



**HUNTER
JOINT
ORG.**
COLLABORATION OF HUNTER COUNCILS

**Hunter JO Advocacy Framework
and Priorities 2022**

As we approach **one million people by 2040**, radical intervention is required to maintain the liveability and economic prosperity of the Hunter.



The Hunter Region is a Powerhouse of the NSW and National Economies.

It has the largest regional economy in Australia, driving around 28% of regional NSW's total economic output, \$23 billion of which can be attributed to coal exports.

We need to work together to build the region's resilience to changing global energy demands and maintain its significant contribution to Australia's economies.

Hunter 2041 Population
NSW Government Forecast

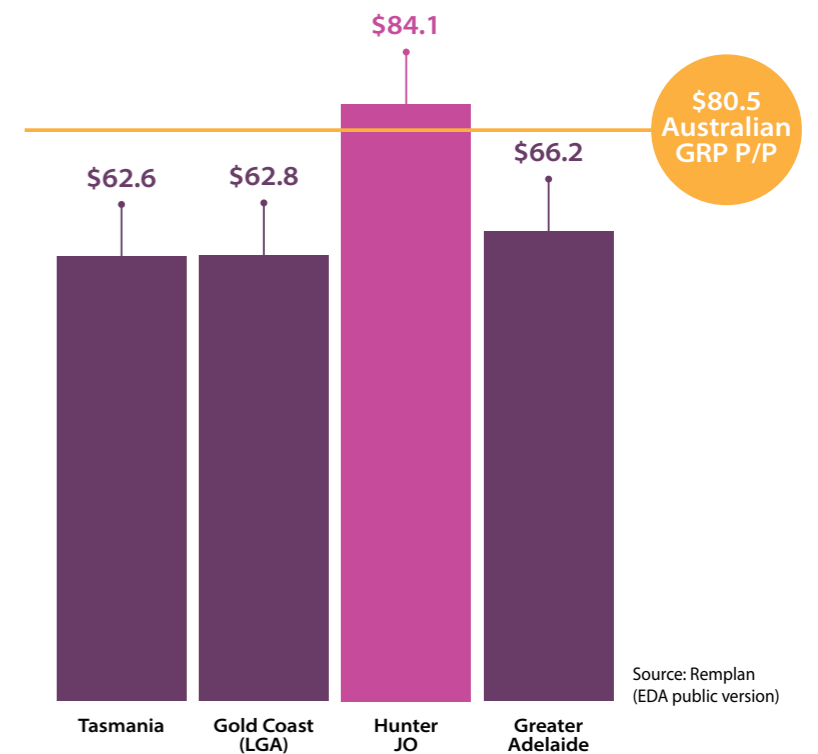
949,833



773,135

Current Hunter
Population

Gross
Regional
Product
per person



Source: Remplan
(EDA public version)



What we want for our local communities

We believe it is
**our responsibility to
support and advocate for the
people of the Hunter.**

Change is upon us now.

We will not allow the quality of life or the opportunities available to our community to be eroded while the economic drivers of our community evolve.



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

Our Leaders



Cr Sue Moore
Mayor Singleton Council



Cr Jay Suvaal
Mayor Cessnock City Council



Cr John Connors
Mayor Dungog Shire Council



Cr Kay Fraser
Mayor Lake Macquarie City Council



Cr Philip Penfold
Mayor Maitland City Council



Cr Claire Pontin
Mayor MidCoast Council



Cr Steven Reynolds
Mayor Muswellbrook Shire Council



Cr Nuatali Nelmes
Lord Mayor City of Newcastle



Cr Ryan Palmer
Mayor Port Stephens Council



Cr Maurice Collison
Mayor Upper Hunter Shire Council

Our Collective Voice

10
Local Councils

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



11

State Electorates

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



6

Federal Electorates

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

Engagement Driving Priorities

As a region currently facing the downturn of its traditional industries and a fast-growing population, the Hunter's economy needs to evolve to maintain its substantial economic contribution to the State and Federal economies. As we approach one million people by 2040, radical intervention is required to maintain the liveability and economic prosperity of the Hunter to build a region resilient to changing global energy demands.

