



Hunter Joint Organisation Annual Performance Statement 2023 - 2024



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.

If you have any feedback or questions please contact us at admin@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au or at www.hunterjo.com.au
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Annual Performance Statement 2023-24

This document reports on the Hunter Joint Organisation's (Hunter JO's) performance and strategic progress through the 2023/2024 Financial Year.

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

A Message from the Chair

*"This year was one of significant reflection
and refocus for the Hunter JO"*

I am delighted to present this Annual Performance Statement and to share the results of our collaboration for the year working together as ten Mayors through the Hunter JO.

This year was one of significant reflection and refocus for the Hunter JO, with our Board of Mayors undertaking a considered and collaborative review of both the organisation's purpose, and the most appropriate leadership, governance and organisational structures needed to achieve our shared aspirations for the region and the Hunter JO moving forward.

Key directions arising from the review include a greater focus and enhanced capability to deliver regional advocacy, while continuing to deliver the valuable regional collaboration and program work for which the Hunter JO is well known. Key changes for the organisation already underway or to commence in 2024/25 include:

- More collaborative Board meetings, processes and activities to enhance opportunities for our region's Mayors to work more closely together to collectively advocate for the region.

- Building staff resource capacity within the Hunter JO to support our increased focus on advocacy and intergovernmental relations.
- Establishing greater structural separation between the Hunter JO and its related entity Arrow Collaborative Services, to provide greater clarity and focus for the Hunter JO's organisational and statutory responsibilities and functions.

This important work has established a foundation that will continue to underpin the collaborative advocacy efforts of our region's Mayors for many years to come.

Sue Moore
Chair - Hunter Joint Organisation
Mayor - Singleton Council



"We have continued to collaborate with our member councils and regional partners to deliver an important suite of programs and projects focused on the shared priorities of our Board of Mayors"



Amongst this year's significant and valuable period of review and refocus for the Hunter JO, we have continued to collaborate with our member councils and regional partners to deliver an important suite of programs focused on the shared priorities of our Board of Mayors: connectivity, resilience, liveability and jobs and a growing economy.

Our focus and grant funded projects have spanned a broad range of areas, with key highlights including:

- Exploring global opportunities for the region through the release of our "Hunter Global: The Flightpath to our Future" report, Hunter Aviation and Air Freight Strategy, and Hunter Global Tourism Strategy.
- Continuing to strengthen the preparedness of our councils and their communities through the wide-ranging Disaster Risk Reduction initiative.
- Paving the way for Councils to reduce emissions through the first year of implementation of the Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration Program.
- Confirming the potential to position the region as a premier cycle tourism destination, through the Hunter Cycle Tourism Strategy and Business Case and Concept Design for the Shiraz to Shore.

- Collaborating with all of our member councils and the NSW Environment Protection Authority to revamp our collective capacity and approach to deterring and taking action on illegal dumping.
- Continuing to lead region-wide efforts to progress the circular economy, which are attracting national recognition and cementing the Hunter's reputation as a leading circular economy region.

I thank and continue to be encouraged by the ongoing enthusiasm and commitment of our Board of Mayors, General Managers, Hunter JO team, Council staff and regional partners in continuing to collaborate on a range of fronts to achieve the best outcomes for our region.

Steve Wilson
Director Hunter JO (Executive Officer)

**A Message
from the
Director
(Executive
Officer)**



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Who we are

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.



Hunter JO Board of Mayors

(Voting Members)



Mayor Jay Suvaal
Cessnock City Council
(Deputy Chair)



Mayor John Connors
Dungog Shire Council



Mayor Kay Fraser
Lake Macquarie City Council



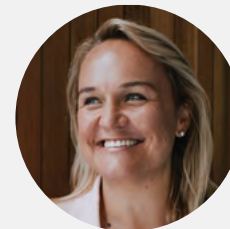
Mayor Philip Penfold
Maitland City Council



Mayor Claire Pontin
MidCoast Council



Mayor Steven Reynolds
Muswellbrook Shire Council



Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes
City of Newcastle



Mayor Ryan Palmer
Port Stephens Council



Mayor Sue Moore
Singleton Council
(Chair)



Mayor Maurice Collison
Upper Hunter Shire Council



Ken Liddell
GM Cessnock City Council



Gareth Curtis
GM Dungog Shire Council



Morven Cameron
CEO Lake Macquarie City Council
(GMAC Chair)



