

Hunter JO Annual Performance Statement 2022 - 2023

This document reports on the Hunter JO's organisational performance and strategic progress through the 2022/2023 Financial Year.

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

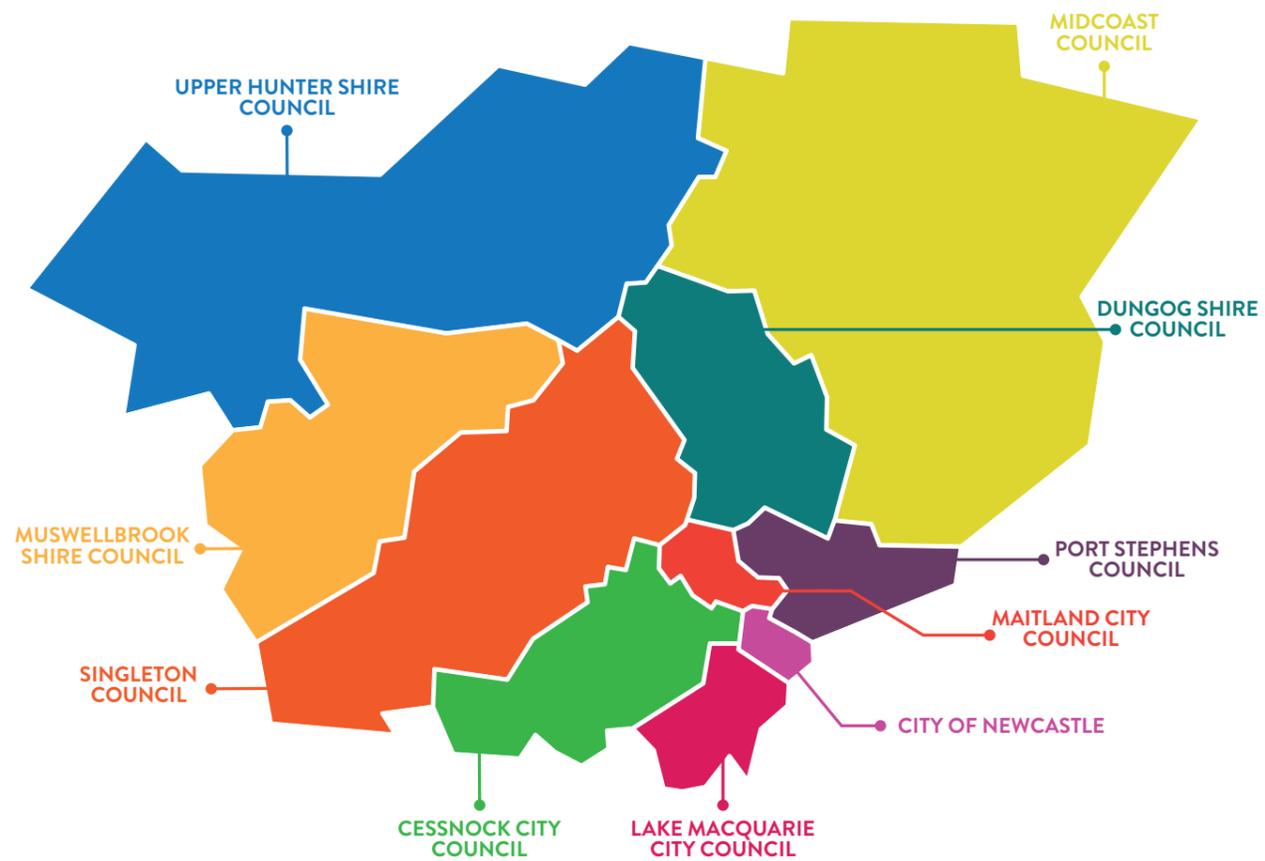


Acknowledgment of Country

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.

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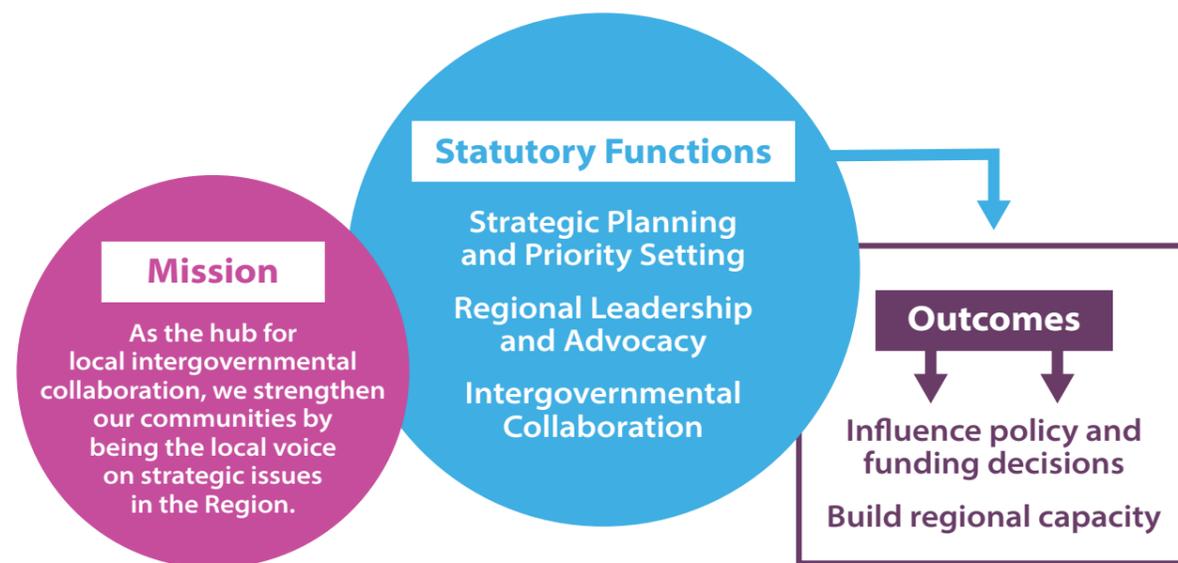


Who we are and what we do

The Hunter Joint Organisation 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.

The Hunter JO Board determines the strategy and oversees the programs and advocacy priorities of the Hunter JO. The Board consists of the Mayor of each Member Council as Voting Representatives, with Non-Voting Representatives including GM's/CEO's of each Member Council and an employee of the public service nominated by the Secretary Department of Regional NSW.

Collaboration across the Hunter region is the cornerstone of the Hunter JO. The connection and coordination between our Member Councils has grown and developed since the 1950s, when local government combined their efforts in the best interests of their communities to respond to floods across the region. Since this time our collaboration has developed and matured, delivering value for councils, our region, and the local government sector as a whole.



The core operations of the Hunter JO are funded by our ten Member Councils and by the affiliated commercial business units of Arrow Collaborative Services which offer shared services to Local Government. The projects of the organisation are also made possible by state and commonwealth grant funding.

