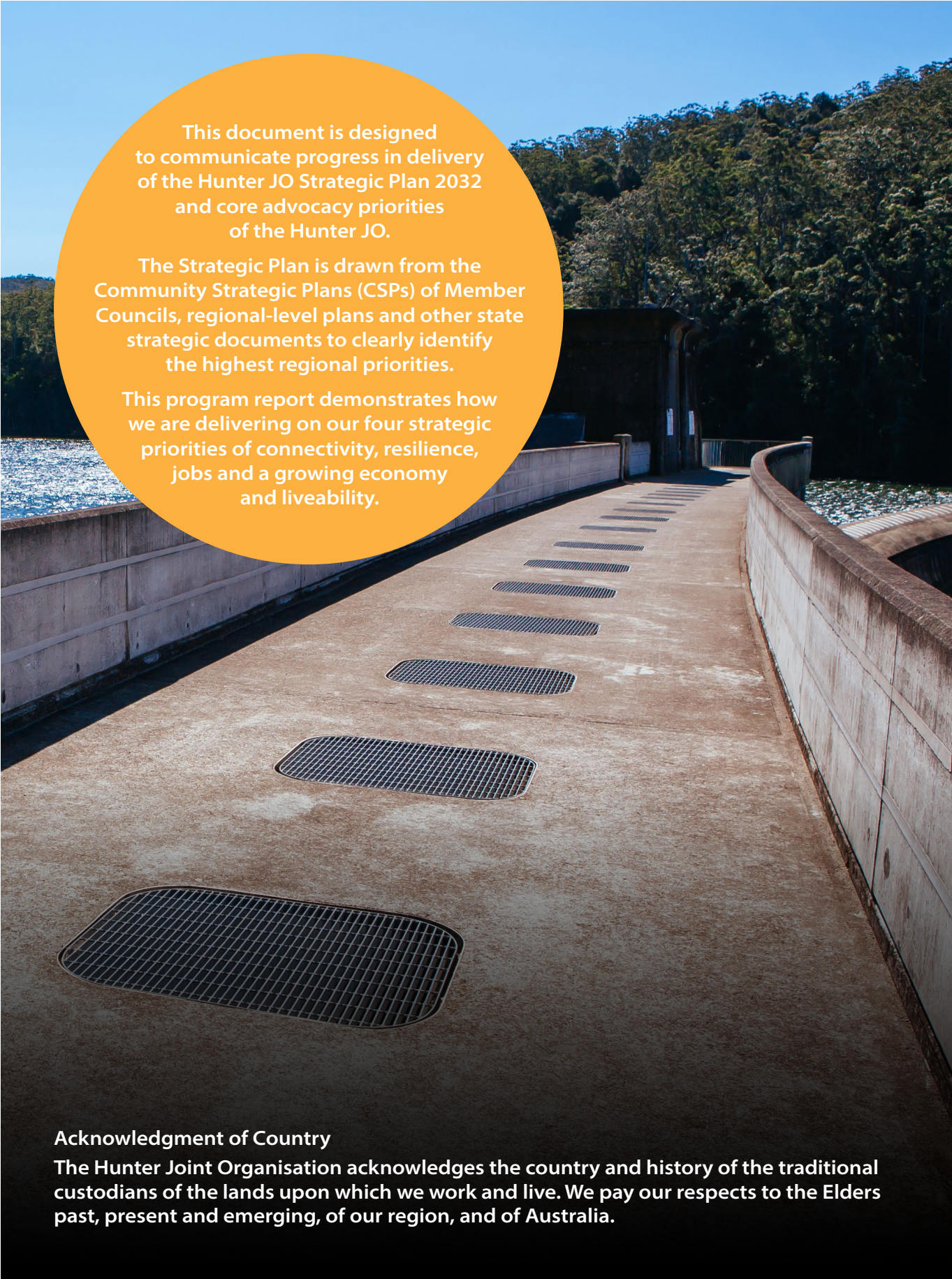
| HCI BS | JUL | AUG | SEPT | Oct | NOV | DEC | JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY | JUN |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| CURRENT ASSETS | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cash & Cash Equivalents | 2,730 | 4,703 | 18,401 | 18,604 | 689 | 6,430 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Receivables | 34,200 | 28,428 | 23,441 | 20,244 | 35,895 | 39,092 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Prepayments | 16,502 | 16,851 | 15,165 | 13,480 | 11,795 | 10,110 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Other Receivables | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| | 53,431 | 49,982 | 57,007 | 52,328 | 48,380 | 55,633 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| NON CURRENT ASSETS | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Buildings | 848,660 | 845,733 | 842,805 | 846,858 | 843,911 | 840,965 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Land | 351,302 | 351,302 | 351,302 | 351,302 | 351,302 | 351,302 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Computers | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Fixtures and Fittings | 6,690 | 6,649 | 6,608 | 6,566 | 6,428 | 8,544 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Building Improvements | 376,685 | 375,885 | 375,086 | 374,286 | 373,486 | 372,686 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Motor Vehicles | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| ROU | 28,798 | 28,798 | 28,798 | 28,798 | 28,798 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Other Non Current Asset | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Intercompany Loans - Asset | (608,189) | (608,189) | (609,675) | (609,675) | (609,675) | (609,675) | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| | 1,003,947 | 1,000,178 | 994,924 | 998,135 | 994,251 | 963,822 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| TOTAL ASSETS | 1,057,378 | 1,050,160 | 1,051,931 | 1,050,463 | 1,042,631 | 1,019,455 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| CURRENT LIABILITIES | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Payables | 20,499 | 15,043 | 14,063 | 10,905 | 5,931 | 17,184 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Accruals | 8,078 | 8,078 | 8,078 | 8,078 | 8,078 | 7,459 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Intercompany Loans - Liability | 226,000 | 226,000 | 226,000 | 226,000 | 226,000 | 226,000 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Loans | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Employee Payables | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Other Payables | 625 | 1,250 | 1,875 | 2,500 | 3,125 | (3,913) | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| GST | 5,238 | 1,766 | 2,775 | 2,827 | 793 | 874 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Employee Entitlements | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Unearned Income | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Unspent Grant Funding | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| | 260,440 | 252,137 | 252,790 | 250,310 | 243,926 | 247,603 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| NON CURRENT LIABILITIES | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Term Debt | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Employee Entitlements - non current | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Lease Liability | 26,894 | 26,894 | 26,894 | 26,894 | 26,894 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| | 26,894 | 26,894 | 26,894 | 26,894 | 26,894 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| TOTAL LIABILITIES | 287,334 | 279,031 | 279,684 | 277,204 | 270,820 | 247,603 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| NET ASSETS | 770,045 | 771,129 | 772,247 | 773,259 | 771,811 | 771,852 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| EQUITY | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Retained Earnings | 767,670 | 767,670 | 767,670 | 767,670 | 767,670 | 768,556 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Current Year Earnings | 2,374 | 3,458 | 4,576 | 5,590 | 4,140 | 3,295 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| TOTAL EQUITY | 770,045 | 771,129 | 772,247 | 773,260 | 771,811 | 771,852 | - | - | - | - | - | - |

HUNTER JOINT ORGANISATION

[illegible]



Hunter JO Six-monthly Program Report - February 2024



This document is designed to communicate progress in delivery of the Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2032 and core advocacy priorities of the Hunter JO.

The Strategic Plan is drawn from the Community Strategic Plans (CSPs) of Member Councils, regional-level plans and other state strategic documents to clearly identify the highest regional priorities.

This program report 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.

