



**HUNTER JO
PROGRAM REPORT**
October 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

| NAME | ROLE | CONTACT |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| Joe James | CEO, Hunter Joint Organisation | 0405 217 249 ceo@hunterjo.com.au |
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REGIONAL LEADERSHIP & ADVOCACY

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENTS

| POLITICAL ENGAGEMENTS (COMPLETED) | |
|---|--|
| The Hon. Catherine King MP, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government | Correspondence sent to the Minister introducing the Hunter Joint Organisation and Regional Cycling Tourism Priorities, including the Richmond Vale Rail Trail. |
| The Hon. James Griffin MP, Minister for Environment and Heritage | Correspondence sent to the Minister requesting a continuation of the Contaminated Land Council Regional Capacity Building (CRCB) Program |
| The Hon Rob Stokes MP, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Cities, and Minister for Active Transport | Correspondence sent to the Minister regarding proposed governance and communication arrangements between the GNMP Mayors and Lower Hunter and Greater Newcastle City Commissioner |
| David Layzell - NSW Member for Upper Hunter | <p>The Chair Cr Sue Moore, CEO and Director Regional Policy & Programs met with David Layzell on 12 August. The meeting focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Role and strategic priorities of the Hunter JO• Hunter Global initiative and emerging opportunities and priorities• The Hunter JOs goals, role and activity in regard to the Region's economic evolution• Issues and concerns held by the Hunter JO with the Royalties for Rejuvenation program |

MEDIA

| OUTLET | FOCUS |
|---|---|
| ABC Radio Monday 29th August 2022 | Tim Askew, Regional Policy and Programs Manager was interviewed by ABC radio regarding the Shiraz to Shore project. |

REGIONAL SUBMISSIONS

There were no new regional submissions during the reporting period.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COLLABORATION

HUNTER JO CONVENED WORKSHOPS, FORUMS AND EVENTS

| EVENT | FOCUS |
|---|---|
| <p>Hunter JO Regional Planning & Economic Development Forum <i>25 August 2022</i></p> | <p>Information, briefings and engagement at this quarterly meeting of Council Planning Directors and Economic Development Managers focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Status and process of Hunter JO Strategic Plan development • Hunter JO Advocacy Framework and Priorities • Hunter JO Policy & Program updates • Department of Regional NSW – focus, structure, programs and funding opportunities for Councils • Muswellbrook Shire Council – economic development programs including Hunter Innovation Precinct (HIP) & employment lands mapping work of the 4 Upper Hunter Councils. <p>Structure and focus of future sessions of the forum to maximise information and value for participants</p> |
| <p>Simtable Demonstrations Various dates</p> | <p>Simtable demonstrations have recently been delivered to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karuah Aboriginal Community (engagement workshop) • Singleton Emergency Services Expo (engagement workshop) • Various organisations including Rural Fire Service, Councils, Australian Red Cross and Resilience NSW (9 individual demonstrations delivered). <p>A further 5 workshops/ community events and 1 demonstration to Local Land Services are booked in for delivery during September and October.</p> |

COMMITTEES AND NETWORKS

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

| NETWORK / COMMITTEE | CONVENER |
|--|--|
| Existing Standing Engagement (convened by Hunter JO and Local Government) | |
| IP&R Network | Lake Macquarie City Council & Hunter JO |
| Regional Contaminated Land Working Group | Hunter JO |
| Hunter Regional Waste Strategy Group | Hunter JO |
| Hunter Circular Economy Facilitators Group | Hunter JO & Department of Planning & Environment |