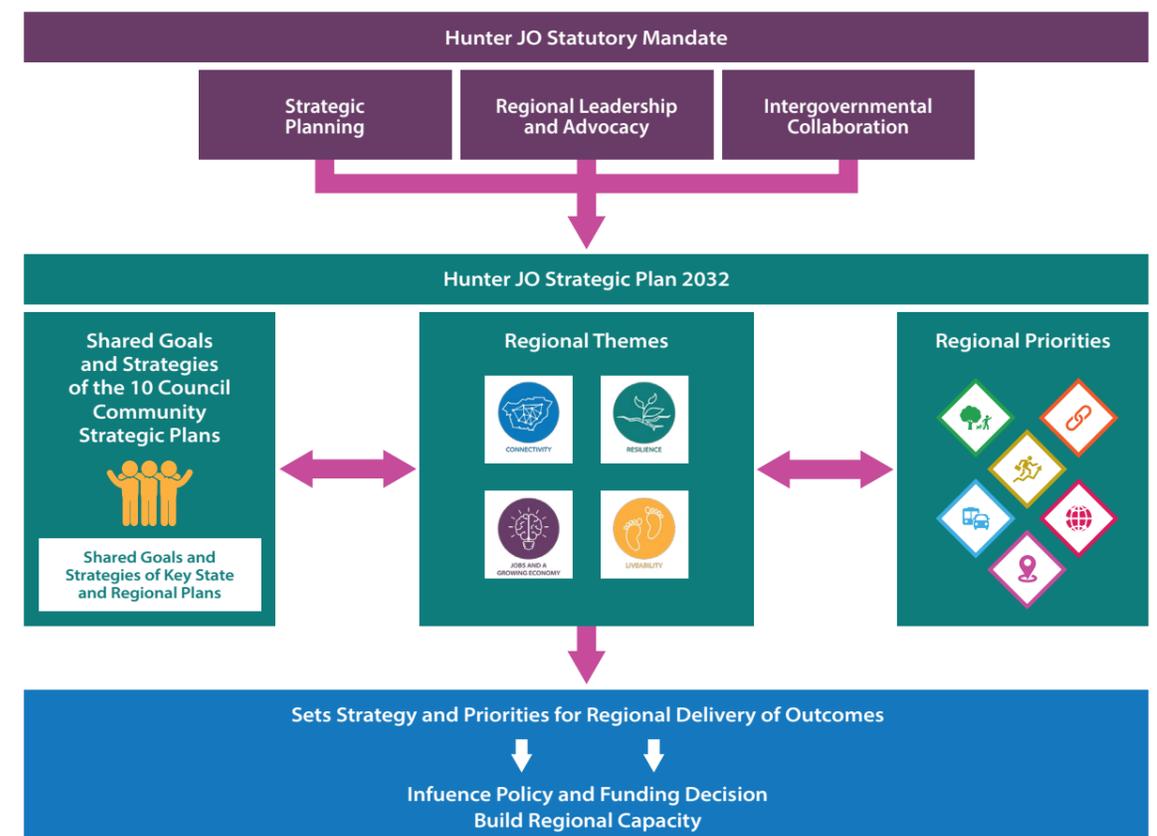
Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2032

The Regional Priorities in our Strategic Plan are a synthesised, collective view of local communities' voices drawn directly from the extensive community engagement undertaken by Councils in preparing statutory 10-year Community Strategic Plans.

This includes extensive and measurable quantitative and qualitative data from:

- In-person and online community workshops
- Pop-up kiosks
- Online surveys

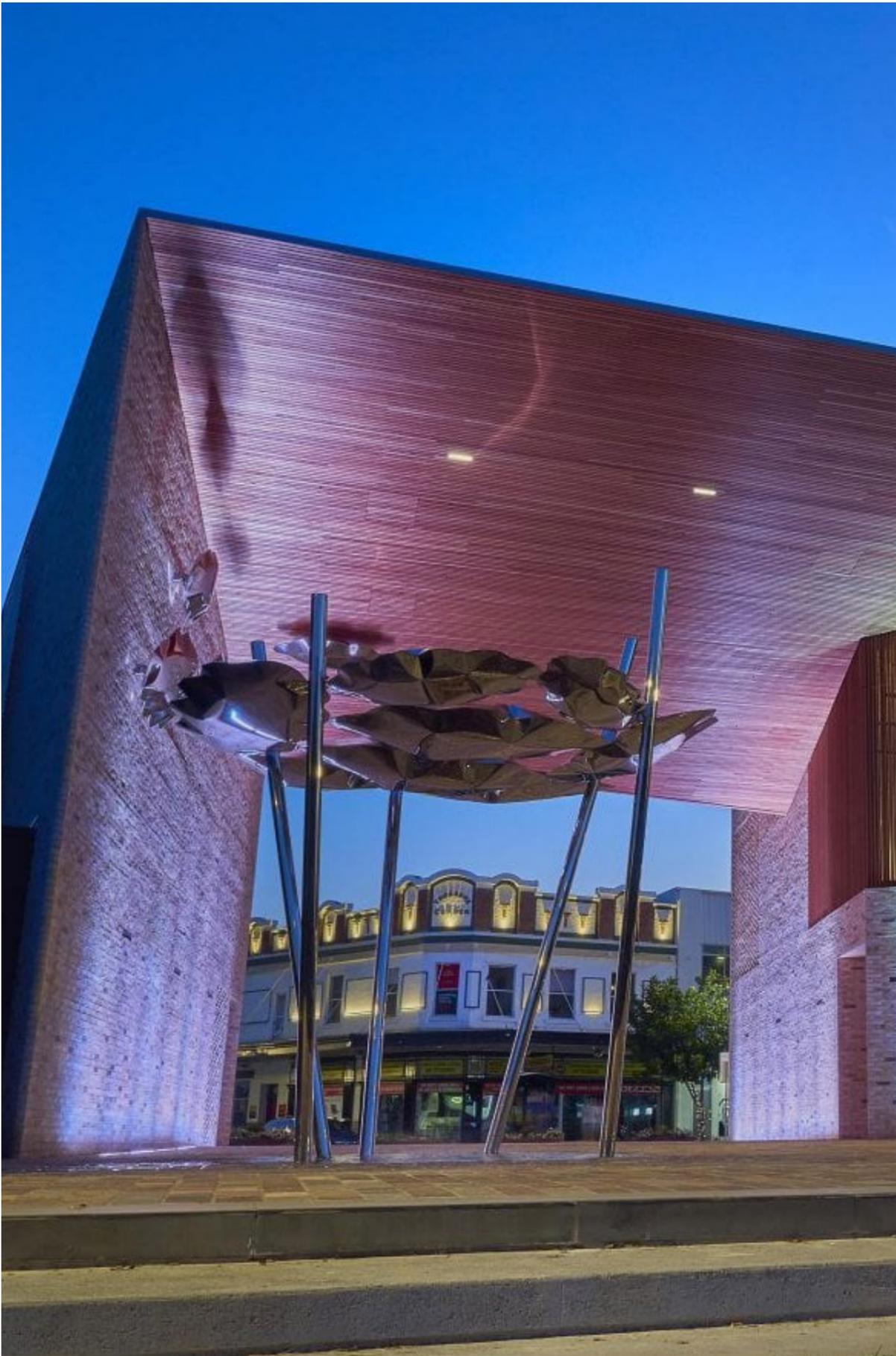
The Hunter JO and it's Member Councils take a leading role in the implementation of this plan, however collaborating and advocating with other levels of government, industry and key stakeholders is crucial to achieving our long term goals.



