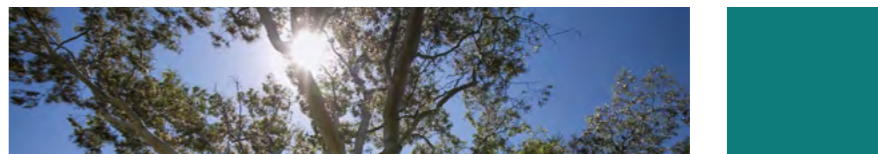




**Hunter JO Program Report
June 2023**



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

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

This program report demonstrates how we are delivering on our four strategic priorities of connectivity, resilience, jobs and a growing economy and liveability.



Acknowledgment of Country

The Hunter Joint Organisation acknowledges the country and history of the traditional custodians of the lands upon which we work and live. We pay our respects to the Elders past, present and emerging, of our region, and of Australia.

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

The Hunter Joint Organisation (Hunter JO) is a collaborative body that brings together the ten councils in the region to provide a united and local voice for our communities. As the hub for local intergovernmental collaboration, our statutory mandate includes identifying key regional strategic priorities, advocating for these priorities, and building collaborations around these priorities with other levels of government, industry and community.

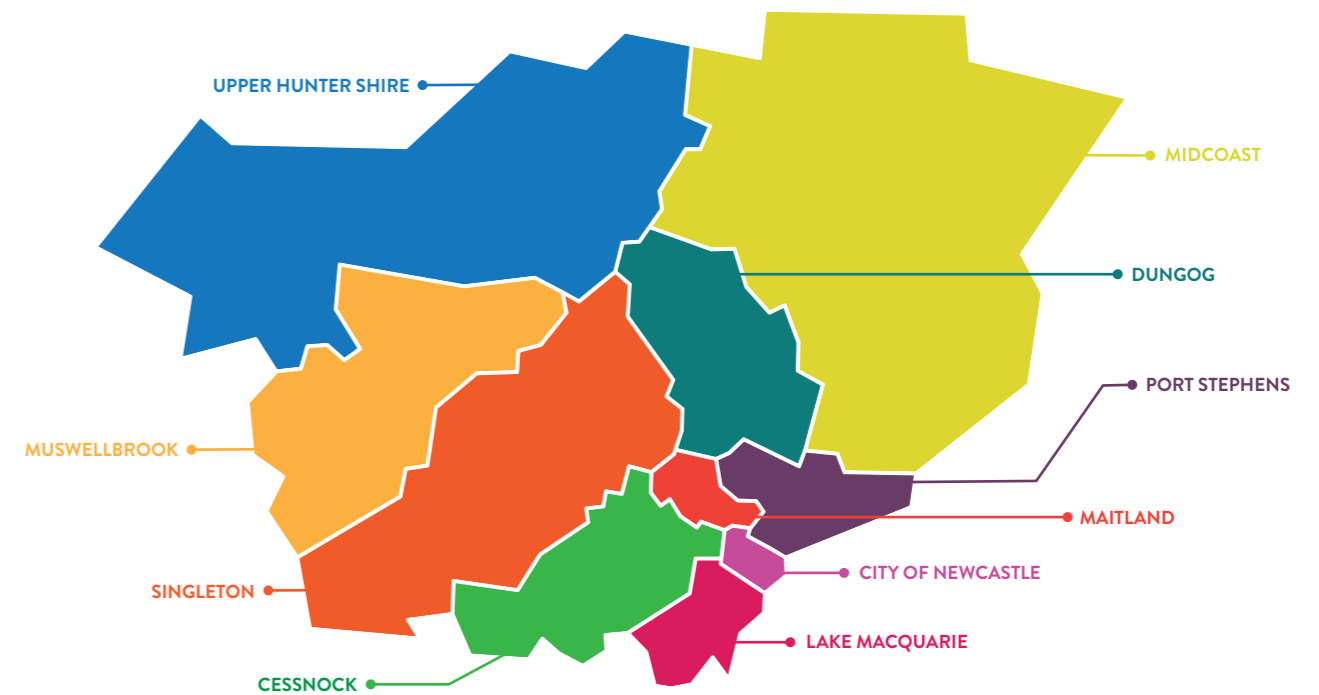
Our statutory functions defined by the NSW Local Government Amendment (Regional Joint Organisations) Act 2017 comprise:

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

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

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

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



Our Vision

We are a Region that:

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



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



Our Board

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

Our Board also includes a representative from NSW Government.



Cr Sue Moore
Mayor Singleton Council



Cr Jay Suvaal
Mayor Cessnock City Council



Cr John Connors
Mayor Dungog Shire Council



Cr Kay Fraser
Mayor Lake Macquarie City Council



Cr Philip Penfold
Mayor Maitland City Council



Cr Claire Pontin
Mayor MidCoast Council



Cr Steven Reynolds
Mayor Muswellbrook Shire Council



Cr Nuatali Nelmes
Lord Mayor City of Newcastle



Cr Ryan Palmer
Mayor Port Stephens Council



Cr Maurice Collison
Mayor Upper Hunter Shire Council

Our Team

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



Our Priorities

Our Strategic Themes



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



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



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



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

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

Our Advocacy Priorities



Our unique lifestyle and attractive environment is protected and enhanced.



