

Hunter JO Program Report August 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.

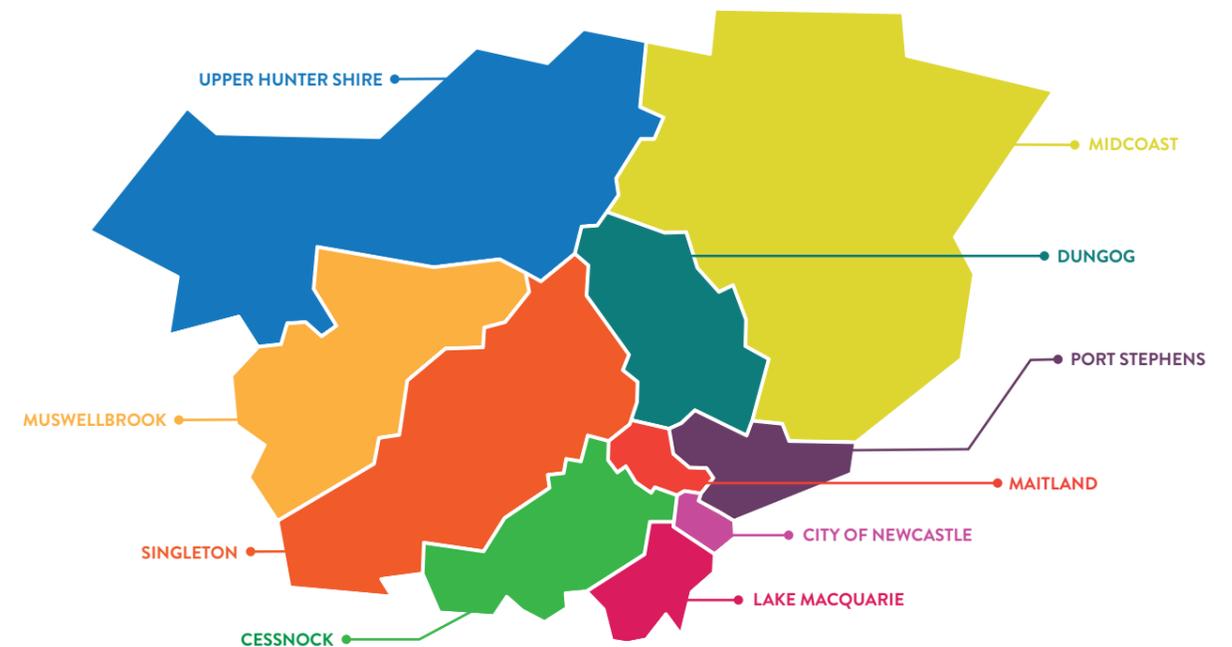
Our statutory functions defined by the NSW Local Government Amendment (Regional Joint Organisations) Act 2017 comprise:

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



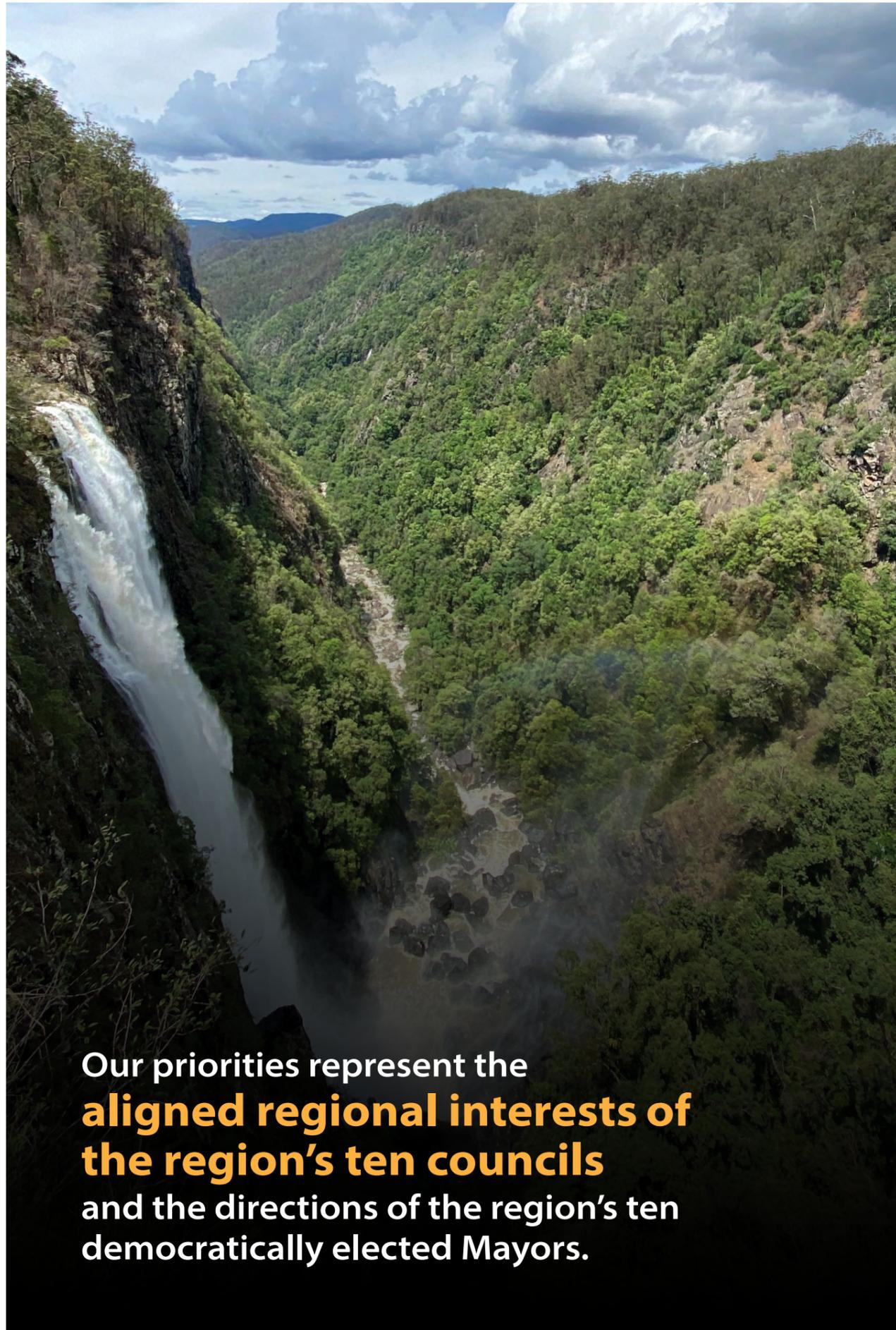
Cr Ryan Palmer
Mayor Port Stephens Council



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.



Intergovernmental Collaboration

Hunter JO Workshops, Forums and Events

Textiles Circularity Think Tank

This event brought together stakeholders across the textile value chain to explore gaps and opportunities for greater circularisation of textiles in the Hunter region. Thirty-five stakeholders from across local councils, industries and the Hunter JO participated.

20 June 2023

Events10 Conference

The focus of this event was to create connections, build networks and receive an overview and summary of all the tools, resources and information that is now available to the events industry in the Hunter through the work completed under the Accelerating Events Economies Program. The event also included the formal launch of the Events10 website.

26 July 2023

Existing Standing Engagements - Convened by Hunter JO and Local Government

Disaster Waste Management & Resource Recovery Preparedness Working Group

This inaugural meeting of the group focused on the scope and boundaries of the new Disaster Waste Management & Resource Recovery component of the Disaster Risk Reduction project. This work will focus on the opportunities to collaborate in preparing and responding to the waste generated by natural disasters.

**Convened by: Hunter JO
29 May 2023**

Regional Resilience Program Advisory Committee (RRPAC)

Monthly RRPAC meetings of this group facilitate regular updates between the NSW Reconstruction Authority (RA) and Joint Organisations on how JOs are tracking with project delivery and reporting, and to provide progress updates from the various cross JO working groups. Discussions at the most recent meeting included potential project delays and the need to complete project variations (not relevant for Hunter JO). Emerging issues included transport vulnerability work already being undertaken by Transport for NSW and likely overlaps with similar works proposed by JOs across the State under the current funding program.

