



**HUNTER JO
PROGRAM REPORT**
June 2022

This publication was produced by the Hunter Joint Organisation.



ENQUIRIES

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THE HUNTER JO

WHO ARE WE

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

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

- Regional Strategic planning and priority setting
- Regional leadership and advocacy
- Intergovernmental collaboration

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

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

HUNTER JO BOARD

Our 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.



OUR TEAM

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REGIONAL LEADERSHIP & ADVOCACY MEDIA

FOCUS	DATE
<p>GET UP HERE. "ITS NOT OUR JOB": UPPER HUNTER COUNCILS FORCED INTO THE VOID <i>Newcastle Herald</i></p> <p>"Singleton and Muswellbrook mayors have fired a broadside at the state and federal governments for not doing enough to help the Upper Hunter shift away from the region's over reliance on coal"....</p> <p>"Muswellbrook Mayor and former coal miner Steve Reynolds said the NSW Government needs "to do a lot more" and he described the "complete lack" of engagement by Scott Morrison's Coalition Government and Anthony Albanese's Labor Opposition in the lead up to this months federal election as "ridiculous" and "appalling"....</p> <p>"Singleton Mayor and Chair of the Hunter Joint Organisation Sue Moore (Ind) said the state and federal governments had the funds and ability to secure the region's future, but were dragging the chain".</p>	<p><i>Saturday 7th May 2022</i></p>

REGIONAL SUBMISSIONS

FOCUS

IPART REVIEW OF DOMESTIC WASTE MANAGEMENT CHARGES

6th May 2022

The Hunter JO team collaborated with Member Councils, Central Coast Council and a wide range of stakeholder organisations, to provide a submission in response to IPART's Draft Report – Review of Domestic Waste Management Charges (13 December 2021). At an overall level the consensus positions and key recommendations identified in the submission included:

1. Councils do not accept the underlying premise upon which implementation of the IPART review has been initiated
2. Councils hold serious concerns that both the voluntary rate peg or a rebalancing exercise could direct Councils to act contrary to existing legislation, and therefore call for a review of the definitions of 'waste' and 'domestic waste management services' in the Local Government Act 1993, alongside updates to the Office of Local Government's Rating and Revenue Raising Manual, to cover all services and functions necessary for minimising landfill and maximising resource recovery from domestic waste
3. The cost of Domestic Waste Management (DWM) service provision varies greatly across geographical and historical contexts, population densities, transport infrastructure and other circumstantial differences. Given the highly contextual nature of these costs, and their interdependencies, Councils are best placed to determine value for money for ratepayers. As such, the setting of DWM charges should be determined by councils in consultation with their communities to reflect their place-based characteristics
4. That the proposed voluntary DWM rate peg be abandoned in favour of improved pricing guidelines, reporting tools, and auditing processes (where warranted) that support councils to set DWM charges in line with their community needs and expectations.
5. That Councils be guided in the setting of DWM charges through the alignment across instruments and frameworks, clear guidelines, as well as a capacity building and education programs that support Councils to educate consumers on how DWM charges are set, and explain local differentiation, in order to promote accountability to, and communication with their communities
6. That as the least worst option presented to date, Councils favour benchmarking, clear and consistent pricing principles, an opportunity to rebalance DWM charges with general rates, over a minimum 2-year transition period, based on updated and expanded definitions of 'waste' and 'domestic waste management services' that include all activities involved in the minimisation of, source separation, collection, recovery, processing and disposal of all forms of domestically generated waste.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COLLABORATION

REGIONAL COMMITTEES AND NETWORKS

Over recent months our team have hosted or participated in the following regional networks, committees and forums.

NETWORK / COMMITTEE	CONVENER
Hunter JO Regional Planning & Economic Development Forum	Hunter JO
Regional Contaminated Land Forum (Problem Contaminants)	Hunter JO
Simtable User Training	Hunter JO
Hunter Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework Network	Lake Macquarie City Council
Circular Economy Subcommittee	Hunter JO
Hunter Regional Waste Strategy Group	by Hunter JO
Hunter Circular Economy Facilitators Group	Hunter JO & Department of Planning & Environment
Smart Region Forum	Hunter JO
Regional Leadership Executive	Regional NSW
RLE Human Services Subcommittee	Regional NSW
RLE Economic Development Subcommittee	Regional NSW
Upper Hunter Education & Training Working Group	Regional NSW
Business Attraction Committee	Regional NSW
RLE Recovery & Resilience Sub-Committee	Regional NSW & Resilience NSW
Interim Hunter Expert Panel	Regional NSW
Upper Hunter Education & Training Working Group	Regional NSW
Project Control Group Hunter Identity and Positioning	Regional NSW
Hunter Identity and Positioning Local Government Reference Group	Regional NSW
EPA Local Government Advisory Group	NSW EPA
Hunter Future Workforces Committee	Business Hunter
Powering Business 2050 Summit Reference Group	Business Hunter
JO Chairs Forum	JO Executive Officers Network

PROGRAM ACTIVITY REPORT

This Activity Report provides an update on the status and nature of current programs and activities being undertaken by the Hunter JO, as at December 2021. Reporting is provided against each of the priority Action Areas included in the Hunter Joint Organisation’s Strategic Plan 2018-21.