A resilient region prepared for change.



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



A globally focused Hunter connected to international markets.



Infrastructure and transport systems that connect the region.



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



Our Delivery

Intergovernmental Collaboration

Hunter JO Workshops, Forums and Events

Events10 Conference

A one day workshop is being planned to provide the Hunter Events Industry with an overview of the outcomes from the Accelerating Event Economies project, including tools and information available to help position our region as a destination of choice for events that align with our unique offering.

28 June 2023

Existing Standing Engagements - Convened by Hunter JO and Local Government

Contaminated Land Working Group

Working Group meeting held on 29 March. A presentation on cattle tick dips was provided by Ballina Council and guests from the Northern Rivers regions joined the discussion. Regular roundtable allowed Councils to share recent sites and challenges, generating good discussion.

Convened by: Hunter JO

Simtables JO Group

Monthly meeting held on 2 May 2023. Hunter JO shared information about possible purchase of flood modelling from JBA Risk to utilise in the Simtable program.

Convened by: Hunter JO

Hunter Net Zero Network

Initial meeting held 26 April 2023. The Hunter JO introduced the network and its purpose and provided an overview of the Net Zero Acceleration Program and Cities Power Partnership regional partnership agreement. A guest presentation was provided by Chargeworks, who will be conducting EV charging feasibility studies in eight Hunter council (funded by NSW Treasury). Finally, a roundtable was held where the council staff were invited to share their work, goals and regional priorities.

Convened by: Hunter JO

Regional Waste Managers Network (Hunter Regional Waste Strategy Group)

The Group met on 30 March 2023, with 8 councils in attendance. The EPA was invited to talk to the group on the issue of lithium ion batteries (storage and handling risks), and the group was advised the EPA were working through the various levels of issues this waste stream is presenting, and as an interim measure would be imminently circulating some guidelines to councils. Other presentations to the group included Utilitarian (app) and Matter (smart bin sensing).

Convened by: Hunter JO

Existing Standing Engagements - Convened by Hunter JO and Local Government	
A2E Tourism and events stakeholder reference committee	Monthly meetings are continuing to steer outcomes of the remaining website and marketing materials being developed under the A2E project. Convened by: Hunter JO
A2E Regional Events Stakeholder Group	A one-day Conference for the Hunter events industry is being planned for 28 June 2023. Convened by: Hunter JO
Hunter Cycle Tourism Advisory Committee	Stakeholders have been invited to nominate relevant contacts for this new project committee. Convened by: Hunter JO
Shiraz to Shore Advisory Committee	Stakeholders have been invited to nominate relevant contacts for this new project committee. Convened by: Hunter JO
Hunter Global Tourism Advisory Committee	Stakeholders have been invited to nominate relevant contacts for this new project committee. Convened by: Hunter JO
Hunter Global Tourism Steering Committee	Glenn Caldwell, General Manager Destination Sydney Surrounds North, and Burcak Sezer, Executive General Manager Marketing and Communications, Newcastle Airport have been appointed to this new project Steering Committee. Convened by: Hunter JO
Hunter Global Partners	A workshop session was held to map the status of any existing delivery, directions or opportunities against the actions identified in the Hunter Global Flightpath report and to explore governance framework / options to support collaborative implementation and monitoring of delivery of the report. Organisations participating in the workshop included the Hunter Global project partners - Newcastle Airport, Business Hunter, Institute for Regional Futures (UoN) and Committee for the Hunter. Convened by: Hunter JO
Sustainable Education Group	This group continues to meet monthly to share, cross promote where possible and collaborate in the Education Space. Our May meeting included a presentation by Jo Taranto from Good for the Hood who talked about her education offer for the region, including an '@home' program that can be delivered on behalf of councils. Convened by: Hunter JO

