



Hunter JO Board Meeting

10.50am, Thursday 16 October 2025

Parliament of NSW, McKell Room
6 Macquarie St, Sydney NSW 2000

This meeting is in person only

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1. Acknowledgement of Country

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
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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 [Hunter JO 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

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

3.1 Minutes of Meeting 12 June 2025

Recommendation:

- **That the minutes of the Hunter JO Board Meeting held on 12 June 2025 be received and noted.**

Hunter Joint Organisation Board Meeting Minutes

11.12am, Thursday 14 August 2025

Hosted by Lake Macquarie City Council (Hunter Sports Centre – 43 Stockland Dr, Glendale NSW 2285)

Voting Members Present

Cr Daniel Watton	Cessnock City Council
Cr Digby Rayward	Dungog Shire Council
Cr Adam Shultz	Lake Macquarie City Council
Cr Claire Pontin	MidCoast Council
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

Peter Chrystal	Interim General Manager, Cessnock City Council
Gareth Curtis	General Manager, Dungog Shire Council
Morven Cameron	CEO, Lake Macquarie City Council
Jeff Smith	General Manager, Maitland City Council
Adrian Panuccio	General Manager, MidCoast Council (Online)
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
Malcolm St Hill	Associate Director Regional Coordination - Hunter New England, Premier's Department NSW

Apologies

Cr Philip Penfold	Maitland City Council
Cr Maurice Collison	Upper Hunter Shire Council
Shaun O'Sullivan	Director North - Regional Coordination, Delivery & Engagement Group – Premier's Department NSW

Staff in Attendance

Steve Wilson	Executive Officer, Hunter JO
Tim Askew	Director of Programs, Hunter JO
Kim Carland	Advocacy & Government Relations Lead, Hunter JO

Anna Flack	Senior Project Coordinator, Hunter JO
Chris Dart	Program Lead – Circular Economy, Hunter JO
Bonnie Gradwell	Administration and Events Officer, Hunter JO (Secretariat)
Anja Carlen-Jorgensen	Advocacy and Communications Officer, Hunter JO

The formal meeting opened 11.12am

Item 1 Acknowledgement 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 Conflict of Interest

Resolved: That any Conflicts of Interest be declared and noted.

Moved: Cr Leah Anderson, Seconded: Cr Claire Pontin, Carried.

Item 3 Minutes of Previous Meeting

3.1 Minutes of Meeting 12 June 2025

Resolved: That the minutes of the Hunter JO Board Meeting held on 12 June 2025 be received and noted.

Moved: Cr Ross Kerridge, Seconded: Cr Leah Anderson, 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 Daniel Watton, Seconded: Cr Ross Kerridge, Carried

Item 5 Presentation

Nil.

Item 6 Correspondence

Resolved: That the correspondence be received and noted.

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

Item 7 Items for the Hunter JO Board: For Decision

7.1 Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2035 and Delivery Program 2025-2029

Resolved: That the Board endorse adoption of the Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2035 and Delivery Program 2025-2029.

Moved: Cr Daniel Watton, Seconded: Cr Claire Pontin, Carried.

7.2 Pecuniary Interest & Other Matters Disclosures – 2024/25 Financial Year

Resolved: That the Pecuniary Interest and Other Matters Disclosures provided by the Hunter JO Board Voting Members and Executive Officer for the 2024-25 financial year be tabled and noted.

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

7.3 Code of Conduct

Resolved: That the Board endorse the draft 2025 Hunter JO Code of Conduct and Procedures

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

7.4 Code of Meeting Practice

Resolved: That the Board endorse the updated Hunter JO Code of Meeting Practice 2025

Moved: Cr Digby Rayward, 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 financial year ending June 2025 be received and noted.*
- *That the summary of Credit Card expenditure for Hunter JO for YTD June 2025 be received and noted.*

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

8.2 Hunter JO Funding & Grant Opportunities

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

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

8.3 Hunter JO Program Status Report

Resolved: That the report be received and noted.

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

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

8.5 Annual Hunter JO Compliance Calendar Checklist

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

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

8.6 Premier's Department Update – Report 53 – Benefit and Proactive Post Mining Landuse

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

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

8.7 Office of Local Government (OLG) Update

Resolved: That the Board note the OLG update.

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

Item 9 Matters Raised by Members

9.1 LGNSW 2025 Annual Conference

Raised by: Port Stephens Council

Cr Leah Anderson, Mayor Port Stephens Council spoke to this report and requested it be discussed in a workshop setting.

9.2 Police Requirements for event management

Raised by: Lake Macquarie City Council

Morven Cameron, CEO Lake Macquarie City Council spoke to this report.

9.3 Rate Rebate Concession

Raised by: City of Newcastle

Cr Ross Kerridge, Mayor City of Newcastle spoke to this report and requested Hunter JO write to the NSW Office of Local Government to support advocacy on this item, which was supported.

Item 10 General Business

Nil.

Meeting closed at 11.37am.

4. Actions Arising from Minutes

4.1 Hunter JO Board Action Register

Recommendation:

- That the status of actions included in the Register be noted.

I.D	Action	Mtg Date		Due	Notes
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	Feb 2026	<p>October 2025: Planning for ARIC continues with Illawarra Shoalhaven JO, Central NSW JO and Mid North Coast JO. Estimated commencement date is May 2026 to align with Mid North Coast JO end of existing ARIC.</p> <p>August 2025: The Boards of Central NSW JO and Mid North Coast JO have confirmed their interest and intent to participate in a shared ARIC. Meeting scheduled for 6th August to progress planning and development.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>April 2025: Report on proposed shared ARIC model will be presented to NSW JO Chairs Forum meeting on 7th May 2025 for consideration.</p> <p>February 2025. Hunter JO is leading collaboration with broader joint organisation network.</p>
HJO-25-003	Hunter JO December Board meeting be changed from 11th December to 4th December 2025	14 Aug 25	Complete		October 2025. Board meeting rescheduled in line with Board resolution
HJO-25-004	Write to Local Government NSW requesting support for re increasing rate rebate concession for pensioners, commensurate to CPI	14 Aug 25	Complete		October 2025. Completed – refer Correspondence.

Key:	Complete	In progress	Incomplete
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5. Presentations

Nil

6. Correspondence

Report Author:	Bonnie Gradwell, Administration and Events Officer
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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: Correspondence to City of Newcastle re: Letter of Support – Community Batteries Funding Round, 8 August 2025
- Attachment 6-2: Correspondence to The Hon Chris Rath MLC re: Invitation to Hunter JO Board Meeting NSW Parliament House, 20 August 2025
- Attachment 6-3: Correspondence to Mr Dave Layzell MP re: Invitation to Hunter JO Board Meeting NSW Parliament House, 21 August 2025
- Attachment 6-4: Correspondence to NSW Premier re: Support for City of Newcastle Advocacy - pensioner rate rebate concession, 19 September 2025
- Attachment 6-5: Correspondence to Tony Chappel re: Invitation to attend 4 December 2025 Hunter JO Board meeting, 30 September 2025
- Attachment 6-6: Correspondence to Interim CEO NSW Reconstruction Authority to attend 4 December Hunter JO Board meeting, 1 October 2025
- Attachment 6-7: Letter of Support for Lake Macquarie City Council to NSW Environment Protection Authority re: Letter of Support for Soft Plastics Value Chain Activation, Local Government Waste Solutions Round 4, 7 October 2025

Correspondence Received:

- Attachment 6-8: Correspondence from Local Government Grants Commission re: Submission FA Grants, 25 August 2025
- Attachment 6-9: Correspondence from Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development re: Outcome of application to the Regional Economic Development and Community Investment Program, 26 August 2025

- Attachment 6-10: Correspondence from The Hon Ron Hoenig MP to Cr Phyllis Miller OAM, President LGNSW re: Cost Sifting Report, 27 August 2025
- Attachment 6-11: Correspondence from NSW Chairs Forum re state-wide approach to advocacy and policy - Community Benefit Sharing, 11 September 2025
- Attachment 6-12: Correspondence from The Hon Ron Hoenig MP to Mayor Moore and Mayor Anderson re: Cost Shifting Report 2025, 18 September 2025

Regional Submissions:

- Attachment 6-13: Submission Hunter Transmission Project: Environmental Impact Statement, 24 September 2025
- Attachment 6-14: Submission to Net Zero Economy Authority re: Statutory Review of Part 5 of the Net Zero Economy Act, 5 September 2025
- Attachment 6-15: Submission to NSW EPA re: Climate change licensee Requirements, 7 October 2025
- Attachment 6-16: Submission to inform the review of the operations of the NSW Reconstruction Authority regarding the NSW East Coast severe weather from May 2025, 3 October 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. Items for the Hunter JO Board: For Decision

7.1 Annual Financial and Performance Audit

Report Author:	Tim Askew, Director of Programs
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Recommendation:

- **That the outcomes of the annual financial and performance audit, including annual audited accounts for 2024-25FY be received and accepted.**

Executive Summary:

This report provides for the Board's consideration, the Hunter JO annual audited accounts for the 2024-25 Financial Year.

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 was completed by Prosperity in collaboration with the NSW Audit Office.

The annual audit documents prepared and provided for the Board's consideration include:

- Engagement Closing Report for the year ended 30 June 2025
- Annual Audited Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 2025

Discussion:

The 2024/25 audit has identified no new reportable matters for the Hunter JO. In regard to ongoing reportable matters from previous years, management is continuing to work toward solutions (e.g. establishment of a shared ARIC with other JOs) or to develop systems and procedures that are commensurate to the level of risk exposure and capacity of the organisation (e.g. IT security and cyber security frameworks).

However, a notable change arising from the 2024/25 Audit for the Board's attention is a change in the way that grant revenue needs to be assessed under *Australian Accounting Standards being either AASB 1058 Income of Not-For-Profit Entities or AASB15 – Revenue from Contracts with Customers*. This assessment now requires that the majority of grant revenue for the Hunter JO will need to be fully recognised in the year it is received, even though expenditure may not be incurred in that year. Previously, recognition of grant revenue has occurred over the life of the grant funded project as it was delivered, ensuring that revenue and expenditure have aligned over what can often be multi-year delivery timeframes.

The implication of this change is that annual financial statements for the Hunter JO will now record substantial variations in the level of profit or loss recorded over subsequent years, as they will be disproportionately impacted by the scale and timing of grants received. For example, if a significant grant is received in June, this will be recorded as revenue in that financial year, however the actual expenditure of the grant will be recorded in the subsequent year, with no accompanying revenue to offset that expenditure. For example, the 2024/25 financial results reported to the Board in August identified a net profit of \$50,613 (where revenue is aligned to expenditure), however after applying AASB1058 this will be recorded as a net profit of \$623,863 in the 2024/25 audited financial statements, which is not a practical reflection of the state of the Hunter JO operational budget.

