



HUNTER JO PROGRAM REPORT

August 2022

This publication was produced by the Hunter Joint Organisation.



ENQUIRIES

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CONTENTS

The Hunter Joint Organisation	1
Who We Are.....	1
Mission Statement.....	1
Hunter JO Board	1
Our Member Councils.....	1
Our Team	2
Regional Leadership and Advocacy	3
Intergovernmental collaboration	5
Program Activity Report	7
Action Area 1	8
<i>Our communities stay inclusive, proud and safe and celebrate diversity</i>	
Action Area 2	11
<i>Our enviable environment is protected for future generations and our resources are used efficiently</i>	
Action Area 3	17
<i>Our economy is multifaceted, resilient and is Australia’s leading smart regional economy</i>	
Action Area 4	24
<i>Our people and products move across the region easily on integrated and accessible transport networks</i>	
Action Area 5	27
<i>Our educational facilities support and encourage our young people and foster lifelong learning and encourage our young people</i>	
Action Area 6	28
<i>Our people have access to the full range of health care fostering active and healthy communities</i>	

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

NAME	ROLE	CONTACT
Joe James	CEO, Hunter Joint Organisation	0405 217 249 ceo@hunterjo.com.au
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Boyd Blackwell	Regional Policy and Program Manager	0448 490 656 boydb@hunterjo.com.au
Tim Askew	Regional Policy and Program Manager	0436 420 623 tima@hunterjo.com.au
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REGIONAL LEADERSHIP & ADVOCACY

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENTS

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENTS (UPCOMING)	
<p>David Layzell - NSW Member for Upper Hunter</p> <p><i>Upcoming Friday 12th August</i></p>	<p>Similar to recent meetings held between the CEO and Director Regional Policy & Programs with local Commonwealth and NSW Members of Parliament, this meeting with Member for Upper Hunter will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role and strategic priorities of the Hunter JO • Hunter Global summit outcomes and emerging priorities • The Hunter JOs goals, role and activity in regard to the Region's economic evolution, including the Hunter Venture Fund project • Transport connectivity • Shiraz to Shore initiative
POLITICAL ENGAGEMENTS (COMPLETED)	
<p>The Hon Kristy McBain MP, Commonwealth Minister for Regional Development, Local Government & Territories</p>	<p>A delegation of Hunter JO Mayors and General Managers met with the Minister on 22 June 2022 while in Canberra to attend the ALGA conference. The meeting provided the opportunity for the delegation to communicate the shared priorities of Member Councils on core regional issues and priorities relevant to the new Minister's portfolio, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic evolution to drive jobs and a growing economy in the region • A globally focused Hunter connected to international markets
<p>Daniel Mookhey, NSW Shadow Treasurer</p> <p><i>27 June 2022</i></p>	<p>The CEO attended the NSW Budget Roundtable Event hosted by Yasmin Catley (Member for Swansea) and City of Newcastle. The forum provided the opportunity for the Shadow Treasurer to outline Labor's response to the NSW Government's budget, and to engage with the Shadow Treasurer on a range of economic development, waste management and climate and energy opportunities that could be unlocked in the region through NSW Government policy.</p>

MEDIA

OUTLET	FOCUS
Multiple	<p>JOINT STATEMENT HUNTER REGION MAYORS CALL FOR MORE DISASTER SUPPORT</p> <p>Following the devastation of recent floods across the Hunter, the region's ten Mayors signed a joint statement calling for more disaster support from the State and Federal Government. The statement acknowledged the improved and more timely response for disaster funding in comparison to previous disasters but argues that the impact of this flood in the face of multiple natural disasters does not extend far enough.</p> <p>The Mayors called for increased financial support to be able to address urgent infrastructure repairs and to help their communities recover, prepare, and adapt. There is also a need to build back better to be more resilience to future disasters.</p> <p>This statement has been featured in multiple publications across the region.</p>