The status of delivery of projects and initiatives being delivered is denoted by the following colour coding:

	Project is On Track, or Completed
	Project is At Risk, Not Yet Started (subject to resourcing to deliver), or Delayed / Impacted
	Project is Stalled / Off Track, or No Longer Proceeding

This Activity Report provides an update on the status and nature of current programs and activities being undertaken by the Hunter JO. Reporting is provided against each of the priority Action Areas included in the Hunter Joint Organisation’s Strategic Plan (Aspire.Act.Achieve) 2018-21.

HUNTER JO STRATEGIC PLAN (2022-2026) –

Hunter JO Strategic Plan	
Program / Project Lead	Mel Curtis
Delivery Status	On track
<p>Purpose: To develop a new Hunter JO Strategic Plan for the period 2022-2026. The new strategy will align with the Local Government IP&R Framework, which will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve alignment between the Hunter JO Strategy and strategic planning documents of member Councils • Provide increased support to member Councils to assist with integrating shared regional priorities and actions within their local planning processes. 	
<p>Status update: An updated timeline was provided and endorsed by the Hunter JO Board at its April 2022 meeting, with development of the new Hunter JO Strategy (JO Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities) now progressing consistent with the revised timeline. A review of the new requirements and OLG Guidelines released in October 2021 has been completed. The guidance now stipulates that "A joint organisation must prepare its Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities by no later than 12 months after each ordinary election of councillors for all member councils". Therefore, the Strategy statutory completion date is December 2022, however as determined by the April 2022 Board resolution, this date will be brought forward to September 2022. Engagement with the IP&R staff of Council is ongoing and has continued individually and through the Hunter IP&R Network meeting. A request was made to obtain copies of all Council Draft CSP's when they are available. We are mapping the priorities of the 10 CSP's against the 4 priority themes of: Jobs and a Growing Economy; Connectivity; Resilience; and Liveability identified by the Hunter JO Board Strategy Day in May 2021.</p>	

ACTION AREA 1. OUR COMMUNITIES

1.1 Develop an engaging online presence which tells the stories of the diverse places and people which make up the Hunter Region

Hunter JO website	
Program / Project Lead	Kali Somerville
Delivery Status	On track
<p>Purpose: The Hunter Joint Organisation website (https://www.hunterjo.com.au/) aims to actively, regularly and effectively engage member Councils, partner organisations and the broader community on the activities and progress of the Hunter JO.</p>	
<p>Status update: Website news and content continues to be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis. All content from the former HCCREMS website has recently been transferred to the Hunter JO website to provide one integrated location for information on the programs and activities of the Hunter JO.</p>	

1.2 Work with the Department of Planning and Environment, Hunter Valley Research Foundation and other partners to closely monitor housing affordability in the region and identify key areas of concern

Monitor housing affordability in the region	
Delivery Status	Not yet started (subject to resourcing)

1.3 Develop and implement a targeted program to advocate for measures to improve housing affordability in the region

Targeted advocacy program to improve housing affordability	
Delivery Status	Not yet started (subject to resourcing)

1.4 Continue to work together to deliver the programs to increase community resilience and preparedness for natural disasters through the Hunter and Central Coast Regional Environmental Management Strategy

Transforming Resilience with the IP&R Framework	
Program / Project Lead	Anna Flack
Delivery Status	On track
<p>Purpose:</p> <p>To provide an innovative approach to support bush fire affected member Councils embed resilience principles and projects into their IP&R, which in turn will provide Councils the ability to allocate recurrent funds and commit to long term resourcing (financial and staff) for resilience projects.</p>	
<p>Status update:</p> <p>A consultant has commenced a literature review on existing regional, state and national resilience policies and strategies, development of a framework for what makes a ‘high’, ‘medium’ and ‘low’ resilience Council and community, as well as a Resilience IP&R document. A review of the draft CSPs of Councils is also being undertaken to identify current approaches towards improving resilience.</p> <p>Discussions with Resilience NSW and Resilient Sydney have continued and are a valuable way to exchange advice and experiences around embedding resilience into Council IP&R frameworks. The Hunter IP&R working group meets every two months to catch up and share progress on the IP&R activities. This working group will be used to update participating Councils on the Resilience IP&R program.</p> <p>Next steps involve developing a Resilience Health Check Tool to help complete a gap analysis and assess participating Councils to determine their current level of resilience, so that we can better inform future actions and identify support required.</p>	

Simtables for Community Empowerment	
Program / Project Lead	Chris Dart
Delivery Status	On track
Purpose:	
<p>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 to provide direct support to Councils in undertaking the extensive community engagement associated with their use.</p>	
Status update:	
<p>The Simtables for Community Empowerment program continues to progress well.</p> <p>The "General" and "Super" user training sessions were delivered on 27 April and 4 May 2022 respectively, facilitated by the U.S.A. based Simtable team. Staff from our member Councils, along with Resilience NSW, the RFS and SES attended the sessions either in-person or online.</p> <p>Data acquisition for the Simtable has commenced, and the Hunter JO has gained access to the the State Vegetation Type Map from DPIE which will provide crucial vegetation data for the region.</p> <p>The team has provided a demonstration of the Simtable at meetings of the GMAC and Hunter JO board, and at a Resilience NSW workshop which included Executive Director Dominic Lane. The Simtable was also used to assist delivery of an emergency management workshop in Karuah, hosted by Aboriginal Affairs NSW.</p> <p>Upcoming will be the finalisation of workshop content resources, after which delivery of place-based workshops in each of the Hunter LGAs will commence.</p>	