Individual economic opportunity and value needs to be maintained and improved as the region diversifies away from coal. This will require support and investment from all levels of government.

Our Priorities

Represent the synthesised, collective view
of local communities.

Are drawn directly from many 1000's of our constituents,
through extensive community engagement undertaken
by Councils, in preparing statutory 10 year
Community Strategic Plans.

Are based on extensive and measurable
quantitative and qualitative data from
in-person and online community workshops,
pop-up kiosks and online surveys.

Our Regional Priorities

Our unique lifestyle and attractive environment is protected and enhanced



A resilient region prepared for change



All levels of government contribute to ensuring the Hunter's successful economic evolution



Infrastructure and transport systems that connect the region



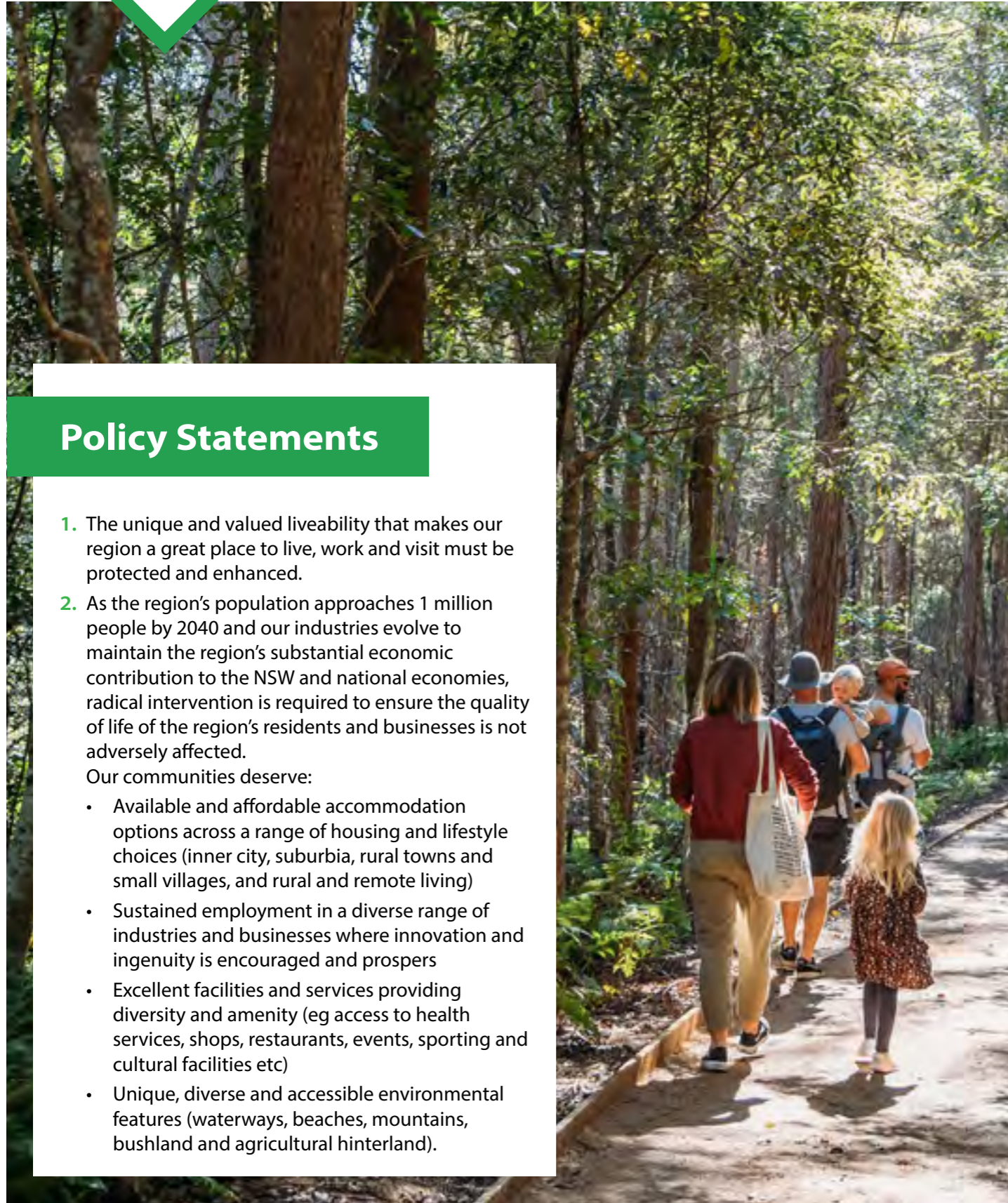
Improving authority and resourcing for place-led decision-making at a local and regional scale