OUTLET	FOCUS
Newcastle Herald, Saturday 25th June 2022	<p>MAYORS MAKE THEIR CASE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hunter council leaders say they are confident that their concerns were heard during a meeting with the federal minister for local government in Canberra • Representatives from Singleton, Muswellbrook, Cessnock and lake Macquarie councils were part of a Hunter JO roundtable meeting with federal MP Kristy McBain during last week’s National Assembly of Local Government
ABC Radio, Saturday 17th July 2022	<p>CIRCULAR ECONOMY ROADMAP LAUNCH</p> <p>Tim Askew, Regional Policy and Program Manager was interviewed by ABC radio regarding the recent launch of the Circular Economy Roadmap.</p>

REGIONAL SUBMISSIONS

There were no regional submissions during the reporting period.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COLLABORATION

HUNTER JO CONVENED WORKSHOPS, FORUMS AND EVENTS

EVENT	FOCUS
<p>Hunter JO Strategic Planning Workshop</p> <p><i>14 & 15 July 2022</i></p>	<p>The focus of this 2 day workshop included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each Member Council identifying priorities for their LGA for the purpose of identifying shared priorities, challenges and areas for collaboration that would benefit from a regional approach. • Reviewing outcomes from the mapping of each Councils Community Strategic Plan and key NSW Government regional plans against the 4 priority • Identifying the role of the JO in addressing the priority action areas identified by the Board.
<p>Hunter JO Circular Economy Roadmap Launch</p> <p><i>11 July 2022</i></p>	<p>The Hunter & Central Coast Circular Economy Roadmap was launched in July with a networking breakfast event with attendance from across the region.</p> <p>Attendees heard from industry and local circular economy experts about circular economy projects and initiatives throughout the region, with speakers including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayor Kay Fraser, Lake Macquarie City Council and Chair of the Hunter JO’s Circular Economy Sub-Committee • Tim Askew, Regional Policy and Programs Manager – Hunter JO • David Hughes, Director of Built & Natural Assets – Lake Macquarie City Council • Brett Allan, General Manager – Molycop • Jess Hodge, Founder – Resourceful Living <p>The launch attracted 53 participants in person and 30 online. Attendees were from across multiple industries including government (19%), business (80%) and academia (1%).</p>
<p>Simtable Demonstrations</p>	<p>Simtable demonstrations have recently been delivered to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RFS Hunter Area Command, Cameron Park, 27 June 2022 • Red Cross disaster resilience staff, 30 June 2022 • Local Land Services, Tocal, 8 July 2022

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 Working Group	Hunter JO
Circular Economy Subcommittee	Hunter JO
Hunter Regional Waste Strategy Group	Hunter JO
Hunter Circular Economy Facilitators Group	Hunter JO & Department of Planning & Environment
Hunter Regional Leadership Executive	Regional NSW
RLE Human Services Subcommittee	Regional NSW
RLE Economic Development Subcommittee	Regional NSW
Business Attraction Committee	Regional NSW
Interim Hunter Expert Panel	Regional NSW
Hunter Cruise Committee	Regional NSW & Destination Sydney & Surrounds North)
Upper Hunter Economic Diversification Working Group	Regional NSW
AGL Site Transition Working Group	AGL
State and Regional Waste Managers Network	NSW EPA
Hunter Future Workforces Committee	Business Hunter
Powering Business 2050 Summit Reference Group	Business Hunter
JO Chairs Forum	JO Network
JO Executive Officers Network	JO 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. Reporting is provided against each of the priority Action Areas included in the Hunter Joint Organisation’s Strategic Plan 2018-21 (Aspire.Act.Achieve).



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

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: A 2-day strategic planning workshop was undertaken by the Hunter JO Board (Member Council Mayors and General managers) on 14th and 15th July. The primary focus and outputs from the workshop included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each Member Council identifying priorities for their LGA for the purpose of identifying shared priorities, challenges and areas for collaboration that would benefit from a regional approach. • Reviewing outcomes from the mapping of each Councils Community Strategic Plan and key NSW Government regional plans against the 4 priority strategic focus areas (Connectivity, Jobs & A Growing Economy, Resilience and Liveability) • Identifying the role of the JO in addressing the priority action areas identified by the Board. 	