Our Strategic Themes

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.

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.

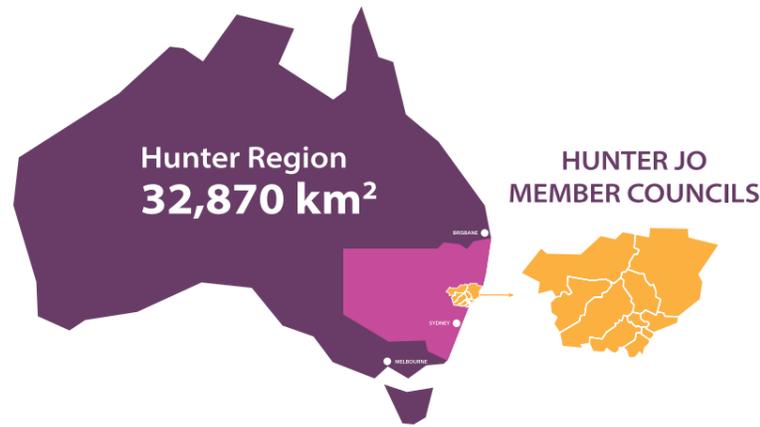


Our Region

The Hunter is currently experiencing a significant rise in population while also facing the decline of its traditional coal and energy-based industries. The Hunter's economy needs to evolve substantially and rapidly to maintain its considerable contribution to the State and Commonwealth economies, particularly as we approach a population of one million people by 2040. This is required to maintain the region's resilience, liveability, and economic prosperity.

It is a core priority and function of the Hunter JO to support, advocate and collaborate with stakeholders across all levels of government. This helps to ensure the quality of life and opportunities available to our local communities are not eroded as the economic drivers of our region evolve and change. Direct competitive access to international markets will underpin and drive this transition to safeguard the future of the Hunter.

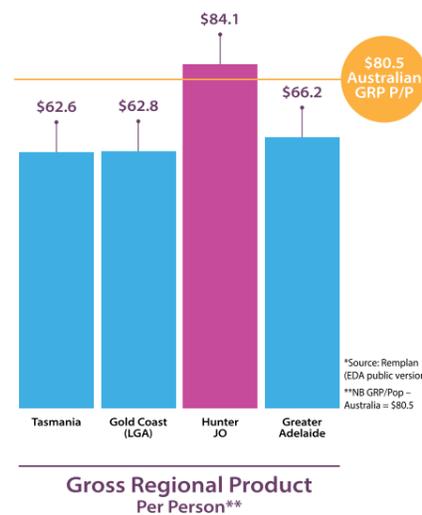
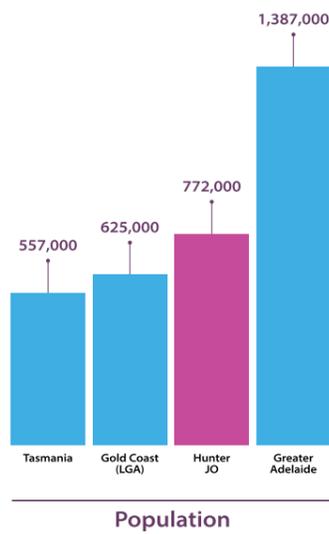
Hunter 2041 Population
NSW Government Forecast
949,833



Current
Hunter Population
773,135

A Powerhouse of the NSW
and National Economies

Gross Regional
Product
\$64b



Inhabited by the Awabakal, Worimi, Wonnarua, Geawegal, Biripi, Guringai & Darkinjung Aboriginal peoples.

41.5yrs
Median Age

2.5
Average people
per household

\$1,563
Median weekly
household income

334
Sportsgrounds

1,362
Bridges

475
Playgrounds

632
Parks

8652
Registered EV &
Hybrid Vehicles

101
Public EV
Chargers

113,600
Solar Systems

12,440km
Roads

293km
Coastline

The Hunter River flows 460km and is one of the largest river valleys on the NSW coast with a catchment of 2.2m ha.

Our Collective Voice

10 Local Councils

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

11 State Electorates

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

6 Federal Electorates

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



Message from the Chair

“It has been a great pleasure to work alongside my fellow Mayors and General Managers over the last 12 months and I thank them all for their dedication and collaborative efforts to deliver outcomes for our region.”

I am delighted to present this report, and to share the results of our collaboration as ten councils working together at the Hunter JO.

The 2022/2023 Financial Year saw many successes for the Hunter JO and the region. A significant milestone was reached in August 2022, when the Hunter JO Board formally approved the Hunter JO Advocacy Framework and Priorities document. This represents the first time in which all councils in the Hunter region endorsed a formal advocacy document, signifying an important alignment on regional advocacy.

Subsequently in February 2023, the Board committed to concentrating our collaborative efforts on five core advocacy priorities. These five priorities seek action on economic evolution, mining land reuse, integrated transport planning, roads funding reform and waste levy reform. It has been exciting to see such strong alignment between our councils on these issues, and to see that alignment evolve into proactive advocacy for the benefit of the entire region.

We have continued to raise the profile of the Hunter JO through our many programs, projects

and initiatives, and this year became the first region to enter a Regional Partnership with Australia’s largest local government climate network; the Cities Power Partnership. We also received recognition for our Climate Change Integrated and Planning and Reporting package in the Local Government Excellence in the Environment Awards, which has helped to support councils not only in the Hunter, but across the state.

It has been a great pleasure to work alongside my fellow Mayors and General Managers over the last 12 months and I thank them all for their dedication and collaborative efforts to deliver outcomes for our region. We have had a great many achievements over the last 12 months, and I am looking forward to seeing how our collective impact continues to grow into the future.

Cr Sue Moore
Mayor of Singleton Council
Chair of the Hunter JO



Message from the Director

“Having these systems, processes and shared regional priorities empowers our ability to achieve truly beneficial outcomes, as well as to offer guidance and regional insights to key decision-makers and influencers at all levels of government.”

A key focus of this year was adopting and commencing implementation of the Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2032, focusing on four brand-new regionally aligned themes: connectivity, resilience, liveability and jobs and a growing economy. Expanding our systems, projects and team resources to deliver on the shared priorities in the new plan has achieved significant beneficial outcomes for our region, including securing a record amount of grant funding for initiatives across each of the four themes. This represents a million dollar increase in grant funds from the previous year.

The clear strategic focus provided within the plan has created significant momentum for the Hunter JO, providing a foundation on which to engage day-to-day with our Member Councils across a range of initiatives and priorities, and to offer guidance and insights to key decision-makers and influencers at all levels of government on behalf of the region’s communities.

Our focus and deliverables for the year span a broad range of areas, with some key highlights including:

- NSW Government election advocacy focusing on the Hunter JO’s five core advocacy priorities
- Establishment of our Net Zero Acceleration program
- Strengthening and expanding our focus on disaster resilience
- Launch of Events10 – our coordinated regional approach to event attraction
- Continuing to lead and facilitate regional efforts to nurture and grow the Circular Economy as a key foundation for the region’s economic evolution.