For all enquiries please contact Hunter Joint Organisation on 02 4978 4020 or email rppd@hunterjo.com.au.
©Hunter Joint Organisation



Hunter JO Program Report

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Part 1: About the Hunter JO | 4 |
| Who We Are | 4 |
| Our Vision | 5 |
| Our Board | 6 |
| Our Team | 7 |
| Our Priorities | 9 |
| Part 2: Our Delivery | 10 |
| Regional Advocacy | 11 |
| Intergovernmental Collaboration | 14 |
| Regional Programs and Capacity Building | 17 |
| Connectivity | 18 |
| Resilience | 19 |
| Jobs and a Growing Economy | 22 |
| Liveability | 26 |
| Grants and Funding | 29 |
| Part 3: Appendix | 30 |
| Strategic Directions and Objectives | 30 |

Who we are

The Hunter Joint Organisation (Hunter JO) 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.

Our statutory functions defined by the NSW Local Government Amendment (Regional Joint Organisations) Act 2017 comprise:

Strategic Planning and Priority Setting

To establish strategic regional priorities for the Joint Organisation area and to establish strategies and plans for delivering those strategic regional priorities.

Regional Leadership and Advocacy

To provide regional leadership for the joint organisation area and to be an advocate for strategic regional priorities.

Intergovernmental Collaboration

To identify and take up opportunities for intergovernmental co-operation on matters relating to the Joint Organisation area.

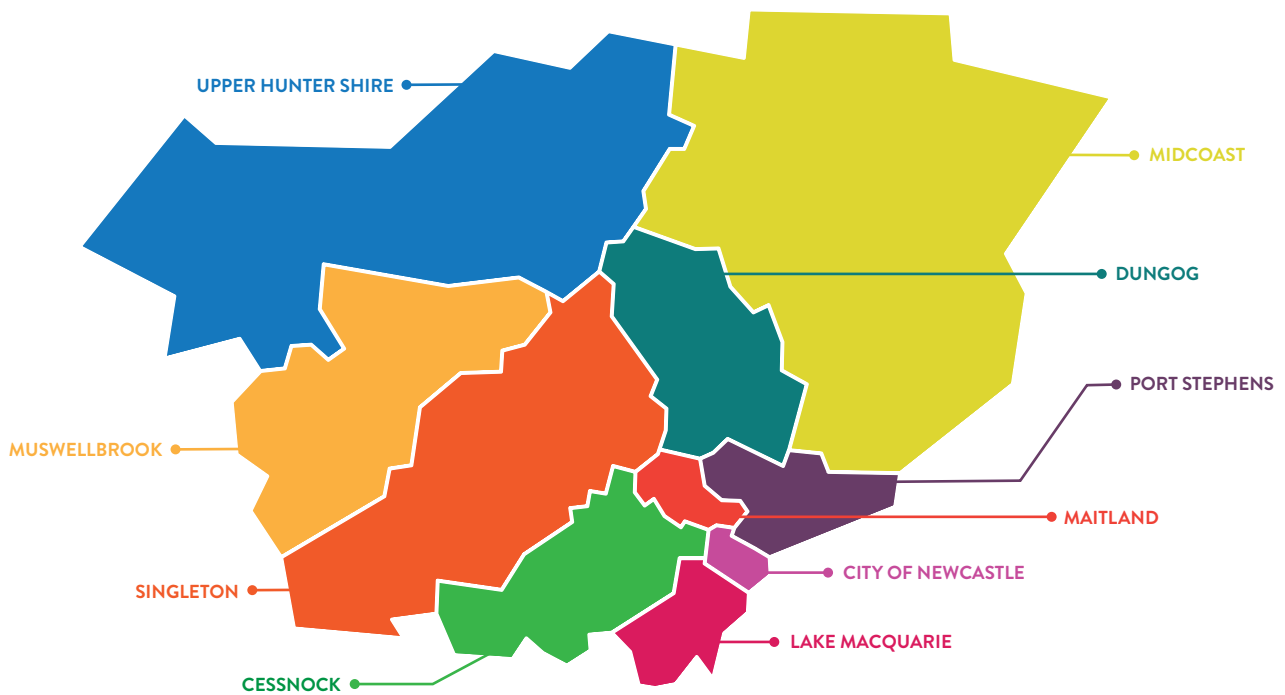


Our Mission

As the hub for local intergovernmental collaboration, we strengthen our communities by being the local voice on strategic issues in the Hunter Region.



The Hunter Joint Organisation (JO) is a collaborative body that brings together the ten Councils in the region to provide a united and local voice for our communities.



Our Vision

We are a region that:

- Is globally connected and whose residents enjoy transport and digital infrastructure and systems that enhance their economic and lifestyle opportunities;
- Is prepared for change and ready to withstand, adapt and recover from natural and human induced risks;
- Has an economy that continues to grow and evolve as a powerhouse of the state and national economies, providing more and higher quality jobs; and
- Will protect, preserve and improve the high standard of liveability and pristine environments.

Our Board

The Hunter JO Board is made up of members from each of our member councils, with each Mayor as a voting representative, and the General Managers of each of the councils in a non-voting capacity.

Our Board also includes a representative from NSW Government.