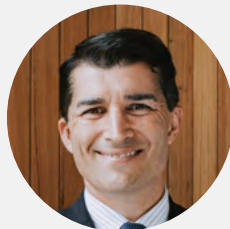
Jeff Smith
GM Maitland City Council



Adrian Panuccio
GM MidCoast Council



Derek Finnigan
GM Muswellbrook Shire Council



Jeremy Bath
CEO City of Newcastle



Tim Crosdale
GM Port Stephens Council



Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr
GM Singleton Council



Greg McDonald
GM Upper Hunter Shire Council



Shaun O'Sullivan
Director North
Regional Coordination
Premiers Department NSW

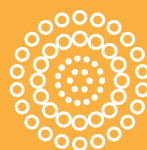
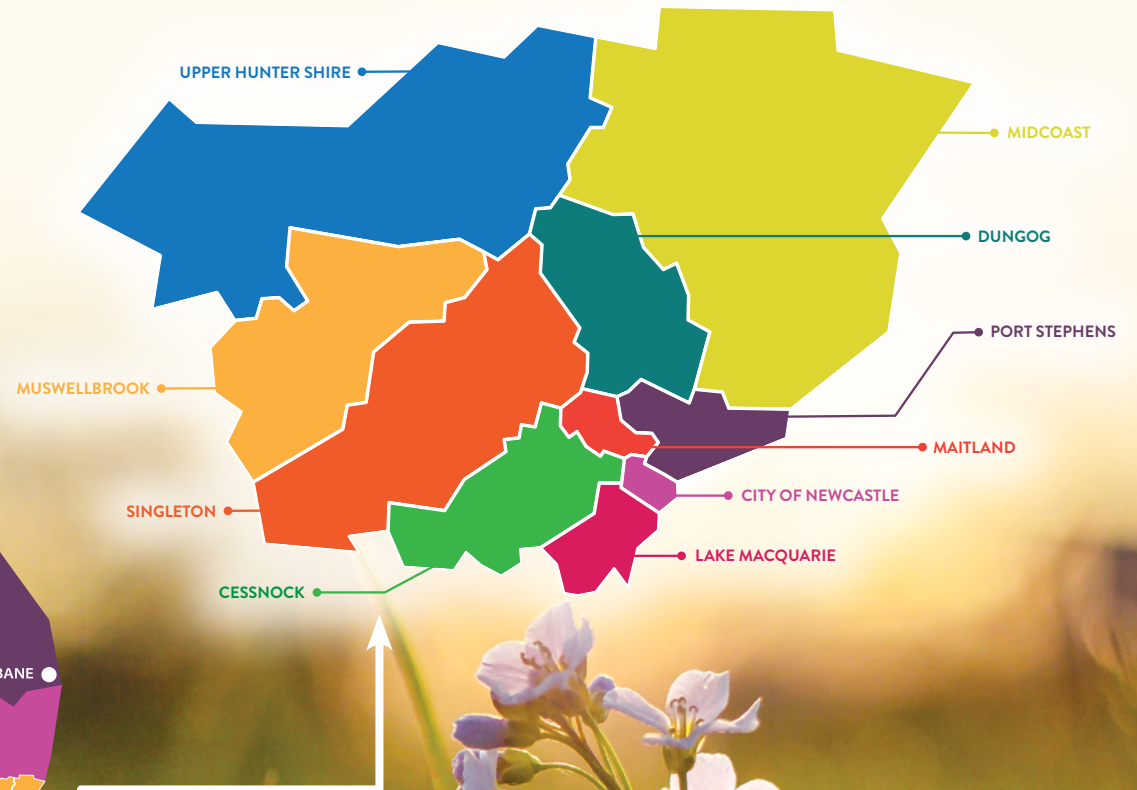


Virginia Errington
Council Engagement Manager
NSW Office of Local
Government

Hunter JO Board (Non-voting Members) and General Managers Advisory Committee (GMAC)

Our Region

Hunter Region
32,870 km²



Lands of the Awabakal, Worimi, Wonnarua, Geawegal, Biripi, Guringai and Darkinjung Aboriginal peoples

Our region is significant, diverse and evolving.

Collectively, our ten local government areas are entering a new and exciting phase with a growing metropolitan area, greater economic diversification and global gateways that will increasingly link the Hunter to the rest of the world



Has a rapidly growing population forecast to reach **1 million people by 2040**



Current Hunter Population **798,963**

Current Strengths

- Agriculture
- Manufacturing
- Defence
- Tourism
- Mining
- Energy



Boasts diverse natural landscapes and environments that underpin the liveability of our local communities and attract significant numbers of visitors to our region

We enjoy diversity in housing and lifestyle choice from major city centres and their suburbs, through to peri urban lots, rural towns and villages and more isolated farming and bushland environments

Gross Regional Product

\$86.2b



Is the largest regional economy in Australia

Ranking above Tasmania, the Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory in terms of economic output driving around

11% of NSW's Gross State Product

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.



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Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2032

Joint Organisations are required to develop a Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities (SSRP) which sets out a vision for the region and provides an overview of the strategic actions required to deliver on that vision. Our SSRP is referred to as the Hunter JO Strategic Plan.

