

Hunter JO Board Meeting

9.40am, Thursday 12 June 2025

Donald Horne Building, STEM Innovation Lab - 140 Bridge St, Muswellbrook NSW 2333

To join online:

Click here to join the meeting

HUNTER JO AGENDA: 12 June 2025

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We acknowledge the country and history of the traditional custodians of the lands upon which we meet today. We pay our respects to the Elders past, present and emerging, of our region, and of Australia.

2. Welcome and Apologies

2.1 Apologies

Apologies for the meeting to be received.

2.2 Conflicts of Interest

Report Author: Bonnie Gradwell, Administration and Events Officer,	Hunter JO
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Recommendations:

That any Conflicts of Interest be declared and noted

Executive Summary:

This report calls for any conflicts of interest to be declared and noted by the Hunter JO Board.

Background

The following process was endorsed by the Hunter JO Board at its December 2023 meeting, for declarations of any conflicts:

- At the start of each meeting, the Chair will call for any conflicts from Board Members
- If any conflicts are declared within the meeting:
 - The Board Member making the declaration will complete the Hunter JO Conflict of Interest Form within 10 business days of the meeting, for record-keeping (on submission, a copy of the completed form is provided to the Secretariat and the Chair)
 - The declaration will be added to the register, included at Appendix 2.2-A to be kept as a record for the course of the financial year within which the declaration was made.
 - The Conflict of Interest Register will be noted at each meeting of the Hunter JO Board.

Discussion:

If discussion is required for any conflicts of interest declared, the Chair will lead this discussion.

Financial / Resourcing Implications: Nil

Next steps: Nil

Appendices* / Attachments**:

Appendix 2.2-A: Hunter JO Conflict of Interest Register

^{*}Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

^{**}Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

Appendix 2.2-A: Hunter JO Conflict of Interest Register

Any potential conflicts of interest declared are to be included in the below Register and the Board Member in question is to also complete the <u>Hunter JO</u> Disclosure of Interest Form.

Name of Board Member	Description of interest	Has the Board been notified?	Date of disclosure	Steps taken by Board for dealing with the conflict	Board Member actions to address the conflict
Dr Ross Kerridge, Lord Mayor City of Newcastle	Family member employed by QANTAS	Yes	10 th April 2025	Conflict noted. No formal decision making undertaken at 10 th April Board meeting day in relation to Newcastle Airport.	Conflict communicated. No further action required as no formal decision making undertaken by Board in relation to the Airport.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

3.1 Minutes of Meeting 10 April 2025

Recommendation:

• That the minutes of the Hunter JO Board Meeting held on 10 April 2025 be received and noted.

Hunter JO Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday 10th April 2025

Hosted by Cessnock City Council (Performance Arts Culture Cessnock – 198 Vincent Street, Cessnock NSW 2325)

Voting Members Present

Cr Daniel Watton Cessnock City Council
Cr Digby Rayward Dungog Shire Council

Cr Adam Shultz Lake Macquarie City Council

Cr Philip Penfold Maitland City Council

Cr Claire Pontin MidCoast Council (Online)
Cr Jeffrey Drayton Muswellbrook Shire Council

Cr Ross Kerridge City of Newcastle

Cr Leah Anderson Port Stephens Council (Deputy Chair)

Cr Sue Moore Singleton Council (Chair)

Non-Voting Members Present

Ken Liddell General Manager, Cessnock City Council
Tony Farrell Acting CEO, Lake Macquarie City Council
Jeff Smith General Manager, Maitland City Council

Derek Finnigan General Manager, Muswellbrook Shire Council

Jeremy Bath CEO, City of Newcastle

Tim Crosdale General Manager, Port Stephens Council

Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr General Manager, Singleton Council

Greg McDonald General Manager, Upper Hunter Shire Council (Online)

Virginia Errington Council Engagement Manager, Office of Local Government

Apologies

Cr Maurice Collison Upper Hunter Shire Council

Gareth Curtis General Manager, Dungog Shire Council

Morven Cameron CEO, Lake Macquarie City Council

Adrian Panuccio General Manager, MidCoast Council (Online)

Shaun O'Sullivan Director North - Regional Coordination, Delivery & Engagement

Group - Premier's Department

Staff in attendance

Steve Wilson Director, Hunter JO (Executive Officer)

Tim Askew Director of Programs, Hunter JO
Lisa Lord Chief Operating Officer, Arrow

Bonnie Gradwell Administration and Events Officer, Hunter JO (Secretariat)

Other attendees

Gina Hanson Chief of Staff, City of Newcastle

Nicky Duffy Regional Coordination Manager, Premier's Department NSW

The formal meeting opened 9.42am

Item 1 Acknowledgment of Country

The chair opened the meeting and welcomed the Board with an Acknowledgment of Country.

Item 2 Welcome & Apologies

2.1 Apologies

Apologies for the meeting were received.

2.2 Conflicts of Interest

Lord Mayor Dr Ross Kerridge declared that he has a family member that is employed by Qantas, and therefore a potential conflict of interest in regard to the workshop briefing from Newcastle Airport.

Resolved: The Conflict of Interest was declared and noted.

Moved: Cr Daniel Watton, Seconded: Cr Digby Rayward, Carried.

Item 3 Minutes of Previous Meeting

3.1 Minutes of Meeting 13 February 2025

Resolved: That the minutes of the Hunter JO Board Meeting held on 13 February 2025 be received and noted.

Moved: Cr Ross Kerridge, Seconded: Cr Philip Penfold, Carried.

Item 4 Actions Arising from Minutes

4.1 Hunter JO Board Action Register

Resolved: That the status of actions included in the Register be noted.

Moved: Cr Adam Shultz, Seconded: Cr Daniel Watton, Carried.

Item 5 Presentations

Nil.

Item 6 Correspondence

Resolved: That the correspondence be received and noted.

Moved: Cr Adam Shultz, Seconded: Cr Digby Rayward, Carried.

Item 7 Items for the Hunter JO Board: For Decision

7.1 Expenses and Facilities Policy

Recommendation was adopted subject to additional clarification being included regarding the purchase of alcohol.

Resolved: That the Board endorse the draft Expenses and Facilities Policy.

Moved: Cr Daniel Watton, Seconded: Cr Digby Rayward, Carried.

7.2 Statement of Revenue Policy 2025/26

Resolved: That Board endorse the 2025/26 Statement of Revenue Policy.

Moved: Cr Leah Anderson, Seconded: Cr Ross Kerridge, Carried.

Item 8 Items for the Hunter JO Board: For Noting

8.1 Hunter JO Financial Report

Resolved:

- That the Income Statement for period ending February 2025 be received and noted.
- That the summary of Credit Card expenditure for Hunter JO for YTD February 2025 be received and noted.

Moved: Cr Leah Anderson, Seconded: Cr Digby Rayward, Carried.

8.2 National General Assembly of Local Government 2025

Resolved: That the Board note the information provided.

Moved: Cr Leah Anderson, Seconded: Cr Digby Rayward, Carried.

8.3 Hunter JO Funding & Grant Opportunities

Resolved: That the Board note the update on funding and grant opportunities.

Moved: Cr Leah Anderson, Seconded: Cr Digby Rayward, Carried.

8.4 Hunter JO Program Status Report

Resolved: That the report be received and noted.

Moved: Cr Leah Anderson, Seconded: Cr Digby Rayward, Carried.

8.5 Hunter JO Six Monthly Delivery Report

Resolved: That the report be received and noted.

Moved: Cr Leah Anderson, Seconded: Cr Digby Rayward, Carried.

8.6 Hunter JO Risk Register

Resolved:

- That the Hunter JO Board note the Hunter JO Risk Register.
- That the Hunter JO Board identify any new risks for inclusion on the Risk Register.

Moved: Cr Leah Anderson, Seconded: Cr Digby Rayward, Carried.

8.7 Annual Hunter JO Compliance Calendar Checklist

Resolved: That the Hunter JO Board note the status of the Compliance Calendar Checklist.

Moved: Cr Leah Anderson, Seconded: Cr Digby Rayward, Carried.

8.8 Premier's Department Update

Resolved: That the Board note the Premier's Department update.

Moved: Cr Leah Anderson, Seconded: Cr Digby Rayward, Carried.

8.9 Office of Local Government (OLG) Update

Resolved: That the Board note the OLG update.

Moved: Cr Leah Anderson, Seconded: Cr Digby Rayward, Carried.

Item 9 Matters Raised by Members

Nil.

Item 10 General Business

Nil.

Meeting closed at 10.03am

4. Actions Arising from Minutes

4.1 Hunter JO Board Action Register

Recommendation:

- That the status of actions included in the Register be noted.
- That Action HJO-24-001 be removed from the Register.

Roundtable that broadens the list of Ministerial invitations to include the Hon. Tara Moriarty, MLC Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional New South Wales, and other Ministers holding portfolios that link directly to the Hunter JOs core advocacy priorities is delivered in place of an existing scheduled Hunter JO Board meeting. Tecommend removal. 2024 activity was not identified as a priority in advocacy planning session completed by Instead, it is proposed that one Board meeting held in NSW Parliament House and one in House during sitting weeks, to facilitate dependence on the Board of the Board's priorities.	D	Action	Mtg Date		Due	Notes
Ministerial Roundtable, based on recent of Board, is to arrange a full day at Parliame Sydney and Canberra, and invite Minister Board throughout the scheduled day. Fur developed in the Hunter JO Strategic Adv. August 2024: No change from June 2024 June 2024: Initial discussions held with O staff. Planning to be included within straplanning work currently underway with the staff.	JO-24-001	Roundtable that broadens the list of Ministerial invitations to include the Hon. Tara Moriarty, MLC Minister for Agriculture and Minister for Regional New South Wales, and other Ministers holding portfolios that link directly to the Hunter JOs core advocacy priorities is delivered in place of	15 Feb 24	recommend		June 2025: Removal of this action is recommended. This activity was not identified as a priority in the 2025/26 advocacy planning session completed by the Board in April. Instead, it is proposed that one Board meeting per year be held in NSW Parliament House and one in Federal Parliament House during sitting weeks, to facilitate direct engagements between Ministers, MP's and the Board. This will complement additional one on one meetings also secured with Ministers at in relation to the Board's priorities. April 2025: As per October 2024 update. October 2024: The preferred delivery model for the Ministerial Roundtable, based on recent consultation with the Board, is to arrange a full day at Parliament House in both Sydney and Canberra, and invite Ministers to meet with the Board throughout the scheduled day. Further details to be developed in the Hunter JO Strategic Advocacy Plan. August 2024: No change from June 2024 update. June 2024: Initial discussions held with City of Newcastle staff. Planning to be included within strategic advocacy planning work currently underway with the Board. April 2024: No action to date. Recommendation to be

I.D	Action	Mtg Date		Due	Notes
					Initial planning / focus to be incorporated within Board workshop session on "Strategic Advocacy Planning".
HJO-24-020	That the Board endorse collaborating with other Joint Organisations to develop a shared ARIC model for implementation	24 Oct 24	In progress	June 2025	June 2025: Other JO's have been asked to confirm their intent to join a shared ARIC with the Hunter JO by 30 May 2025. Refer Agenda Item 7.10 "Shared ARIC" for more information.
					April 2025: Report on proposed shared ARIC model will be presented to NSW JO Chairs Forum meeting on 7 th May 2025 for consideration.
					February 2025. Hunter JO is leading collaboration with broader joint organisation network.

Key:	Complete	In progress	Incomplete
key:	Complete	in progress	incomplete

Nil

6. Correspondence

Report Author:	Bonnie Gradwell, Administration and Events Officer - Hunter JO
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Recommendation:

That the correspondence be received and noted.

Executive Summary:

This report provides an update on correspondence sent and received in relation to the Hunter Joint Organisation Board.

Background: Nil

Discussion: Nil

Financial / Resourcing Implications: Nil

Next steps: Nil

Appendices* / Attachments**:

Correspondence Sent:

- Attachment 6-1: Letter of support to Tony Chappel, NSW EPA CEO re: Letter of Support EPA/ LGNSW Councils Managing Contaminated Land Together, 28 March 2025
- Attachment 6-2: Letter of support to Central Coast Council re: Letter of Support Central Coast Council Resilient Communities Phase 2, 11 April 2025
- Attachment 6-3: Correspondence to the Hon Penelope Sharpe MLC re: Accelerating the reactivation of current and former mining lands to create jobs in the Hunter Region, 11 April 2025
- Attachment 6-4: Correspondence template re: Shared advocacy priorities of the Hunter JO for the 2025 Federal election, 17 April 2025

Sent to:

- Alison Penfold, Nationals Party of Australia candidate for the seat of Lyne
- Arnon Wither, Pauline Hanson's One Nation candidate for the seat of Paterson
- Asarri McPhee, Liberal Party of Australia candidate for the seat of Newcastle
- Barnaby Joyce MP, Member for New England
- Brent Larkham, Pauline Hanson's One Nation candidate for the seat of New England
- Catherine Charsley, Trumpet of Patriots candidate for the seat of Lyne
- Charlotte McCabe, The Greens candidate for the seat of Newcastle
- Colin Hughes, Pauline Hanson's One Nation candidate for the seat of Lyne
- Dan Repacholi MP, Member for Hunter
- Digby Wilson, Australian Labor Party candidate for the seat of Lyne
- Dr Barry Reed, Pauline Hanson's One Nation candidate for the seat of Shortland
- Emma King, Liberal Party of Australia candidate for the seat of Shortland
- Holly Masters, Family First Party Australia candidate for the seat of New England
- James Pheils, Independent candidate for the seat of Shortland

- Jason Briggs, Family First Party Australia candidate for the seat of Newcastle
- Jennifer Stefanac, Trumpet of Patriots candidate for the seat of Newcastle
- Laura Hughes, Australian Labor Party candidate for the seat of New England
- Laurence Antcliff, Liberal Party of Australia candidate for the seat of Paterson
- Louise Stokes, The Greens candidate for the seat of Hunter
- Mark Hornshaw, Libertarian Party candidate for the seat of Lyne
- Meryl Swanson MP, Federal Member for Paterson
- Natasha Ledger, Independent candidate for the seat of New England
- Pat Conroy MP, Member for Shortland
- Paul Farrelly, Family First Party Australia candidate for the seat of Hunter
- Paul Johns, The Australian Greens candidate for the seat of Paterson
- Peter Arena, Trumpet of Patriots candidate for the seat of Paterson
- Philip Penfold, Independent candidate for the seat of Paterson
- Pietro Di Girolamo, Family First Party Australia candidate for the seat of Shortland
- Rod Holding, Independent candidate for the seat of Paterson
- Sandra Briggs, Family First Party Australia candidate for the seat of Paterson
- Sharon Claydon MP, Member for Newcastle
- Stephen Burke, Australian Citizens Party candidate for the seat of Lyne
- Stuart Bonds, Pauline Hanson's One Nation candidate for the seat of Hunter
- Sue Gilroy, National Party of Australia candidate for the seat of Hunter
- Suellen Wrightson, Trumpet of Patriots candidate for the seat of Hunter
- Therese Doyle, The Greens candidate for the seat of Shortland
- Todd Juchau, Trumpet of Patriots candidate for the seat of New England
- Tom Ferrier, The Greens Australia candidate for the seat of Lyne
- Wendy Wales, The Greens candidate for the seat of New England
- Attachment 6-5: Correspondence to Ms Alison Penfold MP re Hunter JO ALGA Dinner Invitation, 16
 May 2025
- Attachment 6-6: Correspondence template to returning MPs re Hunter JO ALGA Dinner Invitation,
 16 May 2025

Sent to:

- Barnaby Joyce MP, Member for New England
- Dan Repacholi MP, Member for Hunter
- Meryl Swanson MP, Federal Member for Paterson
- Pat Conroy MP, Member for Shortland
- Sharon Claydon MP, Member for Newcastle
- Alison Penfold, Nationals Party of Australia Member for Lyne (NB attachment 6-5 was sent)
- Attachment 6-7: Letter of support to CEO Robert Beautement re: Letter of support Hunter Region Botanic Gardens, 20 May 2025

Correspondence Received:

- Attachment 6-8: Correspondence from NSW Audit Office re: Annual Audit Engagement Plan 2025,
 17 February 2025 CONFIDENTIAL
- Attachment 6-9: Correspondence from Hon Kristy McBain re: Letter about Hunter JO Shared Priorities, 8 April 2025
- Attachment 6-10: Correspondence from Richmond Vale Rail Trail Inc re: Composite Shiraz to Shore
 cycle trail and Richmond Vale Rail Trail Update and Request for Ongoing Support and Advocacy from
 RVRT Supporters' Group, 13 April 2025
- Attachment 6-11: Correspondence from Ombudsman NSW re: Public Interest Disclosure Policy Requirements, 16 April 2025

- Attachment 6-12: Correspondence from Digby Wilson, Labor's Candidate for Lyne re: Shared advocacy priorities of the Hunter JO for the 2025 Federal election, 17 April 2025
- Attachment 6-13: Correspondence from Cr Charlotte McCabe, The Greens candidate for the seat of Newcastle re: Shared advocacy priorities of the Hunter JO for the 2025 Federal election, 22 April 2025
- Attachment 6-14: Correspondence from Tony Chappel, NSW EPA CEO re: Letter of Support EPA LGNSW Councils Managing Contaminated Land Together, 7 May 2025
- Attachment 6-15: Correspondence from Alison Penfold re: Invitation to attend Hunter Joint Organisation Dinner in Canberra, 16 May 2025
- Attachment 6-16: Correspondence from Office of Meryl Swanson MP re: Invitation to attend Hunter Joint Organisation Dinner in Canberra, 19 May 2025
- Attachment 6-17: Correspondence from Office of Dan Repacholi MP re: Invitation to attend Hunter Joint Organisation Dinner in Canberra, 19 May 2025
- Attachment 6-18: Correspondence from The Hon Yasmin Catley MP re: Accelerating the reactivation of current and former mining lands to create jobs in the Hunter Region, 20 May 2025

Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

^{**}Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

7.1 Draft Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2035 for Stakeholder Consultation

Report Author:	Anna Flack, Senior Project Coordinator (Hunter JO)

Recommendation:

 That the Board endorse the draft Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2035 and draft Hunter JO Delivery Program 2025-2029 as the basis for targeted stakeholder consultation.

Executive Summary:

The draft Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2035 and draft Hunter JO Delivery Program 2025-2029 have been developed in close consultation with the Board. This report is seeking endorsement of the draft Strategic Plan and Delivery Program as the basis for targeted stakeholder consultation to inform the plan's finalisation.

Background:

As required under the Local Government (General) Amendment (Regional Joint Organisations) Regulation 2018 and aligned with the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) cycle, Joint Organisations must prepare 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, to be completed within 12 months after each subsequent ordinary election of councillors. The Hunter JO SSRP is referred to as the Hunter JO Strategic Plan.

While Councils must endorse their Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program and Operational Plan by 30 June, Joint Organisations have until 14 September to prepare their SSRP. This provides Hunter JO the opportunity to review the priorities included in each Member Councils' Community Strategic Plan and ensure these have been reflected in the Strategic Plan.

Discussion:

Hunter JO has engaged extensively with the Board since October 2024 to develop the draft Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2035 and draft Hunter JO Delivery Program 2025-2029.

To seek further feedback on the draft Strategic Plan and draft Delivery Program, Hunter JO will consult with relevant stakeholders including council staff, key government contacts and regional advocacy groups. Stakeholder consultation could include an online webinar and drop-in session, presentations at committee and network meetings, newsletter articles and online surveys.

Financial / Resourcing Implications:

The process for developing the Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2035 will be delivered within existing Hunter JO staff resources.

Next steps:

- Stakeholder feedback to be collected through activities including an online webinar and drop-in session, presentations at committee and network meetings, newsletter articles and online surveys.
- Final Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2035 and Hunter JO Delivery Program 2025-2029 to be developed for endorsement at the August 2025 Hunter JO Board meeting before the 14 September 2025 due date.

Appendices* / Attachments**:

Attachment 7.1-1: Draft Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2035

- Attachment 7.1-2: Draft Hunter JO Delivery Program 2025-2029

^{*}Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report
**Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

Report Author:	Tim Askew, Director of Programs – Hunter JO
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• That the Board approve the 2025-26 year budget for the Hunter JO.

Executive Summary:

This report provides the 2025-26 financial year budget for the Board's consideration.

Background:

The 2025/26 budget is designed around keeping the current organisational structure which commenced on 1 July 2024, following an extensive review of the organisations focus, leadership model and structure by the previous Hunter JO Board.

The Statement of Revenue Policy 2025/26 was endorsed at the April 2025 Board meeting and determined to continue the existing revenue calculation method from the previous years. There are only minor changes to grant and expense estimates provide in the 2025/26 Statement of Revenue Policy, as shown in the discussions section below. As identified in the Statement of Revenue Policy, there will be no dividend for the Hunter JO in the 2025/26 financial year.

Arrow provides administration services to the Hunter JO and the Arrow Board has determined that the fee will be \$226,754 for the 2025/26 financial year.

Discussion:

The following table is a summary of the budget for 2025/26 financial year with explanatory notes provided on the main items. The table includes the previous year mid-year review budget for comparison.

INCOME STATEMENT	Indicative ANNUAL BUDGET 2025/26	Mid-Year Review ANNUAL BUDGET 2024/25	% Change	\$ Change	Notes (see below)
REVENUE					
Membership Contributions	\$645,815	\$617,366	4.6%	\$28,449	1
Environment Program Fees	\$340,894	\$332,905	2.4%	\$7,990	1
Grant Funding	\$2,072,410	\$2,635,766	-21.4%	-\$563,356	2
Cadet support	\$143,951	\$0		\$143,951	3
Miscellaneous	\$4,800	\$18,253	-73.7%	-\$13,453	
Arrow Contribution	\$13,704	\$0		\$13,704	4
Revenue - Total	\$3,221,574	\$3,604,290	-10.6%	-\$382,716	
COST OF GRANTS (Direct)					
Funding Disbursement	\$353,200	\$340,771	3.6%	\$12,429	
Consultants & Materials	\$427,243	\$994,935	-57.1%	-\$567,692	
Direct Labour (Grants Staff)	\$1,047,476	\$0		\$1,047,476	
Cost of Grants - Total	\$1,827,919	\$1,335,706	36.9%	\$492,213	5
GROSS PROFIT / (LOSS)	\$1,393,655	\$2,268,585			
EXPENSES					
General & Administration	\$477,452	\$559,811	-14.7%	-\$82,359	6
Occupancy Costs	\$29,445	\$27,755	6.1%	\$1,690	
Depreciation	\$31,731	\$52,354	-39.4%	-\$20,623	7
Information Technology	\$35,726	\$38,043	-6.1%	-\$2,317	
Overhead Labour	\$712,565	\$1,487,319	-52.1%	-\$774,754	8
Employee Costs	\$25,050	\$26,242	-4.5%	-\$1,192	
Travel & Accommodation	\$22,822	\$19,561	16.7%	\$3,261	9
Motor Vehicle	\$56,777	\$50,746	11.9%	\$6,031	7
Overhead Expenses - Total	\$1,391,568	\$2,261,831		-\$870,263	
NET PROFIT / (LOSS) - OPERATIONS	\$2,087	\$6,754			
OTHER INCOME / (EXPENSES)					
OTHER INCOME	\$0	\$56,635			
OTHER EXPENSES					
Other Income / (Expenses) - Total	\$0	\$56,635			
NET PROFIT / (LOSS) BEFORE TAX	\$2,087	\$63,389			

Notes

No	te	Description
1.	Revenue – Membership and program fees	These revenue items are consistent with the endorsed Statement of Revenue Policy 2025/26, with membership fees increased by the rate cap of each Council and program fees increased by inflation.
2.	Grant Funding	There is a significant reduction in grants for 2025/26. This is due to the general reduction in grant funds from NSW Government in the last 12 months. It is expected that availability of grants will increase during next financial year, however, no provision for prospective grants has been proposed for 2025/26.
3.	Cadet support grant	This is a grant from the Office of Local Government to cover the costs of employing 2 cadets for next financial year. Overhead labour costs include an increase for a similar amount.
4.	Arrow Contribution (Asset Sale)	This is a transfer of funds for the profit on sale of the last Arrow owned vehicle used by Hunter JO. All new purchased vehicles will be owned directly by Hunter JO. There is no dividend contribution from Arrow for the 2025/26 budget year.
5.	Cost of Grants direct	The direct costs are mostly consultants and direct reimbursement to councils and have reduced in line with reduction in grants received. Our grant program staff will be utilised more next financial year to compensate for the reduction in consultants, for the same outcomes. Direct cost of grants have an accounting change included to show the costs of employing grant focussed staff. Commentary on overall increase in staffing costs are described at Note 8.
6.	General & Administration	The reduction is mostly due to a decrease in the administration fee from Arrow for our accounting, HR and general administration services. This is due to changes in the services offered now that the Financial Controller services have changed.
7.	Depreciation & Motor Vehicle	The significant savings in depreciation is due to a reduction in our owned vehicles, reducing from 6 down to 2 from July 2025. This is a result of the Hunter JO fleet transition to electric vehicles (EVs) or vehicle allowances instead of purchasing vehicles outright. The leasing of EVs is shown in the increased motor vehicle costs. The cost of running EVs is lower than petrol cars and this keeps the increase in motor vehicle costs down to \$6,000 for 2025/26.
8.	Overhead Labour	With the new accounting change, overhead labour will now only consist of the 4 core staff in line with the organisational structure endorsed by the Board. The 9 FTE grant program staff are now accounted for in direct costs of grants. The 2 additional FTE staff for next financial year are cadets and are covered by the cadet support (OLG grant) revenue line item. Other increases in labour include the Local Government Award pay increase of
		4% and the direct and indirect costs of staffing arrangements for covering maternity leave.
9.	Travel and Accommodation	The small increase of \$3,000 is to allow for additional advocacy program related travel in 2025/26.
10	. Other income	There is no other income as there are no Hunter JO vehicle sales in 2025/26.

Financial / Resourcing Implications:

Endorsing this budget provides the necessary resources and funding to deliver the services determined by the Board.

Next steps:

Hunter JO Board approval of the 2025-26 budget.

Appendices* / Attachments**: Nil

^{*}Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

^{**}Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

Report Author: Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO (Executive Officer)

That the Board re-determines the current operating organisational structure.

Executive Summary:

A review of the Joint Organisations structure is required within 12 months of the 2024 local government elections. This report is recommending a continuation of the existing organisational structure.

Background:

Similar to councils, under the *Local Government Act 1993* joint organisations must review their organisation structure within 12 months of the elections. The positions within the organisation structure must be determined to give effect to the priorities set out in our Strategic Plan.

Discussion:

The current organisational structure (refer Appendix 7.3-A) commenced on 1 July 2024, following an extensive and collaborative nine-month review of the organisation's focus, leadership and operational structure by the previous Board. This structure comprises four core funded staff, beyond which additional roles are also funded via grants. The number and focus of these additional roles varies over time depending on the level and nature of grants received by the organisation.

Nearly twelve months into implementation, continuing with the current organisational structure is recommended. This reflects:

- The current model continues to provide capacity and flexibility, within the resources available, to progress implementation of the Board's shared priorities (i.e. both advocacy and capacity building) that are reflected in the new draft Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2035 and Delivery Program, and to deliver the statutory governance and reporting obligations of the organisation.
- The current structure is contributing to enhanced levels of staff retention relative to previous organisational models. This in part reflects the ability within the current structure to provide professional development and leadership opportunities to staff across the different focus areas and operational functions of the organisation.
- Continued implementation of the current structure will provide the opportunity to further embed and/or refine as required, a still relatively new structure that is increasingly delivering the shared aspirations of both the previous and current Hunter JO Boards.

Financial / Resourcing Implications:

Nil. Preparation of the draft 2025/26 budget has been based on the assumption that the current organisational structure will continue.

Next steps:

Nil, the current organisational structure will continue to underpin the activities of the Hunter JO.

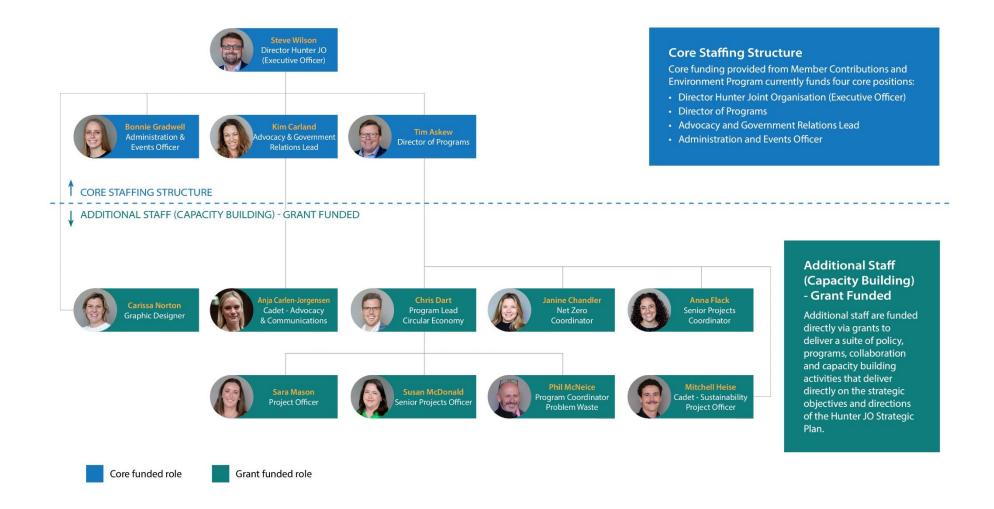
Appendices* / Attachments**:

• Appendix 7.3-A: Hunter JO Organisational Structure

^{*}Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

^{**}Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

Appendix 7.3-A: Hunter JO Organisational Structure



Report Author:	Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO (Executive Officer)	
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That the Board endorse the delegations register.

Executive Summary:

To complement continuation of the existing Hunter JO organisational structure (as recommended in Agenda Item 7.3), this report seeks approval of the delegations register that underpins decision making and approvals within the organisation.

Background:

The purpose of the Hunter JO delegations register (refer Appendix 7.4-A) is to identify the approved level of authorisation for Hunter JO staff in relation to:

- Expenditure
- Human Resources
- Representation in Media and Communications
- Correspondence
- Entering of contractual agreements

Discussion:

The delegations register reflects the current organisational structure and approval processes in place for the Hunter JO. To complement and enable the recommendation to continue with the current organisational structure moving forward (Agenda Item 7.3), the Board's approval of the delegations register is also being sought.

Financial / Resourcing Implications: Nil

Next steps: Nil

Appendices* / Attachments**:

Appendix 7.4-A: Hunter JO Delegations Register

^{*}Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

^{**}Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

Appendix 7.4-A Hunter JO Delegations Register

Date of Board Endorsement: 12 Ju	ne 2025							
Roles > Staff Members Director Hunter JO (Executive Offi Director of Programs (DoP): Tim A Advocacy and Government Relatio Senior Project Coordinators - Prog Janine Chandler	Hunter JO Chair / Board Approval Required	Executive Officer (Director Hunter JO)	Director of Programs	Advocacy and Government Relations Lead	Senior Project Coordinators - Program Leads	Notes		
Financial Delegations - Expenditure*	Delegated Authority							
Expenditure: \$0-\$10,000 (budgeted spend)	Executive Officer / Director of Programs / Advocacy and Government Relations Lead / Senior Project Coordinators - Program Leads		Υ	Y	Y	Y		
Expenditure: \$10,000-\$50,000 (budgeted spend)	Executive Officer / Director of Programs		Υ	Υ			*CAPEX items above 10k require Executive Officer co-sign	
Expenditure: \$50,000+ (budgeted spend)	Executive Officer		Υ					
Expenditure: \$0-\$750 (unbudgeted spend)	Executive Officer / Director of Programs		Υ	Υ				
Expenditure: \$750-\$20,000 (unbudgeted spend)	Executive Officer / Director of Programs		Υ	Υ			Board to be advised through regular financial reporting	
Expenditure: \$20,000+ (unbudgeted spend)	Hunter JO Board	Y						
Human Resources Delegations								
Staff appointments, contracts of employment, terminations, salary determinations and/or review	Executive Officer		Υ					
Performance reviews	Executive Officer / Director of Programs		Υ	Υ			Review and sign off of annual staff Performance Reviews	
Study leave	Executive Officer		Υ					
Annual Leave	Executive Officer / Director of Programs		Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ		
All Long service leave	Executive Officer		Υ					
Staff attendance at conferences (within approved budget)	Executive Officer / Director of Programs		Υ	Υ				
Interstate travel (within approved budget)	Executive Officer / Director of Programs		Υ	Υ				
International travel	Hunter JO Board	Υ						
Representation								
Authorisation to engage / speak with media	Hunter JO Chair / Hunter JO Deputy Chair / Board approved spokesperson / Executive Officer / Director of Programs / Advocacy and Government Relations Lead	Y	Υ	Υ	Υ		NB All media engagement must follow media and communications policy / procedure	
Authorisation of media releases & statements	Hunter JO Chair / Hunter JO Deputy Chair / Executive Officer / Advocacy and Government Relations Lead	Y	Υ	Υ	Υ		NB All media engagement must follow media and communications policy / procedure	
Social Media (Hunter JO Channels)	Executive Officer / Director of Programs / Advocacy and Government Relations Lead		Υ	Υ	Υ			
Social Media (Hunter JO Project Channels)	Executive Officer / Director of Programs / Advocacy and Government Relations Lead / Senior Projects Coordinator - Program Leads		Υ	Υ	Y	Υ		
Correspondence								
Correspondence (Advocacy and Policy)	Hunter JO Chair / Executive Officer / Advocacy and Government Relations Lead	Y	Υ		Υ			
Correspondence (Operational Programs)	Executive Officer / Director of Programs / Senior Project Coordinators - Program Leads		Υ	Υ		Υ		
Letters of Support to external organisations	Executive Officer		Υ					
Contracts								
Grant Funding Applications	Executive Officer / Director of Programs (Hunter JO Board to ratify)		Υ	Υ				
Grant Funding Agreements	Executive Officer / Director of Programs		Υ	Υ				
Contracts / agreements committing organisation to ongoing relationship	Executive Officer		Υ					
Contracts relating to purchase of goods / equipment / services	As per financial delegations (see above)		Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ		
Credit Cards: Issuing of credit cards for any staff member	Executive Officer / Director of Programs		Υ	Υ				
Credit Cards: Increase of credit card limits	Executive Officer / Director of Programs		Υ	Υ				

Report Author:	Tim Askew, Director of Programs

That the Board endorse the development of a shared ARIC for the Hunter JO

Executive Summary:

This report provides, for endorsement, a timeline for the implementation of a shared ARIC model for the Hunter JO commensurate with our financial capacity, size and level of risk. The ARIC will initially be shared with Central NSW and Illawarra Shoalhaven JOs.

Background:

All councils and joint organisations are required, under the *Local Government Act 1993*, to have an audit risk and improvement committee (ARIC), which can be organisation specific or shared across entities. Additionally, the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* requires that from 1 July 2024, all councils and joint organisations are to have a risk management framework and an internal audit function and to prescribe membership requirements for audit risk and improvement committees.

Similar to other Joint Organisations across NSW, the limited financial and resource capacity within the Hunter JO has directly impacted our capacity to comply with the ARIC requirements as they currently stand for the 2024/25 year. As can be seen from the previous decisions by the Board, the preferred pathway forward, is an intent to develop a shared ARIC model with the other Joint Organisations (JOs) around NSW as this approach provides better alignment to the financial capacity and risk characteristics of the JO compared to partnering with member Councils.

The Board has previously endorsed that the Hunter JO:

- 1. Collaborate with the broader NSW Joint Organisation network and NSW Office of Local Government (OLG) with a view to identifying and implementing an ARIC model that is commensurate to the level of risk, expenditure and financial capacity of Joint Organisations.
- 2. Work through options regarding exemptions to ARIC compliance with the NSW Office of Local Government (if required).
- 3. Pursue the Office of Local Government for a formal decision on ARICs for Joint Organisations (JOs) in response to Central NSW JOs letter to OLG requesting exemption.
- 4. Undertake formal planning for a shared ARIC with Illawarra Shoalhaven JO (ISJO) and Central NSW JO (CNSWJO) in anticipation of a response from OLG that does not provide dispensation/ exemption for JO's.

Note that the current limited financial and resource capacity within the Hunter JO means it will not be able to comply with expected ARIC requirements as they currently stand for the 2024/25 year.

Discussion:

The Hunter JO has volunteered to take a lead role in planning and coordinating the development of a shared ARIC with other JO's. The project plan update for doing so is provided below:

Phase	Timing	Details	Status
Preparation and Planning	Sept 2024 - Feb 2025	 Develop the shared ARIC model proposal for consideration by JOs Test the 4 main components of a shared ARIC with JOs: Develop a shared ARIC standalone committee structure and agreed process for establishment 	Complete – see Attachment 7.5- 1 for more detail of what is proposed

Phase	Timing	Details	Status
		 2. Develop a sample draft work plan appropriate for JOs, as these are likely to be similar across all JOs 3. Modify or add to the current risk management framework to comply with ARIC 4. Develop an outsourced internal audit function that can be shared across the JOs 	
Approvals required	Mar - Jun 2025	 Check NSW OLG for a formal decision on ARICs for Joint Organisations (JOs) in response to Central NSW JOs letter to OLG requesting exemption. Receive Joint Organisation Executive Officers' indicative approval for the proposed shared ARIC plan Individual JOs to seek their own board approval for the shared ARIC (by June Board meetings) 	Commenced – No response from OLG; Indicative approval received; Approval being sought in this paper.
Implementation	Jul 2025 – Feb 2026	 After each participating JO endorsement received, we will begin implementation of the 4 main components of a shared ARIC model proposed: 1. The shared ARIC standalone committee structure has been setup, recruited and the first meeting held 2. The draft strategic and annual workplans have been developed ready for endorsement by the shared ARIC standalone committee 3. Each JO has modified their risk management framework in compliance with the ARIC requirements 4. An EOI process has engaged an internal audit company and is ready to start implementation of the workplans (as required). 	Not commenced

Financial / Resourcing Implications:

The cost of implementation for the shared ARIC model is estimated to be no more than \$15,000 per JO. The Hunter JO has made a provision for ARIC costs in the 2025/26 annual budget to be considered by the Board at this meeting. Other resourcing requirements will be in kind and shared by all participating JOs as part of their existing roles and staffing levels. After the initial setup required and with only two ARIC meetings per year proposed this is expected to be a relatively minor in-kind contribution.

Next steps:

Collate endorsements from the JOs participating in the shared ARIC model and commence implementation as outlined in the project plan and model (attachment 7.5 -1).

Appendices* / Attachments**:

• Attachment 7.5-1: Shared ARIC options paper – detail – May 2025

^{*}Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

^{**}Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

Report Author:	Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO (Executive Officer)
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• That the Board endorse continuing to operate as a Joint Organisation as defined under the NSW Local Government Act 1993.

Executive Summary:

Pursuant to a recommendation of the Hunter JO Board in April 2024, this report is providing a recommended way forward for the Hunter JO given that the impacts of ARIC and other compliance obligations on the organisation are now better understood. The recommended way forward is not to explore alternative entities for collaboration (e.g. a Regional Organisation of Councils) but to continue to operate as a Joint Organisation.

Background:

When undertaking the review process leading to the current leadership and organisational model for the Hunter JO, the previous Board considered alternative structural entities to a Joint Organisation through which to facilitate ongoing collaboration between Councils. The alternative considered was a Regional Organisational of Councils (ROC), a form that member councils had previously collaborated through prior to becoming a Joint Organisation. A primary driver for exploring this alternative last year was the level of regulatory and administrative compliance required of Joint Organisations relative to their level of risk, financial transactions, and resource capacity, and in particular, the challenges of complying with ARIC obligations that came into effect on 1 July 2024.

After reviewing comparisons between the JO and ROC models, at its 11th April 2024 meeting the Board resolved to:

- Continue to operate as a Joint Organisation under the Local Government Act until 30 June 2025, during which time the implications of ARIC and other compliance obligations can be more comprehensively evaluated in the context of the new Hunter JO leadership and governance model, as can the intentions and/or aspirations of the current NSW Government for local government collaboration via Joint Organisations
- 2. Note that the current limited financial and resource capacity within the Hunter JO means it will not be able to comply with expected ARIC requirements as they currently stand for the 2024/25 year.
- 3. Endorse the Hunter JO team continuing to collaborate with the broader NSW Joint Organisation network and NSW Office of Local Government with a view to identifying and implementing an ARIC model that is commensurate to the level of risk, expenditure and financial capacity of Joint Organisations.
- 4. Notes that the Hunter JO is working through options regarding exemptions with Office of Local Government.
- 5. Notes a future report will come back to the Hunter JO Board outlining the options for a way forward.

Discussion:

After nearly 12 months implementing the new Hunter JO leadership and organisational model, it is recommended that the Hunter JO continue to operate as a Joint Organisation as defined under the NSW Local Government Act 1993. This reflects:

Focus Area	Advantages of remaining a Joint Organisation
Statutory Legitimacy and Functions	Unlike ROC's, Joint Organisations are statutory entities with defined functions under the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> . This provides the Hunter JO with a statutory legitimacy to deliver advocacy on behalf of the region and facilitate collaboration across member councils and with other levels of government. The organisational status (i.e. a public authority) of a Joint Organisation also engenders understanding and confidence within state and commonwealth agencies as to engaging and collaborating with the organisation.
Capacity to deliver Board priorities	The allocation of limited available staff resources to work on establishing a new corporate model (ie to revert to a ROC) and to wind down and place the Hunter JO into hiatus would significantly distract from progressing implementation of the Board's current shared priorities.
Human Resources	All staff within the Hunter JO are employed under the NSW Local Government Award. This employment arrangement would no longer be possible under a ROC model. Any transition would involve significant staff consultation, time and monetary impacts, and likely lead to the loss of staff. It should be noted that moving staff to the Local Government Award when establishing the current organisational structure is considered a key factor in enhancing staff retention, which previously had been a key challenge for the organisation.
Financial	There are no significant financial savings to be generated from changing to a ROC model. Of key concern is the fact that if this were to occur, the governance obligations of the JO would still need to be met (and financed) until a change in the proclamation required to dissolve the Joint Organisation occurred. Recent advice from the Minister for Local Government and Deputy Secretary of the NSW Office of Local Government indicates that future proclamation changes will not be occurring for some time.
Compliance Obligations	A key reason for the previous Board considering alternative models was the compliance obligations placed on Joint Organisations, particularly in relation to ARIC. While we remain non-compliant in this regard, as can be seen from Agenda Item 7.5 steps are in place to adequately address this via a shared model with other Joint Organisations.
Collaboration with NSW Government	More broadly, recognition of the role that Joint Organisations can contribute to supporting their member councils; to providing a mechanism through which to engage collectively with the NSW Government; and to facilitate place-based delivery of NSW Government policy and program initiatives across regional NSW is continuing to grow. This is reflected in increasing engagement by State Government with Joint Organisations across the state, and in some parts of the state additional councils seeking to become members of a Joint Organisation.

A broader comparison between Joint Organisation and Regional Organisation of Councils models is also provided in Appendix 7.6-A, from which the report's recommendation are drawn.

Financial / Resourcing Implications:

Nil. Preparation of the draft 2025/26 budget has been based on the assumption that the organisation will continue operating as a Joint Organisation.

Next steps:

Continued operation as a Joint Organisation.