Cr Sue Moore
Mayor Singleton Council



Cr Jay Suvaal
Mayor Cessnock City Council



Cr John Connors
Mayor Dungog Shire Council



Cr Kay Fraser
Mayor Lake Macquarie City Council



Cr Philip Penfold
Mayor Maitland City Council



Cr Claire Pontin
Mayor MidCoast Council



Cr Steven Reynolds
Mayor Muswellbrook Shire Council



Cr Nuatali Nelmes
Lord Mayor City of Newcastle



Cr Ryan Palmer
Mayor Port Stephens Council

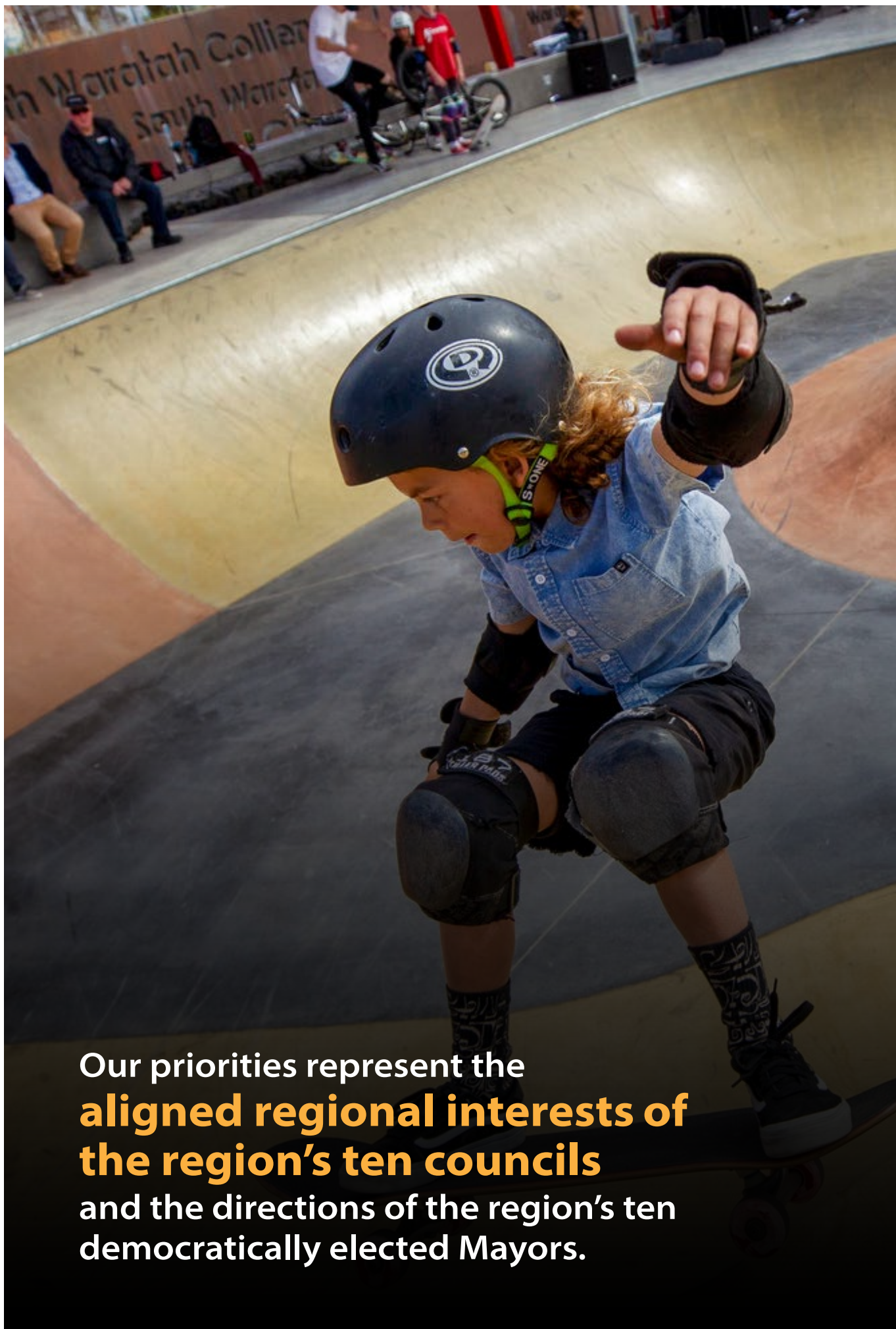


Cr Maurice Collison
Mayor Upper Hunter Shire Council



Our Team

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Steve Wilson | Director Hunter Joint Organisation | 0448 401 436 steve@hunterjo.com.au |
| Louisa Bulley | Executive Officer | 0413 891 320 louisab@hunterjo.com.au |
| Tim Askew | Director of Programs | 0436 420 623 tima@hunterjo.com.au |
| Eloise Lobsey | Program Lead - Circular Economy | 0448 160 800 eloisel@hunterjo.com.au |
| Kim Carland | Program Lead | 0408 051 705 kimc@hunterjo.com.au |
| Anna Flack | Senior Projects Coordinator | 0460 038 199 annaf@hunterjo.com.au |
| Chris Dart | Senior Projects Coordinator | 0460 038 197 chrisd@hunterjo.com.au |
| Susan Conway MacDonald | Senior Project Officer | (02) 4978 4028 susanm@hunterjo.com.au |
| Stephanie Reilly | Project Officer - Circular Economy | 0428 981 012 stephanier@hunterjo.com.au |
| Janine Chandler | Regional Project Officer | 0477 398 250 janinec@hunterjo.com.au |
| Kerri Watson | Project Coordinator - Problem Waste | 0475 824 662 kerriw@hunterjo.com.au |
| Lexi Crouch | Project Coordinator - Net Zero | 0483 393 584 lexic@hunterjo.com.au |
| Barbora Michalidesova | Finance and Systems Coordinator | 0400 087 133 barboram@hunterjo.com.au |
| Kali Somerville | Media and Communications Officer | 0429 564 111 kalis@hunterjo.com.au |
| Carissa Norton | Graphic Designer | 0457 049 878 carissan@hunterjo.com.au |



Our priorities represent the
**aligned regional interests of
the region's ten councils**
and the directions of the region's ten
democratically elected Mayors.



Our Priorities

Our Strategic Themes



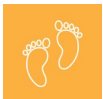
Connectivity - A globally connected region whose residents enjoy transport and digital infrastructure and systems that enhance their economic and lifestyle opportunities.



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



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.



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

*Refer to [Appendix](#) for our full list of Strategic Directions and Objectives.

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 Delivery



Regional Advocacy

1. Economic Evolution Authority

| Purpose | Status Update |
|--|--|
| The region needs a clear, place-based, integrated whole of government policy and planning approach to drive the Region's economic evolution. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial meeting held between Hunter JO staff and representatives from the Commonwealth Net Zero Economy Agency in August 2023 to communicate and explore the regional priorities, opportunities and challenges for the region's economic evolution identified by the Hunter JO Board. Regional advocacy 'Blueprint for Evolving the Hunter's Economy' prepared and provided to Minister Bowen and Greg Combet (Commonwealth Net Zero Economy Authority) and Minister Houssos (NSW Future Jobs and Investment Authorities). Advocacy to the Hon Courtney Houssos, NSW Minister for Natural Resources seeking representation from the Hunter JO on the Royalties for Rejuvenation Hunter Expert Panel. |

2. Reuse of Mining & Industrial Lands

| Purpose | Status Update |
|---|---|
| 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. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priorities regarding reuse of mining and industrial lands included as a core priority in discussions with the Net Zero Economy Agency and 'Blueprint for Evolving the Hunter's Economy' provided to State and Commonwealth Government Ministers (see above). This advocacy priority included in the Hunter JO's submission to the 'Review of the Regional Development Act 2004 Issues Paper', referenced in Additional Advocacy (see below). |

3. Transport Connectivity

| Purpose | Status Update |
|---|--|
| International and intra-region connectivity through integrated transport planning, infrastructure and services will be fundamental to the region's successful economic evolution. | <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"> Commitment from Senior Transport Executives to engage on regular basis with Hunter JO Board (appropriate frequency to be determined) 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. <p>The Hunter JO is in the process of planning a second workshop aimed at operational staff within the Hunter Region's councils, putting the positive outcomes from the Board Workshop into practical application of regional transport planning with Transport for NSW.</p> |

4. Road Funding

| Purpose | Status Update |
|--|---|
| Policy and funding should not leave some communities worse off, but should address the structural inequities where regional communities bear an undue road funding burden compared with capital city counterparts. | <p>Following correspondence from the Hunter JO regarding the inequity of road funding between metropolitan and regional areas, a reply has been received from the Hon Jenny Aitchison, Minister for Regional Transport and Roads regarding the roads funding, and providing further transparency on the formula used.</p> <p>New funding allocations have now been announced for the Regional Emergency Road Repair Fund in the NSW State Government budget. We are waiting for further information to see how this will be applied across the Hunter Region.</p> |

5. Return of Waste Levy Funds

| Purpose | Status Update |
|---|---|
| Significant funding and investment is needed to implement circular economy and waste management initiatives to unlock economic growth and sustainability for the Hunter region. | <p>The NSW Minister for the Environment has approved a review of the NSW Waste Levy. Through the Hunter JO, NSW Environment Protection Agency (EPA) staff engaged with councils and stakeholders in late 2023 seeking input to inform the design and scope of the review, via briefings provided to the Hunter JO General Managers Advisory Committee (GMAC), Hunter JO staff and the Hunter Regional Waste Managers Group.</p> <p>The Hunter JO also took the initiative to prepare a regional submission, providing recommendations for the focus and scope of the review. This submission has been finalised and provided to Minister Sharpe, Rayne de Gruchy and Tony Chappel (EPA). View the Hunter JO's Waste Levy Submission here.</p> |