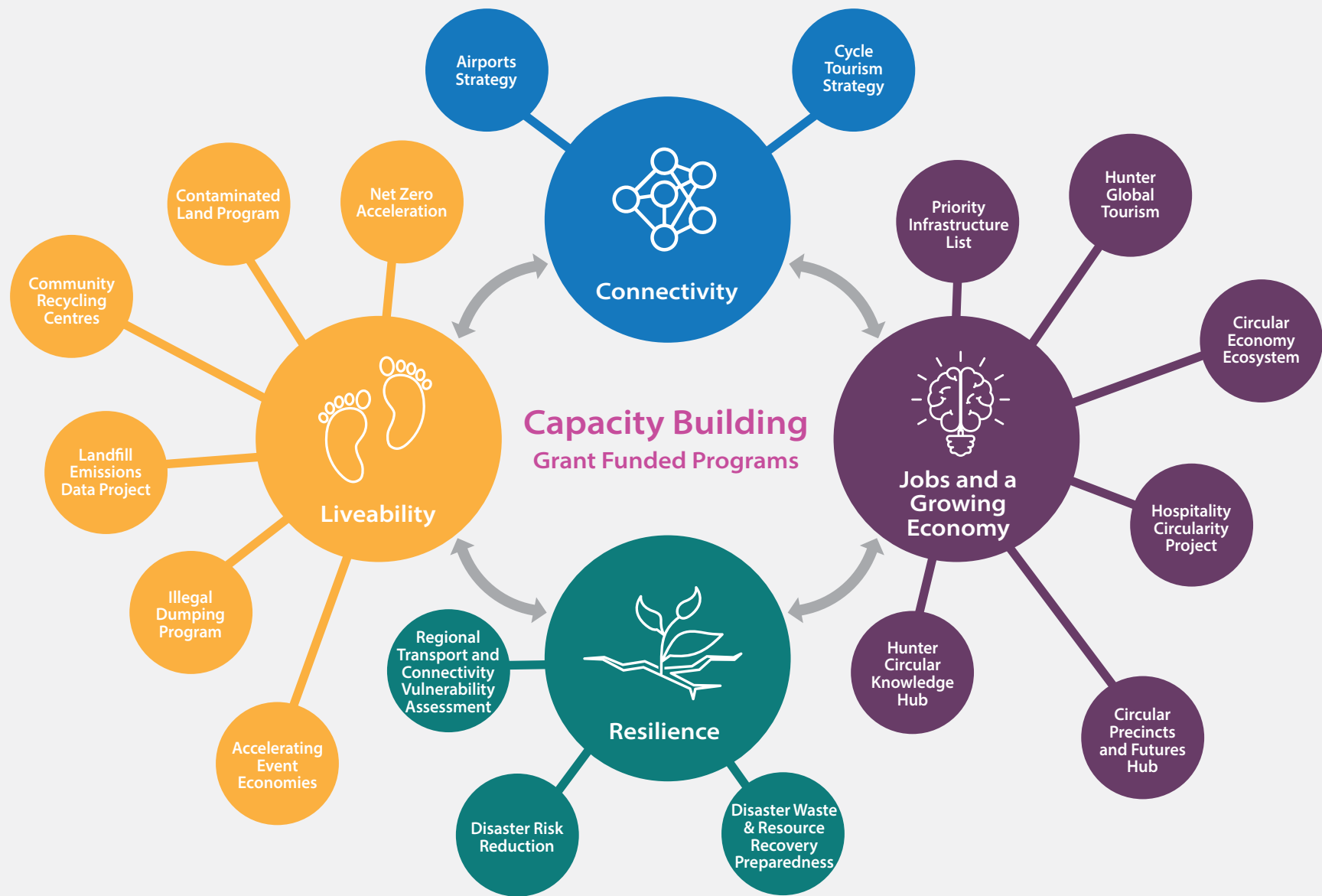
The current Hunter JO Strategic Plan was endorsed by the Board in 2022 and draws from the Community Strategic Plans (CSPs) of our ten Member Councils, regional-level plans, and other state strategic documents to clearly identify the highest regional priorities. It is a four-year document that aligns with the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) cycle.

The vision set out in our Strategic Plan is to be 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.







Valued at \$2.2M in 2024 - 2025



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Connectivity

Strategic Objectives

- 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.

Program	Purpose and Outcome
Hunter Global: Our International Future Initiative	<p>To lead collaboration in identifying and pursuing key international opportunities for expanding Newcastle Airport's economic contribution to the region, to support Airport related business and industry as a primary contributor to the Hunter Region's economic growth and diversification.</p> <p>Completion of the report "Hunter Global: The Flightpath to our Future" was completed during the year, representing a key milestone in the broader 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>
Airports Strategy (Freight and Logistics)	<p>To develop strategy and business case for airfreight and passenger infrastructure and connectivity logistics for the region.</p> <p>This project funded by the Regional NSW Business Case and Strategy Development Fund project has been completed. A key output of the project is the Hunter Region Aviation and Air Freight Strategy, identifying priority planning and infrastructure needs for the region. The plan was developed to enable the region to unlock the opportunities of international connectivity at Newcastle Airport that will enable new investment, business diversification and local jobs.</p> <p>The Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explores the critical role our region's airports play in supporting essential service delivery across the Hunter region.• Identifies the construction of an air-freight cargo terminal at Newcastle Airport as the highest priority investment to unlock the value and opportunity in international air freight for the region.• Identifies supportive activities to help ensure success and participation of freight movements across the region, including support for maintaining operations at all regional airports.

Program

Purpose and Outcome

Cycle Tourism Strategy (Shiraz to Shore)

To prepare a Cycle tourism masterplan / Destination Management Plan for the region.

The Hunter Cycle Tourism (Shiraz to Shore) project funded through the NSW Government's Business Case and Strategy Development program has been completed, with key outputs including a Business Case and Concept Design for the Shiraz to Shore initiative, as well as a Hunter Cycle Tourism Strategy to position the region as a premier cycle tourism destination.

The project has confirmed a unique opportunity exists to link existing and planned cycleway infrastructure, local businesses, and points of interest across five council areas; to create a 100km integrated region-wide cycle network and iconic tourism product called Shiraz to Shore. Forecast benefits arising from Shiraz to Shore include:

- Estimated trail use exceeding 237,000 people per year.
- Cycle tourists/visitors spending more and staying longer in our region, resulting in business growth opportunities providing more jobs for local people.
- Regional income increasing \$119m over a 10 year period.
- Nearly 200 ongoing jobs generated after the construction phase of the project.