A globally focused Hunter connected to international markets





Our unique lifestyle and attractive environment is protected and enhanced.



Policy Statements

1. The unique and valued liveability that makes our region a great place to live, work and visit must be protected and enhanced.
2. As the region's population approaches 1 million people by 2040 and our industries evolve to maintain the region's substantial economic contribution to the NSW and national economies, radical intervention is required to ensure the quality of life of the region's residents and businesses is not adversely affected.
Our communities deserve:
 - Available and affordable accommodation options across a range of housing and lifestyle choices (inner city, suburbia, rural towns and small villages, and rural and remote living)
 - Sustained employment in a diverse range of industries and businesses where innovation and ingenuity is encouraged and prospers
 - Excellent facilities and services providing diversity and amenity (eg access to health services, shops, restaurants, events, sporting and cultural facilities etc)
 - Unique, diverse and accessible environmental features (waterways, beaches, mountains, bushland and agricultural hinterland).



Advocacy Asks

Housing Availability and Affordability

1. Support affordability and increased access to housing.
2. Unlock the transport deficit to support increases in supply of higher density housing.

Liveability Infrastructure

Investment in a Liveability program of local government led infrastructure projects.

The local amenity provided by these projects enhance liveability, which is key to global talent attraction. These projects also create local jobs, provide confidence in local business communities of a sustained pipeline of work, and can be rolled out quickly to provide dispersed benefits. The key themes across the whole region include:

- Fixing and upgrading local roads and bridges
- Sporting, recreational and community facilities
- Cycleway and pedestrian infrastructure
- Improved health facilities, services and research
- Town Centre upgrades and beautification
- Upgrades to water and sewer infrastructure.





A resilient region prepared for change.



Policy Statements

1. The region needs to be prepared for change, and able to withstand and recover from natural and human induced risks (i.e. natural disasters, climate change, economic and social disruption and change).
 2. The current system of reactive, post disaster competitive grant processes to facilitate local and regional recovery and resilience planning does not provide the best value for money. Such an approach:
 - Directly fosters competition between regional stakeholders rather than building the alignment and a collaborative approach that is needed to successfully support communities recover from and plan resilience to natural disasters of increasing frequency and intensity
 3. The cost of implementing Coastal Management Programs being developed by Councils in collaboration with the NSW Government is prohibitive for Councils, meaning that the objectives and intent of the NSW Government's Coastal Management Act will not be achieved under the current system.
- The current system places a significant administrative impost on Councils in the post disaster period, at the very time that maximum resources (human and financial) need to be focused on disaster recovery and resilience efforts.
 - The current grant-based system places a disproportionate negative impact on the capacity of smaller and less resourced Councils and Joint Organisations to access adequate and sustainable recovery and resilience funding.



Advocacy Asks

Sustainable Place-based Resilience Planning and Resourcing

Commit to more sustainable and strategic place-based planning and resourcing of local and regional recovery and resilience planning, delivered via the collaborative efforts of Local Councils and Joint Organisations. At a minimum such funding should be provided on a four-year, recurrent funding cycle that aligns to the Integrated Planning and Reporting cycles of Councils and Joint Organisations.