Appendices* / Attachments**:

Appendix 7.6-A Comparison of Joint Organisation versus Regional Organisation of Councils models

^{*}Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report
**Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

Appendix 7.6-A: Evaluation of Joint Organisation (JO) versus Regional Organisation of Councils (ROC) models

Focus Area	Joint Organisation	Regional Organisation of Councils
Organisational Model	Local Government entity under the NSW Local Government Act	Company Limited by Guarantee
		NB. ROC would need to be hosted within the existing corporate entity Arrow Collaborative Services, which is owned by the member councils but currently operates independently of the Hunter JO. Ministerial approval already exists for this entity.
Regulatory Authority	NSW Office of Local Government	Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC)
Governance Oversight	Governance oversight and direction is provided by the Hunter JO Board comprising the Mayors of each of the ten Member Councils. The membership and functions of the Board are defined by the <i>Local Government Act</i>	 Governance of Arrow Collaborative Services is provided by the Arrow Board, comprising the General Managers of each of the ten-member councils. An ancillary governance / advisory body comprising the Mayors would need to be established to govern the activities and directions of the ROC entity, which would be structurally located alongside other commercial businesses within Arrow.
Compliance Obligations	 Compliance obligations have continued to increase since Joint Organisations were first established. Of particular impact has bene the impact on the JO complying with the <i>Guidelines for Risk Management and Internal Audit for Local Government in NSW</i> from 1 July 2024. These require the Hunter JO to establish: Audit, Risk & Improvement Committee (before end of 23/24FY) Risk Management Framework (before end of 24/25FY) Internal Audit Function (before end of 24/25FY) NB While currently non-compliant with these obligations, the Hunter JO is leading efforts to establish a shared ARIC with other JO's to ensure compliance within available staff and financial resources. 	 Compliance obligations would generally be less an imposition on staff and finances under a ROC model. ROCs are not directly regulated by any NSW Government Agency, however it should be noted that there appears anecdotally, to be an increasing level of concern within the NSW Government regarding the lack of a direct line of sight over the activities of ROCs and other similar corporate entities managed by Councils. This is reflected in the Minister not providing approvals for the establishment of new entities in recent times.
Annual Audit	Between 2017/18 and 2023/24 annual audit fees for the Hunter JO have almost doubled, from \$15,000 to \$29,085. This is consistent with the broader trend across NSW Councils and Joint Organisations. NB There is currently no regulatory pathway available to dissolve a Joint Organisation (and no specified or anticipated timeframe for this to occur). As such, even if all of the Hunter JO's activities and transactions were moved to a ROC structure, the JO would still be required to fulfil its compliance obligations (e.g. completion of an annual financial audit). As an example, one former JO now in hiatus is still required to undertake a \$13,000 audit process even though all of its staffing, projects and financial transactions are now occurring through the ROC.	It is estimated that the time allocated by staff to the audit process would be reduced under a ROC, as would the direct financial cost of the annual audit.
Membership Implications	 Process for determining annual membership fees would remain the same. Pathway for a member council to leave is as follows; Member council must provide 12 months' notice of intention to leave and must write to Minister for Local Government for this to be actioned Membership of the JO would then need to amended by proclamation 	 Process for determining membership fees would remain the same as for the JO Pathway for a member to leave is as follows; Member council must give 12 months' notice of intention to leave
Human resources	 All staff within the Hunter JO are employed under the local government award. This employment arrangement would no longer be possible under a ROC model. Any transition would involve significant staff consultation, time and monetary impacts, and likely lead to the loss of existing staff. NB Having moved staff to the Local Government Award when establishing the current organisational structure is considered a key factor in enhancing staff retention, which previously had been a key challenge for the organisation. 	 Existing Hunter JO staff would need to be transferred to an alternative award. Existing Arrow Collaborative Services staff are employed under the Private Clerks Award. Employment of ROC staff under the Clerks Award would mean limited opportunity to facilitate staff portability (e.g. secondments) and recruitment from Councils to Arrow / JO, as staff leave and entitlements cannot be transferred across different awards.
Grant funding	 In the short term eligibility to apply for grants is expected to remain largely unchanged whether a JO or ROC. Most Government grant programs provide the opportunity for "regional groups" of Councils to apply. It should be noted however, that: 	 In the short-term eligibility to apply for grants is largely the same whether a JO or ROC. Most Government grant programs provide the opportunity for "regional groups" of Councils to apply. In the longer-term greater opportunity is likely for JO's (not ROC's) to establish direct funding relationships with state government agencies.

Hunter JO Board Agenda_12 June 2025

Focus Area	Joint Organisation	Regional Organisation of Councils
Recognition and branding	 While yet to occur, greater potential exists for a joint organisation to establish more direct funding relationships with state government agencies due to both being public authorities By collaborating as a group, the NSW JO network is increasingly and proactively engaging more directly with NSW Government agencies to inform the design and delivery of funding programs that are targeting regional NSW and joint organisations in particular. The Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration (JONZA) program provides a recent example of success in this area, where the state government directly approached JO's given our statutory role and functions. The statutory functions that accompany a JO noticeably add weight / recognition to the narrative and legitimacy of the advocacy and program work undertaken by the organisation. This can be very 	• While the term 'JO' is not one that has been trademarked, it would be unusual to continue branding the collaborative activities of the member councils as "Hunter JO" if they reverted to a ROC, particularly given the logicalities associations under the Logal Covernment Act.
	 important in a region such as the Hunter which is characterised by several different advocacy voices, organisations and interests. Considerable effort has been invested into development of the Hunter JO brand over the past five years. Remaining a JO provides the opportunity to further capitalise on this successful brand investment to date. 	 particularly given the legislative associations under the Local Government Act. Reverting to a ROC would require the development and delivery of appropriate branding and a communications strategy to ensure both internal (i.e. Member Council Councillors and staff) and external (i.e. other JOs, state and Commonwealth Ministers and MPs, government agencies and funding bodies, business groups etc) are aware of the change, the reasons for it occurring and the implications.
Reputational risk	The primary reputational risk arising from remaining a JO relates to the likelihood of non-compliance with regulatory obligations, notably ARIC requirements that come into effect from 1 July 2024. For example, high risk findings in previous audits have been published by the Audit Office. However, a sustained effort to improve internal governance systems and reporting over the past 12 months and to work collaboratively with other JO's to establish a shared ARIC model has substantially reduced this risk.	 It is not anticipated that reverting to a ROC would substantially impact the positive reputation of the JO that is closely tied to the shared advocacy undertaken by the Mayors and to the collaboration and capacity building programs for member councils currently delivered by the JO team. However, moving to a ROC would remove our status / reputation as a statutory entity / public authority which supports engagement with state and federal government Ministers, MP's and agency representatives.

Hunter JO Board Agenda_12 June 2025

Report Author:	Kim Carland, Advocacy and Government Relations Lead

 That the Board endorse Mayoral spokespersons for engagement with politicians, communications and media opportunities.

Executive Summary:

To confirm agreed Mayoral spokespersons for advocacy opportunities, communications and media.

Background:

At its 10th April 2025 workshop, the Board nominated themselves as spokespersons for the advocacy priorities on which they had subject matter expertise (SME) and could speak to on behalf of the region. (refer Appendix 7.7-A)

Nominated Mayoral spokespersons will be used for all communications and engagement activities with politicians, communications activities and media opportunities, and will be reviewed annually. The role of spokespersons includes:

- Speak on behalf of the 10 councils of the Hunter region:
- Knowledgeable in the regional context (not just your LGA).
- Subject matter expertise evidence, data and examples from across the region.
- Attending meetings with Hunter MPs either in the Hunter or Parliament House.
- Attending meetings with Ministers in Sydney and Canberra.
- Attending media ops, approving quotes.

Discussion:

The proposed process for confirming participation in meetings and communications activities is:

- 1. The Hunter JO Chair and Deputy Chair (overall spokespersons for the JO) and SME spokespersons will be contacted to determine availability for a proposed meeting or communications activity.
 - NB when a communications event or activity is planned within a specific LGA, the Mayor of that LGA will also be included in the initial invitation.
- 2. When either the Chair and Deputy Chair and at least one of the nominated SME spokespersons is confirmed (and if applicable the Mayor of the LGA in which an event is planned), the meeting / communications opportunity will be confirmed. This means that our Chair/Deputy will be joined by at least one SME Mayor.
 - NB At their discretion, the Chair or Deputy Chair may choose to nominate an alternate Mayoral spokesperson to speak on behalf of the Hunter JO / region.
- 3. All other Mayors will then be invited to participate in the activity once the minimum quorum of either the Chair or Deputy and at least one SME Mayor is confirmed.

Financial / Resourcing Implications:

The proposed process will reduce logistical complexity and improve efficiencies associated with the organisation of meetings, events and activities involving multiple Board members.

Next steps: Approved process to be implemented.

Appendices* / Attachments**:

• Appendix 7.7-A: Mayoral Spokesperson Chart

^{*}Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report
**Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

Appendix 7.7-A: Mayoral Spokesperson Chart

Priority /Grant Project	Chair Cr Sue Moore	Deputy Chair Cr Leah Anderson	Cr Daniel Watton	Cr Digby Rayward	Cr Adam Shultz	Cr Claire Pontin	Cr Philip Penfold	Cr Jeffrey Drayton	Cr Ross Kerridge	Cr Maurice Collison
HOUSING AND POPULATION GROWTH										
Housing - infrastructure, density, gov integration	у	у			у		у			
Population projections	у	У			У					
ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION AND JOBS										
Mining land reuse / redevelopment	у	у			у			У	у	
Energy transition (Strategy, REZ, worker housing)	У	У					у	У		
Newcastle Airport airfreight precinct	У	У						У		
Hunter global tourism	у	У								у
Port of Newcastle diversification	У	У							у	
Circular economy	у	у								
INFRASTRUCTURE CONNECTIVITY										
Road funding reform	у	у	У	У		у				
Transport planning	У	У	У		У		У		у	
Water infrastructure	у	у		У				у		
Shiraz to Shore	У	У								
Digital connectivity	у	У								
ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY										
Disaster resilience	У	У					У			
Waste levy	у	у	У							
Net Zero	У	У						У	У	
Regional waterway management	У	У		У						
FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY										
Financial sustainability of local government	У	У	у			у				
Grant funding reform	У	У		У						
COMMUNITY LIVEABILITY AND WELLBEING										
Health and research	У	у							У	

Report Author:	Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO (Executive Officer)	
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• That the Board nominate representatives to move and second each of the Hunter JO regional motions at the National General Assembly.

Executive Summary:

This report provides an update on the status of regional activities being undertaken in the lead up to the National General Assembly (NGA) of Local Government in Canberra from 24 – 27 June 2025, and is seeking to identify which Mayors will move and second the Hunter JO regional motions at the conference.

Background:

The Hunter JO is coordinating the following regional activities in conjunction with the 2025 NGA:

- Shared regional motions for each Member Council to individually lodge to the NGA
- Planning and hosting an annual conference dinner for Hunter-based Mayors, Councillors and staff attending the conference.

NB based on the Board's advice at the April meeting we are not attempting to secure any meetings with Federal Government Ministers during the conference.

Discussion:

Hunter Delegates Dinner

- The QT Canberra has been booked for the night of Tuesday 24th June as the dinner venue.
- Invitations have been extended to all Hunter-based federal MP's, however to date there have been no acceptances.
- At this point in time 39 registrations have been received, ensuring the dinner will proceed. Those attending the dinner include:

Name	Partner	Position	Organisation/Council	
Alexandria Carruthers		Deputy Mayor	Dungog Shire Council	
Adam Shultz		Mayor	Lake Macquarie City Council	
Morven Cameron		CEO	Lake Macquarie City Council	
Tony Farrell		Executive Team	Lake Macquarie City Council	
Kate Davies		Executive Team	Lake Macquarie City Council	
Cr Brian Adamthwaite	Yes	Councillor	Lake Macquarie City Council	
Cr Madeline Bishop	Yes	Councillor	Lake Macquarie City Council	
Cr Colin Grigg	Yes	Councillor	Lake Macquarie City Council	
Cr Christine Buckley	Yes	Councillor	Lake Macquarie City Council	
Cr Kate Warner		Councillor	Lake Macquarie City Council	
Cr Stacey Radcliffe		Councillor	Lake Macquarie City Council	
Ross Kerridge	Yes	Lord Mayor	City of Newcastle	
Claire Pontin		Mayor	MidCoast Council	
Adrian Panuccio		General Manager	MidCoast Council	
Sue Moore	Yes	Mayor	Singleton Council	
Sue George		Deputy Mayor	Singleton Council	
Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr		General Manager	Singleton Council	

Name	Partner	Position	Organisation/Council	
Jeff Drayton		Mayor	Muswellbrook Shire Council	
Derek Finnigan		General Manager	Muswellbrook Shire Council	
Daniel Watton		Mayor	Cessnock City Council	
Sally Halliday		Councillor	Maitland City Council	
Mitchell Griffin		Councillor	Maitland City Council	
Steve Wilson		Director	Hunter JO	
David Farmer		CEO	Central Coast Council	
Lawrie McKinna		Mayor	Central Coast Council	
Doug Eaton		Deputy Mayor	Central Coast Council	
Belinda Neal		Councillor	Central Coast Council	
Trent McWaide		Councillor	Central Coast Council	
Maurice Collison	Yes	Mayor	Upper Hunter Shire Council	
Pat Ryan		Deputy Mayor	Upper Hunter Shire Council	
Allison McPhee		Councillor	Upper Hunter Shire Council	
Greg McDonald		General Manager	Upper Hunter Shire Council	

Notes:

- Port Stephens Council representatives are unable to attend as their Council meeting is on the same evening.
- The direct costs of dinner and any associated room hire costs (proportional to level of representation) will be invoiced back to councils **based on the confirmed registrations prior to the date**. Based on 40 representatives attending the cost per head will be around \$100.

Spokespersons for regional motions

The four regional motions that have been lodged to the conference are provided in Appendix 7.8-A, where they have also been mapped against the Mayoral spokespersons identified at the April Board workshop for those priorities (refer Agenda Item 7.7).

The Board is requested to confirm which representatives will move and second each motion at the conference, drawing on who has been nominated as Mayoral spokespersons for the issue and who will be present at the conference.

Financial / Resourcing Implications:

- Activities are being delivered within available Hunter JO staff resources.
- The direct costs of dinner and any associated room hire costs (proportional to level of representation) will be invoiced back to councils based on the confirmed registrations

Next steps:

• Nominated Mayors to speak to regional motions at the conference (NB supporting information will be provided beforehand).

Appendices* / Attachments**:

 Appendix 7.8-A: 2025 NGA Hunter Regional Motions – Mayoral spokespersons to move and second.

^{*}Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

^{**}Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

Appendix 7.8-A: 2025 NGA Hunter Regional Motions – Mayoral spokespersons to move and second.

NB While unable to attend the Board meeting, Cr Claire Pontin has confirmed interest in moving Motion 3 and potentially Motion 4 (if required).

Category	Regional Motion	Current Mayoral spokespersons	Nominated Mover and Seconder at NGA (TBD)
1. Jobs and skills	 This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to: Directly support the acceleration of local government actions that address imminent and substantial job losses arising from large scale industry closures in regional economies rapidly transforming to net zero by: Clearly identifying and establishing a single Federal Government Minister and Agency with responsibility for delivering funding and coordinating the provision of broader agency resources directly to Council led initiatives Directly investing in Council led, place-based initiatives that: Pilot the reactivation and repurposing of current and former mining lands and infrastructure to create urgently needed new employment lands De-risk industry investment and strategically inform and accelerate industry attraction, skills development and job creation. 	Cr Jeff Drayton Cr Adam Shultz Cr Ross Kerridge Cr Sue Moore (Chair) Cr Leah Anderson (Deputy Chair)	Mover: Seconder:
2. Housing and Homelessness	This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to: Substantially increase direct Australian Government investment to councils for the construction of local enabling transport and community infrastructure and utilities critical to supporting national housing targets by unlocking and accelerating the delivery of housing on existing development-ready land.	Cr Adam Shultz Cr Philip Penfold Cr Sue Moore (Chair) Cr Leah Anderson (Deputy Chair)	Mover: Seconder:

Category	Regional Motion	Current Mayoral spokespersons	Nominated Mover and Seconder at NGA (TBD)
3. Financial Sustainability	 This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to: Build consistency in the governance frameworks, systems and documentation required across various funding programs and governing agencies to reduce the administrative burden on local government. Improve the delivery of grant funding to councils across Australia to ensure equity, certainty and sustainability for effective strategic planning. Ensure equitable delivery of grant funding for rural and regional councils by upholding the principles of the Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995, ensuring horizontal fiscal equalisation of funding. 	Cr Claire Pontin Cr Digby Rayward (not attending NGA) Cr Daniel Watton Cr Sue Moore (Chair) Cr Leah Anderson (Deputy Chair)	Mover: Seconder:
4. Roads and Infrastructure	This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to: Lead systems reform across all levels of government to improve the planning, administration and delivery of road funding, to ensure equity in Financial Assistance Grant distribution to rural and regional councils by ensuring nationwide adherence to the principle of Horizontal Fiscal Equalisation established under the Federal Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995.	Cr Digby Rayward (not attending NGA) Cr Daniel Watton Cr Claire Pontin Cr Sue Moore (Chair) Cr Leah Anderson (Deputy Chair)	Mover: Seconder:

Report Author:	Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO (Executive Officer)
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• That the Board endorse the proposed meeting schedule

Executive Summary:

This report provides a draft schedule of dates and proposed locations for Hunter JO Board meetings for the period August 2025 – December 2027.

Background:

The location of Hunter JO Board meetings are rotated around the region to provide each Member Council the chance to regularly host in their area, and to provide the opportunity for all Board Members to see first-hand the issues being faced, the opportunities being pursued and the achievements being delivered by other Hunter JO Member Councils right across the region.

Discussion:

The Board meeting at Muswellbrook Shire Council on 12 June 2025 represents completion of the first full schedule of rotating meetings since the practice commenced in December 2023. Principles that underpin the draft schedule suggested in Appendix 7.9-A include:

- 1. Scheduling meetings in the short term to:
 - Revisit those Councils who hosted early in the previous cycle given the time that has now elapsed (approximately 18 months)
 - Provide the opportunity for new Mayors who have not yet hosted a meeting to do so.
- 2. Alternating meetings between Lower Hunter locations followed by Upper Hunter / Mid Coast locations.
- 3. Incorporating one Board meeting per year in NSW Parliament House and one per year in the Federal Parliament House during sitting weeks (in line with the draft 2025/26 Advocacy Implementation Plan)

It should be noted that where circumstances require, the schedule can be amended should this be needed by the host Council. This is generally facilitated by swapping out the hosting date with another Council included in the forward schedule.

Financial / Resourcing Implications:

The costs to the Hunter JO of delivering Board meetings around the region is accommodated in the 2025/26 budget.

Next steps:

Meetings will be organised in collaboration with the host Council as per the approved schedule.

Appendices* / Attachments**:

Appendix 7.9-A: Draft Hunter JO Board Meeting Schedule (August 2025 – December 2027)

^{*}Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

^{**}Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

Appendix 7.9-A: Draft Hunter JO Board Meeting Schedule (August 2025 – December 2027)

Date	Date	Comments			
2025					
Thursday 14 August 2025	Location: Lake Macquarie City Council	TBC			
Thursday 9 Location: NSW October 2025 Parliament House		TBC pending approval of Annual Advocacy Plan			
Thursday 11 December 2025	Location: MidCoast Council				
<u>2026</u>					
Thursday 12 February 2026	Location: Port Stephens Council				
Thursday 9 April 2026	Location: Federal Parliament House	TBC pending approval of Annual Advocacy Plan			
Thursday 11 June 2026	Location: Upper Hunter Shire Council				
Thursday 13 August 2026	Location: Singleton Council				
Thursday 8 October 2026	Location: NSW Parliament House	TBC pending approval of Annual Advocacy Plan			
Thursday 10 December 2026	Location: Maitland City Council				
<u>2027</u>	'				
Thursday 11 February 2027	Location: Dungog Shire Council				
Thursday 8 April 2027	Location: Federal Parliament House	TBC pending approval of Annual Advocacy Plan			
Thursday 10 June 2027	Location: City of Newcastle				
Thursday 12 August 2027	Location: Muswellbrook Shire Council				
Thursday 7 Location: NSW October 2027 Parliament House		TBC pending approval of Annual Advocacy Plan			
Thursday 9 December 2027	Location: Cessnock City Council				

Report Author: Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO (Executive Officer)

• That the Board endorse the Public Interest Disclosure Policy and its publication on the Hunter JO website.

Executive Summary:

This report is providing a draft Public Interest Disclosure Policy for the Board's consideration and endorsement.

Background:

All public agencies in NSW are required to have a Public Interest Disclosure (PID) Policy under section 42 of the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2022* (PID Act). The PID Act sets out the information which must be included in a PID policy and requires an agency to publish its PID policy prominently on its public website and intranet. The Hunter JO has not previously had a PID policy for the organisation.

Discussion

The draft Hunter JO PID policy provided in Attachment 7.10-1 has been prepared utilising the Model Policy Template provided by the NSW Ombudsman's office and sets out:

- How the organisation will support and protect those coming forward with a report of serious wrongdoing
- How the organisation will deal with reports of serious wrongdoing and and its other responsibilities under the PID Act
- Contact details for those wanting to make a report
- Process for making a report
- Protections available under the PID Act.

Financial / Resourcing Implications:

The policy will be implemented within existing staff resources.

Next steps:

- 1. The adopted policy will be published on the Hunter JO website
- 2. Hunter JO staff will be briefed on the new policy and the processes and procedures it contains
- 3. Training will be provided to Hunter JO staff using the online training resources available from the NSW Ombudsman's Office.

Appendices* / Attachments**:

• Attachment 7.10-1. Draft Public Interest Disclosure Policy

^{*}Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

^{**}Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

8. Items for the Hunter JO Board: For Noting

8.1 Hunter JO Financial Report

Report Author:	Tim Askew – Director of Programs

Recommendations:

- That the Income Statement for period ending April 2025 be received and noted.
- That the summary of Credit Card expenditure for Hunter JO for YTD April 2025 be received and noted.

Executive Summary:

This report provides, for noting, the year-to-date financial statements for the Hunter Joint Organisation.

Background: Nil

Discussion:

Income Statement Summary

SUMMARY	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	BUDGET	YTD	YTD	ANNUAL	FORECAST
INCOME STATEMENT HIGHLIGHTS	Current Month	YTD	YTD	VARIANCE	PRIOR YEAR	BUDGET	BUDGET
HJO GROUP							
HUNTER COUNCILS INCORPORATED	(6,892)	(126,507)	(116,071)	8%	6,098	(3,626)	(138,631)
HUNTER JOINT ORGANISATION	(1,651)	140,909	186,631	32%	218,626	53,528	63,388
TOTAL NET PROFIT / (LOSS) - OPERATIONS	(8,543)	14,402	70,560	0	224,724	49,902	(75,243)
HJO Subsidy							
Extraordinary Expenses	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL GROUP NET PROFIT / (LOSS)	(8,543)	14,402	70,560	0	224,724	49,902	(75,243)

As of Year-to-Date (YTD), Hunter JO reports a net profit of \$140,909, which is 24% below the YTD budget projections. This variance is primarily attributable to timing differences in grant progress and the budget remains on track for a surplus.

The YTD net results for Hunter Councils Inc align with the reforecast budget completed at the end of Q2. A lease was signed with new tenants in March 2025.

For a more detailed breakdown of the Income Statement, Balance Sheet, and Cash Flow by company, please refer to the attached documents accompanying this report.

A copy of Credit Card Expenditure for the Hunter JO since 1 July 2024 has been included at Attachment 8.1-1 for noting.

Balance Sheet Summary

	HUNTER	HUNTER JOINT	НІО
YTD SUMMARY	COUNCILS INC	ORGANISATION	GROUP TOTAL
BALANCE SHEET HIGHLIGHTS			
ASSETS			
Cash	1,053	1,169,528	1,170,581
Trade Debtors	8,828	178,860	187,688
Property, Plant & Equipment	1,525,111	49,540	1,574,651
Intercompany Loans	(645,412)	91, 7 62	(553,650)
Other	(14,291)	5,511	(8,780)
	875,289	1,495,201	2,370,490
LIABILITIES			
Trade Creditors	12,200	42,446	54,646
Employee Leave Entitlements	-	209,946	209,946
Unspent Grant Funding	-	1,009,658	1,009,658
Intercompany Loans	226,000	-	226,000
Other	4,958	255,880	260,838
	243,158	1,517,930	1,761,088
NET ASSETS	632,130	(22,729)	609,402
	-	-	
BALANCE SHEET METRICS			
Working Capital	(4,410)	1,353,899	1,349,489
Current Ratio [Target >1.5]	-0.3:1	0.9:1	0.9:1
Liabilties to Assets %	28%	102%	74%
Cash Ratio [Target >1]	0.1:1	0.8:1	0.8:1

Cashflow Summary

	HUNTER	HUNTER JOINT
YTD SUMMARY	COUNCILS INC	ORGANISATION
CASHFLOW HIGHLIGHTS		
OPENING BALANCE - CASH ON HAND	23,859	27,953
Net Cash - Operating	(40,805)	1,135,114
Net Cash - Investing	-	(18,537)
Net Cash - Financing	18,000	25,000
Cash - Net Increase / (Decrease)	(22,805)	1,141,577
CLOSING BALANCE - CASH ON HAND	1,054	1,169,530
Plus Trade Debtors / Creditors	(3,372)	136,414
AVAILABLE WORKING CAPITAL (CASH)	(2,318)	1,305,944
LESS RESTRICTED FUNDS		
Employee Leave Entitlements	-	209,946
Unspent Grant Funds	-	1,009,658
UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	(2,318)	86,340

Appendices* / Attachments**:

- Attachment 8.1-1: Hunter JO Credit Card Expenditure: YTD April 2025 CONFIDENTIAL
- Attachment 8.1-2: Hunter JO Monthly Financial Report: April 2025

^{*}Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

^{**}Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

Report Author:	Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO (Executive Officer)

• That the Board note the information provided

Executive Summary:

This report provides an overview of the focus and discussion occurring at the most recent meeting of the NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum held on 7 May 2025 in Sydney.

Background:

The NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum brings together all NSW JO's along with other alliances of councils from across NSW three times per year. Its purpose is to exchange information on best practice and excellence in the pursuit of strategic regional priorities, joint advocacy and collaboration activities for the benefit of local councils and their communities right across rural and regional NSW.

The current chair of the Forum is Cr Sue Moore, Mayor of Singleton Council and Chair of Hunter JO, along with Deputy Chair Cr Kevin Beatty, Mayor of Cabonne Council and Chair of Central NSW JO. The Hunter JO currently provides the secretariat to the Forum.

Discussion:

Key focus areas / outcomes from the 7th May meeting included:

- 1. Updates from the Hon Ron Hoenig, Minister for Local Government and Brett Whitworth, Deputy Secretary Office of Local Government:
 - OLG preparing guidance on process for adopting Code of Conduct in the interim given review process remains underway.
 - Pecuniary Interest Disclosures proposed changes include:
 - Trusts will need to be disclosed
 - Personal addresses will no longer need to be disclosed
 - The Minister is planning a more flexible policy approach to facilitate collaboration between Councils across NSW (ie they can choose whether to collaborate as a JO or as a ROC).
 - For those JO's who have additional councils wanting to join, it is recommended they do so
 initially via associate memberships. Any changes to proclaimed JO membership will not be
 occurring for some time.
- 2. Presentation from Dams Safety NSW focusing on:
 - The need for strategic planning for climate change resilience and improved stakeholder engagement.
 - Progress in DSNSW's regulatory maturity, the implementation of risk reduction measures
- 3. Presentation from NSW Net Zero Commission focusing on:
 - The Commission's role i.e. an independent statutory body which monitors action on climate change in NSW, including how NSW is tracking on its climate goals.
 - The Commission's first report published in November 2024, which found that unless action is accelerated, NSW will fail to achieve its legislated target of a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.
 - The Commission would like to engage with the JO network on ideas and levers for accelerating progress toward the targets, including the role that local councils can play. A

- post meeting engagement is being planned between the Net Zero Commission and JO Executive Officers to progress this further.
- The Commission is currently undertaking consultation to help shape its work plan and is inviting submissions from JOs and councils.
- 4. ARIC report identifying framework and options for a shared ARIC between Hunter and other JO's. Those JO's interested in joining have been asked to confirm this intent by 30 May 2025.
- 5. Joint progress reports from across the network on the delivery of JONZA and Disaster Ready initiatives.
- 6. Advocacy reports from ALGA and LGNSW.

A copy of the full meeting papers for the NSW JO Chairs Forum are provided in Attachment 8.2-1.

Financial / Resourcing Implications: Nil

Next steps: N/A

Appendices* / Attachments**:

Attachment 8.2-1: NSW JO Chairs Forum Meeting Papers (7th May 2025)

^{*}Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

^{**}Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

Report Author: Tim Askew, Director of Programs - Hunter JO	
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• That the Board note the update on funding and grant opportunities

Executive Summary:

This paper provides an update on the status of funding applications submitted by the Hunter JO.

Background:

Grant funding is a key source of revenue for the Hunter JO, underpinning delivery of a range of advocacy initiatives and capacity building activities and projects that contribute directly to implementation of the Hunter JO Strategic Plan.

Discussion

Status of Grant Applications

Status	Grant	Amount
Successful	Funding Program: EPA Local Government Waste Solutions	\$206,425
	Program Project: Hunter Circular Value Chain Solutions project	(over 1 year)
	The Hunter Circular Value Chain Solutions project seeks to develop and test innovative value chain collaboration processes to enable multi-party groups to work together to solve some of the region's waste management challenges.	
Advice pending	Funding Program: Regional Economic Development & Community Investment Program	\$998,843
	Project: Regional Post Mining Land Use in the Hunter	(over 2 years)
	This project would deliver the preliminary components of the regional post mining land use proposal. Activities would focus on assessing region-wide mining lands and assets and developing a regional action plan for the repurposing of sites.	
Advice pending (NB If successful	Funding Program: Regional Economic Development & Community Investment Program	\$250,000
DSSN would be	Project: Hunter Global Tourism Project.	
the grant recipient)	Hunter JO has partnered with Destination Sydney Surrounds North (the proponent) and Newcastle Airport in this application, which would fund the delivery of two critical action plan items from the Hunter Global Tourism Marketing Strategy:	
	 Trade Representation & International Market Readiness Content Strategy & Digital Infrastructure. 	
	As required by the funding guidelines DSSN and Newcastle Airport are providing a 20% direct financial contribution to the project.	

Key: Successful Advice Pending Unsuccessful

Report Author:	Tim Askew, Director of Programs - Hunter JO
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That the report be received and noted.

Executive Summary:

The Program Status Report provides the Board with an "at-a-glance" overview of the range of operational capacity building projects currently being delivered by the Hunter JO.

Background:

Key information provided by the report includes:

- 1. Project name.
- 2. Alignment of project to the strategic themes included in the Hunter JO Strategic Plan.
- 3. Source of project funding.
- 4. Status of project delivery in relation to project schedule, resourcing and scope.
- 5. Scheduled delivery date.
- 6. A brief update where any impacts on project schedule, resourcing and scope are being experienced.

Discussion: Nil

Financial / Resourcing Implications: Nil

Next steps: Nil

Appendices* / Attachments**:

• Appendix 8.4-A: Program Status Update Report

^{*}Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

^{**}Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

Appendix 8.4-A: Program Status Update Report

Strategic Themes	Project	Funding	Schedule	Resourcing	Scope	Delivery Date	Updates by Exception
CONNECTIVITY							
RESILIENCE							
	Disaster Ready Project	Grant	On Track	On Track	On Track	29 February 2028	
JOBS AND A GROWIN	NG ECONOMY						
	Circular Economy Ecosystem	Grant	On Track	On Track	On Track	30 June 2027	
	Hospitality Circularity Project	Grant	On Track	On Track	On Track	31 March 2026	
	Circular Precincts and Futures Hub	Hunter JO	On Track	Moderate Impact	On Track	30 June 2025	The grant funding has concluded. The project continues to be managed by the Hunter JO to seek a new grant to continue the work.
	Hunter Circular Knowledge Hub	Grant	Completed	Completed	Completed	30 April 2025	Project completed. Project launched internally with Council staff 15 May 2025.
	Hunter Circular Value Chains	Grant	On Track	On Track	On Track	30 June 2026	Funding deed recently signed. Project to commence in July 2025. Continues the work completed in Hunter Circular Knowledge Hub project.
	Circular Economy Procurement Project	Grant	On Track	On Track	On Track	30 April 2026	-
	Priority Infrastructure List (Stage 2)	Hunter JO	Moderate Impact	Moderate Impact	Moderate Impact	30 June 2026	Project is on hold as there is currently no resources available in the short term. Likely to recommence in January 2026.
LIVEABILITY							
	Illegal Dumping Program	Grant	On Track	On Track	On Track	31 March 2027	
	Landfill Emissions Data Project	Grant	Completed	Completed	Completed	31 March 2025	Project completed and handed over to NSW EPA for assessing and developing next steps.
	Community Recycling Centres	Grant	On Track	On Track	On Track	30 June 2025	Awaiting funding deed for a 12 months extension.
	Net Zero Acceleration	Grant	On Track	On Track	On Track	31 December 2026	Project to be extended by 18 months. Waiting on funding deed arriving early June 2025.

Report Author:	Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO (Executive Officer)

That the Board note the information provided

Executive Summary:

This report provides a a copy of the Annual Engagement Plan for the Hunter JO for the 2024/25 audit period.

Background:

In accordance with The NSW Local Government Act 1993, the NSW Audit Office has responsibility for undertaking or managing consultants (engaged by the Audit Office) to undertake the annual financial and performance auditing of the Hunter JO. Under this arrangement the 2024/25 audit for the Hunter JO is being undertaken by Prosperity in collaboration with the Audit Office.

Discussion:

This Annual Engagement Plan provided by the Auditor (see Attachment 8.5-1) contains information about the audit.

The scope of the audit comprises an audit of the Hunter JO's general purpose financial report, with:

- an Independent Auditor's Report on the general purpose financial statements in accordance with section 417 of the Local Government Act 1993 (LG Act)
- a Report on the Conduct of the Audit in accordance with section 417(3) of the LG Act.

The Engagement Plan identifies the issues and risks that may impact the audit and how the audit team will respond to them.

Financial / Resourcing Implications:

The estimated audit fee for the 2025 audit is \$29,980 (ex GST)

Next steps:

Ongoing implementation of actions identified in the Engagement Timetable.

Appendices* / Attachments**

Attachment 8.5-1: Annual Engagement Plan - CONFIDENTIAL

^{*}Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

^{**}Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context

Report Author: Bonnie Gradwell, Administration and Events Officer – Hunter JO

- That the Hunter JO Board note the Hunter JO Risk Register
- That the Hunter JO Board identify any new risks for inclusion on the Risk Register

Executive Summary:

This report provides, for noting, a copy of the Hunter JO Risk Register, and asks that the Board raise any additional risks for noting within the meeting, to be added to the register.

Background:

Provision of the Risk Register for the Board's consideration at each meeting is in accordance with the findings and recommendations of the annual Hunter JO audit.

Discussion:

Review and updating of the Risk Register is undertaken bi-monthly to identify any new risks and evaluate those already on the register.

Financial / Resourcing Implications:

The Governance & Risk Framework is managed by the Director Hunter JO (Executive Officer) and Administration and Events Coordinator.

Next steps:

The Register will continue to be reviewed and reported bi-monthly to Hunter JO Board.

Appendices* / Attachments**:

Attachment 8.6-1: Hunter JO Risk Register (CONFIDENTIAL)

^{*}Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

^{**}Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

Report Author: Bonnie Gradwell, Administration and Events Officer - Hunter JO
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That the Hunter JO Board note the status of the Compliance Calendar Checklist.

Executive Summary:

This report provides for noting, the status of the annual Hunter JO Compliance Calendar Checklist.

Background:

Similar to its Member Councils, the Hunter JO has a number of annual statutory compliance and reporting obligations that it must fulfil on an annual basis. To assist the Board with its oversight of these compliance obligations, the Compliance Calendar checklist identifies these obligations and their delivery status throughout the year. The checklist is reviewed and reported to the Board on a bi-monthly basis.

Discussion: Nil

Financial / Resourcing Implications:

The compliance calendar checklist is reviewed by the Director Hunter JO (Executive Officer) and Administration and Events Officer on a bi-monthly basis.

Next steps:

The Checklist will continue to be reviewed and reported bi-monthly to meetings of the Hunter JO Board.

Appendices* / Attachments**:

Appendix 8.7-A: Hunter JO Compliance Checklist 2024-25FY

^{*}Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

^{**}Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

Appendix 8.7-A: Hunter JO Compliance Checklist 2024-25FY

Item	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Legislative Compliance												
Hunter Joint Organisation Audit (Auditor-General)	V											
Hunter JO Meeting includes presentation of audited accounts				\square								
Lodgement of Audited Financial Statements to OLG												
Submission of Hunter JO Annual Performance Statement to OLG					Ø							
Submission of financial data return (FDR) to OLG				☑								
Hunter JO Pecuniary Interest Declaration Form to be sent to Mayors for completion (as well as Executive Officer)												
Tabling of Hunter JO Pecuniary Declarations at Hunter JO Board Meeting		$\overline{\mathbf{v}}$				Ø						
Publishing of Audited Annual Financial Statements on Hunter JO website				☑								
Submission of Public Interest Disclosure Annual Return												
Publishing of Hunter JO Board Meeting Agendas on Hunter JO website		☑						\square		\square		\square
Publishing of Hunter JO Board Meeting Minutes on Hunter JO website		☑		☑				\square				
Annual Report of obligations under GIPA due to the Minister and the Information Commissioner				☑								
Model Code of Conduct Complaints Statistics to be reported to Board. Collection form due												
to OLG												
Post LG Election												
Election of Hunter JO Chair				\square								
Election of Hunter JO Deputy Chair				☑								
Review of Hunter JO Strategic Plan, and adoption of Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities (within 12 months of election)												due by Sep 2025
Review & adoption of Code of Meeting Practice (within 12 months of election)												due by Sep 2025
Review & adoption of Expenses and Facilities Policy (within 12 months of election)												due by Sep 2025
Review of organisational structure (within 12 months of election)												due by Sep 2025
Review of Code of Conduct (within 12 months of election)												due by Sep 2025
Finance & Budget												2023
Commence consultation with Board on Statement of Revenue Policy								☑				
Presentation of forecast budget (Hunter JO)												✓
GST Certificate to be submitted	Ø											
Adopt Statement of Revenue Policy and Budget [LG Reg cl 397I]												Ø
Publish Statement of Revenue Policy and Budget on website [LG Reg cl 397I]												$\overline{\square}$

Key:

☑ Green – Completed

Orange – Due date/to be completed by

X Red – Not completed on schedule

Hunter JO Board Agenda_12 June 2025

Report Author:	Shaun O'Sullivan, Director North - Regional Coordination, Delivery and	l
	Engagement Group, Premier's Department	

• That the Board note the Premier's Department update.

Release of the Regional Communities Consultation Guide

On 8 May 2025, Premier Chris Minns and Minister for Regional NSW Tara Moriarty launched the Regional Communities Consultation Guide, developed under the Regional Communities (Consultation Standards) Act 2024. The Guide establishes mandatory standards for NSW Government engagement with regional communities and was shaped by extensive consultation, including a regional listening session held in Newcastle. It aims to address long-standing concerns about consultation effectiveness by embedding principles of meaningful, inclusive, and transparent engagement. The Guide is now in effect and must be applied to any consultation impacting the wellbeing of regional, rural, and remote communities.

Ongoing Government Response to Youth Crime in Regional NSW

The NSW Government continues to prioritise youth crime prevention, particularly in regional areas, through a coordinated strategy combining legislative reform and community-based intervention. In 2024, the Government introduced stricter bail laws for repeat youth offenders and created new offences for promoting criminal behaviour online. These reforms are part of a broader \$26.2 million investment in youth justice, focused on prevention, rehabilitation, and improved community safety. Minister for Youth Justice Jihad Dib has stressed the importance of "striking a balance between public safety and giving young people every opportunity in life," highlighting the Government's commitment to early intervention and locally informed solutions across the state.

Discussion: Nil

Financial / Resourcing Implications: Nil

Next steps: Nil

Appendices* / Attachments**: Nil

^{*}Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

^{**}Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

Report Author:	Virginia Errington, Council Engagement Manager, Office of the Deputy			
	Secretary, Office of Local Government			

• That the Board note the OLG update.

Executive Summary:

To provide an update on upcoming policy changes, funding opportunities, consultations and events for councils and joint organisations.

Background:

Public Spaces (Unattended Property) Act and Regulation

OLG is evaluating the *Public Spaces* (*Unattended Property*) *Act 2021* and the *Public Spaces* (*Unattended Property*) *Regulation 2022* (PSUP laws) to assess the effectiveness of the laws in meeting their objectives and their implementation. The review has a particular focus on

- timeframes and scope of the laws,
- powers available to authorities and their use and
- the nature and impact of offences and penalties.

Submissions can be made by completing the <u>online survey</u> or emailing the <u>editable submission form</u> to <u>unattendedproperty@olg.nsw.gov.au</u>. Submissions close Friday 13 June 2025.

Release of 2024/25 Code of Accounting Practice and Financial Reporting

The 2024/25 update to the Code of Accounting Practice and Financial Reporting has been released with changes and additions highlighted in yellow for ease of reference. A <u>Summary of Changes</u> and the updated Code are published on the <u>OLG website</u>.

Council finance professionals with technical expertise are invited to join the annual Working Group to provide input on accounting issues for the 2025/26 update. Expressions of interest can be made by emailing code@olg.nsw.gov.au no later than Friday 30 May.

Financial Assistance Grants Public Hearings

The NSW Local Government Grants Commission will hold a hearing for regional and rural councils to provide updates in relation to the allocation of the federally funded Financial Assistance Grants. The hearing will be held on Wednesday 11 June, 3pm - 4.30pm with an option to attend via webinar or inperson in Orange.

To register, email <u>grantscommission@olg.nsw.gov.au</u> and indicate if you wish to attend in person or remotely.

Discussion: Nil

Financial / Resourcing Implications: Nil

Next steps: Nil

Appendices* / Attachments**: Nil

^{*}Appendices are included directly following the report and inform the validity of the report

^{**}Attachments are included at the end of the Board Pack to provide supplementary information and context.

9. Confidential Session

9.1 Closure of the Meeting

In accordance with section 11.1 of the Hunter JO Code of Meeting Practice and section 10A(2) of the *NSW Local Government Act 1993*, it is proposed to close the meeting to the public for discussion of Agenda Item 9.2 (refer Confidential Paper). This item incorporates discussion of personnel matters (other than voting representatives).

9.2 Director Hunter JO (Executive Officer) Performance Review

Refer to Confidential Paper.

9.3 Reopening the Meeting to the Public

No further items are recommended for consideration in closed session.

Recommendation:

- That the meeting be reopened to the public
- That the open meeting be advised of any decisions occurring during the closed meeting session.

10. Matters Raised by Members

Nil.

11. General Business

Nil.



Hunter JO Board Agenda Attachments

Thursday 12 June 2025

Donald Horne Building, STEM Innovation Lab - 140 Bridge St, Muswellbrook NSW 2333

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Attachment 6-1 Letter of support to Tony Chappel, NSW EPA CEO re Letter of Support – EPA-LGNSW Councils Managing Contaminated Land Together, 28 March 2025



4 Sandringham Avenue, PO Box 3137, Thornton, NSW 2322 - 02 4978 4040 www.hunterjo.nsw.gov.au

Tony Chappel CEO NSW Environment Protection Authority 6 Parramatta Square, 10 Darcy Street Parramatta NSW 2150

28 March 2025

Re: Letter of Support - EPA / LGNSW Councils Managing Contaminated Land Together

I write to confirm support for the ongoing continuation of the 'Councils Managing Contaminated Land Together' program by the NSW EPA and Local Government NSW.

The Hunter Joint Organisation (JO) is a collaborative body that brings together ten regional councils to provide a united and local voice for communities. Our statutory role includes identifying key regional strategic priorities and supporting collaborations to deliver these priorities with key partners, including other levels of government, industry and community.

Over the past 12 months, the 'Councils Managing Contaminated Land Together' pilot project has effectively built upon the success of the Contaminated Land Councils Regional Capacity Building (CRCB) program, ensuring that critical expertise, resources, and collaboration in contaminated land management continue to be accessible to councils.

Hunter JO and its member councils have actively participated in this program, benefiting from its structured approach to knowledge-sharing, technical support and collaboration. The program has played a crucial role in addressing a major challenge faced by councils—contaminated land management is a highly complex and technical field, and most councils lack the dedicated resources to manage it effectively on their own. The 'Councils Managing Contaminated Land Together' initiative provides an invaluable support system that ensures councils have the guidance, tools, and expertise needed to navigate regulatory and environmental challenges.

This program has also created an essential platform for collaboration, allowing councils to share best practices, access valuable templates and tools developed through the CRCB program, and participate in training opportunities hosted by Hunter JO and other stakeholders. This has led to greater efficiency and consistency in managing contaminated land across NSW.

For this initiative to remain effective, we encourage the continuation and expansion of key program elements that were highly valued under the CRCB model, including:

- A service desk function offering technical support from specialists on contaminated land projects.
- Frequent basic training for new staff to address high turnover rates in councils.



 A resourcing model for UPSS compliance, as many councils lack the capacity to conduct inspections of operational sites.

The 'Councils Managing Contaminated Land Together' program directly aligns with the following objectives and strategic directions from the Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2032:

Strategic Theme	Strategy
Liveability	4.3.1 Our Councils are well supported in protecting and enhancing the environment through regional programs, data collection, support resources and capacity building
	4.3.3 We drive council capacity building opportunities to protect the environment and human health from pollution.

Maintaining the 'Councils Managing Contaminated Land Together' program is crucial to ensuring councils across NSW continue to receive the support they need. We strongly advocate for its ongoing funding and development to support local government capacity-building in contaminated land management. Hunter JO is committed to supporting the NSW EPA and LGNSW deliver this important initiative for the region and NSW.

Should you have any further queries or require any further information please do not hesitate to contact Anna Flack, Senior Project Coordinator, at annaf@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au or 0460038199.