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





Political Engagements

- **The Hon David Gillespie MP Federal Member for Lyne**
22nd May 2024
Focus: Hunter Global Freight and Tourism.
- **Mr Dan Repacholi MP Federal Member for Hunter**
7th June 2024
Focus: Hunter Global Freight and Tourism & Hunter Cycle Tourism Plan (Shiraz to Shore).
- **NSW Hunter Labor Caucus**
9th May 2024
Focus: Hunter Global Freight and Tourism & Hunter Cycle Tourism Plan (Shiraz to Shore).
- **Ms Meryl Swanson MP, Federal Member for Paterson**
24th April 2024
Focus: Hunter Global Freight and Tourism & Hunter Cycle Tourism Plan (Shiraz to Shore).
- **The Hon Jenny Aitchison, Minister for Regional Transport and Roads (correspondence)**
29 August 2023
Focus: Clarification of road funding formula underpinning allocation of NSW Regional Emergency Road Repair Fund.
- **Meryl Swanson MP, Federal Member for Paterson & Dan Repacholi MP, Federal Member for Hunter**
29 September 2023
Focus: Field trip to view a section of the proposed Richmond Vale Trail and to explore the broader opportunities for the region that would be provided by the Hunter Cycle Tourism Strategy and Shiraz to Shore Trail.

Media

- **Hunter Airport Strategy and Air-freight Cargo Terminal**
8th March 2024
Focus: Outcomes and Recommendations arising from Regional Airports Strategy and Freight Terminal Business Case.

Submissions

- **NSW Transport Freight Policy Reform Program**
31 May 2024
Recommendations for building the international freight capacity and capability of the Hunter Region's primary international gateways, the Port of Newcastle and Newcastle Airport.





Strategic Objectives

- 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.

Program

Purpose and Outcome

Disaster Risk Reduction Sub Project 1 - Regional Support and Capacity Building

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:

1. Regional Support and Capacity Building - embedding disaster resilience into Council operations and building capacity to communicate disaster resilience to local communities.
2. Disaster waste management and resource recovery preparedness - assisting Councils to plan place-based solutions for effective disaster waste management and resource recovery systems.
3. Delivering a regional transport vulnerability and connectivity assessment and mitigation plan.
4. Continued refinement and expansion of the use of Simtables regionally for multi-hazard disaster engagement.

All four sub projects were successfully delivered during 2023/24. Specific regional capacity building initiatives to support collaboration amongst councils and the integration of disaster resilience into Council IP&R processes (Sub Project 1) included:

- Hunter JO facilitated 2 monthly Council Resilience Network meetings featuring council case studies, guest presentations and discussion.
- Delivery of an in-person forum in May 2024 including NSW Reconstruction Authority, focusing on Disaster Adaptation Plans and measuring resilience.
- The Hunter JO Resilience IP&R Support Package was updated to reflect workshop outputs and the new State Disaster Mitigation Plan.
- Six council representatives were supported to attend Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience online masterclasses to build capability.
- A Resilience Needs and Opportunities Analyses for individual LGAs and region-wide were completed (see details below).

Details on the outcomes of Sub Projects 2-3 are provided separately below.

Program

Purpose and Outcome

Needs and Opportunities Analysis - Sub Project 1

The scope of Needs and Opportunities Analysis was to:

- Identify available data and information that could be used to identify Councils' resilience needs.
- Synthesise the data collected to identify the resilience gaps and needs by Council area.
- Develop opportunities to improve disaster resilience at a regional level.

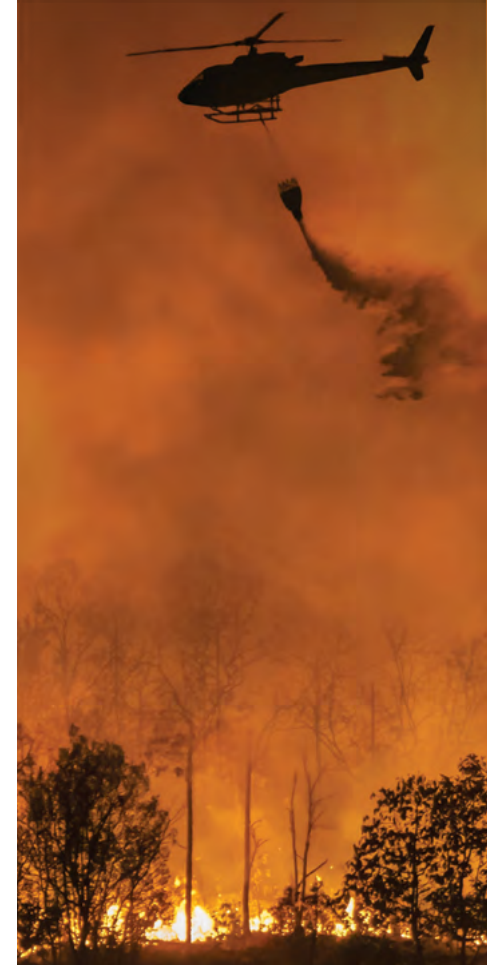
A Resilience Needs and Opportunities Analysis Summary Report has been developed that explores:

- The role of councils in building resilience.
- Council needs and opportunities, and strengths and limitations.
- Linkages with IP&R, including how to integrate actions from the Needs Analysis in Council IP&R processes.
- Regional-scale opportunities for collaboration.
- Next steps for implementation.