The facilitate practical management of the budget in a way that provides meaningful insight for the Board, the approach for managing this new requirement moving forward will include:

- Initially assessing each new grant for revenue recognition using the accounting standards template provided by the auditors.

- Continuing to record and report on grants using the current management accounting methods to ensure close expenditure management of the grants.
- Making an end of financial year adjustment to recognise revenue according to the accounting standards, ensuring that the revenue accumulated in a prior year to expenditure is clearly shown as a restricted cash in the financial statements.

Financial / Resourcing Implications:

There are no additional financial implications to those identified in the above discussion.

Next steps:

1. The Audited Financial Statements will be lodged with NSW Office of Local Government and published on the Hunter JO website by 31 October 2025
2. Hunter JO will continue to progress actions to address those remaining reportable items identified from previous years audits.

Attachments (CONFIDENTIAL) **:

NB the following attachments will be circulated separately to the papers, pending their provision by the Auditor.

- Attachment 7.1-1: Engagement Closing Report for the year ended 30 June 2025 (Confidential)
- Attachment 7.1-2: Annual Audited Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 2025 (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:	Steve Wilson, Executive Officer
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Recommendation:

- **That the Board endorse the Service Level Agreement between Hunter JO, Hunter Councils, Arrow Collaborative Services and Hunter Councils Legal Services (Local Government Legal).**

Executive Summary:

This report is seeking endorsement from the Hunter JO Board for an updated Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the four Hunter Councils owned entities, that formalises and acknowledges the relationships between the entities.

Background:

The ten Hunter Councils collectively operate and own four separate entities:

- Hunter Joint Organisation (Hunter JO)
- Hunter Councils Incorporated (HC Inc)
- Arrow Collaborative Services (Arrow)
- Hunter Councils Legal Services (HCLS)

Further details on the purpose, entity type and Board structures are provided in Appendix 7.2-A.

An SLA was initially established between the entities in September 2021. Substantial restructuring of the Arrow businesses and Hunter JO has occurred since that time, necessitating a review of the SLA.

Discussion:

The draft SLA formalises and acknowledges the relationships between Hunter JO, Arrow, HCLS and HC Inc. It documents the services & charges received by each entity from another within the group. The SLA focuses on:

- Operation of an inter-entity loan account to efficiently manage inter-entity transactions
- Inter-entity services (building use & administrative support)
- Inter-entity charges (payment processes, annual charges, building use – rent, administrative & IT support.
- Payment of annual dividend from Arrow to Hunter JO

Financial / Resourcing Implications:

Nil. The SLA documents existing arrangements in place between the entities.

Next steps:

1. SLA to be endorsed by the Boards of Hunter JO, Arrow, HCLS and HC Inc prior to execution.
2. The SLA is to be reviewed annually and formally adopted on a four yearly basis, or as required in the interim subject to the agreement of all parties.

Appendices:**

- Appendix 7.2-A: Related Entities of the Hunter Councils.
- Appendix 7.2-B: Draft Service Level Agreement between Hunter JO, Hunter Councils Incorporated, Arrow Collaborative Services and Hunter Councils Legal Services.

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

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Appendix 7.2-A. Related Entities of the ten Hunter Councils

Entity	Purpose	Entity Type	Board
Hunter Joint Organisation (Hunter JO)	Statutory functions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Advocacy Identifying key regional strategic priorities Intergovernmental collaboration 	Statutory local government body under NSW Local Government Act Regulator: NSW Office of Fair Trading	All Mayors (voting) All General Managers (non-voting) Premier's Department representative (non-voting)
Hunter Councils Incorporated (HC Inc)	Provides asset ownership of the office building housing Hunter JO, Arrow and Hunter Councils Legal Services (4 Sandringham Ave, Thornton)	Unincorporated Entity Regulator: NSW Office of Fair Trading	All Mayors (voting) All General Managers (non-voting)
Arrow Collaborative Services (Arrow)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides specialised services in planning and environment law, purchasing and procurement Provide a funding dividend (from profits) to Hunter JO Provides corporate support services (financial & IRT systems, human resources, building management etc) to Hunter JO and HCLS) 	Australian Public Company (Limited by Guarantee) Regulator: Australian Securities and Investment Commission	All General Managers (voting)
Hunter Councils Legal Services (HCLS)	Provides specialised services in planning and environment law to NSW local government <i>NB HCLS is a wholly owned subsidiary company of Arrow Collaborative Services</i>	Australian Public Company (Limited by Guarantee) Regulator: Australian Securities and Investment Commission	Hunter Councils Legal Services Board <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adrian Panuccio (GM MidCoast) Gareth Curtis (GM Dungog) Greg McDonald (GM Upper Hunter) Mark Cotton, Director Local Government Legal Marlie Caban, Director Local Government Legal

Service Level Agreement Between:

- Hunter Joint Organisation
- Arrow Collaborative Services
- Hunter Councils Incorporated
- Hunter Councils Legal Services

4th December 2025



LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
LEGAL

Hunter Councils Inc

Controlled Document Information

Authorisation Details

Document Name	Service Level Agreement Between Hunter Joint Organisation, Arrow Collaborative Services, Hunter Councils Incorporated & Hunter Councils Legal Services (Local Government Legal)
Responsible Officer	Steve Wilson, Executive Officer – Hunter JO Joseph Corrigan, Director Regional Procurement – Arrow Collaborative Services Marlie Caban & Mark Cottom, Directors – Local Government Legal
Review timeframe	4 years
Next Scheduled Review	October 2029
Authorisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hunter JO Board• Arrow Collaborative Services Board• Hunter Councils Incorporated Board• Hunter Councils Legal Services Board
Authorisation Date	16 th October 2025

Related Document Information

Related Legislation	N/A
Related Policies / Procedures	N/A

Definitions

Term / Abbreviation	Definition

Consultation

Consulted with:	General Managers Advisory Committee, Arrow Collaborative Services Board, Hunter Councils Legal Services Board, Hunter JO Board
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Version History

Version No.	Date Changed	Modified by	Details and Comments
2	4 December 2025	Steve Wilson	N/A
1	September 2021	Joe James	N/A

Service Level Agreement

1. Purpose

This Agreement represents a Service Level Agreement (“SLA” or “Agreement”) for the provision of services between the organisations:

- Hunter Joint Organisation (Hunter JO)
- Arrow Collaborative Services (Arrow)
- Hunter Councils Legal Services (HCLS)
- Hunter Councils Incorporated (HC Inc)

This Agreement remains valid until superseded by a revised agreement mutually endorsed by the parties. This Agreement outlines the parameters of all services and charges between the parties as they are mutually understood by the stakeholders.

2. Goals and Objectives

This Agreement formalises and acknowledges the relationships between the Hunter JO, Arrow, HCLS and HC Inc. This Agreement documents the services & charges received by each entity from another within the group.

3. Stakeholders

The primary stakeholders for this Agreement will be the Board for each respective party to this Agreement.

4. Periodic Review

This Agreement is to be reviewed annually and formally adopted on a four yearly basis, or as required in the interim subject to the agreement of all parties.

5. Inter-entity Loan Account

Inter – entity Loan Accounts will be provided to efficiently manage inter-entity transactions without having to physically move cash between bank accounts as:

- a) Periodically, costs are incurred by one of the entities that are paid by the other.
- b) A facility needs to be in place and shown in the accounting records of the entities to properly record such transactions.

6. Inter-entity services

6.1 Building Use

HC Inc provides corporate accommodation for the staff of Arrow, Hunter JO and HCLS in the 4 Sandringham Avenue, Thornton NSW property, under Hunter Councils Inc’s rental agreement.

6.2 Administrative Support

Arrow provides finance, human resources and administrative support to Hunter JO, HCLS and HC Inc. This is provided on an as-needed basis.

7. Inter-entity charges

7.1 Payment of Charges

All charges between entities are paid on a monthly basis.

Charges between Hunter JO, Arrow, HCLS and HC Inc will be managed through the provision of intercompany invoicing.

7.2 Annual Charges:

The determination of annual charges between the entities will be determined during the annual budget process and will be informed by:

- Overhead costs are attributed using activity-based costing
- Direct costs are attributed to each business unit

7.3 Building Use - Rent

Arrow, HCLS and Hunter JO pay a percentage of the commercial rent to HC Inc as determined in annual budget process.

7.4 Administrative Support (including IT Support)

Hunter JO, HCLS & HC Inc each pay a monthly fee to Arrow for finance & administrative support as determined in the annual budget process.

Where corporate overhead direct charges are passed on, the overhead costs are apportioned on the basis of the number of users as determined in the annual budget process.

8. Payment of Annual Dividend

It is the mission of Arrow to support the Hunter JO by a member dividend and equip them with the resources needed to effectively advocate for the region.

The capacity to pay a member dividend and the amount of the dividend will be determined by the Arrow Board annually.

9. Executed by the Parties

Cr Sue Moore

Chair of the Hunter Joint Organisation
Chair of Hunter Councils Inc
Mayor of Singleton Council

Date:

Jeff Smith

Chair of Arrow Collaborative Services
General Manager Maitland City Council

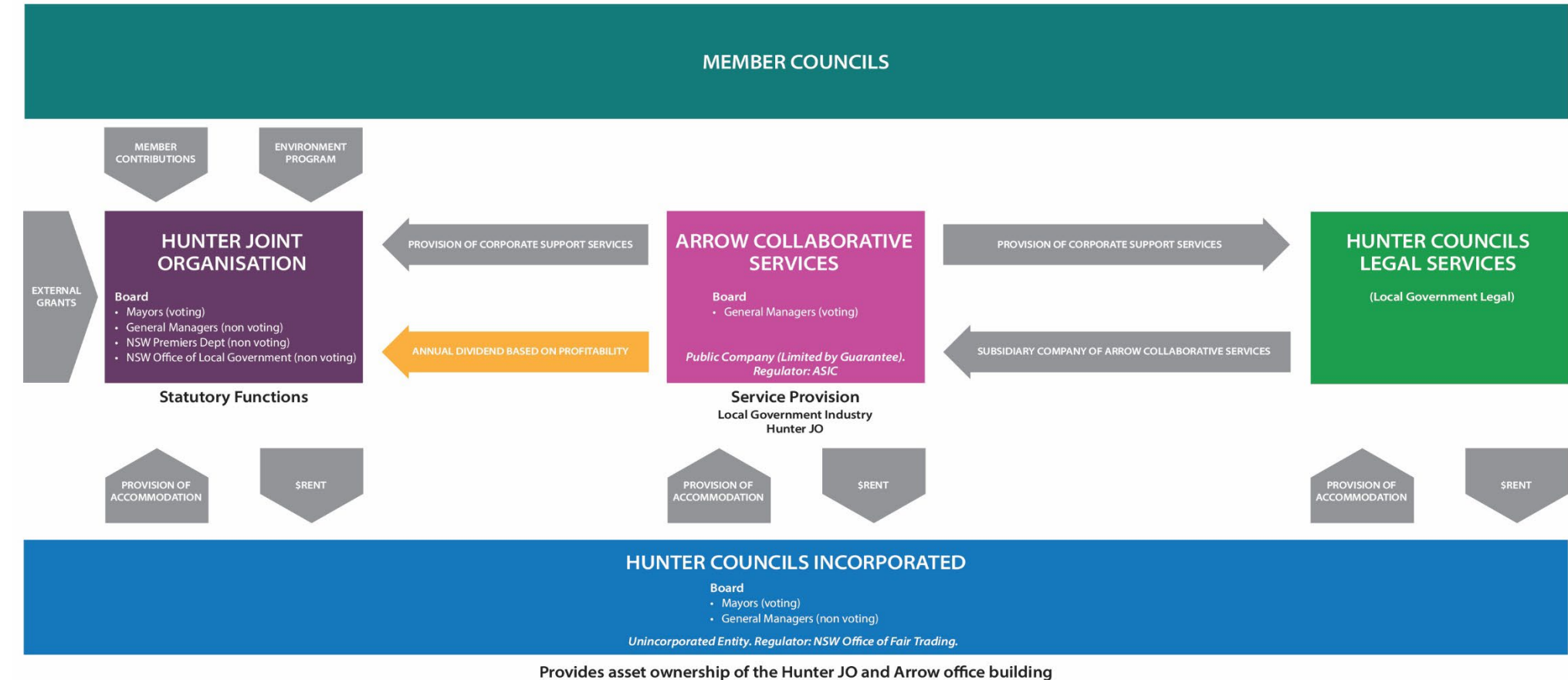
Date:

Adrian Panuccio

Chair of Hunter Councils Legal
Services
General Manager MidCoast Council

Date:

ATTACHMENT 1. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ENTITIES



Report Author:	Steve Wilson, Executive Officer
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Recommendations:

- That the Board endorse the Hunter JO Annual Performance statement for the 2024-25 period, and its submission to the Office of Local Government by 30 November 2025
- That the Board endorse publication of the Hunter JO Performance Statement for the 2024-25 period on the Hunter JO website

Executive Summary:

This report provides for endorsement, the Hunter JO Annual Performance Statement for the 2024-25 financial year.

Background:

Under the *NSW Local Government Act*, Joint Organisations must prepare and submit to the NSW Office of Local Government an Annual Performance Statement by 30th November each year. For joint organisations the report should identify their progress in implementing strategies and plans for delivering strategic regional priorities.

Discussion:

The 2024/25 Annual Performance Statement provides an overview of the nature and outcomes of advocacy activities and regional program work delivered by the Hunter JO for the period 1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025. The structure of the report aligns to the four strategic themes of the Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2032 which was in place for the reporting period.

For the Hunter JO, this reporting period was the first year of implementation of the new leadership and organisational model that commenced on 1 July 2025. This included a greater focus on delivering regional advocacy while continuing to implement the Hunter JO's long standing grant funded capacity building programs.

The reporting period includes the involvement and activities implemented by both the previous Hunter JO Board (July 2024 – September 2024) and the current Board of Mayors appointed following the September 2024 local government elections.

NB The link to the audited financial statements (page 38 of the Annual Performance Statement) will be activated pending Board acceptance of the annual audited accounts for 2024-25FY (Agenda Item 7.1).

Financial / Resourcing Implications: Nil**Next steps:**

1. Provision of the Hunter JO Annual Performance Statement 2024-25 to the NSW Office of Local Government.
2. The report will be published on the Hunter JO Website by 30 November 2025

Appendices* / Attachments:**

- Attachment 7.3-1: Hunter JO Annual Performance Statement 2024-25

*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, Executive Officer
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Recommendation:

That the Board confirms its support and participation in a state-wide collaborative approach to:

- i) understanding and applying the new benefit-sharing guideline for large-scale energy developments**
- ii) developing council policies and procedures for negotiating community benefits-sharing arrangements; and**
- iii) advocating for clear planning processes, additional guidelines and retrospective arrangements to ensure net community benefit for regional host communities for all energy developments.**

Executive Summary:

This report is seeking the Board’s support to participate in a state-wide collaborative approach to building councils’ capabilities, developing policies and procedures and undertaking advocacy in relation to community benefits-sharing arrangements linked to the roll out of renewable energy projects.

Background:

Local councils across regional NSW are experiencing or are anticipated to experience increased development of renewable energy projects such as wind farms, solar farms, battery storage facilities, pumped hydro, energy distribution and transmission and waste-to-energy projects.

Many energy projects are state significant developments and, while all energy consumers will benefit from renewable energy projects once constructed, local communities where energy developments and operations are located will bear a disproportionate burden associated with hosting the ongoing energy operations.

Despite this, many energy developments are proceeding, both within and outside of renewable energy zones, without suitably commensurate arrangements in place to ensure local communities can experience a net positive benefit as a result of infrastructure and operations being located within or transiting through their area.

Recognising this, in November 2024 the NSW Government published a benefit-sharing guideline for large scale renewable energy developments, specifically solar and wind energy generation projects and battery storage projects on rural properties. While these guidelines were a positive step towards establishing appropriate long-term community benefits-sharing for energy projects, there is still much to be understood and considered by NSW councils, including:

- how the guidelines should be applied by councils and the state via the planning process
- development of individual council policy positions and procedures regarding negotiation of community benefits-sharing arrangements, which may include agreements with local governments, as distinct from traditional developer contribution agreements and specific infrastructure agreements between energy companies and local governments
- required advocacy to the NSW Government for development of benefit-sharing guidelines, and associated planning processes to apply them, for other types of energy developments
- retrospective advocacy to energy companies who have achieved development consents without appropriate benefits-sharing arrangements in place.

Discussion:

At its 7 August 2025 meeting, the NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum considered efforts underway by councils in regional areas to develop appropriate policy positions with respect to community benefits-sharing. This included the merits of a coordinated statewide approach to building councils' capabilities, developing policies and procedures and undertaking advocacy with respect to processes for establishing appropriate community benefits-sharing arrangements, with a view to:

- More clearly and consistently communicating to energy companies, to the NSW Government and to local communities what councils are seeking by way of fair contribution towards broad community benefits, above and beyond negating direct construction impacts
- Enhancing the capacity and capability of local councils across NSW to more consistently and equitably negotiate with energy companies and the NSW Government to secure legacy benefits for their local communities.

To further progress this opportunity, the Chair's resolved to: *"write to all joint organisations, regional organisations of councils and other regional groups of councils to recommend and seek their support for and participation in a collaborative approach to: understanding and applying the new benefit-sharing guideline for large-scale energy developments; developing council policies and procedures for negotiating community benefits-sharing arrangements and; advocating for clear planning processes, additional guidelines and retrospective arrangements to ensure net community benefit for regional host communities for all energy developments"*

Refer Attachment 6-11 for correspondence received by the Hunter JO.

Financial / Resourcing Implications:

Initial work to progress this initiative will be delivered within the existing resources of the joint organisations via the Chairs Forum. While there is no direct financial commitment required at this stage, it should be noted that a potential future financial contribution request may be received to assist with procurement of appropriate technical expertise and advice to support this work. Should this be required, a separate report relating to the request will be provided for the Board's consideration.

Next steps:

1. The outcome of the Board decision will be communicated to the NSW JO Chairs Forum
2. The Chair's Forum will continue to progress the initiative pending the level and nature of support received from joint organisations and other alliances of councils from across NSW.

Appendices* / Attachments:**

- Attachment 6-11: Correspondence from NSW Chairs Forum re potential for a statewide coordinated policy development and advocacy approach by councils to community benefits-sharing for energy projects.
- Attachment 7.4-1: Report to the 7 August NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum regarding the potential for a state-wide approach to Community Benefit Sharing
- Attachment 7.4-2: Benefit-Sharing Guideline (November 2024), NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.

*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 NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum Reports and Minutes

Report Author:	Steve Wilson, Executive Officer
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Recommendation:

- **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 August 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 August 2025 meeting included:

1. Potential for a state-wide approach to advocacy, frameworks and resources to support the establishment of Community Benefit Sharing schemes linked to renewable energy projects, in collaboration with a broader range of stakeholders (e.g. Country Mayors Association, Mining and Energy Related Councils, Coalition of Renewable Energy Mayors) - refer Agenda Item 7.4.
2. Individual JO Spotlight – commencing with Hunter JO, this is a new standing item on the agenda, to showcase the operating structure, systems, Board processes, priorities, challenges and opportunities for each JO around the state. A different JO will present at each meeting.
3. NSW Office of Local Government update (Brett Whitworth, Deputy Secretary OLG) focusing on:
 - JO framework review and potential resulting changes to joint organisation model
 - Status of changes to proclamations for new JO member councils and/or bringing in Associate Members
 - Status of changes to Code of Conduct and Code of Meeting Practice.
4. Advocacy updates from Australian Local Government Association and Local Government NSW
5. Update on key priorities and activities of the Country Mayors Association provided by Cr Rick Firman, Chair Country Mayors Association
6. Reports from the JO network focusing on:
 - State-wide Disaster Ready projects
 - State-wide JO Net Zero Acceleration (JONZA) projects
 - Shared priorities (cross JO) provided to the NSW Net Zero Commission Consultation process

Financial / Resourcing Implications: Nil

Next steps: Nil

Appendices* / Attachments:**

- Attachment 8.1-1: NSW JO Chairs Forum Meeting Papers (7th August 2025)
- Attachment 8.1-2: NSW JO Chairs Forum Meeting Minutes (7th August 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.

8.2 Hunter JO Financial Report

Report Author:	Tim Askew, Director of Programs
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Recommendations:

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

Executive Summary:

This report provides, for noting, the year-to-date Hunter Joint Organisation financial statements for the month ending August 2025.

Background: Nil

Discussion:

Income Statement Summary

SUMMARY	ACTUAL	ACTUAL	BUDGET	YTD	YTD	ANNUAL
INCOME STATEMENT HIGHLIGHTS	Current Month	YTD	YTD	VARIANCE	PRIOR YEAR	BUDGET
HJO GROUP						
HUNTER COUNCILS INCORPORATED	(8,826)	(15,257)	(10,876)	29%	(26,027)	13,664
HUNTER JOINT ORGANISATION	(220)	(8,270)	243	-103%	34,577	2,087
TOTAL NET PROFIT / (LOSS) - OPERATIONS	(9,045)	(23,527)	(10,634)	(1)	8,550	15,751
HJO Subsidy	-	-	-	-	-	-
Extraordinary Expenses	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL GROUP NET PROFIT / (LOSS)	(9,045)	(23,527)	(10,634)	(1)	8,550	15,751
Check to consolidated P&L (HJO)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Check to BS current earnings -HJO	-	(0)	-	-	-	-

For the month ending August 2025, Hunter JO reports a net loss of \$8,270 which is \$8,400 below the budget projections. This variance is primarily attributable to timing differences in grant progress and we are still waiting on funding from NSW OLG for the cadets.