Additional Advocacy & Political Engagements

| Purpose | Status Update |
|---|--|
| Regional Submission on Regional Development Act and Trust Fund. | <p>The Hunter JO has provided a regional submission to the 'Review of the Regional Development Act 2004 Issues Paper', providing the Hunter region's position on the Regional Development Road Map and Trust Fund process. As this review is likely to have significant impacts in the Hunter Region, the Mayors of the Hunter JO collaborated at the December 2023 meeting of the Board in order to provide a coordinated response to the review.</p> <p>The Hunter JO also held a meeting with Chief of Staff, Minister for Regional NSW regarding the review, and attended the December Development Roundtable held in Maitland, along with a number of Mayors from the region. View the Hunter JO's Regional Development Act & Trust Fund Submission here.</p> |
| Shiraz to Shore Advocacy Engagement. | <p>In conjunction with the Richmond Vale Rail Trail Supporters Group, Hunter JO staff participated in a field trip to a section of the proposed Richmond Vale Trail, with the following Commonwealth Parliament representatives and Cessnock City Councillors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meryl Swanson MP, Federal Member for Paterson • Dan Repacholi MP, Federal Member for Hunter • Cr Jay Suvaal, Mayor Cessnock City Council • Cr Rosa Grine, Councillor Cessnock City Council <p>This meeting explored the broader opportunities for the region that would be provided by the Hunter Cycle Tourism Strategy and Shiraz to Shore Trail.</p> |

Intergovernmental Collaboration

Highlights - Hunter JO Workshops, Forums and Events

Resilience Games

Hunter Disaster Resource Sharing Workshop ('Resilience Games') was delivered with support from AECOM. This workshop explored the challenges and opportunities involved with sharing resources between councils across the region during a disaster. The workshop followed a design sprint methodology, taking the groups through setting the scene, ideation, prototyping and testing. 30 people attended including representatives from 9 councils, NSW Police, NSW SES and NSW Reconstruction Authority.

AECOM will now deliver a report and recommendations based on the workshop findings and other research to suggest ways in which to improve the effectiveness of councils sharing and helping each other during disasters. Early ideas from the workshop suggested a need to better communicate and learn from each other and understand what each LGA has to offer, with potentially Hunter JO facilitating a regional resource sharing database pending resourcing.

2 November 2023

Plugging into the Future: Electrifying Council Fleets Event

More than 60 council representatives from across the Hunter and surrounding regions attended Hunter JO's 'Plugging into the Future: Electrifying Council Fleets' event. Councils heard from expert speakers on how best to navigate the essential aspects of transitioning to electric vehicle fleets, including total cost of ownership, charging, and planning. The attendees test drove a range of EVs and browsed the electric trucks and outdoor equipment on display, such as electric ride on mowers and BBQs.

This highly successful event was delivered in partnership with Cities Power Partnership. Positive feedback was received from attendees and the event received positive coverage from local media. This included a live ABC radio cross, and articles by Newcastle Herald and several other local newspapers.

30 November 2023

Hunter Biodiversity and Conservation Forum

The Forum was organised in response to interest from Member Council staff in collaborating and identifying opportunities for improved biodiversity and conservation outcomes in the Hunter region. It featured presentations from key state government teams, Q&A panel sessions, and a workshop session to identify collaborative opportunities and priorities.

The Forum was attended by 50 people including staff from Member Councils, state government agencies, LGNSW and the Hunter JO.

7 September 2023

Highlights - Hunter JO Workshops, Forums and Events

International Insights for a Circular Hunter

Delivered in conjunction with both the Hunter Innovation Festival and Circularity 2023, this event featured presentations and a panel discussion with three expert keynote speakers: Nicole Garofano (Planet Ark Environmental Foundation's ACE Hub), Eloise Lobsey (Hunter Joint Organisation), and Annie Jiang (Go Circular). The event also included the official launch of the Hunter Circular website by Mayor Kay Fraser. The event was sponsored by Hunter Innovation Festival, The Business Centre Newcastle, NSW Energy & Resources Knowledge Hub, and the University of Newcastle, attracting 77 stakeholders from across industry, local government, and university researchers.

26 October 2023

Textiles Circularity Think Thank

This event brought together key players from local government, industries, and other stakeholders across the region's textiles value chain. The event was attended by 35 stakeholders from Local Government, industry, and other groups across the textiles value chain, who together:

- brainstormed and provided insight into the gaps and opportunities for greater circularisation of textiles in the Hunter
- developed and pitched an education campaign, and
- workshopped potential pilot projects to address the identified gaps and opportunities.

The event also spurred participating businesses and organisations to continue to pursue discourse around textiles circularity in the Hunter, including delivery of a follow-up Think Tank on the 18th October delivered by the NSW Smart Sensing Network (NSSL).

20 June 2023

Collaborating for disaster resilience - Mid North Coast

Representatives from the Hunter JO visited Mid North Coast JO to share learnings around Council collaboration, Disaster Risk Reduction Programs and other collaborative JO projects, initiatives and processes.

7 August 2023

| Standing Engagement - Convened by Hunter JO & Local Government | |
|--|------------|
| Hunter JO Circular Economy SubCommittee | Quarterly |
| Circular Economy Facilitators Group | Quarterly |
| Disaster Waste Management & Resource Recovery Preparedness Working Group | N/A |
| Contaminated Land Working Group | Bi-monthly |
| Regional Waste Managers Network (Regional Waste Strategy Group) | Quarterly |
| National Simtable Working Group | Monthly |
| Sustainability Educators Group | Monthly |
| Hunter Net Zero Network | Bi-monthly |
| Hunter Resilience Network | Bi-monthly |
| Revolving Energy Fund Action Group | Monthly |

| Standing Engagement - Convened by Others | |
|---|-----------|
| Hunter Central Coast Coastal Management Practitioners Roundtable (NSW Department of Planning & Environment) | Monthly |
| NSW JO Chairs Forum | Quarterly |
| NSW JO Executive Officers Network | Monthly |
| Regional Resilience Program Advisory Committee (RPPAC) - Canberra Region JO | Monthly |
| Hunter IP&R Network | Monthly |
| Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration Network - Office of Energy & Climate Change | Weekly |
| Hunter Regional Leadership Executive (Regional NSW) | Quarterly |
| Upper Hunter Economic Diversification Steering Committee | Quarterly |
| Regional Business Attraction Committee (Regional NSW) | Quarterly |
| Resources NSW Steering Committee (NIER) | Quarterly |
| Regional SDG's Dashboard Project Group | Quarterly |
| Unified Voice - Hunter Advocacy Coordination and Collaboration (Committee for the Hunter) | Monthly |

Regional Programs and Capacity Building

| Program Status Report | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|-----------|---------------|
| Strategic Themes | | | Project | Funding | Delivery Date |
| 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 | 15-12-2023 |
| <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | | | Act Now on Coastal Adaptation | Grant | 30-09-2023 |
| <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <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 | 01-06-2023 |
| <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | | Disaster Waste & Resource Recovery Preparedness | Grant | 30-06-2024 |
| <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | | Regional Transport and Connectivity Vulnerability Assessment | Grant | 30-06-2024 |
| JOBS AND A GROWING ECONOMY | | | | | |
| | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | Circular Economy Ecosystem | Grant | 30-06-2024 |
| | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | Circular Precincts and Futures Hub | Grant | 31-03-2024 |
| | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | Hunter Circular Knowledge Hub | Grant | 30-06-2023 |
| | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | Hospitality Circularity Project | Grant | 31-03-2026 |
| <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <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></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | Priority Infrastructure List | Hunter JO | 30-06-2024 |
| | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | Circular Data Project | Grant | 30-06-2024 |
| | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | Cert III & IV Waste Management Training | Grant | 30-06-2024 |
| | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | Circular Textiles | Grant | 30-06-2024 |
| LIVEABILITY | | | | | |
| | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | Accelerating Event Economies | Grant | 31-12-2023 |
| | | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | Community Recycling Centres | Grant | 30-06-2024 |
| | | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | Illegal Dumping Program | Grant | 31-03-2027 |
| <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | Landfill Emissions Data Project | Grant | 30-06-2024 |
| | | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | Contaminated Land Program | Grant | 15-12-2023 |
| <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | <div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div> | Net Zero Acceleration | Grant | 30-06-2024 |