| NETWORK / COMMITTEE | CONVENER |
|--|---|
| Existing standing engagements (convened by others) | |
| Hunter Central Coastal Management Program Practitioners Roundtable | Department of Planning & Environment |
| City of Newcastle SDG Collaborative meeting | City of Newcastle |
| State and Regional Waste Managers Network | NSW EPA |
| Upper Hunter Education and Training Working Group | Education NSW |
| Regional Leadership Executive | Regional NSW |
| Business Attraction Committee | Regional NSW |
| EPA Advisory Group | NSW EPA |
| Upper Hunter Economic Diversification Committee | Regional NSW |
| Interim Hunter Expert Panel | Regional NSW |
| AGL Site Transition Working Group | AGL |
| Hunter Future Workforces Committee | Business Hunter |
| Additional Strategic Engagements | |
| University of Technology - Small & Medium Enterprise Futuremaps workshop, Newcastle (13 October 2022). | UTS Sydney |
| Webinar - Procurement in a Circular Economy (26 August 2022) | Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council, WA |
| Tour of Hunter Innovation Precinct development (1 September 2022) | Muswellbrook Shire Council |
| Upper Hunter Enabling Infrastructure and Services Project | Astrolabe on behalf of Department of Regional NSW |
| NSW EPA review of the POEO Waste Regulation - early stakeholder engagement (31 August 2022) | Hunter JO |
| State Resilience Strategy Consultation (5 August 2022) | Resilience NSW & Hunter JO |
| Hunter Region Sustainable Development Goals Taskforce (20 September 2022) | Sustainability Advantage |
| JO Review Implementation Plan workshop (20 September 2022) | Office of Local Government |

REGIONAL FUNDING APPLICATIONS

Since June 2022 a significant focus and effort has been put in by the Hunter JO team to the development of seven funding applications totalling \$4,340,127, a summary of which is provided below.

| Funding Program | Project Summary | Amount Requested | Status |
|--|--|------------------|---------|
| Regional NSW Business Case and Strategy Development Fund <i>Submitted 24-Aug-22</i> | Regional Airports Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strategy & business case for airfreight infrastructure investment and connectivity infrastructure for passenger and airfreight logistics (LIP) for the region. • An integrated airports strategy for the region (IRAS) including assessments of passenger, airfreight and transport (PAT) links to each airport across the region. | \$500,000 | Pending |
| Regional NSW Business Case and Strategy Development Fund <i>Submitted 24-Aug-22</i> | Regional Transition MasterPlan Providing Place-Based Authoritative Leadership and Policy Certainty through an assessment of transition mechanisms that accelerate Investment, Business Diversification, Job Substitution, and Innovation for the region. | \$368,750 | Pending |
| Regional NSW Business Case and Strategy Development Fund <i>Submitted 24-Aug-22</i> | Hunter Global Tourism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder engagement to bring all tourism, marketing and economic development organisations across the region to identify how we want to position, brand and market our region as one to potential visitors. • Undertaking a review of our region to identify one piece of priority tourism infrastructure needed by our region to attract international visitors. | \$500,000 | Pending |
| Regional NSW Business Case and Strategy Development Fund <i>Submitted 24-Aug-22</i> | Shiraz to Shore <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Shiraz to Shore concept plan with communication and engagement plan • A Hunter cycle tourism destination management plan. | \$387,500 | Pending |

| Funding Program | Project Summary | Amount Requested | Status |
|---|--|--------------------|---|
| Regional NSW Business Case and Strategy Development Fund <i>Submitted 24-Aug-22</i> | Regional Electric Vehicle Strategy This project will develop a Regional Electric Vehicle Strategic Plan to provide and promote intra-regional (within the Hunter and Central Coast) and inter-regional (with other NSW regions) EV connectivity. | \$205,438 | Pending |
| Regional NSW Business Case and Strategy Development Fund <i>Submitted 24-Aug-22</i> | Circular Economy Innovation Hubs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A concept plan and strategy for Circular Economy Precincts • A concept plan and strategy for CE Futures Hub. | \$878,600 | Pending |
| Disaster Risk Reduction Fund - Local & Regional Risk Reduction stream - Pathway 2 <i>Submitted 12-Jul-22</i> | Reducing regional disaster risk through early action: Place-based collaboration in the Hunter and the Central Coast Facilitation of place-based regional collaboration across four sub projects to empower Councils and communities in the region to reduce disaster risk through early action. Sub projects include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regional Support and Capacity Building 2. Disaster waste management and resource recovery preparedness 3. Regional transport vulnerability and connectivity assessment 4. Simtables for multi-hazard disaster engagement | \$1,499,839 | Advised 7 th September that Resilience NSW has engaged a provider to review each of the proposals submitted by 8 JOs across the state as part of its due diligence. There are two parts to the review: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reviewing each proposal and developing recommendations that align scope and budget where synergies or efficiency can be achieved 2. A proposed program governance structure and framework will be defined that includes a common work plan and performance milestones to be included in funding contracts, if approved. <p>This review is planned to occur over 6 weeks from 12 September 2022.</p> <p>Completion of the review does not guarantee funding.</p> |
| TOTAL VALUE | | \$4,340,127 | |