Yours Sincerely

Steve Wilson

Director Hunter JO (Executive Officer)

S.P. Wilson

Attachment 6-2 Letter of support to Central Coast Council re Letter of Support – Central Coast Council Resilient Communities Phase 2, 11 April 2025



4 Sandringham Avenue, PO Box 3137, Thornton, NSW 2322 - 02 4978 4040 www.hunterjo.nsw.gov.au

Central Coast Council 91-99 Mann Street Gosford NSW 2250, Australia

11 April 2025

Re: Letter of Support - Central Coast Council Resilient Communities Phase 2

To whom it may concern

I write to confirm support for the above funding application being submitted through the Disaster Ready Fund Round 3.

The Hunter Joint Organisation (JO) is a collaborative body that brings together ten regional councils to provide a united and local voice for communities. Our statutory role includes identifying key regional strategic priorities and supporting collaborations to deliver these priorities with key partners, including other levels of government, industry and community.

This project focuses on enabling resilient communities in the Central Coast local government area, including;

- Social cohesion events for two communities
- Connected Communities: Resilience Action Plans for two communities
- Connected Communities Network
- Convening and administration of the Central Coast Disaster Recovery and Resilience Network
- Convening the Central Coast Disaster Resilience Working Group
- Localisation and promotion of the NSW Get Ready campaign
- Review of the Pre-Event Recovery Plan
- Streamline recovery processes at Central Coast Council, develop a toolkit and hold staff training sessions for recovery centre management

The proposed project directly aligns with the following objectives and strategic directions from the <u>Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2032</u>:

Strategic Theme	Strategy
Resilience	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.





We are committed to working with Central Coast Council to deliver this important initiative for the region.

Should you have any further queries or require any further information please do not hesitate to contact Anna Flack at annaf@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au.

Yours Sincerely

S.P. Wilson

Steve Wilson

Director Hunter JO (Executive Officer)

Attachment 6-3 Correspondence to the Hon Penelope Sharpe MLC re Accelerating the reactivation of current and former mining lands to create jobs in the Hunter Region, 11 April 2025



4 Sandringham Avenue, PO Box 3137, Thornton, NSW 2322 - 02 4978 4040 www.hunterjo.nsw.gov.au

The Hon Penelope Sharpe, MLC Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Heritage 52 Martin Place Sydney NSW 2000

office@sharpe.minister.nsw.gov.au

11 April 2025

Dear Minister Sharpe,

Re: Accelerating the reactivation of current and former mining lands to create jobs in the Hunter Region

I write on behalf of the ten Hunter Joint Organisation (JO) Mayors to request a meeting with you to discuss the focus and urgency of actions needed to accelerate the reactivation and repurposing of current and former mining lands and their infrastructure, to create urgently needed new employment lands and jobs across the Hunter region.

Within the next five years the Hunter is conservatively facing the imminent and substantial loss of at least 12,000 mining-related jobs from scheduled mine closures, with significantly more to follow. Given the scale and timeframe of this industrial closure, urgent action and transformational investment is needed to replace these significant losses and accompanying region-wide economic impacts.

It is for this reason that the Councils of the Hunter are seeking urgent investment from the NSW and Federal Governments of \$20M to lead a region-wide program that (refer Attachment):

- Pilots the reactivation and repurposing of current and former mining lands and infrastructure, across a range of scenarios, to create urgently needed new employment lands
- Directly de-risks industry investment and strategically informs and accelerates the industry attraction, skills development and job creation that is urgently needed as the Hunter's economy rapidly transforms away from coal.

We have recently briefed Federal Government Ministers, Shadow Ministers and Hunter-based MP's on these imminent challenges and the region-wide project we propose. We would also welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss and explore this opportunity which will require investment and collaborative action across all levels of government.

It would be greatly appreciated if you could please confirm the opportunity to meet with us by contacting Bonnie Gradwell, Administration and Events Officer on 0400 063 502 or bonnieg@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

Cr Sue Moore

Mayor, Singleton Council

Chair, Hunter Joint Organisation

\$20m

There needs to be greater urgency to plan for the impacts as we move away from coal.

- There are 22 coal mines in the Hunter region due to close in the next couple of decades, impacting nearly 50,000 jobs.
- By 2030 alone, almost 12,000 jobs will be gone unless we take action now.
- In 2023/24 budget, NSW mining royalties delivered \$3 billion to consolidated budget. There was no funding made available to mining impacted communities.

We don't have time to waste - we need support to take action now.

We are proposing to undertake a regional audit of all mining lands and infrastructure across the Hunter, while simultaneously developing a pilot Place Based Mine Closure Strategy for Singleton and Master Plans for two identified priority mine sites in Muswellbrook and Lake Macquarie.

HUNTER REGIONAL

Regional identification of assets and opportunities for economic development

Project Lead: Hunter Joint Organisation

Timeframe: 3 years

Project Activities: Coordination

· Project Working Group with Local, State and Federal Government and relevant stakeholders.

Project Delivery

Map mine sites and infrastructure

Prioritisation for future use

· Collaborative planning review

Stakeholder vision

Business prospectus

LOCAL MINE CLOSURE STRATEGY

Localised coal mine closure strategies to determine actions and timelines to support local communities

Project Lead: Singleton Council

Timeframe: 5 years

Project Identify local priority sites for more detailed planning to activate reuse of mining lands

• Hunter JO Board Subcommittee / Agency Steering Committee

Develop Singleton Place Plan and Mine Closure Strategy **Activities:**

SITE SPECIFIC - OPERATING MINE

Master Plan for operating mine planning to close within five years

Muswellbrook Shire Council **Project Lead:**

Timeframe: 2-3 years

Project Activities: • Development of site Master Plan

· Biodiversity offset assessment

· Urban design and visual assessment

Participation in Regional Project Working Group and planning review process

SITE SPECIFIC - CLOSED MINING SITE

Master Plan for a closed mining site in rehabilitation

Project Lead: Lake Macquarie City Council

Timeframe: 2-3 years

Project Activities: • Development of site Master Plan

· Detailed geotechnical assessment

· Urban design and visual assessment

 Participation in Regional Project Working Group and planning review process

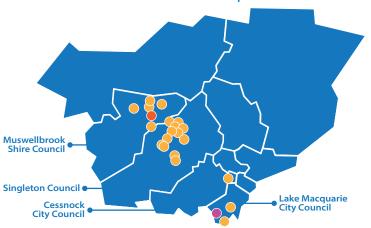
Outcomes from this approach can be used as a framework to accelerate planning for other mining regions and communities across NSW and Australia

Regional Context



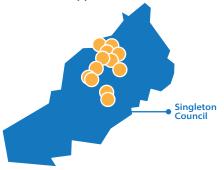
HUNTER REGIONAL

Regional identification of assets and opportunities for economic development



LOCAL

Localised coal mine closure strategies to determine actions and timelines to support local communities



SITE SPECIFIC

OPERATING MINE

Master Plan for operating mine planning to close within five years



al Mines BHP Mt Arthur Coal Mine

CLOSED MINING SITE

Master Plan for a closed mining site in rehabilitation



Glencore Macquarie Coal Mine

Our Member Council Mayors



Cr Sue Moore

Mayor Singleton Council

Chair Hunter JO



Cr Leah Anderson Mayor Port Stephens Council Deputy Chair Hunter JO



Cr Daniel WattonMayor Cessnock City Council



Cr Digby RaywardMayor Dungog Shire Council



Cr Philip Penfold Mayor Maitland City Council



Cr Adam Shultz Mayor Lake Macquarie City Council



Cr Claire PontinMayor MidCoast Council



Cr Jeffrey Drayton Mayor Muswellbrook Shire Council



Cr Ross Kerridge Lord Mayor City of Newcastle



Cr Maurice Collison
Mayor Upper Hunter Shire Council





Our Ask

To replace imminent and substantial job losses right across the Hunter region from mine industry closures by 2030, urgently invest \$20M to enable Hunter councils to:

- Pilot the reactivation and repurposing of current and former mining lands and infrastructure, across a range of scenarios, to create urgently needed new employment lands across the region
- Directly de-risk industry investment and strategically inform and accelerate industry attraction, skills development and job creation urgently needed as the Hunter's economy rapidly transforms away from coal.



Outcome

- Clear and certain planning pathways for existing owners and incoming investors to reuse and adapt current mining and industrial lands to activate the Hunter's new and high value jobs.
- Reduce the significant commercial risk currently deterring new and expanded investment in the reuse of mining and industrial lands.
- Re-use existing infrastructure and already disturbed land to remain productive for local communities.
- Entice new, clean, high value industries based on net zero and circular economy principles such as renewable energy, smart manufacturing, resource recovery and high value agriculture.

Representing the communities of the Hunter Region

HUNTER JOINT ORG. COLLABORATION OF HUNTER

The Hunter Joint Organisation is the statutory collaborative body that brings together the ten Councils in the Hunter Region, NSW to provide a united and local voice for our communities



Has a rapidly growing population forecast to reach

1million people by 2040



Current Hunter Population

800,000



The Hunter has the largest regional economy in Australia, a third of which is attributed to coal exports.



Our **Statutory Mandate**

Strategic Planning and Priority Setting

Regional Leadership and Advocacy

Intergovernmental Collaboration

Our Member Council Mayors .



Mayor Singleton Council Chair Hunter JO



Cr Leah Anderson Mayor Port Stephens Council Ďeputy Chair Hunter JO



Cr Daniel Watton Mayor Cessnock City Council



Cr Digby Rayward Mayor Dungog Shire Council



Mayor Lake Macquarie City Council





Cr Claire Pontin Mayor MidCoast Council



Mayor Muswellbrook Shire Council



Lord Mayor City of Newcastle





Attachment 6-4 Correspondence template re Shared advocacy priorities of the Hunter JO for the 2025 Federal election, 17 April 2025



4 Sandringham Avenue, PO Box 3137, Thornton, NSW 2322 - 02 4978 4040 www.hunterjo.nsw.gov.au

NAME

XXXXX MP (for existing MP's) or CANDIDATE FOR THE SEAT OF....
EMAIL

17th April 2025

Dear NAME,

Re. Shared advocacy priorities of the Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils for the 2025 Federal election.

The ten Mayors of the Hunter region are the democratically elected and trusted voice of the region. Through the Hunter Joint Organisation, we are aligned in proactively working with all levels of government to drive the Hunter's economic transformation, build resilience and enhance the wellbeing of our region's local communities.

The Hunter currently has the largest regional economy in Australia and a population approaching 1 million people. However, given the significant and accelerating change in global investment and energy policy that will inevitably transform our region's future, our Board of Mayors are deeply committed to diversifying and supporting the Hunter's growth and economic transformation.

As the 3rd May Federal election approaches, we are seeking support and commitments from federal election candidates to:

- Accelerate the redevelopment and reactivation of current and former mining lands to drive and support the growth of new businesses and industry to provide the Hunter's future jobs.
- Actively support and collaborate with the region's councils and the NSW Government to deliver housing targets that meet our region's immediate and future housing needs.
- Ensuring the financial health and sustainability of local government to ensure it can continue to deliver the essential community infrastructure and services that underpin our local communities and future economic growth.
- Deliver investment in new and alternative industries that will diversify and grow the Hunter's economy by capitalising on our current economic strengths, competitive advantages and increasing international opportunities (e.g. international tourism and freight via both Newcastle Airport and the Port of Newcastle)

The specific support and commitments we are seeking from candidates include:



Hunter JO Commonwealth Election Priorities

Advocacy Priority	Description	Ask	Electorate
Re-use mining lands	Identification, assessment and planning of current and future mining lands to identify their strategic value and contribution to broader local and regional economic, social and environmental objectives and opportunities, and/or potential constraints to adaptive reuse.	\$20.7M	Regional impacts - Hunter, Paterson, Newcastle, New England, Lyne, Shortland.
Housing	Substantially increase direct Australian Government investment to councils for the construction of local enabling transport and community infrastructure and utilities critical to supporting national housing targets by unlocking and accelerating the delivery of housing on existing development-ready land.	\$948M	Hunter, Paterson, Newcastle, New England, Lyne, Shortland.
Air-freight precinct	To leverage the Commonwealth investment to upgrade Newcastle Airport to international, an air-freight precinct is required to attract airlines to the region and catalyse business growth across Hunter region to export air freight products.	\$49M	Located in Paterson, regional benefits.
International tourism	To leverage the Commonwealth investment to upgrade Newcastle Airport to international, a unified identity, business training and export trade marketing are required to increase international recognition and attract more visitors to the Hunter region to create local jobs.	\$3.85M	Hunter, Paterson, Newcastle, New England, Lyne, Shortland.
Circular economy futures hub	To create local jobs and achieve waste reduction targets, a circular economy transition broker entity is required to drive the region's economic transformation	\$8.5M	Located in Paterson/Newcastle, regional benefits.
Roads	Seek Federal Government support to achieve the principle of Horizontal Fiscal Equalisation as required under the Federal Local Government (Financial Assistance) Act 1995 to achieve the equitable distribution of financial assistance grant funds to those Councils that need it the most.	Support to work with NSW Government Grants Commission	Regional benefits - Hunter, Paterson, New England, Lyne, Shortland.



Should you have any queries or wish to discuss in more detail, please contact Kim Carland, Advocacy and Government Relations Lead on kimc@hunterjo.com.au or 0460 034 614.

We look forward to your response and wish you all the best in the upcoming election.

Yours sincerely,

Cr Sue Moore

Mayor, Singleton Council

Chair, Hunter Joint Organisation

The Hunter Joint Organisation's statutory mandate includes identifying the key regional strategic priorities, advocating for these priorities and building collaboration with other levels of government, industry and community. More information on our shared priorities are outlined in our <u>Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2032</u> and <u>Advocacy Priorities</u>.

Attachment 6-5 Correspondence to Ms Alison Penfold MP re Hunter JO ALGA Dinner Invitation, 16 May 2025



4 Sandringham Avenue, PO Box 3137, Thornton, NSW 2322 - 02 4978 4040 www.hunterjo.nsw.gov.au

NAME PROFILE ADDRESS

EMAIL

16th May 2024

Dear Ms Penfold,

Re: Invitation to attend Hunter Joint Organisation Dinner in Canberra (24th June 2025)

Congratulations on your success in being elected as the Member for Lyne in the recent Federal election. As Chair of the <u>Hunter Joint Organisation</u>, I look forward to working with you and our Board of Mayors on a range of fronts to progress our shared interests and priorities for the region.

On this occasion I am writing to extend an invitation to you to attend our annual Hunter JO dinner to be held in Canberra on Tuesday 24th June 2025. This dinner is hosted by the Hunter JO each year, to provide the opportunity for Mayors, Councillors and staff delegates who are attending the National General Assembly of Local Government to informally meet and network while in Canberra for the conference.

We would be delighted if you, along with other Hunter-based MP's, were also able to join us for this year's dinner, details for which include:

Date: Tuesday 24th June 2025

Time: 6.30 – 10.00pm

Location: QT Canberra, 1 London Circuit, Canberra

If you are available to attend, please RSVP to Steve Wilson, Director Hunter HJO (Executive Officer) on 0448 401 436 or stevew@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au by no later than INSERT DATE.

Yours sincerely,

Cr Sue Moore Mayor, Singleton Council Chair, Hunter Joint Organisation

Attachment 6-6 Correspondence template to returning MPs re Hunter JO ALGA Dinner Invitation, 16 May



4 Sandringham Avenue, PO Box 3137, Thornton, NSW 2322 - 02 4978 4040 www.hunterjo.nsw.gov.au

NAME PROFILE ADDRESS

EMAIL

16th May 2024

Dear NAME,

Re: Invitation to attend Hunter Joint Organisation Dinner in Canberra (24th June 2025)

Congratulations on your success in being re-elected as the Member for INSERT SEAT NAME in the recent Federal election. As Chair of the Hunter Joint Organisation, I look forward to continuing to work with you and our Board of Mayors on a range of fronts to progress our shared interests and priorities for the region.

On this occasion I am writing to extend an invitation to you to attend our annual Hunter JO dinner to be held in Canberra on Tuesday 24th June 2025. This dinner is hosted by the Hunter JO each year, to provide the opportunity for Mayors, Councillors and staff delegates who are attending the National General Assembly of Local Government to informally meet and network while in Canberra for the conference.

We would be delighted if you, along with other Hunter-based MP's, were also able to join us for this year's dinner, details for which include:

Date: Tuesday 24th June 2025

Time: 6.30 – 10.00pm

Location: QT Canberra, 1 London Circuit, Canberra

If you are available to attend, please RSVP to Steve Wilson, Director Hunter HJO (Executive Officer) on 0448 401 436 or stevew@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au by no later than 6th June 2025.

Yours sincerely,

Cr Sue Moore

Mayor, Singleton Council

Chair, Hunter Joint Organisation

Attachment 6-7 Letter of support to CEO Robert Beautement re Letter of support – Hunter Region Botanic Gardens, 20 May 2025



4 Sandringham Avenue, PO Box 3137, Thornton, NSW 2322 - 02 4978 4040 www.hunterjo.nsw.gov.au

Robert Beautement Chief Executive Officer 2100 Pacific Hwy, HEATHERBRAE NSW 2324

20 May 2025

Re: Letter of Support - Hunter Region Botanic Gardens

I write to express support for the efforts of the Hunter Region Botanic Gardens (HRBG) to secure funding to assist with recovery of the Garden's following the devastating 15th January 2025 storm event, and importantly, longer term funding to ensure the ongoing financial sustainability of this important regional asset, and the enormous community, scientific and environmental contributions that it provides to our region.

The Hunter Joint Organisation (JO) is the collaborative body that brings together ten regional councils to provide a united and local voice for communities. Our statutory role includes identifying key regional strategic priorities and supporting collaborations to deliver these priorities with key partners, including other levels of government, industry and community.

The Hunter JO member councils strongly support the HRBG and its many contributions to our region, including:

- A centre for research, education and knowledge sharing on botanical matters for the region.
- A unique garden and bushland setting which contributes directly to our region's visitor economy, attracting 25-35,000 visitors each year, including students, tourists, cruise ship passengers, community organisations and families.
- 125 hectares of community space and facilities supporting recreational activities, personal wellbeing, and community and business events including weddings, conferences and functions. The Gardens are accessible for the aged and people with a disability.
- The HRBG living collection which features plants of the Hunter region and rare and endangered plants. It should be noted that the NSW Government has contracted HRBG to propagate a number of threatened species, and that the HRBG herbarium houses a significant collection of plant specimens predominately collected from the Hunter region. The collection is a valuable record of species growing in our region over time.
- Delivery of environmental and educational workshops and other activities for a range of educational and community organisations.



Ensuring the long-term sustainability of the HRBG will contribute directly to the following objectives and strategic directions identified for our region in the <u>Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2032</u>:

Strategic Theme	Strategy				
Resilience	2.3 Our region is resilient to environment risks, natural hazards and climate change				
Jobs and a Growing Economy	3.5 We are recognised a a destination of choice for international and domestic visitors				
	Support a coordinated approach and collaborate around regional tourism promotion to grow jobs in the ergion				
Liveability	4.3 Our natural environments including our bushland, estuaries, waterways and beaches are protected and enhanced				
	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				
	Support a healthy and active community				
	Support a safe and accessible society across the region				
	Support enhanced cultural opportunities and protected heritage				

We strongly support your efforts and wish you all the best in securing ongoing funding for the Gardens.

Should you have any further queries or require any further information please contact Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO (Executive Officer) on stevew@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au.

Yours Sincerely

Cr Sue Moore Mayor, Singleton Council

Chair, Hunter Joint Organisation

Cr Leah Anderson

Mayor, Port Stephens Council

Deputy Chair, Hunter Joint Organisation



Australian Government

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

Ref: MC25-002937

Ms Kim Carland
Advocacy and Government Relations Lead
Hunter Joint Organisation
PO Box 3137
THORNTON NSW 2323

via: kimc@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au

Dear Ms Carland

Thank you for your email of 5 March 2025 to the Hon Kristy McBain MP, Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories, concerning local government projects in the Hunter region. I am replying on her behalf.

With the announcement by the Prime Minister, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, of the forthcoming election on 3 May 2025, the Australian Government has assumed a caretaker role. The Government is operating in accordance with the caretaker conventions pending the outcome of the 2025 federal election. During this period, by convention, decisions are not taken or advice given, that is likely to commit an incoming Government. Further information about these conventions can be found at pmc.gov.au/resources/guidance-caretaker-conventions.

You may also be interested in registering with GrantConnect for current or future Australian Government grant opportunities at grants.gov.au.

You may like to write again to the Government after the outcome of the election is known.

I trust this information will be of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Michael Gregory
Assistant Secretary

M.S. Gragas

Local Government, Regional Intelligence and Data Branch Regional Development and Local Government Division

08/04/2025

Attachment 6-10 Correspondence from Richmond Vale Rail Trail Inc re Composite Shiraz to Shore cycle trail and Richmond Vale Rail Trail Update and Request for Ongoing Support and Advocacy from RVRT Supporters' Group, $\frac{13 \text{ April 2025}}{\text{Richmond Vale Rail Trail Inc}}$

Richmond
Vale
Rail
Hunter Valley

PO Box 714 THE JUNCTION NSW 2291 PHONE +61 418 402 644

EMAIL rvrt.inc@gmail.com WEBSITE richmondvalerailtrail.org.au

To: Hunter Region Mayors, as Board Members of Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils (Hunter JO) - Mayor Daniel Watton, Cessnock City Council; Mayor Digby Rayward, Dungog Shire Council; Mayor Adam Shultz, Lake Macquarie City Council; Mayor Philip Penfold, Maitland City Council; Mayor Claire Pontin, MidCoast Council; Mayor Jeffrey Drayton, Muswellbrook Shire Council; Lord Mayor Ross Kerridge, City of Newcastle; Mayor Leah Anderson; Port Stephens Council; Mayor Sue Moore, Singleton Council; and Mayor Maurice Collison, Upper Hunter Shire Council.

April 13th, 2025

Dear Hunter Region Mayors,

Re: Composite *Shiraz to Shore* cycle trail and Richmond Vale Rail Trail (S2S/RVRT) – Update and Request for Ongoing Support and Advocacy from RVRT Supporters' Group

This letter is on behalf of the RVRT Supporters' Group, who have been strong advocates for the **long-standing 32+km RVRT proposal** (within Cessnock, Lake Macquarie and Newcastle LGAs) as well as the more recent inter-dependent, **broader 100+km** *Shiraz to Shore* (S2S) cycle trail proposal initiated by Hunter JO in 2020.

We acknowledge that Hunter JO's **Regional Advocacy efforts are multi-pronged**, including: **Economic Growth and Diversification** (e.g., Air-Freight Precinct development; Mining Land Re-development; Circular Economy transformation; Global Tourism promotion; **Shiraz to Shore** Project and Hunter Cycle Tourism refinement and promotion); and **Improving Housing Supply, Services and Facilities** (e.g., Housing Enabling Infrastructure; Road Funding Reform; Disaster Resilience; and Local Government Grant Funding delivery and effectiveness).

We are also aware that since the launch of the S2S Concept Plan and Business Case (August, 2024) Hunter JO has **continued to advocate for S2S funding**, including at a range of engagements with local MPs, Federal Ministers, Assistant Ministers and Shadow Ministers. In December 2024, the Hunter Valley Section of the S2S (at an estimated cost of \$24m) was also included among Hunter JO's 2025 Commonwealth Election Priorities. Likewise, Hunter JO has supported development of the S2S and associated rail trails as key *Short-term Initiatives* (i.e., transport priorities) in its response (25/2/2025) to the *Draft Hunter Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan* (SRITP).

As part of your **current discussions about regional priorities and directions**, and preparations for the new *Hunter Joint Organisation Strategic Plan 2035*, we would like to encourage you to **continue to prioritise and build upon the substantial work that has already been done** by local Councils and other agencies and groups during the last decade to refine and promote the RVRT and S2S proposals.

We would also like to argue for a wider framing of the opportunities and benefits associated with the Composite 120km S2S/RVRT Shared Pathway, beyond the regional tourism and economic diversification S2S aspects that Hunter JO has tended to advance (which also include promotion of the Hunter Region as a future premier cycle tourism destination).

After all, the **regional backbone shared pathway** provided by the identified core S2S Sections and the remainder of the RVRT (see accompanying Figure/Map) is **just the start**. As a linked network and long-life asset (and in conjunction with other shared pathways and complementary local initiatives), the Composite S2S/RVRT will provide a mix of long-term benefits across its full length, including: **community access and connection**; **health**, **lifestyle and liveability** benefits; **environmental**, **cultural** and **heritage** appreciation; as well as cycling-specific safety, **active transport and other commuting benefits**.

Moreover, as illustrated in the **broad S2S vision** originally presented in the *Hunter Regional Plan 2041* (December 2022, Page 45), future extensions and connections to the S2S/RVRT have the potential to **directly benefit the majority of the Hunter Region's LGAs.**

From our perspective, the Composite S2S/RVRT Shared Pathway also has direct relevance for all six of the **regional strategic themes** that you have recently identified (Hunter JO News item 4/3/2025): Housing, liveability and wellbeing; Economic transformation and jobs; Infrastructure and connectivity; Environmental sustainability and resilience; Financial sustainability and funding reform; and Community liveability and wellbeing).

Finally, you may find some of the **recent Composite S2S/RVRT related material** that we have produced to be of interest as you continue to advocate both for the overall Hunter Region and for your LGAs and communities. It may also assist you as you finalise your priority setting deliberations for the new Hunter JO *Strategic Plan 2035*.

<u>Recent Update Presentation</u>: In late March (27/3/2025), the RVRT Supporters' Group gave an Update Presentation to Cessnock City Council's "*Trails Reference Group*", which focused primarily on the Composite S2S/RVRT – comprising 8 core S2S sections from Wine Country to the Shores of Newcastle Harbour/Beach and Lake Macquarie, plus the remainder of the RVRT.

This presentation reviewed the proposal's history and outlined some of the *Benefits, Opportunities*, *Challenges* and *Strategies* that need to be considered in attempting to move the Composite S2S/RVRT forward. Links to: 'Presentation Handout' (20-page PDF) Download from our webpages - <a href="https://www.richmondvalerailtrail.org.au/uploads/1/2/0/4/120411157/composite s2s-rvrt shared pathway - update - presentation contents march 27 2025 - terry lewin.pdf; and full *YouTube* Version of the *Powerpoint* Presentation - https://youtu.be/nreKEOm4vMU (18 Minutes). [We also referenced this material in some of our recent Facebook Posts].

If you are already reasonably familiar with the proposal's history and scope, you may get more value from simply **skimming through the Presentation Handout** than listening to the actual presentation.

<u>Follow-up Post About Potential S2S/RVRT Funding Approaches</u>: In a recent Follow-up Post (10/4/2025), we argued that "... a mix of funding approaches will almost certainly be needed" to help **optimise the varying opportunities and benefits** that arise along the Trail's 120km length (including tourism, economic, community connection, recreation and active transport opportunities/benefits).

We also illustrated Four Inter-related Funding Approaches:

- 1: Full Funding (for the 'new trail' components approx. 76km);
- 2: Funding for Prioritised Self-contained Sub-sections (approx. 18km);
- 3: Funding for the 13km Sugarloaf Range Premier RVRT Section; and/or
- 4: Funding for Specific Infrastructure Components or Barriers.

Link to Download this Follow-up Post (9-Page PDF) from our Webpages:

https://www.richmondvalerailtrail.org.au/uploads/1/2/0/4/120411157/facebook_post_- approaches_to_s2s-rvrt_funding_- april 10th_2025.pdf.

We are more than happy to clarify any of the matters/suggestions that we have raised or to discuss the Composite S2S/RVRT proposal further.

Janny Shews -

Best wishes,

Terry

Terry J. Lewin, RVRT Supporters' Group President

RVRT Inc. Contact Information:

ABN: 38 561 671 292 - Registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) WEBSITE: https://richmondalerailtrail.org.au/ FACEBOOK: https://www.facebook.com/richmondrailtrail/

President: Terry Lewin Secretary & Treasurer: Sam Reich

Email: Terry.Lewin@bigpond.com

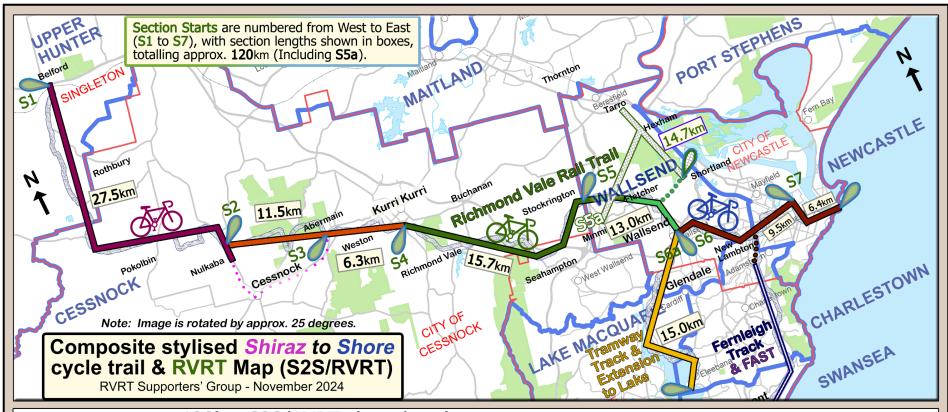
Telephone: 0404 439 616 (Terry)

Email: rvrt.inc@gmail.com

Telephone: 0418 402 644 (Sam)

Vice-President:Leigh GibbensFounding President:Billy MetcalfeEmail:Leigh.Gibbens@gmail.comEmail:wmetcalfe@bigpond.comTelephone:0433 570 920 (Leigh)Telephone:0417 453 152 (Billy)

cc.: RVRT Inc. Committee Members, Elected Representatives



Proposed composite 120km S2S/RVRT shared pathway from Hunter Valley ('Shiraz') Wine Country to the Shores of Newcastle and Lake Macquarie. Image also shows current LGA (Red) and State Electoral (Blue) boundaries. S2S: Proponent - Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils; Core Sections (100+km) - S1 to S7 (Excluding S5a). RVRT: Proponents - Cessnock, Lake Macquarie & Newcastle Councils; Sections (32+km) - S4, S5 (part) & S5a.

- S1 Hunter Valley Wine Country (Hermitage Road Singleton to Lomas Lane);
- S2 Back Country Bushland (Through Werakata National Park to Abermain);
- S3 Country Town & Cultural Heritage (Abermain to Weston and Kurri Kurri);
- S4 Richmond Vale Rail Trail (Through Sugarloaf Range and three historic tunnels to Stockrington/Lenaghan);
- S5 Urban Wetlands (Pambalong Nature Reserve through Fletcher to Wallsend, beside coastal wetlands);
- S5a Reserves & Coastal Wetlands (Minmi to Tarro & Shortland);
- S6 Parklands & Urban Pathways (Wallsend to Islington Park via parklands and sporting precincts);
- S6a Lake Macquarie Connection (Wallsend to Lake Foreshore via Tramway Track & Speers Point Park);
- S7 Newcastle City Foreshore (To beach via riverside/harbour).

Attachment 6-11 Correspondence from Ombudsman NSW re Public Interest Disclosure Policy Requirements, 16 April 2025

ABN 76 325 886 267 Level 24, 580 George Street, Sydney NSW 2000 **T** 02 9286 1000 **Tollfree** 1800 451 524 www.ombo.nsw.gov.au **Ombudsman**New South Wales

16 April 2025

Steve Wilson Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils 4 Sandringham Avenue THORNTON NSW 2322

Dear Steve

Public Interest Disclosure Policy Requirements

The *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2022* (PID Act) provides that all agencies must have a public interest disclosure (PID) policy.¹ The PID Act sets out the information which must be included in a PID policy and requires an agency to publish its PID policy prominently on its public website and intranet.²

Under <u>s 72</u> of the PID Act, one of the functions of the Ombudsman is to audit and monitor the exercise by agencies of their functions under this Act. We routinely conduct desktop audits of agency websites and PID policies (if published) to determine:

- if the agency has a PID policy
- whether the PID policy contains all information required under the PID Act, and
- whether the PID policy complies with the publication requirements.

On 24 January 2025, we conducted a desktop audit of your website to review your PID policy.

We were unable to locate your agency's PID policy on your website Home - Hunter Joint Organisation.

An agency with a public website is required to prominently publish their PID policy on the agency's website. As we were unable to locate your PID policy, your agency appears to be in breach of its obligation under section 47(1)(a) of the PID Act.

If your PID policy is on your website, please provide us with a direct link to it. If your PID policy is difficult to locate on your website, please consider how to make it easier for users to locate the policy.

As your agency's PID policy does not appear to meet the requirements outlined in section 43 of the PID Act, your agency appears to be in breach of this obligation.

We request that you contact our office within 30 days, from the date of this letter, about any remedial action your agency has undertaken to ensure it complies with this obligation.

If you have any questions, please contact us by emailing PIDmonitoring@ombo.nsw.gov.au.

¹ Public Interest Disclosures Act 2022 s 42

² Public Interest Disclosures Act 2022 s 43, s 47

Yours sincerely

PID Audit and Monitoring PID Unit

PIDmonitoring@ombo.nsw.gov.au

1800 710 277

NSW Ombudsman



Pursuing fairness for the people of NSW.

Attachment 6-12 Correspondence from Digby Wilson, Labor's Candidate for Lyne re Shared advocacy priorities of the Hunter JO for the 2025 Federal election, 17 April 2025

Bonnie Gradwell

From: Digby Wilson < Digby.Wilson@nswlabor.org.au>

Sent: Thursday, 17 April 2025 9:36 PM

To: Bonnie Gradwell; smoore@singleton.nsw.gov.au

Cc: Kim Carland

Subject: RE: Shared advocacy priorities of the Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils for the

2025 Federal election

Follow Up Flag: Follow up Flag Status: Completed

Dear Mayor Moore,

Thank you for your correspondence outlining the Hunter Joint Organisation's advocacy priorities for the 2025 Federal Election. As a current Councillor on MidCoast Council, I strongly support the priorities detailed in your letter, including the re-use of mining lands, housing investment, air-freight precinct development, international tourism, circular economy initiatives, and equitable road funding.

I agree with the importance of these initiatives for driving the Hunter region's economic transformation, enhancing community wellbeing, and ensuring sustainable growth. I commit to advocating for these priorities within MidCoast Council, as your Lyne Representative and candidate and in collaboration with other stakeholders to support their realisation.

Please feel free to contact me to discuss how we can further align our efforts. I wish you and the Hunter Joint Organisation continued success in advancing these critical objectives.

Yours sincerely,

Digby Wilson

Labor's Candidate for Lyne Australian Labor Party (NSW Branch)

Email: digby.wilson@nswlabor.org.au

FB: <u>Labor4LYNE</u>
Insta: <u>labor4lyne</u>
Ph: 0489 199 849

Web: https://www.nswlabor.org.au/digby_wilson

From: Bonnie Gradwell <BonnieG@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au>

Sent: Thursday, 17 April 2025 4:05 PM

To: Digby Wilson <Digby.Wilson@nswlabor.org.au> **Cc:** Kim Carland <kimc@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au>

Subject: Shared advocacy priorities of the Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils for the 2025 Federal election

Dear Mr Wilson,

Please find attached correspondence on behalf on the 10 local governments of the Hunter region, seeking your support and commitments for the Hunter Joint Organisation's 2025 federal election priorities.

Kind Regards,

Bonnie Gradwell | Administration & Events Officer

Hunter Joint Organisation

bonnieg@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au | 0400 063 502





Collaboration of Hunter Councils

Strengthening our communities by being the regional voice on strategic issues.

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

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters, and culture. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Attachment 6-13 Correspondence from Cr Charlotte McCabe, The Greens candidate for the seat of Newcastle re Shared advocacy priorities of the Hunter JO for the 2025 Federal election, 22 April 2025

Bonnie Gradwell

Cr Charlotte McCabe <cmccabe@ncc.nsw.gov.au> From:

Tuesday, 22 April 2025 9:29 PM Sent:

Bonnie Gradwell To: Kim Carland Cc:

Re: Shared advocacy priorities of the Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils for the Subject:

2025 Federal election

Follow Up Flag: Follow up Flag Status: Completed

Hi Bonnie and Kim, Thanks for your email.

I can broadly give my support as the Greens candidate for Newcastle for most of these requests, but I won't support the Newcastle Airport while they continue to develop the Astra Aerolab precinct as a defence precinct with contracts with companies like LMA, BAE and Kongsberg.

I'm unable to make specific funding commitments because all of the Greens' policies have been costed by the Parliamentary Budget Office, but I have forwarded your advocacy to our campaign team member who is reviewing all policy and funding requests against our policy commitments.

Hopefully she will have time to respond to you in more detail before the 3rd of May.

Thanks again, Charlotte

Get Outlook for iOS

Cr Charlotte McCabe | Councillor | Ward 1

City of Newcastle

f 🔘 💆 🗖 in

E: cmccabe@ncc.nsw.gov.au | M: +61407027810



of the Newcastle LGA, the Awabakal and Worimi peoples.

From: Bonnie Gradwell < Bonnie G@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au>

Sent: Thursday, April 17, 2025 4:25:11 PM

To: Cr Charlotte McCabe <cmccabe@ncc.nsw.gov.au>

Cc: Kim Carland <kimc@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au>

Subject: Shared advocacy priorities of the Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils for the 2025 Federal election

You don't often get email from bonnieg@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au. Learn why this is important Dear Ms McCabe,

Please find attached correspondence on behalf on the 10 local governments of the Hunter region, seeking your support and commitments for the Hunter Joint Organisation's 2025 federal election priorities.

Kind Regards,

Bonnie Gradwell | Administration & Events Officer

Hunter Joint Organisation

bonnieg@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au | 0400 063 502





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Attachment 6-14 Correspondence from Tony Chappel, NSW EPA CEO re Letter of Support - EPA LGNSW Councils Managing Contaminated Land Together, 7 May 2025



DW25/138

Mr Steve Wilson Director Hunter Joint Organisation

By email: stevew@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Wilson

Thank you for your correspondence dated 28 March 2025 regarding support for the continuation of the Councils Managing Contaminated Land Together (CMCLT) pilot project by the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and Local Government NSW.

The aim of the CMCLT pilot is to establish and facilitate a state-wide network for council officers managing contaminated land to share information and resources and provide a platform for capacity building and access to expert advice. I am very pleased to hear that the knowledge sharing, technical support, and collaboration facilitated by the pilot have been effectively supporting the Hunter Joint Organisation and its member councils in practicing effective contaminated land management within the region.

As you may be aware, an evaluation of the pilot program is currently underway. We will consider your feedback as part of this process, which we expect to complete in the coming months ahead of the pilot's forecast end date of 30 June 2025.

I want to thank you for your active and continued participation in the pilot, as well as your feedback and recommendations for the future.

If you have any further questions about this matter, please contact Ms Tara Vaughan, A/Unit Head, Circular Connections Unit, on 0455 333 993 or at tara.vaughan@epa.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

TONY CHAPPEL
Chief Executive Officer

cc: annaf@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au

bonnieg@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au

epa.nsw.gov.au

Website:



Attachment 6-15 Correspondence from Alison Penfold re Invitation to attend Hunter Joint Organisation Dinner in Canberra, 16 May 2025

 From:
 Alison Penfold

 To:
 Bonnie Gradwell

 Cc:
 Steve Wilson

Subject: RE: Invitation to attend Hunter Joint Organisation Dinner in Canberra (24th June 2025)

Date: Friday, 16 May 2025 4:44:29 PM

Attachments: image001.png

image002.png

Bonnie

Thank you very much for the invitation. Once I am formally declared as the Member for Lyne and establish my office, I will be in touch to advise of my attendance at the dinner in Canberra. We are waiting on the new sitting schedule to be released as well.

Kind regards Alison Penfold

From: Bonnie Gradwell <BonnieG@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au>

Sent: Friday, 16 May 2025 4:10 PM

To: Alison Penfold <alison.penfold@nswnationals.org.au>

Cc: Steve Wilson <stevew@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au>

Subject: Invitation to attend Hunter Joint Organisation Dinner in Canberra (24th June 2025)

You don't often get email from bonnieg@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au. Learn why this is important

Good afternoon Ms Penfold,

Please find attached correspondence on behalf of the 10 local governments of the Hunter region to congratulate you on your success in being elected in the recent Federal election and extending an invitation to you to attend our annual Hunter JO dinner to be held in Canberra on Tuesday 24th June 2025.

We look forward to hearing back from you.

Kind Regards,

Bonnie Gradwell | Administration & Events Officer

Hunter Joint Organisation

bonnieg@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au | 0400 063 502

Upcoming annual leave: 26 May – 11 July 2025





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

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters, and culture. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Attachment 6-16 Correspondence from Office of Meryl Swanson MP re Invitation to attend Hunter Joint Organisation Dinner in Canberra, 19 May 2025

From: Campbell, Beth (M. Swanson, MP)

To: <u>Steve Wilson</u>
Cc: <u>Bonnie Gradwell</u>

Subject: RE: Invitation to attend Hunter Joint Organisation Dinner in Canberra (24th June 2025)

Date: Monday, 19 May 2025 11:33:55 AM

Attachments: <u>image001.png</u>

image002.png image003.png

Good morning Steve

Thank you for Ms Swanson's invitation to the Hunter Organisation Dinner in Canberra on Tuesday 24 June 2025, unfortunately she has a prior commitment in the electorate and will not be able to attend.

Kind regards

Beth Campbell

Office of Meryl Swanson MP

Federal Member for Paterson

Ph: 02 4983 2401 | E: Meryl.Swanson.MP@aph.gov.au 35 Sturgeon St (PO Box 156) Raymond Terrace NSW 2324

W: merylswanson.com.au



From: Bonnie Gradwell < Bonnie G@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au >

Sent: Friday, May 16, 2025 4:02 PM

To: Swanson, Meryl (MP) < <u>Meryl.Swanson.MP@aph.gov.au</u>>

Cc: Steve Wilson < stevew@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au >

Subject: Invitation to attend Hunter Joint Organisation Dinner in Canberra (24th June

2025)

Good afternoon Ms Swanson,

Please find attached correspondence on behalf of the 10 local governments of the Hunter region to congratulate you on your success in being re-elected in the recent Federal election and extending an invitation to you to attend our annual Hunter JO dinner to be held in Canberra on Tuesday 24th June 2025.

We look forward to hearing back from you.

Kind Regards,

Bonnie Gradwell | Administration & Events Officer

Hunter Joint Organisation

bonnieg@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au | 0400 063 502

Upcoming annual leave: 26 May – 11 July 2025





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

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters, and culture. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Attachment 6-17 Correspondence from Office of Dan Repacholi MP re Invitation to attend Hunter Joint Organisation Dinner in Canberra, 19 May 2025

From: Repacholi, Dan (MP Office)

To: Bonnie Gradwell
Cc: Steve Wilson

Subject: RE: Invitation to attend Hunter Joint Organisation Dinner in Canberra (24th June 2025)

Date: Monday, 19 May 2025 9:21:09 AM

Attachments: <u>image001.png</u>

image002.png imaqe003.pnq image004.png image005.png image006.png image007.png image008.png

Hi Bonnie

Thanks for sending through Cr Sue Moore's letter both congratulating Dan on his reelection as well as inviting him to attend your annual Hunter JO dinner in Canberra on June 24.

With parliament not sitting that week Dan will not be in Canberra, he has a prior engagement that day.

It would be most appreciated if you could please pass on his apology on this occasion.

I trust the conference is a success and everyone has a great evening.

Kind regards

Liz Deloraine
Executive Assistant
Dan Repacholi MP
Federal Member for Hunter

Electorate Office: 3 Edward Street, (PO Box 526), Cessnock NSW 2325

Canberra Office: Parliament House Suite R1.32 (PO Box 6022), Canberra ACT 2600

Office: 02 4991 1022 | Canberra: 02 6277 4930

Please consider the environment before printing this email











I acknowledge the Wonnarua & Awabakal people, Traditional Custodians of the land and water which the electorate of Hunter encompasses, and pay my respect to culture and Elders past, present and emerging.

that is confidential and may also be the subject of legal professional or other privilege. If you are not the intended recipient of this message, you must not review, copy, disseminate or disclose its contents to any other party or take action in reliance of any material contained within it. If you have received this message in error, please notify the sender immediately by return email informing them of the mistake and delete all copies of the message from your computer system.

From: Bonnie Gradwell <BonnieG@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au>

Sent: Friday, 16 May 2025 4:01 PM

To: Repacholi, Dan (MP Office) < Dan.Repacholi.MP@aph.gov.au>

Cc: Steve Wilson <stevew@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au>

Subject: Invitation to attend Hunter Joint Organisation Dinner in Canberra (24th June 2025)

Good afternoon Mr Repacholi,

Please find attached correspondence on behalf of the 10 local governments of the Hunter region to congratulate you on your success in being re-elected in the recent Federal election and extending an invitation to you to attend our annual Hunter JO dinner to be held in Canberra on Tuesday 24th June 2025.