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?

| | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| 1.1 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. | 1.2 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. | 1.3 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. | 1.4 A region that is built around sustainable transport outcomes. |
|---|--|---|--|

Cycle Tourism Strategy (Shiraz to Shore)

| Purpose | Status Update |
|---|---|
| <p>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.</p> | <p>The draft Hunter Cycle Tourism Strategy has been provided to the project stakeholders for review, including the Shiraz to Shore Concept Plan.</p> <p>Site visits have been undertaken with land managers along each section of the Shiraz to Shore trail, including those from Singleton, Cessnock, Lake Macquarie and Newcastle Councils, and NSW National Parks. A presentation on the Shiraz to Shore Concept has also been provided to the Urban Development Institute of Australia, and to the Property Council in the Hunter Region.</p> <p>Situation Analysis has been completed for Hunter Cycle Tourism Strategy, and Audit Assessment Report of the Shiraz to Shore trail has been completed, with the Concept Design and Business Case to follow.</p> |
| Strategic Directions | 1.1.2, 1.1.5, 1.4.1, 4.1.2 |

Airports Strategy (Freight and Logistics)

| Purpose | Status Update |
|--|---|
| <p>To develop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A strategy and business case for airfreight and passenger infrastructure and connectivity logistics for the region. An integrated airports strategy for the region including assessments of passenger, airfreight and transport links across the region. | <p>The Hunter Airports Strategy has now been completed. Outcomes of the project include.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hunter Airports Strategy Final Reports - Long and short form Hunter Airports Strategy Business Case <p>The business case has been provided to Newcastle Airport, City of Newcastle and Port Stephens Council and will be utilised by the Airport in their efforts to secure funding to deliver the regionally important Cargo Terminal.</p> <p>A presentation on the outcomes of the Hunter Airports Strategy was provided to stakeholders from the Hunter JO Member Councils, Newcastle Airport, Committee for the Hunter, Royal Newcastle Aero Club, Dantia, and RDA Hunter in December 2023.</p> |
| Strategic Directions | 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3 |



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?

2.1 We are recognised as innovative leaders in Council capacity building and policy support for climate change action, resilience and disaster preparedness.

2.2 We take leadership and drive regional best practice in climate action.

2.3 Our region is resilient to environment risks, natural hazards and climate change.

Transforming Resilience with the IP&R Framework

Purpose

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.

Status Update

The Resilience IP&R Package has now been finalised and is available on the Hunter JO website, with a high level of interest from stakeholders since its publication. The project has been officially acquitted, with the following documents also now available on the Hunter JO Website at closure of the project; Resource Sharing Arrangements and Council Needs Synthesis Report, Resource Sharing Plan including Shared Fatigue Management Guideline template, and Summary Factsheet. The Hunter JO will continue to progress Resilience IP&R work through the DRRF program. Resource-sharing and MOU to be progressed through Disaster Waste project and presented at Hunter Councils Risk Management Committee meeting in February.

Strategic Directions

2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.3.1, 2.3.2

Act Now on Coastal Adaptation

Purpose

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.

Status Update

Presentation on the Coastal and Estuary Support Package provided to the 2 October Coastal Practitioners meeting. Feedback was given about the benefit of having regionally consistent messaging about coastal hazards for the community. A summary of the Package was also sent to councils' communications representatives. This project is now complete. Final Coastal and Estuary Communications Support Package is now publicly available on the Hunter JO website - <https://www.hunterjo.com.au/projects/act-now-on-adaptation-coastal-communication/>.

Strategic Directions

2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.2.1, 4.3.1



Resilience

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

Disaster Risk Reduction

Purpose

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:

- Regional Support and Capacity Building - embedding disaster resilience into Council operations and building capacity to communicate disaster resilience to local communities.
- Disaster waste management and resource recovery preparedness - assisting Councils to plan place-based solutions for effective disaster waste management and resource recovery systems
- Delivering a regional transport vulnerability and connectivity assessment and mitigation plan
- Continued refinement and expansion of the use of Simtables regionally for multi-hazard disaster engagement

Status Update

Hunter Resilience Network scheduled for 8 February, with Cessnock and Singleton giving case study updates on their projects. Lessons in Disaster training by Gender and Disaster Australia scheduled for 5 March at Hunter JO offices, capped at 25 attendees. Resilience Canopy Training discussions also underway for early 2024.

Beat the Heat resources have been updated on website and communicated to councils. Disaster Comms Framework review is underway with upcoming engagement with council communications staff planned.

Needs and Opportunities Analysis is continuing with some delays experienced from the project consultant. Councils have been provided with LGA specific data reports for review, and Needs Analysis reports are due to be provided in late January / early February.

Strategic Directions

2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 2.2.2, 2.3.1, 2.3.2

Simtables for Community Empowerment

Purpose

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.

Status Update

This project was formally completed on 1 June 2023. However, the Simtables continue to be used for community engagement for disaster resilience across the region. The Hunter JO hosted a Simtable Program Development Workshop on 18 and 19 December 2023. The Workshop was attended by Simtable users and program managers from across NSW and QLD, including Noosa Council, Ku-ring-gai Council, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, and several Joint Organisations. The workshop provided training for Simtable users, worked towards the development of shared program resources, and identified opportunities for the group to work together going forward.

The Simtables program continues to facilitate community engagement activities across the region, using the Simtables to help communities understand their disaster risks and actions that can be taken to improve preparedness.

Strategic Directions

2.1.2, 2.3.1, 2.3.2



Resilience

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

Disaster Waste & Resource Recovery Preparedness (Disaster Risk Reduction Sub-Project)

Purpose

To understand disaster waste needs and risks in the Hunter and Central Coast, and prepare a regional support package to assist councils to plan for effective disaster waste management.

Status Update

Phase I of the Disaster Waste and Resource Recovery Preparedness Project was completed on 21st December 2023, which included the following deliverables:

- Site Assessment Criteria (for temporary disaster waste sites)
- Waste Type V Material Composition Matrix
- Disaster Waste Material Flow Analysis
- Predicted disaster waste volumes.
- Constraints mapping at regional, sub regional and local scales that identify vulnerabilities to flood, tsunami, storm, and bushfires for existing waste management facilities

Phase II planning is now underway, which will develop a Regional Support Package, Regional Disaster Waste Management Plan and DRAFT MOU to support delivery. Phase II will also review the temporary site selection process determined through Phase I.

Strategic Directions

2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 2.2.2, 2.3.1, 2.3.2

Regional Transport and Connectivity Vulnerability Assessment (Disaster Risk Reduction Sub-Project)

Purpose

To provide an assessment of the risks posed to Hunter and Central Coast region's transport networks by natural disasters, and the actions and partnerships required to mitigate these risks

Status Update

The Joint Organisation Network has continued to engage with TfNSW towards a statewide Resilience Plan - an initiative assessing transport and connectivity vulnerability across regions to boost network and infrastructure resilience. This goes beyond existing plans to improve infrastructure planning, policies, and overall network resilience, delivering benefits for both councils and TfNSW. TfNSW and Hunter JO hosted a workshop on Wednesday 31 January to collaboratively gather and define council business & user requirements for the development of a spatial data sharing tool providing a comprehensive, real-time representation of potential vulnerabilities beyond existing state and local systems, to support improved decision-making, planning, and response strategies.