The YTD net results for Hunter Councils Inc reports a net loss of \$15,257, which is 29% below the budget projections. This variance is primarily attributable to a repair to an air conditioning unit increasing occupancy costs by \$3,000 over expected costs YTD.

For a more detailed breakdown of the Income Statement, Balance Sheet, and Cash Flow by company, please refer to attachment 8.2-1 & 8.2-2.

A copy of Credit Card Expenditure for the Hunter JO since 1 July 2024 has been included at Attachment 8.2-1 for noting.

Balance Sheet Summary

YTD SUMMARY	HUNTER COUNCILS INC	HUNTER JOINT ORGANISATION	HJO GROUP TOTAL
BALANCE SHEET HIGHLIGHTS			
ASSETS			
Cash	3,368	1,400,906	1,404,274
Trade Debtors	7,620	460,635	468,255
Property, Plant & Equipment	1,511,306	52,543	1,563,849
Intercompany Loans	(652,412)	56,402	(596,010)
Other	(8,891)	23,888	14,997
	860,991	1,994,374	2,855,365
LIABILITIES			
Trade Creditors	27,689	82,611	110,300
Employee Leave Entitlements	-	241,322	241,322
Unspent Grant Funding	-	782,612	782,612
Intercompany Loans	226,000	-	226,000
Other	8,544	1,009,125	1,017,669
	262,233	2,115,669	2,377,902
NET ASSETS	598,758	(121,295)	477,463
	(0)	(0)	
BALANCE SHEET METRICS			
Working Capital	2,098	1,885,429	1,887,527
Current Ratio [Target >1.5]	0.1:1	0.9:1	0.9:1
Liabilities to Assets %	30%	106%	83%
Cash Ratio [Target >1]	0.1:1	0.7:1	0.7:1

Cashflow Summary

YTD SUMMARY	HUNTER COUNCILS INC	HUNTER JOINT ORGANISATION	GROUP TOTAL
CASHFLOW HIGHLIGHTS			
OPENING BALANCE - CASH ON HAND	68	936,945	937,013
Net Cash - Operating	(3,700)	463,961	460,261
Net Cash - Investing	-	-	-
Net Cash - Financing	7,000	-	7,000
Cash - Net Increase / (Decrease)	3,300	463,961	467,261
CLOSING BALANCE - CASH ON HAND	3,368	1,400,906	1,404,274
Plus Trade Debtors / Creditors	(20,069)	378,024	357,955
AVAILABLE WORKING CAPITAL (CASH)	(16,701)	1,778,930	1,762,229
LESS RESTRICTED FUNDS			
Employee Leave Entitlements	-	241,322	241,322
Unspent Grant Funds	-	782,612	782,612
UNRESTRICTED FUNDS	(16,701)	754,996	738,295

Check to cashflows

Appendices* / Attachments**:

- Attachment 8.2-1: Hunter JO Credit Card Expenditure: YTD August 2025 (CONFIDENTIAL)
- Attachment 8.2-2: Hunter JO Monthly Financial Report: August 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.

8.3 Hunter JO Funding & Grant Opportunities

Report Author:	Tim Askew, Director of Programs
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Recommendation:

- 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
Advice pending	Funding Program: Joint Procurement Funded Support – Stream 1 (NSW Environment Protection Authority) <i>Project: Hunter Central Coast Regional Waste Infrastructure Strategy</i> This project will develop a Regional Waste Infrastructure Strategy for the Hunter and Central Coast that sets out a long-term, collaborative roadmap for councils to deliver resilient, financially sustainable, and modern waste infrastructure and services. It will identify opportunities for future joint procurement of infrastructure and services amongst councils.	\$249,944
Unsuccessful	Funding Program: Regional Economic Development & Community Investment Program (NSW Regional Development Trust) <i>Project: Regional Post Mining Land Use in the Hunter</i> 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.	\$998,843 (over 2 years)
Advice pending (NB If successful DSSN would be the grant recipient)	Funding Program: Regional Economic Development & Community Investment Program (NSW Regional Development Trust) <i>Project: Hunter Global Tourism Project.</i> 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: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Trade Representation & International Market Readiness2. Content Strategy & Digital Infrastructure. As required by the funding guidelines DSSN and Newcastle Airport are providing a 20% direct financial contribution to the project.	\$250,000

Final stage of approval – contract negotiations underway with DCCEEW	Funding Source: NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water <i>Project: Embedding Climate Risk in Council Enterprise Risk Management</i> <p>Hunter JO has submitted a proposal to assist councils update and develop climate change risk assessments using the latest NARClIM climate projections and embed them within councils' broader enterprise risk framework.</p> <p>The project will also include development of an instructional toolkit to assist councils across the state use best practice methodology to improve their climate risk management.</p>	TBA
Advice pending	Funding Program: Local Government Waste Solutions – Round 4 (NSW Environment Protection Authority) <i>Project: Hunter Circular Materials Data Project</i> <p>This proposed project will update and integrate regional waste and resource recovery data, combining existing datasets with new business-level information captured through geospatial mapping. This data will be presented in a purpose-built data portal that will include an ESG engagement tool for businesses and councils. The portal will aim to support waste reduction, circularity and resource recovery by encouraging collaboration and providing practical actions and strategies for users. It will also provide a dataset that can be used by the Hunter JO, councils and other stakeholders to identify strategic initiatives to further develop the circular economy. The uptake of the portal will be supported by an engagement and communications program.</p>	\$298,892

Key: Successful Advice Pending Unsuccessful

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.

8.4 Hunter JO Program Status Report

Report Author:	Tim Askew, Director of Programs
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Recommendation:

- **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
HOUSING & POPULATION GROWTH												
ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION & JOBS												
						Circular Economy Procurement Project	Grant	On Track	On Track	On Track	30 April 2026	
						Regional Economic Evolution	Hunter JO	Moderate Impact	Moderate Impact	Moderate Impact		Project is on hold as there are currently no resources available in the short term. Likely to recommence in January 2026.
						Circular Precincts and Futures Hub	Hunter JO	On Track	Moderate Impact	On Track	30 June 2026	The project has commenced writing an RPPP grant to continue the work towards development of the Circular Precincts and Futures Hub.
INFRASTRUCTURE & CONNECTIVITY												
						Priority Infrastructure List (Stage 2)	Hunter JO	Moderate Impact	Moderate Impact	Moderate Impact	30 June 2026	Project is on hold as there are currently no resources available in the short term. Likely to recommence in January 2026.
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY & RESILIENCE												
						Disaster Risk Reduction	Grant	On Track	On Track	On Track	29 February 2028	Project progressing well as it's at an early stage. However, the excessive administration requirements from the grant body may start to impact delivery over time. We will keep the Board updated should this impact be realised.
						Net Zero Acceleration	Grant	On Track	On Track	On Track	31 December 2026	
						Embedding Climate Risk in Council (ERM)	Grant	On Track	On Track	On Track	30 June 2026	On Hold - waiting for funding deed to be signed by DCCEEW
						Regional Waste Coordination	Grant	On Track	On Track	On Track	30 June 2027	
						Community Recycling Centres	Grant	Moderate Impact	On Track	On Track	30 June 2026	Main project on hold awaiting funding deed for 2026-2027. Battery disposal awareness campaign funding has been received in the interim.

Strategic Themes						Project	Funding	Schedule	Resourcing	Scope	Delivery Date	Updates by Exception
						Illegal Dumping Program	Grant	On Track	On Track	On Track	31 March 2027	
						Hospitality Circularity Project	Grant	On Track	On Track	On Track	31 March 2026	
						Hunter Circular Value Chains	Grant	On Track	On Track	On Track	30 June 2026	
FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY & FUNDING REFORM												
COMMUNITY LIVEABILITY & WELLBEING												

8.5 Hunter JO Risk Register

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

- **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 by the Executive Officer and Administration & Events Officer to identify any new risks and evaluate those already on the register. Identification of corporate and operational risks is also included as an agenda item in weekly Hunter JO team meetings.

Financial / Resourcing Implications:

The Governance & Risk Framework is managed by the Hunter JO Executive Officer in collaboration with the Administration & Events Officer.

Next steps:

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

Appendices* / Attachments:**

- Attachment 8.5-1: 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.

8.6 Annual Hunter JO Compliance Calendar Checklist

Report Author:	Bonnie Gradwell, Administration and Events Officer
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Recommendation:

- **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 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 Executive Officer and Administration and Events Officer on a weekly basis.

Next steps:

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

Appendices* / Attachments:**

- Appendix 8.6-A: Hunter JO Compliance Checklist 2025-26FY

*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 8.6-A: 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)	☑	☑										
Hunter Joint Organisation Audit (Auditor-General)												
Hunter JO Meeting includes presentation of audited accounts												
Lodgement of Audited Financial Statements to OLG												
Submission of Hunter JO Annual Performance Statement to OLG												
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		☑										
Publishing of Audited Annual Financial Statements on Hunter JO website												
PID self assessment audit												
Submission of Public Interest Disclosure Annual Return	☑											
Publishing of Hunter JO Board Meeting Agendas on Hunter JO website		☑		☑								
Publishing of Hunter JO Board Meeting Minutes on Hunter JO website												
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												
Review & adoption of Code of Meeting Practice & Expenses and Facilities Policy (within 12 months of election)		☑										
Review of organisational structure (within 12 months of election)		☑										
Review of Code of Conduct (within 12 months of election)		☑										
Finance & Budget												
Commence consultation with Board on Statement of Revenue Policy												
Presentation of forecast budget (Hunter JO)												
GST Certificate to be submitted	☑											
Adopt Statement of Revenue Policy and Budget [LG Reg cl 397I]												
Publish Statement of Revenue Policy and Budget on website [LG Reg cl 397I]												
Human Resources												
Commence Executive Officer Performance Review												
Presentation of Executive Officer Performance Review outcomes to Hunter JO Board												

Key:

- ☑

Green – Completed
- Orange – Due date/to be completed by
- Red – Not completed on schedule

Report Author:	Shaun O'Sullivan, Director North - Regional Coordination, Delivery & Engagement Group – Premier's Department NSW
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Recommendation:

- That the Hunter JO Board note the update from the Premier's Department

Housing Update

The Regional Housing Governance Framework has established a Working Group chaired by the Premier's Department, comprising Deputy Secretaries from The Cabinet Office, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Homes NSW, Landcom, and Crown Lands.