I thank all of our Member Councils, Mayors, GMs/CEOs and key regional stakeholders for their passion and dedication to the Hunter region. I am very proud of what we have been able to achieve as a collaboration of councils and am especially grateful for the consistent efforts of our staff to enabling outcomes for our region.

Steve Wilson
Director Hunter JO



Delivery Highlights 2022 - 2023



Hunter JO Advocacy Framework and Priorities

Member Councils endorsed first regionally aligned advocacy priorities, focusing on economic evolution, reuse of mining and energy lands, integrated transport planning, roads funding reform and the NSW Waste levy.

Regional Illegal Dumping Program

Established the Hunter Central Coast RID Program with NSW EPA, our ten Hunter JO Member Councils and Central Coast Council.



Record amount of grant funding

Awarded \$2.55 million in grant funding, an increase of a million dollars from the previous financial year.



The Community Recycling Centre (CRC) Program reached over 1.2 million people across the region, including the Central Coast contributing to a 10% increase in CRC use from the previous year.



Net Zero Climate Action

- Initiation of the Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration program to support Hunter councils on their journey to Net Zero by 2050.
- Entered Australia's first Regional Partnership with Australia's largest local government climate network, the Cities Power Partnership.



17 Ministerial Engagements

Hosted eight regionally significant events

Contaminated Land

Accelerating Events

Circular Economy

Resilience



Small Acts Big Change

The digital strategy reached **1.3 million people** and had almost **7 million views**.



Hunter JO Strategic Plan

Endorsed and Implemented.



Excellence in the Environment Award

Our Climate Change Integrated Planning and Reporting Package received a Highly Commended Award.



Regional Contaminated Land Program

Released updated Hunter JO Register of Contaminated Land Consent Conditions.



Regional Events Acceleration

Established Events 10 - a regional brand to position the Hunter as a destination of choice for hosting events.



Circular Economy Leader

- Invited to attend the World Circular Economy Forum in Helsinki as part of the Australian delegation.
- Adoption of the Hunter and Central Coast Regional Circular Materials Strategy.
- Development and launch of the Hunter and Central Coast Circular Economy Roadmap.
- 80 hours spent on circular economy knowledge sharing both in and out of the region.

7 out of 10 Hunter Councils endorsed net zero or emissions reduction targets.



Strengthened Focus on Disaster Resilience in the Hunter Region

Commenced **Disaster Risk Reduction Program** in collaboration with seven other Joint Organisations and the NSW Reconstruction Authority.

Simtables for Community Empowerment Delivered 63 community workshops, events and training sessions to help communities better understand, plan, and prepare for natural disasters.



Part Two

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Collaboration, Engagement and Advocacy Overview

During the year the Hunter JO Board endorsed the following shared advocacy priorities for the region.

Our Priorities	Our Ask
<p>1 The region needs a clear and place-based policy and planning approach to drive the Region's economic evolution that is integrated across all levels of government.</p>	<p>A commitment that the next NSW Government will partner with the region's Councils, through the Hunter JO, to jointly approach the Commonwealth Government to explore a city-region deal for the Hunter, including specifically exploring and progressing opportunities to establish an entity that has the authority and resources from the Commonwealth and NSW Governments necessary to drive and deliver the Region's economic evolution.</p>
<p>2 There is an urgent need for legislation and policy change to provide clarity, certainty and a clear pathway to enable adaptation and reuse of mining and industrial lands to support the region's economic evolution.</p>	<p>A commitment from the next NSW Government that it will establish a clear and properly resourced process, with the necessary support and engagement from relevant government agencies and local government to provide recommendations on policy and legislative change that would change to provide a clear planning pathway to encourage the adaptation and reuse of mining and industrial lands as a key driver to support the region's economic evolution.</p>
<p>3 Development of an Integrated Transport Plan for the region that supports housing and employment outcomes.</p>	<p>A commitment that the next NSW Government, working with the region's Councils, will fund, resource and complete a study within 12 months of the election, that establishes a clear vision, credible concept plans and staged delivery plans for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated public transport solutions for the metropolitan heart of the region • Delivery of consistent, rapid services into the metropolitan heart from surrounding strategic centres, with sufficient increased frequency to make them a practical commuter option.
<p>4 Policy and funding should not leave some communities worse off but should address the current structural inequity where regional communities bear an undue road-funding burden compared with capital city counterparts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request the Minister for Transport to release the rationale and calculation for the distribution of the funds under the Regional and Local Roads Repair Program between Rural & Regional and Greater Sydney/Outer Metropolitan Councils • A commitment that the next NSW Government will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equalise the per kilometre funding across all areas • In collaboration with local government, develop and apply a more equitable model for allocating roads funding across metropolitan and regional areas.
<p>5 Significant funding and investment is needed to implement circular economy and waste management initiatives to unlock economic growth and sustainability for the Hunter region.</p>	<p>A commitment that the next NSW Government return 100% of Section 88 Domestic Waste Management Service Charge (the "waste levy") funds to Local Government for investment in local and regional communities.</p>

Political Engagements

Engagement with newly elected NSW Government	
Focus of Engagement	Political Representatives
Communicating the advocacy priorities of the Hunter JO to newly appointed NSW Government Ministers and understanding the core priorities of the new Government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Hon. Kate Washington MP, Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Inclusion (18th May 2023) The Hon Tim Crakanthorp MP, Minister for the Hunter, Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education (8th June 2023).
NSW Election Advocacy	
Focus of Engagement	Political Representatives
Communicating the shared interests, priorities and directions of the Hunter region's 10 democratically elected Mayors in the lead up to the 2023 NSW Government election	<p>NSW Government Ministers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Hon Wendy Tuckerman MP, Minister for Local Government (9th November 2022) The Hon. Rob Stokes MP, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Cities & Minister for Active Transport (17th Nov 2022) David Layzell MP, Member for Upper Hunter & Lachlan Barnsley, Strategy Advisor (representing The Hon Sam Farraway MP, Minister for Regional Transport and Roads) - 10th Nov 2022 <p>Shadow Ministers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> David Harris MP, Shadow Minister for Jobs, Investment and Tourism (6th Dec 2022) Paul Scully MP, Shadow Minister for Planning and Public Spaces (29th Nov 2022) Greg Warren MP, Shadow Minister for Local Government, Shadow Minister for Veterans, and Shadow Minister for Western Sydney (23rd Oct 2022) Jihad Dib MP, Shadow Minister for Energy & Climate Change & Shadow Minister for Emergency Services (26th Oct 2022) Tim Crakanthorp MP, Shadow Minister for Skills and TAFE, Shadow Minister for Tertiary Education (23rd October 2022) <p>Hunter based Members of Parliament</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clayton Barr MP, Member for Cessnock (21st October 2022).
Extension of Regional Contaminated Land Program	
Focus of Engagement	Political Representatives
Request for a continuation of the Contaminated Land Council Regional Capacity Building (CRCB) Program.	Correspondence to The Hon. James Griffin MP, Minister for Environment and Heritage (16 Sept 2022).