The focus of additional funding opportunities also being actively explored / progressed at present include:

| Funding Opportunity | Summary | Indicative Value | Status |
|--|--|-------------------------|--|
| NSW EPA Regional Illegal Dumping Program | Establishment of Regional Illegal Dumping Program. | \$580,000 | Negotiations with EPA continuing. The EPA are supportive of a RID Program Model, however given resourcing limitations we are exploring the option of commencing with a smaller program model and scaling up to full regional coverage over time. |
| NSW Environment Protection Authority | NSW Waste & Sustainable Materials Strategy | Not yet available | While some additional information on the focus of the new contestable funding program is emerging, at this point there are no grant programs open. |
| NSW Environment Protection Authority | Regional Contaminated Land Program | \$140,000 per annum | In conjunction with the broader JO network, we have reactivated advocacy efforts to the Minister for the Environment for a continuation of funding for this program beyond its scheduled January 2023 completion date. |

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: An overview of the draft plan is being presented to the Hunter JO Board at its 13th October 2013 meeting, seeking endorsement of the working draft for consultation with Member Councils, State Government Agencies and Key Partner organisations. This delivers on the commitment to have a plan in September/October that we can start using as a working draft during the consultation phase to refine and fill any gaps before presenting back to the Board at the end of November for endorsement of the final plan.</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. An exploration of user experience and navigation is currently being undertaken ahead of integrating advocacy information and the new Hunter JO Strategic Plan onto the website.</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. The key deliverables of the project include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilience IP&R Support Package (based on Climate Change IP&R Package) • Resilience health-check and gap assessment of Councils • Resilience Health and Improvement Games | |
| <p>Status update:</p> <p>Key activities completed to date under the project include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilience review of Council Community Strategic Plans, Delivery Programs and Operational Plans • Literature review on existing regional, state and national resilience policies and strategies • Draft introductory sections for Resilience IP&R Package, including framework for what makes a ‘leading’, ‘motivated’ and ‘committed’ resilient Council and community • Ongoing discussions with Resilience NSW and Resilient Sydney on local/state/national resilience work, especially following the recent flood disaster in the Hunter region. • Research into existing resilience health check tools continues, and planning for the Health and Resilience Games is underway. <p>In the coming months, Hunter JO will be commencing engagement with Councils to test the work done to date, gain a better understanding of Council roles and responsibilities, and identify resource gaps when it comes to resilience. We will meet with Councils individually and would like to include General Managers and appropriate Directors, Managers and operational staff in short workshop sessions.</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 project continues to progress well. As at 1 September, the following activities have been delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 community workshops - Karuah Aboriginal Community and Singleton Emergency Services Expo. • 9 Simtable demonstrations - including RFS, Councils, Red Cross and Resilience NSW. • 2 Simtable loans - LMCC and Laguna Rural Fire Brigade <p>A further 5 workshops/ community events and 1 demonstration to Local Land Services are scheduled for delivery in September and October.</p> <p>Further project highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Software update enabling a data management portal. This allows for Simtable users to upload and manage datasets for use on the Simtable. • State Vegetation Type Map (SVTM) acquired from NSW DPE and made available in Simtable software. Fire model now draws on this mapping. • Data acquired from Lake Mac, Singleton and MidCoast for use in workshops. • Replacement sand in transit to replace existing walnut shell, which will significantly improve visual clarity of the projection and in doing so the user experience. • Project working group meeting held, featuring staff from several participating Councils. | |