The Regional Housing Steering Committee has been established to provide strategic oversight and coordination for regional housing delivery, ensuring a cross-agency approach and alignment of objectives. The committee's purpose is to share information, address concerns and impediments, identify and track agency actions, and maintain consistent communications across government. The Premier's Department (PD) is actively supporting this work by mapping current and future NSW Government commitments, facilitating Regional Housing Delivery Plans, and engaging with councils, land councils, and stakeholders to identify issues and opportunities. PD is committed to enabling government-led investment opportunities, working collaboratively with agencies and councils to develop whole-of-government priorities and actions for regional housing.

Future Jobs and Investment Authority

The NSW Government will establish the Future Jobs and Investment Authority to support the long-term economic security of coal-reliant communities as global demand for coal declines. The Authority will be a statutory body, comprising four Local Divisions to represent industry, workers, and community views, a Board led by an independent Chair, and a Chief Executive Officer. The 2025 - 26 NSW Budget allocates \$27.3 million over four years to fund the Authority, with an initial focus on the Hunter and Central West regions. Legislation to formally establish the Authority and enact its operating model will be introduced in Parliament this year. Additionally, the Royalties for Rejuvenation Fund will be repurposed as the Future Jobs and Investment Fund, with the government committing \$22.5 million annually for the next four years to support transition and investment initiatives.

8.8 Office of Local Government (OLG) Update

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

- **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:

Procurement Guidelines for NSW Local Government

OLG is seeking feedback on draft [Procurement Guidelines for NSW Local Government](#) to replace the outdated Tendering Guidelines 2009. The draft Guidelines outline best practice procurement principles and processes to enable delivery of quality outcomes that provide value for money while effectively managing risks.

The Guidelines will also give effect to recommendations made by the NSW Auditor General, address identified procurement risks, and address corruption risks identified by recent NSW ICAC investigations.

OLG is also inviting expressions of interest from procurement professionals to join a Procurement Working Group. This group will provide input into the Guidelines and assist with the development of a range of comprehensive supplementary guidance material and other procurement resources for councils.

Submissions on the draft Guidelines and expressions of interest to join the working group can be emailed to olg@olg.nsw.gov.au and marked to the attention of OLG's Council Governance Team until COB on Friday, 10 October 2025.

2025 Model Meeting Code

Following extensive consultation, the new 2025 Model Code of Meeting Practice for Local Councils in NSW has been finalised.

The new 2025 Model Meeting Code has been published in the Government Gazette and is expected to be prescribed under the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2021* shortly.

Councils must adopt the Model Meeting Code that incorporates the mandatory provisions by no later than 31 December 2025.

The Model Meeting Code also applies to meetings of the boards of joint organisations and county councils.

Transitional provisions in the Regulation will provide that if a council does not adopt a code of meeting practice that incorporates the mandatory provisions by 31 December, from 1 January 2026, any provision of the 2025 Model Meeting Code will be automatically overridden by the relevant mandatory provision.

OLG has issued a [circular](#) on [2025 Model Meeting Code](#) and provided guidance on its adoption in an [FAQ](#) attached to the circular.

A webinar will be held in October to support councils in adopting the new Model Meeting Code. Notice will be provided to enable councils to register.

More information can be obtained by contacting OLG's Council Governance Team.

Quarterly Budget Review Statement Guidelines

Draft Quarterly Budget Review Statement (QBRs) Guidelines were released for comment in March 2025 and feedback closed on 28 April 2025. A consultation summary report has been released outlining the feedback received.

OLG has now released the revised [QBRs Guidelines](#)

The Guidelines highlight the importance of financial reporting and clarify that councillors have a primary role in determining the financial direction and health of a council. They establish standardised QBRs reporting templates and introduce a QBRs overview and reporting of council income and expenditure based on fund.

These changes will ensure that the governing body and communities are receiving clear, relevant and meaningful financial information.

A '[How to read your Quarterly Financial Overview](#)' guide has also been developed to assist users read and understand the figures presented in the QBRs. The one-page resource can be re-badged and used by councils.

OLG expects that councils will commence reporting the 1st quarter QBRs under the new Guidelines by no later than 30 November 2025.

OLG will provide councils with an electronic data template, aligned to the template in the Guidelines in advance of the 30 November 2025 reporting date.

Financial training available on the OLG Council portal

OLG has a suite of training materials available on-demand via OLG's Council Portal. The suite includes over 50 recorded sessions, between 2 and 30 minutes in length, covering:

- The purpose of the Code of Accounting and Financial Reporting
- Primary statements and notes
- Rehabilitation provisions
- Lease modifications
- Climate-related reporting

It also features conversations with the NSW Audit Office on a range of topics. For more information, please contact OLG's Sector Policy and Frameworks team at code@olg.nsw.gov.au

Transition of EPAR, EW and IRW to NSW Reconstruction Authority

The NSW Reconstruction Authority will assume centralised responsibility for Essential Public Asset Restoration, Emergency Works and Immediate Reconstruction Works from 1 October 2025.

During the transition, existing projects and funding arrangements will remain unchanged, and councils should continue working with Transport NSW and NSW Public Works as normal.

To support a smooth transition, Reconstruction Authority has launched an engagement program consisting of all-council webinars, regular email updates and regional engagement sessions on changes and future improvements which will be held during October to December 2025.

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 Chair's Confidential Paper). This item incorporates discussion of personnel matters (other than voting representatives).

9.2 Executive Officer Performance Review

A confidential Chairs report will be circulated separately to the meeting papers.

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 16 October 2025

Parliament of NSW

Contents:

- Attachment 6-1: Correspondence to City of Newcastle re: Letter of Support – Community Batteries Funding Round, 8 August 2025
 - Attachment 6-2: Correspondence to The Hon Chris Rath MLC re: Invitation to Hunter JO Board Meeting NSW Parliament House, 20 August 2025
 - Attachment 6-3: Correspondence to Mr Dave Layzell MP re: Invitation to Hunter JO Board Meeting NSW Parliament House, 21 August 2025
 - Attachment 6-4: Correspondence to NSW Premier re: Support for City of Newcastle Advocacy - pensioner rate rebate concession, 19 September 2025
 - Attachment 6-5: Correspondence to Tony Chappel re: Invitation to attend 4 December 2025 Hunter JO Board meeting, 30 September 2025
 - Attachment 6-6: Correspondence to Interim CEO NSW Reconstruction Authority to attend 4 December Hunter JO Board meeting, 1 October 2025
 - Attachment 6-7: Letter of Support for Lake Macquarie City Council to NSW Environment Protection Authority re: Letter of Support for Soft Plastics Value Chain Activation, Local Government Waste Solutions Round 4, 7 October 2025
 - Attachment 6-8: Correspondence from Local Government Grants Commission re: Submission FA Grants, 25 August 2025
 - Attachment 6-9: Correspondence from Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development re: Outcome of application to the Regional Economic Development and Community Investment Program, 26 August 2025
 - Attachment 6-10: Correspondence from The Hon Ron Hoenig MP to Cr Phyllis Miller OAM, President LGNSW re: Cost Sifting Report, 27 August 2025
 - Attachment 6-11: Correspondence from NSW Chairs Forum re state-wide approach to advocacy and policy - Community Benefit Sharing, 11 September 2025
 - Attachment 6-12: Correspondence from The Hon Ron Hoenig MP to Mayor Moore and Mayor Anderson re: Cost Shifting Report 2025, 18 September 2025
 - Attachment 6-13: Submission Hunter Transmission Project: Environmental Impact Statement, 24 September 2025
 - Attachment 6-14: Submission to Net Zero Economy Authority re: Statutory Review of Part 5 of the Net Zero Economy Act, 5 September 2025
 - Attachment 6-15: Submission to NSW EPA re: Climate change licensee Requirements, 7 October 2025
 - Attachment 6-16: Submission to inform the review of the operations of the NSW Reconstruction Authority regarding the NSW East Coast severe weather from May 2025, 3 October 2025
 - Attachment 7.3-1: Hunter JO Annual Performance Statement 2024-25
- Hunter JO Board Agenda Attachments_16 October 2025

- Attachment 7.4-1: Report to the 7 August NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum regarding the potential for a state-wide approach to Community Benefit Sharing
- Attachment 7.4-2: Benefit-Sharing Guideline (November 2024), NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
- Attachment 8.1-1: NSW JO Chairs Forum Meeting Papers (7th August 2025)
- Attachment 8.1-2: NSW JO Chairs Forum Meeting Minutes (7th August 2025)
- Attachment 8.2-2: Hunter JO Monthly Financial Report: August 2025



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

Jeremy Bath
Chief Executive Officer
City of Newcastle
12 Stewart Avenue
NEWCASTLE WEST NSW 2302

Date

Re: Letter of Support – CITY OF NEWCASTLE GRANT APPLICATION - ARENA COMMUNITY BATTERIES FUNDING ROUND 2

I write to confirm support for the above funding application being submitted through the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) Community Battery Funding Round 2 program.

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 City of Newcastle's (CN) proposed Community Battery Program representing an innovative approach to reducing councils' exposure to the volatility of energy markets which since 2022 resulted in major financial pressures, including budget uncertainty and cost increases. While also delivering energy cost savings and emission reductions, the insights and learnings from this initiative will be of great value to all councils in our network.

Hunter JO is also part of the NSW Government's Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration (JONZA) program, delivered by the Sustainable Councils team within the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. Through this program, we are supporting our ten member councils and Central Coast Council to reduce their operational emissions via knowledge building and targeted program delivery.

As part of JONZA, Hunter JO hosts a bimonthly Hunter Net Zero Network meeting, which brings together over 45 sustainability officers from across our councils. This network would provide an ideal forum for CN to share the knowledge, lessons learned and outcomes of the project, encouraging other councils to consider large-scale BESS as a practical solution to energy and emissions challenges.



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The project directly aligns with the following objectives and strategic directions from the [Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2032](#):

- 4.4.2 Support regional collaboration around clean energy and future energy initiatives and industries.
- 5.3.2 Encourage continuous improvement and innovation to enhance overall performance, efficiency and effectiveness of delivery of the strategic regional priorities.
- 5.3.3 Build regional capacity and expertise in councils through the development of program resources, provision of technical support and expertise, and facilitation of collaborative knowledge-sharing forums.

We are committed to working with City of Newcastle 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 Janine Chandler our Net Zero Coordinator on 0477 398 250 or at janinec@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "S. P. Wilson", is positioned below the "Yours Sincerely" text.

Steve Wilson
Director, Hunter Joint Organisation (Executive Officer)



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

The Hon Christopher Rath, MLC
Shadow Minister for Local Government
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000
office.rath@parliament.nsw.gov.au

20 August 2025

Dear Mr Rath,

Re. Invitation to attend Hunter Joint Organisation Parliament House Board Meeting - 16th October 2025

The Hunter Joint Organisation Board, comprising the ten Mayors of the Hunter Region will be holding its annual meeting in NSW Parliament House Board on 16th October 2025, in the McKell Room.