We look forward to hearing back from you.

Kind Regards,

Bonnie Gradwell | Administration & Events Officer

Hunter Joint Organisation

bonnieg@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au | 0400 063 502

Upcoming annual leave: 26 May – 11 July 2025





We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters, and culture. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.



Attachment 6-18 Correspondence from The Hon Yasmin Catley MP re Accelerating the reactivation of current and former mining lands to create jobs in the Hunter Region, 20 May 2025

The Hon Yasmin Catley MP

Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism Minister for the Hunter



Ref: A7871555

Cr Sue Moore

Via email: BonnieG@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au

Re: Accelerating the reactivation of current and former mining lands to create jobs in the Hunter Region

Dear Cr Sue Moore,

Thank you for your correspondence regarding the reactivation and repurposing of current and former mining lands in the Hunter region, and your request to meet and discuss the matter further.

I acknowledge the scale of economic and employment transition facing the Hunter as the region's coal mines progressively close, with significant implications for local communities, businesses, and industries. The NSW Government recognises the importance of proactive, collaborative planning to ensure that post-mining land use delivers lasting economic, social, and environmental outcomes for our regions.

I commend the leadership shown by the Hunter Joint Organisation in advancing a regional approach to these challenges, including the proposed pilot projects and site-specific master plans. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and member council representatives to discuss your proposal and explore how the NSW Government can work in partnership with local government and industry to deliver meaningful outcomes for the Hunter.

My office will be in contact to arrange a suitable time for this discussion.

Thank you again for your advocacy on behalf of the Hunter region.

Sincerel

Yasmin Catley MP

Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism

Minister for the Hunter



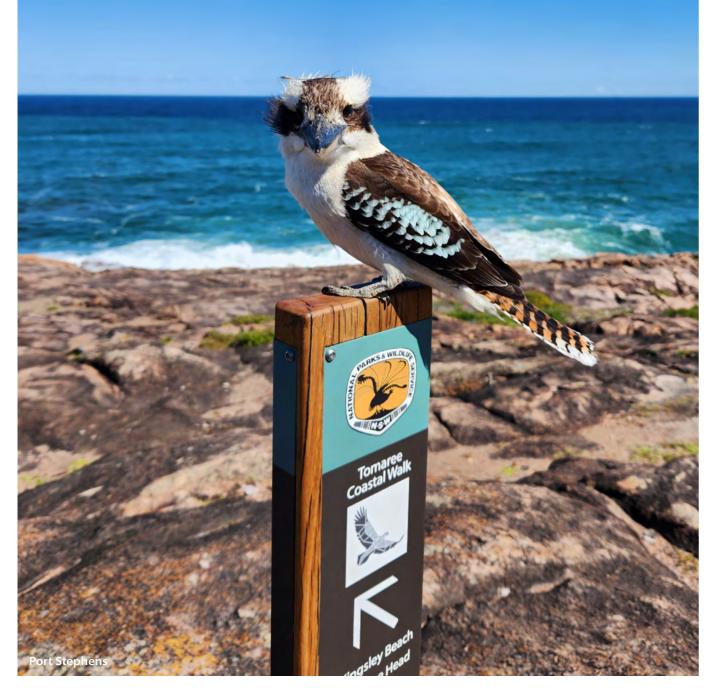
The Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2035 is our Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities (SSRP), an aspirational 10-year plan reflecting the shared vision of our ten Councils for the Hunter Region.

Acknowledgment of Country

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

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.



Contact us at <u>admin@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au</u> or <u>www.hunterjo.nsw.gov.au</u> @Hunter Joint Organisation 2025
Front cover image credit Lake Macquarie City Council

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a message from the chair Cr Sue Moore

The Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2035 is a renewed and futurefocused vision for our region, developed in close collaboration with our ten Member Councils and their communities.

This Strategic Plan reflects a collective commitment by the region's Mayors to work together to shape a stronger, more resilient Hunter - one that is ready to meet the challenges of today and embrace the opportunities of tomorrow. It builds on Member Councils' Community Strategic Plans, aligning local aspirations with a shared regional purpose.

The Hunter is navigating a period of profound transformation. With population growth accelerating and global shifts in energy and industry impacting our region more than most, this Plan recognises the need for coordinated leadership, strategic advocacy, and meaningful partnerships. Together, we are laying the groundwork to ensure that our communities remain vibrant, liveable and economically secure into the future.

This strategy marks an important evolution for the Hunter JO itself. Alongside our core work in regional collaboration and project delivery, we are enhancing our capacity to lead on regional advocacy - ensuring that the Hunter's voice is heard clearly at the state and national level.

Importantly, this Plan is not just a roadmap for the Hunter JO - it is a shared regional agenda. It reflects the unity, ambition, and strategic foresight of our Member Councils, and positions us to drive real outcomes for our communities.

On behalf of the Board of Mayors, I thank everyone who contributed to the development of this strategy. We look forward to working with our partners to bring its vision to life.



a message from the director (executive officer) Steve Wilson

Our Plan outlines a clear, regionally aligned direction for addressing the most pressing issues facing our region.

Through strengthened collaboration across our ten Member Councils, this Plan reflects our shared commitment to achieving sustainable outcomes for the Hunter.

This Plan is guided by six strategic themes:

- · Housing and Population Growth
- Economic Transformation and Jobs
- · Infrastructure and Connectivity
- · Environmental Sustainability and Resilience
- Financial Sustainability and Funding Reform
- · Community Liveability and Wellbeing

Each theme represents a core priority for the region, and through collaborative action, we aim to deliver lasting change. Throughout the Plan, you'll find case studies showcasing how the Hunter JO drives regional programs and advocacy, highlighting the significant benefits of working together as a region.

The Hunter JO is committed to facilitating connections, advocating for the region, and building capacity to ensure the Hunter thrives. I look forward to continuing this important work with our Board of Mayors, councils, and partners to deliver impactful, community-driven outcomes.

Strategic Plan 2035 5 4 Hunter Joint Organisation

hunter jo strategic plan 2035

statement of strategic regional priorities

Cessnock City Council • Dungog Shire Council
Lake Macquarie City Council • Maitland City Council
MidCoast Council • Muswellbrook Shire Council
City of Newcastle • Port Stephens Council
Singleton Council • Upper Hunter Shire Council

our vision for the region

We harness our unique strengths to drive economic transformation, build resilience, and enhance community wellbeing for the Hunter region.

regional priorities and objectives



Housing & Population Growth

- **1.1** Housing affordability, density, diversity and availability
- 1.2 Integrated planning and enabling infrastructure to support housing development in priority growth areas
- **1.3** Supporting population growth and demographic shifts
- **1.4** Development planning to minimise environmental impacts



Economic
Transformation
& Jobs

- **2.1** Activate the reuse of mining related lands
- **2.2** Leveraging regional and global industries
- **2.3** Evolution towards renewable energy, circular economy and future industries
- **2.4** Business attraction, job creation and future skills development



Infrastructure & Connectivity

- **3.1** Safe and efficient road networks
- **3.2** Integrated cross-agency infrastructure planning
- **3.3** Multimodal, low-emission transport connectivity
- **3.4** Digital connectivity improvements



Environmental Sustainability & Resilience

- **4.1** Climate change mitigation, adaptation and disaster resilience
- 4.2 Circular materials and waste management
- **4.3** Water security and waterway health
- **4.4** Protection of natural environments



Financial Sustainability & Funding Reform

- **5.1** Ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of councils
- **5.2** Securing reliable funding for place-based regional collaboration
- **5.3** Reforming grant funding processes to secure sustainable funding models



Community Liveability & Wellbeing

- **6.1** Enhancing access to health services and aged care facilities
- **6.2** Expanding open space, greening and public amenity access
- **6.3** Promoting community identity, culture and opportunities



our principal functions

Strategic Planning and Priority Setting

Regional Leadership and Advocacy

Intergovernmental Collaboration



how we deliver our strategic objectives





our key partners and stakeholders





- Regional advocacy groups (eg. Committee for Hunter, Business Hunter, HunterNet)
- University of Newcastle
- Regional Development Australia (RDA) Hunter
- Hunter Water

- Destination Sydney Surrounds North
- Newcastle Airport
- Port of Newcastle
- Central Coast Council



- NSW Premiers Department
- NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
- NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
- NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
- NSW Reconstruction Authority
- NSW Environment Protection Authority

- NSW Health
- Transport for NSW
- Office of Local Government
- Future Jobs and Investment Authority
- Local Land Services
- Other relevant State Government dept's
- Joint Organisation Chairs Forum & Network
- Local Government NSW



- Net Zero Economy Authority
- National Emergency Management Agency
- High Speed Rail Authority

- Australian Local Government Association
- Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

the hunter region

gross regional product

\$91b

opportunities and challenges



Housing affordability, availability and diversity



Population growth



Economic diversification



Climate Change



State and federal investment in economic transformation



Repurposing of industrial and mining lands and infrastructure



Training and skills development for future economy



Shared vision for our region



Leveraging international opportunities through Newcastle Airport and Port

The Hunter Region is a diverse and economically significant area known for its agriculture, manufacturing, defence, tourism, mining and energy industries. 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.

The Hunter Region boasts diverse natural landscapes and environments that underpin the liveability of our local communities and attract significant numbers of visitors to our region. With a Gross Regional Product of \$91b, the Hunter plays a vital role in New South Wales' economic, social and environmental landscape.

Collectively, our ten local government areas are entering a new and exciting phase with a growing metropolitan area, greater economic

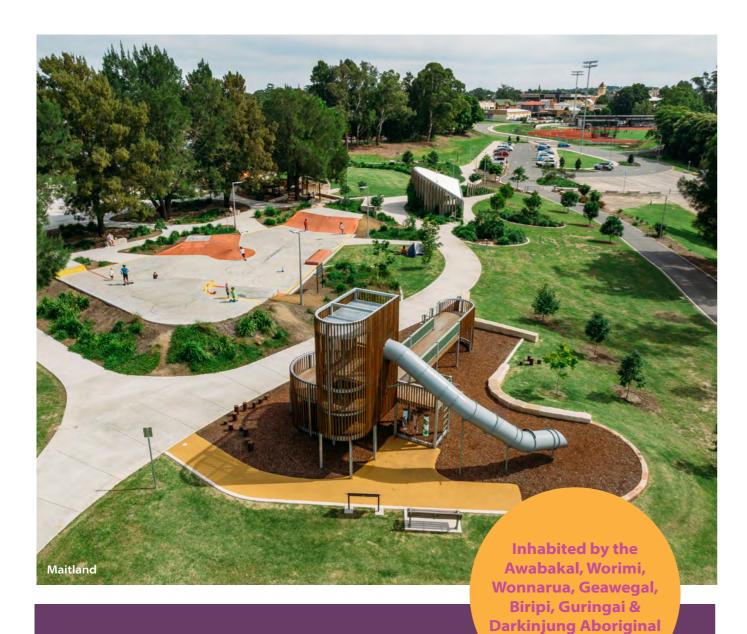
diversification and global gateways that will increasingly link the Hunter to the rest of the world

Our region hosts a newly opened international airport, deep sea port and industrial hub with a growing focus on clean energy and technology.

The Hunter's economy has traditionally relied on coal exports, but there is increasing investment in renewable energy, manufacturing, and agribusiness.

With its rapidly growing population, the Hunter Region is facing increasing demand for infrastructure, housing, and services. Collaboration with State and Federal Governments is essential for sustainable development, ensuring investment in transport, healthcare, and economic diversification.

Cessnock







10 local councils

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



11 state electorates

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



peoples

6 federal electorates

- Hunter
- Lyne
- Newcastle
- New England Paterson
- Shortland



810,491

2025 **Population**



959,562

2041

Population Projection NSW Government 2024



32,748km² **Hunter Region**



41yrs Median age





69%

Population who own their home or have a mortgage



26% **Population** who rent





Average people per household



\$1.95b Value of tourism industry



12,993k **Annual tourist** visitors



283.5km Coastline



162,233ha Rainforest



12,664km **Roads**



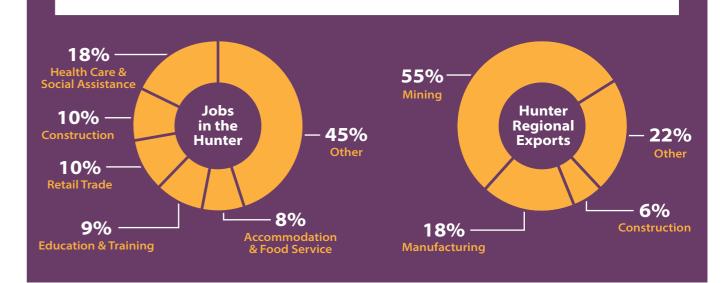
37,938ha Wetlands

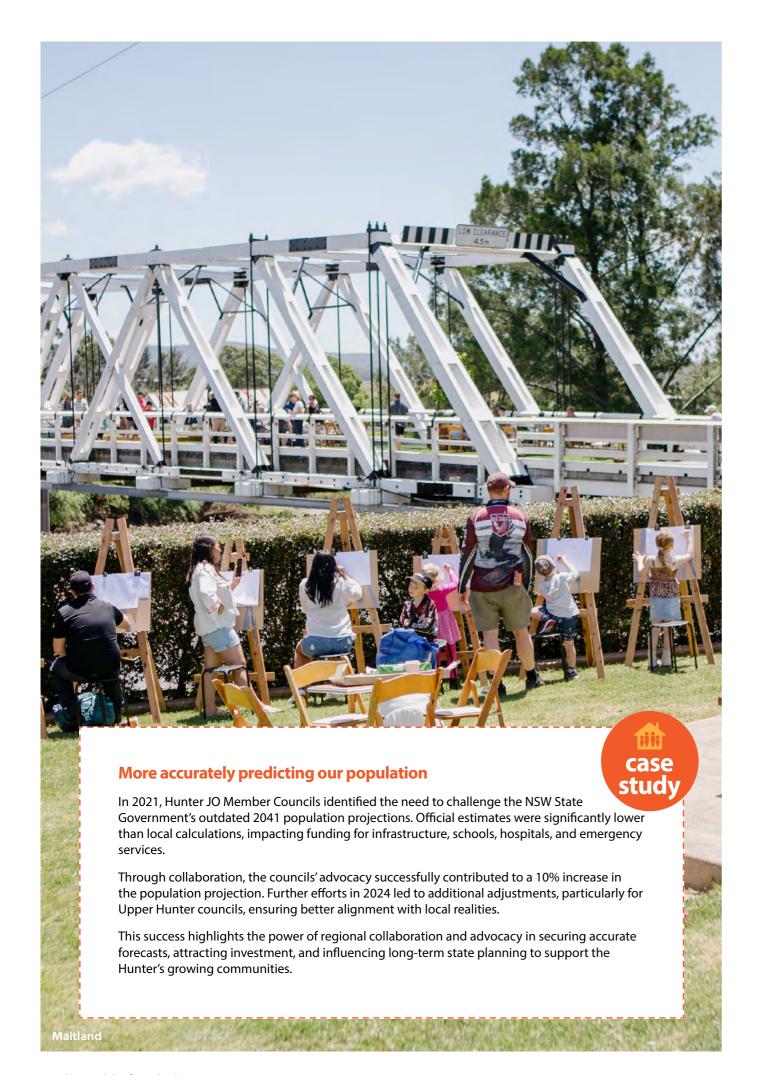


3,581 **Native plant** species



803 Native mammal, bird, reptile & amphibian species





PART 1

the hunter jo

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what is the hunter jo

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

As the hub for local intergovernmental collaboration, our statutory mandate includes identifying key regional strategic priorities, advocating for these priorities and building collaboration 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 General Managers (GM) and/or Chief Executive Officers (CEO) of each

Member Council, an employee of the public service nominated by the Secretary Department of Regional NSW, and a representative from the Office of Local Government.

Collaboration across the Hunter Region is the cornerstone of the Hunter JO. Since our beginning in 1955, the connection and coordination between our Member Councils has grown, developed and matured, delivering value for councils, our region and the Local Government sector as a whole.

The Local Government Act 1993 (NSW) sets out three principal functions for Joint Organisations:

Strategic Planning and Priority Setting

To establish strategic regional priorities for the joint organisation area and to establish strategies and plans for delivering those strategic regional priorities.

Regional Leadership and Advocacy

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

Intergovernmental Collaboration

To identify and take up opportunities for intergovernmental co-operation on matters relating to the joint organisation area.

























our board of mayors



Mayor Daniel Watton Cessnock City Council



Mayor Claire Pontin MidCoast Council



Mayor Digby Rayward Dungog Shire Council



Mayor Jeffrey Drayton Muswellbrook Shire Council



Mayor Sue Moore Singleton Council (Chair)



Mayor Adam Shultz Lake Macquarie City Council



Lord Mayor Ross Kerridge City of Newcastle



Mayor Maurice Collison Upper Hunter Shire Council



Mayor Philip Penfold Maitland City Council



Mayor Leah Anderson Port Stephens Council (Deputy Chair)

our general managers advisory committee



Ken Liddell GM Cessnock City Council



Adrian Panuccio GM MidCoast Council



Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr GM Singleton Council



Gareth Curtis GM Dungog Shire Council



Derek Finnigan



Greg McDonaldGM Upper Hunter Shire Council



Morven Cameron CEO Lake Macquarie City Council (GMAC Chair)



Jeremy Bath CEO City of Newcastle



Shaun O'Sullivan
Director North
Regional Coordination
Premiers Department NSW



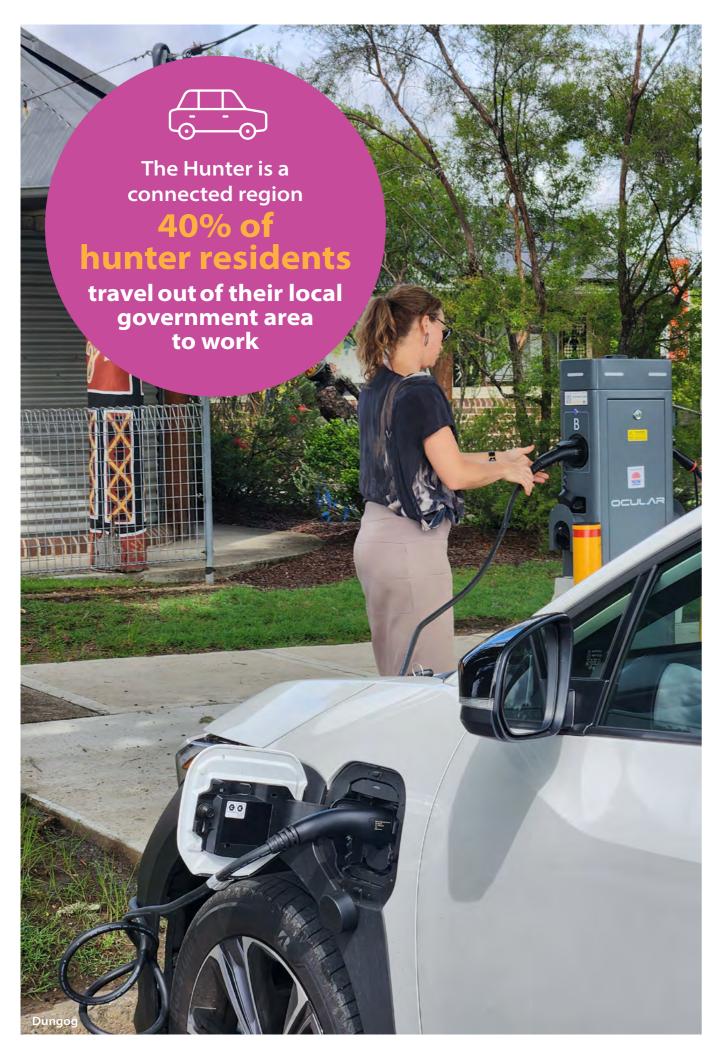
Jeff Smith GM Maitland City Council



Tim Crosdale GM Port Stephens Council



Virginia Errington Council Engagement Manager NSW Office of Local Government



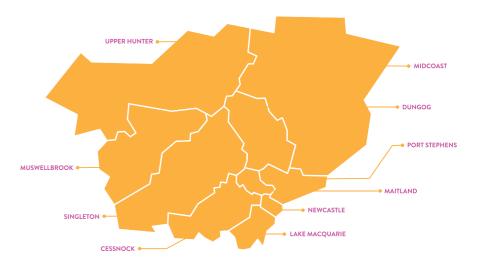
vision for the region

We harness our unique strengths to drive economic transformation, build resilience, and enhance community wellbeing for the Hunter region.

why work together

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

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.



The Hunter JO offers:

- The only place where the ten Hunter Mayors and General Managers regularly come together.
- The only democratically elected voice for the whole of the Hunter, expressing the needs and priorities of our local communities.
- The power of a united and aligned voice for the region, focusing on issues and opportunities we all share.
- A forum through which to engage, influence and collaborate with other levels of government to solve our shared challenges together.

Advocating for mining land reuse

As coal demand declines, the Hunter region faces mine closures that could affect up to 50,000 direct and indirect jobs by 2050.

Urgent action is needed to overcome the barriers to reusing former mining and buffer lands. Repurposing mine sites and infrastructure represents a cost-effective way to support new industries and jobs as the region transitions.

case study

Recognising this, the Hunter JO Board has made post-mining land use one of its top advocacy priorities, initially focusing on delivery of four pilot projects to map former mine sites, developing action plans, and creating master plans for redevelopment.

With ten democratically elected Mayors representing the Hunter Region, our collective voice is stronger and more influential.



PART 2

about our plan

What is the Hunter JO Strategic Plan?	
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what is the hunter jo strategic plan?

The Hunter JO's Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities (SSRP) is called the **Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2035.**

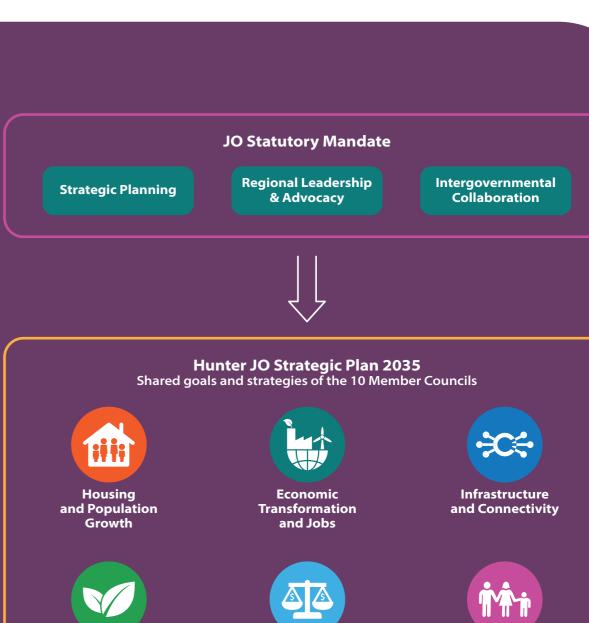
JOs are required to develop a Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities (SSRP) which sets out a vision for the region and provides an overview of the strategic actions required to deliver the vision. The SSRP draws from the Community Strategic Plans (CSPs) of Member Councils, regional-level plans and 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 and must be prepared within 12 months of ordinary election of councillors for all Member Councils.

Hunter JO engages directly with Member Councils to ensure our Strategic Plan is a synthesised, representative view of local communities' voices from across the region.

Hunter JO and Member Councils take a leading role in the implementation of the Strategic Plan, however collaboration and advocacy with other levels of government, industry and key stakeholders is crucial to achieving our long-term goals.

Our Strategic Plan is supported by the Hunter JO Delivery Program 2025-2029, which identifies the projects and advocacy priorities Hunter JO will deliver to achieve the objectives of the Strategic Plan.









Sustainability and

Funding Reform

Community Liveability and

Wellbeing



Delivery Program Delivering our Strategic Objectives

Capacity Building Program



Advocacy Program

Building resilient communities: Integrating climate action into council strategies

Hunter JO is a leader in developing guidance documents that align with the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Framework. The <u>Climate Change IP&R Package</u> and <u>Resilience IP&R Support Package</u> are the first of their kind, providing councils with practical tools and templates to embed climate resilience into everyday operations.

Recognising the region's diversity, spanning large regional centres to smaller rural councils, Hunter JO's IP&R Support Packages offer flexible templates tailored to different commitment levels: **Committed, Motivated,** and **Leading.** This approach allows councils to choose templates that best suit their resources, priorities, and community needs.

The adaptability of these Packages has also enabled their uptake by councils right across NSW, further strengthening climate resilience and long-term planning by Local Government.

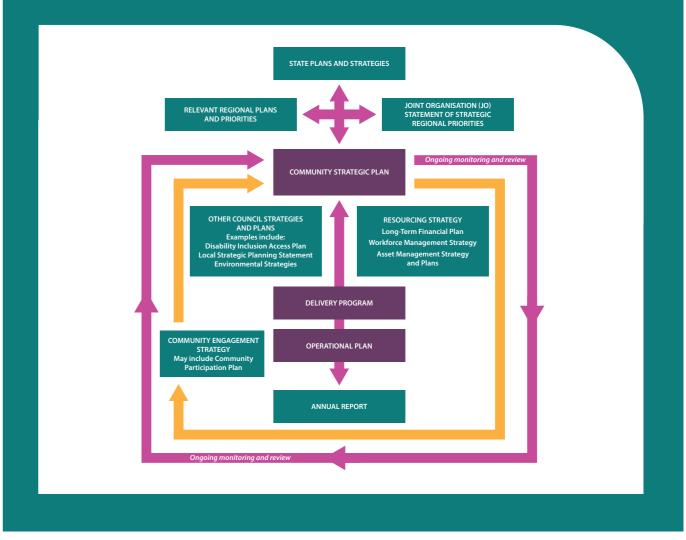


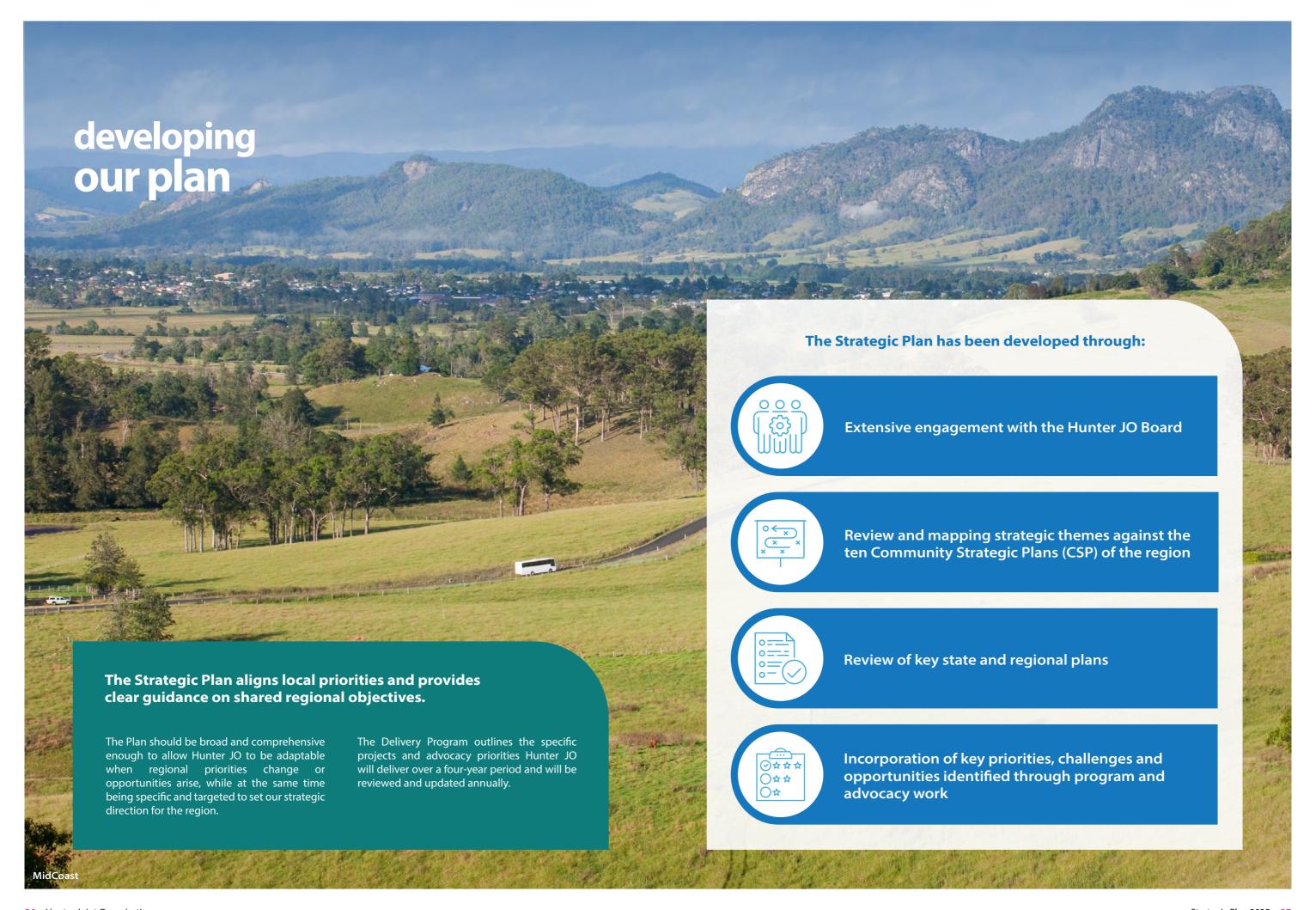
integrated planning and reporting framework

The Local Government Act 1993 (NSW) requires Councils to be consistent with the Local Government Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Framework, which aims to ensure a more sustainable Local Government sector. This requires Councils to take a long-term view and consider social, economic and environmental aspects and the needs of the current and future generations when making decisions.

Joint Organisations (JO) also have streamlined planning and reporting requirements under the Local Government (General) Regulation 2021 and Integrated Planning and Reporting Guidelines for Local Government in NSW. This includes compliance with the relevant section of the IP&R Guidelines.

The JO Statement of Strategic Regional Priorities (SSRP) strengthens the linkages between the JO, its Member Councils, state agencies and key partners, providing better support to Councils.





strategic line of sight

aligns at the local level

- Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework
- Member Councils Community Strategic Plans
- Cessnock Community Strategic Plan 2040
- Dungog Shire Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035
- Lake Macquarie City Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035
- Maitland's Future Community Strategic Plan 2025-2034
- MidCoast 2035 Community Strategic Plan
- Muswellbrook Shire Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035
- Newcastle 2040 It's Our Future
- Port Stephens Community Strategic Plan 2025 2035
- Create Singleton 2035
- Upper Hunter 2035

aligns at the regional level

- Hunter Regional Plan 2041
- Hunter Central Coast Regional Leadership Executive (RLE) Priorities
- Regional Disaster Adaptation Plans (under development)
- Regional Economic Development Strategies for Central Coast and Lake Macquarie, Hunter and MidCoast
- Draft Hunter Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan
- Hunter Central Coast Circular Economy Roadmap
- Hunter Local Jobs Plan
- Regional Development Australia (RDA) Hunter charter

aligns at the state level

- NSW Premier's Priorities
- NSW Performance and Wellbeing Framework
- NSW Net Zero Plan
- State Infrastructure Strategy
- NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy
- NSW Circular Economy Policy Statement
- NSW Future Transport Strategy
- NSW State Disaster Mitigation Plan
- NSW State Health Plan
- Future Jobs and Investment Authorities Issues Paper 2024
- NSW housing targets
- Local Government NSW Advocacy Priorities

aligns at the national level

- Powering Australia Plan
- Net Zero Plan (under development)
- Annual Climate Change Statement
- Net Zero Economy Authority focus areas
- Future Made in Australia
- Australia's Strategy for Nature 2024–2030
- National Housing Accord
- Australian Local Government Association Advocacy Priorities

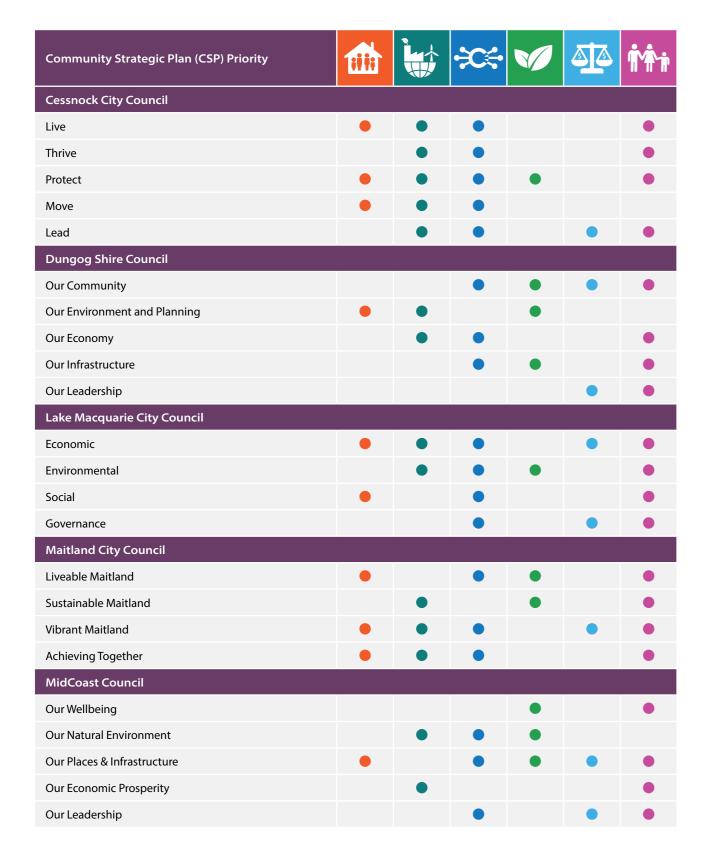
aligns at the global level

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals



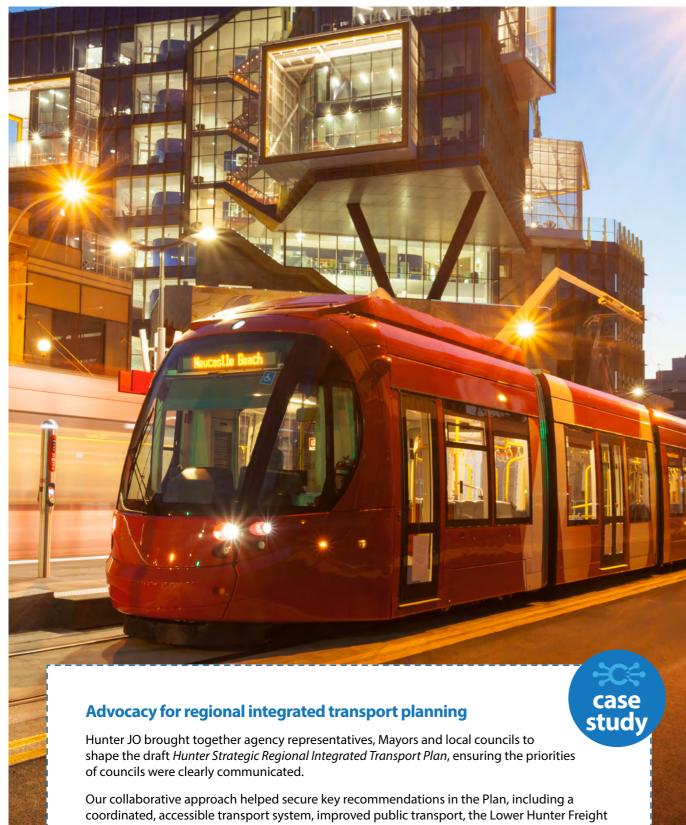
community strategic plan mapping

The ten Community Strategic Plans adopted in June 2025 have been mapped against the six themes of the Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2035, to identify aligned priority areas and collaboration focus areas.





Community Strategic Plan (CSP) Priority	1111		; C≑	W		ŤŤi
Muswellbrook Shire Council						
We are a strong community						
We are a regional centre	•	•	•			
We are a thriving economy		•				
We are a great place to live	•	•	•	•		
We are working together		•				
City of Newcastle						
Liveable	•					
Sustainable		•		•		
Creative		•				
Achieving Together		•				
Port Stephens Council						
Our Community						
Our Place	•	•		•		
Our Environment		•		•		
Our Council		•			•	
Singleton Council						
Our Community	•	•			•	
Our Places	•	•		•		
Our Environment		•		•		
Our Economy		•				
Our Leadership						
Upper Hunter Shire Council						
A Connected Community			•	•		
Protected Environment	•	•		•		
Thriving Economy	•	•			•	
Quality Infrastructure	•	•	•	•	•	
Responsible Governance		•	•	•	•	



Corridor, and enhanced rail services to drive economic growth.

The Hunter JO submission supports the plan but calls for clearer project prioritisation, better walking and cycling infrastructure, stronger climate resilience, improved mobile connectivity, and recognition of regional airports like Cessnock.

By working together, Hunter JO strengthens its influence on state transport planning to ensure local needs are met.

Newcastle

PART 3

our plan

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Boosting our global reach – Hunter Global

The Newcastle Airport precinct is undergoing a once-in-a-generation redevelopment and expansion to enable international connectivity. Leveraging the benefits of the investment and upgrades, Hunter JO and key partners facilitated a 2022 Hunter Global summit to boost collaboration, planning and advocacy to capitalise on the runway and terminal upgrade.

case

study

Acting on the summit recommendations, Hunter JO led two grant-funded projects to develop <u>Business Cases</u> exploring economic opportunities in air freight and international tourism.

With input from regional stakeholders, the Business Cases identified key priorities - establishing an air freight cargo terminal at Newcastle Airport to boost freight capacity and developing a unified 'Hunter region' brand to attract international tourists.

This research has strengthened our advocacy efforts by demonstrating the potential benefits and returns on investment for the broader Hunter region.



our plan



Housing & Population Growth

Inclusive, affordable, and sustainable housing that supports population growth through integrated development, efficient land use, and the protection of natural environments.



Economic Transformation & Jobs

The evolution of our region toward renewable and future focused industries, maximising our mining related and industrial lands and leveraging our regional strengths to drive economic growth, create jobs and protect our natural assets and environment.



Infrastructure & Connectivity

Seamless, multimodal connectivity powered by modern transport networks, enhanced digital infrastructure, and integrated planning to support sustainable mobility and regional growth.



Environmental Sustainability & Resilience

A future focused on long-term resilience, where disaster preparedness, climate mitigation and adaptation, sustainable water management, and circular economy practices work together to protect ecosystems and build holistic resilience for future generations.



Financial Sustainability & Funding Reform

Financial sustainability achieved through reformed funding processes and secure financial models that ensure the long-term viability and success of local councils to deliver services to communities.

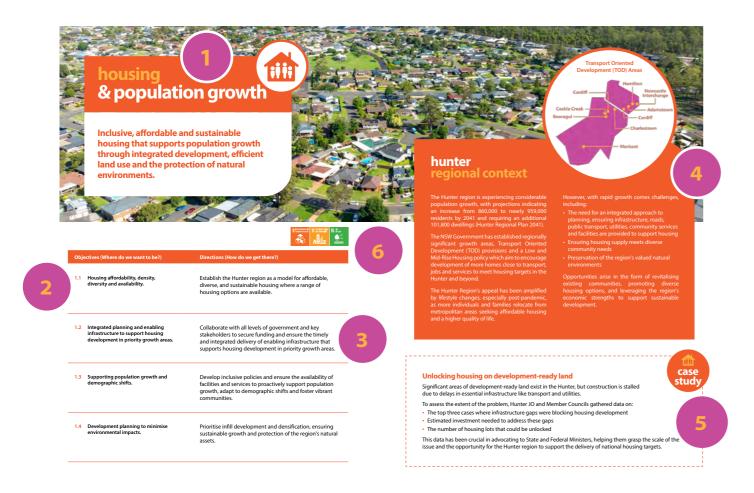


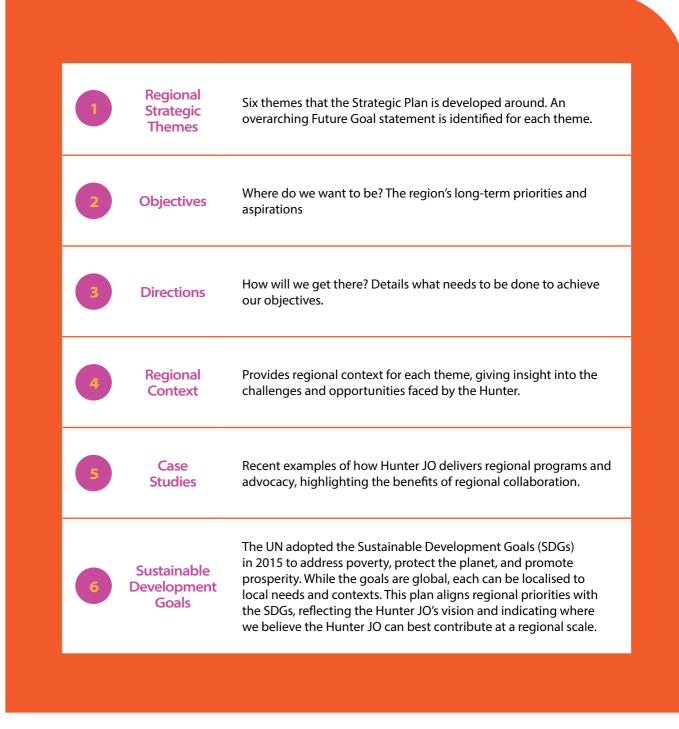
Community Liveability & Wellbeing

A community where enhanced access to health services, improved public spaces, and a strong sense of identity and opportunity promote wellbeing and a high quality of life for all.



how to read this plan





housing & population growth

Inclusive, affordable and sustainable housing that supports population growth through integrated development, efficient land use and the protection of natural environments.



The Hunter region is experiencing considerable population growth, with projections indicating an increase from 860,000 to nearly 959,000 residents by 2041 and requiring an additional 101,800 dwellings (Hunter Regional Plan 2041).

The NSW Government has established regionally significant growth areas, Transport Oriented Development (TOD) provisions and a Low and Mid-Rise Housing policy which aim to encourage development of more homes close to transport, jobs and services to meet housing targets in the Hunter and beyond.

The Hunter Region's appeal has been amplified by lifestyle changes, especially post-pandemic, as more individuals and families relocate from metropolitan areas seeking affordable housing and a higher quality of life. However, with rapid growth comes challenges, including:

- The need for an integrated approach to planning, ensuring infrastructure, roads, public transport, utilities, community services and facilities are provided to support housing
- Ensuring housing supply meets diverse community needs

Transport Oriented

Development (TOD) Areas

Cockle Creek

Preservation of the region's valued natural environments

Opportunities arise in the form of revitalising existing communities, promoting diverse housing options, and leveraging the region's economic strengths to support sustainable development.



Objectives (Where do we want to be?)

Directions (How do we get there?)

1.1 Housing affordability, density, diversity and availability.

Establish the Hunter region as a model for affordable, diverse, and sustainable housing where a range of housing options are available.

1.2 Integrated planning and enabling infrastructure to support housing development in priority growth areas.

Collaborate with all levels of government and key stakeholders to secure funding and ensure the timely and integrated delivery of enabling infrastructure that supports housing development in priority growth areas.

1.3 Supporting population growth and demographic shifts.

Develop inclusive policies and ensure the availability of facilities and services to proactively support population growth, adapt to demographic shifts and foster vibrant communities.

1.4 Development planning to minimise environmental impacts.

Prioritise infill development and densification, ensuring sustainable growth and protection of the region's natural assets.

Unlocking housing on development-ready land

Significant areas of development-ready land exist in the Hunter, but construction is stalled due to delays in essential infrastructure like transport and utilities.

To assess the extent of the problem, Hunter JO and Member Councils gathered data on:

- The top three cases where infrastructure gaps were blocking housing development
- Estimated investment needed to address these gaps
- The number of housing lots that could be unlocked

This data has been crucial in advocating to State and Federal Ministers, helping them grasp the scale of the issue and the opportunity for the Hunter region to support the delivery of national housing targets.

case study



The evolution of our region toward renewable and future focused industries, maximising our mining related and industrial lands and leveraging our regional strengths to drive economic growth, create jobs and protect our natural assets and environment.











Objectives (Where do we want to be?) Directi

Directions (How do we get there?)

2.1 Activate the reuse of mining related lands.

Transform former mining-related lands into vibrant, economically productive areas that deliver new and sustainable jobs, maximise land use potential, drive long-term economic growth and minimise environmental impacts.

2.2 Leveraging regional and global industries.

Leverage the region's key economic assets including port, airports, tourism and freight networks to drive industry diversification and strengthen the Hunter region's position as a leading globally connected economic hub of state and national significance.

 Evolution towards renewable energy, circular economy and future industries. Transform the Hunter region towards net zero to become a hub for renewable energy, circular economy and future industries, driving innovation, creating sustainable jobs, and fostering economic diversification.