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 |
| Purpose: | |
| 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. | |
| Status update: | |
| Following the 11 Councils in the Hunter joining the Cities Power Partnership Program, the Hunter Joint Organisation (Hunter JO) in March 2021 accepted an invitation from the Cities Power Partnership (CPP) to become its first 'Regional Partner'. We are the first region nationally to achieve this and were acknowledged in the NSW Parliament. | |
| The CPP pledges established have been linked and incorporated into the Climate Change IP&R Package. Hunter JO staff are currently collaborating with CPP to prepare a draft MOU. The intention of this partnership is to formalise collaboration between the organisations in order to support informed and coordinated local government climate initiatives in the Hunter region. The aim would be to ensure we enter into a partnership with mutual commitments and benefits that will support each party to achieve its aims. | |

| 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"> • Upcoming training and capacity building includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Forum on acid sulfate soils • Undertaking preliminary site investigations • Training for asset managers • UPSS refresher training • Hunter JO staff recently attended a 2-day EPA workshop with other staff from other regional CRCB programs to discuss the remaining 6 months of the program and consolidation of all resources, including a new EPA endorsed state-wide model policy. • The Hunter Contaminated Land Working Group was held in late July and discussed Council priorities and knowledge gaps to be focussed on during the coming months, including training needs which can be provided by the EPA. | |

- Correspondence has recently been sent (14th September 2022) to the The Hon. James Griffin MP, Minister for Environment and Heritage requesting support for the continuation of the Contaminated Land Council Regional Capacity Building (CRCB) Program beyond January 2023.

| Business case review - potential for HJO to host Regional Illegal Dumping Squad | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Program / Project Lead | Tim Askew and Eloise Lobsey |
| Delivery Status | Complete |
| Purpose: | |
| 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. | |
| Status update: | |
| Negotiations with the EPA are continuing with a common goal of establishing a RID Program Model in the Hunter and central Coast based on the following: | |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The EPA will support a RID program model approach for the Hunter (as previously resolved by GMAC), to drive regional solutions to the management of illegal dumping. 2. Limitations in the amount of RID program funding presently available, will require the program, in terms of funding for full members, to start small and scale up over time. Starting small and scaling up in this way would also provide the opportunity to pilot the RID program model approach before expanding more broadly across the region. 3. Scaling up the model over time would involve the EPA, Hunter JO and Member Councils actively working together to explore further funding opportunities for expansion. This could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring alternative grant programs • Engaging with public land managers across the region (e.g. NPWS, Crown Lands, Hunter Water Corporation, State Forests, Department of Defence) with a view to them investing in the program. This approach also has greater potential for attracting NSW Treasury funding as it demonstrates a co-investment approach. 4. Subject to confirming the comfort of GMAC with this approach, the next steps would include the Hunter JO and EPA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refining the program model budget based on a “start small and scale up” approach within the current funding envelope that is available • Confirming the initial participating Councils within this model • Establishing a 5-year funding agreement with stop/review points to facilitate review and/or expansion of the model to full regional coverage over time. • Developing a governance model to establish clear responsibilities for program delivery and decision making between the EPA, Hunter JO and participating Councils. | |

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>This project is now technically complete, however comments from the last round of Council feedback and community focus groups is still being incorporated into the package, which will be made publicly available during the second half of 2022. A Consultant is likely to be appointed to complete the package updates. The Climate Change IP&R Package has been released as a final document and is available on the Hunter JO website.</p> | |