As the democratically elected local voice of the Hunter Region, our Board of Mayors are strongly aligned to the priorities including housing supply, job creation and transformation of the NSW economy toward net zero. These priorities are particularly important to the Hunter region, where our population is increasing toward 1 million people by 2040, and where we urgently need to transform and diversify our region's economy (the largest in regional Australia) away from its current dependence on coal.

The purpose of our meeting in NSW Parliament House is to provide the opportunity for our Mayors to collectively meet and engage with key Ministers, Shadow Ministers and other decision makers in the Government, to discuss our shared priorities and opportunities for working more closely to progress outcomes in the Hunter. The full suite of our Mayor's shared priorities are provided in Attachment 1.

It is for this reason that we would be delighted if the Minister were available to attend part of our meeting to discuss our shared priorities for the Hunter region, focusing on:

Financial sustainability of local government

Explore the financial and the opportunities to strengthen our long-term sustainability including:

- Financial Assistance Grants (FA Grants) equity
- IPART constraints
- Inadequate road funding



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- Disaster recovery and resilience funding challenges
- Escalating audit and compliance costs
- Waste pressures
 - Waste Levy
 - FOGO implementation

To confirm your ability and timing to participate in the Board meeting, please contact Kim Carland, Advocacy and Government Relations Lead on kimc@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au or 0460 034 614.

Yours sincerely,

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

Cr Leah Anderson
Mayor, Port Stephens Council
Deputy 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 [Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2032](#) and [Advocacy Priorities](#).

Attachment 1. Shared Priorities of the Hunter JO Board of Mayors

Rank	Advocacy Priority	Objective
1	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.
2	Housing	Enabling infrastructure investment, State Government integrated planning, balancing biodiversity, increasing diversity of housing stock and increasing density in TODs and Low-rise Mid-rise areas.
3	Financial sustainability of local government	Long-term financial sustainability of local government (incorporating grant funding reform, return of waste levy, road funding reform, SRVs)
4	Transport planning	Transparent infrastructure plan with timelines, improved public transport connections, park and ride, and active transport option to reduce the reliance on vehicles, along with improved coordination of electric vehicle infrastructure.
5	Airfreight precinct	Delivery of a cargo precinct at Newcastle Airport to unlock air freight capability to help attract international carriers and stimulate business growth.
6	Disaster resilience	Sustainable and strategic place-based planning and resourcing of local and regional disaster resilience and recovery activities.
7	Water infrastructure	Investment in infrastructure to ensure a reliable, safe and secure water supply for the Hunter region.
8	Port of Newcastle	Improve road and rail infrastructure to activate diversification, i.e. container terminal, clean energy precinct, and support establishment of the REZs.



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Mr Dave Layzell MP
Member for Upper Hunter, Shadow Minister for Regional Transport and Roads
94 John Street
SINGLETON NSW 2330
upperhunter@parliament.nsw.gov.au

21 August 2025

Dear Mr Layzell

Re. Invitation to attend Hunter Joint Organisation Parliament House Board Meeting - 16th October 2025

The Hunter Joint Organisation Board, comprising the ten Mayors of the Hunter Region will be holding its annual meeting in NSW Parliament House Board on 16th October 2025, in the McKell Room.

As the democratically elected local voice of the Hunter Region, our Board of Mayors are strongly aligned to the NSW Government's priorities including housing supply, job creation and transformation of the NSW economy toward net zero. These priorities are particularly important to the Hunter region, where our population is increasing toward 1 million people by 2040, and where we urgently need to transform and diversify our region's economy (the largest in regional Australia) away from its current dependence on coal.

The purpose of our meeting in NSW Parliament House is to provide the opportunity for our Mayors to collectively meet and engage with key Ministers, Shadow Minister and decision makers in the Government, to discuss our shared priorities and opportunities for working more closely to progress outcomes in the Hunter. The full suite of our Mayor's shared priorities are provided in Attachment 1.

It is for this reason that we would be delighted if you could attend our meeting in your capacity as Shadow Minister for Regional Roads and Transport, to discuss our shared priorities for the Hunter region, focusing on:

Transport planning

- Discuss actions to improve regional road funding, road reclassification, increased public transport connections, dedicated freight corridors, active transport option to reduce the reliance on vehicles, along with improved coordination of electric vehicle infrastructure.



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To confirm your ability and timing to participate in the Board meeting, please contact Bonnie Gradwell, Administration and Events Officer on bonnieg@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au or 0400 063 502.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "SR Moore".

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 [Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2032](#) and [Advocacy Priorities](#).

Attachment 1. Shared Priorities of the Hunter JO Board of Mayors

Rank	Advocacy Priority	Objective
1	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.
2	Housing	Enabling infrastructure investment, State Government integrated planning, balancing biodiversity, increasing diversity of housing stock and increasing density in TODs and Low-rise Mid-rise areas.
3	Financial sustainability of local government	Long-term financial sustainability of local government (incorporating cost shifting, grant funding reform, return of waste levy, road funding reform, SRVs, escalating audit fees, FA Grants, rate exemptions, disaster funding)
4	Transport planning	Transparent infrastructure plan with timelines, improved regional road funding, road reclassification, increased public transport connections, dedicated freight corridors, active transport option to reduce the reliance on vehicles, along with improved coordination of electric vehicle infrastructure.
5	Airfreight precinct	Delivery of a cargo precinct at Newcastle Airport to unlock air freight capability to help attract international carriers and stimulate business growth.
6	Disaster resilience	Sustainable and strategic place-based planning and resourcing of local and regional disaster resilience and recovery activities.
7	Water infrastructure	Investment in infrastructure to ensure a reliable, safe and secure water supply for the Hunter region.
8	Port of Newcastle	Improve road and rail infrastructure to activate diversification, i.e. container terminal, clean energy precinct, and support establishment of the REZs.



4 Sandringham Avenue, PO Box 3137,
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www.hunterjo.nsw.gov.au

The Hon. Chris Minns MP
Premier
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001
E: premier@dpc.nsw.gov.au

19 September 2025

Dear Mr Minns

Re: Rate rebate concession for pensioners commensurate to CPI

At our 14th August 2025 meeting the Hunter JO Board considered and agreed to support recent advocacy by the City of Newcastle requesting an increase in the rate rebate concession for pensioners, noting that:

1. The rate rebate concession is jointly funded by the NSW State Government and local Councils.
2. The rate rebate of \$250 per annum was set in 1989, now 36 years ago, and in that time there has been a continued significant increase in the cost of living.

On behalf of the ten member councils of the Hunter Joint Organisation I write in support of the City of Newcastle's recent correspondence to you on this matter, requesting that the NSW Government index it's contribution to the remission on rates, so that rate relief increasing with CPI can be passed on to pensioners.

I attach for reference a copy of the City of Newcastle's earlier correspondence.

I trust that you will consider this matter and provide a response at your earliest convenience.

Should you require any further information on this matter please contact Steve Wilson, Executive Officer – Hunter JO via steve@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

Cr Sue Moore
Mayor Singleton Council
Chair Hunter Joint Organisation

Corporate Services.DC
Phone: 02 4974 2000



29 July 2025

The Hon. Chris Minns MP
Premier
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001

BY EMAIL: premier@dpc.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Minns

At the meeting of 17 June 2025, the elected Council of the City of Newcastle carried the following resolution.

That Council:

F.

1. *Notes the Rate Rebate concession jointly funded by the NSW State Government and local Councils.*
2. *Notes the rate rebate of \$250 per annum was set in 1989, now 36 years ago, and in that time there has been a continued significant increase in the cost of living.*
3. *Notes that 10 years ago in June 2015, Council resolved to write to the NSW Government requesting an increase in the Rate Rebate concession for pensioners, commensurate to CPI.*
4. *Reaffirms its position that the State Government should index their contribution to the remission on rates, so that rate relief increasing with CPI can be passed on to pensioners.*
5. *Resolves to again write to the NSW Government requesting an increase the Rate Rebate concession for pensioners, commensurate to CPI.*
6. *Resolves to write to Local Government NSW and the Hunter Joint Organisation requesting their support for this advocacy.*

I trust that you will consider this matter and provide a response at your earliest convenience.

Should you require any further information on this matter please contact the Lord Mayor's office via lordmayor@ncc.nsw.gov.au.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeremy Bath".

Jeremy Bath
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



4 Sandringham Avenue, Thornton,
NSW 2322 - 02 4978 4020
www.hunterjo.nsw.gov.au

Tony Chappel
Chief Executive Officer
NSW Environment Protection Authority
Locked Bag 5022
Parramatta NSW 2124

30 September 2025

Dear Mr Chappel

Re: Invitation to Attend Hunter Joint Organisation Board Meeting – 4th December 2025

I write on behalf of the Board of the Hunter Joint Organisation, comprising the Mayors and General Managers of the ten Hunter region councils, to invite you to participate in our December Board meeting day in Taree on 4th December 2025.

A key focus of the day will be exploring the shared impacts of the extreme east coast weather events that have affected the MidCoast and Hunter regions during 2025 and collectively exploring opportunities for greater and more effective collaboration between our Member Councils and NSW Government agencies in preparing and recovering from these increasingly frequent and severe weather events.

Given the critical role and relationship between the NSW EPA and local councils in supporting communities recover from disasters, we would like to engage directly with you as CEO to explore opportunities we have identified for improving collaborative efforts to more rapidly and effectively support communities to respond and recover from future disaster events, including:

- Building consistency in communications between Councils and the EPA
- Consistent triggers and processes for determining the waiving of waste levy and waste disposal fees for disaster waste
- Collaborative disaster waste management planning, including identification of temporary emergency waste sites.

More broadly we would also like to explore opportunities for collaboration to support the ability of councils to help deliver the NSW Government's waste reduction and net zero objectives and targets, including:

- Funding reform to facilitate more strategic and collaborative waste infrastructure planning and investment to deliver both the 2030 FOGO mandate and achieve resource recovery and circular economy outcomes.



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- Supporting Councils to meet their climate change licensee requirements for landfill sites, which builds on innovative landfill emissions work previously completed by the Hunter JO in partnership with the EPA.

We would be delighted if you could join us for the 4th December 2025 meeting and would be pleased to provide you with more detailed background information beforehand if you can attend.

Please note we will also be inviting the new A/ CEO of the NSW Reconstruction Authority to participate in these important discussions.

Should you have any further queries or to confirm your participation please contact Steve Wilson, Hunter JO Executive Officer at steview@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au or on M0448 401 436.