The report identifies the following opportunities for regional scale collaboration where Hunter JO may be best placed in terms of capability and remit to assist Councils improve their disaster resilience;

- Facilitating knowledge and best practice sharing between Councils.
- Advocating for improved telecommunications/ connectivity to allow Councils to enable smart city and other digital solutions, and enable better communications during disasters.
- Providing GIS/digital assistance to Councils in terms of GIS databases and hosting hazard layers that will be publicly available.
- Assisting Councils to update their IP&R documents, including Asset Management Plans, to include disaster risk reduction and mitigation actions by sharing resources from other JOs.
- Developing a template for Councils to use when they develop their Disaster Adaptation Plans (DAP) and assist them to create the DAP.
- Advocate for grants/ funding or highlight any that are available to Councils to enable Councils to update their flood studies/plans.
- Develop a Regional Disaster Waste and Resource Recovery Management Plan and assist Councils to create a local plan if they choose to do so.

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





Resilience

Program

Purpose and Outcome

Disaster Risk Reduction Sub-Project 2 - Disaster Waste & Resource Recovery Preparedness

To enable the region to understand and prepare for waste generated by disasters ('disaster waste') and facilitate the diversion and recovery of materials from disaster waste and protect the region's landfill.

This project has been completed, with several outputs developed to assist the regions councils in increasing their disaster preparedness:

1. Constraints Mapping – Analysed and mapped disasters in the region such as floods, bushfires, storms, East Coast Lows, tsunami, and earthquakes. These maps also plotted current waste facilities across the region.
2. Material Flow Analysis (MFA) to understand what currently happens to disaster waste in the region.
3. Regional Risk Analysis.
4. Type V Material Composition Matrix with predictions for disaster waste volume and composition from each disaster type in the region.
5. Regional Disaster Waste and Resource Recovery Management Plan.
6. Eleven individual LGA Disaster Waste and Resource Recovery Management Plans.
7. Memorandum of Understanding (draft) that outlines how councils will collaborate during and post disaster.
8. Multi Criteria Analysis Tool (MCA) – using the temporary transfer site criteria from the NSW Disaster Waste Sub-Plan, this tool provides a process of for councils to identify the best options for temporary transfer sites.
9. Temporary Transfer Sites Pre-Approval Process – Meetings with key stakeholders from the EPA, Department of Planning, and the Reconstruction Authority to explore potential pre-approval pathways for temporary transfer sites.
10. Identification of pilot sites – Murrurundi Old Showground Public Reserve and Teralba Worm Farm identified as potential sites to pilot the pre-approval process.
11. Disaster Waste and Resource Recovery Preparedness Project Report.

Disaster Risk Reduction Sub-Project 3 - Transport Vulnerability & Connectivity

To provide an assessment of the risks posed to Hunter and Central Coast region's transport networks by natural disasters, and the actions and partnerships required to mitigate these risks.

Regional Planwisely Subscription

In collaboration with TfNSW and the broader NSW JO Network, a 12-month subscription has been established to enable councils to use the Planwisely platform. Planwisely is used extensively by TfNSW and contains a wide array of TfNSW data along with foundational, demographic and movement data and satellite imagery, allowing councils to access and use data in real world planning, preparation, response and recovery, 'test' the usefulness and serviceability of the data and identify what else would better support them to deliver disaster resilience of their networks. Each council has been issued with 1-3 licences to trial and during 2024/25.

Customer Journey Resilience (CJR) Plans

During the year Hunter JO worked with TfNSW to assist in delivery of Customer Journey Resilience Plans (CJRP). A draft Hunter CJR Plan has been prepared along with local plans that have been distributed by TfNSW to councils for review.

Program

Purpose and Outcome

Disaster Risk Reduction Sub-Project 4 - Simtables for Community Empowerment

To provide support to Councils and other partner organisations to undertake community engagement around bushfire preparedness using simtables.

The Hunter JO, Councils and other stakeholder organisations continued to use the Simtable for community engagement throughout 2023/24, including:

- 43 community workshops/ events were delivered of which:
 - 15 delivered by Hunter JO.
 - 17 delivered by council partners.
 - 11 delivered by other partners.
- 13 demonstrations/ training sessions were held.
- 9 loans of the Simtable were used to support community organisations (eg Rural Fire Service) with training and community engagement.
- A Simtable User Manual was developed.
- The Hunter JO user support subscription was renewed in perpetuity, meaning that software updates, hardware repairs, and user support will be available for as long as required.

Spatial Data Scoping Study

To inform the development of spatial data and tools by the state government, ensuring that local government perspectives are understood and accounted for.

Along with Illawarra-Shoalhaven JO and Central NSW JO, Hunter JO participated in the Spatial Data Scoping Study. The study identified the current spatial data, governance and visualisation/ access tools that are available to local government in relation to disaster resilience, identified the needs and any gaps, and made recommendations for how these can be rectified.



Resilience

Program

Purpose and Outcome

Transforming Resilience with the IP&R Framework

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.