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

| Hunter & Central Coast Regional Circular Materials and Waste Strategy | |
|--|--------------------|
| Program / Project Lead | Eloise Lobsey |
| Delivery Status | Delayed / Impacted |
| Purpose: | |
| <p>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.</p> | |
| Status update: | |
| <p>The strategy has been on hold since April awaiting critical information and resourcing from the EPA (relating to the NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy). Funding details are still not available; however consultancy resources have been released by the EPA in August to assist us with completion of the strategy. Given that MidCoast Council joined the Hunter Central Coast Regional Waste Group in August (2022), we are using the EPA sponsored consultancy resources to onboard and factor in MidCoast into our evidence base and strategy. Engagement of consultants is underway at the moment, with work scheduled to commence in September 2022. All regional strategies are to be completed by December 2022.</p> | |

| 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 | On track |
| Purpose: To deliver a regionally coordinated approach to promoting community awareness of Community Recycling Centres (CRC's). | |
| Status update: CRC promotion has recommenced with plans to increase direct mail, radio advertising and social media promotion which will also highlight a recent new video promoting CRCs across the region which was recently filmed at Lake Macquarie and Singleton CRCs. | |

| 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 Circular Economy (CE) Hub project is continuing to work with the CE Living Lab (CELL) developed by Lake Macquarie City Council to see how we can leverage CE outcomes for the region.
- An \$878,600 funding application was submitted to the Regional NSW Business Case and Strategy Development Fund on 24th August to prepare a concept plan and strategy for Circular Economy Precincts and a concept plan and strategy for a CE Futures Hub.

Circular Economy Roadmap

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| Program / Project Lead | Tim Askew |
| Delivery Status | On track |

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 2022. The Roadmap can be viewed at [Circular Economy Roadmap - Hunter & Central Coast Circular \(huntercircular.com.au\)](https://huntercircular.com.au)

We are continuing to work on the quarterly review process to keep the Roadmap up to date and relevant. The next roadmap update will be posted to the website in October 2022.

Circular Economy Eco-system Stage 2

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| Program / Project Lead | Tim Askew |
| Delivery Status | On track |

Purpose:

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

Status update:

The project is currently under review in preparation for NSW EPA grant rounds opening over the next 6 months. A CE newsletter will be launched following the launch of the CE Roadmap and the CE website - huntercircular.com.au will have a refresh by November 2022.

| 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: No further update. The EOI process continues to be managed through Lake Macquarie City Council. | |

| Regional Waste Management Training (Cert III in Waste Management) | |
|---|----------------|
| Program / Project Lead | Susan McDonald |
| Delivery Status | On track |
| Purpose: Councils identified a training need for waste management staff. A capacity building program was established to deliver Cert III in Waste Management to train council waste management staff from across the region utilising funds from the NSW Government's Better Waste Recycling program. | |
| Status update: Following an EOI process canvassing all councils in the region, 4 councils including Cessnock, Maitland, Muswellbrook and Singleton nominated staff for the course. Twelve staff commenced training in March this year and will complete the course in March 2023. The training is being delivered by Academy Green. | |

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>Recent meetings of the Subcommittee (11th August & 8th September) have focused on the following key areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Royalties for Rejuvenation Expert Panel</i> - with the initial term of the Royalties for Rejuvenation Interim Expert Panel now expired, the Subcommittee resolved that the Hunter JO seek to have a representative nominated to participate on the new permanent Expert Panel being established, and that this representative be Joe James, CEO. This nomination was submitted on 5th September 2022. <i>Regional Advocacy & Policy priorities</i> – meetings of the Subcommittee have continued to refine the regional policy and advocacy asks of the Hunter JO (and the strategies to communicate them to State and Federal Governments) to support the region’s economic evolution. Key policy and advocacy messages and priorities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirming acknowledgement by the State and Commonwealth Governments of the economic issues facing the region and seeking a commitment them to work with the region to proactively these Reinforcing the importance of maintaining and improving the region’s liveability and prosperity (per capita Gross Regional Product) as a core tenet of our advocacy Royalties for Rejuvenation <ol style="list-style-type: none"> \$25M per annum across 3 regions is not enough for the economic evolution task that is required Expenditure of the \$25M should not be via a competitive grant-based process. This would encourage competition between regional stakeholders rather than collaboration Targeting the next Federal Government election seeking a commitment for a “regional deal” to ensure the sustainability of our communities into the future. The focus for the 2023 NSW Government election should be a “policy commitment” from the State that the Hunter is significant enough to commit to a dedicated regional transition entity. <i>Hunter Venture Fund</i> – reviewing the recommendations of the report prepared by Henshall Capital regarding the establishment of a place-based venture Fund in the Hunter, including providing guidance on the next steps required to confirm the feasibility and support for the concept. | |