ACTION AREA 2. OUR ENVIRONMENT

2.1 Continue to work together to deliver the Hunter and Central Coast Regional Environmental Management Strategy

Cities Power Partnership Program	
Program / Project Lead	Mel Curtis
Delivery Status	On track
<p>Purpose:</p> <p>To support regional collaborative efforts by Councils, the Hunter JO and Cities Power Partnership (CPP) in delivery of shared pledges on climate action made by Councils.</p>	
<p>Status update:</p> <p>During the regional mapping of the CSP's as part of the Hunter JO Strategy project, a review the CPP Program links and objectives identified in the region will also be completed. Discussion will continue with the Climate Council and Member Council staff to formalise the draft regional priorities, prior to presenting them to the Hunter JO Board for endorsement and incorporating them into the Hunter JO Strategy.</p>	

Business case review - potential for HJO to host Regional Illegal Dumping Squad	
Program / Project Lead	Eloise Lobsey
Delivery Status	On track
<p>Purpose:</p> <p>To determine the feasibility of the Hunter JO potentially hosting the Hunter RID Squad, and the most appropriate financial and operational model for the RID Squad were this to occur.</p>	
<p>Status update:</p> <p>At its September 2021 meeting, The General Managers Advisory Committee resolved to undertake a due diligence assessment to explore the potential for the Hunter JO to host a Regional Illegal Dumping (RID) squad, that would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing state-wide approaches to the management of RID Squads • Determine the feasibility of the Hunter JO potentially hosting a RID Squad • Identifying the most appropriate financial and operational model for the RID Squad were it to be hosted by the Hunter JO. <p>Consultation with the NSW EPA and many of our member councils as part of the due diligence process has identified strong support for a continuation of a regional collaboration approach to RID activities. Initial consultation has favoured a RID Program model, which is a collaboration model where a centralised program team (coordinator and administrator) provide advice, support and programs to member council's Illegal dumping operations. All RID officers or regulatory and waste officers managing illegal dumping compliance are retained by the member councils.</p>	

Regional Contaminated Land Program	
Program / Project Lead	Mel Curtis & Anna Flack
Delivery Status	On track
Purpose:	
To build capacity and capability of 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:	
Engagement with the Councils has continued through the Contaminated Land Working Group and ad hoc Service Desk enquiries from member Councils. The Service Desk function continues to be well used, with multiple requests received since January 2022, delivered through the Contaminated Land Support Officer.	
A Regional Forum on Problem Contaminants (asbestos and PFAS) was held on 12 May and included presentations from EPA, LGNSW, Council case studies and technical experts. All relevant Council staff involved in contaminated land management were invited.	
Additional training on UPSS and contaminated land training for land use planners is being organised for the coming months.	
Advice remains pending from the NSW EPA as to whether there will be a 12 month extension in funding for the program.	

2.2 Establish a Coastal Resilience Sub Committee, made up of representatives from relevant Hunter JO councils, to increase collaboration in planning for climate change

Act Now on Coastal Adaptation	
Program / Project Lead	Mel Curtis
Delivery Status	On track
Purpose:	
The objectives of this project are to:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 Councils. 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:	
Comments received from Councils and stakeholder organisations (within and beyond the region) on the Climate Change IP&R Package have now been integrated and the final document is now available.	
Communications consultants Articulous have been engaged and have commenced work on the coastal communications package. The first round of engagement with Councils on the draft communications	

matrix is complete with good support received from all Councils. The final communications package is due for completion in early June.

2.3 Work together to find an effective recycling solution for the region

Hunter & Central Coast Resource Recovery Strategy	
Program / Project Lead	Eloise Lobsey
Delivery Status	On track
Purpose:	
To develop a new Hunter Central Coast Resource Recovery Strategy for the period 2022-2027. The new Strategy will align with the recently released NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2021-2041 and associated funding streams, and provide improved alignment with the Regional Circular Economy program.	
Status update:	
A Strategic Directions and Options Paper has been developed following review and assessment of the existing Regional Waste Strategy and multi-staged consultation with Council Waste Managers. This paper provides recommendations on the key directions and priorities to be addressed within the Draft Strategy and Action Plan. This document was used to inform a strategy direction workshop with the Hunter Central Coast Regional Waste Strategy Group on 14 March 2022, from which key outcomes included:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The vision (20 years) should reflect the aspiration of eliminating waste in our region. • The Strategy should be focused, by adopting a 'doing less and doing it well' prioritisation approach to action planning. • There is strong interest in aligning kerbside waste services across the region. • There is strong support for delivering regional behaviour change programs designed to deliver consistent messaging that support Council implementation of WaSM priorities such as FOGO services roll out and plastics education. • The Strategy should continue to drive the transition to a circular economy in our region. 	
The planned completion date for the Strategy (i.e. endorsement by the Hunter JO Board) is August 2022.	

Small Acts Big Change Regional Communication Campaign	
Program / Project Lead	Eloise Lobsey
Delivery Status	On track
Purpose:	
To deliver a regional communication campaign to improve community waste avoidance behaviours at the top end of the waste management hierarchy, along with reuse and recycling habits.	
Status update:	
The waste avoidance campaign continues to grow its reach and engagement within the region.	