2.4 Business attraction, job creation and future skills development.

Position the Hunter region to attract businesses and new industries and strengthen our role as a leader in skills and workforce development through strong partnerships with TAFE, universities and other educational institutions.

hunter regional context

The Hunter region is undergoing enormous economic transformation, shifting from traditional coal, energy and manufacturing toward renewable energy, health, and advanced manufacturing. With over 343,000 jobs and \$173.9 billion in current annual output (REMPLAN), the region faces both significant opportunities and challenges.

22 coal mines in the Hunter are forecast to close in the next few decades, mpacting nearly 50,000 jobs (Future Jobs and Investment Authorities), including around 12,000 jobs by 2030 alone (Muswellbrook Shire Council). Urgent action is needed to ensure alternative jobs can be provided.

The reuse of former mining land and infrastructure presents a major opportunity,

with sites potentially being repurposed for renewable energy projects, circular economy precincts, industrial hubs, smart manufacturing, tourism, freight and logistics, and conservation. Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) and initiatives like the proposed TAFE Energy Centre of Excellence aim to address retraining challenges, skill shortages and infrastructure demands, and over 70% of residents have expressed they are open to retraining (University of Newcastle Institute of Regional Futures).

Strategic regional planning is essential to balance industry transition while ensuring economic stability. With proactive workforce development and investment, the Hunter region is well-positioned to drive sustainable job growth in a rapidly evolving economy.

Advancing a Circular Economy in the Hunter Region

Hunter JO's <u>Circular Economy Precincts Project</u> supports the region's economic evolution through new efficient, resilient, net zero approaches to economic development. Funded by the NSW Government, the project delivered concept plans for four Circular Economy Precincts and an operational framework for a coordinating body - the Futures Hub.

The precincts were designed using extensive research and stakeholder input, focusing on integrating circular principles locally by leveraging waste streams, adopting new technologies, and coordinating logistics and energy systems. The Futures Hub is designed to be a trusted entity to guide precinct development, assist circular system development, foster innovation, and attract investment.

The project developed a hybrid model concept to develop the local circular economy, through combining place-based precincts with a broader network of circular businesses. It has identified key sites, validated business models, and outlined governance structures, positioning the Hunter as a potential national leader in circular economy innovation, with the capacity to unlock up to \$2 billion in economic value and significantly reduce emissions.



Seamless, multimodal connectivity powered by modern transport networks, enhanced digital infrastructure, and integrated planning to support sustainable mobility and regional growth.







Objectives (Where do we want to be?)	Directions (How do we get there?)
3.1 Safe and efficient road networks.	Support a safe and efficient road network across the Hunter region by advocating for equitable and sustainable road funding.
3.2 Integrated cross-agency infrastructure planning.	Foster integrated infrastructure planning that coordinates efforts across all levels of government and sectors to create a seamless, efficient, and future-ready region.
3.3 Multimodal, low-emission transport connectivity.	Ensure sustainable movement of people and goods and enhance regional transport connectivity through diverse, multimodal and low-emission transport solutions, including infrastructure investments in air, rail and active transport infrastructure.
3.4 Digital connectivity improvements.	Drive digital connectivity improvements across the Hunter region to support economic development, education, and community engagement.

hunter regional context

The Hunter region's infrastructure, transport networks, and digital connectivity are central to its ongoing development and future growth. Key road projects, such as the \$700 million Singleton bypass and the \$2.1 billion M1 Pacific Motorway extension to Raymond Terrace are improving safety, reducing congestion, and enhancing the region's connection to Greater Sydney and key industrial hubs including the Renewable Energy Zones. Public transport and active transport solutions are also evolving, with ongoing initiatives to improve accessibility and connectivity within the region.

However, challenges remain, including the need for more efficient and safer road links, better public transport options, and reliable digital infrastructure. The region faces increasing demand for high-speed internet and mobile coverage, especially in rural and remote areas. Opportunities exist in coordinating infrastructure planning, supporting the growth of innovation hubs, expanding digital infrastructure, and leveraging new transport technologies to further connect communities and improve economic resilience. Effective planning and investment in these areas will be essential for the Hunter's future.

Supporting electric vehicle readiness in the Hunter

Hunter JO is working with the NSW Government to build capacity and confidence among councils to lead the transition to net zero transport solutions.

With funding support from the NSW Government, Hunter JO organised electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure feasibility assessments for across the region. These assessments have supported councils in applying for grants to expand the local charging network, advancing the region's shift to low-emission transport.

We also hosted the 2023 *Plugging into the Future: Electrifying Council Fleets* event, which provided practical guidance on EV fleet transition for councils - covering topics such as total cost of ownership, charging infrastructure, and transition planning.

These collaborative efforts are helping to lay the groundwork for a cleaner, more sustainable transport future across the Hunter Region.



environmental sustainability & resilience

A future focused on long-term resilience, where disaster preparedness, climate mitigation and adaptation, sustainable water management, and circular economy practices work together to protect ecosystems and build holistic resilience for future generations.



The Hunter is predicted to experience increased extreme weather and natural hazards, with the effects of this already impacting the region. Many of the region's communities are struggling to recover from the continual and combined impacts of more frequent and severe natural hazards. The NSW Reconstruction Authority's State Disaster Mitigation Plan 2024 has identified the Lake Macquarie, Newcastle and MidCoast LGAs among the most at-risk from natural hazards now and into the future, and Port Stephens was identified in the top three LGAs for coastal erosion and inundation risk. These challenges mean climate change adaptation measures such as enhancing flood resilience and protecting vulnerable infrastructure are becoming essential, but Local Government, especially regional and rural councils, are often under-resourced in this area.

The Hunter is also at the forefront of circular economy initiatives, with councils, businesses, and communities working to create economic value, while reducing waste and maximise resource recovery. Programs focused on repurposing industrial by-products, expanding recycling infrastructure, and supporting sustainable manufacturing are positioning the region as a leader in innovative and sustainable economic development and waste solutions.

Hunter communities value and enjoy the lifestyle provided by our diverse ecosystems, rich biodiversity, clean air, water, and natural resources. As the region grows, balancing development with the protection of these critical ecosystems remains a key challenge.





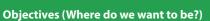












Directions (How do we get there?)

4.1 Climate change mitigation, adaptation and disaster resilience. Develop and implement comprehensive strategies for climate change mitigation, adaptation and disaster resilience, strengthening the long-term resilience and wellbeing of the region.

4.2 Circular materials and waste management.

Promote a circular economy and enhance waste management practices, focusing on regional waste opportunities, maximising resource value, reducing landfill reliance, and fostering circular waste solutions that support environmental and economic sustainability in the Hunter region.

4.3 Water security and waterway health.

Ensure a reliable, safe and secure water supply for the Hunter region through coordinated and sustainable water management practices, infrastructure investment, and proactive measures that safeguard waterways and water resources for current and future generations.

4.4 Protection of natural environments.

Protect and enhance our natural environments and open space including bushland, estuaries, waterways, beaches and biodiversity.

Planning for the future: Increasing disaster resilience in the Hunter

The NSW Reconstruction Authority has developed the Disaster Adaptation Planning (DAP) process to help NSW communities better manage natural hazard risks and reduce the impact and cost of disasters. Stakeholder engagement has strongly supported a regional approach to implementing DAPs across the state.

Hunter JO and its Member Councils have a long history of disaster resilience collaboration, dating back to the 1955 Maitland floods. This long-standing collaboration has been recognised with Disaster Ready Fund support, enabling Hunter JO to coordinate disaster adaptation planning with councils in the region.

In the coming years, delivering DAPs will be a key priority, strengthening the Hunter's long-term resilience.

financial sustainability & funding reform

Financial sustainability achieved through reformed funding processes and secure financial models that ensure the long-term viability and success of local councils to deliver services to communities.



Like many councils across the state, councils in the Hunter are facing challenges in financial sustainability exacerbated by rising expenses, cost shifting and limited revenue streams, particularly in rural areas where financial disparities with metropolitan councils are more pronounced. The 2024 NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the Ability of Councils to Fund Infrastructure and Services and the 2024 Federal Inquiry into Local Government Sustainability have recognised the need for reform to improve council financial sustainability, providing numerous recommendations.

One of the main issues Hunter councils face is the reliance on grant funding which has become

more competitive, complex, administratively burdensome and with significant co-contribution requirements, making it harder for councils to secure necessary funds to deliver key infrastructure and community services. Road funding is an ongoing and significant challenge, requiring systems reform across all three levels of government and a renewed focus on ensuring greater equity, certainty and sustainability in funding across regional and metropolitan communities.

There are significant opportunities for more equitable, efficient, and sustainable funding models, flexible rate-setting mechanisms, and exploring alternative revenue sources.

case

study



Objectives (Where do we want to be?)

sustainability of councils.

5.1 Ensuring the long-term financial

Advocate for more equitable and efficient funding models that enhance the long-term financial capacity of Local Government to deliver essential services to Hunter communities.

Directions (How do we get there?)

5.2 Secure reliable funding for placebased regional collaboration. Advocate for consistent, long-term and non-competitive NSW Government funding to deliver effective place-based regional collaboration under the Joint Organisation / Regional Organisation of Councils model.

5.3 Reforming grant funding processes to secure sustainable funding models.

Advocate for reforms to grant funding models, systems and processes to support improved efficiency and impact of council-led programs.

Helping councils save on energy costs and transition to renewables

In 2024, Hunter JO helped 13 councils across regional NSW secure a renewable electricity supply agreement through a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA), extending to 2030. The group includes four Hunter JO Member Councils - Maitland, MidCoast, Muswellbrook, and Upper Hunter.

The agreement delivers over 390 gigawatt hours of electricity to 163 council sites and streetlighting, with 83% sourced from NSW renewable projects. Maitland, MidCoast, and Muswellbrook have committed to 100% renewable energy.

Key benefits include:

- Emissions Reduction: Avoiding 185,000 tonnes of CO₂, supporting net zero targets.
- Cost Savings and Stability: Councils will save an estimated \$5.3M and gain protection from energy price volatility.
- Regional Economic Support: The deal supports NSW wind and solar projects, creating jobs and boosting local economies

Through <u>JO-led collaboration</u>, councils leveraged collective buying power to secure a competitive price and reduce procurement costs.



Obj	ectives (Where do we want to be?)	Directions (How do we get there?)			
6.1	Enhancing access to health services and aged care facilities.	Enhance access to health services, ensuring that the community, particularly the vulnerable, can access high-quality care and support in a timely and equitable manner across the region.			
6.2	Expanding open space, greening, and public amenity access.	Expand access to open spaces, green areas, and public amenities, fostering vibrant, healthy communities and enhancing the quality of life for the community through sustainable and inclusive urban design.			
6.3	Promoting community identity, culture and opportunities.	Promote and celebrate the region's unique community identity and culture, fostering opportunities for cultural expression, community engagement, and social inclusion for the community.			

The Hunter Region's liveability and community wellbeing are shaped by access to essential services, public spaces, and strong local identity. While the region benefits from expanding health infrastructure, including the new Maitland Hospital and upgrades to John Hunter Hospital, challenges remain in meeting growing demand, particularly in aged care, mental health, and specialist services in rural areas.

Access to quality open spaces and public amenities varies and communities face gaps in green space and social infrastructure, especially in the face of increasing development. There may be opportunities to take a regional-scale

approach to improve community access to facilities and services as the Hunter grows.

The lands of the Hunter Region cross 15 Local Aboriginal Land Councils. Our region's cultural identity is a key strength, with vibrant arts, heritage, and First Nations initiatives fostering community pride and social cohesion.

Opportunities exist to further invest in accessible healthcare, expand public amenities, and support local cultural initiatives to strengthen community resilience and wellbeing as the region continues to grow.

case

Tackling illegal dumping across the Hunter

Hunter JO's Regional Illegal Dumping (RID) Program, funded by the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) over five years, helps Member Councils address and reduce illegal dumping in their communities. The program provides coordinated regional support through initiatives such as a social media education campaign, a legal support desk for councils, staff training, and provision of equipment like road signs, personal protective equipment, surveillance cameras, and educational materials.

This regional approach is delivering strong value for money and operational efficiencies for both participating councils and the NSW EPA. It also fosters collaboration among council officers across the Hunter, resulting in more effective and consistent outcomes for local communities.

More effective regional-scale program delivery

Joint Organisations increasingly depend on competitive, time-limited state and federal grants to deliver essential regional programs and achieve Strategic Plan objectives. These grants often involve complex administration and require financial co-contributions, leading to uncertainty and fragmented program delivery.

case

study

To address these challenges, a more sustainable and effective approach would involve codesign funding models in partnership with government. One successful example is the NSW Government's Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration (JONZA) program, which collaborates with JOs and councils to identify and fund regional-scale net zero initiatives. Co-design of the JONZA program has ensured the more successful and efficient delivery of NSW Government policy and funding into regional NSW in a way that better reflects place-based needs and opportunities in each JO region.

Similarly, the NSW EPA's Sustainability Partnerships program worked with the Hunter JO to co-design and implement the Landfill Emissions project. This partnership improved how Local Governments measure carbon emissions from landfill, delivering better outcomes through collaboration, with outcomes now being used more broadly across NSW.



PART 4

collaborating, delivering and reporting on our plan

Collaborative Partnerships	52
How We Deliver and Report on our Plan	54
Communication and Engagement Strategy	57



key existing and emerging collaboration partners

10 member councils























hunter region

- Regional advocacy groups (eg. Committee for Hunter, Business Hunter, HunterNet)
- University of Newcastle
- Regional Development Australia (RDA) Hunter
- Hunter Water
- Destination Sydney Surrounds North
- Newcastle Airport
- · Port of Newcastle
- · Central Coast Council
- NSW Premiers Department
- $\bullet \ \ NSW\ Department\ of\ Climate\ Change,\ Energy,\ the\ Environment\ and\ Water$
- NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
- NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
- NSW Reconstruction Authority
- NSW Environment Protection Authority
- NSW Health
- Transport for NSW
- Office of Local Government
- Future Jobs and Investment Authority
- Local Land Services
- Other relevant State Government departments
- Joint Organisation Chairs Forum and Network
- Local Government NSW



national

- Net Zero Economy Authority
- National Emergency Management Agency
- High Speed Rail Authority
- Australian Local Government Association
- Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

how we deliver and report on our plan

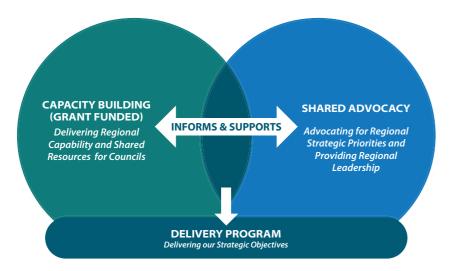
capacity building and advocacy

Capacity Building

Hunter JO's Capacity Building program (including the Environment Program) delivers policy and program development, collaboration and capacity building activities for Member Councils to directly achieve the objectives of the Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2035. Hunter JO seeks out State and Federal Government grants to fund our Capacity Building program.

Advocacy

Hunter JO's Advocacy program is predominately funded through Member Council contributions and is supported by the Capacity Building program. Each year, the Hunter JO Board prioritises the advocacy focus areas within the resources that are available.



The Advocacy and Capacity Building programs support and inform each other. Council insights, findings and recommendations from grant-funded project work directly inform the Advocacy program, while advocacy efforts also attract grant funding for capacity building initiatives.

hunter jo delivery program 2025-29

Hunter JO's Delivery Program 2025-29 is our plan for achieving the objectives outlined in the Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2035. It identifies the projects and advocacy priorities that the Hunter JO will deliver between 2025 and 2029 based on available resources. The Delivery Program will be reviewed and adopted by the Hunter JO Board each year.

reporting our progress

Our progress on delivering the Hunter JO Strategic Plan and Delivery Program will be reported through:

- Annual audited financial reports
- Annual Performance Statement
- Six-monthly Performance Statement

reviewing the plan

A review will be undertaken annually and a complete update of the Strategic Plan will be carried out within 12 months of each ordinary election of councillors for all Member Councils (normally every 4 years).



Keeping communities cool: Regional collaboration on heatwave communication

Hunter JO's Beat the Heat Communications Support Package was developed in collaboration with councils and NSW Health to engage communities about the impacts of heatwaves. Based on NSW Health's Beat the Heat resources, it adapts key messages into various formats to address at-risk communities and highlight important issues.

The package includes customisable content such as key messages, email alerts, newsletters, SMS/text alerts, social media posts, and website materials to support councils in creating their communications.

These resources ensure consistent messaging across platforms, helping avoid miscommunication and duplication of effort. This means that residents across the region receive the same important information, no matter where they are.

By working together, councils can develop shared, regionally consistent resources, making it easier to communicate with the communities across the Hunter region.

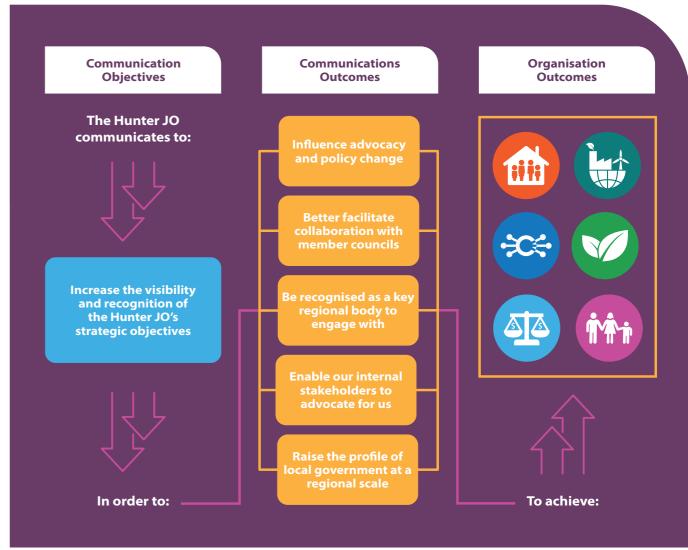
communication and engagement strategy

The Communication and Engagement Strategy enables clear communication about the delivery of the Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2035 and provides consistent messaging aligned to our strategic priorities, statutory functions and communications objectives.

In a collaborative organisation like the Hunter JO, implementing effective communications campaigns using a variety of methods is essential in achieving our desired outcomes of:

- · Advocating to influence policy and funding decisions for the benefit of the region.
- Building capacity within the region (particularly within Local Government and the community) through the delivery of grant-funded projects and programs.

Maintaining a positive reputation and strong brand recognition by increasing our visibility and demonstrating our value will contribute to the successful delivery of the Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2035. A strong communications strategy can assist in encouraging partnerships with, and support from, key industry bodies and other levels of government, supporting our advocacy function.





case

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methods for communicating

Our Communication and Engagement Strategy will drive communications activities on the progress of our strategic priorities, including the achievement of key milestones and successes. This includes:



Websites

Providing updates on our website including project updates and latest news.



Newsletters

Publishing a bi-monthly corporate newsletter to share updates on our key projects and advocacy priorities.



Mayors Digest

A monthly newsletter sent to Mayors and General Managers outlining political engagements, media, strategic engagements, events and key project and program updates.



Social Media

Posting social media updates that link to our projects and advocacy activities.



Traditional Media

Coordinating radio, newspaper and TV media opportunities to promote key project milestones, strategic objectives and advocacy priorities.



Meetings and Events

Hosting or attending meetings and events that are relevant to our strategic priorities, including with Ministers and MPs.



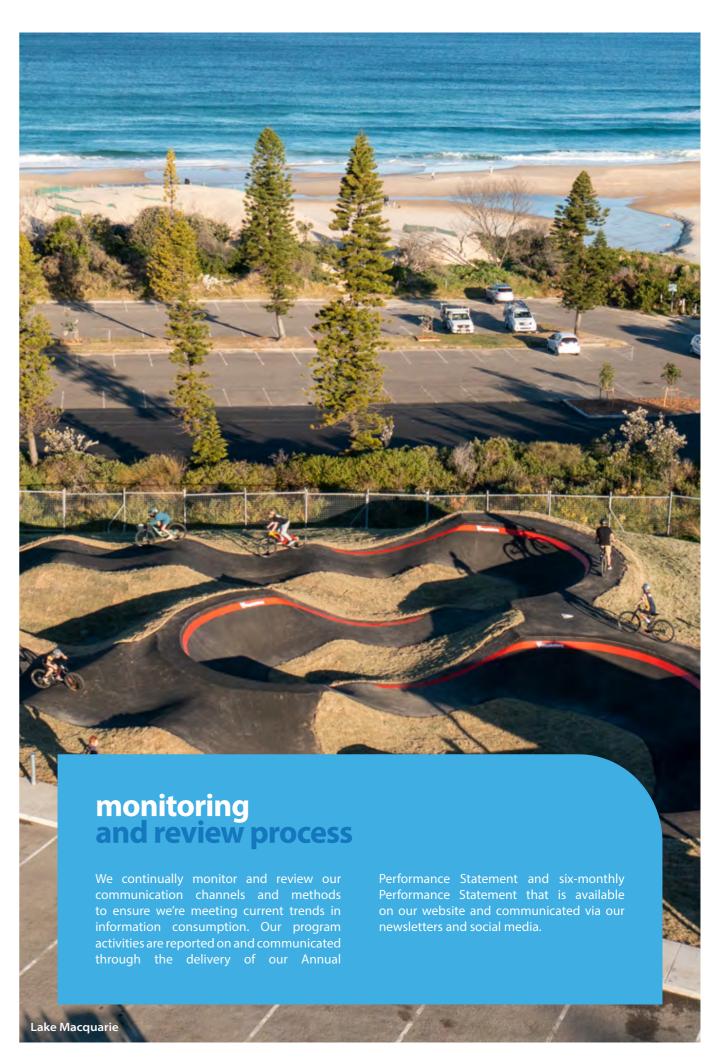
Presentations and Publications

Providing reports and updates in the form of presentations and publications on the progress of our strategic priorities.



Direct Email Distributions

Sending emails to stakeholders on the progress of our strategic priorities.





Hunter JO Delivery Program 2025-2029

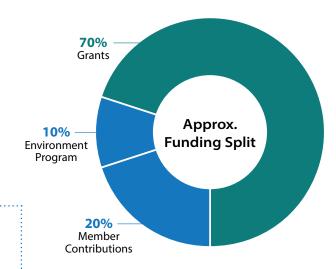
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How we deliver

Capacity Building

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The Advocacy and Capacity Building programs support and inform each other. Council insights, findings and recommendations from grant-funded project work directly inform the Advocacy program, while advocacy efforts also attract grant funding for capacity building initiatives.

CAPACITY BUILDING (GRANT FUNDED)

Delivering Regional Capability and Shared Resources for Councils

INFORMS & SUPPORTS

SHARED ADVOCACY

Advocating for Regional Strategic Priorities and Providing Regional Leadership

DELIVERY PROGRAM *Delivering our Strategic Objectives*

Reporting our progress

Our progress on delivering the Hunter JO Strategic Plan and Delivery Program will be reported through:

- Annual audited financial reports
 Annual Performance Statement
- Six-monthly Performance Statement

## PORTION FACTOR AND FORWARD OF JOHN FOR THE PROPERTY AND AND FORWARD AND AND AND FORWARD AND AND FORWARD AND AND AND FORWARD AND AND AND AND AND AND AND AND AND AN	Strategic Objective (How will we get there?)	Project	Funding Source	Housing & Population Growth	Economic Transformation & Jobs	Infrastructure & Connectivity	Environmental Sustainability & Resilience	Financial Sustainability & Funding Reform	Community Liveability & Wellbeing	Project Objective (What will we do to get there?) Funding Status Likely to be funct Seeking funding 700 700 700 700 700 700 700 700 700 70	
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FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY & FUNDING REFORM	The state of the s		NSW DCCEEW	•	•	•	•	•			
	FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY & FUNDII	NG REFORM									

		lation	: & Jobs	e Z	al silience	ability orm	eability of the control of the contr			Resourcing 2025 / 2026			
Strategic Objective (How will we get there?)	Advocacy Priority	Housing & Popu Growth	Economic Transformation 8	Infrastructure & Connectivity	Environmental Sustainability & Resi	Financial Sustain & Funding Ref	Financial Sustaina & Funding Refo Community Livea & Wellbeing	Advocacy Objective		Opportunisitic	Tier 3	Tier 2	Tier 1
HOUSING & POPULATION GROWTH													
1.1 Housing affordability, density, diversity and availability	Havein a			•				Increasing viability of housing in Transport Orientied Development (TOD) and Low and Mid-Rise areas, and opportunities to reduce construction cost by increasing feasibility and quality of modular homes.	State				
.2 Integrated planning and enabling infrastructure to support housing development in priority growth areas	Housing							Funding for enabling infrastructure, State Government integrated planning, and improved biodiversity mapping.	State				
3.3 Supporting population growth and demographic shifts	Regional population projections	•		•				An agreed population vision as a foundation to support advocacy for State and Federal Government service planning.	State				
CONOMIC TRANSFORMATION & JOBS													
2.1 Activate the reuse of mining related lands	Mining land reuse / redevelopment		•					Investment to pilot the reactivation and repurposing of current and former mining lands and infrastructure, and to de-risk industry investment and strategically inform and accelerate industry attraction, skills development and job creation.	State & Federal				
	Airfreight precinct		•				•	Delivery of a cargo precinct at Newcastle Airport to unlock air freight value chain.	State & Federal				
2.2 Leveraging regional and global industries	Hunter Global Tourism Marketing Strategy		•					Leverage the investment in the Newcastle Airport to increase international tourism through business training and mentoring, implementing a Hunter regional identity, and international trade representation.	State & Federal				
	Port of Newcastle		•	•				Improve road and rail infrastructure to activate diversification, i.e. container terminal, clean energy precinct, and support establishment of the Renewable Energy Zones (REZ).	State & Federal				
2.3 Evolution towards renewable energy, circular economy	Circular Economy Futures Hub		•		•			Alignment and commitment across all levels of government on a Circular Economy Futures Hub to accelerate the region towards a circular economy.	State & Federal				
and future industries	Energy transition	•	•	•	•			Whole of government strategic plan and vision for the future industries of the Hunter, skilled worker housing, Renewable Energy Zone challenges and opportunities, and energy supply for future industries.	State & Federal				
NFRASTRUCTURE & CONNECTIVITY													
3.1 Safe and efficient road networks	Road funding reform							Commitment from the Federal and State Governments to collaboratively develop and apply a more equitable model for allocating roads funding across metropolitan and regional local government areas that equalises per kilometre funding.	State & Federal				1
	Transport planning							Delivery of the Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan (SRITP).	State				1
3.2 Integrated cross-agency infrastructure planning	Water infrastructure							Investment into infrastructure to ensure a reliable, safe and secure water supply for the Hunter and MidCoast Region.	State				
	Transport improvement			•	•			Improved low-emissions transport solutions for the region, including electric vehicle infrastructure, park and ride, and active transport.	State				
3.3 Multimodal, low-emission transport connectivity	Shiraz to Shore		•	•				Delivery of the Shiraz to Shore cycle trail from the Hunter Valley to Newcastle and Lake Macquarie.	State & Federal				
8.4 Digital connectivity improvements	Digital connectivity							Investment in infrastructure to improve digital connectivity.	State & Federal				
NVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY & RESILIENCE													
L1 Climate change mitigation, adaptation and disaster resilience	Disaster resilience				•			Sustainable and strategic place-based planning and resourcing of local and regional disaster resilience and recovery activities.	State & Federal				
.2 Circular materials and waste management	Waste levy							Return of waste levy funds to implement local and regional circular economy and waste management initiatives.	State				
.3 Water security and waterway health	Regional waterway management				•			Establish a regional waterway management authority with responsibility for waterway and catchment health.	State				
INANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY & FUNDING REFORM													
.1 Ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of councils	Financial sustainability of Local Government							Long-term financial sustainability of Local Government.	State & Federal				
5.3 Reforming grant funding processes to secure sustainable funding models	Grant funding reform							Strategic block funding of grants aligned to IP&R Framework provided to Local Government from both State and Federal Governments to allow effective planning and delivery of community interests.	State & Federal				

Detailed plan for a shared ARIC model

Attachment 7.8-1

Current Scenario (NSW Government)

The Guidelines for Risk management and Internal Audit for Local Government (OLG) in NSW have been approved. This is the overview of requirements from OLG NSW.

Joint organisations must comply with the 3 Core Requirements from 1 July 2024.

1.

Audit risk and improvement committee

2.

Risk management framework

3.

Internal Audit function

RISK MANAGEMENT AND INTERNAL AUDIT for local government in NSW



November 202





Current Scenario (JO's)

Outline of current approach to ARIC for other JOs

JO	ARIC	Internal Audit
CANBERRA REGION JOINT ORGANISATION Repeal Institution on a semantic	 Goulburn Mulwaree, Upper Lachlan Shire Yass Valley and CRJO utilise the same Audit Review and Improvement Committee (ARIC), whilst Snowy Monaro retained their own ARIC. The committee meets four times per year. 	The CRJO has employed an independent internal auditor who undertakes this function with Goulburn Mulwaree, Upper Lachlan Shire, Yass Valley and Snowy Monaro Councils.
Mid North Coast Joint Organisation MNCJO	Kempsey Shire Council and MNCJO share an ARIC that meets independence criteria. The committee meets four times per year for approx. one hour. (See Board minutes 8 December 2023)	MNCJO Executive Officer appointed as the Internal Audit Coordinator. Approved by MNJCO subsequent to being endorsed by MNJCO ARIC. Board minutes indicate they are sourcing a shared internal audit function.
NORTHERN RIVERS JOINT ORGANISATION	The NRJO and Rous County Council share an ARIC that meets independence criteria.	The August 2023 Board minutes note at that time there was no specific Internal Audit Program for the JO.
◎ ◎ RAMJO © Ø Riverina & Murray Joint Organisation	RAMJO shares an ARIC with Albury City, but is not bound to this ARIC and can leave to join a JO led one, without impact on Albury's set-up Our ARIC meets four times a year and has been in operation since August 2023	RAMJO is being supported by its ARIC to seek an exemption to the internal audit function (IAF), in line with section 216U (a) (ii) of the ARIC regulations: "would have had a significant impact on the councils/JO budget" ARIC and RAMJO undertakes various risk management activities and maintains an assurance map, to help demonstrate alternative steps to an IAF

Proposed Scenario (JO's)

Outline of proposed approach to ARIC for JOs participating in the Shared ARIC

JO	ARIC	Internal Audit
Hunter JO	 Shared ARIC Appoint a standalone committee - seek exemption under s216U Regs to appoint a shared JO ARIC 	 Shared Internal Audit Service Engage a (local) internal audit service provider to undertake audit across all JOs
Central NSW JO	 Seek a volunteer committee of 3 from across the state + (up to) 2 x observer status reps from each JO Seek exemption for reduced meeting schedule 2 per year 	One function is audited across each JO per year, with separate reports provided to each Board and the shared ARIC This will be reflected in the ARIC workplan.
Illawarra Shoalhaven JO	 Workplans 1 yr and 4 yr aligned to 2 x meeting schedule – Workplans can be virtually identical for each JO and aligned to Board papers and meetings to avoid unnecessary duplication 	 This will be reflected in the ARIC workplan Each JO nominates an audit coordinator (likely your accountant or similar) Estimated Cost \$10,000-\$15,000 per JO
	 Review each JOs Risk Management Framework to check compliance with ARIC requirements (including risk appetite statement from each Board) Estimated cost: In Kind support from JOs (extra administration should be manageable after ARIC established); there is a risk that the chair of ARIC will want some recompense given there are 3 JO's 	 we follow RAMJO's and (other's) lead and seek an exemption to the internal audit function (IAF), in line with section 216U (a) (ii) of the ARIC regulations: "would have had a significant impact on the councils/JO budget"

Core requirement 1: Audit Risk and Improvement Committee (ARIC)

Legislative requirements



- Each JO must have an independent ARIC that provides advice for the purpose of improving performance of the JO.
- The committee provides advice on JO operations including but not limited to compliance, risk management, financial reporting and controls, governance and internal audit.
- JO's have until 1 July 2024 to ensure membership and operations of the committee comply with the Guidelines.
- Exemptions available under s216U Local Government Regulations if:
 - Compliance is unreasonable due to a temporary circumstance or significant impact on budget
 - JOs are unable to enter into a shared agreement to achieve compliance
 - JOs proposes an alternative arrangement to ensure an equivalent outcome and notifies the Department Chief Executive
 - The JO annual report contains a relevant statement.

Committee



Composition (s216C Regs)

- At least 3 = Independent chair + at least 2 independent members
- (optional non-voting member) councillor / mayor who is not the JO chair
- ARIC chairs and members must meet independence and eligibility requirements.

Term of office

 4-year period, option for re-appointment subject to member performance assessment and statutory 8-year limit (s216G Regs)

Frequency and attendance

 Must meet at least quarterly (s216J Regs) [exemption will be sought]

Agenda

 ARIC must review the matters listed s428A Local Government Act at least once every 4 years.

Sitting fees

• We will seek voluntary members (S216I Regs)

Processes/resources



- Committee members appointed by Shared JO ARIC resolution (S216C). Letter of appointment and induction by Shared JO ARIC chair.
- Committee TOR, consistent with model terms, adopted by resolution of each JO Board (s216K Regs)
- Strategic workplan, adopted by Shared JO ARIC every four years, reviewed annually
- Annual workplan (forward agenda) aligned with strategic workplan
- Dedicated Secretariat to be shared, assigned to a JO for a period – rotated in alignment with JOs Chair rotation
- Annual committee performance assessment by ARIC
- Independent review every 4 years that the committee has reviewed matters listed in s428A as well as performance review of the committee and members.
- JO's will report on their compliance with the Regulation in their annual report.

- s428A Local Government Act
- Local-Government-General-Amendment-Audit-Risk-and-Improvement-Committees-Regulation-2023.pdf (nsw.gov.au)

Core requirement 2: Risk management

Legislative requirements



- Commencing on 1 July 2024, JOs must adopt and implement a framework for identifying and managing risk (section 216S Local Government Regulations), that is consistent with the requirements specified in the Guidelines.
- JOs must manage its strategic and operational risks and implement a risk management framework that is consistent with the current Australian risk management standard (AS ISO 31000:2018), and appropriate for the JO's risks.
- The JO's ARIC must keep the implementation of each JO's risk management framework under review and provide advice to the JOs on its implementation and operation (section 216S).

Risk management



Strategic leadership (JOs)

 Each JO to establish the foundational elements of the risk management framework and set the 'tone at the top', including approving by resolution the risk appetite.

Risk management function

Each JO EO to implement their JOs risk management framework.

Reporting

- Annual self-assessment of the risk management framework.
- Shared ARIC to provide an assessment of the effectiveness of the JO's risk management framework each 4-year term (s216S Regs)

Performance measures

 JO to assign performance targets to risk management activities that can be measured

Processes / resources



- Risk Appetite Statement adopted by resolution of each JO
- · Risk management framework
- · Risk management function
- Each JO risk profile to support ARIC internal audit workplans
- Regular risk reporting
- Risk management performance targets
- · Annual self-assessment of ERM framework.
- JO's will report on their compliance with the Regulation in their annual reports.

Relevant legislative considerations:

- s428A Local Government Act
- Local-Government-General-Amendment-Audit-Risk-and-Improvement-Committees-Regulation-2023.pdf (nsw.gov.au)
- Guidelines for Risk Management and Internal Audit for Local Government in NSW (nsw.gov.au)

Core requirement 3: Internal Audit

Legislative requirements



- Commencing 1 July 2024, JOs must have an internal audit function to provide an independent assessment of JO operations and risk and control activities (section 216O).
- The internal audit function must be undertaken in accordance with the internal audit charter adopted by each JO, considering the approved model charter.
- All internal audit activities are to be undertaken under the oversight and direction of the Shared ARIC (sections 216M, 216P and 216R).

OR

 We seek an exemption to the internal audit function (IAF), in line with section 216U (a) (ii) of the ARIC regulations: "...would have had a significant impact on the councils/JO budget"

Internal Auditor / Internal audit function



Structure - For discussion

- Internal audit function will be:
 - · As a shared arrangement with other JOs.
- In a shared arrangement a shared internal audit coordinator / internal audit function operates as a standalone internal audit function for each participating organisation.
- The decision to share an internal audit coordinator / internal audit function is independent of the decision to share an ARIC.
- The EO must consult with ARIC in relation to decisions affecting employment of internal audit coordinator.

OR

 The EOs consult with ARIC in relation to management of internal audit through the risk framework by improving internal policy and procedures.

Relevant legislative considerations:

- s428A Local Government Act
- Local-Government-General-Amendment-Audit-Risk-and-Improvement-Committees-Regulation-2023.pdf (nsw.gov.au)
- · Guidelines for Risk Management and Internal Audit for Local Government in NSW (nsw.gov.au)

Processes/resources



- Internal audit charter adopted by resolution of each JO, considering the Model Internal Audit Charter (s216O).
- With the shared arrangement, JO EOs must allocate an employee of their JO the internal audit coordination responsibility.
- Risk based internal audit plan (strategic and annual) to ensure all matters listed in s428A LGA are reviewed by ARIC and considered by internal audit.
- · ARIC role:
 - Oversees internal audit activities carried out in relation to each JO.
 - reviews and reports on performance of the internal audit function annually.
 - Assesses and reports on the effectiveness of the internal audit function each term.
- JO's will report on their compliance with the Regulation in their annual reports.

OR

 The process above is modified to have ARIC supervise these tasks and internal audit become part of the risk framework's process improvement implementation at each JO.



Public Interest Disclosure Policy

Version 1.0–12 June 2025 DRAFT

Controlled Document Information

Authorisation Details

Policy Name	Public Interest Disclosure Policy
Responsible Officer	Steve Wilson, Director Hunter JO (Executive Officer)
Review timeframe	2 years
Next Scheduled Review	June 2030
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Authorisation Date	12 June 2025

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Relation Legislation	Public Interest Disclosures Act 2022
Related Policies / Procedures	Hunter JO Code of Conduct

Definitions

Term / Abbreviation	Definition

Consultation

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Consulted with: General Managers Advisory Committee (29 May 2025)

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Purpose

All agencies in NSW are required to have a Public Interest Disclosure (PID) Policy under section 42 of the Public Interest Disclosures Act 2022 (PID Act).

At Hunter Joint Organisation (JO) we take reports of serious wrongdoing seriously. We are committed to building a 'speak up' culture where public officials are encouraged to report any conduct that they reasonably believe involves wrongdoing.

The integrity of our agency relies upon our staff, volunteers, contractors and subcontractors speaking up when they become aware of wrongdoing.

This policy sets out:

- how Hunter JO will support and protect you if you come forward with a report of serious wrongdoing
- how we will deal with the report and our other responsibilities under the PID Act
- who to contact if you want to make a report
- how to make a report
- the protections which are available to you under the PID Act.

This policy also documents our commitment to building a speak up culture. Part of that speak up culture is having in place a framework that facilitates public interest reporting of wrongdoing by:

- protecting those who speak up from detrimental action
- imposing duties on agencies who receive reports of wrongdoing to take appropriate action to investigate or otherwise deal with them.

In NSW, that framework is the PID Act.

Accessibility of this policy

This policy is available on Hunter JO's publicly available website and Hunter JO internal SharePoint Drive (Hunter JO / General / Governance / Policies).

Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to, and for the benefit of, all public officials in NSW. You are a public official if you are:

- a person employed in or by an agency or otherwise in the service of an agency
- a person having public official functions or acting in a public official capacity whose conduct or activities an integrity agency is authorised by another Act or law to investigate
- an individual in the service of the Crown
- a statutory officer
- a person providing services or exercising functions on behalf of an agency, including a contractor, subcontractor or volunteer
- an employee, partner or officer of an entity that provides services, under contract, subcontract or other arrangement, on behalf of an agency or exercises functions of an agency, and are involved in providing those services or exercising those functions
- a judicial officer

- a Member of Parliament (MP), including a Minister
- a person employed under the Members of Parliament Staff Act 2013.

The Hunter JO Executive Officer, other nominated disclosure officers and managers within Hunter JO have specific responsibilities under the PID Act. This policy also provides information on how people in these roles will fulfil their responsibilities. Other public officials who work in and for the public sector, but do not work for Hunter JO may use this policy if they want information on who they can report wrongdoing to within Hunter JO.

Who does this policy not apply to?

This policy does not apply to:

- people who have received services from an agency and want to make a complaint about those services
- people, such as contractors, who provide services to an agency. For example, employees of a company that sold computer software to an agency.

This means that if you are not a public official, this policy does not apply to your complaint (there are some circumstances where a complaint can be deemed to be a voluntary PID, see section 1(i) of this policy for more information).

What is contained in this policy?

This policy will provide you with information on the following:

- ways you can make a voluntary PID to Hunter JO under the PID Act
- the names and contact details for the nominated disclosure officers in Hunter JO
- the roles and responsibilities of people who hold particular roles under the PID Act and who are employees of Hunter JO
- what information you will receive once you have made a voluntary PID
- protections available to people who make a report of serious wrongdoing under the PID Act and what we will do to protect you
- Hunter JO procedures for dealing with disclosures
- Hunter JO procedures for managing the risk of detrimental action and reporting detrimental action
- Hunter JO record-keeping and reporting requirements
- how Hunter JO will ensure it complies with the PID Act and this policy.

If you require further information about this policy, how public interest disclosures will be handled and the PID Act you can:

- confidentially contact a nominated disclosure officer within Hunter JO
- contact the PID Advice Team within the NSW Ombudsman by phone: (02) 9286 1000 or email: pidadvice@ombo.nsw.gov.au, or
- access the NSW Ombudsman's PID guidelines which are available on its website.

If you require legal advice with respect to the PID Act or your obligations under the PID Act, you may need to seek independent legal advice.

1. How to make a report of serious wrongdoing

(a) Reports, complaints and grievances

When a public official reports suspected or possible wrongdoing in the public sector, their report will be a PID if it has certain features which are set out in the PID Act.

Some internal complaints or internal grievances may also be PIDs, as long as they have the features of a PID. If an internal complaint or grievance is a report of serious wrongdoing, we will consider whether it is a PID. If it is a PID, we will deal with it as set out in this policy, but we will also make sure we follow our:

- Code of Conduct
- Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Procedure

It is important that we quickly recognise that we have received a PID. This is because once a PID is received, the person who has made the report is entitled to certain protections and we have certain decisions that we have to make on how we will deal with the PID and how we will protect and support the person who has made the report.

(b) When will a report be a PID?

There are three types of PIDs in the PID Act. These are:

- 1. Voluntary PID: This is a PID where a report has been made by the public official because they decided, of their own accord, to come forward and disclose what they know.
- 2. *Mandatory PID*: This is a PID where the public official has made a report about serious wrongdoing because they have a legal obligation to make that report, or because making that report is an ordinary aspect of their role or function in an agency.
- 3. Witness PID: This is a PID where a person discloses information during an investigation of serious wrongdoing following a request or requirement of the investigator.

This policy mostly relates to making a voluntary PID and how we will deal with voluntary PIDs. People who make a mandatory PID or a witness PID are still entitled to protection. More information about protections is available in section 2 of this policy.

You can find more information about mandatory and witness PIDs in the Ombudsman's guidelines 'Dealing with mandatory PIDs' and 'Dealing with witness PIDs'.

Voluntary PIDs are the kind of PIDs most people have in mind when they think about public interest reporting and 'whistleblowing'.

They involve a public official making a report because they have information that they believe shows (or tends to show) serious wrongdoing, where they are not under a legal obligation to make that report and where it is not an ordinary part of their role to report such wrongdoing.

A report is a voluntary PID if it has the following five features, which are set out in sections 24 to 27 of the PID Act:

1. A report is				
made by a				
public official				

- 2. It is made to a person who can receive voluntary PIDs
- 3. The public official honestly and reasonably believes that the information they are providing shows (or tends to show) serious wrongdoing

4. The report was made orally or in writing

5. The report is voluntary (meaning it is not a mandatory or witness PID)

If the report has all five features, it is a voluntary PID.

You will not be expected to prove that what you reported actually happened or is serious wrongdoing. You *do* have to honestly believe, on reasonable grounds, that the information you are reporting shows or tends to show serious wrongdoing.

Even though you do not have to prove the serious wrongdoing happened or provide evidence, a mere allegation with no supporting information is unlikely to meet this test.

If we make an error and do not identify that you have made a voluntary PID, you will still be entitled to the protections under the PID Act.

If you make a report and believe we have made an error by not identifying that you have made a voluntary PID, you should raise this with a nominated disclosure officer or your contact officer for the report. If you are still not satisfied with this outcome, you can seek an internal review or we make seek to conciliate the matter. You may also contact the NSW Ombudsman. Further information on rights to internal review and conciliation is found in section 7 of this policy.

(c) Who can make a voluntary PID?

Any public official can make a voluntary PID — see 'Who this policy applies to'. You are a public official if:

- you are employed by Hunter JO
- you are a contractor, subcontractor or volunteer who provides services, or exercises functions, on behalf of Hunter JO, or
- you work for an entity (such as a non-government organisation) who is contracted by Hunter JO
 to provide services or exercise functions on behalf of Hunter JO if you are involved in
 undertaking that contracted work.