Yours Sincerely,

Cr Sue Moore
Mayor Singleton Council
Chair Hunter Joint Organisation



4 Sandringham Avenue, Thornton,
NSW 2322 - 02 4978 4020
www.hunterjo.nsw.gov.au

Kate Meagher
Interim CEO
NSW Reconstruction Authority
GPO Box 5434,
SYDNEY NSW

1 October 2025

Dear Kate

Re: Invitation to Attend Hunter Joint Organisation Board Meeting – 4th December 2025

I write on behalf of the Board of the Hunter Joint Organisation, comprising the Mayors and General Managers of the ten Hunter and MidCoast region councils, to invite you to participate in our December Board meeting day in Taree on 4th December 2025.

A key focus of the day will be exploring the shared impacts of the extreme east coast weather events that have impacted the MidCoast and Hunter regions during 2025 and to collectively explore opportunities for greater and more effective collaboration between our Member Councils and NSW Government agencies in preparing and recovering from these increasingly frequent and severe weather events.

Given the critical roles and relationships between the NSW Reconstruction Authority and local councils when responding and recovering to events of this nature, we'd like to engage directly with you in your capacity as Interim CEO Reconstruction Authority as we collectively reflect on and review our experiences and responses to this year's weather events. This aims to share our learnings and to explore opportunities for improving collaboration moving forward, particularly as we embark on developing the inaugural Disaster Adaptation Plans for the Hunter and MidCoast regions in close collaboration with Reconstruction Authority.

Key focus areas we are interested in exploring include:

- Focus, coverage and development process for Regional Disaster Adaptation Plans for the Hunter and MidCoast
- Disaster planning and recovery arrangements and funding
- Adopting 'build back better' principles for infrastructure restoration
- Building staff capacity and capability to ensure Councils are proactively resourced to handle increasing disaster adaptation planning and recovery needs
- Enhancing early consultation and collaboration with Councils and joint organisations when designing disaster adaptation programs and recovery arrangements to ensure relevance to local priorities and delivery capacity.



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- The circumstances, roles and challenges of responding to the New Lambton landslip incident in the Newcastle Local Government Area.

We would therefore be delighted if you could join us for the 4th December 2025 meeting to discuss these matters, but to also provide the opportunity for introductions between yourself as the Interim CEO Reconstruction Authority and our Mayors, General Managers and the Hunter JO team as a foundation for ongoing communication and engagement.

Please note we will also be inviting the CEO of the NSW Environment Protection Authority to participate in these important discussions.

Should you have any further queries or to confirm your participation please contact Steve Wilson, Hunter JO Executive Officer at steve@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au or on M0448 401 436.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "SR Moore", is positioned below the "Yours Sincerely," text.

Cr Sue Moore
Mayor Singleton Council
Chair Hunter Joint Organisation



4 Sandringham Avenue, Thornton,
NSW 2322 - 02 4978 4020
www.hunterjo.nsw.gov.au

7 October 2025

To: NSW Environment Protection Authority

Re: Letter of Support for Soft Plastics Value Chain Activation, Local Government Waste Solutions Round 4

I write to confirm support for the funding application being submitted by Lake Macquarie City Council through the NSW Environment Protection Authority’s Local Government Waste Solutions Round 4.

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.

The Hunter JO also serves as the voluntary regional waste group under the NSW EPA’s [Regional Networks for Effective Waste Management \(RENEW\) program](#), which is comprised of the ten Member Councils, as well as Central Coast Council.

The project, being delivered by Lake Macquarie City Council in partnership with Dantia’s Circular Economy Living Lab (CELL) and Tidal Circular, will aim to strengthen the soft plastics recycling industry by creating strong pull-through demand and activating end markets through a coordinated, tools-based approach to local government procurement.

This project will support efforts to enable government procurement as a driver for circular economy market creation, an initiative with immense potential for impact but numerous barriers to successful implementation. It will also complement and build on work undertaken by the Hunter JO’s Circular Procurement Phase 2 project, funded by Local Government Waste Solutions Round 2.

The project also directly aligns with the following objectives and strategic directions from the [Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2035](#):

Strategic Theme	Strategy
Economic Transformation & Jobs	2.3 Evolution towards renewable energy, circular economy, and future industries
Environmental Sustainability & Resilience	4.2 Circular materials and waste management



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We are committed to supporting the project as a partner by:

- Participating in steering committee or technical advisory group meetings.
- Participating in engagement sessions
- Contributing to the co-design of tools, templates, and procurement clauses to ensure practical council adoption
- Assisting with engagement of stakeholders from within our member councils (procurement, asset management, sustainability, waste, parks and recreation, etc.)
- Engaging our professional network to share the project's approach and outcomes, maximising awareness, participation, and opportunities for collaboration.

Our participation will strengthen the project's ability to deliver outcomes of strategic value by contributing a variety of perspectives from across our region and network, demonstrating regional leadership in adopting circular solutions, and amplifying the project's outputs and learnings. It will also increase the Hunter JO's and our member councils' expertise in incorporating circularity into local government procurement.

Should you have any further queries or require any further information please do not hesitate to contact Chris Dart on chrisd@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au or 0460 038 197.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Wilson
Executive Officer

Local Government Grants Commission



Reference: A970107

Her Worship the Mayor
Cr Sue Moore
Mayor Singleton Council
Chair Hunter Joint Organisation
PO Box 3137
THORNTON NSW 2322

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

25 August 2025

Dear Cr Moore,

Thank you for your submission on behalf of the Hunter Joint Organisation to the NSW Local Government Grants Commission, following the recent 2025–26 Grant Allocation public hearing [presentations](#).

The Grant Commission's recommendations on the Financial Assistance Grants (FA Grants) allocations are made in accordance with the National Principles identified in the Act and the NSW Commissions formulas address these principles.

The National Principles include a requirement that the Commission undertake a comparative assessment of needs including:

- additional costs to councils due to inherent factors and revenue raising capacity
- Horizontal Fiscal Equalisation (HFE) – identifies councils with the greatest relative need
- Effort neutral - means that a council's policy decisions do not influence the grant calculation

HFE is also consistent with the NSW Government's policy directive to the Commission to support, as far as is possible, local councils with the greatest relative need, or greatest disadvantage, through factors beyond their control. Generally, these councils are remote and rural councils with small or declining populations with less capacity to raise own

source revenue, while being required to finance and maintain local infrastructure, which includes extensive local road networks.

However, the legislation also provides that all councils must receive no less than the per capita minimum Grant. The 30% minimum grant is determined under the Act and is calculated on 30% of the general-purpose pool, divided by the State's population.

It is noted that one of the recommendations from the NSW Standing Committee on State Development Inquiry on the Ability of Local Governments to Fund Infrastructure and Services was that the NSW Government advocate to the Federal Government for an increase in the FA Grant from 0.5 per cent to 1 per cent of Commonwealth Gross Domestic Product and amend the current commonwealth grant guidelines per capita distribution method, that disproportionately benefits inner city councils.

The Commission welcomes the Government's response that it would continue to strongly advocate for this increase along with undertaking a review into the distribution model that assists in determining the allocation of FA Grants to NSW councils.

As identified at the Public Hearing, the Commission does not have any say into what, if any, advanced payments are made, or the increase in funding made to NSW each year. This is determined by the Federal Government.

Following the allocation of the 2025-26 FA Grants, the Commission has determined to undertake a review of the methodology for the 2027-26 allocation and will be undertaking consultation with the sector during this process.

Yours sincerely



Linda Scott
Chair
Local Government Grants Commission

Department of Primary Industries
and Regional Development



Ref: REDCIP-0226

Kim Carland
Advocacy and Government Relations Lead
Hunter Joint Organisation
4 Sandringham Avenue
THORNTON NSW 2322
kimc@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au

Re: Outcome of application to the Regional Economic Development and Community Investment Program

Dear Carland

Thank you for submitting an application to the Regional Economic Development and Community Investment Program.

I regret to inform you that the following application was assessed as ineligible:

Application ID	Project title
REDCIP-0226	Regional Post Mining Land Use in the Hunter

The application was assessed against the assessment criteria published in the Regional Economic Development and Community Investment Program Guidelines. An independent probity advisor provided oversight during the assessment process to ensure a robust, fair, and transparent process was followed.

Your application has been assessed as ineligible based on the following:

- the project being for planning purposes only
- insufficient evidence to warrant an exemption from the co-contribution requirement

The department acknowledges the considerable time and effort involved in preparing and submitting an application and recognises that this outcome may be disappointing.

To support applicants in strengthening future submissions, the department will be hosting an online information session offering insights and guidance for those who were unsuccessful. Further information on how to access this opportunity will be provided shortly via the email address supplied with your application.

Any enquiries regarding this outcome may be directed to the department at regionaldevelopmenttrust@dpird.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

Richie Robinson

A/Director Regional Development Trust

The Hon. Ron Hoenig MP

Leader of the House in the Legislative Assembly
Vice-President of the Executive Council
Minister for Local Government



Our Ref: A974346 / M025-0403

Cr Phyllis Miller OAM
President
Local Government NSW
Level 8,
28 Margaret Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Via email: lgnsw@lgnsw.org.au

Dear Cr Miller,

Thank you for your letter of 8 July 2025 regarding the Local Government NSW (LGNSW) Cost Shifting Report 2025.

Addressing the financial sustainability of councils is a key priority of the NSW Government. Though the Government continues to fund billions of dollars of services and infrastructure for councils every year, it is irrefutable that councils are facing financial challenges. That is why I asked the Legislative Council's Standing Committee on State Development to report and inquire into the ability of local governments to fund infrastructure and services (the Inquiry).

The Government response to the Inquiry report and its recommendations was tabled in Parliament 6 May 2025, setting out the path to improve the financial sustainability of councils. The response outlines a suite of reforms aimed at strengthening the reputation of local government as a robust, independently elected third tier of government, empowered to address its financial challenges.

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) will have continued oversight of council rates to ensure councils' revenue keeps pace with cost changes while protecting ratepayers from excessive rate hikes. However, the introduction of a Comprehensive Expenditure Review (CER) process for councils seeking to permanently increase rates revenue above the rate peg will ensure they do so having thoroughly recognised the needs and service demands of their community.

The Inquiry identified the existing Special Rate Variation (SRV) application process to be excessively resource and time-intensive for councils. The Government will remove bureaucratic requirements from the SRV process that make the current system onerous for councils. The improved SRV process will ensure special variations are limited to specific, time-limited, community-backed projects where additional spending is necessary.

The Government is also committed to streamlining local government financial statements and reporting to increase transparency over council spending. These reforms will provide councillors and the public with more timely and accurate financial information, offering a clearer understanding of a council's cash flow and its overall performance.

Together, these reforms will improve transparency in decision making and provide councillors with the financial information they need to be visibly in control of their councils. An Expert Advisory Panel of experienced general managers, finance directors and other local government experts will be established to support the government to deliver these important reforms.