Coastal Management

Establish a truly collaborative funding model involving significant state resources to effectively meet the objectives and intent of the NSW Government's Coastal Management Act. Innovative funding models are required to enable the State Government and Councils to generate revenue for Coastal Management Programs.

Rural Fire Service Assets

That the NSW Government's determination, applied by the Auditor General, that Rural Fire Service assets (Red Fleet) are the property of councils for accounting purposes be reversed.



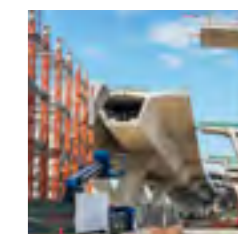


All levels of government contribute to ensuring the Hunter's successful economic evolution.



Policy Statements

1. As we transition to a clean energy future, we need to evolve the Hunter's economy to ensure a steady increase in the region's economic outputs, so that the dominance of coal is replaced with other products and services, at a level that will:
 - Replace and provide more jobs than those currently provided by traditional heavy industries
 - Maintain and improve the lifestyle and opportunities available for our local communities.
2. The economic evolution needed in the Hunter requires intervention and investment across all sectors and levels of government. Investment that accelerates and amplifies market driven investment in innovation and capitalises on the region's existing natural strengths and attributes is the priority.
3. The region needs a clear, place-based, integrated whole of government policy and planning approach to drive the Region's economic evolution, including:
 - Create a structure for better information, collaboration and agreement on the economic evolution strategy for the Hunter.
 - Establish an entity that has the authority and resources from the Commonwealth and NSW Governments necessary to drive and deliver the Region's economic evolution. The entity would provide institutional capacity with a focus on expert and empowered place-based planning and decision-making capability.
 - Establish a specialised local investment and redevelopment entity, with place-based leadership collaborating with government, to drive the industrial changes needed to transition the Hunter's economy.
 - Support businesses and workers impacted by changes in the economy with dedicated innovation and transition support services.
4. Design of the Royalties for Rejuvenation program strategically and systematically fund the transition required to support coal mining communities to attract and develop new industries in the long-term
5. The \$25M per annum currently allocated across NSW coal mining regions from the Royalties for Rejuvenation program, is insufficient to support the investment needed to proactively catalyse the region's economic evolution.
6. Accelerating planning and investment in key regional catalyst areas is critical to driving the economic evolution of the region and to making the Hunter a globally connected region.





All levels of government contribute to ensuring the Hunter's successful economic evolution.

Advocacy Asks

Coordinated Planning and Investment

- **A commitment to establish a regional entity based in the Hunter, with the authority and resources from the Commonwealth and NSW Governments,** necessary to drive and deliver the Region's economic evolution.
- **Establish a "place-based deal" for the Hunter,** entered by all levels of Government, that provides clear priorities for public and private investment and planning in the Hunter for the next 30 years.
- **Develop an Integrated Transport Plan** for the Hunter Region that identifies and delivers:
 - Increased accessibility to diverse transport options that provide genuine options for our communities
 - Clear priorities and funding for transport infrastructure and services to support a population of 1 million people by 2041
 - Frequency and accessibility to a diversity of transport services and systems that provide a truly sustainable '15-minute region' via genuine multi-modal, fast and efficient non-car based intra-regional connections, particularly between key facilities including Newcastle Airport, tertiary educational facilities (University & TAFE), health and medical services and regional transport nodes.
- **Make both legislation and policy changes to provide clarity, certainty and a clear pathway** to enable access to and adaptation of former mining and mining buffer lands.

Royalties for Rejuvenation

- **Increase the level of funding allocated overall to the Royalties for Rejuvenation program.**
 - **Allocate funds from the program to a "place-based deal" or entity** to drive and deliver the coordinated and integrated approach needed to ensure the region's economic evolution
- NOTE:** Establishing a competitive grant process in the Hunter to determine the allocation of funds from the Royalties for Rejuvenation Program will not deliver the best value for money or the necessary outcome from these funds. It will instead:
- Significantly undermine the credibility of the program and its potential role in strategically shaping the economic evolution of the region beyond coal.
 - Directly foster competition between regional stakeholders rather than building the alignment and collaborative approach that is needed to successfully plan and deliver the Hunter's economic evolution.