Reuse of Mining and Industrial Lands	
Focus of Engagement	Political Representatives
Communicating the Hunter JO's advocacy priorities, focusing on the need for legislation and policy change to provide clarity, certainty and a clear pathway to enable adaptation and reuse of mining and industrial lands to support the region's economic evolution.	Michael Bishop, Director of Policy - Office of the Hon Rob Stokes MP, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Cities & Minister for Active Transport (16th December 2022).
Regional Economic Evolution	
Focus of Engagement	Political Representatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role and strategic priorities of the Hunter JO Hunter Global initiative and emerging opportunities and priorities The Hunter JOs goals, role and activity in regard to the Region's economic evolution Issues and concerns held by the Hunter JO with the Royalties for Rejuvenation program. 	David Layzell - NSW Member for Upper Hunter (12 August 2022).
Hunter Cycle Tourism (Shiraz to Shore)	
Focus of Engagement	Political Representatives
Introduction and overview of the Hunter Joint Organisation and Regional Cycling Tourism priorities, including the Shiraz to Shore and Richmond Vale Rail Trail.	Correspondence to The Hon. Catherine King MP, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government (16th Sept 2022).
Greater Cities Commission	
Focus of Engagement	Political Representatives
Proposed governance and communication arrangements between the GNMP Mayors and Lower Hunter and Greater Newcastle City Commissioner.	Correspondence to The Hon Rob Stokes, MP Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Cities, and Minister for Active Transport (14th Sept 2022).
Circular Economy	
Focus of Engagement	Political Representatives
Introduction and overview of the the Circular Economy work of the Hunter JO, including expressing interest in contributing to Commonwealth Government Circular Economy initiatives.	Correspondence to the Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP, Minister for the Environment and Water (20th June 2022).

Media Coverage

Date	Topic
23 May 2023	Live Radio Interview – Shiraz to Shore overview
9 May 2023	Hunter JO Federal budget priorities
15 March 2023	Hunter Clean Energy Transition Authority – Hunter JO position
14 March 2023	Roads funding reform advocacy
13 March 2023	Five advocacy priorities – Mayors’ joint statement for incoming NSW Government
13 March 2023	Bipartisan approach of councils in advocating to state and federal governments around five advocacy priorities
16 February 2023	Advocacy for a statutory body to support the Hunter’s economic transition
1 December 2022	Hunter Expert Panel announcement of Hunter JO CEO appointed as panel member
19 October 2022	Simtables for Community Empowerment training in Noosa
29 August 2022	Live radio interview – Shiraz to Shore overview
27 July 2022	Mayors’ joint statement calling for more disaster support
17 July 2022	Live radio interview – Launch of the circular economy roadmap

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
● ● ●	Hunter Global: Our International Future Initiative	Grant	30-06-2023
RESILIENCE			
●	Transforming Resilience with the IP&R Framework	Grant	31-12-2023
● ●	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
● ●	Hospitality Circularity Project	Grant	30-06-2023
● ●	Circular Economy Precincts and Futures Hub	Grant	31-03-2024
● ● ●	Hunter Global Tourism	Grant	31-03-2024
●	Hunter Venture Fund and Innovation Entity	Grant	30-06-2023
● ●	Priority Infrastructure List	Grant	30-06-2023
● ●	Circular Economy Roadmap	Grant	30-06-2023
● ●	Circular Economy Procurement	Grant	30-06-2023
● ●	Hunter Circular Knowledge Hub	Grant	31-12-2024
LIVEABILITY			
● ●	Accelerating Event Economies	Grant	31-12-2023
●	Illegal Dumping Program	Grant	31-03-2027
● ●	Regional Circular Materials Strategy	Grant	31-12-2022
●	Landfill Emissions Data Project	Grant	30-06-2024
●	Net Zero Acceleration	Grant	30-06-2024
●	Small Acts Big Change	Grant	30-06-2023
●	Community Recycling Centres	Grant	30-06-2023
●	Contaminated Land Program	Grant	15-12-2023
● ●	Cities Power Partnership	Grant	Ongoing



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?

<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>1.2 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>1.3 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>1.4 A region that is built around sustainable transport outcomes.</p>
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Cycle Tourism Strategy (Shiraz to Shore)

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
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.	Funding was received through the NSW Government's Business Case and Strategy Development program to commence delivery of this project. Delivery during the year included engagement of project consultants, establishment of the project Steering Committee and initial stakeholder engagement.
Strategic Directions	1.1.2, 1.1.5, 1.4.1, 4.1.2

Airports Strategy (Freight and Logistics)

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
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. 	Funding was received through the NSW Government's Business Case and Strategy Development program to commence delivery of this project. Delivery during the year included engagement of the project consultant and initial industry and stakeholder engagement (i.e. 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

Hunter Global: Our International Future Initiative

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
<p>The Hunter JO is leading a collaborative partnership between the Hunter JO, Newcastle Airport, Committee for the Hunter, Business Hunter and the University of Newcastle to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build collaborative processes and systems within the region to collectively identify and actively pursue key international opportunities for expanding the Airport's economic contribution to the Region Directly support the expansion of international Airport related business and industry as a primary contributor to the Hunter Region's economic growth and diversification. 	<p>During the year the Hunter JO completed the "Hunter Global: The Flightpath to our Future" report, which represents a key milestone in the Hunter Global initiative. The report was developed following significant stakeholder participation achieved through the whole-of-region Hunter Global summit in February 2022, and ongoing collaboration and engagement since that time to further explore, refine and prioritise the opportunities identified. The report establishes a vision that "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". It discusses the economic opportunities created by the Airport's upgrade as 'above the wing' – the movement of people between destinations – and 'below the wing' – the movement of goods and freight between destinations. The report also sets out the priority actions necessary to ensure the region is ready for take-off in line with the Hunter Global vision.</p>
Strategic Directions	1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3, 1.2.4, 3.1.5, 3.3.1, 4.4.1, 4.1.2



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	Key Outcomes Delivered
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 draft resilience IP&R Package summary document was prepared, with a view to being released for consultation and review during 2023/24. Progress was also made on engaging a consultant to design and deliver a workshop to explore the idea and opportunities around regional resource sharing across Councils and the logistics and potential governance arrangements that would be needed to support this.
Strategic Directions	2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.3.1, 2.3.2

Act Now on Coastal Adaptation

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
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.	Primary outputs delivered under this project include: 1. Coastal & Estuary Communications Support Package - this provides a resource for the Councils of the Hunter and Central Coast to use to educate and create community awareness of coastal hazards and impacts within the region. The package provides consistent messaging and a regional-scale focus on coastal hazards and impacts. It includes template key messages, frequently asked questions, factsheets, an image library and social media content along with guidance for Council officers. 2. Climate Change Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Package - this provides support and guidance to Councils during the development of their Community Strategic Plan (CSP), Delivery Program and Operational Plan. This guide supports Councils' and their communities' climate change journey by providing user friendly, practical tools and templates to embed climate change throughout the IP&R process.
Strategic Directions	2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.2.1, 4.3.1