**Convened by: Canberra Region Joint Organisation
Monthly**

Existing Standing Engagements - Convened by Hunter JO and Local Government	
Circular Economy Facilitators Group	<p>The focus of this meeting was the quarterly Circular Economy Roadmap session. Project identification and alignment workshopping was undertaken to inform and update of the Roadmap via the Hunter Circular website (digital hub).</p> <p>Convened by: Hunter JO 30 June 2023</p>
Contaminated Land Working Group	<p>The focus of this meeting included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular recurring agenda items (EPA funding, recent asset managers training, Council visits, Service Desk update). • Update on the LGNSW Asbestos Network (provided by Mal Hunter, Dungog Shire Council) • An overview of some of Maitland's contaminated land portfolio and its unique challenges, including the Anambah Landfill, Webland St, Gasworks, Maitland Gaol and Walka Waterworks (provided by Mal Adrienm, Maitland City Council) • An update from City of Newcastle on improvements to their contaminated land information system. • Council roundtable, with a focus on PFAS and legacy landfills, which will be the topic for the next working group meeting. <p>Convened by: Hunter JO 31 May 2023</p>
Regional Waste Managers Network (Regional Waste Strategy Group)	<p>The focus of this quarterly meeting included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action planning for this year's implementation of the Regional Circular Materials Strategy. • An overview of the Illawarra Shoalhaven JO Regional Illegal Dumping Program, provided by James Vincent - Regional Illegal Dumping Prevention Coordinator with ISJO. <p>Convened by: Hunter JO 6 July 2023</p>
Sustainability Educators Group	<p>Key focus areas for the meeting included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good for the Hood program • B-cycle training that will be implemented in a number of our councils. • CRC education and communication plan evaluation survey • Discussion of the purpose and goals of the Sustainability Educators Group. <p>Convened by: Hunter JO 10 July 2023</p>

Existing Standing Engagements - Convened by Hunter JO and Local Government	
Hunter Net Zero Network	<p>This second meeting of the Network was attended by 17 representatives from across 10 councils. Its focus included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing an overview of the purpose of the Network. • Presenting the draft Project Management Plan for consultation, feedback and advice. • Providing an overview of the Landfill Emissions Project, and an update on the EV chargers feasibility study. • Discussion on the ARENA Community Batteries EOI with officers from the four participating councils (Maitland, Cessnock, MidCoast and Singleton). <p>Convened by: Hunter JO 28 June 2023</p>
Simtables JO Group	<p>Regular meetings of this group provides the opportunity to share learnings from individual Simtable focused projects being delivered by the Hunter JO, Noosa Council, Ku-ring-gai Council, Mid North Coast JO, and Canberra Region JO. Meetings will continue for the next 12 months, as we continue to extend application and use of the Simtables through the Disaster Risk Reduction project.</p> <p>Convened by: Hunter JO Monthly</p>
Regional SDGs Dashboard Project	<p>While no meeting of the project group occurred during the reporting period, an email update has been provided following queries from Member Councils. This has confirmed that the Sustainability Advantage / UON team have quality checked the data and are currently developing a dashboard and uploading the data. They have indicated more information will be available in July/August.</p> <p>Convened by: Sustainability Advantage / University of Newcastle</p>
Hunter Resilience Network	<p>All 11 Councils (Hunter JO Member Councils and Central Coast Council) participated and engaged heavily in this inaugural meeting of the Hunter Resilience Network. Participants represented a range of Council functions including business continuity, LEMO's, strategic planning and community engagement. The focus of the meeting included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of the Network • An overview of current regional resilience projects being led by the Hunter JO. • An extensive Council Roundtable session identifying what each Council is currently working on in the resilience space and where they see the biggest opportunities for building regional resilience. A follow up survey has also been disseminated to confirm priorities and directions for moving forward. The next scheduled meeting of the network is 20 July, at which briefings from Andrew Codrington (REMO) and the NSW Reconstruction Authority will be provided. <p>Convened by: Hunter JO 18 May 2023</p>