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 now 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>Program activities recently completed include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A literature review of 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, • Development of Resilience IP&R document, drawn from a review of Councils' Community Strategic Plans <p>Current activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing discussions with Resilience NSW, Resilient Sydney and Hunter JO Council staff (both Resilience and IP&R focused) to explore collaborative opportunities both within and beyond the region • Research into existing resilience health check tools. 	

Simtables for Community Empowerment	
Program / Project Lead	Chris Dart
Delivery Status	On track

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 to provide direct support to Councils in undertaking the extensive community engagement associated with their use.

Status update:

The Simtables for Community Empowerment program continues to progress well.

User training was delivered in April and May, with staff from our member Councils, Resilience NSW, the RFS and SES attending. Acquisition of key data continues, including the State Vegetation Type Map, historic fires and hazard reduction activities, modelled flood extents and land use maps.

The Hunter JO team are now finalising workshop content and resources in consultation with key Council staff and the RFS and Resilience NSW. Furthermore, the team is continuing to engage key stakeholders. Simtable demonstrations have now been delivered to the GMAC and Hunter JO Board; Resilience NSW staff and directors; NSW Local Land Services; and the RFS at the Hunter Area Command and Central Coast Fire Control Centre.

Planning for the delivery of community workshops is underway, with several bookings already made for August and September. This follows the Simtable being used to assist during an emergency management workshop with the Karuah Aboriginal Community in May.

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 of the CPP Program links and objectives identified in the region has also been 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	Tim Askew and Eloise Lobsey
Delivery Status	Complete
<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>With funding support from the NSW EPA, over recent months the Hunter JO commissioned a due diligence assessment exploring the potential for the Hunter JO to host a Regional Illegal Dumping (RID) squad. The process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed existing state-wide approaches to the management of RID Squads • Examined the feasibility of the Hunter JO potentially hosting a RID Squad • Recommended the most appropriate financial and operational model for a RID Squad were it to be hosted by the Hunter JO. <p>The recommended approach is 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 their local council. The due diligence report has been completed and provided to NSW EPA for consideration.</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:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW EPA have confirmed a 6 month extension of the regional capacity building program until February 2023, along with \$85k additional funding. • Discussions with NSW EPA and other CRCB JOs are underway for the next 6 months of the program, with a focus on updating the existing Conditions of Consent resource. • A 3-part online training session on Contaminated Land for Planners was delivered during June, with over 50 Council attendees at each session who provided very positive feedback • The Contaminated Land Service Desk function continues to be utilised by Councils, and the Hunter JO website has been updated to better display the wide range of resources that are available. 	

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	Completed
Purpose:	
<p>The objectives of this project are to:</p> <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:	
<p>The Climate Change Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Package has now been released in its final version. Originally released as a working draft in late 2021, the Climate Change IP&R package is now available as a final version after incorporating feedback from stakeholders across NSW.</p> <p>The package provides support and guidance to Councils during the development of their Community Strategic Plans (CSP), Delivery Program and Operational Plan. It supports Councils' and their communities' climate change journey by providing user friendly, practical tools and templates to embed climate change throughout the IP&R process. The Climate Change IP&R Package includes:</p>	

- Climate change commitment level framework – Commitment levels allow Councils to establish a vision and identity for their climate change journey. The three levels established provide typical (but not binding) narratives, which are based on the individual Councils’ resources available, risk and opportunity level for their particular Local Government Area (LGA), and their communities’ values. The concept supports the discussions within Councils when setting the scene for their IP&R cycle
- IP&R templates – This section provides template wording for strategic priority statements, delivery program objectives and operational plan examples of initiatives and actions for each commitment level, in line with relevant guidelines and best practice principles; and
- Communication and engagement package – This package provides process support, factsheets, template Council papers and presentations

Since being released as a working draft, the Climate Change IP&R Package has been embraced, not only throughout the Hunter region, but also across NSW by numerous Councils who are referencing the package and using the template wording in their new Community Strategic Plans.