Strategic Directions

2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 2.2.2, 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?

3.1 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.

3.2 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.

3.3 A globally focused region that drives talent attraction and retention.

3.4 A region that is built around Circular Economy principles as a driver of future jobs.

3.5 We are recognised as a destination of choice for international and domestic visitors.

Circular Economy Ecosystem

Purpose

- Provide and improve circular economy communication for all circular economy eco-system participants in the Hunter and Central Coast
- Build circular economy knowledge through education and capacity building opportunities for Hunter JO member councils and Central Coast Council
- Develop and improve circular economy data and analytics systems for use by all circular economy eco-system participants in the Hunter and Central Coast.

Status Update

Ecosystem engagement work has continued including the compiling of new case studies for the Hunter Circular website. Collaboration and information sharing is strengthening between Hunter Circular and other hubs (ACEHub).

Our premier Hunter Circular event for 2023 - "International Insights for a Circular Hunter" was held on the 26th October 2023 at the Q Building in Newcastle, in conjunction with both the Hunter Innovation Festival and Circularity 2023. The event featured presentations and a panel discussion with three expert keynote speakers: Nicole Garofano (Planet Ark Environmental Foundation's ACE Hub), Eloise Lobsey (Hunter Joint Organisation), and Annie Jiang (Go Circular). The event also included the official launch of the Hunter Circular website by Mayor Kay Fraser.

The event was sponsored by Hunter Innovation Festival, The Business Centre Newcastle, NSW Energy & Resources Knowledge Hub, and the University of Newcastle.

We also featured seven stalls showcasing CE initiatives and projects; Circular Economy Living Lab, The Business Centre Newcastle, Cha Cha Biochar, Resourceful Living, PV Industries, Go Circular, and the University of Newcastle.

The event was attended by 77 stakeholders from across industry, local government, and university researchers.

Strategic Directions

3.4.1, 4.2.2, 4.4.2



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.

Circular Precincts and Futures Hub

Purpose

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:

- 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.
- A concept plan and strategy for establishing a Circular Economy Futures Hub.

Status Update

GHD have been engaged to deliver this project and an Expert Panel of industry representatives appointed to advise the consultant at each project stage. The Expert Panel consists of Annie Jiang, Dr. Anumitra Mirti, Granville Taylor, Mark Glover and Troy Uren.

Stage 1 - Inception has now been completed.

Stage 2 - Circular Economy Precincts design is near completion, with draft CE Precincts Concept Plans having been reviewed by the Expert Panel. The Concept Plans outline technological and process options for four sites across the region, based on an analysis of market and technical factors. The concept plans will inform the eventual business case and implementation plan to be developed in stage 4.

Stage 3 - Circular Economy Precincts Hub design has commenced, and will deliver a concept plan and strategy for a Futures Hub to support and curate the CE in the Hunter, particularly the development of the precincts.

Strategic Directions

3.4.1, 4.2.2, 4.4.2

Hunter Circular Knowledge Hub

Purpose

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.

Status Update

The consulting firms Aurecon and Edge Impact have been engaged to collaboratively deliver this project, including data gathering, analysis, and opportunities and gaps report for Stream A of project - to underpin development of a digital portal for council staff members to enable circularity best practice for council-managed waste streams and facilitate knowledge sharing amongst councils.

A request for Quotation has been distributed to engage a consultant for Stream B of the project, which will develop a digital map tool to encourage the uptake of sharing, hiring, reuse and repair behaviours by connecting community members with circular solutions provided by businesses (B2C) and councils (C2C).

Strategic Directions

3.4.1, 3.4.2, 4.2.2, 4.4.2

Hospitality Circularity Project

Purpose

This project will create the 'Hunter Hospitality Circularity Network' and engage hospitality SME's across the Hunter region, to build their capacity to evaluate and adopt circular solutions for their business operations and supply chains, with a focus on organics and single-use items. The project will work with existing business networks in precincts across six Local Government areas to take a place-based approach to strengthening and building hospitality SME networks. Through co-design processes and Bin Trim assessment phases, the project will build the capacity of these networks to work collectively to identify and implement circular solutions that benefit from network efficiency and scale.

Status Update

GoCircular have been engaged as the core project partner to deliver this new project in partnership with the Hunter JO. GoCircular have commenced initial communications to engage hospitality businesses in the project.

Strategic Directions

3.4.2, 4.2.2



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.

Hunter Global Tourism

Purpose

To identify the international tourism opportunities of the Hunter region in preparation of the Newcastle Airport international upgrade. Key elements include:

- 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.
- Undertaking a review of the region to identify priority tourism infrastructure needed to attract international visitors.

Status Update

Key activities delivered under the project include:

- Situation Analysis for the Hunter Global Tourism project
- Investment Logic Mapping with stakeholders to determine priorities for the Business Case Assessment.
- Completion of the Hunter Global Tourism Options and Assessment Report
- Completion of an Export Ready Tourism Marketing Strategy and Business Case for the Hunter region, to leverage the Newcastle Airport investment into the upgrade.
- Communication of project outcomes to key project partners and stakeholders.

Strategic Directions

1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3, 3.5.1, 3.5.2, 4.1.1

Priority Infrastructure List

Purpose

To develop a methodology and process for determining regional infrastructure priorities to support:

- Building and advocating a stronger case for investment in infrastructure priorities across the region
- Identifying the potential for shared interests and collaboration between Councils and other stakeholders in delivering local and regional scale infrastructure initiatives.

Status Update

The initial infrastructure data capture identified missing projects and data gaps that need to be rectified. We are building a new project plan to resolve this issue and have commenced engagement with Councils and the previous product developer to improve the collection of missing infrastructure projects and data.

Strategic Directions

3.1.1, 3.1.5, 4.5.1

Circular Data Project (Circular Economy Ecosystem Sub-Project)

Purpose

To deliver a comprehensive data management system that supports circular economy analysis and data use cases. The system will collect, store, and present data from different sources and build upon previous material flow analysis work and establish a methodology for continuous data updating and management.

Status Update

A review of the draft version of the data platform is currently underway with the project working group. Opportunities are also being explored to partner with other JO's and State Government to enhance the project.

Strategic Directions

3.4.1, 4.2.2, 4.4.2

Cert III & IV Waste Management Training (Circular Economy Ecosystem Sub-Project)

Purpose

To provide subsidised training opportunities for our member councils to improve the knowledge and capability of our waste and recycling industry workers

Status Update

The delivery of Cert III and Cert IV in Waste Management by the Hunter JO commenced in August and September 2023. Academy Green are the training providers. Eighteen students from eight councils are doing Cert III, and 15 students from seven councils are doing Cert IV.

Strategic Directions

3.4.1, 4.2.2, 4.4.2



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.

Circular Textiles (Circular Economy Ecosystem Sub-Project)

Purpose

To support member councils with the reported increase in the volume of clothing textiles by:

- Assisting councils to identify best practice recovery pathways for textile materials, and
- Bringing actors in the textile value chain together to explore gaps and opportunities for greater circularisation of textiles in the Hunter region

Status Update

In June 2023 the Hunter JO hosted a Textiles Circularity Think Tank with MRA Consulting Group to bring together key players from local government, industries, and other stakeholders across the region's textiles value chain. The event was attended by 35 stakeholders from Local Government, industry, and other groups across the textiles value chain. Together, the stakeholders brainstormed and provided insight into the gaps and opportunities for greater circularisation of textiles in the Hunter, developed and pitched an education campaign, and workshopped potential pilot projects to address the identified gaps and opportunities. The event spurred participating businesses and organisations to continue to pursue discourse around textiles circularity in the Hunter, including delivery of a follow-up Think Tank on the 18th October delivered by the NSW Smart Sensing Network (NSSN).