The Resilience IP&R Package was published during the year and is available on the Hunter JO website. There has been interest in the package by local government across the state since its publication. The package aims to support Councils' and their communities' resilience journey by providing user friendly, practical tools and templates to embed resilience as business as usual through the IP&R process and the development of their Community Strategic Plan (CSP), Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

Act Now on Coastal Adaptation

The objectives of this project were 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.

Released in October 2023, the primary outputs delivered from 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.



Submissions

- **Independent Review of Commonwealth Disaster Funding**
3 August 2023
Focus: Recommendations to the Commonwealth Government re the provision of funding (and the mechanisms through which it is delivered) to support councils and their communities reduce their disaster risk.



Jobs and a Growing Economy

Strategic Objectives

- 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.
- 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.
- 3.3 A globally focused region that drives talent attraction and retention
- 3.4 A region that is built around Circular Economy principles as a driver of future jobs.
- 3.5 We are recognised as a destination of choice for international and domestic visitors.

Program	Purpose and Outcome
Circular Economy Ecosystem	<p>To build circular economy knowledge through education, data sharing and capacity building opportunities for Hunter JO member councils and Central Coast Council.</p> <p>This program continued to support a number of circular economy ecosystems initiatives including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitating Circular Economy Facilitators Group meetings• Delivering quarterly networking and capacity building workshops and events• Delivering a Co-Design Workshop to present key insights on current practices, level of circularity and gaps to address across our top 10 waste streams in the region• Delivering the "International Insights for a Circular Hunter" event, in conjunction with both the Hunter Innovation Festival and Circularity 2023. The event was attended by 77 stakeholders from across industry, local government, and university researchers• Delivering Boomerang Labs Circular Economy Accelerator course• Maintaining the Hunter Circular website, including compiling and updating new case studies for the site.
Circular Economy Precincts and Futures Hub	<p>To deliver concept plans and business cases for four circular economy precincts, that would each represent a key part of the Hunter.</p> <p>This project funded by the Regional NSW Business Case and Strategy Development Fund project has been completed. The outcomes from the project identified that an investment of \$8.5 Million over 5 years would establish a Circular Economy Futures Hub, that would generate 1,020 local jobs and generate \$1.1 billion in Gross Regional Product.</p>

Program	Purpose and Outcome
Circular Economy Procurement	<p>To support Councils to prioritise recycled materials and circular economy services in their procurement systems and processes.</p> <p>A successful funding application totaling \$349,000 was submitted to the NSW Government's Local Government Waste Solutions Fund. This funding will assist councils reduce the impact of the materials they consume as an organisation, by working with suppliers and looking at lower impact alternatives.</p> <p>Delivery of the project will commence in 2024/25.</p>
Hunter Circular Knowledge Hub	<p>To create a digital circular knowledge hub for council staff and community to address the information accessibility and knowledge barriers that prevail and frustrate uptake of circular services and recovery pathways in the region.</p> <p>This project commenced during the year, with consultants being appointed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake data gathering and analysis, and prepare an opportunities and gaps report for Stream A of project - to underpin development of a digital portal for council staff members to enable circularity best practice for council-managed waste streams and facilitate knowledge sharing amongst councils • Develop a digital map tool to encourage the uptake of sharing, hiring, reuse and repair behaviours by connecting community members with circular solutions provided by businesses (B2C) and councils (C2C) - Stream B of the project.
Hospitality Circularity Project	<p>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.</p> <p>GoCircular were engaged as the core project partner to deliver this project.</p> <p>During the year GoCircular commenced initial communications to engage hospitality businesses in the project, and to date have delivered waste audits and action plans for 161 hospitality businesses around the region. These action plans identify and implement circular solutions to reduce waste, with targets having been met and exceeded.</p>

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





Jobs and a Growing Economy

Program	Purpose and Outcome
Hunter Global Tourism	<p>To identify the international tourism opportunities of the Hunter region in preparation of the Newcastle Airport international upgrade.</p> <p>The Business Case and Strategy is now complete. Several workshops were held with key tourism industry stakeholders across the region. An Export Ready Tourism Marketing Strategy has been completed identifying the highest priority activities to increase in international tourism across the Hunter region. Implementation of the Strategy anticipates a range of benefits for the Hunter Region, including an increase in international visitation by at least 1%, providing an additional \$268m flowing through the Hunter region in the next three years. Further advocacy work is underway to raise awareness of the opportunity and to seek funding partners.</p>
Priority Infrastructure List	<p>To develop a methodology and process for determining regional infrastructure priorities to build a stronger advocacy case for investment in our region.</p> <p>Progress during the year included compiling from each member council their top five regional transport priorities and sharing these with Transport for NSW (TfNSW), along with the reasoning and benefits for their selection. This aimed to assist TfNSW recognise and understand the unique local transport needs for the Hunter to support them with preparation of the Hunter Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan.</p> <p>A workshop was also held with TfNSW in June 2024 to contribute local council staff technical input to the identification of regional priorities for the Hunter Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan.</p>
Regional Economic Development and Planning Forum	<p>To raise awareness and build collaboration between member councils on the economic development and planning challenges and opportunities facing local government</p> <p>A forum was delivered in May 2024 showcasing the preliminary findings (and their relationship to the Hunter's economic evolution) of Dr Simon Wright's recent Churchill Fellowship visit to Europe and Canada, during which he investigated the transition of coal based economies. Updates were also provided by Federal and NSW Government agency representatives on the progress of the Net Zero Economy Agency and Future Jobs and Investment Authorities.</p>