The final package can be viewed on the Hunter JO [website](#)

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	Delayed / Impacted
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:	
The Hunter JO continues to await the release of new funding guidelines from the NSW EPA that are required to develop the strategy. The NSW EPA have offered additional support that will assist us in these delays. The revised completion date is now October 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:	
This campaign has continued over the winter months, continuing to focus on our three themes for the year: reducing textile consumption, food waste avoidance, and plastic waste avoidance.	

Community Recycling Centres Awareness Campaign	
Program / Project Lead	Susan McDonald
Delivery Status	Impacted
Purpose: To deliver a regionally coordinated approach to promoting community awareness of Community Recycling Centres (CRC's).	
Status update: Community recycling centre campaigns have had to be reduced/suspended due to limited operational capacity following a fire at the Cleanaway facility. Once fully operational again, CRC campaigns will recommence in a condensed campaign format.	

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 	

- 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.

Status update:

The Hunter JO team are currently exploring opportunities with the CE Living Lab developed by Lake Macquarie City Council, to see how we can complement and collaboratively leverage CE outcomes for the region, including in relation to the Circular Economy (CE) Hub project.

Circular Economy Roadmap

Program / Project Lead	Tim Askew
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Delivery Status	On track
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Purpose:

- 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

Status update:

The Hunter & Central Coast Circular Economy Roadmap was launched in July with a networking breakfast event. Attendees heard from industry and local circular economy experts about circular economy projects and initiatives throughout the region, with speakers including:

- Mayor Kay Fraser, Lake Macquarie City Council and Chair of the Hunter JO’s Circular Economy Sub-Committee
- Tim Askew, Regional Policy and Programs Manager – Hunter JO
- David Hughes, Director of Built & Natural Assets – Lake Macquarie City Council
- Brett Allan, General Manager – Molycop
- Jess Hodge, Founder – Resourceful Living

The launch attracted 53 participants in person and 30 online. Attendees were from across multiple industries including government (19%), business (80%) and academia (1%).

The Roadmap can be viewed at [Circular Economy Roadmap - Hunter & Central Coast Circular \(huntercircular.com.au\)](http://huntercircular.com.au)

Circular Economy Eco-system Stage 2	
Program / Project Lead	Tim Askew
Delivery Status	On track
Purpose:	
<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:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Circular Economy (CE) Roadmap was officially launched on Monday 11 July 2022 (see above for details). • The quarterly review process to keep the Roadmap up to date and relevant is now developed and currently being tested. 	

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:	
The Circular Economy procurement methods and tools are currently being tested and readied for deployment. The main task will be to position the work for limited implementation into Councils and to seek funding for broader implementation over the next few years.	

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.

Subcommittee for Economic Evolution	
Program / Project Lead	Boyd Blackwell
Delivery Status	On track
Purpose:	
<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>	
Status update:	
<p>At its April 2022 meeting the Hunter JO Board resolved to revamp and refocus the activities of its Regional Economic Transition Subcommittee. Now known as the Subcommittee for Economic Evolution, the Committee met for the first time on 17th June.</p> <p>Membership of the revamped committee include the newly appointed Committee Chair, Mayor Steve Reynolds (Muswellbrook Shire Council), Mayor Sue Moore (Singleton Council), Mayor John Connors (Dungog Shire Council), Mayor Jay Suvaal (Cessnock City Council), Morven Cameron (CEO, Lake Macquarie City Council), Jason Linnane (General Manager Singleton Council) and Fiona Plesman (General Manager Muswellbrook Council).</p> <p>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 region. This will particularly focus on seeking and influencing Commonwealth and State Government leadership, strategic direction, resources and action to plan and deliver the work that is needed to achieve this goal, including a focus on the Royalties for Rejuvenation program and Hunter Expert Panel.</p> <p>Key outcomes from the 17th June meeting included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing and endorsing an updated Terms of Reference for the Subcommittee • Identifying draft Advocacy priorities for the Subcommittee and broader Hunter JO Board 	