Strategic Directions

3.4.1, 4.2.2, 4.4.2





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 | Status Update |
|--|---|
| 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 event management resources including an event managers toolkit, prospectus, website and integrated council shared services, approvals and event data. | <p>The Events10 website and marketing campaign has been launched, with Cessnock, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Singleton and Port Stephens Councils committing in kind resources to a 12-month pilot approach to determine the feasibility of the Events10 approach as a way of continuing to position our region as an events destination. This collaborative effort includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring and maintenance of the Events10 website which provides information about the Hunter region to assist event planners in deciding to host their event in our region. Providing a point of contact for customers (event planners) Providing recommendations and local knowledge based on customer needs, for the customer to make direct contact with venues. An e-newsletter to event planners highlighting venues and destination information from the Hunter. Occasional marketing content may be shared on the Events10 social channels <p>A partnership has also been established with Newcastle Airport to implement a Hunter region marketing campaign, to fly into Newcastle Airport and travel across the Hunter. The campaign is using remaining funding from the Accelerating Event Economies program. All lower Hunter councils and tourism associations are interesting in investing to increase the reach of this initiative.</p> |
| Strategic Directions | 1.2.1, 1.2.3, 4.1.1, 4.1.2 |

Community Recycling Centres

| Purpose | Status Update |
|---|--|
| To deliver a regionally coordinated approach to promoting community awareness of Community Recycling Centres (CRC's). | CRC community education on social media throughout July and August 2023 reached 499,077 over two months and with videos viewed more than 1.5 million times. The Creative Collective were engaged to run an online survey evaluating the community education activity, which was completed by 247 community members, and showed 50% had seen or heard promotions about their local CRC. At this point in time paid advertising for the CRC program has been suspended pending a further funding deed being provided by the NSW EPA. |
| Strategic Directions | 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.3 |



Liveability

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

Illegal Dumping Program

Purpose

To support Member Councils manage illegal dumping by:

- Delivering a regional approach to target illegal dumping
- Employing skilled officers to undertake compliance action against illegal dumpers
- Undertaking proactive measures to prevent illegal dumping
- Targeting problematic and complex illegal dumping incidents.
- Increasing capacity to target problematic and complex illegal dumping incidents.

Status Update

The RID Program is progressing well, with a Program Logic successfully delivered in November 2023 by Clear Horizon consultants. This provides strategic direction for member councils and the Project Coordinator in facilitating the program over the next 3 years until 2027. EPA co-funding runs from 2022-2027.

Strategic Directions

4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.3

Landfill Emissions Data Project

Purpose

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.

Status Update

- A Steering Committee has been established to support delivery of this project including representatives from NSW EPA, NSW OECC, Hunter JO, UNSW, University of Newcastle, and Hunter Councils. Additionally, a Landfill Emissions Working Group has been established with representatives from 8 out of 10 Member Councils.
- In 2023 we hosted a Landfill Emissions Masterclass for Councils and a Scoping Workshop to identify a clear path forward.
- A consultant has been engaged and is currently measuring landfill emissions for Hunter councils in accordance with the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act. A training package is being developed to support councils in continuing ongoing measurement and reporting. The Federal Government is considering expanding mandatory reporting to all publicly owned landfills.

Strategic Directions

4.2.2, 4.4.2

Contaminated Land Program

Purpose

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.

Status Update

This program will finish in March 2024 when remaining EPA grant funds are expended. All Member Councils have been advised of this timeframe. To maintain access to the range of resources produced through the regional programs delivered by the Hunter and other JOs), the NSW EPA funded LGNSW to launch a Contaminated Land webpage and Network for councils which can be used to access up to date information and communicate with council peers across NSW. Many Hunter Councils a have been actively using the LGNSW network since its establishment.

Strategic Directions

4.3.1, 4.3.3



Liveability

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

Net Zero Acceleration

| Purpose | Status Update |
|--|--|
| 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. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revolving Energy Fund (REF) - Hunter JO, Central NSW JO, and Mid North Coast JO have released its draft 'Design a REF Kit' to the REF Action Group for feedback. The Kit supports councils interested in implementing a REF to design a suitable fund that meets their needs. The Kit is being piloted with select councils ahead of the final version being published. Last year we opened applications for the Council Net Zero Accelerator course for councils across the state. This course is NSW's first net zero course designed specifically for local government and has been developed by the Hunter JO in partnership with the NSW Government and Accelerate Zero. Following a competitive application process, six Hunter council employees were selected for the course from Cessnock City Council, Dungog Shire Council, MidCoast Council, Muswellbrook Shire Council, Port Stephens Council, and Singleton Council. These positions are subsidised by the NSW Government. The NSW Government's Sustainable Councils team is funding feasibility assessments for five Hunter councils (Cessnock, Maitland, Singleton, Lake Macquarie, Central Coast) to transition their aquatic centres from gas to net zero. The assessments will provide councils with shovel ready projects for grant funding opportunities, such as the Australian Government's \$100 million Community Energy Upgrades Fund. Powering Tomorrow – Regional Councils NSW PPA: The Hunter JO and Mid North Coast JO are facilitating a Power Purchasing Agreement (PPA) buyers group to support regional NSW councils to procure renewable energy in 2024. 18 councils have received the MOU to participate, including 5 Hunter councils. Regional Procurement will be coordinating the tender process, with specialist advice from expert advisors, including a technical energy advisor (Sourced Energy) and probity advisor (Procure Group). PPAs have historically been inaccessible for smaller and resourced constrained councils due to high upfront participation fees, ongoing trailing commissions (which result in increased costs for councils), and decision-making led by larger, metro councils. The Regional Councils PPA is a pathway forward for regional councils that is fit for purpose, led by regional councils, and will provide long term value. It consists of a low participation fee and no ongoing trailing commission. The PPA is supported by the NSW Government. From 11 September 2023, Hunter Joint Organisation, Regional Procurement and Local Government Legal now purchase GreenPower 100% renewable energy for its offices in Thornton. A network tariff cost saving was identified for the business, and a portion of this cost saving is now funding the purchase GreenPower. This means renewable energy is procured at no additional cost to the business. On behalf of Hunter Councils Inc, Hunter JO applied for the NSW Community Building Partnership 2023 grant. If successful, the grant funds will be used to purchase and install a 39.6kW solar PV system for the Hunter Councils Inc building at 4 Sandringham Ave, Thornton. If the grant application is successful, formal endorsement will be sought from the Hunter Councils Inc board to proceed with the project. |
| Strategic Directions | 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 4.4.1, 4.4.2 |

Grants and Funding Proposals

| Funding Source | Amount | Description |
|--|-----------|---|
| Local Government Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) Round 1 | \$851,271 | <p>Getting Local Government Disaster Ready – Disaster Resilience Capacity Building for the Hunter and Central Coast</p> <p>Focus: The project will build disaster resilience capacity and capability within 11 Hunter and Central Coast councils and their communities. This will be achieved by supporting development and implementation of local and regional Disaster Adaptation Plans, embedding resilience into councils' IP&R framework, facilitating a regional resilience network, and supporting community engagement.</p> <p>Status update: The Expression of Interest submitted under Round 1 of this program has been successful, with the Hunter JO invited to submit a full proposal under Round 2.</p> |