Investment in Innovation

Invest \$1.5M per annum for 10 years to create and operate a "Hunter Innovation Entity" which will:

- Support the commercialisation of research and other innovation in the Hunter region
 - Support ventures which leverage opportunities in energy transition or diversify Hunter economic activity
 - Incubate, accelerate and activate the innovation ecosystem that will attract investors and provide confidence that there is a pipeline of viable Hunter investment opportunities
- Establish a \$50M Hunter Venture Fund,** to be co-funded by all levels of Government, research and industry partners which will:
- Accelerate the flow of capital into the region to support the innovation ecosystem and drive investment.
 - Activate a pipeline of projects that attracts ongoing private sector investment.
 - Address concerns around access to a depth of readily available capital for early-stage ventures in the Hunter

Building the Nation's Leading Circular Economy Region

Invest \$2.65M over 3 years to position the Hunter as Australia's leading Circular Economy region:

- **Circular Economy Precincts (\$0.9M)** – delivery of concept plans for 4 multi-element circular economy precincts across the region. Each precinct will represent a key strength or resource available, and establish circular processing, green energy and value-added businesses that deliver new industries and jobs to the Hunter.
- **Circular Economy Futures Hub (\$1.75M)** – to drive the growth of the Circular Economy across the Hunter and Central Coast by Councils, government agencies, education, business and industry groups and the community including:
 - Delivering the region's Circular Economy Roadmap
 - Acquire and share research and information, and provide a "problem concierge" (i.e. a regional broker to link stakeholders with issues to those who can provide solutions)
 - Curate and grow the Circular Economy ecosystem
 - Facilitate and deliver projects and initiatives across organisations
 - Consistent and coordinated promotion of the region to researchers, innovators and investors.

Catalysing Investment

Government planning documents recognise and prioritise investment to accelerate planning and development of key regional catalyst areas, including:

- Williamtown Special Activation Precinct
- John Hunter Hospital Health and Innovation Precinct
- Lake Macquarie Northwest Catalyst Area
- Callaghan
- Beresfield - Black Hill
- Broadmeadow (Hunter Park)
- East Maitland Catalyst Precinct
- Newcastle Port
- Tomago
- Kotara



A globally focused Hunter connected to international markets.



Policy Statements

1. A globally focused Hunter connected to international markets will underpin the Hunter's successful economic evolution. Efficient and effective access to global markets to attract investment and talent to evolve our economy, and to sell our products and services on the world stage, will be key to this success.



Advocacy Asks

- Global Gateways**
- All levels of government **confirm their support for the Commonwealth Government's commitment of \$66 million to upgrade the Newcastle Airport runway to Code E status**
 - All levels of government **confirm their support for the Newcastle Airport terminal upgrade**
 - **Establish a permanent Australian Border Force presence at Newcastle Airport** following commissioning of the airport runway upgrade to Code E status.
 - **Invest in development of a Transport Master Plan** that prioritises and improves accessibility for people and freight from across the region to key international transport and export hubs including Newcastle Airport and the Port of Newcastle.
 - **Remove restrictions in the Port of Newcastle Port Commitment Deed** impeding the development of the Newcastle Container Terminal.

Building International Profile and Visitation

Invest \$4M over three years for "Hunter Global – Regional Tourism Marketing, Concierge & Product Packaging." To capitalise on direct international access created by the Newcastle Airport runway and passenger terminal upgrades, this initiative is necessary to provide coordination and promotion to grow the number of international visitors directly entering the region and entice them to stay and spend longer. Key elements include:

- A unified and collaborative approach across the Hunter Region to connect experiences and create compelling itineraries (e.g. food and wine trails, coastal experiences, coast to mountains, rural hinterland, ecotourism trail, adventure experiences etc)
- Scoping the opportunities, focus and delivery mechanisms for existing booking systems to provide a whole of region approach to international travel packaging and booking.
- Identifying key barriers and opportunities for attracting international visitors directly to the region via Newcastle Airport
- Market research to identify core international markets aligned to the region's key tourism assets and experiences
- Development and delivery of a targeted international marketing campaign.