Existing Standing Engagements - Convened by Others	
Regional Resilience Program Advisory Committee	Monthly meetings chaired by CRJO and attended by JOs and NSW Reconstruction Authority (NSWRA). Discussion is currently focused around the proposals for the Monitoring and Evaluation component of the project, of which assessment is underway. Subject-specific working groups have been established, due to commence during May and June. NSWRA gave a high level overview of how each JO is tracking in terms of reporting, Hunter JO is on track. Convened by: Canberra Region JO
City of Newcastle SDG Collaborative meeting	A presentation on the Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2032 was delivered to the meeting. Feedback confirmed strong alignment between the strategic directions of the Hunter JO Strategic Plan and the focus and directions of the SDG Collaborative Group. Convened by: City of Newcastle
NSW Joint Organisation Executive Officers Network	This network continues to meet on a fortnightly basis. Focus areas include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross JO engagement with key NSW Government agency representatives • Cross regional information sharing and collaboration in delivery of the Disaster Resilience and Net Zero grant programs, under which a number of JOs received funding Identifying opportunities for more direct collaboration and engagement with state agencies re the funding and delivery of place-based programs Convened by: JO Network
Hunter Central Coast CMP Practitioners Roundtable	Meeting on 24 March included an update on the Lake Macquarie Coastal Management Program (CMP), Estuary Monitoring app and Hunter Offshore Renewable Energy proposal. Councils present were in support of the proposal and were in the process of preparing submissions. Next meeting scheduled for 25 May. Convened by: Department of Planning and Environment
Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration (JONZA)	Weekly meetings with the JONZA group continue. Recent discussion has mostly been around the recruitment process, with all JOs now having a Net Zero Officer appointed. The network is very collaborative and the officers from other JOs are very open and willing to share their expertise and experiences. Sustainable Councils (OECC / NSW Treasury)

Additional Strategic Engagements - Convened by Hunter JO and Local Government

Unlocking Local Capital: Lessons from the United States, Canada, and elsewhere on how Newcastle can tap local investment for community development

Attended a presentation from Michael Shuman, a U.S.-based attorney, economist, and author on what local investment options might be available in Australia through the unlocking of local capital. This included how, by mobilising local investors we can move some of their capital into local businesses, projects, and people, to accelerate the growth of its economy. However, federal government law changes may be necessary.

Convened by: City of Newcastle
5 May 2023

Additional Strategic Engagements - Convened by Others

World Circular Economy Forum

Eloise Lobsey (Program Lead - Circular Economy), will be attending the World Circular Economy Forum in Helsinki as part of an Australian delegation. Eloise received the invitation based on her role with the Hunter JO, reflecting the value and recognition of the work being led by the JO in the Circular Economy space.

The Forum will feature sessions with leading global Circular Economy experts, with attendees expected from more than 100 countries. An overview of the Forum Program and Speakers can be seen at <https://wcef2023.com/about/>. The Australian Delegation has been pulled together by Dr Nicole T Garofano, Head of Circular Economy Development, Planet Ark Environmental Foundation. Planet Ark operate the Australian Circular Economy (ACE) Hub.

Convened by: Nordic Innovation
30 May - 2nd June 2023

Resilient Hunter Platform

The Greater Cities Commission has approached the Hunter JO with a proposal for the Resilient Hunter Platform, an extension of the Resilient Sydney Platform developed by Resilient Sydney (via City of Sydney). The Resilient Sydney Platform collates environmental data for each Council to help them track environmental performance, provide a standardised evidence-base for decision making, and enable collaboration, action and advocacy to better plan for future communities. Initial meetings and a workshop have been held with Hunter JO, GCC and Resilient Sydney showcasing the tool and discussing a proposal for Hunter JO to take on the role of Program Sponsor for the region. This role would require Hunter JO to support Councils in the roll out of the tool, facilitate training sessions, and build capacity in the region. This proposal and context for Hunter JO will be presented to GMAC as more details become available.

Convened by: Greater Cities Commission

Additional Strategic Engagements - Convened by Others (cont)

Hunter Insights Series: The Geography of Jobs

Drawing on research and data from the Hunter Research Foundation Centre and latest research from the Institute for Regional Futures, the seminar focused on unpacking the underlying drivers behind the region's employment trends, delving into the spatial variations in employment needs and highlighting issues for decision-makers across key sectors moving forward. A key finding from the research is the need to move beyond sector-based thinking, to build a workforce with transferable skills across sectors and to develop human capital that is nimble, adaptable and resilient to change.

Convened by: Institute for Regional Futures
4 May 2023

In Conversation: Climate-related risk and Corporate ESG – Opportunities and challenges for business in the Hunter's fossil fuel transition

The Hunter JO CEO participated as an expert panellist at this event, which analysed and discussed the Hunter Region's transition into a low carbon economy and the key challenges, risks, and opportunities through legal, financial, engineering and venture funding lenses. Other expert panellists included Persia Navidi, Partner - Hicksons Lawyers and Adam Davis, Technical Practice Leader, Sustainability and Resilience ANZ - AECOM.