Community Recycling Centres Awareness Campaign	
Program / Project Lead	Susan McDonald
Delivery Status	On track
Purpose: To deliver a regionally coordinated approach to promoting community awareness of Community Recycling Centres (CRC's).	
Status update: The regional delivery of CRC advertising across the region continues in conjunctions with the Small Acts Big Change campaign. Targeted advertising through our social media accounts has reach over 100,000 people. Additional promotional activities in recent months have included the direct mail out to of information flyers to 16,000 households in the Upper Hunter, with plans to reach further households in the Lower Hunter	
Green Caffein Swap and Go Coffee Cup Scheme	
Program / Project Lead	Susan McDonald
Delivery Status	Complete
Purpose: The Hunter JO, seven-member councils and Central Coast Council partnered with Green Caffein to deliver a Swap-and-Go Coffee Cup scheme. The scheme aims to eliminate distribution of disposable cups by providing participating cafes and coffee outlets with reusable cups which are available for scheme members to use when buying their coffee. Councils participating in the initiative are Maitland, Port Stephens, Lake Macquarie, Cessnock, Singleton, Muswellbrook, Upper Hunter and Central Coast Council.	
Status update: The contract with Green Caffein ended in March 2022, however the program will continue to be supported by Green Caffein, the Hunter JO and councils to support continued uptake of the scheme by customers and cafes across the region. Since the program commenced 85 cafes are active across 9 Local Government Areas saving 32,513 cups from landfill which is the equivalent of 327 bins!	

Hunter & Central Coast Circular Economy Hub	
Program / Project Lead	Tim Askew
Delivery Status	On track
Purpose: To drive and facilitate development of the Circular Economy (CE) across the Hunter and Central Coast by Councils, government agencies, business and industry groups and the community. The CE Hub would focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing leadership and planning to establish a common vision and plan for the region's move to a CE • facilitate the acquisition and sharing of research and information among stakeholders in the CE, including the provision of a "problem concierge" • Continuing to curate and grow the CE ecosystem • Facilitating and delivering joint projects and initiatives across organisations 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating and advocating an agreed regional voice on CE for the region to State and Federal Governments • Consistent and coordinated promotion of the region to researchers, innovators and investors • Building knowledge in the region to capture and translate innovation and best practice into day to day operations, and to enact sustained change in organisational culture and systems required to progress the Circular Economy.
<p>Status update:</p> <p>The Circular Economy (CE) Hub project is currently awaiting the final Living Lab business case being developed by Lake Macquarie City Council to see how the CE Hub proposal can leverage upon that initiative.</p>

Circular Economy Roadmap	
Program / Project Lead	Tim Askew
Delivery Status	On track
<p>Purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop a common understanding and definition for the circular economy of the region relevant to all stakeholders – government, business and academia. • Gain broad regional support and engagement for the development of a circular economy in the Hunter and Central Coast region. • Develop a strategic roadmap for the region • To create an identity for the region as a leader in the transition to a circular economy and as a place to do Circular Economy activities, providing business attraction and local support for the circular economy • To provide leverage and connect with other key circular economy frameworks and strategies at all levels of government 	
<p>Status update:</p> <p>The Circular Economy (CE) Roadmap is finished, and awaiting final approval from NSW EPA before being released.</p> <p>The quarterly review process to keep the Roadmap up to date and relevant is now developed. The first meeting established prioritisation and measurement working groups to facilitate changes to the Roadmap at the quarterly reviews.</p>	

Circular Economy Eco-system	
Program / Project Lead	Tim Askew
Delivery Status	On track
<p>Purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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:

A communications plan has been developed and is now being implemented. This includes:

- A CE newsletter - this first edition is being readied for sending to our database of subscribers
- A LinkedIn CE network group - now launched it has grown to 65 members and receives weekly postings
- Huntercircular.com.au website is now updated and live

A Circular Economy event working group has been established to scope a roadmap of CE events for the region over a 3 year time period (no funding at this stage)

Circular Economy Procurement	
Program / Project Lead	Tim Askew
Delivery Status	On track
Purpose: To support Councils to prioritise recycled materials and circular economy services in their procurement systems and processes, and to collaborate with the Hunter JO and other participating councils to develop a common framework for a joint regional procurement of recycled materials.	
Status update: Significant progress has been made by the project on the development of the Circular Economy procurement methods and tools. Draft tools, implementation and engagement plans are now being reviewed and readied for deployment.	

Hunter ReCircular (Regional Recycling Solution - yellow bins)	
Program / Project Lead	Tim Askew
Delivery Status	On track
Purpose: To investigate preferred options for development of a new regional materials recovery facility	
Status update: EOI process being managed through Lake Macquarie City Council remains underway	

ACTION AREA 3. OUR ECONOMY

3.1 Establish an Economic Sustainability Sub Committee, made up of representatives from member councils, to coordinate the economic development activity of the JO and report to the Board.