Existing Standing Engagements - Convened by Hunter JO and Local Government

IP&R Network	<p>Lake Macquarie Council provided an update on the LG Professionals Integrated Planners Network, including service review training sessions. Enquiries are being made to canvass the potential for a training session to be delivered in Newcastle. Council roundtable session discussed service review reporting, annual reports, strategies and plans registers, progress on Delivery Programs and Operational Plans, and staff changes.</p> <p>Convened by: Lake Macquarie City Council 31 May 2023</p>
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NSW JO Chairs Network	<p>The Chair, CEO and Director Hunter JO participated in this meeting, which included briefings from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Hon Ron Hoenig, Minister for Local Government • LGNSW (Red Fleet, Emergency Services Levy, IPART Review) • ALGA (\$100M Climate Fund, Review of Commonwealth Disaster Funding Arrangements, Federal Assistance Grants, Commonwealth review of Regional Development Authorities) <p>Other agenda items included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates on cross Joint Organisation delivery of projects (Net Zero Acceleration, Disaster Resilience and Contaminated Lands) • Grant funding - shared challenges and opportunities across the NSW Joint Organisation Network (prepared by the Hunter JO) • Progress on the OLG Joint Organisation Review - outcomes and recommendations from the joint "Financial sustainability and boundaries" working group <p>Convened by: Canberra Region Joint Organisation 29 June 2023</p>
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Existing Standing Engagements - Convened by Others

Contaminated Land CRCB Officers Group	<p>Recent discussions have focused on wrapping up the contaminated land program and establishing a LGNSW Contaminated Land webpage and online network to be managed by the NSW Environment Protection Authority (to be confirmed). Development of a Contaminated Land podcast series continues, with the first interviews with Anna Lundmark (StellaNord Consulting) and Peter Brennan (Singleton Council) now live.</p> <p>Convened by: NSW Environment Protection Authority Monthly</p>
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Hunter Central Coast CMP Practitioners Roundtable	<p>The Hunter JO continues to participate in the Roundtable. The focus of the most recent meeting included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hunter JO provided an update on the Coastal and Estuary Support package • Foreshore and waterway development (provided by Lake Macquarie Council) • The impacts of the recent East Coast Low (provided by Department of Planning and Environment) • Flood debris clean up (provided by NSW Environment Protection Authority) <p>Convened by: Department of Planning and Environment NSW 25 May 2023</p>
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State and Regional Waste Managers Network	<p>Metro and RENEW Regional Waste Coordination networks met with the NSW EPA Partnerships Team. Key discussions involved the results of the LGNSW waste survey, as well as a workshop on the regional coordination program.</p> <p>Convened by: NSW Environment Protection Authority 26 June 2023</p>
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Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration	<p>Weekly meetings with the JONZA Managers and OECC Sustainable Councils team continue. Recent discussion has focused predominantly around the ARENA Community Battery EOI bids. The Network is very collaborative. A knowledge sharing session on tariff reviews for councils has been organised for July.</p> <p>Convened by: Office of Energy and Climate Change Weekly</p>
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Additional Strategic Engagements - Convened by Others

Hunter Planning Alliance

A briefing was provided by Transport for NSW representatives to the Hunter Planning Alliance. The briefing provided an overview of the key shifts in the approach of the new NSW Government to the Transport portfolio including:

- A move away from centralised mega projects and an increased focus on more widely spread smaller projects that increase access and equity to transport options for communities across NSW – this includes a greater emphasis on public transport
- A clear direction for a more integrated approach to transport planning for the region
- A 90-day review of current priority transport projects is currently underway to determine which will continue to proceed and which won't.

**Convened by: Urban Development Institute of Australia NSW
31 May 2023**

Commonwealth Disaster Funding Review - consultation session

The Hunter JO were invited to participate, along with Central West JO and LGNSW, in this targeted consultation session delivered by Deloitte's as part of the Independent Review of Commonwealth Disaster Funding. The session focused on:

- The role of local government in disaster
- Understanding the usefulness and accessibility of supports
- Data needs

The session provided the opportunity to communicate the key issues and priorities identified by Member Councils through recent "Resilience Health Checks" facilitated by the Hunter JO, and those priorities articulated in the Hunter JO Strategic Plan and Advocacy Priorities.