Convened by: Committee for the Hunter & Hicksons Lawyers
23 May 2023



Regional Programs and Capacity Building

Program Status Report				
Strategic Themes	Project		Funding	Delivery Date
CONNECTIVITY				
● ● ●	Cycle Tourism Strategy (Shiraz to Shore)		Grant	30-09-2023
● ● ●	Airports Strategy (Freight and Logistics)		Grant	30-09-2023
RESILIENCE				
● ● ●	Transforming Resilience with the IP&R Framework		Grant	30-06-2023
● ● ●	Act Now on Coastal Adaptation		Grant	30-06-2023
● ● ●	Disaster Risk Reduction		Grant	30-06-2024
● ● ●	Simtables for Community Empowerment		Grant	1-06-2023
JOBS AND A GROWING ECONOMY				
● ● ●	Circular Economy Eco-System		Grant	30-06-2023
● ● ●	Circular Economy Procurement		Grant	30-06-2023
● ● ●	Circular Economy Precincts and Futures Hub		Grant	30-09-2023
● ● ●	Hunter Global Tourism		Grant	30-09-2023
LIVEABILITY				
● ● ●	Accelerating Event Economies		Grant	31-12-2023
● ● ●	Illegal Dumping Program		Grant	31-03-2027
● ● ●	Small Acts Big Change		Grant	30-06-2023
● ● ●	Community Recycling Centres		Grant	30-06-2023
● ● ●	Net Zero Acceleration		Grant	30-06-2024
● ● ●	Contaminated Land Program		Grant	15-12-2023



Connectivity

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

Objectives - Where do we want to be?

- 1.1** Within the region there is a robust integrated transport solution that underpins the experience/liveability and productivity of its residents and visitors comparable to its global peers.
- 1.2** Through its port and airport the Hunter is a globally connected and economically prosperous city-region, recognised as a key international gateway, providing its communities with a vibrant and unique lifestyle and growth in products and services to replace the economic output of thermal coal.
- 1.3** Digital connectivity that ensures community access to core services on commuter routes across the region and between Sydney and Newcastle and to enable business development, growth and innovation.
- 1.4** A region that is built around sustainable transport outcomes.

Cycle Tourism Strategy (Shiraz to Shore)

Purpose	Status Update
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.	A tender process for this project has been launched and a tender assessment panel established. This panel includes representatives from the Hunter JO, Cessnock City Council and City of Newcastle. Contracts will be entered into with the successful consultant by mid to late May 2023. Terms of Reference have also been developed and invitations extended for two stakeholder advisory groups for the following project components 1. Shiraz to Shore Strategy 2. Shiraz to Shore infrastructure.
Strategic Directions	1.1.2, 1.1.5, 1.4.1, 4.1.2

Airports Strategy (Freight and Logistics)

Purpose	Status Update
To develop: • A strategy and business case for airfreight and passenger infrastructure and connectivity logistics for the region. • An integrated airports strategy for the region including assessments of passenger, airfreight and transport links across the region.	Meetings have been held with key Newcastle Airport representatives to brief them on the project and establish project relationships. A detailed project brief has been developed to support launching a tender process for a project consultant in mid-late May 2023.
Strategic Directions	1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3





Resilience

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

Objectives - Where do we want to be?

- 2.1** We are recognised as innovative leaders in Council capacity building and policy support for climate change action, resilience and disaster preparedness.
- 2.2** We take leadership and drive regional best practice in climate action.
- 2.3** Our region is resilient to environment risks, natural hazards and climate change.

Transforming Resilience with the IP&R Framework

Purpose	Status Update
To support Member Councils embed resilience principles and projects into their Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework (IP&R), in order to support their ability to allocate recurrent funds and commit to long term resourcing (financial and staff) for resilience projects.	Discussions are occurring with the NSW Reconstruction Authority (the funding authority) with the aim of extending the project completion date until 15 December 2023. This would facilitate more effective design and delivery of the remaining project outputs, and accommodate the planning and start up of new resilience projects now also coming online. The outcomes of the Resilience Health Check process undertaken with individual councils are being collated into a summary report outlining the challenges and opportunities identified by Councils.
Strategic Directions	2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.3.1, 2.3.2

Act Now on Coastal Adaptation

Purpose	Status Update
The objectives of this project are to: 1. Develop an Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Package which embeds resilience to Climate Change into Councils operations through incorporation into the overarching IP&R documents. 2. Provide a coastal adaptation communication framework, media templates and suite of practical resources to directly build the capacity of the coastal councils of the Hunter and Central Coast. 3. Build capacity within Councils to reduce risks, increase resilience and reduce climate vulnerability by collaboratively building community understanding and literacy around coastal management and adaptation issues and bridging the gap between the IP&R framework and prioritisation of Climate Change resilience.	The independent improvement review of the Coastal and Estuary Support Package by an external consultant remains underway. New project outputs currently in development include three Factsheets, FAQs and other supporting items. The project remains on track for substantive completion by 30 June 2023.
Strategic Directions	2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.2.1, 4.3.1