A public official can make a PID about serious wrongdoing relating to any agency, not just the agency they are working for. This means that we may receive PIDs from public officials outside our agency. It also means that you can make a PID to any agency, including an integrity agency like the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) and the NSW Ombudsman. Annexure B of this policy has a list of integrity agencies.

(d) What is serious wrongdoing?

Reports must be of one or more of the following categories of *serious wrongdoing* to be a voluntary PID (in addition to having the other features set out here). Serious wrongdoing is defined in the PID Act as:

- corrupt conduct such as a public official accepting a bribe
- *serious maladministration* such as an agency systemically failing to comply with proper recruitment processes when hiring staff

- a government information contravention such as destroying, concealing or altering records to prevent them from being released under a Government Information Public Access application
- a local government pecuniary interest contravention such as a senior council staff member recommending a family member for a council contract and not declaring the relationship
- a privacy contravention such as unlawfully accessing a person's personal information on an agency's database
- a serious and substantial waste of public money such as an agency not following a competitive tendering process when contracting with entities to undertake government work.

When you make your report, you do not need to state to Hunter JO what category of serious wrongdoing you are reporting or that you are reporting serious wrongdoing.

(e) Who can I make a voluntary PID to?

For a report to be a voluntary PID, it must be made to certain public officials.

Making a report to a public official who works for Hunter JO

You can make a report inside Hunter JO to:

- Director Hunter JO (Executive Officer)
- a disclosure officer for Hunter JO a list of disclosure officers for Hunter JO and their contact details can be found at Annexure A of this policy
- your manager this is the person who directly, or indirectly, supervises you. It can also be the person who you directly, or indirectly, report to. You may have more than one manager. Your manager will make sure that the report is communicated to a disclosure officer on your behalf or may accompany you while you make the report to a disclosure officer.

Making a report to a recipient outside of Hunter JO

You can also make your report to a public official in another agency (meaning an agency you do not work for) or an integrity agency. These include:

- the *head of another agency* this means the head of any public service agency
- an integrity agency a list of integrity agencies is located at Annexure B of this policy
- a disclosure officer for another agency ways to contact disclosure officers for other agencies is located in an agency's PID policy which can be found on their public website
- a Minister or a member of a Minister's staff but the report must be made in writing.

If you choose to make a disclosure outside of Hunter JO, it is possible that your disclosure will be referred back to Hunter JO so that appropriate action can be taken.

Making a report to a Member of Parliament or journalist

Disclosures to MPs or journalists are different to other reports. You can only disclose a report of wrongdoing as a voluntary PID to an MP or journalist in the following circumstances:

- You must have first made substantially the same disclosure (described here as a 'previous disclosure') to someone who can receive disclosures.
- The previous disclosure must be substantially true.
- You did not make the previous disclosure anonymously.
- You did not give a written waiver of your right to receive information relating to your previous disclosure.

- You did not receive the following from Hunter JO:
 - notification that Hunter JO will not investigate the serious wrongdoing and will also not refer the previous disclosure to another agency, or
 - the following information at the end of the investigation period:
 - o notice of Hunter JO decision to investigate the serious wrongdoing
 - o a description of the results of an investigation into the serious wrongdoing
 - details of proposed or recommended corrective action as a result of the previous disclosure or investigation.

Investigation period means:

- after six months from the previous disclosure being made, or
- after 12 months if you applied for an internal review of the agency's decision within six months of making the disclosure.

If all the above requirements are met, your disclosure to an MP or journalist may be a voluntary PID.

(f) What form should a voluntary PID take?

You can make a voluntary PID:

- in writing this could be an email or letter to a person who can receive voluntary PIDs.
- *orally* have a private discussion with a person who can receive voluntary PIDs. This can be face-to-face, via telephone or virtually.
- anonymously write an email or letter or call a person who can receive PIDs to make a
 report without providing your name or anything that might identify you as the maker of the
 report. A report will only be considered anonymous if there is no reasonable or practical
 way of communicating with the person making the report. Even if you choose to remain
 anonymous, you will still be protected under the PID Act. It may be difficult, however, for
 Hunter JO to investigate the matter(s) you have disclosed if we cannot contact you for
 further information.

(g) What should I include in my report?

You should provide as much information as possible so we can deal with the report effectively. The type of information you should include is:

- date, time and location of key events
- names of person(s) involved in the suspected wrongdoing, their role, title and how they are involved
- your relationship with the person(s) involved, such as whether you work closely with them
- your explanation of the matter you are reporting
- how you became aware of the matter you are reporting
- possible witnesses
- other information you have that supports your report.

(h) What if I am not sure if my report is a PID?

You should report all wrongdoing you become aware of regardless of whether you think it is serious wrongdoing. It is important for Hunter JO to understand what is or may be occurring.

We are then responsible for making sure your report is handled appropriately under the PID Act, or if it is not a PID, in line with our other procedures. Even if your report is not a PID, it may fall within

another one of the agency's policies for dealing with reports, allegations or complaints.

(i) Deeming that a report is a voluntary PID

The Hunter JO can, in certain circumstances, determine that a report is a voluntary PID even if the report does not otherwise have all the features of a voluntary PID. This is known as the 'deeming power'.

By deeming that a report is a voluntary PID, it ensures that reporters are provided with protections under the PID Act.

If you make a report that has not met all the requirements of a voluntary PID, you can refer your matter to Director Hunter JO (Executive Officer) to request that they consider deeming your report to be a voluntary PID.

A decision to deem a report to be a voluntary PID is at the discretion of the Director Hunter JO (Executive Officer). For more information about the deeming power, see the Ombudsman's guideline 'Deeming that a disclosure is a voluntary PID'.

(j) Who can I talk to if I have questions or concerns?

For a confidential discussion, you are invited to contact Disclosure Officers at Annexure A.

2. Protections

(a) How is the maker of a voluntary PID protected?

When you make a voluntary PID you receive special protections under the PID Act.

We are committed to taking all reasonable steps to protect you from detriment as a result of having made a PID. We are also committed to maintaining your confidentiality as much as possible while the PID is being dealt with.

We will not tolerate any type of detrimental action being taken against you because you have made a report, might make a report or are believed to have made a report.

The maker of a voluntary PID is protected in the following ways:

- Protection from detrimental action
 - A person cannot take detrimental action against another person because they have made a voluntary PID or are considering making a PID. Detrimental action includes bullying, harassment, intimidation or dismissal.
 - Once we become aware that a voluntary PID by a person employed or otherwise associated with Hunter JO that concerns serious wrongdoing relating to Hunter JO has been made, Hunter JO will undertake a risk assessment and take steps to mitigate the risk of detrimental action occurring against the person who made the voluntary PID.
 - It is a criminal offence for someone to take detrimental action against a person because they have made or may make a voluntary PID. It is punishable by a maximum penalty of 200 penalty units or imprisonment for five years or both.
 - A person may seek compensation where unlawful detrimental action has been taken against them.
 - A person can apply for a court order (injunction) where detrimental action is threatened or has occurred (for example, an order to prevent dismissal or to require

reinstatement).

Note that a person who makes a PID can still be subject to reasonable management action (such as ordinary performance reviews and performance management). Provided such action is not taken because of the PID, it is not detrimental action under the PID Act.

Immunity from civil and criminal liability

Some public officials are often subject to a duty of confidentiality that prevents them disclosing certain information that they obtain or become aware of at work. Sometimes, in order to make a PID, public officials will need to breach or disregard such confidentiality duties. If that happens, a public official cannot be disciplined, sued or criminally charged for breaching confidentiality.

Confidentiality

Public officials and agencies must not disclose information tending to identify a person as the maker of a voluntary PID unless doing so is permitted by the PID Act.

• Protection from liability for own past conduct

The Attorney General can give the maker an undertaking that a disclosure of their own past conduct will not be used against them if a person discloses their own wrongdoing or misconduct while making a report. This undertaking can only be given on application by an integrity agency to the Attorney General.

(b) Protections for people who make mandatory and witness PIDs

Apart from PIDs that are made voluntarily by public officials, there are other types of reports that are recognised as PIDs under the PID Act:

- A mandatory PID: This is a PID where the public official has made the report about serious wrongdoing because they have a legal obligation to make that report, or because making that report is an ordinary aspect of their role or function in an agency.
- A witness PID: This is a PID where a person discloses information during an investigation of serious wrongdoing following a request or requirement of the investigator.

Protections for makers of mandatory and witness PIDs are detailed in the table below.

Protection	Mandatory PID	Witness PID
Detrimental action — It is an offence to take detrimental action against a person based on the suspicion, belief or awareness that a person has made, may have made or may make a PID.	√	✓
Right to compensation — A person can initiate proceedings and seek compensation for injury, damage or loss suffered as a result of detrimental action being taken against them.	√	√
Ability to seek injunction — An injunction can be sought to prevent the commission or possible commission of a detrimental action offence against a person. For example, an order to prevent dismissal or to require reinstatement.	√	√

Protection	Mandatory PID	Witness PID
Immunity from civil and criminal liability — a person will not incur civil or criminal liability if the person breaches a duty of confidentiality while making a disclosure. This means that legal action cannot be taken against a person for: • breaching a duty of secrecy or confidentiality, or • breaching another restriction on disclosure.	✓	√

3. Reporting detrimental action

If you experience adverse treatment or detrimental action, such as bullying or harassment, you should report this immediately. You can report any experience of adverse treatment or detrimental action directly to Hunter JO, or to an integrity agency. A list of integrity agencies is located at Annexure B of this policy.

4. General support

(a) Support for Public Officials reporting wrongdoing

Hunter JO will ensure that Public Officials who have reported wrongdoing, regardless of whether they have made a PID, are provided with access to support. The support available includes:

- Allocation of a key contact person through-out the whole process
- Access to Hunter JO's Employee Assistance Program

(b) Support for Public Officials who are the subject of a PID

Hunter JO will ensure that the Public Official who is the subject of a PID is:

- Treated fairly and with impartiality;
- Informed of their rights and obligations;
- Kept informed of progress during an investigation;
- Given the opportunity to respond to any allegation made against them;
- Advised of the outcome of any investigation;
- Provided with information about support available from Hunter JOI or external agencies; and
- Provided with access to Hunter JO's Employee Assistance Program.

5. Roles and responsibilities of Hunter JO employees

Certain people within Hunter JO have responsibilities under the PID Act.

(a) The Executive Officer is responsible for:

- fostering a workplace culture where reporting is encouraged
- receiving disclosures from public officials
- ensuring there is a system in place for assessing disclosures
- ensuring the Hunter JO complies with this policy and the PID Act
- ensuring that the Hunter JO has appropriate systems for:
 - overseeing internal compliance with the PID Act

- supporting public officials who make voluntary PIDs, including by minimising the risk of detrimental action
- implementing corrective action if serious wrongdoing is found to have occurred
- complying with reporting obligations regarding allegations or findings of detrimental action
- complying with yearly reporting obligations to the NSW Ombudsman.

(b) Disclosure officers

Disclosure officers are responsible for:

- receiving reports from public officials
- receiving reports when they are passed on to them by managers
- ensuring reports are dealt with appropriately
- ensuring that any oral reports that have been received are recorded in writing.

(c) Managers

The responsibilities of managers include:

- receiving reports from persons that report to them or that they supervise
- passing on reports they receive to a disclosure officer.

(d) All employees

All employees must:

- report suspected serious wrongdoing or other misconduct
- use their best endeavours to assist in an investigation of serious wrongdoing if asked to do so by a person dealing with a voluntary PID on behalf of Hunter JO.
- treat any person dealing with or investigating reports of serious wrongdoing with respect.

All employees must not take detrimental action against any person who has made, may in the future make, or is suspected of having made, a PID.

6. How we will deal with voluntary PIDs

(a) How Hunter JO will acknowledge that we have received a report and keep the person who made it informed

When a disclosure officer in Hunter JO receives a report which is a voluntary PID, or looks like it may be a voluntary PID, the person who made the report will receive the following information:

- You will receive an acknowledgment that the report has been received. This acknowledgement will:
 - state that the report will be assessed to identify whether it is a PID
 - state that the PID Act applies to how Hunter JO deals with the report
 - provide clear information on how you can access this PID policy
 - provide you with details of a contact person and available supports.
- If the report is a voluntary PID, we will inform you as soon as possible how we intend to deal with the report. This may include:
 - that we are investigating the serious wrongdoing
 - that we will refer the report to a different agency (if appropriate) to deal with the

- voluntary PID. If we do this, we will provide you with details of this referral
- If we decide to not investigate the report and to not refer it to another agency for it to be investigated, we will tell you the reasons for this decision. We will also notify the NSW Ombudsman of this decision.
- If we decide to investigate the serious wrongdoing, we will provide you with updates on the investigation at least every three months. During this time, if you would like more frequent updates, you should contact the contact person who was nominated when you made the report.
 - If we investigate the serious wrongdoing, we will provide you with the following information once the investigation is complete:
 - o a description of the results of the investigation that is, we will tell you whether we found that serious wrongdoing took place.
 - information about any corrective action as a result of the investigation/s —
 this means we will tell you what action we took in relation to the person who
 engaged in the serious wrongdoing or if the serious wrongdoing was by our
 agency, what we have put in place to address that serious wrongdoing.
 - Corrective action could include taking disciplinary action against someone or changing the practices, policies and procedures that we have in place which led to the serious wrongdoing.
- There may be some details about both the findings made as a result of the investigation and the corrective action taken that cannot be revealed to you. We will always balance the right of a person who makes a report to know the outcome of that report, with other legal obligations we have.
- If you have made an anonymous report, in many cases we may not be able to provide this information to you.

(b) How Hunter JO will deal with voluntary PIDs

Once a report that may be a voluntary PID is received Hunter JO will look at the information contained in the report to see if it has the features of a voluntary PID. This assessment is undertaken to identify whether the report is a voluntary PID or another type of disclosure, and to make sure that the right steps are followed. If it is a voluntary PID, we will ensure that we comply with the requirements in the PID Act.

Report not a voluntary PID

Even if the report is not a voluntary PID, it will still need to be dealt with in a manner consistent with our:

- Code of Conduct
- Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Procedure.

If the report is not a voluntary PID, we will let you know that the PID Act does not apply to the report and how we will deal with the concerns raised in the report.

If you are not happy with this assessment or otherwise disagree with it, you can raise it with the person who has communicated the outcome with you or a disclosure officer, request an internal review or request that the matter be conciliated. Hunter JO can, but do not have to, request the NSW Ombudsman to conciliate the matter.

Cease dealing with report as voluntary PID

Hunter JO may stop dealing with a voluntary PID because it is not actually a voluntary PID (meaning it does not have all the features of a PID).

Where the report is a voluntary PID

If the report is a voluntary PID:

- In most cases we will conduct an investigation to make findings about whether the serious
 wrongdoing disclosed in the report occurred, who was involved, who was responsible, and whether
 the people involved, or the agency engaged, in serious wrongdoing. There may be circumstances
 where we believe an investigation is not warranted for example, if the conduct has previously
 been investigated.
- There may also be circumstances where we decide that the report should be referred to another agency, such as an integrity agency. For example, reports concerning possible corrupt conduct may be required to be reported to the ICAC in accordance with section 11 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988.
- Before referring a matter, we will discuss the referral with the other agency, and we will provide you with details of the referral and a contact person within the other agency.
- If we decide not to investigate a report and to not refer the matter to another agency, we must let you know the reasons for this and notify the NSW Ombudsman.

(c) How Hunter JO will protect the confidentiality of the maker of a voluntary PID

We understand that people who make voluntary PIDs may want their identity and the fact that they have made a report to be confidential.

Under the PID Act, information tending to identify a person as the maker of a voluntary PID (known as identifying information) is not to be disclosed by a public official or an agency.

There are certain circumstances under the PID Act that allow for the disclosure of identifying information. These include:

- where the person consents in writing to the disclosure
- where it is generally known that the person is the maker of the voluntary PID because of their voluntary self-identification as the maker
- when the public official or Hunter JO reasonably considers it necessary to disclose the information to protect a person from detriment
- where it is necessary the information be disclosed to a person whose interests are affected by the disclosure
- where the information has previously been lawfully published
- when the information is disclosed to a medical practitioner or psychologist for the purposes of providing medical or psychiatric care, treatment or counselling to the individual disclosing the information
- when the information is disclosed for the purposes of proceedings before a court or tribunal
- when the disclosure of the information is necessary to deal with the disclosure effectively
- if it is otherwise in the public interest to disclose the identifying information.

We will not disclose identifying information unless it is necessary and authorised under the PID Act.

We will put in place steps to keep the identifying information of the maker and the fact that a report has been made confidential. It may not be possible for us to maintain complete confidentiality while we progress the investigation, but we will do all that we practically can to not unnecessarily disclose information from which the maker of the report can be identified. We will do this by:

- limiting the number of people who are aware of the maker's identity or information that could identify them.
- If we must disclose information that may identify the maker of the PID, we will still not disclose the

actual identity of the maker of the PID, unless we have their consent to do so.

- We will ensure that any person who does know the identity of the maker of a PID is reminded that they have a legal obligation to keep their identity confidential.
- We will ensure that only authorised persons have access to emails, files or other documentation that contain information about the identity of the maker.
- We will undertake an assessment to determine if anyone is aware of the maker's identity and if those persons have a motive to cause detrimental action to be taken against the maker or impede the progress of the investigation.
- We will provide information to the maker of the PID about the importance of maintaining confidentiality and advising them how best to protect their identity, for example, by telling them not to discuss their report with other staff.

If confidentiality cannot be maintained or is unlikely to be maintained, Hunter JO will:

- advise the person whose identity may become known
- update our risk assessment and risk management plan
- implement strategies to minimise the risk of detrimental action
- provide additional supports to the person who has made the PID
- remind persons who become aware of the identifying information of the consequences for failing to maintain confidentiality and that engaging in detrimental action is a criminal offence and may also be a disciplinary matter.

(d) How Hunter JO will assess and minimise the risk of detrimental action

Hunter JO will not tolerate any detrimental action being taken by any person against a person who has made a PID, investigators, witnesses or the person the report is about.

Hunter JO will assess and take steps to mitigate detrimental action from being taken against the maker of a voluntary PID, the person whose conduct is the subject of a PID, investigators and witnesses.

Hunter JO will take steps to assess and minimise the risk of detrimental action by:

- explaining that a risk assessment will be undertaken, and a risk management plan will be created (including reassessing the risk throughout the entirety of the matter)
- providing details of the role that will be responsible for undertaking a risk assessment
- explaining the approvals for risk assessment and the risk management plan, that is, rank or role of the person who has final approval
- explaining how the agency will communicate with the maker to identify risks
- listing the protections that will be offered, that is, the agency will discuss protection options with the maker which may including remote working or approved leave for the duration of the investigation
- outlining what supports will be provided.

Detrimental action against a person is an act or omission that causes, comprises, involves or encourages detriment to a person or a threat of detriment to a person (whether express or implied). Detriment to a person includes:

- injury, damage or loss
- property damage
- reputational damage
- intimidation, bullying or harassment

- unfavourable treatment in relation to another person's job
- discrimination, prejudice or adverse treatment
- disciplinary proceedings or disciplinary action, or
- any other type of disadvantage.

Detrimental action does not include:

- lawful action taken by a person or body to investigate serious wrongdoing or other misconduct
- the lawful reporting or publication of a finding of serious wrongdoing or other misconduct
- the lawful making of adverse comment, resulting from investigative action
- the prosecution of a person for a criminal offence
- reasonable management action taken by someone in relation to a person who made or may make a PID. For example, a reasonable appraisal of a PID maker's work performance.

(e) How Hunter JO will deal with allegations of a detrimental action offence

If Hunter JO becomes aware of an allegation that a detrimental action offence has occurred or may occur, Hunter JO will:

- take all steps possible to stop the action and protect the person(s)
- take appropriate disciplinary action against anyone that has taken detrimental action
- refer any evidence of a detrimental action offence to the Commissioner of Police and the ICAC or the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (whichever is applicable)
- notify NSW Ombudsman about the allegation of a detrimental action offence being committed.

(f) What Hunter JO will do if an investigation finds that serious wrongdoing has occurred

If, after an investigation, it is found that serious wrongdoing or other misconduct has occurred, Hunter JO will take the most appropriate action to address that wrongdoing or misconduct. This is also known as corrective action.

Corrective action can include:

- a formal apology
- improving internal policies to adequately prevent and respond to similar instances of wrongdoing
- providing additional education and training to staff where required
- taking employment action against persons involved in the wrongdoing (such as termination of employment, relocation, a caution or reprimand)
- payment of compensation to people who have been affected by serious wrongdoing or other misconduct.

7. Review and dispute resolution

(a) Internal review

People who make voluntary PIDs can seek internal review of the following decisions made by Hunter JO:

- that Hunter JO is not required to deal with the report as a voluntary PID
- to stop dealing with the report because Hunter JO decided it was not a voluntary PID

- to not investigate the serious wrongdoing and not refer the report to another agency
- to cease investigating the serious wrongdoing without either completing the investigation or referring the report to another agency for investigation.

Hunter JO will ensure internal reviews are conducted in compliance with the PID Act.

If you would like to make an application for an internal review, you must apply in writing within 28 days of being informed of Hunter JO's decision. The application should state the reasons why you consider Hunter JO's decision should not have been made. You may also submit any other relevant material with your application.

(b) Voluntary dispute resolution

If a dispute arises between Hunter JO and a person who has made a report which is, or may be, a voluntary PID, we may request the NSW Ombudsman to conciliate the dispute. Conciliation is a voluntary process and will only be suitable for disputes where Hunter JO and the maker of the report are willing to resolve the dispute.

8. Other agency obligations

(a) Record-keeping requirements

Hunter JO must keep full and accurate records with respect to all information received in connection with the PID Act. This ensures that Hunter JO complies with its obligations under the *State Records Act 1998*.

(b) Reporting of voluntary PIDs and Hunter JO annual return to the Ombudsman

Each year Hunter JO provide an annual return to the NSW Ombudsman which includes:

- information about voluntary PIDs received by Hunter JO during each return period (yearly with the start date being 1 July)
- action taken by Hunter JO to deal with voluntary PIDs during the return period
- how Hunter JO promoted a culture in the workplace where PIDs are encouraged.

(c) How Hunter JO will ensure compliance with the PID Act and this policy

- Incorporate PID Policy obligations into Hunter JO Compliance calendar
- Complete annual PID self-assessment audit
- Complete annual return to NSW Ombudsman
- Provide information and training to Hunter JO staff on the purpose and application of the PID policy.

Annexure A - Names and contact details of disclosure officers for Hunter JO.

Disclosure Officer	Contact Information
Lisa Exton	E: lisae@arrowco.com.au
Human Resources Officer	P: (02) 4978 4043
Arrow Collaborative Services	M: 0438 112 928
Tim Askew	tima@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au
Director of Programs	M 0436 420 623
Hunter Joint Organisation	
Kim Carland	kimc@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au
Advocacy and Government Relations Lead	M 0460 034 614
Hunter Joint Organisation	
Chris Dart	chrisd@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au
Program Lead, Circular Economy	M 0460 038 197
Hunter Joint Organisation	
Anna Flack	annaf@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au
Senior Project Coordinator	M 0460 038 199
Hunter Joint Organisation	

Annexure B — List of integrity agencies

Integrity agency	What they investigate	Contact information
The NSW Ombudsman	Most kinds of serious maladministration by most agencies and public officials (but not NSW Police, judicial officers or MPs)	Telephone: 1800 451 524 between 9am to 3pm Monday to Friday Writing: Level 24, 580 George Street, Sydney NSW 2000 Email: info@ombo.nsw.gov.au
The Auditor-General	Serious and substantial waste of public money by auditable agencies	Telephone: 02 9275 7100 Writing: GPO Box 12, Sydney NSW 2001 Email: governance@audit.nsw.gov.au
Independent Commission Against Corruption	Corrupt conduct Telephone: 02 8281 5999 or toll free 1800 463 909 (callers outside Sydney between 9am and 3pm, Monday to F Writing: GPO Box 500, Sydney NSW 2 faxing 02 9264 5364 Email: icac@icac.nsw.gov.au	
The Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption	Serious maladministration by the ICAC or the ICAC officers	Telephone: 02 9228 3023 Writing: PO Box 5341, Sydney NSW 2001 Email: oiicac executive@oiicac.nsw.gov.au
The Law Enforcement Conduct Commission	Serious maladministration by the NSW Police Force or the NSW Crime Commission	Telephone: 02 9321 6700 or 1800 657 079 Writing: GPO Box 3880, Sydney NSW 2001 Email: contactus@lecc.nsw.gov.au
The Inspector of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission	Serious maladministration by the LECC and LECC officers	Telephone: 02 9228 3023 Writing: GPO Box 5341, Sydney NSW 2001 Email: oilecc executive@oilecc.nsw.gov.au
Office of the Local Government	Local government pecuniary interest contraventions	Email: olg@olg.nsw.gov.au
The Privacy Commissioner	Privacy contraventions	Telephone: 1800 472 679 Writing: GPO Box 7011, Sydney NSW 2001 Email: ipcinfo@ipc.nsw.gov.au
The Information Commissioner	Government information contraventions	Telephone: 1800 472 679 Writing: GPO Box 7011, Sydney NSW 2001 Email: ipcinfo@ipc.nsw.gov.au

YTD INCOME STATEMENT

			YTD
SUMMARY BY COMPANY	HUNTER COUNCILS INC	HUNTER JOINT ORGANISATION	GROUP TOTAL
REVENUE			
Membership Subscriptions	-	791,896	791,896
Project Funding	-	1,897,474	1,897,474
Management Fees	-	-	-
Training Revenue	-	-	-
Consultancy Fees	-	-	-
Rent & Overheads	54,094	-	54,094
Miscellaneous	-	18,965	18,965
Legal Fees	-	-	-
Client Fees	-	-	-
Arrow Contribution	-	58,463	58,463
Revenue - Total	54,094	2,766,797	2,820,892
COST OF SALES			
Cost of Sales	-	875,556	875,556
Direct Labour	-	-	-
GROSS PROFIT / (LOSS)	54,094	1,891,241	1,945,336
Gross Margin	100%	68%	69%
EXPENSES			
General & Admistration	54,587	415,012	469,600
Occupancy Costs	88,025	23,129	111,154
Depreciation	37,951	41,848	79,799
Information Technology	37	31,313	31,351
Overhead Labour	_	1,196,648	1,196,648
Employee Costs	_	6,112	6,112
Travel & Accomodation	_	13,274	13,274
Motor Vehicle	-	35,632	35,632
Overhead Expenses - Total	180,601	1,762,968	1,943,569
NET PROFIT / (LOSS) - OPERATIONS	(126,507)	128,274	1,767
Net Profit Margin	-234%	5%	0%
OTHER INCOME / (EXPENSES)			
OTHER INCOME		40.00	
Profit / Loss on sale of asset	-	12,635	12,635
Interest	-	-	-
Other - Extraordinary	_	_	-
OTHER EXPENSES	-	-	-
HJO Contributions	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-
EVED A ODUNA DV EVDENICES	-	-	-
EXTRAODINARY EXPENSESS	-	-	-
Other - Extraordinary	-	-	-
Redundancy	-	-	-
Other Income / (Expenses) - Total		12,635	12,635
NET PROFIT / (LOSS) BEFORE TAX	(126,507)	140,909	14,402
EBITDA - NET PROFIT	(88,555)	182,757	94,201
EBITDA Margin	-164%	7%	3%

YTD BALANCE SHEET

SUMMARY BY COMPANY	HUNTER COUNCILS INC	HUNTER JOINT ORGANISATION
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash & Cash Equivalents	1,053	1,169,528
Receivables	8,828	178,860
Prepayments	3,375	5,510
Other Receivables	(17,666)	1
	(4,410)	1,353,899
NON CURRENT ASSETS		
Buildings	803,139	-
Land	351,302	-
Computers	-	4,154
Fixtures and Fittings	10,779	8,620
Building Improvements	359,890	-
Motor Vehicles	-	36,766
ROU	-	-
Other	-	-
Intercompany Loans	(645,412)	91,762
	879,698	141,302
TOTAL ASSETS	875,288	1,495,201
CURRENT MARKUTES		
CURRENT LIABILITIES Payables	12 200	12 110
Payables Accruals	12,200	42,446
Loans	7,459	7,880
Employee Payables	<u> </u>	- 83,646
Other Payables	(1,525)	4,856
GST	(976)	(17,631)
Employee Entitlements	-	209,946
Unearned Income	_	177,129
Unspent Grant Funding	_	1,009,658
Other Payables	_	-
	17,158	1,517,930
NON CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Term Debt	-	-
Employee Entitlements - non current Lease Liability	- -	-
Intercompany Loans	226,000	-
	226,000	<u>-</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES	243,158	1,517,930
NET ASSETS	632,130	(22,729)
EQUITY		
Retained Earnings	758,637	(163,639)
Current Year Earnings	(126,507)	140,910
-		

YTD CASHFLOW

SUMMARY BY COMPANY	HUNTER COUNCILS INC	HUNTER JOINT ORGANISATION	GROUP TOTAL
CASH FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Cash inflows from			
Trade debtors	83,728	3,100,301	3,184,029
Other receivables	, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,	810,918	810,918
Other Income	5,441	-	5,441
			2,
	89,169	3,911,219	4,000,388
		, ,	, ,
Cash outflows to			
Trade Creditors	(133,434)	(1,671,279)	(1,804,713)
Employee Expenses	_	(862,003)	(862,003
Funding Disbursements	_	-	-
Other			
Other	-	-	-
Taxes	3,460	(242 922)	(220.262)
Taxes	3,400	(242,823)	(239,363)
	(129,974)	(2,776,105)	(2,906,079)
Net cash from/(used)	(40,805)	1,135,114	1,094,309
CASH FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES	(40,503)	1,133,114	1,034,303
Cash Inflows from			
Proceeds from sale of P&E		29,000	20,000
	-	28,000	28,000
Other	-	-	-
		28,000	28,000
	-	28,000	28,000
Cash outflows to			
Purchase of CAPEX	_	(46,537)	(46,537)
Repay / (new loans) - Finance Lease	_	-	-
Other	_	_	_
	-	(46,537)	(46,537)
let cash from/(used)		(18,537)	(18,537)
CASH FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES	_	(16,557)	(10,557)
Cash inflows from			
	18,000	35 000	42,000
Intercompany (Arrow) Other	18,000	25,000	43,000
Other	-	-	-
	18,000	25,000	43,000
	10,000	25,000	+3,000
Cash outflows to			
Intercompany (Arrow)	_	<u>-</u>	_
Other			
Other	_		
	-	-	-
let cash from/(used)	18,000	25,000	43,000
Movement in cash	10,000		
Cash at the hoginaing of the nexted	22.050	27.052	E1 013
Cash at the beginning of the period	23,859	27,953	51,812
Net increase/(decrease) in cash	(22,805)	1,141,577	1,118,772
CASH AT THE END OF THE PERIOD	1,054	1,169,530	1,170,584



6 Macquarie Street, Sydney

MEMBERS MEETING INVITEES				
Canhama Basian IO	Chair	Cr Russell Fitzpatrick, Mayor Bega Valley Shire Council		
Canberra Region JO	Executive Officer	Sharon Houlihan		
Control NCW IO	Chair	Cr Kevin Beatty, Mayor Cabonne Shire Council		
Central NSW JO	Executive Officer	Jenny Bennett		
For North West 10	Chair	Cr Jarrod Marsden, Mayor Cobar Shire Council		
Far North West JO	Executive Officer	Ross Earl		
Far South West JO	Chair (Acting)	Cr Daniel Linklater, Mayor Wentworth Shire Council		
Tai South West 30	Executive Officer	Jay Nankivell, General Manager Broken Hill City Council		
Hunter JO	Chair	Cr Sue Moore, Mayor Singleton Council		
Hunter JO	Executive Officer	Steve Wilson		
Illawarra Shoalhaven JO	Chair	Cr Chris Homer, Mayor Shellharbour Council		
illawarra Shoainaven JO	Executive Officer	Roger Stephan		
Mid North Coast JO	Chair	Cr Steve Allen, Mayor Bellingen Shire Council		
	Executive Officer	Liz Fairweather		
Namoi Unlimited JO	Chair	Non-Operational		
Namoi Ominited 10	Executive Officer	Non-Operational		
New England JO	Chair	Cr Sam Coupland, Mayor Armidale Regional Council		
(Coalition of Renewable Energy Mayors, CoREM)	Executive Officer	Unconfirmed		
North and Birman IO	Chair	Cr Chris Cherry, Mayor Tweed Shire Council		
Northern Rivers JO	Executive Officer	Phil Rudd		
Alliance of Western	Chair	Cr Glen Neill, Mayor Bogan Shire Council		
Councils	Executive Officer	Lisa Schiff		
Discoving and Manager 10	Chair	Cr Ruth McRae OAM, Mayor Murrumbidgee Shire Council		
Riverina and Murray JO	Executive Officer	Yvonne Lingua		
Riverina JO (Riverina Eastern Regional	Chair	Cr Rick Firman OAM, Mayor, Temora Shire Council (Deputy Convenor)		
Organisation of Councils, REROC)	CEO	Megan Mulrooney		

INVITED GUESTS		
NSW Minister for Local Government	The Hon. Ron Hoenig MP	
	Deputy Secretary, Local Government	Brett Whitworth
NSW Office of Local	Director, Office of Deputy Secretary	Patrick Doyle
Government	Manager Council Engagement	Sharne Colefax
	Council Engagement Manager	Louise Taylor
Local Government	President	Cr Phyllis Miller OAM Mayor Forbes Shire Council
NSW	Chief Executive Officer	David Reynolds
Australian Local Government	President	Cr Matt Burnett Mayor Gladstone Regional Council
Association	Chief Executive Officer	Amy Crawford

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1. Welcome & Acknowledgement of Country

Convenor, Cr Sue Moore (Mayor Singleton Council and Chair Hunter JO) will welcome members and guests and acknowledge the country and history of the traditional custodians of the lands upon which we meet today. We pay our respects to the Elders past, present and emerging, of our region, and of Australia.

2. Attendees and Apologies

Recommendation:

That the attendees and apologies of the NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum held on 7 May
 2025 be accepted.

The secretariat will call for any additional attendees and apologies.

Additional attendees:

 Mayor Julie Ham of Snowy Valleys Council, Deputy Chair Canberra Region Joint Organisation (in place of Mayor Russell Fitzpatrick)

Apologies have been received from the following:

- Mayor Russell Fitzpatrick, Canberra Region Joint Organisation
- Jenny Bennett, Executive Officer, Central NSW JO
- Lisa Schiff, Executive Officer, Alliance of Western Councils

Apologies have been received from the following guests:

• Cr Matt Burnett, Mayor Gladstone Regional Council, President Australian Local Government Association

3. 2025 Meeting Dates

Recommendation:

That the NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum endorse the proposed meeting dates for 2025.

In line with previous practice, it is proposed that the remaining 2025 meeting dates for the JO Chairs Forum be aligned to meetings of the NSW Country Mayors Association held in Sydney (ie held on the afternoon prior to the Country Mayors meeting). In line with this practice the proposed dates for 2025 are:

- Thursday 7 August (3.00 5.00pm)
- Thursday 13 November (3.00 5.00pm)

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

4.1. Confirmation of Previous Meeting Minutes

Recommendation:

• That the minutes of the NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum held on 14 November 2024 be received and noted.

NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum Minutes 4.00pm, Thursday 14 November 2024 McKell Room, NSW Parliament House

Present - Chairs

Cr Russell Fitzpatrick Mayor Bega Valley Shire Council Canberra Region JO
Cr Kevin Beatty Mayor Cabonne Shire Council Central NSW JO
Cr Jarrod Marsden Mayor Cobar Shire Council Far North West JO

Bob Stewart Administrator Central Darling Shire Council Far South West JO

Cr Sue Moore Mayor Singleton Council Hunter JO

Cr Chris Homer Mayor Shellharbour Council Illawarra Shoalhaven JO

Cr Sam Coupland Mayor Armidale Regional Council New England JO
Cr Chris Cherry Mayor Tweed Shire Council Northern Rivers JO

Cr Glen Neill Mayor Bogan Shire Council Orana JO

Cr Ruth McRae OAM Mayor Murrumbidgee Shire Council Riverina and Murray JO

Cr Rick Firman OAM Mayor Temora Shire Council Riverina JO

Present - Executive Officers

Sharon Houlihan Canberra Region JO

Jenny Bennett Central NSW JO

Jay Nankivell Far South West JO General Manager Broken Hill City Council

Steve Wilson Hunter JO

Roger Stephan Illawarra Shoalhaven JO

Liz Fairweather Mid North Coast JO

James Roncon New England JO General Manager Armidale Regional

Council

Lisa Shift Orana JO

Yvonne Lingua Riverina and Murray JO

Julie Briggs / Megan Mulrooney Riverina JO

Additional Attendees

Leonie Brown General Manager Bourke Shire Council (observer), representing Ross Earl

from Far North West JO

Melissa Boxall General Manager Temora Shire Council

Louise Taylor Council Engagement Manager, NSW Office of Local Government

David Reynolds Chief Executive Officer, Local Government NSW

Apologies from forum members

Cr Steve Allan Mayor Bellingen Shire Council Mid North Coast JO
Ross Earl Executive Officer Far North West JO
Phil Rudd Executive Officer Northern Rivers JO

Apologies from guests

Cr Matt Burnett

The Hon. Ron Hoenig MP NSW Minister for Local Government

Brett Whitworth Deputy Secretary, Local Government NSW Office of Local

Government

Danny Lester Acting Deputy Secretary, Local Government NSW Office of Local

Government

Cr Darriea Turley AM Councillor Broken Hill City Council, President Local Government NSW

Mayor Gladstone Regional Council, President Local Government NSW

Amy Crawford Chief Executive Officer Local Government NSW

Formal meeting opened at 4.00pm

Item 1 Welcome and Acknowledgment of Country

Sharon Houlihan, Secretariat NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum and Executive Officer Canberra Region Joint Organisation, in the absence of a forum chair, chaired the meeting until a new Convenor was appointed.

The secretariat welcomed members and guests and made an acknowledgement of country. The meeting commenced at 4pm.

Item 2 Attendees and Apologies

The secretariat called for any additional attendees and apologies. Apologies were received from forum members and guests.

Item 3 NSW JO Chairs Forum Terms of Reference

Resolved: That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum endorse the NSW JO Chairs Forum Terms of Reference 2024-2028 with the exception that the proposed removal of a deputy convenor and chair be reinserted into the terms of references.

Moved: Cr Russell Fitzpatrick, Seconded: Cr Sue Moore, Carried.

Item 4 Appointment of NSW JO Chairs Forum Convenor

4.1 Nomination for Convenor

Resolved: That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum receives the verbal nomination for NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum convenor and chair from Cr Sue Moore, Chair Hunter Joint Organisation.

Moved: Cr Russell Fitzpatrick, Seconded: Cr Rick Firman, Carried

4.2 Appointment of Convenor

Resolved: That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum appoints Cr Sue Moore, Chair Hunter Joint Organisation as convenor and chair of the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum, and notes Hunter Joint Organisation as the secretariat, for a period of two years to align with the NSW local government election cycle.

Moved: Cr Russell Fitzpatrick, Seconded: Cr Rick Firman, Carried.

4.3 Nominations for Deputy Convenor

Resolved: That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum receives the verbal nomination for NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum Deputy Convenor from Cr Kevin Beatty, Chair Central NSW Joint Organisation.

Moved: Cr Rick Firman, Seconded: Cr Sue Moore, Carried.

4.4 Appointment of Deputy Chair

Resolved: That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum appoints Cr Kevin Beatty, Chair Central NSW Joint Organisation as Deputy Convenor of the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum.

Moved: Cr Rick Firman, Seconded: Cr Sue Moore, Carried.

Item 5 Minutes of Previous Meeting

5.1 Confirmation of Previous Meeting Minutes

Resolved: That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum confirms the minutes from its meeting held on 8 August 2024.

Moved: Cr Sue Moore, Seconded: Cr Kevin Beatty, Carried.

5.2 Actions of Previous Meetings

Clarification sought by secretariat as to previous meetings actions relating to Coalition of Renewable Energy Council presentation.

Update to actions list: Jenny Bennett Executive Officer Central NSW Joint Organisation to prepare report for next meeting regarding the NSW Renewable Energy Planning Framework's new Benefit Sharing Guidelines November 2024 including recommendations for NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum and/or individual joint organisational action to progress adoption of local development frameworks, statements of expectations or similar in NSW regional and rural councils.

Resolved: That the NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum notes the progress of actions from previous meetings and discusses and provides guidance for items as indicated on the action list.

Moved: Cr Rick Firman, Seconded: Cr Chris Cherry, Carried.

Item 6 Correspondence

Update to actions list: Secretariat to forward correspondence and attached legal opinion from the Hon Ron Hoenig Minister for Local Government regarding waste tendering legislation amendments to Local Government NSW for information.

Resolved: That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum notes, discusses and provides guidance for further action regarding incoming and outgoing correspondence.

Moved: Cr Russell Fitzpatrick, Seconded: Cr Chris Cherry, Carried.

Item 7 Reports

7.1 NSW Joint Organisation Initiatives, Collaboration and Opportunities

Resolved: That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum notes the information provided in the report on the highlighted activities and achievements of the state-wide joint organisations and notes further opportunities that the network is pursuing.

Moved: Cr Chris Cherry, Seconded: Cr Rick Firman, Carried.

Item 8 Presentations

8.1 Minister for Local Government Address (Apology)

8.2 NSW Office of Local Government Report (Apology)

8.3 Local Government NSW Report

Resolved: That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum notes the report from Local Government NSW.

Moved: Cr Chris Cherry, Seconded: Cr Kevin Beatty, Carried.

8.4 Australian Local Government Association Report

Resolved: That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum notes the report from the Australian Local Government Association.

Moved: Cr Chris Cherry, Seconded: Cr Kevin Beatty, Carried.

Item 9 General Business

The convenor, Cr Sue Moore called for any general business.

Cr Sue Moore, Chair Hunter Joint Organisation congratulated Ms Julie Briggs on her retirement and tanked her for her 27 years of service as executive officer of the Riverina Eastern Regional Organisations of Councils. Cr Sue Moore also welcomed Megan Mulrooney, incoming executive of the Riverina Eastern Regional Organisation of Councils.

Item 10 Close

The convenor, Cr Sue Moore closed the meeting at 4:55pm

Formal meeting closed 4.55pm

4.2. Action Register

Recommendation:

• That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum notes the progress of actions from previous meetings.

Date and Agenda Item No.	Action	Responsible Person	Status	Target Date	Progress Comments
8/8/2024 6.2	Coalition of Renewable Energy Councils Presentation JOs Chairs Forum members to ask their JOs' member councils to consider passing motions in support of CoREM Statement of Expectations content, councils will need to review Mayor Sam Coupland's wording based on local circumstances and the types of projects and developers in their area.	All JOs Chairs	Completed	For review at first meeting 2025	May 2025. Action completed. Refer Agenda Item 6.1 for report prepared by Central NSW JO. Nov 2024. Update to actions list (14/11/24): Jenny Bennett Executive Officer Central NSW Joint Organisation to prepare report for next meeting regarding the NSW Renewable Energy Planning Framework's new Benefit Sharing Guidelines November 2024 including recommendations for NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum and/or individual joint organisations action to progress adoption of local development frameworks, statements of expectations or similar in NSW regional and rural councils.
21/03/2024 4.3	New Waste Tendering regulation Write to the Premier, Minister for Local Government and Minister for Environment to: 1. Raise concerns with the regulatory amendments for tendering of local government waste contracts; 1.1 Seek clarifications and support regarding complying with the new regulatory requirements; and Support LGNSW's advocacy position regarding legal advice obtained as to the validity of the regulatory amendment	Mayor Russell Fitzpatrick	Completed	8 th August 2024	May 2025. Action Completed. Correspondence forwarded to LGNSW December 2024 – refer correspondence Nov 2024: Update to action list (14/11/2024): Secretariat to forward correspondence and attached legal opinion from The Hon Ron Hoenig Minister for Local Government regarding waste tendering legislation amendments to Local Government NSW for information.

Key:CompleteIn progressIncomplete

5. Correspondence

Report Author:	Bonnie Gradwell, Administration and Events Officer, Hunter JO

Recommendation:

• That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum notes, discusses and provides guidance for further action regarding incoming and outgoing correspondence.

Executive Summary:

This report provides an update on correspondence sent and received in relation to the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum.