**Convened by: Deloittes
5 July 2023**

Regional Programs and Capacity Building

Program Status Report

Strategic Themes	Project	Funding	Delivery Date
CONNECTIVITY			
● ● ●	Cycle Tourism Strategy (Shiraz to Shore)	Grant	31-03-2024
● ● ●	Airports Strategy (Freight and Logistics)	Grant	31-03-2024
RESILIENCE			
● ● ●	Transforming Resilience with the IP&R Framework	Grant	15-12-2023
● ● ●	Act Now on Coastal Adaptation	Grant	30-09-2023
● ● ●	Disaster Risk Reduction	Grant	30-06-2024
● ● ●	Simtables for Community Empowerment	Grant	01-06-2023
JOBS AND A GROWING ECONOMY			
● ● ●	Circular Economy Eco-System	Grant	30-06-2024
● ● ●	Circular Precincts and Futures Hub	Grant	31-03-2024
● ● ●	Hunter Circular Knowledge Hub	Grant	30-06-2023
● ● ●	Hospitality Circularity Project	Grant	31-03-2026
● ● ●	Hunter Global Tourism	Grant	31-03-2024
● ● ● ●	Priority Infrastructure List	Hunter JO	30-06-2024
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	30-06-2024
● ● ● ●	Net Zero Acceleration	Grant	30-06-2024
● ● ●	Landfill Emissions Data Project	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.	The consultancies Destination Marketing Store and TRC Consulting have been formally engaged to deliver this Business Case project. To date stakeholder engagement and planning meetings have been held with Cessnock, Newcastle and Lake Macquarie City Councils, and with Parks NSW, Dept of Regional NSW and Crown Lands NSW.
Strategic Directions	1.1.2, 1.1.5, 1.4.1, 4.1.2

Airports Strategy (Freight and Logistics)

Purpose	Status Update
To develop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	The preferred consultant PricewaterhouseCoopers has been engaged to deliver the project, with the project inception meeting held Friday 7 July 2023. An initial stakeholder list has been identified and representatives contacted from all Member Councils, each of the five regional airports, business associations and relevant government agencies.
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.	A request to vary the completion date for this project by 6 months until 15 December 2023 has been approved by the funding authority. A draft resilience IP&R Package summary document has been completed and a consultant engaged to refine and complete the package during August/September 2023. An Expression of Interest is currently in preparation to identify a consultant to support and facilitate the delivery of the Resilience Games with Member 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.	All deliverables have now been provided by the consultant and positive engagement on these completed via an update to the Hunter Central Coast Coastal Practitioners Network. Hunter JO are in the process of compiling all components for graphic design which is scheduled to be complete in August.
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 	Extensive ongoing collaboration is occurring with the NSW JO network and NSW Reconstruction Authority (RA) through the establishment stage, with regular topic specific meetings each month. The Hunter JO team required to deliver the project is now fully onboard and all 4 sub-projects have commenced. Key activities to date include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hunter Resilience Network established involving all Hunter JO Member Councils and Central Coast Council which first met on 18 May. Extensive discussion will be followed up by a feedback survey to inform future work and priorities. The next meeting is scheduled for 20 July at which REMO Andrew Codrington and Hunter Central Coast NSW RA representatives will provide an overview of the emergency management framework and the role of the RA. • Ongoing engagement with Councils and other stakeholders, including a whole team IP&R workshop and Statewide Mutual Flood Road Management workshop in July. • Commencement of the next stage of community engagement using Simtables, which will expand the focus of community engagement from bushfires (under the previous project concluded 1 June 2023) to a broader all hazards approach. Key deliverables as at 10 July 2023 include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 Simtable workshops • 5 Simtable training sessions or demonstrations • 2 Simtable loans • Simtable working group established (Council staff) • Flood mapping purchased for use in Simtable workshops. • Data acquired for each LGA through the Emergency Services Spatial Information Library (ESSIL). • Joint Organisation DRRF Technology Working Group established and meeting monthly (Hunter JO is chair).
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.	This project was formally completed on 1 June 2023. Final outputs of the project included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 47 Simtable community workshops/ events - 1061 attendees total. • 23 Simtable demonstrations or training sessions. • 5 Simtable loans. • Community support resources procured: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500x Emergency kit fridge magnets • 500x Get Ready logo Jute Bags • Production of Community Case Study video, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core video, demonstrating the use and purpose of the Simtable • Burrell Creek (MidCoast LGA) community case study • 30 and 15 second cut-downs. • Completion of a Simtable user guide and workshop outline. • Purchase of regional flood mapping to integrate into future Simtable community engagements.
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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Hunter Central Coast Facilitators Group met on the 30 June 2023 for its Quarterly CE Roadmap session. Project identification and alignment workshopping was undertaken with the group and will inform an update of the Roadmap via our Hunter Circular website (digital hub). Completion of the rebuild of the Hunter Circular Hub (website) is now complete and soft launched. Work is underway to organise an official launch of the digital hub in the coming months. Work is underway to progress a circular economy event series in the region, with the aim to have a Hunter Circular showcase event in November 2023, if funding can be secured. The Textiles Circularity Think Tank was held on the 20th June 2023 at Fort Scratchley Function Centre. Thirty-five stakeholders from local councils, HJO, and industries across the textile value chain attended the event.
Strategic Directions	3.4.1, 4.2.2, 4.4.2