Disaster Risk Reduction

Purpose	Status Update
To facilitate place-based regional collaboration across four sub projects to empower Councils and communities in the region to reduce disaster risk through early action. The focus of the sub-projects includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Support and Capacity Building - embedding disaster resilience into Council operations and building capacity to communicate disaster resilience to local communities. • Disaster waste management and resource recovery preparedness - assisting Councils to plan place-based solutions for effective disaster waste management and resource recovery systems • Delivering a regional transport vulnerability and connectivity assessment and mitigation plan • Continued refinement and expansion of the use of Simtables regionally for multi-hazard disaster engagement 	Monthly reporting obligations for February, March and April to the NSW Reconstruction Authority (NSWRA) have been submitted and approved. This reporting is complemented by monthly Steering Committee meetings between the Hunter JO and NSWRA. The Inaugural meeting of the Hunter Resilience Network is scheduled for 18 May. Sub-project establishment is underway, to be supported by commencement of an additional project officer in early June.
Strategic Directions	2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 2.2.2, 2.3.1, 2.3.2

Simtables for Community Empowerment

Purpose	Status Update
Simtables provide a "State of the Art" tool that can be used to engage communities in localised place-based emergency information sessions. This project has purchased two Simtables for the collective use of Member Councils and is providing direct support to Councils in undertaking the extensive community engagement associated with their use.	The project has continued to progress well and remains on track for completion by 1 June 2023. As this end date approaches the focus will be to ensure all deliverables are completed prior to grant acquittal. Achievements, outputs and outcomes of the project to date include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 43 Simtable community workshops/ events. 2. 24 Simtable demonstrations or training sessions. 3. 5 Simtable loans. 4. Community support resources procured: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500x Emergency kit fridge magnets • 500x Get Ready logo Jute Bags 6. Production of Community Case Study videos, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core video, demonstrating the use and purpose of the Simtable • Burrell Creek (MidCoast LGA) community case study 7. Completion of a Simtable user guide and workshop outline. The total number of Simtable activities delivered are well in excess of the targets established for the project.
Strategic Directions	2.1.2, 2.3.1, 2.3.2



Jobs and a Growing Economy

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

Objectives - Where do we want to be?

<p>3.1 Coordinated planning and investment by all levels of government that empowers the region and its residents to maintain and grow jobs, economic opportunities and quality of life.</p>	<p>3.2 Accelerated and amplified market-driven investment in innovation that capitalises on the region's existing natural strengths and attributes which create jobs in future industries.</p>	<p>3.3 A globally focused region that drives talent attraction and retention.</p>
<p>3.4 A region that is built around Circular Economy principles as a driver of future jobs.</p>	<p>3.5 We are recognised as a destination of choice for international and domestic visitors.</p>	

Circular Economy Ecosystem

Purpose	Status Update
<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. 	<p>The new Hunter Circular website was soft-launched in mid-May. Further user testing and planning will be undertaken prior to a hard-launch of the website in the new financial year.</p> <p>The newly launched website can be viewed at www.huntercircular.com.au</p>
Strategic Directions	3.4.1, 4.2.2, 4.4.2

Circular Economy Procurement

Purpose	Status Update
<p>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.</p>	<p>This project is currently on hold following completion of the first phase (framework and tools establishment) whilst resourcing is secured to progress to the next stage of the project (implementation). A new project officer with the potential to support delivery is scheduled to commence in June 2023.</p>
Strategic Directions	3.4.1, 4.2.2, 4.4.2



Circular Economy Precincts and Futures Hub

Purpose	Status Update
<p>To deliver concept plans and business cases for four multi-element circular economy precincts, that would each represent a key part of the Hunter. Project outputs will outline the potential for circular processing, renewable energy production and value-added businesses, delivering diversified employment opportunities and new industries to the region. Key project deliverables will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A concept plan and strategy for Circular Economy Precincts, including an Anaerobic Digestion component for the circular processing of organics and biogas or energy production for the precinct. A concept plan and strategy for establishing a Circular Economy Futures Hub. 	<p>The funding deed for this Business Case project has been signed and returned to the Department of Regional NSW's Business Case and Strategy Fund team. The consultant selection process has commenced, with tender submissions opening 9 May 2023 for a four week period. A project plan and stakeholder management plan have also been created. The next steps will be to establish the Expert Working Group (to advise and assist the consultant), and review tender submissions to appoint the successful consultant.</p>
Strategic Directions	3.4.1, 4.2.2, 4.4.2

Hunter Global Tourism

Purpose	Status Update
<p>To identify the international tourism opportunities of the Hunter region in preparation of the Newcastle Airport international upgrade. Key elements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder engagement to bring all tourism, marketing and economic development organisations across the region together to identify how we want to position, brand and market the region as one to potential visitors. Undertaking a review of the region to identify priority tourism infrastructure needed to attract international visitors. 	<p>A tender process for this project has been launched and tender assessment panel established. The panel includes representatives from Newcastle Airport and Destination Sydney Surrounds North to assist in reviewing and selecting the preferred project consultant. Contracts will be drawn with the selected consultant by mid to late May 2023.</p>
Strategic Directions	1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3, 3.5.1, 3.5.2, 4.1.1



Liveability

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

Objectives - Where do we want to be?