Background: Nil

Attachments*:

Correspondence Sent:

• Attachment 4-1: Correspondence to LGNSW re legal advice – local government tendering for waste management services, 19 December 2024

Correspondence Received:

- Attachment 4-2: Correspondence from Inger Shimell, A/Manager Capability Dams Safety NSW re Request to meet with the Joint Organisation Chairs Forum, 26 March 2025
- Attachment 4-3: Correspondence from Dr Nicole Carroll Murray Darling Basin Authority re Request to meet with the Joint Organisation Chairs Forum, 1 April 2025
- Attachment 4-4: Correspondence from Gareth Edwards A/Principal Advisor Net Zero Commission re Request to meet with the Joint Organisation Chairs Forum, 15 April 2025

^{*}Attachments are provided as a separate document to provide supplementary information and context.

6. Presentations

6.1. Dams Safety NSW

Presenters: Paul O'Connor, Chair and Chris Salkovic, CEO - Dams Safety NSW

The briefing by Dams Safety NSW (DSNSW) will cover the evolution of dam safety regulation, emphasising effective asset management, transparent regulation, and decision-making. It will highlight the need for strategic planning for climate change resilience and improved stakeholder engagement. Additionally, the briefing will discuss progress in DSNSW's regulatory maturity, the implementation of risk reduction measures, and the importance of community trust and engagement.

6.2. Net Zero Commission

Presenter: Dr Will Rayward-Smith, Executive Director – Net Zero Commission

The <u>Net Zero Commission</u> was established by the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* and commenced operations in mid-2024. It is an independent statutory body which monitors action on climate change in NSW, including how NSW is tracking on its climate goals. The Commission's first <u>report</u> was published in November. It found that unless action is accelerated, NSW will fail to achieve its legislated target of a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. The Commission would like to engage with the JO network on ideas and levers for accelerating progress toward the targets, including the role that local councils can play.

In addition the Commission is currently running a <u>consultation</u> to help shape its work plan and would welcome submissions from JOs and local governments. A PDF of the Consultation paper can be downloaded <u>here</u>).

7. Reports

7.1. Benefit sharing for communities impacted by the transition to renewable energy

Report Author: Ms Jenny Bennett, Executive Officer, Central NSW Joint Organisation

Recommendation:

That the Joint Organisation Chairs' Forum note the Benefit Sharing for communities impacted by the transition to renewable energy report and

- 1. Note that the impacts to communities from the transition to renewables are poorly understood and likely to be highly understated.
- 2. Recognise that the current voluntary benefits sharing arrangements for renewable energy development is a trivial fraction of the income generators receive from Large Generation Certificates:
- 3. Advocate for better benefit sharing arrangements for the communities of regional NSW; and
- 4. Support a greater focus on the roll out of Distributed Energy Resources.

Background:

The significant construction task impacting regional NSW is the transition to renewables. Most communities support an orderly transition to a renewable energy future, where their Joint Organisation participating in the JONZA program demonstrates commitment to reducing their emissions and impacts on climate change.

However, the lived experience is that while the NSW Government has high hopes that the Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) will be a significant part of the emissions and energy security solution into the future, the impacts on both the communities within and outside REZ boundaries are, and will continue for many decades to be, severely impacted by the poor development decisions that have been made to date.

Arguably, NSW Government legislation enabling the transition to a renewable energy future has been rushed, will continue to be rushed and its socialisation has been extremely poor. For example, the cumulative impacts on accommodation of the anticipated REZ construction are only now beginning to be considered. Councils have not been engaged, and assumptions have been made about their capacity and role in managing various issues, for example temporary worker housing, water supply and waste management.

Other agencies, such as TfNSW, are raising concerns about the transport task where, as Australian Government policy is so far behind in embracing renewables with its corollary lacklustre manufacturing, a significant amount of the infrastructure needed must be imported by sea then transported into regional NSW.

The cumulative transport task is particularly important for the Central NSW region (and others) given the geography of NSW needing imported, oversize over-mass renewable infrastructure to be transported over a few roads. At this time these require police escort and where estimates vary, assuming a conservative ten of these movements per working night this will effectively close the Golden Highway to other traffic every working night for ten years. Other estimates suggest the movements will go for twenty years which is the life of a wind turbine blade. This would mean that the transport task for wind turbines into regional NSW, with its corollary impacts, is endless.



One wind turbine blade road transport breakdown on Cowra bridge – image credit: Over and Above Photography

It is devastating that the poor execution of the rewiring is likely to lead to it stumbling with its ongoing challenges for community. There needs to be a significant rethink about what is achievable where distributed energy systems, including storage, would be much more logistically possible than the current effort.

Central NSW Joint Organisation and its members led the development of a Business Case on the Nexus Between Energy Security and Emissions Reduction in 2023 which found that distributed energy resources can provide communities with reliable and secure electricity, which can be rolled out in a faster, less complex and less costly manner than the current approach.

Across regional NW stakeholders are being engaged in accordance with the State Significant Development (SSD) pathway. This is a minimalist approach that sees developers taking the minimalist pathway through. Until this process is amended to be more fit-for-purpose for such largescale developments, communities will continue to be engaged through a 'tick and flick' approach, with insufficient meaningful consultation with the community being impacted. Concurrently more opportunities for development are being opened up outside of REZs for example 2021 legislation enabling windfarms in State Forests.¹



State Forests provide advice that Black Springs, Sunny Corner, Bondo and Orange are currently being progressed.

¹ Forestry Corporation - Renewable energy

Benefit sharing for communities

In Australia, renewable energy is being incentivised through Large Generation Certificates. Large-scale generation certificates (LGCs) are an instrument that is created and sold to incentivise the development of renewable energy power stations in Australia.

Accredited power stations are entitled to generate LGCs based on the amount of eligible electricity they produce from renewable energy sources, which can be used by the owner or an electricity retailer to meet their renewable energy target obligations.

LGCs have financial value and can be sold or traded. They can also be surrendered voluntarily to help companies meet their renewable energy and emissions reduction targets.

LGCs can be sold to liable entities (mainly electricity retailers) who buy and surrender the LGCs to the Clean Energy Regulator to comply with their mandatory scheme obligations. In return, the LGCs provide the power station with a source of revenue in addition to the sale of the electricity generated. To be able to make the claim that the electricity purchased is renewable, a Council must buy LGCs.

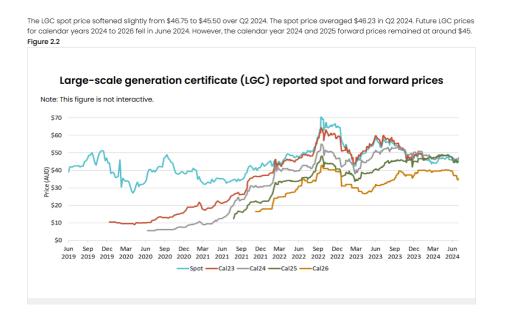
A comparison of LGCs to the *voluntary* \$1,050 per megawatt per annum for wind energy development compensation as advised in the <u>Overview of the Renewable Energy Planning Framework</u> is worth looking at.

Informed by specialist advice, the following commentary makes the following assumptions:

- a 40% capacity factor for wind renewable energy production;
- the price for is \$46; and
- all LGCs will be realised and they are realised annually as is the case at present.

\$1,050 per megawatt per annum equates to just 0.7% of the annual income from only LGCs. The renewable energy generator sells its electricity at profit on top of its LGCs.

The return of income to an affected community is less than trivial and should be more given the impacts. Communities are likely to be severely impacted by the transport task not just for the development but for replacement and decommissioning. As it stands, generation is being significantly incentivised and communities are not enjoying enough benefit.



Conclusion

Communities of regional NSW are bearing the brunt of the rush to renewables, particularly in regard to the transport task where many communities outside of REZ boundaries will experience impact and damage to roads, with no compensation to fund their repair.

It is recommended that, through the JO Chairs Forum, advocacy be undertaken to highlight the importance of a fit-for-purpose and fair benefit sharing model beyond the currently approved development compensation framework, and that support be given to a greater focus on distributed energy resources.

Report Author:	Tim Askew, Director of Programs - Hunter JO
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Recommendation:

- That the Joint Organisation Chairs' Forum note the project plan and timeline for moving the interested Joint Organisations (JOs) toward a shared ARIC model.
- That Joint Organisations nominate their intent to participate in the shared ARIC by 30 May 2025.

Executive Summary:

This report provides, for noting, a timeline for the implementation of a shared ARIC model for the interested JOs, namely Hunter JO, Illawarra Shoalhaven JO (ISJO) and Central NSW JO (CNSWJO), Hunter JO and Central JO) commensurate with our financial capacity, size and level of risk.

Background:

All councils and joint organisations are required, under the *Local Government Act 1993*, to have an audit risk and improvement committee (ARIC), which can be organisation specific or shared across entities. Additionally, the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* requires that from 1 July 2024, all councils and joint organisations are to have a risk management framework and an internal audit function and to prescribe membership requirements for audit risk and improvement committees.

Similar to other Joint Organisations across NSW, the limited financial and resource capacity within the JO network has directly impacted the capacity to comply with the ARIC requirements as they currently stand for the 2024/25 year. At previous JO Executive Officer meetings ISJO, Hunter JO and CNSWJO indicated that they were keen to explore a shared ARIC model with interested JOs around NSW as this approach provides better alignment to the financial capacity and risk characteristics of JOs.

The JO network has previously requested an ARIC exemption from the Office of Local Government, due our size and level of risk, through both CNSWJO's letter (dated: 23 March 2022) and through the JO Executive Officer meetings and related correspondence (dated 3 January 2024). We are still yet to receive a formal decision from the Office of Local Government on ARICs for JOs.

Discussion:

The Hunter JO has volunteered to take a lead role in planning and coordinating the development of a shared ARIC with the interested JOs. The proposed project plan for achieving a shared ARIC is provided below:

Timing	Details
May - July 2025	 Agree on the shared ARIC model for moving forward – See attachment 6.2-1.
	Each individual JO seeks endorsement of the shared ARIC model at the next available Board meeting
	Continue to pursue a response from Office of Local Government on ARIC exemptions for JOs
Jul – Dec	Begin implementation of the 4 main components of a shared ARIC:
2025	The shared ARIC standalone committee structure has been setup, recruited and the first meeting held
	May - July 2025

Phase	Timing	Details
		 The draft strategic and annual workplans have been developed ready for endorsement by the shared ARIC standalone committee Each JO has checked and modified (if necessary) their risk management framework in compliance with the ARIC requirements We have received an exemption from OLG or an EOI process has engaged an internal audit company and is ready to start implementation of the workplans (as required)

Financial / Resourcing Implications:

There will be a cost of implementation for the shared ARIC model for each individual JO as outlined in attachment 6.2-1. The costs include both in kind and budgeted amounts.

Interested JOs should make a provision for ARIC costs in their 2025/26 annual budget.

Next steps:

- 1. Joint Organisations interested in participating in the shared ARIC confirm their intent to join by 30 May 2025.
- 2. Seek endorsement by individual JO Boards on the shared ARIC model plan
- 3. Report back to JO Chairs next meeting on progress toward the shared ARIC model

Attachments*:

• Attachment 6.2-1: Detailed plan for shared ARIC model

^{*}Attachments are provided as a separate document to provide supplementary information and context.

Report Authors:	Canberra Region JO, Central NSW JO, Far North West JO, Hunter JO, Illawarra Shoalhaven JO, Mid North Coast JO, Riverina and Murray JO
	& REROC

Recommendation:

• That the Joint Organisation Chairs' Forum note the update on NSW Disaster Adaptation Planning and Readiness Projects being delivered across the JO network.

Executive Summary:

This report provides an update on the delivery of grant funded disaster adaptation planning and readiness projects being delivered across the NSW Joint Organisation network.

Background:

Over recent years the JO network has been actively collaborating in the delivery of a number of disaster preparedness projects funded by the Disaster Risk Reduction Fund (DRRF), which included a state-wide coordination and reporting role provided by the Canberra Region JO.

To build upon the success and momentum of both the individual and cross JO collaborative projects delivered through the DRRF (which largely wrapped up on 30 June 2024), five Joint Organisations have been successful with further funding applications made to Round 2 of the Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) administered by National Emergency Management Agency via the NSW Reconstruction Authority. In addition to the individual JO projects, an application through the Illawarra Shoalhaven JO to continue providing the statewide Network Coordination role was also successful. Over recent months funding agreements between individual JO's and the NSW Reconstruction Authority have been progressively finalised, with practical delivery of projects now commencing. Funded project durations range from one to three years. Four Joint Organisations have also submitted applications to Round 3 of the Disaster Ready Fund, which is scheduled to commence in early 2026.

These new projects particularly recognise the important role that JO's will play in supporting the NSW Reconstruction Authority to collaboratively consult and prepare Regional Disaster Adaptation Plans in accordance with the impending release of the NSW Disaster Adaptation Planning Guidelines.

Discussion:

LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards

In December 2024 our JO/ ROC network was awarded Winner (Division D) in the Climate Change Category of the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards. This award recognised the state-wide collaborative efforts of the network in delivering regional resilience initiatives through the Disaster Risk Reduction Fund. Refer Attachment 6.3-1.

Project Updates

The status of new projects and/or funding applications being delivered across the network include:

Region	Update
Canberra Region	CRJO submitted a pre-funding agreement variation for its Disaster Ready Fund Round 2 project on 26/03/2025, primarily to adjust the composition of the
	approved co-contribution amount to include relevant prior expenditure. Also

Region	Update
	submitted were an updated milestone proposal form and implementation plan. Waiting on approval of the variation and draft deed of agreement to be furnished.
	 The objectives and outcomes for the project remain as follows: maturity matrix template & maturity baseline assessment (per council) with one annual review Regional and local disaster waste management plans (minimum of 5 councils) Multi-hazard communications and/or detection platform/system (to be identified with councils) Critical infrastructure resilience plans (minimum of 5 councils) Regional directional document for disaster adaptation planning Understanding place report for disaster adaptation planning Resources including internal, contractor and consultant are identified however will not be allocated or engaged until a deed of agreement is in place. CRJO did not make an application to Disaster Ready Fund Round 3, however at least one individual member council did.
Central NSW	At the direction of the CNSWJO Board, CNSWJO successfully submitted an application to the Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) Round 2 (R2), which was approved, and more recently to DRF Round 3 (R3), which is currently under assessment DRF R2 project - Integrated preparedness: integrated approaches for disaster religions and the baselogue.
	mitigation, energy and water security, and technology Building on the work under the Disaster Risk Reduction Fund (DRRF) project, this program will leverage previous work (needs analysis, DRR IP&R Framework, Planwisely Tool, other JO outputs) and the draft/final Disaster Adaptation Guidelines (DAP) to;
	 Engage a consultant to create a local Disaster Adaptation Plan (DAP) template, enabling councils to develop their own local DAPs, which will contribute to the regional DAP as it continues to evolve; Leverage the Canberra Region JO (CRJO) Critical Infrastructure Resilience Plan (CIRP) template by engaging a consultant to adapt it for the CNSWJO and support at least 6 member councils in piloting the template; At both the commencement and completion of the project, conduct a review of IP&R documentation from all members to assess the maturity and integration of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). These evaluations should be compared against the baseline assessment established in the needs analysis; Deliver a regional workshop to assist councils in embedding DRR into their Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) processes, with a focus on operationalising the DRR IP&R Framework; Engage a consultant to prepare a report on resilience, energy, and water connections, identifying strategies to improve the self-sufficiency of evacuation centres across the region. The report will include recommendations on solutions such as solar power, battery storage,

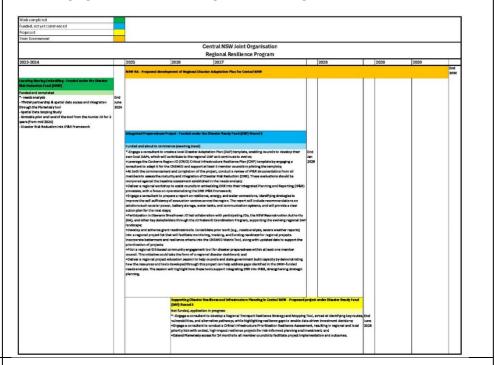
Region **Update** water tanks, and communication systems, and will provide a clear action plan for the next steps; Participation in Illawarra Shoalhaven JO led collaboration with participating JOs, the NSW Reconstruction Authority (RA), and other key stakeholders through the JO Network Coordination Program, supporting the evolving regional DAP landscape; Develop and enhance grant readiness tools. Consolidate prior work (e.g., needs analysis, severe weather reports) into a regional project list that will facilitate monitoring, tracking, and funding readiness for regional projects. Incorporate betterment and resilience criteria into the CNSWJO Matrix Tool, along with updated data to support the prioritisation of projects; Pilot a regional GIS-based community engagement tool for disaster preparedness within at least one member council. This initiative could take the form of a regional disaster dashboard; and Deliver a regional project education session to help councils and state government build capacity by demonstrating how the resources and tools developed through this project can help address gaps identified in the DRRF-funded needs analysis. The session will highlight how these tools support integrating DRR into IP&R, strengthening strategic planning. Click here for the DRF R2 Program Logic: 240319 DRF Round Two Project Logic Final.pdf DRF R3 project - Strengthening Infrastructure Resilience and Disaster Planning in Central NSW This program will be delivered alongside the DRF R2 project, leveraging key resources such as the DRF R2 CIRP template and pilot, the enhanced Matrix Tool, the CNSWJO Severe Weather Impacts report and the Planwisely tool from the DRRF project to achieve its objectives. The program includes the following actions; Engage a consultant to develop a Regional Transport Resilience Strategy and Mapping Tool, aimed at identifying key routes, vulnerabilities, and alternative pathways, while highlighting resilience gaps to enable data-driven investment decisions; • Engage a consultant to conduct a Critical Infrastructure Prioritisation Resilience Assessment, resulting in regional and local priority lists with costed, high-impact resilience projects for risk-informed planning and investment; and Extend Planwisely access for 24 months to all member councils to facilitate project implementation and outcomes. We did explore the idea of using the DAP template at DRF R2 to develop local Disaster Preparedness Plans (DPPs) with 4 members, however after consultation with the Adaptation and Mitigation Division within NSW Reconstruction Authority (RA) and not having final DAP Guidelines, this project was not included in the R3 submission and will be considered once more information is available. The Adaptation and Mitigation Division within RA indicated that this work may duplicate the implementation plan proposed

under the draft DAP Guidelines.

Region Update

Click here for the DRF R3 Program Logic: 250226 Program Logic FINAL.pdf

Below are the Regional Resilience Program initiative timelines, past, present and emerging as well as the state government regional DAP.



Far North West

Far North Wests JO (FNWJO) was unsuccessful in its application for funding to the Disaster Ready Found (DRF) Round 2 in 2024. An application will be made to DRF Round 3 to undertake the project *Building disaster resilience and preparedness in Far North West NSW*. A significant change to the funding structure of the previous DRF rounds has modified the co-contribution requirement for funding to a tiered structure. There is now a category for Councils in 'very remote' and 'remote' locations (based on ABS remoteness classification data) which includes Bourke, Cobar, Walgett (very remote) and Coonamble (remote). Councils within remote and very remote regions can apply for funding up to 90% of the project costs with a minimum 10% co-contribution (cash and/or in-kind).

The aim of the project is to develop a consolidated preparedness and response inventory and a regional plan for the councils of the FNWJO. Currently, there is no consolidated Regional Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan, nor a regional Inventory of resources and assets that can be used for preparation and response to disaster events. This project will increase collaboration and assess the capability of infrastructure and resources to improve co-ordination and sharing of resources across the region.

Potential benefits will be derived from an increased level of engagement and collaboration between Council Emergency Management teams and community responders across the region. The Regional Plan will increase preparedness and resilience which reduces risk to the community by enabling co-ordinated well-resourced response, especially if required on regional basis by improving efficiency and effectiveness.

Developing an Inventory of regional resources and assets, their location and availability (i.e. publicly or privately owned) will enhance the ability of member councils and community responders to better co-ordinate response activities. This will also identity where there may be gaps in essential emergency

Region	Update
	response and recovery resources or assets – for example the availability of portable accommodation, alternative power and potable water treatment options etc.
Hunter	Hunter JO's Disaster Ready Fund Round 2 Funding Agreement was executed on 19 th March 2025. The three-year project will build disaster resilience capacity and capability within 11 Hunter and Central Coast councils and their communities. This will be achieved by supporting development and implementation of local and regional Disaster Adaptation Plans, embedding resilience into councils' IP&R framework, facilitating a regional resilience network, and supporting community engagement. The total value of the project is \$1,738,540.00 of which \$851,271.00 is Commonwealth funding and \$887,269.00 is in-kind and recognition of prior expenditure.
	Initial discussions have been completed with Mayors and General Managers at each council, a kickoff Hunter Councils Resilience Network meeting is scheduled for May, and we are meeting with the NSW Reconstruction Authority Disaster Adaptation Planning team on 2 May 2025.
	March GMAC workshops included discussions on regionally-consistent approaches to manage disaster waste and a draft MOU for Emergency Operations Centre and Resource Sharing between councils.
	Hunter JO did not submit an application to Round 3 of the Disaster Ready Fund.
Illawarra Shoalhaven	The ISJO was successful in gaining funding under the Disaster Ready Fund Round 2 (DRF2) for implementation of a statewide Network Coordination role and the delivery of an Illawarra Shoalhaven Region suite of Disaster related initiatives.
	The total value of the program over three years will be \$2,532,800 with grant funding amounting to \$1,220,000 of that amount.
	A recent approved variation to our initial application adding resourcing to the regional aspects of delivery and removed \$300,000 of ISJO and Member Council direct cash contribution without any reduction in key deliverables including consultancy deliverables.
	The three year program's key outcome will be integrated regional capacity for disaster adaption planning across all sectors with local leaders and key regional stakeholders empowered to implement disaster adaption strategies and resilience building actions. We will enable this across built, natural, social and economic environments through:
	 embedded comprehensive local risk profile plans that integrate with critical infrastructure and asset plans, local and regional planning priorities and frameworks, community response and recovery plans, and
	 business cases that support sustained investment in mitigation and adaptation infrastructure and systems (e.g. improved energy security through vulnerability assessment and resilience planning focused on community resilience and net zero outcomes).
	Councils, agencies and communities will use evidence-based decision making to support risk reduction, including systems supporting risk management of critical transport routes that reduce impacts to community safety and social and economic loss. Ongoing technological monitoring and early warning of

Region	Update
	climate events will facilitate improved planning, strategic response and system resilience.
	The ISJO coordination of a JO/ROC network will provide efficiencies in collaboration across local, regional and State agencies, build aligned risk reduction and resilience activities, articulate a common narrative and logic on disaster risk reduction commitments, foster governed partnerships and strengthen decision making and capacity across regions.
	Installation of Multisensor network completed
	The ISJO was successful in gaining funding for the installation throughout our region of a network of multi-sensing devices that provide comprehensive corelated information that allow users to understand how changes in environment lead to impacts in health, systems, assets and critical infrastructure.
	The intelligent sensors detect, measure, analyse and transmit detailed information on air quality, weather, noise, fire ignition, water quality, ground and structural movement, noise and asset condition. Sensing capabilities are supported by live images, hi-definition video streaming, thermal imaging and equipment automation.
	Early detection and notification detailing the type of threat, fault or threshold breach is provided and is supported by live conditions and on-site images that enable rapid investigation and ongoing situational awareness.
	The information is seamlessly streamed through secure high-speed wireless networks maintaining a real-time picture of locations and regions to improve safety, health, efficiency, productivity and awareness.
Mid North Coast	Whilst not compulsory, the MNCJO submitted an Expression Of Interest to DRF Round 3 and received extremely positive feedback on the proposal.
	MNCJO is submitting a funding submission to DRF Round 3. It should be noted the MNCJO would be working collaboratively with our JOs across the State to leverage resource sharing and broader skill sets.
	This project will build disaster resilience capacity and capability within the Mid North Coast councils and their communities. This will be achieved through the following project elements:
	Disaster Adaptation Plan (DAP) Implementation - Coordinating Key Local and Regional Stakeholders
	MNCJO Inter-Council Regional Resilience Network (building council capacity)
	3. Simtable Program - Community Preparedness and Capacity Building
	4. Participation in Statewide Joint Organisation (JO) Network Coordination Program
	JOs across the State are undertaking projects included in the application. The MNCJO can leverage resource sharing and joint procurement, and significant savings by including these elements:
	Strategic Land Use Planning Maturity Assessments – identifying disaster resilience gaps and imbed into LSPS

Region	Update
	2. Development of a Regional Critical Infrastructure Resilience Plan
Riverina and Murray	The DRF Round 2 Project, 'All-hazards, risk-based approach to strategic land use planning and critical infrastructure asset management for Riverina/Murray Region', commenced 10 April 2025. The project comprises three components, including:
	 Critical Infrastructure a) Critical Infrastructure Risk Assessments – Risk assessments for all council critical infrastructure, including water and sewerage systems, landfill, aerodrome, and evacuation centres, that will identify and prioritise actions to increase resilience of these assets/systems (1 report per LGA for all critical infrastructure assets).
	b) Asset and Infrastructure Risk Management Plan Assessments – Asset and infrastructure risk management plan assessments for each council that will assess how well infrastructure resilience and adaptation to long-term stressors is incorporated into asset and infrastructure risk management plans, including an assessment of options for adoption of smart technology, to facilitate long term monitoring of assets.
	c) Critical Infrastructure Action Plans – Action plans that list and prioritise mitigation activities identified in the Critical Infrastructure Risk Assessments and Management Plan Assessments (1 per LGA).
	2) Land Use Planning a) Land Use Planning Maturity Assessments - Assessments that will evaluate the maturity of land use planning and housing strategy documents to determine how well future natural hazard risk is embedded into strategies/plans/statements (1 per LGA).
	b) Natural Hazards Checklists - Land Use Planning Maturity Assessments - Natural Hazards checklists (1 per LGA) completed by assisting councils to work through the DPHI Planning Considerations Checklist in the Handbook for the Strategic Guide to Planning for Natural Hazards and consider relevant SEPP amendments. This will identify gaps in meeting the 8 guiding principles to planning for natural hazards.
	c) Land Use Planning Action Plans - Action plans (1 per LGA) developed from information identified in the document maturity assessment and the Planning Checklist that identify priorities for councils to include in future strategic planning activities and amendments to Land Use Planning documents.
	3) Synthesis and Embedment a) Synthesis Workshops - Two workshops held to help incorporate findings from the Critical Infrastructure and Land Use Planning assessments into asset management plans, infrastructure risk management plans, local housing strategies and strategic land use planning documents.

Region	Update
	b) Plan Embedment - JO assistance to help councils to embed priorities from Action Plans into IP&R documents and DAPs.
	A Project Control Group (PCG) is being established for the purpose of project governance and will include members from each participating council. The PCG will: track project implementation; review and endorse reporting and plans; monitor elements of the project considered high risk and endorse risk mitigation measures; provide access to stakeholder networks; and provide advice to support robust project governance.
	RAMJO will continue working in collaboration with the Joint Organisation network established in the Disaster Risk Reduction Fund Project 2023-24 to share knowledge and resources, participate in coordinated engagement with NSW Government Agencies and coordinate alignment on resilience initiatives being undertaken across the JO network.
	The project manager is Emily Sharp who commenced 14 April 2025. Emily also managed the 2023-24 Disaster Risk Reduction Fund Project for RAMJO.
	 Council Benefits: Identified opportunities for the RAMJO membership include provision of: Data and proposed actions that can be incorporated into critical infrastructure asset management planning, strategic land use planning and Integrated Planning and Reporting documents. Provision of assessment reports and action plans that can be used to support funding applications and to communicate with state and federal bodies about council and regional priorities for critical infrastructure resilience and land use planning initiatives.
	 Project Timeline: The project deliverable timelines include: Critical Infrastructure Risk Assessments and Asset & Infrastructure Risk Management Plan Assessments – by 30 January 2026 Land Use Maturity Assessments and Natural Hazard Checklist completion – by 30 January 2026 Critical Infrastructure and Land Use Planning Action Plans – by 31 March 2026
	 Synthesis Workshops – by 30 April 2026 Budget:
	RAMJO was awarded funding of \$694,000, with a 50% Commonwealth contribution (\$345,000), 25% NSW Government contribution (\$173,500) and a 25% RAMJO member council in-kind contribution (\$173,500). In-kind contributions were calculated as staff member time that will be spent on the project from participating councils. The Critical Infrastructure project component has a budget of approximately \$175,000 for assessments and a workshop, and the Land Use Planning project component has a budget of approximately \$150,000 for assessments and a workshop.
REROC	DRF R2 project REROC did not apply for Round 2 funding.

Region	Update		
	DRF R3 project – application submitted 15.4.2025		
	Building and strengthening partnerships for effective disaster management in the Eastern Riverina NSW		
	 This project has four key components and aims to address identified gaps to improve disaster preparedness and management in Eastern Riverina NSW. Support NSW RA - South to develop a regional Disaster Adaptation Plan aligning with the NSW JO/ROC network coordinated initiative from DRF Rd 2 funding. Create a Regional Disaster Waste Management Plan, in partnership with REROC Waste Forum (including Wagga Wagga City Council) and NSW EPA. Identify Disaster Alternate Regional Transport routes, in partnership with TfNSW, NHVR, Council and other key stakeholders. 		
	Deliver Disaster Preparedness community information sessions to support and a Telstra Connected Communities workshop for council staff professional development in connectivity capability. Both will enable councils to better protect their communities in times of disaster.		

Attachments*:

• Attachment 6.3-1: Excellence in the Environment Awards 2024

^{*}Attachments are provided as a separate document to provide supplementary information and context.

Report Author:	Canberra Region JO, Central NSW JO, Far North West JO, Hunter JO,
	Illawarra Shoalhaven JO, Mid North Coast JO, Northern Rivers JO,
	Riverina and Murray JO & REROC

Recommendation:

That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum note:

- The project updates provided on the JONZA Program.
- The next round of JONZA is expected to open 19 May. This grant will enable JOs to extend their JO Net Zero manager beyond June 2025.

Executive Summary:

This report provides an update on the delivery of the Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration Program (JONZA) being delivered across the JO network.

Background:

Operating since July 2023, the The NSW Government's Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration (JONZA) program is a grant funded program that helps Joint Organisations (JOs) and Regional Organisations of Councils (ROCs) in NSW accelerate their net zero emissions reduction efforts. It provides funding to support a dedicated internal staff member within these JO's / ROCs to drive net zero initiatives, including building internal capacity across member councils to develop and implement net zero projects.

By partnering with JOs, the NSW Government hopes to strengthen collaboration between state and local governments to achieve net zero outcomes in line with community expectations.

Since its commencement substantial progress and success has been achieved by the JONZA program with both region specific and cross region initiatives. This is a reflection of the strong collaboration in program design and delivery occurring both across the JO's/ROCS involved and directly with the Sustainable Councils team within DCCEEW.

For more information on the program and its successes visit the <u>JONZA video "Net Zero Managers</u> helping to reduce emissions across regional NSW".

Discussion

Extension of JONZA funding

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment, & Water (DCCEEW) have recently confirmed that funding has been approved to extend the JONZA initiative for a third year, with the Sustainable Councils team now proceeding with preparing grant guidelines and approvals for an 18-month program, 1 July 2025, to 31 December 2026. This extension will play a considerable role in extending the momentum and successes that have been realised to date through the program.

NB Information relating to the proposed third round of JONZA is currently under a media embargo until advised by DCCEEW.

Project Updates

The following table provides an update on JONZA initiatives currently being delivered across the network.

Region	Update
Canberra Region	CRJO's Joint Organisation Net Zero Accelerator (JONZA) Round 2 is based on preparing our member councils for mandatory greenhouse gas emission reporting, embedding emission reduction processes in council operations as well as supporting member councils' staff to understand their responsibilities.
	An additional \$75,400 was received as a variation from DCCEEW's Net Zero Transport team with the intention to develop strategic processes to assist councils to adopt electric vehicle infrastructure in the region.
	Status of CRJO's deliverables under JONZA 2 and EV variation projects is as follows:
	Carbon Compass (emissions inventory tool)
	10 out of CRJO's 11 councils have chosen to participate in the Carbon Compass project.
	Training sessions hosted by 100% Renewables were attended by multiple staff members from the 10 councils.
	Two presentations to the net zero working group on Carbon Compass have been held, a cheat sheet produced to assist data sourcing and support offered.
	Councils are working on populating the Carbon Compass tool and a meeting has been scheduled for early May to discuss progress.
	Councils' Net Zero Steering Groups
	It was recommended to all CRJO councils that a steering group be established to facilitate the monitoring and reporting of greenhouse gas emissions.
	A template terms of reference has been created and shared with CRJO member councils for use in establishing net zero steering groups.
	A draft report for council officers to use in briefing their executive leadership teams was included with the terms of reference to facilitate steering groups' establishment.
	Councils' emissions data monitoring and reporting procedure
	A template Emissions Data Monitoring and Reporting Procedure is in draft form and CRJO councils have been briefed on the importance of adopting a procedure for future monitoring and reporting of emission data.
	Councillors' net zero legislative landscape induction training
	All councils were offered presentations to their newly elected councillors to outline councillors' roles in reducing emissions in NSW.
	To date one presentation has been delivered and a second one is being scheduled.
	Presentation was crafted using material presented in 2024 to councillors including a factsheet on the state of net zero for each council.
	Fast track installation of smart meters
	A number of CRJO councils have been working with their retailer to ensure that their meters are upgraded. This work was triggered by the (completed) tariff review project and councils have received support from ChargeWorks.

Region	Update
	The process of changing meters is a multi-step process which involves many stakeholders both in councils and their retailers hence the councils have preferred to manage this process independently of support available from CRJO.
	Expiring electricity contracts
	A summary of all electricity contracts of member councils has been compiled.
	10 of 11 CRJO councils are on fixed term contracts (versus rolled over contracts).
	Five of the 11 councils purchase renewable energy and are part of power purchasing agreements.
	Electric vehicles
	- EV Training Package
	To streamline the delivery of resources for JONZA councils, CRJO is delivering this project together with the Hunter JO and Northern Rivers JO.
	A series of videos are being developed for council staff to upskill them in all aspects of transitioning to electric vehicles and the approval processes associated with the installation of EV charging infrastructure.
	- EV Roadshow
	A barrier identified to the uptake of EV technology is the lack of opportunities to test drive EVs and to hear from experts about technology and associated infrastructure. 6 of CRJO councils have elected to host EV Roadshow sessions in the week of 12 May.
	The program is currently being finalised and aims to include representation from major EV manufacturers such as BYD and Kia, as well as speakers from DCCEEW and Local Government Procurement.
	- EV transition plans
	To date CRJO's councils have engaged at various levels regarding transition to low emissions vehicles.
	An amount of the funding has been earmarked for assisting our member councils finalise draft transition plans, or review existing plans, to allow for the plans to be adopted.
Central NSW	Emissions Reduction
	CNSWJO is working on progressing actions from the Regional Emissions Reduction Plan which includes working more closely with Netwaste and waste managers from member councils to identify and progress projects and opportunities which aim to reduce emissions from landfill.
	Electric Vehicles
	A Regional Fleet Transition Strategy has been developed and CNSWJO is supporting councils to work through the 16 key strategic activities identified through that work. This includes supporting councils with applications for EV destination and fast chargers, facilitating vehicles trials and developing policies to enable the transition to EVs in councils' fleet. A significant portion

Region **Update** of this work is being completed through the funding provided by the NSW DCCEEW Net Zero Transport team. An EV Drive Day was facilitated in December 2024 with strong attendance and excellent feedback provided from attendees. Please click the link to view the event report. A key project underway, led by CNSWJO on behalf of all 9 JONZA Joint Organisations is an interactive EV map which aims to support spontaneous tourism across regional NSW. The map should be functional by June 2025, however signage and promotion of the map will continue in the following months. Resilience The focus in the coming months will be to conduct an analysis on the water, energy and telco requirements of evacuation centres around the region with the intention to be grant ready for future opportunities as they arise. This project is being completed in conjunction with the Disaster Ready Fund Round 2 project. **Advocacy** CNSWJO has been working with the Portfolio Mayors for the energy priority to update the Energy Advocacy Plan, which has a strong focus on distributed energy resources, the transition to renewables and the impacts the transition is having on the region. Further, the JO has lodged a number of energy related submissions in recent months. These are generally shared with other JOs who are encouraged to support the submission if they choose. **Awards** At the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards held in Sydney on 4 December, CNSWJO was awarded the Division D winner (JOs, ROCs and County Councils) for the Towards Net Zero Emissions award category, as well as being named as the Overall Winner for the category for its '52 Shades of Green: The Central NSW JO Net Zero Acceleration Program'. Far North West **Energy and Emissions Reduction** Electricity tariff reviews have been conducted for each council and potential savings identified. Energy audits were conducted by specialist energy consultants in January and February at high electricity consumption sites - at least six (6) sites in each council. Preliminary findings have been shared with each Council and the final reports from the consultants are being developed. The detail on potential energy savings will provide suitable evidence for Councils to use in applying for any government grant funding, especially the Round 2 of the Community Energy Upgrade Fund (closes 13 June 2025). Energy and emissions profile. The Net Zero Manager has been sourcing electricity, energy (fuel, gas etc.), waste and wastewater data from councils in order to develop an energy and emissions profile. The Carbon Compass Tool, an excel-based reporting tool, has been used to incorporate data to produce individual profiles for each Council. This work is still underway and will assist in forming a basis for the

Region	Update
	development of Energy and Emission Reduction Plans for each Council once the additional information for the energy audits is incorporated.
	Electric Vehicle (EV) Project
	 Far North West JO (FNWJO) and Mid North Coast JO (MNCJO) have worked together on developing a guide to assist councils in making their towns more EV friendly. The guide includes a simple self-assessment checklist to assist councils to identify how they meet the EV Friendly Town/Destination criteria. The checklist covers essential and desirable criteria that reflect the expectation and experience of EV drivers.
	The essential and desirable criteria were based on findings of other traveller/destination ratings such as the RV Friendly Town™ Program ratings and some primary research undertaken as part of this project. An online survey was developed by MNCJO and FNWJO to seek information from EV drivers on what they considered would make towns EV friendly. The survey questions were informed by discussions with the Australian Electric Vehicle Association (AEVA), the Electric Vehicle Council, Destination NSW Outback and Country and Destination North Coast. The survey of EV drivers was conducted through social media with assistance from AEVA who distributed it through their network. This project will be completed by May 2025
	 EV Trial for Councils – FNWJO has entered into a flexible subscription arrangement with Origin 360 to facilitate a trial of electric vehicles for councils. Two long range medium sized SUVs will be available over a three month period, shared amongst the four councils. EV Transition plans – not yet started. Focus to be on plant and small fleet vehicles. Consultant to be engaged. FNWJO is also collaborating with and contributing financially to other JOs on key projects including: Development of a public EV charging policy for use by all councils (led by Illawarra Shoalhaven JO). Development of an interactive map that links already developed maps to focus on economic development & tourism across regional NSW.
	Key issues
	 Lack of dedicated sustainability staffing resources within Councils to progress JONZA project aspects. Competing priorities for Council staff who often have multiple roles and responsibilities. Potentially, insufficient funds within councils to progress recommended energy and emissions reduction and action priorities.
Hunter	JONZA Face 2 Face Days
	 Hosted by Hunter JO and held in Newcastle in March, day two included site visits around Newcastle with City of Newcastle staff providing the group with a tour of three of the city's EV stations, sharing insights and learnings. Second site visit was provided by Lake Macquarie City Council with a tour of a microgrid and battery at Cameron Park RFS (Lake Macquarie Fire Control Centre.

Region	Update		
	Electric Vehicle (EV) Project		
	 Development of Educational Videos: Electric Vehicles (EV) & Charging Infrastructure – led by Hunter JO in collaboration with CRJO and NRJO. A video marketing agency – Fisheye Creative, has been contracted to deliver 6-8 short educational videos focussing on council and community. Videos will be made accessible through a landing page developed by RAMJO under a further project titled EV 101 Resource. 		
	Hunter JO is also contributing and collaborating on two other EV projects.		
	- EV Tourism Map led by CNSWJO		
	- EVCI led by ISJO		
	Regional Councils PPA		
	Webinar held to help support participating councils (13 in total) to further understand markets and their new contracts. Additional support has been negotiated to provide each council with site transfer support, bill validation and electricity contract support.		
	Funding Application Support		
	 Facilitating support for councils that have indicated they will apply for upcoming grants including provision of templates, expert tips and online forums/coaching. 		
	- Community Energy Upgrades Fund Program (CEUF) Round 2		
	- Arena Community Batteries Funding Round 2		
Illawarra	EVCI on Public Land – Leading Practice Framework		
Shoalhaven	The DCCEEW Net Zero Transport team provided additional funding to the ISJO through a variation to the JONZA program to specifically deliver activities which support a regional approach to the delivery of electric vehicle charging infrastructure (EVCI) on public land.		
	A significant gap that exists within Council initiatives towards delivering EVCI on public land is the inconsistency in internal processes for evaluating suitable locations for EV chargers and variable internal capacity across Councils to effectively coordinate the delivery of EVCI. The ISJO has used the funding from DCCEEW to appoint a consultant to deliver a Leading Practice Framework designed to address this gap and enhance Council capability to facilitate EVCI on public land.		
	The ISJO and broader JO network recognised our member Councils would benefit from a framework for developing EVCI policy and process aimed at building internal capabilities within Councils. The framework will be designed to be adaptable for various Council departments, providing a consistent methodology that all Councils can use to manage the entire lifecycle of EVCI projects.		
	The practice framework will enhance Council capability approaching EVCI by:		
	 Standardising evaluation processes by providing clear criteria and procedures for assessing suitable site locations for EVCI on public land 		

Region **Update** Build on internal capacity and knowledge, offering resources to increase the knowledge and skill set of Council staff to manage EVCI projects Streamlining workflow coordination by establishing efficient workflows and communication between internal and external stakeholders to improve coordination of EVCI installations Identifying leading practices to engage communities and gather input for effective EVCI site selection Promoting consistent implementation procedures by creating leading practice tools. The EVCI Leading Practice Framework is currently under development with consultation from Council participants from across the State-wide JO network to help best identify the key issues councils face when encountering the EVCI rollout. **Community Renewables Program** A key deliverable for the ISJO during the JONZA Round 2 program was to develop and deliver the Community Renewables Program (CRP), which builds on the investigative work undertaken during JONZA Round 1 to establish the CRP in our region. This exciting and innovative project has reached the final stages of procurement to award a suitably qualified service provider to partner with ISJO and the member Councils to deliver the CRP for the region. The Councils identify that they play a key role in advocating and influencing emissions reduction activities within their community, thus the establishment of a CRP will provide a practical solution for member Councils to engage with community on the cost savings and emissions reduction benefits from adopting renewable energy technology such as solar, household battery storage and virtual powerplant technology. Once established the CRP aims to deliver a program that will: Reduce the up-front cost barriers to renewable energy technologies Increase regional solar system and battery storage uptake Increase access to renewable energy to reduce cost of living pressures Reduce peak grid demand by increasing localised solar generation and battery storage capacity within the community Facilitate participation in local and regional distributed energy networks Develop renewable energy access options for those without rooftop solar Increase engagement between Council, community and industry by collaboratively developing tailored solutions for households and businesses

Region	Update
	 Enable identification of opportunities for location specific programs and infrastructure in collaboration with the local Distributed Network Service Provider (DNSP) and communities
	 Provide opportunities to stimulate the local economy by generating jobs for local clean energy service providers, and
	Provide information and data on Program uptake which enables monitoring and evaluation of the program and support longer-term Net Zero initiatives.
Mid North Coast	EV Charging Solutions manual
	This document has been produced in collaboration with the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation. It will assist with decision making and procedures related to EV charging solutions.
	Network Energy Constraints
	on behalf of MNCJO member councils Chargeworks have developed reports identifying network energy constraints in depots and administration/civic centres. This will assist councils with planning for fleet transition and installation of charging infrastructure in the years ahead. Chargeworks is also liaising with Essential Energy to confirm grid capacity.
	JONZA Workshop
	Following the success of our initial staff workshop a second workshop focused on EV Charging infrastructure and fleet transition. Recognising that net zero emissions is not just about sustainability, all relevant staff from member councils attended. Speakers included:
	 JONZA Manager discussing the changing EV landscape, opportunities for councils and presented the EV Charging Solutions Document Evan Darmanin (Chargeworks) provided an update on the network energy constraints report. Dan Wigmore (NSW Net Zero Transport Team) EV Charging and EV Fleet incentive grants that are currently available to councils.
Northern Rivers	Resource to progress infrastructure in the NRJO region The first version of the document has been released, titled Powering Up Northern NSW - EV Charging Solutions, Issue 1, 11-2-25. The document was produced by NRJO in conjunction with MNCJO and will be updated on a 6 monthly basis. This document gives an overview of electric vehicle charger installation and covers areas such as: • The business, environmental and economic drivers for Electric Vehicle (EV) and charger introduction • Technologies being used in charging EV's • Identification of EV charger sites • Financing options, business models and grants currently available • Planning and approval • An overview of the installation base of EV chargers in the Northern Rivers in each LGA Subscription service for trialling EVs at Councils and EV awareness training
	To generate interest within the Councils on Electric Vehicles, and to give an opportunity for Councils to experience some of the latest offerings, 2 vehicles

Region Update

will be obtained through an Origin Energy subscription service. These vehicles would be paid for by NRJO under funding supplied by the NSW Government through the EV variation agreement. The subscription period will be for 3 months, both cars will be subscribed at the same time and supplied to Councils for trials and training and familiarisation sessions will be arranged.