3.2 Work with the Hunter Research Foundation, University of Newcastle and other research partners to gather and analyse economic data and develop a regional attraction plan based on regional strengths in research, education, transport and logistics, aerospace, agribusiness and tourism.

| Hunter Economic Model | |
|--|----------------|
| Program / Project Lead | Boyd Blackwell |
| Delivery Status | On track |
| Purpose: | |
| To develop/obtain an easily updateable, forward and backward-looking economic model for the region that can be used to quantify the economic impacts of any given policy, program or project, and that provides detailed analysis of the relative structure, size and impact of the region’s evolving economy. This will support most of the HJO’s Regional Policy and Program work: both backward looking reviews and evaluations and forward-looking policy, strategies and plans. | |
| Status update: | |
| Through the Regional Population Scenario Planning project, access to REMPLAN (an off-the-shelf regional economic modelling tool) by the Hunter JO is being explored. Subject to being acquired, this will provide an evidence based tool to support the regional economic analysis outlined in “purpose” above. | |

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 Subcommittee | |
|--|--------------|
| Program / Project Lead | Steve Wilson |
| Delivery Status | On track |
| Purpose: | |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 To 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. | |
| Status update: | |
| <p>The Subcommittee last met on 17 August 2022. Key outcomes from the meeting included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The Subcommittee has written write to the Hon Rob Stokes, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Cities, and Minister for Active Transport outlining that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Subcommittee provides a formal governance mechanism that will support the newly appointed Lower Hunter and Greater Newcastle City Cities Commissioner in their role it is the expectation of the GNMP Mayors that the Commissioner will participate as a member of the Subcommittee. The Hunter JO will continue to provide secretariat support to the Subcommittee for the next 12-month period, to ensure the ongoing activity and focus of the committee. After this period opportunities for the Greater Cities Commission to support the Subcommittee can be explored. | |

3. A workshop of the Subcommittee is to be held to determine agreed advocacy agenda and priorities of the Subcommittee prior to its first meeting with the new Lower Hunter and Greater Newcastle Cities Commissioner
4. Ongoing meetings of the Subcommittee will be held on the second Thursday of each month. These meetings will incorporate a schedule of briefings from NSW Government Agencies.

| 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 presented to the Hunter JO Board and planners in August is out for more consultation before finalisation by December 2022. All advocacy items included in the document will be translated and transferred into the consolidated and overarching Hunter JO Advocacy Framework & Priorities. | |

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: | |
| As previously reported, 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: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. <p>An engagement process with staff across Member Councils to discuss the findings and recommendations of the report is almost complete. This has identified general support for the concept of the place-based fund, which would complement any existing funds and innovation support provided to ventures in the region. The next steps in the project include widening consultation to further explore the report's findings and recommendations with:</p> | |

1. The Region's Investment & Innovation Ecosystem
2. Senior Government Agency representatives and policy advisors
3. NSW Government Ministers

| 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 uploaded onto 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 |
| Purpose: 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. | |
| Status update: This project is on hold, waiting for the NSW data action plan refresh (Strategy 2.0). This will enable the project to review priorities and directions. | |

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 |
| Purpose: 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.

Status update:

Key project initiatives underway at present include:

- The draft Economic Analysis report prepared by KPMG to determine the value and benefits of events for the region (including comparisons to other regions) was provided for review mid-August
- The Event Approvals Review project draft report is due end of September
- The Facility Audit is nearing completion with a recommendations report soon to be provided.
- Preparations for website project, and tourism prospectus are commencing.

Mayors Gala - Building Regional Collaboration & Celebrating Regional Success

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| Program / Project Lead | Boyd Blackwell |
| Delivery Status | Delayed / Impacted |

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 needs to be undertaken to further review and refine the concept or to explore alternatives.