Circular 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 tender process for this project has now been completed, with the preferred consultant now in the process of being formally engaged. Invitations have also been extended to those who will be represented on the Expert Working Group that will provide advice and assistance on project delivery to the Hunter JO and project consultant.</p>
Strategic Directions	3.4.1, 4.2.2, 4.4.2

Hunter Circular Knowledge Hub

Purpose	Status Update
<p>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.</p>	<p>Key data sets have been gathered across all Councils. The project consultant has built a test platform and dashboards. The next stage of delivery will include developing use cases and a methodology for analysing the data sets and to finalise dashboard requirements.</p>
Strategic Directions	3.4.1, 3.4.2, 4.2.2, 4.4.2

Hospitality Circularity Project

Purpose	Status Update
<p>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, focusing 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.</p>	<p>\$498,971 in grant funding has been received from the NSW Environment Protection Authority's Bin Trim Program to deliver this new project. Project planning is now underway and administrative systems being established to support project delivery.</p>
Strategic Directions	3.4.2, 4.2.2

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>Destination Marketing Store and Pier2Pier Consulting have now been engaged as the consultants to deliver this Business Case project. An Investment Logic Mapping workshop has been held with the Project Steering Committee, and initial stakeholder engagement meetings held with Parks NSW and Dept of Regional NSW.</p>
Strategic Directions	1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3, 3.5.1, 3.5.2, 4.1.1

Priority Infrastructure List

Purpose	Status Update
<p>To develop a methodology and process for determining regional infrastructure priorities to support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building and advocating a stronger case for investment in infrastructure priorities across the region Identifying the potential for shared interests and collaboration between Councils and other stakeholders in delivering local and regional scale infrastructure initiatives. 	<p>The collation of infrastructure data through the initial phase of this project identified missing projects and data gaps that now need to be rectified. Engagement with Councils has commenced to develop a refined and efficient process for collecting the missing infrastructure projects and data.</p>
Strategic Directions	3.1.1, 3.1.5, 4.5.1