Appendix - Strategic Objectives and Directions

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? | Strategic Directions - How will we get there? |
|--|---|
| 1.1 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. | 1.1.1 Support local government having a collective voice in the planning and delivery of major transport infrastructure and systems. 1.1.2 Proactively facilitate collaboration with key state agencies to support delivery of connectivity solutions that suit the regions current and future needs. 1.1.3 Support Member Councils to influence other levels of government on a sustainable model for delivery and maintenance of road infrastructure. 1.1.4 Support a Regional Integrated Transport Plan linking key services and centres. 1.1.5 Identify and facilitate regional approaches for active transport outcomes that deliver connectivity, health, liveability and economic benefits. 1.1.6 Private and public transport solutions operate on a net zero basis. |
| 1.2 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. | 1.2.1 Partnering with airport and port to identify and pursue priority actions to enable access to international markets for the benefit of the region. 1.2.2 Influence government policy to prioritise the importance of access to international markets for the benefit of the region. 1.2.3 Leading collaboration in the region between government, industry and community to ensure the benefits of international markets are region wide. 1.2.4 Support a transport access strategy for regional connectivity to and from the airport. |
| 1.3 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. | 1.3.1 Support and encourage investment in equitable and competitive digital connectivity and the elimination of mobile black spots across the region to ensure community access to commuter routes, core health and education opportunities, and to enable business development, growth and innovation. |
| 1.4 A region that is built around sustainable transport outcomes. | 1.4.1 Embed the direction of net-zero in all our connectivity strategies to provide a pathway and level of confidence to investors and community to support the transition to more sustainable transport outcomes. |

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? | Strategic Directions - How will we get there? |
|---|---|
| 2.1 We are recognised as innovative leaders in Council capacity building and policy support for climate change action, resilience and disaster preparedness. | 2.1.1 We provide guidance and support packages to embed Climate Change action, resilience and disaster preparedness into Councils Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework. 2.1.2 We drive council capacity building opportunities supported by an evidence base to improve regional resilience and community awareness. 2.1.3 We drive opportunities to collaborate, adopt system thinking and circular economy opportunities to reduce our impact on climate change and increase resilience. |
| 2.2 We take leadership and drive regional best practice in climate action. | 2.2.1 We lead the way in regional best practice and work with all levels of government to drive policy and strategy on climate change. 2.2.2 Engage and provide thought leadership in local, national and global climate change and resilience networks. |
| 2.3 Our region is resilient to environment risks, natural hazards and climate change. | 2.3.1 Apply and obtain financial grants for regional programs that support a resilient region. 2.3.2 Facilitate and manage regional programs that support a resilient region. |

Jobs and a Growing Economy

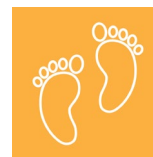
The Hunter economy continues to grow and evolve as a powerhouse of the state and national economies, providing more and higher quality jobs.



| Objectives - Where do we want to be? | Strategic Directions - How will we get there? |
|--|--|
| 3.1 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. | 3.1.1 Support a clear, place-based, integrated whole-of-government policy and planning approach to drive the region's economic evolution and jobs of the future. 3.1.2 Support the establishment of an entity that has the authority and resources from the Commonwealth and NSW Government necessary to provide the institutional capacity and expert and empowered, place-based planning and decision-making capability. 3.1.3 Support regional institutional capacity to assist businesses and workers impacted by changes in the economy. 3.1.4 Drive collaboration to provide clarity, certainty and fairness in land-use policy and regulation as it relates to the use of former industrial and mining land and assets, or where local communities bear the impacts or have restrictions arising from the contribution of that place to broader regional or state benefits. 3.1.5 Support government policy and planning that prioritise the investment into key regional catalyst areas. 3.1.6 Support the place-based delivery of Aboriginal partnerships and employment programs in the Hunter. |
| 3.2 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. | 3.2.1 Support and mature the innovation ecosystem in order to drive commercialisation of ventures and start-ups in the region which will provide growth in future jobs. 3.2.2 Improve and accelerate the regions access to investment and capital markets to underpin the innovation ecosystem and the redevelopment of industrial and mining assets. |
| 3.3 A globally focused region that drives talent attraction and retention. | 3.3.1 Support efforts that position the Hunter globally in its areas of competitive and comparative strength. |
| 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. |
| 3.5 We are recognised as a destination of choice for international and domestic visitors. | 3.5.1 Support a coordinated approach and collaborate around regional tourism promotion to grow jobs in the region. 3.5.2 Identify opportunities for growth and diversification of employment based in the tourism economy. |

Liveability

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

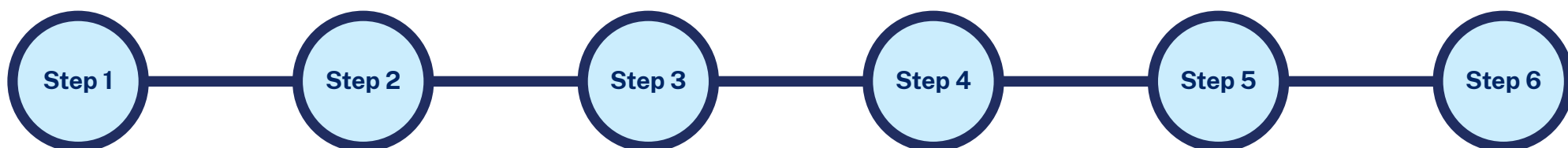


| Objectives - Where do we want to be? | Strategic Directions - How will we get there? |
|---|---|
| 4.1 We are recognised as a destination for hosting world class events that align with our unique offering. | 4.1.1 Support a coordinated approach and collaborate around events and tourism. 4.1.2 Identify opportunities for growth and diversification of the regional events and tourism economy. |
| 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. |
| 4.3 Our natural environments including our bushland, estuaries, waterways and beaches are protected and enhanced. | 4.3.1 Our Councils are well supported in protecting and enhancing the environment through regional programs, data collection, support resources and capacity building. 4.3.2 Provide support and identify opportunities to improve and protect the regional Blue Green Grid. 4.3.3 We drive council capacity building opportunities to protect the environment and human health from pollution. 4.3.4 Provide support for regional conservation planning to protect regional biodiversity. 4.3.5 Provide support and identify opportunities to enhance the health of the region's estuaries and other waterways. |
| 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. | 4.4.1 Provide support and identify opportunities on regional collaboration around Electric Vehicles. 4.4.2 Support regional collaboration around clean energy and future energy initiatives and industries. |
| 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. | 4.5.1 Support Improved planning outcomes to enhance liveability and lifestyle. 4.5.2 Support a healthy and active community. 4.5.3 Support a safe and accessible society across the region. 4.5.4 Support enhanced cultural opportunities and protected heritage. |
| 4.6 A region that is connected, inclusive and a fair. | 4.6.1 Support affordability and increased access to housing. 4.6.2 Support an increase in the availability of jobs and services closer to people. 4.6.3 Support equitable access to education and health services and facilities. |



4 Sandringham Ave, Thornton NSW 2322
02 4978 4020 • admin@hunterjo.com.au
www.hunterjo.com.au

Regional Development Roadmap



October 2023

23/24 Budget

\$350M investment in the Regional Development Trust.

November 2023

Public Consultation Commenced

Public Release of Issues Paper on changes to the Regional Development Act.

December 2023

Regional Development Advisory Council

Council membership announced.

January 2024

Public Consultation Closes

Public consultation with regional communities on changes to the RD Act and investing from Trust closes.

February 2024

Advisory Council Report

Finalise Advisory Council Consultation report. Recommendations made from Council to Minister on changes to Regional Development Act and governance of Regional Development Trust.

From March 2024

Investment and Delivery

Regional Development Advisory Council makes recommendations to the Minister on policies, projects and programs that can be supported from the Regional Development Trust.