Political Engagements

- **The Hon David Gillespie MP Federal Member for Lyne**
25th June 2024
Focus: Regional Economic Evolution & Hunter Cycle Tourism Plan (Shiraz to Shore).
- **The Hon Courtney Houssos MLC, NSW Minister for Finance, Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, and Minister for Natural Resources**
8th May 2024.
Focus: Regional Economic Evolution & Re-use of Mining Lands.
- **The Hon Chris Bowen Bowen MP, Federal Member for Climate Change and Energy (correspondence)**
22 January 2024
Focus: Provision of Regional advocacy “Blueprint for Evolving the Hunter’s Economy”.
- **The Hon Courtney Houssos, MLC, NSW Minister for Natural Resources (correspondence)**
22 January 2024
Focus: Provision of Regional advocacy “Blueprint for Evolving the Hunter’s Economy”.
- **The Hon Courtney Houssos, MLC, NSW Minister for Natural Resources (correspondence)**
28 November 2023
Focus: Request to appoint a representative from the Hunter JO on the Hunter Royalties for Rejuvenation Expert Panel.
- **The Hon Tara Moriarty, MLC, Minister for Regional NSW (correspondence)**
22 November 2023
Focus: Request to appoint a representative from the Hunter JO on the Hunter Royalties for Rejuvenation Expert Panel.
- **Brad Fitzmaurice (Chief of Staff to the Hon Tara Moriarty, Minister for Regional NSW)**
31 October 2023
Focus: Providing input to the Regional Development Roadmap and Trust Fund, and communicating potential implications and opportunities for the Hunter.

Media

- **Hunter Global Tourism**
12th June 2024
Outcomes and recommendations arising from Hunter Global Tourism Business Case.

Submissions

- **Inquiry into beneficial and productive post-mining land use.**
25th June 2024
Focus: Priorities and opportunities through which to activate the strategic, beneficial and productive reuse of mining lands as a primary contributor to the region’s economic evolution.
- **Regional Development Act and Trust Fund.**
31 January 2024
Focus: Providing the Hunter JO’s aligned position on the Regional Development Road Map and Trust Fund Issues Paper, including the anticipated significant impacts on the Hunter arising from proposed changes in the funding model.





Strategic Objectives

- 4.1 We are recognised as a destination for hosting world class events that align with our unique offering.
- 4.2 Making use of our opportunity to drive circular evolution of our region's economy.
- 4.3 Our natural environments including our bushland, estuaries, waterways and beaches are protected and enhanced.
- 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.
- 4.5 A region with enriched neighbourhoods and places supported by planned infrastructure that promotes community cohesion, active living and pride in culture and heritage.
- 4.6 A region that is connected, inclusive and a fair.

Program	Purpose and Outcome
Accelerating Event Economies	<p>To strengthen the region's collective voice and the capacity of Councils to collaboratively pitch for major events for the region.</p> <p>This project funded through the Bushfire Local Economy Recovery Fund has been completed. Key benefits from its delivery include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improved understanding of the economic benefits of events to the region.• Identification of gaps in infrastructure to support event attraction.• Provision of data to develop business cases to encourage infrastructure investment in the region and have evidence-based conversations with stakeholders.• Improved the region's positioning as a destination of choice for events.• Made it easier for event managers to find, select and host events in our region. <p>Key project outcomes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• KPMG Hunter Event Economic Analysis Report• KPMG Event Prioritisation and Assessment Framework• Strategic Recommendations for Event Infrastructure• Event Licencing Recommendations• Major Event Feasibility Study• Cross Regional Itineraries• Events10 Website• KPMG Event Economic Modelling Tool• Facilities Audit• Event Planning Guide• Consistent Templates for Event Management• Hunter Event Destination Guide• Promotional Videos
Regional Circular Materials Strategy	<p>To develop a new Hunter Central Coast Resource Recovery Strategy for the period 2022-2027. To align with the NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2021-2041 and associated funding streams, to provide improved alignment with the Regional Circular Economy program.</p> <p>In December 2023 the Hunter JO adopted a Regional Circular Materials Strategy. The Strategy outlines 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>

Program	Purpose and Outcome
Regional Illegal Dumping Program	<p>To support Member Councils manage and reduce the impacts of illegal dumping on local communities and the environment.</p> <p>During the year this program continued to build momentum among the eleven councils participating in the program. Key achievements for the first full year of the program included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a program logic identifying three key activity areas for attaining a region free from illegal dumping: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Building community awareness and knowledge about illegal dumping; 2. Building member council capacity; and 3. Building relationships and partnerships with stakeholders. • Delivery of a regional social media campaign • Delivery of training workshops • Purchase of new surveillance cameras to directly support council monitoring and compliance activities.
Contaminated Land Program	<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>This long running (10 year) program funded by the NSW Environment Protection Authority was completed in March 2024. Primary components delivered under the program included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regionally consistent contaminated land policies and procedures • Training and capacity building forums for Council staff to improve individual and corporate knowledge and skills, and to provide access to external technical expertise and support • Assisting Councils with the transfer of management responsibilities for Underground Petroleum Storage Systems from the NSW EPA, which commenced in 2019 – Hunter JO delivered a range of training sessions, site inspections and technical support opportunities for councils to assist with the handover of UPSS responsibility. • Provision of a Service Desk for Council staff seeking technical advice on issues involving contaminated land management (land use planning, UPSS and public land management) <p>All resources delivered under the program continue to be available via the Hunter JO website, while the NSW EPA funded LGNSW Contaminated Land webpage and network continues to facilitate collaboration between councils on contaminated land issues.</p>