Development of Educational Videos: Electric Vehicles (EV) & Charging Infrastructure

NRJO is working with other JOs on the production of a series of videos to help Councils understand how EV's work, are charged, and the financial and environmental benefits of EV introduction. A total of 6 short videos will be produced.

Foton Truck Trial

Foton trucks have offered Councils to trial a 6 Tonne electric tipper truck. The interested Councils will have the opportunity to have the truck for trial for 1 week to evaluate the fit for purpose of EV trucks in the Council fleets. The first Council will be Clarence Valley Council and then it will be passed to other interested Councils. The program started during April, 2025.

Other activities

Energy monitoring platform

As part of the energy cost tracking and emissions reporting, most Councils are using a platform to collect the data. Most NRJO councils are using a software package called Azility to collect the data and energy bills. This platform has not seen the development and functionality improvement that other rival products have had, so it was decided to review the latest offerings from other selected organisations. Three companies were invited to present their software platforms, these being E21, Trellis and Peclet. A review of the offerings will be undertaken, and the next steps will be decided by the end of April.

Compass Tool

This emission tracking tool has been supplied by the NSW Sustainable Councils team and developed by an external company, 100% Renewables. Training has been undertaken by 5 of the NRJO Councils and the Councils have identified and gathered the required emissions data to complete the reporting. Lismore City Council was the first Council in the NSW JONZA program to supply a completed emissions reporting document to the NSW Sustainable Councils team and Clarence Valley Council has also undertaken the process and supplied the completed tool.

Community Renewables

A Notice of Motion from Councillor Cherry requesting NRJO to consider expanding on the work completed in the Renewable Energy Blueprint for the Northern Rivers (Jan 2022) was actioned and has been completed. The final document has been released and will be circulated to the councils. This project is to investigate what role government can play to make renewable energy more accessible and affordable. The document was published on 10 March 2025 and titled *Role of local governments in supporting uptake of community renewables*.

Region	Update
	Energy cost reduction and efficiency programs Continuation on working with the Councils on tariff reviews using software tools supplied by the NSW Sustainable Councils team. The tariff review project is looking at saving Councils money on their bills by analysing the small and large market bills and understanding if the appropriate distribution tariff has been applied to the metering point.
	EVX Chargers EVX and Essential Energy have been in discussions with NRJO and the councils concerning installing chargers on Essential Energy power poles. 3 chargers have been installed to date and at least 10 others planned to be installed over the coming months. These chargers are at no cost to the councils and are funded by EVX, who also receive the revenue. The purpose of putting in the chargers is to supply EV charging to the local community and to help the visitor economy and local businesses.
Riverina and Murray	Update to the Regional Energy Strategy RAMJO is currently updating its Regional Energy Strategy (RES 2.0) which will have a significant focus on energy security and reliability for our region. As the First JO produced Regional Energy Strategy, RAMJOs strategy helped conceptualise the JONZA program for all JOs and ROCS, and for RAMJO, formed the basis of funding applications for JONZA rounds 1 and 2. RAMJO-Regional-Energy-Strategy-November-22-Web-Version.pdf
	Large Site PPAs – ongoing support The consultants Sourced Energy who were integral in the development of the PPA are providing support to council staff. This includes a Training Webinar - Understanding council's new electricity supply contract and how to manage it effectively (held 9/4/25). There is no cost to Councils for this service.
	IP&R integration Hunter JO and Central NSW JO developed toolkits and resources to assist councils to incorporate issues around Net Zero into the Integrated Planning and Reporting process, on an opt in basis. This toolkit was shared and presented at the RAMJO Energy Sub-Committee meeting and highlighted for the boards consideration for adoption by their own councils.
	Advocacy: Energy Capacity and Security RAMJO, REROC, CNSWJO, AusIndustry and SC have formed a working group aimed at addressing Energy Security. Initial meetings have been held, and it has been agreed to formalise the group and potentially expand the membership. A major concern is to make sure that Councils, businesses and communities can have access to reliable, consistent and adequate energy. Case studies are being identified. This will also be a theme within the RAMJO Regional Energy Strategy 2.0.
	Policy development around Electric Vehicles Sustainable Councils provided additional funding of \$97,500 (added to JONZA Round 2 grant) for advancing Electric Vehicle fleet transitions.
	RAMJO and Griffith City Council delivered the successful EV Summit and Drive Days in Griffith in February 2025. This was a project that had been identified

Region	Update
	in the previous Regional Energy Strategy and in the application for JONZA funding.
	The JONZA network has identified projects across the relevant JOs to make it easier for Councils, businesses and communities to understand and become ready to take advantage of the increasing opportunities around Electric Vehicles. Each JO has a separate project. Projects being undertaken include: • EV Charging Infrastructure Policy (Illawarra and Shoalhaven Joint Organisation) (ISJO) • Resources to assist local businesses become EV friendly (Riverina Eastern Regional Organisation of Councils) (REROC) • EV 101 Resource for Councils to Businesses (RAMJO)
	EV 101 Resource for Councils to Businesses (RAMJO) The primary objective is to Develop an EV 101 Resource that can be replicated and run by councils for local businesses across regional NSW, with the stated aim of helping businesses who are interested in and/or considering EV uptake, having easy access to Local Government aligned and endorsed EV facts and general literature.
	The aim is to also make it easier for councils to provide access to information and respond to requestS, without needing to invest staff time or financial resources in seeking and obtaining additional information. The RFQ for the project is about to be circulated, with a focus on developing a web-based landing tool (not a web site).
	Community Energy Updates Fund (CEUF) Round 2 applications Lisa Miller from the SC team is again providing support for councils applying for funding from the second round of CEUF funds.
	Understanding Council's emissions The NSW State Government has regulated for State Agencies to report emissions starting in April 2025. That requirement is to be expanded to Councils in 2027. The State Government has developed a tool for Councils that is consistent with the requirements and the State Government legislation: the C-Compass tool.
	Sustainable Councils has made the tool available for free to local Councils as well as training. 8 of RAMJO Councils have signed up for the tool to date.
REROC	Emission tracking - Carbon-Compass Two REROC Member Councils have made substantial progress with the emission baselining exercise of the Carbon-Compass tool, which had been financed by NSW Sustainable Councils (DCCEEW) and developed by consultants 100% Renewables.
	Community Energy Upgrade Fund (CEUF)
	Initial work for some Member Councils on assessments and planning for Round 2 of the Federal Community Energy Upgrade Fund. Planning and coordinating for deployment of Round 1 projects. For both Round 1 and Round 2, liaising with virtual power plant providers to identify equipment, configurations and partnerships to increase returns with virtual power plants.

Region	Update
	NSW electric vehicle (EV) fleet incentive
	Repeated encouragements and reminders about the 'increased NSW Kickstart' incentive for the purchase of electric vehicles and associated EV charging. Three Member Councils have applied for 7 EVs (including 2 utes).
	NSW Destination EV Charging Grant Round 3
	Worked with two Member Councils to identify sites and prepare Expressions of Interest to host EV charging stations and to respond to Charge Point Operators (CPOs) with letters of support. CPOs then apply to the grant for sites. Liaison with CPOs supported by consultancy ChargeWorks, thanks to NSW Sustainable Councils.
	EV Funding Variation
	With the special EV Funding provided to JONZA members for FY25, three subprojects for the level 2 and level 3 priorities are being organised:
	 Short video focused on an EV charging station at a library (recipient of NSW Destination Charging Round 2) for "a resource to assist local businesses become EV friendly"; Trial of EV, using the Origin 360 month by month subscription, for some Member Councils; Assessment by consultant of the capacity of a council site to support council EV charging, in view of the long term fleet transition to EVs,
	for some Member Councils. This is to include connection inquiries to the local DNSP in conjunction with recommendations on the electrical system upgrades needed for the site.
	Community
	Using the Beam and Sunspot tools, assessed different battery and increased solar installation options and payback for a community hotel in Member LGA.

8. Reports

8.1. NSW Office of Local Government Report

Brett Whitworth, Deputy Secretary Local Government – Office of Local Government will provide a verbal update.

8.2. LGNSW Report

Report Author:	Mayor Claire Pontin, LGNSW Vice President Rural/Regional	
Report Author:	Mayor Claire Pontin, LGNSW VICE President Rural/Regional	

Recommendation:

That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum notes the update from Local Government NSW.

Background:

2025 cost shifting survey

LGNSW's latest cost shifting survey has now closed. I thank all the councils who returned completed surveys to LGNSW. LGNSW's consultants for this project, Morrison Low, are now analysing the data, verifying outlying data and preparing a report to assess the scale of cost shifting. LGNSW will release this report in the coming months to bolster and renew our advocacy on this important matter.

The <u>previous survey found</u> that other spheres of government were cost shifting \$1.36 billion annually onto councils, the equivalent of \$460 per ratepayer annually.

NSW Inquiry - Ability of local governments to fund infrastructure and services

The NSW Government was due to respond to recommendations of the <u>NSW inquiry into the ability of</u> councils to fund infrastructure and services on 28 February 2025.

The excellent recommendations of this inquiry demonstrate that the committee has heard the calls of LGNSW and our sector more broadly. They reflect recognition that the financial sustainability of councils is being persistently eroded and that, without improvements, all communities will suffer.

Recommendations of the inquiry closely align with <u>submissions from LGNSW</u> and councils right across the state.

Key recommendations include:

- Reviewing rate exemptions and concessions to achieve a better balance between local council financial sustainability, community benefits and principles of equity.
- Redesigning the rating system to provide councils with greater flexibility in setting rates, while keeping rates affordable for the community.
- Streamlining the special variation process.
- Advocating to the Australian Government to increase Financial Assistance Grants to councils from 0.5% to 1% of Commonwealth taxation revenue.
- Grant models that are more secure, sustainable and predictable.

- Changes to the developer contributions framework to better support councils to fund the ongoing costs of new infrastructure, and support development including of community facilities.
- More timely disaster recovery assistance to councils.
- Dedicated and ongoing funding streams for disaster mitigation and preparedness.
- Incorporation of betterment into disaster recovery funding programs.
- Appropriately recognising that Rural Fire Service assets are vested in the NSW Government, and not councils.
- Reducing cost shifting onto councils and consideration of how the Waste Levy can better support infrastructure and services that support the transition to the circular economy.

However, the Minister for Local Government announced at Budget Estimates on 28 February that the NSW Government would not meet that deadline while it further considered its response to the recommendations. It is positive that the NSW Government is taking the time to genuinely consider these recommendations that are so important to the financial sustainability of our sector.

Red Fleet and NSW Auditor-General's report on local government finances

In March the NSW Auditor-General released his report on Local Government financial performance for the year ended 30 June 2024: <u>Local government 2024</u>.

LGNSW welcomes the report, noting the excellent news that the number of qualified audits has plummeted, with unqualified audit opinions being issued for 124 councils, eight county councils and 11 joint organisations.

This in large part reflects the Auditor-General's sensible approach for councils that quite correctly do not recognise RFS mobile assets (the 'Red Fleet') in their accounts. These are NSW Government assets and should be reflected as such. This is an excellent outcome for the local government sector.

Not surprisingly, the report highlights what LGNSW and many in the local government sector have been saying for a long time – that there are significant and growing concerns about the financial sustainability of councils in NSW.

LGNSW also notes the Auditor-General's observation that 'NSW councils continue to have a higher regulatory financial reporting burden compared to councils in other Australian states and territories'. This is an important finding and LGNSW welcomes sensible moves to reduce any unnecessary reporting burden on councils.

LGNSW and councils now await the report of the NSW parliamentary <u>inquiry into the assets</u>, <u>premises</u> and <u>funding of the NSW Rural Fire Service</u>. We are optimistic that, building on the recommendations of the NSW financial sustainability inquiry, this inquiry will lead to action from the NSW Government to sensibly resolve the longstanding Red Fleet accounting dispute once and for all.

FOGO legislation

The NSW Government introduced the Protection of the Environment Operations (FOGO Recycling) Bill 2024 to Parliament on 21 November 2024, with the Bill passing both houses on 20 February 2025.

While councils are in general supportive of the FOGO mandate, which will require councils to have residential FOGO collections by 1 July 2030, there is a need for flexibility. Fortunately, the legislation includes broad provision for the NSW Government to issue exemptions from the mandate. This could include exempting entire LGAs where appropriate (such as rural LGAs where a FOGO collection is not needed or is not viable due to the lack of markets), or exempting classes of buildings (such as multi-unit dwellings where collection is not yet practical due to access and storage limitations).

An amendment to the Bill, supported by parliament, will require Minister Sharpe to establish a FOGO Implementation Advisory Panel, with at least two representatives nominated by LGNSW, as well as least two nominees from the waste and resource recovery industry.

LGNSW continues to call for funding for councils to support the rollout of the mandate. The Bill will result in significant financial and administrative costs on councils (e.g. ongoing staffing costs, system maintenance, contamination management, redevelopment of plans and contracts, inclusion of space for FOGO in planning developments).

LGNSW has a longstanding position calling for the full reinvestment of the almost \$1 billion collected annually via the Waste Levy – and this should include funding the costs of implementation of the FOGO mandate.

At the same time, the Waste Levy is currently under review by the NSW Government. In addition to our position calling for full reinvestment of the Waste Levy, we also strongly oppose any expansion of current Waste Levy area boundaries.

IPART's draft report on Valuer General's pricing for councils

IPART has been reviewing draft maximum prices for land valuation services provided by the Valuer General to local councils. LGNSW broadly welcomes <u>IPART's draft decisions</u> on the Valuer General's (VGs) pricing proposal, published in early April. It's clear that IPART has listened to local government objections to the Valuer-General's proposal for price increases of between 21% and 38%.

<u>LGNSW</u>, the NSW Revenue Professionals and individual councils were unanimous in arguing that the VG's pricing proposals were excessive and unjustified. IPART's draft decision rejects the VG's proposal of an average fee of \$10.45 and provides for an average fee of only \$7.86, which is marginally below the current average price.

LGNSW is appearing at the IPART hearing for this review on 15 April and will reiterate our positions.

Federal budget

The early federal budget in March included a number of items of interest for NSW councils, including the following:

• Financial Assistance Grants for NSW councils will increase to \$1.053.8 billion in 2025-26. Legislated indexation of the funding has increased this quantum year-on-year, but nationally these grants remain stuck at 0.51% of Commonwealth taxation revenue. LGNSW and ALGA have long been calling for these grants to return to the 1% of Commonwealth taxation revenue that was last achieved in 1996. The lack of investment in our communities is a missed opportunity and a significant contributor to the financial sustainability challenges faced by councils.

The budget papers note that the Australian Government will continue to work with the states in relation to financial support of councils, including advancing funding earlier than would usually occur.

- Roads to Recovery grants to NSW councils in 2025-26 will amount to \$222.8 million an increase of more than \$40 million year-on-year and in line with expectations. It is positive that the Commonwealth is sticking to its commitment to gradually double this funding.
- Safer Local Roads and Infrastructure Program funding to NSW councils will increase by more than 50% to \$99.9 million in 2025-26, a significant and unexpected increase in this important program that consolidates the previous Bridges Renewal Program and Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program.
- **Black Spots** program funding will increase to \$44.4 million for NSW councils in 2025-26, in line with expectations.
- Disappointingly, the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure program funding remains scheduled to be phased out by the end of 2025-26. This funding for roads, open space, sporting facilities, active transport infrastructure and tree planting is so important for making communities liveable. The budget also includes no further funding for the Thriving Suburbs Program, which provided funding to councils for projects that enhance liveability and support local amenity.
- In better news for communities, the budget does include \$5 billion towards building a new universal early childhood education and care system, which guarantees eligibility for at least three days a week of subsidised early childhood education and care. This will support communities and the more than 300 local government early childhood education and care services across NSW.

However, the Commonwealth Government has also missed an opportunity to invest in our nation's productivity and GDP through funding to bolster local government efficiencies. <u>ALGA's recent research</u> demonstrated a \$7 billion boost to national GDP from improving financial sustainability in local government.

LGNSW will continue to advocate for clarification on the timing of any Financial Assistance Grant payments and a return to 1% of Commonwealth taxation revenue to be provided to councils in financial assistance. LGNSW has joined with ALGA in its advocacy in advance of the federal election, through the Put Our Communities First campaign.

LGNSW submissions

LGNSW has lodged the following submissions since the beginning of 2025. LGNSW always welcomes input from all LGNSW members, including JOs and ROCs, to inform our submissions.

Topic	Submitted to	Date
Resource Recovery Orders and Exemptions Framework	NSW Environment Protection Authority	April
Livable Housing Discussion Paper	Building Commission NSW	March
Modern Slavery Risks Faced by Temporary Migrant Workers in Rural and Regional NSW	Modern Slavery Committee	March

Review of Roads Act 1993	Transport for NSW	March
Regional Communities Consultation Guide	Premier's Department	March
Off-The-Plan Contracts and Covenants Laws under Review	Office of the Registrar General Policy Team	March
Approach to Road Re-categorisation	Transport for NSW	March
Draft NSW Homelessness Strategy 2025 – 2035	Department of Communities and Justice	February
Inquiry Into Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on Rural and Regional Communities and Industries In NSW	NSW Parliament - Portfolio Committee No. 4 (Regional NSW)	February
IPART Approach to Assessing Infrastructure Contributions Plans	IPART	February
Submission: Draft Model Code of Meeting Practice	Office of Local Government	February
Explanation of Intended Effect: Cultural State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP)	Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure	January
LGNSW Pre-Budget Submission 2025-26 State Budget NSW Local Government Priorities	NSW Treasury	January
Homes for NSW Discussion Paper	Homes NSW	January

Rural and Regional Summit – Thursday 8 May

Finally, I look forward to seeing many of you at the 2025 LGNSW Rural and Regional Summit to be held the day following the JO Chairs Forum. This full-day event is a critical forum for discussing the pressing concerns of rural and regional communities.

As well as being a great opportunity for learning from our peers, the summit promises to foster collaborative solutions aimed at strengthening rural and regional NSW.

Report Author:	Mayor Cr Matt Burnett, President of Australian Local Government	
	Association	

Recommendation:

• That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum notes the update from the Australian Local Government Association.

Background:

2025 federal election campaign

ALGA has run a successful 2025 Federal election campaign, called <u>Put Our Communities First</u>, focusing on five key election funding priorities, including:

- \$1.1 billion per year for enabling infrastructure to unlock housing supply
- \$500 million per year for community infrastructure
- \$600 million per year for safer local roads
- \$900 million per year for increased local government emergency management capability and capacity, and
- \$400 million per year for climate adaptation.

During our national campaign, I highlighted the importance of formula-based, non-competitive <u>funding for all councils across Australia facing budget pressures.</u> I continue to emphasise that national priorities can only be met through significant recurrent funding to local councils.

As part of the campaign, I outlined the \$3.5 billion funding quantum which, when combined with the Financial Assistance Grants councils receive, amounts to one per cent of Commonwealth taxation revenue.

I also did several media interviews, including with <u>The Australian</u> where I expressed my disappointment about the Labor government failing to meet its 2022 pre-election commitment to provide 'fair funding increases' to FA Grants.

As part of our campaign, ALGA showcased several videos on how local government supports national priorities, including <u>emergency management</u>, <u>community infrastructure</u> and <u>housing infrastructure</u>.

Federal election funding commitments

During the election campaign I welcomed several pledges by the Coalition to benefit councils. In effect, the Coalition met three of the five ALGA election funding asks on funding for community infrastructure, safer roads and enabling infrastructure.

The Coalition promised to restore the Commonwealth-State funding model for regional roads to 80:20, and also establish a new Regional Australia Future Fund, which we welcomed.

The Coalition committed to using the Regional Australia Future Fund to reinstate the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program, with \$500 million for all councils for community infrastructure, and another \$500 million for local roads. This was a significant commitment that met ALGA's request for \$500 million for community infrastructure, and also acknowledged our advocacy for \$600 million for safer roads. The Coalition also pledged to immediately bring forward scheduled increases to Roads

to Recovery funding, that would provide councils with an additional \$250 million over the next four years, and also reinstate the Building Better Regions Fund at \$250 million per year.

These commitments were in addition to the Coalition's earlier pledge to invest \$5 billion in a Housing Infrastructure Programme, which is in line with ALGA's call for \$1.1 billion per year for housing enabling infrastructure.

Other parties did not commit significant new or expanded local government funding programs during the election campaign. However, I did support a commitment from independent MP Zali Steggall to create a \$10 billion Climate Resilience Facility Fund, with the profits to be invested in local government climate adaptation projects, in line with our federal election funding ask on adaptation funding.

At the time of writing this report (28 April), the election outcome is unknown, so ALGA stands ready to work closely with whichever party becomes the new government of the day. We know the needs of local governments remain consistent, regardless of the election outcome, so we will continue to represent the needs to all political parties through government, opposition and cross-bench engagement.

2025-26 Federal Budget

The Government handed down its 2025-26 Federal Budget on 25 March in Canberra.

We expressed disappointment that there were <u>no new funding programs for local government</u> in the Budget, especially after the recent Parliamentary inquiry into local government sustainability, highlighting the serious challenges faced by our sector and a need for urgent funding reform.

ALGA's analysis of the 2025-26 Federal Budget and local government programs can be found here.

Ministerial council meetings

We continue to represent your needs and concerns at the highest level on a range of Federal Ministerial councils.

These forums provide an opportunity for all three levels of government to meet to work through policies, programs and issues.

On 14 March, I attended the Energy and Climate Change Ministers Meeting, where Ministers discussed options for developing a renewable gas industry in Australia and agreed to a National Energy Equity Framework.

You can download the Communique here.

NGA 2025 and council motions

A reminder to register for the 2025 National General Assembly (NGA) from 24-27 June, with early bird registrations closing at the end of this month.

We will be hosting the Regional Forum on Tuesday 24 June and look forward to focussing on the unique challenges faced by regional and rural councils, with guest speakers including demographer Bernard Salt, National Rural Health Commissioner Professor Jenny May and road safety expert Principal Engineer Kenn Beer.

We have assembled an exciting line-up of high-profile speakers, hosts and panellists for this year's event at the National Convention Centre, embracing the theme of 'National Priorities Need Local Solutions'.

I'm personally looking forward to the session on Friday 27 June, where David Speers from ABC

Insiders will moderate panels with federal Ministers – an excellent opportunity to see how the government of the day plans to work with local government!

A big thank you to NSW councils who have provided motions to debate at the NGA. ALGA is currently assessing all motions received, and will contact your councils directly if there are any issues or we require further information. I look forward to seeing you at this year's NGA.

8.4. Minister for Local Government Address

NSW Minster for Local Government The Hon Ron Hoenig MP attendance to be confirmed.

9. General Business

The convenor will call for any general business.

10. Close

The convenor will close the meeting.

NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum Attachments

When: Wednesday, 7 May 2025

Time: 3pm-5pm

Where: McKell Room, NSW Parliament House

6 Macquarie Street, Sydney

NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum Attachments:

- Attachment 4-1 Correspondence to LGNSW re legal advice local government tendering for waste management services, 19 December 2024
- Attachment 4-2 Correspondence from Inger Shimell, Acting Manager Capability Dams Safety
 NSW re Request to meet with the Joint Organisation Chairs Forum, 26 March 2025
- Attachment 4-3 Correspondence from Dr Nicole Carroll Murray Darling Basin Authority re
 Request to meet with the Joint Organisation Chairs Forum, 1 April 2025
- Attachment 4-4 Correspondence from Gareth Edwards Acting Principal Advisor Net Zero
 Commission re Request to meet with the Joint Organisation Chairs Forum, 15 April 2025
- Attachment 6.2-1 Detailed plan for shared ARIC model
- Attachment 6.3-1 Excellence in the Environment Awards 2024

Attachment 4-1 Correspondence to LGNSW re legal advice – local government tendering for waste management services, 19 December 2024

From: Steve Wilson

Sent: Thursday, 19 December 2024 2:29 PM

To: 'chiefexecutive@lgnsw.org.au'

Cc: Bonnie Gradwell

Subject: Correspondence from Local Gov Minister to JO Chairs Forum - reply to concerns

around waste tendering legislation

Attachments: Attachment 6.1.1 - INCOMING Correspondence from the Minister for Local

Government 20240910.pdf; Attachment 6.1.3 - OUTGOING Correspondence to the

Hon. Ron Hoenig MP 20240731.pdf

Hi David

At our November meeting of the the NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum, the attached correspondence from the Local Government Minister was tabled, provided in reply to concerns raised by the Forum re the amendments to legislation around local government tendering for domestic and other waste management services.

Given your active advocacy in this space the Chairs wanted to ensure you had a copy of the response received from the Minister. Please note I've also attached the outgoing correspondence for your reference.

More broadly, I also wanted to let you know that with Cr Moore's appointment as the new Convener of the Chairs Forum, Hunter JO will now be providing secretariat to the group for the next two years. As such, if there is anything on which you or your team need to engage with the Forum, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Have a great Christmas and New Years.

Regards,

Steve Wilson | Director Hunter JO (Executive Officer) Hunter Joint Organisation

stevew@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au | 0448 401 436





Collaboration of Hunter Councils

Strengthening our communities by being the regional voice on strategic issues.

connection to land, waters, and culture. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Lands of the Awabakal, Worimi, Wonnarua, Geawegal, Biripi, Guringai and Darkinjung Aboriginal peoples. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live, and recognise their continuing

Attachment 4-2 Correspondence from Inger Shimell, Acting Manager Capability Dams Safety NSW re Request to meet with the Joint Organisation Chairs Forum, 26 March 2025

From: Inger Shimell < inger.shimell@damsafety.nsw.gov.au >

Sent: Tuesday, 18 February 2025 10:25 AM

To: Hunter Councils Admin admin@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au>

Cc: Kristina Resanceff < kristina.resanceff@damsafety.nsw.gov.au>; Chris Salkovic

<chris.salkovic@damsafety.nsw.gov.au>; Margaret Hynes <margaret.hynes@damsafety.nsw.gov.au>

Subject: Request to meet with the Joint Organisation Chairs Forum

Hello

The Chair and CEO of Dams Safety NSW would like to meet with the NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum to give a short presentation about dam safety, our strategic direction and answer any questions the JO Chairs may have about the requirements for declared dams in NSW. Currently, 59 NSW councils own at least one declared dam.

Could you please let Kristina Resanceff know if the Chairs forum would be interested in such a meeting, and if so, when might be suitable? Her contact email address is: kristina.resanceff@damsafety.nsw.gov.au

Thank you and kind regards, Inger

Inger Shimell A/Manager Capability Dams Safety NSW

E: inger.shimell@damsafety.nsw.gov.au

damsafety.nsw.gov.au

4 Parramatta Square12 Darcy Street Parramatta NSW 2150



I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land and pay respects to Elders past and present. I also acknowledge all the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff working with NSW Government at this time.

Please consider the environment before printing this email.

Attachment 4-3 Correspondence from Dr Nicole Carroll – Murray Darling Basin Authority re Request to meet with the Joint Organisation Chairs Forum, 1 April 2025

From: Nicole Carroll (MDBA) Nicole.Carroll@mdba.gov.au

Sent: Tuesday, 1 April 2025 11:44 AM

To: Bonnie Gradwell Bonnie G@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au

Cc: Steve Wilson stevew@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au; Murray-Darling Water and Environment Research Program

MDWERP@mdba.gov.au

Subject: RE: Murray Darling Water and Environment Research Program Presentation [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Hi Bonnie,

Thanks for your email. Kevin has left the MDBA since reaching out to the NSW JO.

Given we are now in now in caretaker and very likely to still be by 7 May, unfortunately we won't be able to give a presentation on the Murray-Darling Water and Environment Research Program (MD-WERP).

The MDBA is planning to hold a leadership summit on science later this year (likely November) where we will share all of MDBA's science (including MD-WERP and a broad range of other programs) and how it will be applied for the Basin Plan Review and beyond. There will be JO representation at this forum.

Kind regards Nicole

Dr Nicole Carroll (she/her)

Director, Science Programs

Science Acquisition
Basin Science and Knowledge

Murray-Darling Basin Authority Canberra | Ngunnawal Country 02 6279 0620 www.mdba.gov.au

Please note I work flexible hours and do not expect a response outside of business hours.

Keep up to date with the latest Basin news in our newsroom, or subscribe for regular updates.







We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout the Murray–Darling Basin and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We offer our respects to the people, the cultures and the Elders past and present.

OFFICIAL

From: Bonnie Gradwell < Bonnie G@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au >

Sent: Wednesday, 26 March 2025 2:18 PM

To: Kevin.Mack@mdba.gov.au

Cc: Steve Wilson < stevew@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au>; Nicole Carroll (MDBA)

<Nicole.Carroll@mdba.gov.au>

Subject: FW: Murray Darling Water and Environment Research Program Presentation

[SEC=OFFICIAL]

Good afternoon Kevin,

I wanted to reach out to confirm you are on the agenda to provide a presentation at the next NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum.

Our first meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 7th May 2025 3-5pm. The meeting will be held at NSW Parliament House, this space does not have AV and therefore is in person only. Presentations will need to be printed out with copies for all attendees.

I will be able to confirm agenda timing closer to the date, but for now locking you in the give a short presentation.

Please confirm if you would be interested in attending.

Kind Regards,

Bonnie Gradwell | Administration & Events Officer

Hunter Joint Organisation

bonnieg@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au | 0400 063 502





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From: Kevin Mack (MDBA) < Kevin. Mack@mdba.gov.au>

Sent: Tuesday, 24 September 2024 12:27 PM

To: Sharon Houlihan < Sharon.Houlihan@crjo.nsw.gov.au > **Cc:** Nicole Carroll (MDBA) < Nicole.Carroll@mdba.gov.au >

Subject: Murray Darling Water and Environment Research Program Presentation [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Sharon

As per our discussion yesterday it would be great if the MD WERP Implementation Team could do a presentation to the Chairs Forum at your next available meeting. The purpose of the presentation would be to outline the research that has been undertaken in the Basin over the past 4 years, which was funded because of the 'fish kill' event in the Menindee Lakes in 2019, with subsequent events occurring since. We believe it would be useful for the Mayors and CEO's, who many of, are in the Basin to understand the extent of the research and the highlighted findings of relevant papers. With a Basin Plan Review due in the next two years this engagement would be useful to gauge their

concerns and provide them with useful reference points that they can use. If you could provide me with an idea of when this maybe possible that would allow us to plan, as we are also offering similar presentations to singular Joint Organisations with RAMJO being the first to take up the opportunity. These presentations would be tailored to suit the relevant physical footprint that each Joint Organisation occupies.

<u>Early Insights Paper | Murray–Darling Basin Authority (mdba.gov.au)</u>
<u>Murray–Darling Water and Environment Research Program | Murray–Darling Basin Authority (mdba.gov.au)</u>
regards

Kevin Mack

Engagement and Adoption Lead MD-WERP

Murray-Darling Basin Authority

Phone: 0412483388 www.mdba.gov.au

In the spirit of strengthening partnerships with Aboriginal people the MDBA acknowledges the cultural authority of the Traditional Owners in the Murray-Darling Basin.

OFFICIAL

Classified by kevin.mack@mdba.gov.au on 24/09/2024 12:26:00 PM

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OFFICIAL

Attachment 4-4 Correspondence from Gareth Edwards Acting Principal Advisor – Net Zero Commission re Request to meet with the Joint Organisation Chairs Forum, 15 April 2025

From: Gareth Edwards <gareth.edwards@environment.nsw.gov.au>

Sent: Tuesday, 15 April 2025 4:59 PM

To: Bonnie Gradwell <BonnieG@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au>

Cc: Steve Wilson <stevew@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au>; Caroline Residovic <caroline.residovic@dpie.nsw.gov.au>

Subject: Re: Request to present to the NSW JO Chairs Forum - 7th May 2025

Dear Bonnie,

Thank you so much for the invitation. I am acting for Caroline while she's on leave.

We are very keen to accept this invitation. It would likely by our Executive Director, Dr. Will Rayward-Smith who would present, and I've slightly edited the blurb for your agenda.

Could you let me know the anticipated timing on the 7th May and when you need details confirmed by and I'll make the necessary arrangements.

Regards,

Gareth.

Revised blurb

The Net Zero Commission was established by the Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023 and commenced operations in mid-2024. It is an independent statutory body which monitors action on climate change in NSW, including how NSW is tracking on its climate goals. The Commission's first report was published in November. It found that unless action is accelerated, NSW will fail to achieve its legislated target of a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. The Commission would like to engage with the JO network on ideas and levers for accelerating progress toward the targets, including the role that local councils can play.

Gareth Edwards

A/Principal Advisor — Government Advice

Net Zero Commission

T 02 9585 6578 E gareth.edwards@environment.nsw.gov.au

Working days Monday to Thursday

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of Country throughout Australia and recognise First Nations peoples' continuing connection to land, waters and community. Always was. Always will be.

From: Bonnie Gradwell < Bonnie G@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au >

Sent: Tuesday, 15 April 2025 15:25

To: Gareth Edwards < gareth.edwards@environment.nsw.gov.au >

Cc: Steve Wilson <stevew@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au>; Caroline Residovic <caroline.residovic@dpie.nsw.gov.au>

Subject: FW: Request to present to the NSW JO Chairs Forum - 7th May 2025

Good afternoon Gareth,

I sent Caroline Residovic the below email but received an automatic reply. I wanted to reach out to you as you may be able assist in confirming a few details:

The NSW JO Chairs Forum are keen to have the Net Zero Commission present at our next meeting.

The meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 7th May 2025 at NSW Parliament House in the McKell Room. Please note this space does not have AV and therefore is in person only and any PowerPoints or documents will need to be printed out.

I can confirm the agenda closer to the date but for now I wanted to lock you in to give a short 15 minute presentation.

Please advise details of who will be presenting and if you are happy for the following to be added to the agenda:

The <u>Net Zero Commission</u> was established as part of NSW's Climate Futures Act, as the independent expert advisor to the Government for how NSW is tracking on its climate goals. The first NZC <u>report</u> was published in November which identifies that NSW is still some long way from its legislated 50% emissions reduction target by 2030. The Commission would like to engage with the JO network on ideas and levers for accelerating progress toward the targets.

Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

Kind Regards,

Hunter Joint Organisation



bonnieg@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au | 0400 063 502



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

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters, and culture. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

From: Bonnie Gradwell

Sent: Tuesday, 15 April 2025 3:22 PM **To:** caroline.residovic@dpie.nsw.gov.au

Cc: Kate Barker - Central NSW Joint Organisation < kate.barker@centraljo.nsw.gov.au>; Steve Wilson

<stevew@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au>

Subject: Request to present to the NSW JO Chairs Forum - 7th May 2025

Good afternoon Caroline,

The NSW JO Chairs Forum are keen to have the Net Zero Commission present at our next meeting.

The meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 7th May 2025 at NSW Parliament House in the McKell Room. Please note this space does not have AV and therefore is in person only and any PowerPoints or documents will need to be printed out.

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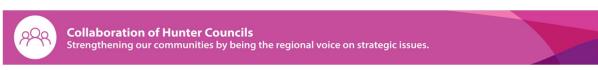
Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

Kind Regards,

Hunter Joint Organisation



bonnieg@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au | 0400 063 502



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

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters, and culture. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Detailed plan for a shared ARIC model

Attachment 6.2-1

Current Scenario (NSW Government)

The Guidelines for Risk management and Internal Audit for Local Government in NSW have been approved.

Joint organisations must comply with the 3 Core Requirements from 1 July 2024.

1.

Audit risk and improvement committee

2.

Risk management framework

3.

Internal Audit function

RISK MANAGEMENT AND INTERNAL AUDIT for local government in NSW

Guidelines

Jovember 2023





Current Scenario (JO's)

JO	ARIC	Internal Audit
CANBERRA REGION JOINT ORGANISATION Repart ladicaley remoting an annualise	 Goulburn Mulwaree, Upper Lachlan Shire Yass Valley and CRJO utilise the same Audit Review and Improvement Committee (ARIC), whilst Snowy Monaro retained their own ARIC. The committee meets four times per year. 	The CRJO has employed an independent internal auditor who undertakes this function with Goulburn Mulwaree, Upper Lachlan Shire, Yass Valley and Snowy Monaro Councils.
Mid North Coast Joint Organisation MNCJO	Kempsey Shire Council and MNCJO share an ARIC that meets independence criteria. The committee meets four times per year for approx. one hour. (See Board minutes 8 December 2023)	MNCJO Executive Officer appointed as the Internal Audit Coordinator. Approved by MNJCO subsequent to being endorsed by MNJCO ARIC. Board minutes indicate they are sourcing a shared internal audit function.
NORTHERN RIVERS JOINT ORGANISATION	The NRJO and Rous County Council share an ARIC that meets independence criteria.	The August 2023 Board minutes note at that time there was no specific Internal Audit Program for the JO.
Riverina & Murray Joint Organisation	RAMJO shares an ARIC with Albury City, but is not bound to this ARIC and can leave to join a JO led one, without impact on Albury's set-up Our ARIC meets four times a year and has been in operation since August 2023	RAMJO is being supported by its ARIC to seek an exemption to the internal audit function (IAF), in line with section 216U (a) (ii) of the ARIC regulations: "would have had a significant impact on the councils/JO budget" ARIC and RAMJO undertakes various risk management activities and maintains an assurance map, to help demonstrate alternative steps to an IAF

Proposed Scenario (JO's) - Summary

JO	ARIC	Internal Audit
•	 Shared ARIC Appoint a standalone committee - seek exemption under s216U Regs to appoint a shared JO ARIC Seek a volunteer committee of 3 from across the state + (up 	 Shared Internal Audit Service Engage a (local) internal audit service provider to undertake audit across all JOs One function is audited across each JO per year, with
JO Illawarra Shoalhaven JO	 to) 2 x observer status reps from each JO Seek exemption for reduced meeting schedule 2 per year Workplans 1 yr and 4 yr aligned to 2 x meeting schedule – Workplans can be virtually identical for each JO and aligned 	separate reports provided to each Board and the shared ARIC This will be reflected in the ARIC workplan Each JO nominates an audit coordinator (likely your accountant or similar)
to Board papers and meetings to avoid unnecessary duplication Review each JOs Risk Management Framework to check compliance with ARIC requirements (including risk appetite statement from each Board) Estimated cost: In Kind support from JOs (extra administration should be manageable after ARIC established); there is a risk that the chair of ARIC will want some recompense given there are 3 JO's	 Estimated Cost \$10,000-\$15,000 per JO We follow RAMJO's and (other's) lead and seek an exemption to the internal audit function (IAF), in line with section 216U (a) (ii) of the ARIC regulations: "would have had a significant impact on the councils/JO budget" 	

Core requirement 1: Audit Risk and Improvement Committee (ARIC)

Legislative requirements



- Each JO must have an independent ARIC that provides advice for the purpose of improving performance of the JO.
- The committee provides advice on JO operations including but not limited to compliance, risk management, financial reporting and controls, governance and internal audit.
- JO's have until 1 July 2024 to ensure membership and operations of the committee comply with the Guidelines.
- Exemptions available under s216U Local Government Regulations if:
 - Compliance is unreasonable due to a temporary circumstance or significant impact on budget
 - JOs are unable to enter into a shared agreement to achieve compliance
 - JOs proposes an alternative arrangement to ensure an equivalent outcome and notifies the Department Chief Executive
 - The JO annual report contains a relevant statement.

Committee



Composition (s216C Regs)

- At least 3 = Independent chair + at least 2 independent members
- (optional non-voting member) councillor / mayor who is not the JO chair
- ARIC chairs and members must meet independence and eligibility requirements.

Term of office

 4-year period, option for re-appointment subject to member performance assessment and statutory 8-year limit (s216G Regs)

Frequency and attendance

 Must meet at least quarterly (s216J Regs) [exemption will be sought]

Agenda

 ARIC must review the matters listed s428A Local Government Act at least once every 4 years.

Sitting fees

• We will seek voluntary members (S216I Regs)

Processes/resources



- Committee members appointed by Shared JO ARIC resolution (S216C). Letter of appointment and induction by Shared JO ARIC chair.
- Committee TOR, consistent with model terms, adopted by resolution of each JO Board (s216K Regs)
- Strategic workplan, adopted by Shared JO ARIC every four years, reviewed annually
- Annual workplan (forward agenda) aligned with strategic workplan
- Dedicated Secretariat to be shared, assigned to a JO for a period – rotated in alignment with JOs Chair rotation
- Annual committee performance assessment by ARIC
- Independent review every 4 years that the committee has reviewed matters listed in s428A as well as performance review of the committee and members.
- JO's will report on their compliance with the Regulation in their annual report.

- s428A Local Government Act
- Local-Government-General-Amendment-Audit-Risk-and-Improvement-Committees-Regulation-2023.pdf (nsw.gov.au)

Core requirement 2: Risk management

Legislative requirements



- Commencing on 1 July 2024, JOs must adopt and implement a framework for identifying and managing risk (section 216S Local Government Regulations), that is consistent with the requirements specified in the Guidelines.
- JOs must manage its strategic and operational risks and implement a risk management framework that is consistent with the current Australian risk management standard (AS ISO 31000:2018), and appropriate for the JO's risks.
- The JO's ARIC must keep the implementation of each JO's risk management framework under review and provide advice to the JOs on its implementation and operation (section 216S).

Risk management



Strategic leadership (JOs)

 Each JO to establish the foundational elements of the risk management framework and set the 'tone at the top', including approving by resolution the risk appetite.

Risk management function

Each JO EO to implement their JOs risk management framework.

Reporting

- Annual self-assessment of the risk management framework.
- Shared ARIC to provide an assessment of the effectiveness of the JO's risk management framework each 4-year term (s216S Regs)

Performance measures

 JO to assign performance targets to risk management activities that can be measured

Processes / resources



- Risk Appetite Statement adopted by resolution of each JO
- Risk management framework
- · Risk management function
- Each JO risk profile to support ARIC internal audit workplans
- Regular risk reporting
- Risk management performance targets
- · Annual self-assessment of ERM framework.
- JO's will report on their compliance with the Regulation in their annual reports.

Relevant legislative considerations:

- s428A Local Government Act
- Local-Government-General-Amendment-Audit-Risk-and-Improvement-Committees-Regulation-2023.pdf (nsw.gov.au)
- Guidelines for Risk Management and Internal Audit for Local Government in NSW (nsw.gov.au)

Core requirement 3: Internal Audit

Legislative requirements



- Commencing 1 July 2024, JOs must have an internal audit function to provide an independent assessment of JO operations and risk and control activities (section 216O).
- The internal audit function must be undertaken in accordance with the internal audit charter adopted by each JO, considering the approved model charter.
- All internal audit activities are to be undertaken under the oversight and direction of the Shared ARIC (sections 216M, 216P and 216R).

OR

 We seek an exemption to the internal audit function (IAF), in line with section 216U (a) (ii) of the ARIC regulations: "...would have had a significant impact on the councils/JO budget"

Internal Auditor / Internal audit function



Structure - For discussion

- Internal audit function will be:
 - · As a shared arrangement with other JOs.
- In a shared arrangement a shared internal audit coordinator / internal audit function operates as a standalone internal audit function for each participating organisation.
- The decision to share an internal audit coordinator / internal audit function is independent of the decision to share an ARIC.
- The EO must consult with ARIC in relation to decisions affecting employment of internal audit coordinator.

OR

 The EOs consult with ARIC in relation to management of internal audit through the risk framework by improving internal policy and procedures.

Relevant legislative considerations:

- s428A Local Government Act
- Local-Government-General-Amendment-Audit-Risk-and-Improvement-Committees-Regulation-2023.pdf (nsw.gov.au)
- · Guidelines for Risk Management and Internal Audit for Local Government in NSW (nsw.gov.au)

Processes/resources



- Internal audit charter adopted by resolution of each JO, considering the Model Internal Audit Charter (s216O).
- With the shared arrangement, JO EOs must allocate an employee of their JO the internal audit coordination responsibility.
- Risk based internal audit plan (strategic and annual) to ensure all matters listed in s428A LGA are reviewed by ARIC and considered by internal audit.
- · ARIC role:
 - Oversees internal audit activities carried out in relation to each JO.
 - reviews and reports on performance of the internal audit function annually.
 - Assesses and reports on the effectiveness of the internal audit function each term.
- JO's will report on their compliance with the Regulation in their annual reports.

OR

 The process above is modified to have ARIC supervise these tasks and internal audit become part of the risk framework's process improvement implementation at each JO.