<p>4.1 We are recognised as a destination for hosting world class events that align with our unique offering.</p>	<p>4.2 Making use of our opportunity to drive circular evolution of our region's economy.</p>	<p>4.3 Our natural environments including our bushland, estuaries, waterways and beaches are protected and enhanced.</p>
<p>4.4 Supporting our region to be on the path to net zero emissions and paving the way with smart innovative solutions that increase liveability.</p>	<p>4.5 A region with enriched neighborhoods and places supported by planned infrastructure that promotes community cohesion, active living and pride in culture and heritage.</p>	<p>4.6 A region that is connected, inclusive and a fair.</p>

Accelerating Event Economies

Purpose	Status Update
<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 even management resources including an event managers toolkit, prospectus, website and integrated council shared services, approvals and event data.</p>	<p>Key project activities currently include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major Event Feasibility Study underway with JMP consultants, which is scheduled for completion mid June. Website, Event Prospectus, marketing videos and itineraries have been drafted and undergoing final changes. A one day conference is being planned to summarise and share all tools and resources that have been developed as part of the A2E project.
Strategic Directions	1.2.1, 1.2.3, 4.1.1, 4.1.2

Illegal Dumping Program

Purpose	Status Update
<p>To support Member Councils manage illegal dumping by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivering a regional approach to target illegal dumping Employing skilled officers to undertake compliance action against illegal dumpers Undertaking proactive measures to prevent illegal dumping Targeting problematic and complex illegal dumping incidents. Increasing capacity to target problematic and complex illegal dumping incidents. 	<p>The recruitment process for the role of Regional RID Program Co-ordinator has been completed, with the successful applicant due to commence on 5th June 2023. With this position now appointed, the NSW EPA will now release funding to commence delivery of the Program.</p>
Strategic Directions	4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.3

Small Acts Big Change

Purpose	Status Update
<p>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.</p>	<p>The focus of Small Acts Big Change continues to be the promotion of new local business hero videos until the end of financial year. So far these videos have reached almost a million people.</p>
Strategic Directions	4.2.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.3

Community Recycling Centres

Purpose	Status Update
<p>To deliver a regionally coordinated approach to promoting community awareness of Community Recycling Centres (CRC's).</p>	<p>New regional CRC videos have been viewed by over half a million people (568,542) during March and April, with video played on 666,959 occasions. Cessnock, Lake Macquarie, MidCoast, Port Stephens, Singleton and Upper Hunter Shire Council each received a 45second video that promotes their CRC, as well as a 30second video featuring safe battery disposal.</p>
Strategic Directions	4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.3

Net Zero Acceleration

Purpose	Status Update
<p>To support Member Councils reduce their carbon emissions to achieve their part in the State's Net Zero target of 50 per cent reduction by 2030 and Net Zero by 2050. This includes employing a staff member dedicated to progressing the JO and its member councils toward net zero emissions, and to provide a link to other NSW government support mechanisms.</p>	<p>Recruitment of the Hunter JO Net Zero Officer to deliver this project has been completed, with the successful applicant commencing 23 May 2023.</p> <p>The first meeting of the Regional Net Zero Network initiated under this project was delivered on 26th April, in which there was strong engagement from Member Councils. EV Feasibility studies are underway with all Hunter councils (excluding Lake Macquarie and Muswellbrook, who have received Destination Charging grants). A scope variation has been facilitated to support Councils like Newcastle who are further down the EV path, to help them promote EV chargers to businesses. Further support is available for Councils to use the findings of their EV Feasibility studies to apply for future NSW government EV charging grants.</p>
Strategic Directions	2.2.1, 2.2.2, 4.4.1, 4.4.2

Contaminated Land Program

Purpose	Status Update
<p>To build capacity and capability within Member Councils to manage contaminated sites on private and council managed land, and to support Councils transition to their new role as regulator of the Underground Petroleum Storage System (UPSS) Regulation.</p>	<p>NSW EPA have approved a time extension for final project completion until 15 December 2023, allowing for a full review of all website documents. Recent project activities include :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalising and publishing on the Hunter JO website a guide on "Developing a Contaminated Land Information System" Initiating a legal review of the existing (2020) regional "Register of Contaminated Land Consent Conditions" Delivery of Contaminated Land for Asset and Land Mangers training on 2 May, which was attended by approximately 40 attendees including guests from Northern Rivers and Central Tablelands regions. Scheduling face-to-face visits with MidCoast, Dungog, Upper Hunter and Cessnock Councils in relation to the program.
Strategic Directions	4.3.1, 4.3.3