Disaster Risk Reduction

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
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 has occurred across the NSW JO network and NSW Reconstruction Authority (RA) to deliver this project. All 4 sub-projects being delivered by the Hunter JO commenced, with key activities initiated including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hunter Resilience Network established involving all Hunter JO Member Councils and Central Coast Council • Establishment of JO Simtable working group • Flood mapping purchased for integration in Simtable workshops. • Data acquired for each LGA through the Emergency Services Spatial Information Library (ESSIL). • Commencement of the next stage of community engagement using Simtables, which will expand the focus of community engagement from bushfires to a broader all hazards approach. • 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	Key Outcomes Delivered
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. Key outputs delivered included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 47 Simtable community workshops/ events - 1,061 attendees total. • 23 Simtable demonstrations or training sessions. • 5 Simtable loans. • Development of community support / education resources • Production of Community Case Study video • Completion of a Simtable user guide and workshop outline.
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	Key Outcomes Delivered
<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>A rebuild of the Hunter Circular website was completed as a core platform for supporting and growing the regions Circular Economy Stakeholder Ecosystem, with the official launch of the new site scheduled for November 2023.</p> <p>Work also commenced on design and delivery of a circular economy event series in the region, commencing with delivery of the Textiles Circularity Think Tank in June 2023.</p>
Strategic Directions	3.4.1, 4.2.2, 4.4.2

Hospitality Circularity Project

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
<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 was received from the NSW Environment Protection Authority's Bin Trim Program to deliver this new project. Project planning commenced to support project delivery in 2023/24.</p>
Strategic Directions	3.4.1, 3.4.2, 4.2.2

Circular Economy Precincts and Futures Hub

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
<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>Funding was received through the NSW Government's Business Case and Strategy Development program to deliver this project. Project delivery was commenced, including initiating the tender process for a preferred consultant to deliver the project and extending invitations for the establishment of an Expert Panel to 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 Global Tourism

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
<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>Funding was received through the NSW Government's Business Case and Strategy Development program to commence delivery of this project. Delivery during the year included engagement of consultants to deliver the project, establishment of the project Steering Committee and delivery of an Investment Logic Mapping workshop to guide project design and delivery.</p>
Strategic Directions	1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3, 3.5.1, 3.5.2, 4.1.1

Hunter Venture Fund & Innovation Entity	
Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
<p>To explore the design, feasibility and demand for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Hunter focused Innovation Entity, to support the commercialisation of research and other innovation in the Hunter region, through incubating, accelerating and activating the innovation ecosystem to attract investors and provide confidence that there is a pipeline of viable Hunter investment opportunities 2. A Hunter Venture Fund, a place-focused venture fund with potential to be co-funded by all levels of Government, research and industry partners to accelerate the flow of capital into the Hunter region to support the innovation ecosystem and drive investment; to activate a pipeline of projects that attracts ongoing private sector investment; and to address industry concerns around access to a depth of readily available capital for early-stage ventures in the Hunter. 	<p>This project was completed with the final report and recommendations produced under the project endorsed by the Hunter JO Board in June 2023. This report:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confirmed there is a need, interest and support for a place-based (Hunter focused) Venture Fund to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support ventures which may leverage opportunities in energy transition or diversify Hunter economic activity away from energy • Address local concerns with depth of readily available capital for early-stage ventures in the Hunter • Address Australia-wide concerns with gaps in available early-stage capital for ventures with specific characteristics. 2. Identified the need for a Hunter focused Innovation Entity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the commercialisation of research and other innovation generally in the Hunter region • Support ventures which may leverage opportunities in energy transition or diversify Hunter economic activity away from energy • Provide investors in (and managers of) any local fund with confidence that there is a pipeline of viable Hunter investment opportunities
Strategic Directions	3.2.1, 3.2.2

Priority Infrastructure List	
Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
<p>To develop a methodology 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. • Identifying a longer-term infrastructure investment pipeline, to provide transparency and confidence for potential investors, professional services and contractors to build their presence in the Hunter. 	<p>Phase 2 of this project commenced during the year, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design of a data survey and capture process through which to gather information on priority infrastructure projects from councils and agencies on an annual basis • Development and testing of a model for capturing and analyzing data provided by councils and agencies <p>The testing process has identified data gaps and variations in the type, level and quality of information collected. Engagement with Councils has commenced to develop a more refined and efficient process for collecting priority infrastructure data.</p>
Strategic Directions	1.1.1, 3.1.5

Circular Economy Roadmap	
Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop a common understanding and definition for the circular economy of the region relevant to all stakeholders – government, business and academia. • Gain broad regional support and engagement for the development of a circular economy in the Hunter and Central Coast region. • Develop a strategic roadmap for the region • To create an identity for the region as a leader in the transition to a circular economy and as a place to do Circular Economy activities, providing business attraction and local support for the circular economy • To provide leverage and connect with other key circular economy frameworks and strategies at all levels of government 	<p>The Hunter and Central Coast Circular Economy Roadmap was completed and delivery commenced during the year. The Roadmap showcases successes and sets a path for 12 months for the region to collaborate and accelerate towards our longer term shared vision of being Australia's leading regional circular economy. It knits together the region's progress and sets next steps to accelerate the transition to the collective vision for a circular and sustainable region. With a view to the region's strengths and challenges, the Roadmap has been co-designed with the broader Circular Economy stakeholder ecosystem. It prioritises initiatives based on their feasibility and potential to create local benefits. The Roadmap provides, not only a comprehensive list of initiatives happening across the Hunter and Central Coast region, but also lays out the methodology for adding, maintaining, and prioritising initiatives on a quarterly basis.</p>
Strategic Directions	3.4.1, 3.4.2, 4.2.1, 4.2.2

Circular Economy Procurement	
Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
<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>Phase 1 of this project to develop a draft framework to support Councils with their Circular Economy procurement efforts has been completed. Finalisation of the draft outputs to support their public release will be completed during 2023/24, subject to resourcing availability.</p>
Strategic Directions	3.4.1, 4.2.2, 4.4.2

Hunter Circular Knowledge Hub	
Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
<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>The initial stages of this project were completed including the acquisition of key datasets from Councils, and the building of a test platform and dashboards by the consultant.</p>
Strategic Directions	3.4.1, 3.4.2, 4.2.1



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	Key Outcomes Delivered
<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>This project has been completed. An Events10 brand has been developed to represent the 10 council destinations across the Hunter, supported by a website providing a wealth of information to help position the Hunter region as a destination of choice for events. Key resources and information generated by the project include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events 10 website • KPMG Hunter Event Economic Analysis Report • KPMG Event Economic Modelling Tool • KPMG Event Prioritisation and Assessment Framework • Event Licencing Recommendations Report • Event Planning Guide • Facilities audit • Consistent templates for event management • Website to promote the region • Hunter Event Prospectus • Cross Regional Itineraries • Major Event Feasibility Study • Regional Marketing until December 2023
<p>Strategic Directions</p>	<p>1.2.1, 1.2.3, 4.1.1, 4.1.2</p>