Hunter JO Regional Economic Transition Subcommittee	
Program / Project Lead	Boyd Blackwell
Delivery Status	On track
<p>Purpose:</p> <p>The purpose of the Committee (from existing Terms of Reference) is to continue to prioritise a resilient and diversified economy, and to assist in managing economic transition in the region in partnership with identified and other regional stakeholders.</p>	
<p>Status update:</p> <p>The Hunter JO Board at its April 2022 meeting resolved that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the primary role of the Subcommittee moving forward, will be to develop and provide a strong and united advocacy voice on agreed core priorities for the place based economic evolution of the Hunter region, within the context of the broader Hunter JO narrative. This would particularly focus on seeking and influencing State Government leadership, strategic direction, resources and action to ensure collective local government priorities enable the region's economic evolution through the Royalties for Rejuvenation program and the Hunter Expert Panel. Membership of the Committee be drawn exclusively from the Hunter JO Board, to ensure representatives have the appropriate authority to make decisions and deliver the advocacy functions of the Subcommittee and its members. Representatives from the Hunter JO Board with an interest being a representative on the Committee confirm their involvement at the April 2022 Board meeting. The name of the Subcommittee be amended to the "Subcommittee for Economic Evolution" to align with the broader narrative of the Hunter JO around the region's economic transformation. A revision of the Terms of Reference for the Subcommittee will be undertaken to reflect the outcomes of the Board's resolution, and presented to the next meeting of the Subcommittee for consideration. <p>In line with this resolution, Board Members (Mayors and General Managers) have been invited to nominate their interest in being involved as a representative on the Subcommittee. Options are also being explored with the Chair to deliver the first meeting of the restructured and refocused Committee during June 2022.</p>	

Regional Strategy Review - Exploring the role of local government in regional economic development strategy for the Hunter	
Program / Project Lead	Boyd Blackwell
Delivery Status	On track

Purpose:

There are currently a range of strategies and initiatives being prepared and/or implemented across the region at various scales (local to federal), and by various agencies that are targeting economic development and investment attraction. The purpose of this project is to identify and review the focus and activities of the many initiatives currently in play in the region, to identify those priority areas of shared interest and/or gaps that the Hunter JO needs to be actively involved in addressing. This seeks to avoid duplication with existing programs, improve alignment between them, and ensure the shared interests of Councils are being considered. The outcome of this work will be a priority list of clear actions for the Hunter JO to pursue that are consistent with its statutory functions and strategic plan.

Status update:

Following the work of identifying common themes across member councils for economic development, fact sheet information has been drafted that identifies the role of the Hunter JO and governance arrangements for regional economic development. This will now support the work of the Subcommittee for Economic Evolution (SEE) and other projects within the scope of regional economic development, including:

- NSW Government's Royalties for Rejuvenation Expert Panel
- NSW Government review of Regional Economic Development Strategies
- Hunter 2050 (H50)
- Hunter Venture Fund (HVF)
- Regional Infrastructure Priority lists (PIL)
- Accelerating Event Economies (A2E) and
- Hunter Economic Model (HEM).

3.3 Deepen relationships with the Department of Planning and Environment and the Hunter Development Corporation and gain a commitment to a formal JO role in the implementation, monitoring and review of the Hunter Regional Plan 2036 and Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036. Be an effective and outcome-oriented committee member.

Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan Steering Committee	
Program / Project Lead	Steve Wilson
Delivery Status	On track
Purpose:	
The role of the Steering Committee (current Terms of Reference) is to oversee the development and implementation of the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, Department of Regional NSW, Hunter Central Coast Development Corporation & Transport for NSW.	

Status update:

The focus of the next meeting of the Subcommittee will include:

1. Collectively reviewing the outcomes of individual engagement sessions held between Councils and the Greater Cities Commission during May
2. Determining an agreed policy position around the design and structure of governance arrangements to be established between the Greater Newcastle Cities Commissioner (to be appointed), and the five Mayors, to:
 - Ensure regular and meaningful communication and collaboration between the Mayors and the Commissioner, and:
 - Establish effective reporting processes to ensure accountability within the Greater Cities Commission for delivery of key regional planning documents.
3. Progressing the outcomes of the March workshop of the Subcommittee focused on developing an agreed narrative to be used by the Mayors to:
 - Provide a strong and united advocacy voice on agreed core priorities for the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Area, within the context of a broader shared regional narrative
 - Inform the broader advocacy platform of the Hunter JO Board in regard to the agreed priorities and advocacy narrative for the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan area.

Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan - Review of Regional Governance Options	
Program / Project Lead	Steve Wilson
Delivery Status	Completed
Purpose:	
The purpose of this project is to identify and explore potential regional governance models and/or legislative change that would ensure integrated, collaborative and effective delivery of the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan.	
Status update:	
Following presentation of the draft Options Paper to the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan Steering Committee in October 2021, feedback has now been consolidated and the Options Paper finalised.	

Regional Population Scenario Planning	
Program / Project Lead	Tim Askew
Delivery Status	On track
Purpose:	
To prepare population scenarios as a platform for informing an agreed long-term vision for regional population growth, and to influence strategic regional planning processes, delivery programs and regional migration strategies by all levels of government for the Hunter Region.	
Status update:	
A draft advocacy document has been reviewed and is currently being reviewed to align with broader policy directions and advocacy documents developed by the Hunter JO.	
The next stage of work will be to familiarise the member Council and expert panel stakeholders with the draft document.	

3.4 Work with the Hunter Regional Leadership Executive to deliver the Upper Hunter Economic Diversification Project Action Plan, monitor its success and review as needed.