Regional Funding Proposals

Grants and Funding Proposals	
Regional NSW Growing Regional Economy Fund	<p>Shiraz to Shore Focus: EOI to undertake detailed design and construction for a key section of the Shiraz to Shore route through the Hunter Valley. While applications generally require a 25% financial contribution to the project, following advice from the funding authority, the Hunter JO will applying for extenuating circumstances to avoid this requirement given the nature of the organisation and the regional collaborative focus and scope of the project. Status update: Advice Pending</p>
NSW EPA Bin Trim Program	<p>The Hospitality Circularity Network Focus: The project seeks to engage hospitality SMEs across the region, to build their capacity to evaluate and adopt circular solutions for their business operations and supply chains, focussing on organics and single use items. The project will also seek to create or strengthen existing business networks and assist them to collaborate and co design practical solutions that benefit from network efficiency and scale. Status update: Advice Pending</p>
Local Government Waste Solutions Fund Round 1	<p>Hunter Circular Knowledge Hub Focus: To create and pilot a digital circular knowledge hub for two distinct user groups – for council staff, and for the community at large. The aim is to address the information accessibility and knowledge barriers that prevail and frustrate uptake of circular services and recovery pathways in the region. By creating tools to broaden participation, these solutions will be supported to scale and increase their impact. The project will gather information on services and solutions available in the region, then deploy tools that will present that information in a user-friendly format designed specifically for that group's needs. Status update: Advice Pending</p>
EPA Sustainability Partnerships Program 2023-24	<p>Landfill Emissions Data Management Program (Landfill Emissions DMP) Focus: To establish a landfill emission data management program for councils to assist in understanding their baseline landfill emissions, and building a model data management framework and tools to support the collation and interpretation of landfill emission data. Status update: The Expression of Interest has been successful. At the request of the NSW EPA the more detailed funding application is now being prepared.</p>

Grants and Funding Proposals (Cont.)	
NSW EPA Regional Illegal Dumping Program	<p>Regional Illegal Dumping Program Focus: To support Member Councils manage illegal dumping by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering a regional approach to target illegal dumping • Supporting employment of skilled officers to undertake compliance action against illegal dumpers • Undertaking proactive measures to prevent illegal dumping • Increasing capacity to target problematic and complex illegal dumping incidents. <p>Status update: Successful. Funding to commence delivery of the Hunter and Central Coast RID Program will now be provided by the EPA following the successful recruitment of the RID Program Coordinator, who is scheduled to commence 5th June 2023.</p>
Get NSW Active Program	<p>Shiraz to Shore Feasibility & Preferred Route Focus: To undertake a strategic assessment to determine the feasibility and preferred route of the Hunter vineyards section of the widely supported Shiraz to Shore 100km cycle trail, connecting communities, tourists and local businesses. The project will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • balance safety, amenity, feasibility and local landholder and stakeholder inputs for the route following an extensive local stakeholder engagement program. • produce the indicative costs and key elements to enable the project to move through to the next stage. <p>Status update: Advice Pending</p>

Appendix - Strategic Objectives and Directions

Connectivity

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



Objectives - Where do we want to be?	Strategic Directions - How will we get there?
<p>1.1 Within the region there is a robust integrated transport solution that underpins the experience/liveability and productivity of its residents and visitors comparable to its global peers.</p>	<p>1.1.1 Support local government having a collective voice in the planning and delivery of major transport infrastructure and systems.</p> <p>1.1.2 Proactively facilitate collaboration with key state agencies to support delivery of connectivity solutions that suit the regions current and future needs.</p> <p>1.1.3 Support Member Councils to influence other levels of government on a sustainable model for delivery and maintenance of road infrastructure.</p> <p>1.1.4 Support a Regional Integrated Transport Plan linking key services and centres.</p> <p>1.1.5 Identify and facilitate regional approaches for active transport outcomes that deliver connectivity, health, liveability and economic benefits.</p> <p>1.1.6 Private and public transport solutions operate on a net zero basis.</p>
<p>1.2 Through its port and airport the Hunter is a globally connected and economically prosperous city-region, recognised as a key international gateway, providing its communities with a vibrant and unique lifestyle and growth in products and services to replace the economic output of thermal coal.</p>	<p>1.2.1 Partnering with airport and port to identify and pursue priority actions to enable access to international markets for the benefit of the region.</p> <p>1.2.2 Influence government policy to prioritise the importance of access to international markets for the benefit of the region.</p> <p>1.2.3 Leading collaboration in the region between government, industry and community to ensure the benefits of international markets are region wide.</p> <p>1.2.4 Support a transport access strategy for regional connectivity to and from the airport.</p>
<p>1.3 Digital connectivity that ensures community access to core services on commuter routes across the region and between Sydney and Newcastle and to enable business development, growth and innovation.</p>	<p>1.3.1 Support and encourage investment in equitable and competitive digital connectivity and the elimination of mobile black spots across the region to ensure community access to commuter routes, core health and education opportunities, and to enable business development, growth and innovation.</p>
<p>1.4 A region that is built around sustainable transport outcomes.</p>	<p>1.4.1 Embed the direction of net-zero in all our connectivity strategies to provide a pathway and level of confidence to investors and community to support the transition to more sustainable transport outcomes.</p>