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



Program	Purpose and Outcome
Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration (JONZA) Program	<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.</p> <p>With funding support provided through the NSW Government's Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration (JONZA) program, a staff member was employed within the Hunter JO dedicated to progressing the JO and its member councils toward net zero emissions, and to provide a link to other NSW government support mechanisms. Key initiatives delivered during the year (including in collaboration with the broader JO network) included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developed a "Design a Revolving Energy Fund (REF) Kit" to support councils interested in implementing a REF within their organisation• Designed and delivered the Council Net Zero Accelerator course, NSW's first net zero course designed specifically for local government developed by the Hunter JO in partnership with the NSW Government and Accelerate Zero. Over 80 council staff from across NSW participated, including from Cessnock, Dungog, MidCoast, Muswellbrook, Port Stephens and Singleton Council.• Feasibility assessments completed for councils:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 8 EV Charging Assessments- 5 Net Zero Pools Assessment- 4 Community Battery Assessments• Delivered the "Plugging into the Future: Electrifying Council Fleets" regional event, attended by over 60 council representatives from across the Hunter and surrounding regions.• Commenced a Power Purchasing Agreement (PPA) buyers group to support 13 regional NSW councils to procure renewable energy in 2024.• Purchased 100% GreenPower for the Hunter JO office building in Thornton.• Successfully applied for funding through the NSW Community Building Partnership 2023 program install a 39.6kW solar PV system for the Hunter JO office building.
Community Recycling Centres	<p>To deliver a regionally coordinated approach to promoting community awareness of Community Recycling Centres (CRC's).</p> <p>Implementation of this project occurred during only the first quarter of 2023/24, after which delivery was suspended pending a further funding deed being provided by the NSW EPA. Key activities delivered during the first quarter included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community education on social media throughout July and August 2023, reaching 499,077 over two months, with videos being viewed more than 1.5 million times.• The Creative Collective were engaged to run an online survey evaluating the community education activity. Completed by 247 community members, this identified that 50% had seen or heard promotions about their local CRC.

Program

Purpose and Outcome

Landfill Emissions Data Project

To establish a landfill emission data management program for councils to improve understanding of baseline emissions.

Hunter Joint Organisation partnered with the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) through the Sustainability Partnerships 2023 program to support NSW councils with landfill emissions measurement and reporting.

Stage 1 of this project was completed during the year, including:

- A boundary assessment to determine what is and isn't included in landfill emissions calculations.
- Calculation of landfill emissions using the NGERs solid waste calculator for 8 of the 11 participating councils.
- Developed the "Mastering Landfill Emissions with the NGERs calculator" capacity building package to support NSW councils with landfill emissions measurement and reporting.

Stage 2 of the project commenced during 2023/24, including:

- Scenario modelling to show how emissions reductions actions (FOGO implementation and landfill gas capture systems) impact projected landfill emissions.
- Development of technical and financial feasibility guidance for implementing landfill gas capture systems.
- Collation of NSW case studies of landfill gas capture systems that have been implemented to build an online dashboard to display landfill emissions data and scenario modelling.

Political Engagements (Correspondence)

- The Hon Penny Sharpe MLC, Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment & Minister for Heritage (correspondence)

23 January 2024

Focus: Recommendations to inform the design and scope of the review of the NSW Waste Levy.



Section Four

Financial and Statutory Statements

Financials and Statutory Statements

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Statutory Statements

Issues raised by Anti-Slavery Commissioner

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

Steps taken to ensure good and services procured were not the product of modern slavery

Hunter JO is reviewing its procurement policies and processes to facilitate adherence to the requirements of the Modern Slavery Act 2018, for procurements with a value of AUD \$150,000 or greater (including GST), commencing 1 July 2024.

Overseas Travel

Nil.

Expenses and Provision of Facilities to Board Members

Nil.

Details of contracts awarded

During 2023/24 Arrow Collaborative Services provided administration support services to the Hunter JO via a Service Level Agreement between the two entities. Total value of services was \$162,480.

Summary of amounts incurred in relation to legal proceedings

Nil.

Financial assistance to others

Nil.

External bodies exercising functions delegated by the Hunter JO

The Hunter JO has not delegated any of its functions. During 2023/24 Arrow Collaborative Services provided policy, advocacy and grant and program management services to the Hunter JO via a Service Level Agreement between the two entities.

Holding of controlling interests (other bodies)

Nil.

Bodies in which Hunter JO participated

Nil.

Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan

Hunter JO continued to implement its "Bullying, Harrassment, Discrimination and Equal Opportunity Policy" adopted in January 2023.

Executive Officer Remuneration

The total remuneration package of the Executive Officer for the 2023/2024 financial year was \$346,786.36 inclusive of salary, vehicle allowance, superannuation and fringe benefits tax payable (for the period). However this package was only in place until 30 September 2023 at which point the Executive Office left the organisation.

Senior Staff Remuneration

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.