Infrastructure and transport systems that connect the region.



Policy Statements

1. Addressing the existing infrastructure deficit and improving intra-regional transport connectivity is key to realising the broader aspiration and strategic goals for the region, which are focused around: Jobs & A Growing Economy; Connectivity; Liveability; and Resilience.
2. Investment in digital connectivity and the elimination of mobile black spots across the region are fundamental to ensure community access to core health and education opportunities, and to enable business development, growth and innovation.
3. Uptake of electric cars, bicycles and other vehicles is increasing rapidly and will continue to accelerate over the coming years. Providing a pathway and level of confidence for private and commercial users is needed to support the transition to Electric Vehicles, and in doing so, improve intra and inter regional connectivity and accessibility for EVs in a way that supports regional liveability, local place making, economic activity and the visitor economy.
4. Improving connectivity of the region's cycling experiences and networks and increasing cycle tourism provides clear benefits to local communities and economies, including new jobs within the visitor economy, preventive health outcomes, enhanced recreational opportunities and social connectivity, and environmental benefits such as reducing car use and contributing towards net zero emissions targets.



Advocacy Asks

Digital Connectivity

Support and encourage investment in equitable and competitive digital connectivity and the elimination of mobile black spots across the region to ensure community access to core health and education opportunities, and to enable business development, growth and innovation.

Integrated Transport Planning

Develop an Integrated Transport Plan for the Hunter Region that identifies and delivers:

- Clear priorities and funding for transport infrastructure and services to support a population of 1 million people by 2041
- Frequency and accessibility to a diversity of transport services and systems that provide a truly sustainable "15-minute region" via genuine multi-modal, fast and efficient non-car based intra-regional connections, particularly between key facilities including Newcastle Airport, tertiary educational facilities (University & TAFE), health and medical services and regional transport nodes.
- \$500M to establish an Enabling Infrastructure Fund to invest in urban infrastructure that will free up land capable of supporting the construction of over 25,000 homes and generate an annual economic output of \$12.9 billion including the creation of 15,700 jobs.

For more information - [Partnering for Growth](#)

Local and Regional Road Network

- **Confirm the process and timeframe for completing a review of the road classification system** across all of NSW.
- **Streamline the process for Councils to apply for the reclassification of roads** from regional to state status and local to regional status



Infrastructure and transport systems that connect the region.



Cycle Based Tourism

\$1M investment in Stage 1 of “Shiraz to Shore”, a region-wide recreational and tourism initiative that connects and amplifies a collection of already outstanding cycle experiences that span mountain, road and leisure riding across the Hunter. Stage 1 will develop the Shiraz to Shore concept as a nationally and internationally recognised destination for recreational and high value cycling tourists, including development of:

- Destination Masterplan
- Website to collate all existing cycling experiences in the Hunter into one comprehensive location
- Marketing Plan
- Product development.

Contribution to the \$71M build program for Shiraz to Shore, to link existing and planned cycleway infrastructure, local businesses and points of interest across all council areas to create an integrated region wide network. Connecting the picturesque Hunter wine country to the spectacular coastal beaches and lakes through this initiative, will activate cycle tourism as a significant contributor to our local and regional economies, and to the Hunter’s broader economic evolution. The breakdown of the project sections are (from the vineyards towards the coast) are:

- Shiraz Section (Pokolbin to Cessnock) - \$17.5m
- Cessnock to Kurri Section - \$14m
- Richmond Vale Rail Trail - \$39.6m
- Broke to Hermitage Road
- Hermitage Road to Pokolbin and
- Branxton to Hermitage Road

Transition to Electric Vehicles

\$300K to develop a Regional Strategic Plan for Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure to support a region-wide transition to EV’s.