Resilience

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



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

Jobs and a Growing Economy

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



Objectives - Where do we want to be?	Strategic Directions - How will we get there?
<p>3.1 Coordinated planning and investment by all levels of government that empowers the region and its residents to maintain and grow jobs, economic opportunities and quality of life.</p>	<p>3.1.1 Support a clear, place-based, integrated whole-of-government policy and planning approach to drive the region's economic evolution and jobs of the future.</p> <p>3.1.2 Support the establishment of an entity that has the authority and resources from the Commonwealth and NSW Government necessary to provide the institutional capacity and expert and empowered, place-based planning and decision-making capability.</p> <p>3.1.3 Support regional institutional capacity to assist businesses and workers impacted by changes in the economy.</p> <p>3.1.4 Drive collaboration to provide clarity, certainty and fairness in land-use policy and regulation as it relates to the use of former industrial and mining land and assets, or where local communities bear the impacts or have restrictions arising from the contribution of that place to broader regional or state benefits.</p> <p>3.1.5 Support government policy and planning that prioritise the investment into key regional catalyst areas.</p> <p>3.1.6 Support the place-based delivery of Aboriginal partnerships and employment programs in the Hunter.</p>
<p>3.2 Accelerated and amplified market-driven investment in innovation that capitalises on the region's existing natural strengths and attributes which create jobs in future industries.</p>	<p>3.2.1 Support and mature the innovation ecosystem in order to drive commercialisation of ventures and start-ups in the region which will provide growth in future jobs.</p> <p>3.2.2 Improve and accelerate the regions access to investment and capital markets to underpin the innovation ecosystem and the redevelopment of industrial and mining assets.</p>
<p>3.3 A globally focused region that drives talent attraction and retention.</p>	<p>3.3.1 Support efforts that position the Hunter globally in its areas of competitive and comparative strength.</p>
<p>3.4 A region that is built around Circular Economy principles as a driver of future jobs.</p>	<p>3.4.1 Support knowledge sharing and embed Circular Economy principles in our strategies and plans to provide a pathway to future jobs creation in our local supply chains and services.</p> <p>3.4.2 Support implementation of the Hunter Central Coast Circular Economy Roadmap.</p>
<p>3.5 We are recognised as a destination of choice for international and domestic visitors.</p>	<p>3.5.1 Support a coordinated approach and collaborate around regional tourism promotion to grow jobs in the region.</p> <p>3.5.2 Identify opportunities for growth and diversification of employment based in the tourism economy.</p>

Liveability

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



Objectives - Where do we want to be?	Strategic Directions - How will we get there?
<p>4.1 We are recognised as a destination for hosting world class events that align with our unique offering.</p>	<p>4.1.1 Support a coordinated approach and collaborate around events and tourism.</p> <p>4.1.2 Identify opportunities for growth and diversification of the regional events and tourism economy.</p>
<p>4.2 Making use of our opportunity to drive circular evolution of our region's economy.</p>	<p>4.2.1 Support meeting our future regional infrastructure and operations for circular outcomes.</p> <p>4.2.2 Reduce carbon emissions through better waste and materials management.</p>
<p>4.3 Our natural environments including our bushland, estuaries, waterways and beaches are protected and enhanced.</p>	<p>4.3.1 Our Councils are well supported in protecting and enhancing the environment through regional programs, data collection, support resources and capacity building.</p> <p>4.3.2 Provide support and identify opportunities to improve and protect the regional Blue Green Grid.</p> <p>4.3.3 We drive council capacity building opportunities to protect the environment and human health from pollution.</p> <p>4.3.4 Provide support for regional conservation planning to protect regional biodiversity.</p> <p>4.3.5 Provide support and identify opportunities to enhance the health of the region's estuaries and other waterways.</p>
<p>4.4 Supporting our region to be on the path to net zero emissions and paving the way with smart innovative solutions that increase liveability.</p>	<p>4.4.1 Provide support and identify opportunities on regional collaboration around Electric Vehicles.</p> <p>4.4.2 Support regional collaboration around clean energy and future energy initiatives and industries.</p>
<p>4.5 A region with enriched neighborhoods and places supported by planned infrastructure that promotes community cohesion, active living and pride in culture and heritage.</p>	<p>4.5.1 Support Improved planning outcomes to enhance liveability and lifestyle.</p> <p>4.5.2 Support a healthy and active community.</p> <p>4.5.3 Support a safe and accessible society across the region.</p> <p>4.5.4 Support enhanced cultural opportunities and protected heritage.</p>
<p>4.6 A region that is connected, inclusive and a fair.</p>	<p>4.6.1 Support affordability and increased access to housing.</p> <p>4.6.2 Support an increase in the availability of jobs and services closer to people.</p> <p>4.6.3 Support equitable access to education and health services and facilities.</p>



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