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 event management resources including an event managers toolkit, prospectus, website and integrated council shared services, approvals and event data.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The outcomes of the Major Event Feasibility Study have now been completed, with outputs to be presented to the Hunter JO Board's August meeting. The Events10 website (www.events10.com.au) has been launched along with paid marketing campaign, and will be officially launched at the Accelerating Event Economies Conference on 26th July. The Hunter JO Board has requested a briefing to provide further detail on the three potential options identified for continuing a regional coordinated approach to event attraction.
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 Illegal Dumping Program Coordinator (Kerri Watson) has now commenced with the Hunter JO and is in the process of establishing working group/network and program codesign with participating councils. Illawarra Shoalhaven JO presented an overview of their regional program to the first network meeting held on 7 July 2023. Eight of the eleven councils eligible to join the Hunter RID Program have now signed the MOU governing participation.</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>This community waste avoidance education/behaviour change program has officially come to the end of its funding under the NSW Better Waste and Recycling Fund. Unfortunately no alternative funding opportunities have been identified that would support the continuation of this wide reaching community focused program. Content of the Small Acts Big Change channels (Facebook, Instagram and Youtube) will now be reduced as a result, however will be kept live in the short to medium term to allow other programs to promote through them, such as the Community Recycling Centres Education Program. The Small Acts Big Change website will now be archived.</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>Continuing promotion of CRC videos has resulted in them being viewed by over 800,000 people in May and June with people playing the video on 1.5 million occasions. The Creative Collective were engaged to run an online promotion via Facebook and Instagram to engage Hunter residents to complete a survey evaluating our 2022-23 CRC Education and Communications plan. The promotion ran between 26th June and 20th July 2023.</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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lexi Crouch has recently commenced in the role of Net Zero Coordinator with the Hunter JO. The second meeting of the Hunter Net Zero Network was held 28 June 2023 with strong engagement from councils. The Network provided input and feedback on the Draft Project Plan for the Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration (JONZA) program. EV feasibility study reports have been finalised and will be provided to councils pending announcement of the NSW Government Destination Charging grant funding, so that the information can be used to support the preparation of Council funding applications. Councils have been invited to nominate potential sites for batteries, for which the NSW Government would also fully fund feasibility studies. Based on the responses, four Hunter councils were invited to participate in the ARENA Community Batteries EOI. Three EOIs were submitted on 30 June 2023 by three lead JOs (Central NSW, ISJO and REROC) on behalf of participating councils.
Strategic Directions	2.2.1, 2.2.2, 4.4.1, 4.4.2



Liveability

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Landfill Emissions Data Project

Purpose	Status Update
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.	\$199,650 in grant funding has been received from the NSW Environment Protection Authority's Sustainability Partnerships Program to deliver this new project. Project planning is now underway and administrative systems being established to support project delivery.
Strategic Directions	4.2.2, 4.4.2

Contaminated Land Program

Purpose	Status Update
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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A substantial update to the Register of Contaminated Land Consent Conditions document has now been completed and published on the Hunter JO website, with initial feedback from other JOs and Councils very positive - https://www.hunterjo.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Register-of-Contaminated-Land-Consent-Conditions.pdf Face-to-face visits have recently been completed with MidCoast, Dungog and Cessnock Councils. These provided an overview of contaminated land management for staff, as well as focusing on particular areas Councils had identified as needing further support. These meetings were well attended by Council staff, including MidCoast (approx 20 people) and Cessnock (approx 12 people). Two new podcast interviews have gone live, which feature interviews with Anna Lundmark (Director & Principal Consultant at StellaNord Consulting), focusing on change management and the Hunter JO contaminated land resource library, and Peter Brennan (Singleton Council) focusing on building capacity for better management of contaminated land. A meeting of the Regional Contaminated Land Working Group was held on 31 May, which included a presentation from Mal Adrien from Maitland City Council on their contaminated land portfolio.
Strategic Directions	4.3.1, 4.3.3



Grants and Funding Proposals

Funding Source	Amount	Description
Greater Cities Commission	\$655,000	<p>Resilient Hunter Central Coast Platform</p> <p>Focus: To establish a common data platform for the Hunter and Central Coast to provide councils access to consistent, up to date datasets, develop evidence-based policy and collaborate on pathways towards net zero emissions.</p> <p>Status update: Advice Pending</p>
Regional NSW Growing Regional Economy Fund	\$10,000,000	<p>Shiraz to Shore</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Status update: Advice Pending</p>
NSW EPA Bin Trim Program	\$498,971	<p>The Hospitality Circularity Network</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Status update: Successful</p>
Local Government Waste Solutions Fund Round 1	\$293,469	<p>Hunter Circular Knowledge Hub</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Status update: Successful</p>

Funding Source	Amount	Description
EPA Sustainability Partnerships Program	\$199,650	<p>Landfill Emissions Data Management Program (Landfill Emissions DMP)</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Status update: Successful</p>
NSW EPA Regional Illegal Dumping Program	\$2,668,341 over 5 years	<p>Regional Illegal Dumping Program</p> <p>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</p>
Get NSW Active Program	\$220,495	<p>Shiraz to Shore Feasibility & Preferred Route</p> <p>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: Unsuccessful</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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