The plan will identify:

- Priority locations and types of recharging stations to provide a strategic and consolidated network across the region that is integrated with community, business and tourism facilities. This will provide confidence to local communities of access to recharging facilities and underpin increased visitation to the region based on the Hunter being “EV friendly”.
- Priority actions (and collaborative opportunities) for Councils to transition their own corporate fleets to EV, and to identify the mechanisms through which this could be delivered in a collaborative manner (e.g. policy alignment, regional monitoring, regional procurement).



Improving authority and resourcing for place-led decision-making at a local and regional scale.



Policy Statements

1. Wherever possible and appropriate, delegation of decision-making authority to place-led mechanisms strengthens social fabric and empowers communities.
2. Increasing the authority of local decision-making can, and will, come with increased accountability of decision makers to communities. This can occur through statutory and funding requirements but principally is manifested through the proximity of local elected representatives to community and the democratic process.
3. Having genuine local decision-making authority, encourages members of a local community to have an active voice in matters that affect their lives and encourages them to advocate for the voice of others with whom they are connected within their communities.
4. Increasing the authority of local decision-making is only meaningful if supported with appropriate resourcing. This requires both structural change in the resourcing of local government and also more structured and genuine collaboration between all three levels of government to efficiently use scarce resources.
5. The financial sustainability of a stable source of "royalty" revenue is needed to fund local infrastructure in local communities that bear the impacts, or otherwise have restrictions arising from the contribution of that place to broader regional or state benefits.

It provides communities with a sense of control of their individual and collective futures and drives improved and more meaningful place-led dialogue.



Advocacy Asks

Authority with Resourcing

Restore Financial Assistance Grants to at least 1 percent of Commonwealth taxation revenue via a phased approach.

A fair share of Commonwealth tax revenue is essential to the continued livability of our communities. Financial Assistance Grants, as a source of operating revenue provided to local government, has declined in a highly material, in some instances almost existential, manner over the past 20 years. Funding should be restored in a planned and phased approach to 1% to minimise budgetary shock. Funding should remain untied, meaning it can be spent where it is most needed.

Greater Cities Commission

A formal governance arrangement be enshrined between the Greater Newcastle Cities Commissioner and the five Mayors of the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Area (City of Newcastle, Lake Macquarie City Council, Cessnock City Council, Maitland City Council and Port Stephens Council), that enshrines a process for regular and meaningful communication and collaboration between the Greater Newcastle Cities Commissioner and the five Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Area Mayors.

Road-funding Reform

Commence and lead collaborative reform between all three levels of government in how roads are planned, managed and funded.

Local roads underpin the economy on which local jobs and community amenity depend as well as the productivity of the national tax base. Structural change should not leave some communities worse off but should repair the structural inequity of the current system where regional communities bear an undue road-funding burden compared with capital city counterparts.





Improving authority and resourcing for place-led decision-making at a local and regional scale.



Returning a share of the NSW Government's water dividend to support the communities of the Dungog Shire

A share of the dividend paid to the NSW Government by Hunter Water be provided to Dungog Shire Council

With 80% of the greater Newcastle and Lower Hunter's water supply coming from within the Dungog local government area, the Councils of the Hunter JO seek a share of the dividend paid to the NSW Government by Hunter Water to be provided to Dungog Shire Council to support the future of its communities.

Alignment of NSW grant programs with the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework

A simplification and alignment of government grant programs to Council Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework

Simplification of state government grants and a 4-year commitment (to align to IPR cycle) to each LGA. This would save everyone so much time and allow far better local and regional outcomes.

At a minimum such funding should be provided on a four-year, recurrent funding cycle that aligns to the Integrated Planning and Reporting cycles of Councils and Joint Organisations.

- More standardised approaches to the timing and process of funding applications to align with IP&R processes of Councils
- Government grant programs recognise and fund the priorities identified in Council IP&R Frameworks (ie the core business)