Hunter Venture Fund	
Program / Project Lead	Boyd Blackwell
Delivery Status	On track
Purpose:	
<p>The purpose of establishing a Hunter venture Fund is to fill funding, investment and capability shortfalls to 2050, that are required to help the Hunter Region plan for change that is accelerated by advancing energy technologies that will reduce the world’s reliance on coal over time.</p>	
Status update:	
<p>In August 2021 the Hunter JO Board resolved to repivot the efforts of the Hunter JO away from advocacy specifically focused on the establishment of the 2050 Foundation entity and instead focus on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continuing advocacy and engagement on the regional transformation challenge as this remains an enduring strategic priority for the region 2. Supporting and constructively influencing the implementation of the Expert Panel and Royalties for Rejuvenation Fund, the Renewable Energy Zone, Special Activation Precinct, Catalyst Areas in the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan and other relevant initiatives based on member assessments of key regional needs; and 3. Retaining a primary focus on advocacy and facilitation efforts aiming to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • secure significant private sector investment, including through the Hunter Venture Fund concept, into new industries that can reduce long term risk and create new jobs; and • maintain local leadership of solutions for the Hunter. <p>In line with the third focus area, the company Henshall Capital P/L were engaged by the Hunter JO to test the viability of an innovation fund for the region. This work included extensive consultation with investment industry and innovation ecosystem representatives, and the preparation of two key outputs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Hunter Venture Fund Report 2. A pitch deck to support advocacy efforts by the Hunter JO to leverage support from government and industry for the fund. <p>These outputs have now been finalised and will be considered by the Hunter JO Board at its June 2022 meeting. At an overall level the report finds:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That there have been and continue to be clear gaps in the flow of funds in the early start-up stage of new businesses (products and services). 2. There remains a gap in the region’s innovation ecosystem, especially in the incubation and acceleration of new products and services provided by these start-ups. <p>The first finding demonstrates a clear role for the HVF and the second demonstrates a clear role for government in building capacity in the region’s innovation ecosystem.</p>	

Upper Hunter Region Website	
Program / Project Lead	Kali Somerville
Delivery Status	On track
<p>Purpose:</p> <p>The delivery of this website was a key action in the Upper Hunter Economic Diversification Action Plan. It was developed in partnership between Regional NSW and the Hunter JO, to provide a central location for resources for investors, local business and community for the Upper Hunter.</p>	
<p>Status update:</p> <p>Work continues with videography to produce the final “hero” video for the Dungog Shire Council Area focusing on the “Tin Shed Brewery” business. Filming completed on Friday 6th May and is currently in the post production stage.</p> <p>A broader review of the resources held on the website is also continuing to ensure it is still relevant, and we are working with Regional NSW to revise the ongoing strategy for the website.</p>	

3.5 Collaborate to ensure Newcastle and the Hunter realise our potential as a smart region and innovation ecosystem, driving jobs and investment whilst ensuring technology improves livability and sustainability for our region

Smart Region Project	
Program / Project Lead	Tim Askew
Delivery Status	On track
<p>Purpose:</p> <p>The Smart Region Project will be an overarching collation of smart region activities and projects across the region placed within an annual review document produced to market the progress of our region. Initially the project will review the existing state of smart city thinking and activity across the region to get a baseline of progress. This program will then outline the priorities of the region in the smart region context and develop a suite of priority actions and templates for regional use.</p>	
<p>Status update:</p> <p>Discussions continue on the scoping for a Circular Economy Data Strategy and the broader implications for the smart region data system.</p>	

3.6 Develop a sustainable model to coordinate council-run events across the region and showcase the Hunter and attract local, national and international visitors.

Accelerating Event Economies	
Program / Project Lead	Kim Carland
Delivery Status	On track
<p>Purpose:</p> <p>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,</p>	

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.

Status update:

Significant progress has been made on establishing a foundation for event attraction, delivery and planning efficiency in the region including:

- Over 100 stakeholders in the economic development, tourism and events industry have been engaged since January 2022.
- A dedicated A2E partner task group has been established with representatives from all 10 member councils, Destination Sydney Surrounds North, Dept of Regional, Hunter Central Coast Development Corporation and Committee for the Hunter.
- A vision workshop has been held with the working group, with a shared vision being ‘We’re recognised as a destination for hosting world class events that align with our unique offering’.
- Weekly meetings with the partner task group have provided in depth feedback to ensure the A2E projects meet stakeholder needs.
- Vision and overall program delivery have been presented to HJO Board for feedback.
- Two consultants have been appointed to deliver the Hunter Events and Opportunities Audit.
- A Project Brief is out for tender to begin the streamlining of regional event approvals.
- A major event opportunity has been presented to GMs for endorsement.
- A workshop with each member councils is being organised to discuss the collaborative options and barriers for attracting and supporting major events to achieve our vision.

Mayors Gala - Building Regional Collaboration & Celebrating Regional Success

Program / Project Lead	Boyd Blackwell
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Delivery Status	Delayed / Impacted
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Purpose:

To pilot delivery of a collaborative regional event by Councils, through the Hunter JO, that brings all Mayors together, along with the full range of stakeholders in the region, to showcase the region’s successes and strengths, and to demonstrate the full range of opportunities and assets that the Hunter offers.

Status update

The Hunter JO Board considered proposals for the Mayors Gala concept at its April 2022 meeting. In light of the feedback provided a review of options is now being undertaken to further review and refine the concept.