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

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 next meeting of the Steering Committee is scheduled for 17 August 2022. A key focus of the meeting will include determining an agreed approach / position around the design and structure of governance arrangements to be established between the Greater Cities Commission and GNMP Steering Committee, and more specifically between the Greater Newcastle Cities Commissioner (currently being recruited), and the mayors of the five GNMP Councils.	

Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan - Review of Regional Governance Options	
Program / Project Lead	Steve Wilson
Delivery Status	Complete
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 is in development and an update will be presented to the Hunter JO Board in August 2022. 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: 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.	
Status update: 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: <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:
 - 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.

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:

1. The Hunter Venture Fund Report (draft)
2. A pitch deck to support advocacy efforts by the Hunter JO to leverage support from government and industry for the fund.

An engagement process is currently underway to familiarise and facilitate feedback by Member Council staff and key industry stakeholders to the draft report prior to its finalisation.

Upper Hunter Region Website	
Program / Project Lead	Kali Somerville
Delivery Status	On track
Purpose:	
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.	
Status update:	
The Dungog hero video, featuring the Tinshed Brewery is now complete. Organising with web developers for it to be uploaded to the UP website.	
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.	

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	Delayed / Impacted

<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>Further action on this initiative is waiting on a refresh of the NSW Data Action Plan (Strategy 2.0), following which a review will be completed to determine next steps.</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, 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>	
<p>Status update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with the General Managers and Mayors of Member Council's, and with Managers in Economic Development, Tourism and Events have recently been completed, which have gathered important information and perspectives to inform the future needs and directions of the A2E project. • The Facilities Audit is progressing well, with much of the data from both indoor and outdoor event venues, and sporting facilities, now captured in the audit. • A contract with KPMG to complete an Events Economic Analysis has been recently commissioned and work commenced. • The Event Licence and Approvals review consultant has recently been commissioned to provide recommendations for improvements. • The Tourism Prospectus consultant has recently been appointed to develop itineraries that cross the Hunter and keep people in the region for longer. 	

Mayors Gala - Building Regional Collaboration & Celebrating Regional Success	
Program / Project Lead	Boyd Blackwell
Delivery Status	Delayed / Impacted
<p>Purpose:</p> <p>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.</p>	

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
Purpose: The Hunter JO is leading a collaborative partnership between the Hunter JO, Newcastle Airport, Committee for the Hunter, Business Hunter and the University of Newcastle to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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.	
Status update: Production of an extended advocacy video has now been completed, which will support regional advocacy efforts to state and federal governments, as well as to attract potential investors to the region. The focus of this video is “When we get to the world stage”, showcasing storylines from local people and businesses from around the region as to what direct international access through the airport will allow them to do. A communications strategy to underpin release and distribution of the video is currently being prepared. The video can be viewed at When We Get to the World Stage . 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 in the final stages of review. Along with the video 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.	

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 was submitted on the draft Hunter Regional Plan, 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:	
<p>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</p> <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:	
<p>It is intended that the Hunter JO will facilitate the development of a regional submission in collaboration with Member Councils on the draft Hunter Regional Transport Pending when it is released for public exhibition.</p>	

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:	
<p>To prepare an agreed list of regional and sub regional infrastructure priorities to:</p> <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 is underway, of which key outputs 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

A workshop was completed with Member Council and Agency staff in early June to test and refine the Googleform survey instrument, and the project consultant has completed the draft Excel model for capturing and analysing data, both of which are now ready to pilot with councils.

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: The draft advocacy document is now being readied for the next NSW State election with modifications currently being developed. The next step is to reengage with key stakeholders to co-design the changes.	

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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