Illegal Dumping Program

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
<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>This program officially commenced during the year, with Member Councils entering a Memorandum of Understanding to participate in the RID Program, and the Regional Illegal Dumping Program Coordinator commencing with the Hunter JO in June 2023. The initial focus of the program has included establishing a regional working group/network and codesigning the new regional program with participating councils and the NSW EPA.</p>
<p>Strategic Directions</p>	<p>4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.3</p>

Regional Circular Materials Strategy

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
<p>To develop a new Hunter Central Coast Resource Recovery Strategy for the period 2022-2027. The new Strategy will align with the recently released NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2021-2041 and associated funding streams and provide improved alignment with the Regional Circular Economy program.</p>	<p>In December 2023 the Hunter JO adopted a Regional Circular Materials Strategy. The purpose of this document is to outline the Hunter JO's strategic direction as a regional response to the NSW EPA Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2021-41 (WaSM). The Strategy embraces a 20-year vision while focusing on the initiatives required in the 5-year period from 2022-2027.</p>
<p>Strategic Directions</p>	<p>3.4.1, 3.4.2, 4.2.1, 4.2.2</p>

Landfill Emissions Data Project

Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
<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>Funding was received 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. Project delivery will commence during the 2023/24 year.</p>
<p>Strategic Directions</p>	<p>4.3.1, 4.3.3</p>

Net Zero Acceleration	
Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
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>The position of Regional Net Zero Coordinator commenced in May 2023. The initial focus of the program included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing the Hunter Net Zero Network comprising strong engagement from councils. This Network provided input and feedback on the Draft Project Plan for the program. Preparation of EV feasibility study reports to support the preparation of Council funding applications. Preparation of three EOIs to the NSW Government to fund feasibility studies for the installation of community batteries.
Strategic Directions	2.2.1, 2.2.2, 4.4.1, 4.4.2

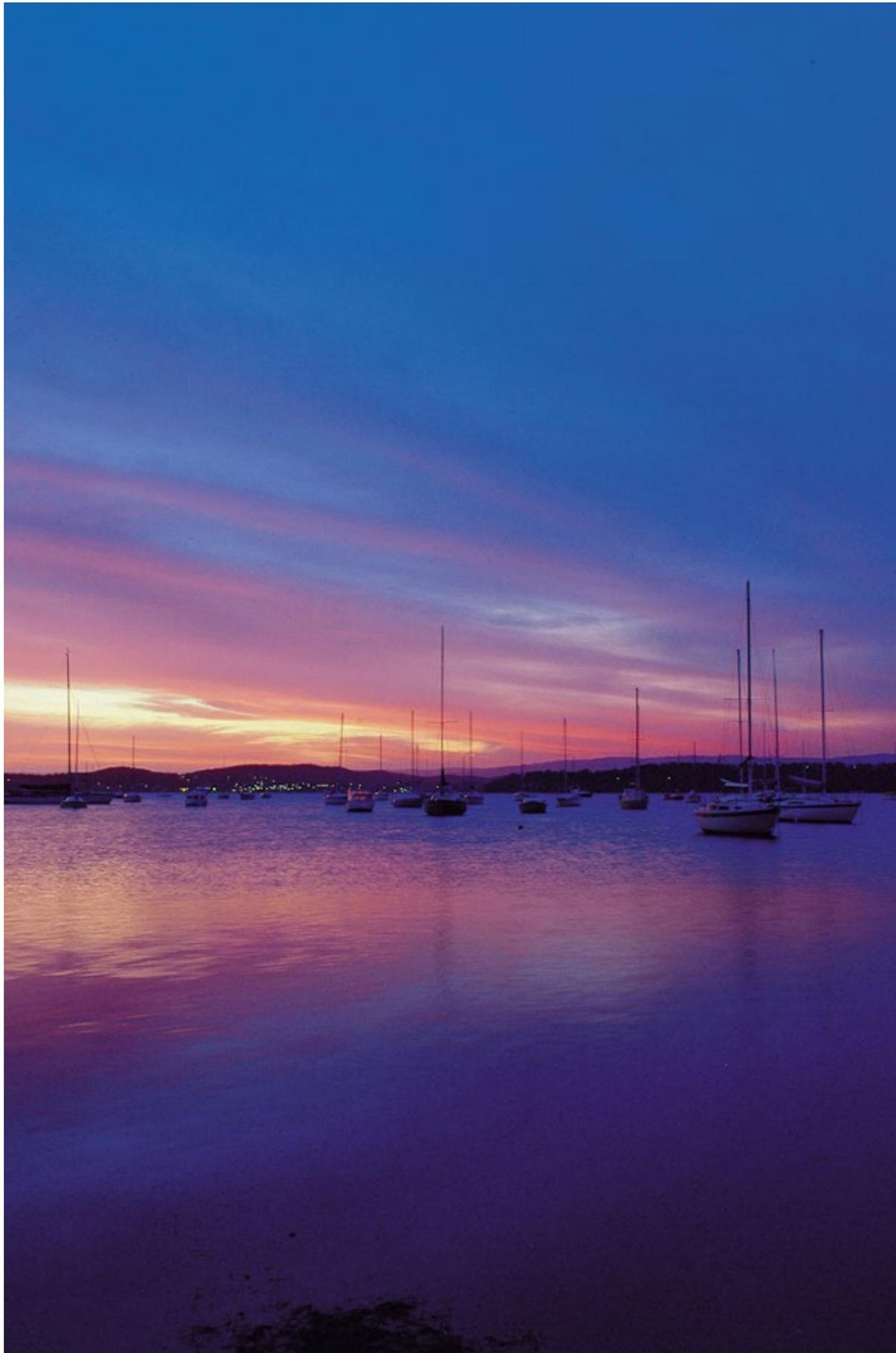
Small Acts Big Change	
Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
To deliver a regional communication campaign to improve community waste avoidance behaviours at the top end of the waste management hierarchy, along with reuse and recycling habits.	<p>The Small Acts Big Change Campaign continued to deliver a suite of region-wide community waste avoidance education/behaviour change initiatives across a range of digital platforms during the year. However, with ongoing grant funding finishing and no alternative funding opportunities being identified, the delivery of this wide reaching community focused program ended on 30 June. Beyond this date the content of the Small Acts Big Change channels (Facebook, Instagram and Youtube) will be reduced, 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.</p>
Strategic Directions	4.2.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.3

Community Recycling Centres	
Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
To deliver a regionally coordinated approach to promoting community awareness of Community Recycling Centres (CRC's).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing promotion of CRC videos occurred throughout the year resulting in them being viewed by over 800,000 people in May and June 2023 alone, with people playing the video on 1.5 million 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. Radio ads have continued to be delivered throughout the year promoting CRC's on 2NM and Triple M stations. An online promotion via Facebook and Instagram was undertaken to engage Hunter residents to complete a survey evaluating the 2022-23 CRC Education and Communications plan. The survey was completed by 247 community members, a 1000% increase on the number of responses received in the previous financial year. Of the people who responded 50% had seen or heard promotions about their local CRC.
Strategic Directions	4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.3