3.7 Work with Destination NSW, Newcastle Airport and other partners to more strongly promote the Hunter as a multifaceted visitor destination. Develop a regional destination management plan.

Hunter Global: Our International Future	
Program / Project Lead	Steve Wilson
Delivery Status	On track
<p>Purpose:</p> <p>The Hunter JO is leading a collaborative partnership between the Hunter JO, Newcastle Airport, Committee for the Hunter, Business Hunter and the University of Newcastle to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build collaborative processes and systems within the region to collectively identify and actively pursue key international opportunities for expanding the Airport’s economic contribution to the Region • Directly support the expansion of international Airport related business and industry as a primary contributor to the Hunter Region’s economic growth and diversification. 	
<p>Status update:</p> <p>Key advocacy activities underway in relation to the Hunter Global initiative include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seeking and undertaking meetings with local Commonwealth and State Members of Parliament, and with Ministers of relevant portfolios, to brief them on the Hunter Global initiative. This includes providing an overview of the Hunter Global initiative, the rationale for its delivery and for the Hunter JO taking a lead role, and the priorities and opportunities that are emerging from the summit and report currently being finalised. 2. Production of an extended advocacy video is continuing, however has been affected by some delays in the availability of local talent arising from COVID impacts. When completed this resource will further underpin regional advocacy efforts to state and federal governments, as well as to attract potential investors to the region. The focus of this video will be “When we get to the world stage”, showcasing 2-4 storylines from local people and businesses from around the region as to what direct international access through the airport will allow them to do. 3. The report documenting the opportunities and key priorities for the region as a whole to capitalise on the runway upgrade (and recently announced passenger terminal upgrade) is nearing completion. This report will provide a platform to support ongoing advocacy and program development work undertaken by the JO, project partners and other regional stakeholders to continue to promote and develop the economic development opportunities for the region arising from the airport runway upgrade. <p>The first piece of advocacy collateral arising from the event, a “teaser” video highlighting the importance of international connectivity for the Hunter; unlocking growth markets, creating new jobs across the region, and maintaining and diversifying the fantastic lifestyle that our region offers, is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= 0vpCbx_H8s.</p> <p>Presentations from the summit are also available on the Hunter JO website at https://www.hunterjo.com.au/event/hunterglobalsummit/</p>	

3.8 Work with the Department of Infrastructure, Regional development & Cities to undertake more detailed exploration of the opportunities created by a City Deal, as well as the preconditions and process to develop a City Deal in the Hunter

City Deal Advocacy	
Program / Project Lead	Joe James
Delivery Status	Delivery Status: No longer proceeding
Purpose: Undertake detailed exploration of the opportunities created by a City Deal, as well as the preconditions and process to develop a City Deal in the Hunter.	
Status update: There is currently no active advocacy occurring around a City Deal, based on advice from the Commonwealth Government that there are no plans for Commonwealth Investment in City Deal initiatives at the current time. However other projects being initiated by the Hunter JO including the Population Scenario Planning and Regional Infrastructure Priority List initiatives will provide important foundations for future planning and advocacy work around a City Deal.	

3.9 Explore and act on smart ways to transform local and global disruptions, such as the disruption of recycling services, into economic opportunities for the Hunter.

Hunter BioCircular	
Program / Project Lead	Tim Askew
Delivery Status	Delivery Status: Not yet started (subject to resourcing)
Purpose: To embrace world-leading innovations to develop a flagship community resources recovery model. By demonstrating a Circular Economy approach, Hunter BioCircular seeks to move the region toward zero waste to landfill, and in doing so provide long term economic, social and environmental benefits from processing waste locally, which will help transition the regional economy, deliver new local jobs and reduce carbon emissions.	
Status update: Project is still in redesign of scope and seeking new funding opportunities for the concept. Currently waiting on a response to the letters of support sent to the Clean Manufacturing Precincts consortium EOIs.	

ACTION AREA 4. OUR TRANSPORT

4.1 Establish a Transport Connectivity Sub Committee, made up representatives from member councils, to coordinate the transport and associated infrastructure planning activity of the JO and report to the Board.

Transport Connectivity Sub Committee	
Delivery Status	Delivery Status: Not yet started (subject to resourcing)

4.2 Coordinate and prepare submissions on regional planning initiatives such as the 2056 Freight and Ports Plan.

Regional Submission – Draft Hunter Regional Plan 2041	
Program / Project Lead	Steve Wilson
Delivery Status	Completed
<p>Purpose:</p> <p>To identify and represent the shared interests of Hunter JO Member Councils within a regional response to the draft Hunter Regional Plan 2041.</p>	
<p>Status update:</p> <p>A regional submission has been submitted, which focused on those regional scale issues, priorities and responses on which Member Councils were aligned regarding the focus and directions identified in the draft Plan, which were drawn from an analysis and synthesis of individual council feedback and submissions.</p> <p>Overall, the submission supported the objectives in the draft Plan which demonstrated high alignment with our own strategic priorities. The submission identified that the draft Plan’s main gaps however, lie in either silence or ambiguity on three key areas which, if not addressed, undermine the Plan’s potential to achieve its own Vision and Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitive access to global markets and the importance of global connectivity for the Hunter region • Intra-region connectivity, specifically public transport • Clarity around governance of the document and its delivery <p>The regional submission can be viewed at https://www.hunterjo.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Hunter-JO-Submission_Draft-Hunter-Regional-Plan-FINAL.pdf</p>	

4.3 Work with the Transport for NSW and other partners to access and analyse detailed transport data across the region and understand gaps in infrastructure and services.