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 Initiative

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Program / Project Lead | Steve Wilson & Kali Somerville |
| 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:

- 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:

The extended advocacy video [When We Get to the World Stage](#) has now been officially released and is being promoted. The video is designed to support regional advocacy efforts aimed at influencing key decision makers and potential investors in the region. The video showcases storylines from local people and businesses from around the region as to what direct international access through the airport will allow them to do.

The "Flightpath to the Future" 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.

Two funding applications have recently been submitted to the Regional NSW Business Case and Strategy Development Fund, that aim to directly build on the outcomes of the Hunter Global Summit delivered earlier in the year. These have been developed in collaboration with our Hunter Global partners & include:

1. Regional Airports Strategy (\$500,000)
 - A strategy & business case for airfreight infrastructure investment and connectivity infrastructure for passenger and airfreight logistics (LIP) for the region.
 - An integrated airports strategy for the region (IRAS) including assessments of passenger, airfreight and transport (PAT) links to each airport across the region.
2. Hunter Global Tourism (\$500,000)
 - Stakeholder engagement to bring all tourism, marketing and economic development organisations across the region to identify how we want to position, brand and market our region as one to potential visitors.
 - Undertaking a review of our region to identify one piece of priority tourism infrastructure needed by our region to attract international visitors.

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 | On track |
| <p>Purpose:</p> <p>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.</p> | |
| <p>Status update:</p> <p>This project is being redesigned to focus on the development of Circular Economy (CE) Precincts to align more closely with NSW Government thinking. Hunter BioCircular is a key element of the CE Precinct concept. Recent actions include applying for grant funds through the regional NSW Business Case and Strategy Fund to develop a concept plan, strategy and business case for CE Precincts incorporating Hunter BioCircular as the centrepiece of the precinct. Discussions have also commenced with businesses keen to be part of CE Precincts to understand their needs with a view to unlocking investment barriers.</p> | |

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 | 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 Submissions | |
|----------------------|---|
| Delivery Status | Not yet started (pending release of key regional plans and initiatives on which to provide submissions) |

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 | 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 | Delayed / Impacted |
| <p>Purpose:</p> <p>Transport for NSW are developing a new Hunter Regional Transport Plan. Its development was occurring in collaboration with DPIE's current process to review the Hunter Regional Plan to ensure these key documents were 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 | |
| <p>Status update:</p> <p>It is intended that the Hunter JO will facilitate the development of a regional submission on the draft Hunter Regional Transport Plan in collaboration with Member Councils subject to it being 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: | |
| <p>Phase 2 of this project is now well advanced, with outputs 1-3 (see following) now completed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preparation of a googleform for councils and other agencies to provide their infrastructure priorities annually 2. Development and testing of an excel model for capturing and analyzing data 3. Extending the model to integrate decisions relating to prioritisation, such as qualitative assessment and rapid CBA outcomes 4. Development of an operating procedure 5. Incorporation of a pipeline of existing project data within the database <p>Engagement with Council officers is being planned for the coming months to familiarise them with the project outputs, to identify the most suitable times to request infrastructure data from Councils (so as to integrate with existing Council processes), and to familiarise them with the data collection processes and tools that will be used to capture infrastructure data from them moving forward.</p> | |

| Regional Cycle Tourism Master Plan (Shiraz to Shore) | |
|---|-----------|
| Program / Project Lead | Tim Askew |
| Delivery Status | On track |
| Purpose: | |
| <p>Significant opportunity exists to link existing and planned cycleway infrastructure across Hunter JO member Councils; to create an integrated region wide network. This would provide both a valuable region wide recreational resource for residents, and the foundation upon which to generate economic and business development by holistically promoting the region as a key cycling destination. The purpose of this project is to prepare and implement a cycle tourism masterplan / Destination Management Plan for the region.</p> | |
| Status update: | |
| <p>A funding application totalling \$387,500 was recently submitted to the Regional NSW Business Case and Strategy Development Fund to develop a concept plan, strategy and business case for the project.</p> | |

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 | Delivery Status: Not yet started (subject to resourcing) |
|------------------------|---|

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 | Delivery Status: Not yet started (subject to resourcing) |
|------------------------|---|