Contaminated Land Program	
Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
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>This program continued to deliver a range of initiatives throughout the year to provide practical support to member Councils on contaminated land planning and management issues. Key outputs included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A substantial update to the Register of Contaminated Land Consent Conditions Coordination of a regional contaminated land managers network Delivery of local (individual council) and regional information and training sessions, regional workshops and forums Creation of a podcast series focusing on change management, the Hunter JO contaminated land resource library, and building capacity for better management of contaminated land. Provision of a Contaminated Land Technical Helpdesk for Member Councils
Strategic Directions	4.3.1, 4.3.3



Cities Power Partnership Program	
Purpose	Key Outcomes Delivered
To support regional collaborative efforts by Councils, the Hunter JO and Cities Power Partnership (CPP) in delivery of shared pledges on climate action made by Councils.	<p>In April 2023 the Hunter JO entered into a partnership agreement with the Cities Power Partnership (CPP), that establishes a collaborative relationship identifying aligned goals and objectives and the activities that will be undertaken to achieve these. The priority areas identified include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regional collaboration - Support regional collaboration around Electric Vehicles by assisting member councils to identify opportunities and work together in delivering solutions. 2. Regional collaboration - Support the region's evolution to a clean energy future by facilitating regional collaboration, planning and project delivery and/or information sharing. 3. Advocacy - Work with the Cities Power Partnership to amplify local government priorities and advocate to state and federal government to improve energy efficiency and reduce emissions in the Hunter region. 4. Knowledge exchange - Support collaboration within and outside the Hunter region by sharing knowledge and learning with the Cities Power Partnership network.
Strategic Directions	2.2.1, 2.2.2, 4.2.2, 4.4.1, 4.4.2



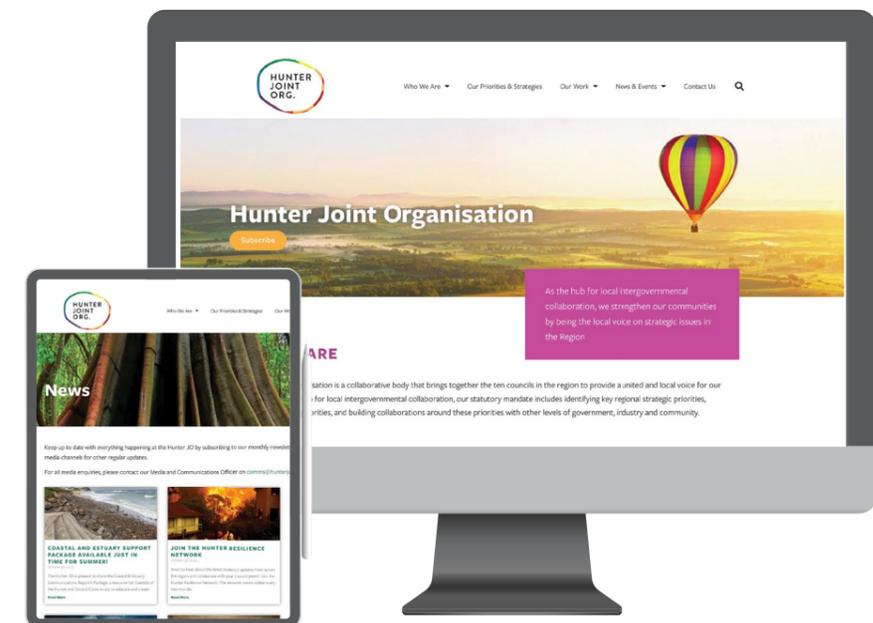
Part Three

Part 3: Financials and Statutory Statements

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Financials and Statutory Statements

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The Hunter JO's Audited Financials and Statutory Statements can be accessed on our website: www.hunterjo.com.au

Statutory Statements

Issues Raised by Anti-Slavery Commissioner

No issues were raised by the Anti-slavery Commissioner concerning the operations of the JO.

Procurement of Goods and Services

To ensure that goods and services procured by and for the JO were not the product of modern slavery, within the meaning of the Modern Slavery Act 2018, procurement practices of the Hunter JO require vendors operating above thresholds required under the Act to provide their specific Modern Slavery Statement.

Overseas Travel

The Hunter JO was invited to attend the World Circular Economy Forum in Helsinki as part of an Australian delegation. A staff member accepted the invitation on behalf of the Hunter JO, and attended the conference in Helsinki as it aligned with personal leave being taken in Europe.

The overseas travel was approved by the General Managers Advisory Committee, in line with the Hunter JO delegations policy and framework.

Expenses & Provision of Facilities to Board Members

Nil

Details of each Contract Awarded

The Hunter JO engaged the policy and program management delivery services of Arrow Collaborative Services (a related entity of the Hunter JO) via a service level agreement to the amount of \$349,600.

Summary of amounts incurred in relation to legal proceedings

Nil

Financial Assistance of Others

Nil

Statement of all external bodies exercising function of JO

The Hunter JO has not delegated any of its functions. Arrow Collaborative service provides policy and advocacy services, and grant and program management services to the Hunter JO.

Statement of bodies in which JO held a controlling interest

Nil

Statement of bodies in which JO participated

Nil

Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan

Our EEO Policy has undertaken broad consultation and is currently pending approval with the CEO. Staff and Manager training will be conducted once approved.

Associated policies and processes have been updated including Code of Conduct, Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment, Performance Management process, Grievance and Complaint procedures and the Recruitment process.

Additional measures to capture or prevent any EEO contraventions include:

- Systematic review of employment practices to ensure flexibility in accommodating the changing needs of employees
- Annual review schedule of Human Resource policies and procedures to ensure they are non-discriminatory and supportive to all employment groups equally
- Employee Assistance Program provider reports de-identified information on any contraventions
- Confidential reporting for staff and managers
- Exit Interviews
- Staff survey completed in March 2023

Our HR Officer has professional membership with the Australian Human Resources Institute – CPHR (Certified Practitioner), The Australian Sociological Association and the Australasian Legal Practice Management Association and keeps abreast of workplace legislation changes and case law outcomes with consideration to currency and best practice of our workplace practices and procedures.

Remuneration Executive Officer

The total remuneration package of the Executive Officer for the 2022/2023 financial year was \$346,786.36 inclusive of salary, vehicle allowance, superannuation and fringe benefits tax payable (for the period).

This amount is for total salary, superannuation and FBT payable for the period 1/7/22 to 30/6/23

Remuneration of Senior Staff Members

Nil.

Statement of total numbers of persons completing paid work on 23 November 2022

The total number of persons who performed paid work on Wednesday 23 November 2022 was fourteen persons, including:

- Two persons employed by the JO on a permanent full-time, permanent part-time or casual basis or under a fixed-term contract, one of which is a senior staff member
- Fourteen persons engaged by the JO, under a contract or other arrangement with the person's employer, wholly or principally for the labour of the person one of which is a trainee

Capital works projects

Nil

Government Information Public Access (GIPA)

Hunter JO received zero formal access and zero informal applications for the reporting year under *Government Information (Public Access) Act, 2009 (GIPA)*.

Public Interest Disclosure Activity

Hunter JO received zero public interest disclosures for the reporting year under *Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994*.