Analyse detailed transport data across the region	
Delivery Status	Delivery Status: Not yet started (subject to resourcing)

4.4 Engage at a senior level with key transport stakeholders including Transport for NSW, Roads and Maritime Authority, Newcastle Airport, Port of Newcastle and Keolis Downer to better understand their forward planning for the region.

Hunter Regional Transport Plan	
Program / Project Lead	Steve Wilson & Joe James
Delivery Status	On track
Purpose: Transport for NSW are developing a new Hunter Regional Transport Plan. Its development is occurring in collaboration with DPIE’s current process to review the Hunter Regional Plan to ensure these key documents are complementary. The Regional Transport Plan will aim to	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable Transport for NSW to respond proactively to anticipated changes in land use, demographics and travel demand • Establish a transport vision for the region • Detail short, medium and long-term initiatives that in combination, support the transport vision 	
Status update: This project is being led by Transport for NSW. Hunter JO staff continue to facilitate liaison as required between the Transport for NSW planning process and member Councils staff, General Managers Advisory Committee and Hunter JO Board. We understand that a draft Plan will soon be placed on public exhibition.	

4.5 Use the in-depth evidence base to prepare Hunter JO agreed priority list of infrastructure, system and service improvements which will make the greatest difference to communities and businesses across the region. This will include expansion and connectivity between cycleways.

Regional Infrastructure Priority List	
Program / Project Lead	Boyd Blackwell
Delivery Status	On track
Project Purpose: To prepare an agreed list of regional and sub regional infrastructure priorities to:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build and advocate a stronger case for investment in infrastructure priorities across the region • Identify the potential for shared interests and collaboration between Councils and other stakeholders in delivering local and regional scale infrastructure initiatives. • Identify a longer-term infrastructure investment pipeline, to provide transparency and confidence for potential investors, professional services and contractors to build their presence in the Hunter 	

Status update:

Phase 2 of this project has commenced in collaboration with HCCDC, and will include:

- preparation of a googleform for councils and other agencies to provide their infrastructure priorities annually
- Development and testing of an excel model for capturing and analyzing data
- Extending the model to integrate decisions relating to prioritisation, such as qualitative assessment and rapid CBA outcomes
- Development of an operating procedure
- Incorporation of a pipeline of existing project data within the database

The consultant, Marsden Jacob Associates has been appointed to deliver this next stage of work.

Regional Cycle Tourism Master Plan (Shiraz to Shore)	
Program / Project Lead	Tim Askew
Delivery Status	On track
Purpose: 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.	
Status update: A draft advocacy document has been developed to assist with generating support and attracting funding for this initiative, and has been used as an advocacy document in the lead up to the 2022 Federal Government election. The next step is to reengage with key stakeholders to prepare the document for the NSW State Government elections in 2023.	

4.6 Develop and implement a targeted advocacy program to gain commitments from infrastructure and service delivery agencies, including the Australian Government, to deliver agreed priorities.

Advocacy program	
Delivery Status	Not yet started (subject to completion of Action 4.5)

ACTION AREA 5. OUR EDUCATION

5.1. Establish a Social Sustainability Sub Committee, made up representatives from member councils, to coordinate the education, health and related policy and planning activities of the JO and report to the Board.

5.2 Engage at a senior level with key education stakeholders including the University of Newcastle, TAFE NSW and School Infrastructure NSW to better understand their forward planning for the region.

5.3 Work with the NSW Department of Education to better understand and test their projections for growth in student numbers throughout the Hunter.

5.4 Use the in-depth evidence base to prepare a Hunter JO agreed priority list of school infrastructure improvements which will make the greatest difference to communities across the region.

5.5 Advocate to Schools Infrastructure NSW and the Minister for Education to gain commitments to deliver agreed schools infrastructure improvements.

5.6 Work with TAFE NSW to expand access to training and vocational services across the region, including through innovative models such as Connected Learning Centres, Specialist Centres and Mobile Training Units.

5.7 Work with the University of Newcastle and TAFE NSW to help raise awareness, aspiration and achievement of tertiary education opportunities for primary and secondary school students in the region.

5.8 Work with Indigenous educational and community groups to support and encourage young Indigenous people into tertiary education.

5.9 Work with local Libraries and education providers to develop and implement technology for life learning schemes to ensure all generations take advantage of new technology to improve quality of life.

Delivery Status	<i>Delivery Status: Not yet started (subject to resourcing)</i>
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ACTION AREA 6. OUR HEALTH

6.1 Work with the Hunter New England Local Health District and other key partners to audit health services across the region, identify accessibility gaps and prioritise actions.

6.2 Hold regional stakeholder workshops to gain input from community members and health professionals to better understand the priority health needs of local communities.

6.3 Use the in-depth evidence base to prepare a Hunter JO agreed priority list of improvements to health services and facilities which will make the greatest difference to communities across the region.

6.4 Explore innovative models of housing to enable older people to age in place in Hunter towns and villages.

Delivery Status	<i>Delivery Status: Not yet started (subject to resourcing)</i>
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