As part of the Inquiry response, the Government has reinforced its commitment to the Intergovernmental Agreement with Local Government NSW. The Agreement reflects a

commitment to ensure that any potential impacts of State Government decisions on local government are identified and appropriately considered. The intergovernmental agreement makes official the NSW Government's commitment to provide funding opportunities and mechanisms that enable councils to deliver for their communities.

As noted in your correspondence, the referral to the Inquiry was supported by the adoption of the revised rate peg methodology to ensure the general income of councils is more reflective of changes in costs incurred by the local government sector. These changes came into effect this financial year and use forward-looking measures to more accurately reflect cost changes and better capture the diversity of councils in NSW. The new rate peg methodology also includes a more direct reflection of the costs of the emergency services levy, to ensure there is no overall burden on a council's financial sustainability due to this expense.

The referral to the Inquiry was supported by the adoption of the revised Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal rate peg methodology to ensure the income of councils is more reflective of changes in costs incurred by the local government sector. These changes commenced last financial year and included, for example a more direct reflection of the emergency services levy costs to Councils.

Similarly, after listening to concerns raised by LGNSW, I asked the Public Accounts Committee to conduct an inquiry on the 'Assets, premises and funding of the NSW Rural Fire Service'. On 27 May 2025, the Committee released its report recommending the rural fire fighting assets be moved to the State's accounts. The NSW Government is considering the Committee's findings and recommendations. A response to the Committee's report will be released by the 27 November 2025 due date.

Importantly, the 2025-2026 Budget shows the Government's continued acknowledgement of the critical role of councils and the Government's commitments to councils so they can deliver on key community outcomes.

The 2025-2026 Budget includes a commitment of \$51.2 million as part of a broader \$252 million investment to continue the great work of the Fresh Start Program, which has already funded the placement of over 1,000 apprentices, trainees and cadets in councils across NSW. The program enhances the capacity and resilience of the local government workforce by training up the next generation of plumbers, engineers, civil construction workers, mechanics, childcare workers and planning cadets that local governments rely on.

Recognising councils' crucial role in the housing crisis, the Budget includes a range of measures to promote housing development and to help councils deliver infrastructure including roads, open spaces, and community facilities to their local communities.

Collectively, these inquiries, initiatives, Budget commitments and the Intergovernmental Agreement provide clear evidence of the NSW Government's commitment to enabling councils to deliver for their communities, now and into the future.

I look forward to continuing to collaborate with LGNSW to develop constructive and practical responses to the many challenges faced by local government.

Yours sincerely,



The Hon. Ron Hoenig MP
Leader of the House in the Legislative Assembly
Vice-President of the Executive Council
Minister for Local Government

27 AUG 2025



Cr Sue Moore
Chair, Hunter Joint Organisation
4 Sandringham Ave
Thornton NSW 2322

admin@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au

11 September 2025

Dear Cr Moore,

Re: Community benefits-sharing for energy projects - potential for a statewide coordinated policy development and advocacy approach by councils

Local councils across regional NSW are experiencing or are anticipated to experience increased development of renewable energy projects such as wind farms, solar farms, battery storage facilities, pumped hydro, energy distribution and transmission and waste-to-energy projects.

Many energy projects are state significant developments and, while all energy consumers will benefit from renewable energy projects once constructed, local communities where energy developments and operations are located will bear a disproportionate burden associated with hosting the ongoing energy operations.

Despite this, many energy developments are proceeding, both within and outside of renewable energy zones, without suitably commensurate arrangements in place to ensure local communities can experience a net positive benefit as a result of infrastructure and operations being located in their area.

Recognising this, the NSW Government recently (November 2024) published a benefit-sharing guideline for large scale renewable energy developments, specifically solar and wind energy generation projects and battery storage projects on rural properties. While these guidelines are a very positive step towards establishing appropriate long-term community benefits-sharing for energy projects, there is still much to be understood and considered by NSW councils, including:

- how the guidelines should be applied by councils and the state via the planning process,
- development of individual council policy positions and procedures regarding negotiation of community benefits-sharing arrangements, which may include agreements with local governments, as distinct from traditional developer contribution agreements and specific infrastructure agreements between energy companies and local governments,
- required advocacy to the NSW Government for development of benefit-sharing guidelines, and associated planning processes to apply them, for other types of energy developments, and

- retrospective advocacy to energy companies who have achieved development consents without appropriate benefits-sharing arrangements in place.

At its 7th August 2025 meeting, the NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum (chairs forum) considered efforts underway by councils in regional areas to develop appropriate policy positions with respect to community benefits-sharing.

The chairs forum also discussed the merits of a coordinated statewide approach to building councils' capabilities, developing policies and procedures and undertaking advocacy with respect to processes for establishing appropriate community benefits-sharing arrangements, with a view to:

- More clearly and consistently communicate to energy companies, to the NSW Government and to local communities what councils are seeking by way of fair contribution towards broad community benefits, above and beyond negating direct construction impacts, and
- Enhancing the capacity and capability of local councils across NSW to more consistently and equitably negotiate with energy companies and the NSW Government to secure legacy benefits for their local communities.

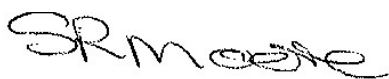
To further progress this opportunity, the chair's forum resolved to: *"write to all joint organisations, regional organisations of councils and other regional groups of councils to recommend and seek their support for and participation in a collaborative approach to: understanding and applying the new benefit-sharing guideline for large-scale energy developments; developing council policies and procedures for negotiating community benefits-sharing arrangements and; advocating for clear planning processes, additional guidelines and retrospective arrangements to ensure net community benefit for regional host communities for all energy developments."*

In line with this resolution, I am writing to seek in-principal support from the Hunter Joint Organisation to be involved in this work, to be initially led by the NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum, supported by the statewide network of executive officers. Should it be of assistance in helping your board's consideration of this request, examples of board reports and recommendations can be provided.

I am also asking that you note a potential future financial contribution request from your organisation toward procurement of appropriate technical expertise and advice to support this work. Should this be needed, a template report and recommendation will be provided by the NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum for your use in considering the request and obtaining a resolution from your organisation.

Should you have any further queries or to discuss, please contact Steve Wilson, Executive Officer - Hunter JO on M 0448401436 or at steview@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Cr Sue Moore
Mayor, Singleton Council
Chair, Hunter JO
Convenor, NSW JO Chairs Forum

The Hon. Ron Hoenig MP

Leader of the House in the Legislative Assembly
Vice-President of the Executive Council
Minister for Local Government



Our Ref: A973946 / M025-0375

Cr Sue Moore
Chairperson
Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils
PO Box 3137
THORNTON NSW 2322

Cr Leah Anderson
Deputy Chairperson
Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils
PO Box 3137
THORNTON NSW 2322

via email: admin@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au

Dear Cr Moore and Cr Anderson,

Thank you for your letter regarding the Local Government NSW (LGNSW) Cost Shifting Report 2025.

I acknowledge the Joint Organisation's concerns and appreciate your advocacy in this matter.

I responded directly to LGNSW on this matter. Please see enclosed a copy of my response for your information.

Yours sincerely,

The Hon. Ron Hoenig MP
Leader of the House in the Legislative Assembly
Vice-President of the Executive Council
Minister for Local Government

18 SEP 2025

Encl: Response to Cr Miller, President, LGNSW



Submission: Hunter Transmission Project - Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

24 September 2025

The Hon Paul Scully
Minister for Planning and Public Spaces

Attention: Kurtis Wathen, Contact Planner
Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
Uploaded via Planning Portal

24 September 2025

Dear Minister Scully,

Re: Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement Submission

The ten Member Councils of the Hunter Joint Organisation (Hunter JO) welcome the opportunity to provide feedback on the Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and considerations for the Hunter region in the delivery of this significant project.

The Hunter JO is the statutory Local Government entity established by the NSW Government to support the ten councils of the Hunter Region to work together for better regional outcomes, and to strengthen collaboration with State and Federal Governments in planning and delivering critical infrastructure and investment.

Member Councils of the Hunter JO include:

- 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

The core statutory functions established by the NSW Government for the Hunter JO and joint organisations more broadly across NSW include:

1. Strategic planning and priority setting
2. Intergovernmental collaboration
3. Shared leadership and advocacy

The Hunter Region is the largest regional economy in Australia, driving around 28% of regional NSW's total economic output and a population approaching one million people.

The ten Mayors of the Region, through the Hunter JO, are strongly aligned in recognising the economic transformation challenges facing the region, and welcome the opportunity to provide input to this important regional project.

Should you have any further queries please don't hesitate to contact Kim Carland, Advocacy and Government Relations Lead, Hunter JO at kimc@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au or on 0460 034 614.

Yours Sincerely



Cr Sue Moore
Chair Hunter Joint Organisation

SUBMISSION

Key Regional Considerations

1. Worker Accommodation and Housing Legacy

At peak construction, the project will employ approximately 750 workers, with around 300 requiring temporary accommodation. The Hunter is already experiencing one of the most acute housing shortages in NSW, with rental vacancy rates below 1% in some areas. Without proactive planning, the influx of workers risks exacerbating housing affordability pressures for local communities.

While central to delivery of the Hunter Transmission Project itself, the development of temporary worker housing has the potential to more broadly support the delivery of State Government housing priorities and targets. For example, design and construction approaches that use modular and reusable methods can ensure that when the project is completed, temporary housing can be repurposed into permanent housing stock or other legacy community infrastructure for the region.

In addition to the type of construction, the location of temporary worker accommodation during project delivery is also important. This is because locating temporary accommodation within or near existing communities can provide economic benefits through boosting local business activity, as well as enhancing social outcomes by supporting the wellbeing of workers through enhanced integration with local communities.

Recommendation:

The Hunter JO recommends that temporary worker accommodation delivered under the project:

- Utilise modular and reusable construction methods that will be repurposed for permanent housing stock in the Hunter region, in partnership with local Councils, Homes NSW and Community Housing Providers.
- Be located near or within towns and villages rather than remote rural sites to ensure economic benefits are realised by local communities
- Utilise local suppliers and services wherever possible
- Is designed using sustainability and amenity principles.

2. Local Water Infrastructure

Demands on local water infrastructure arising from short term worker accommodation has the potential to place significant strain on already stretched local facilities and services. Councils outside the Hunter Water service area carry full responsibility for water and wastewater infrastructure, with the cost of upgrades well beyond the capacity of small regional councils to deliver.

Increases in temporary worker populations and project construction activity will increase water demand and wastewater generation, placing further pressure on local water infrastructure. Careful consideration of these impacts and working with Councils and other agencies to identify and fund required upgrades to water infrastructure can support not only delivery of the transmission project itself but provide enduring benefits for the community. These in turn can play an important role in supporting local Councils and their communities provide additional housing and to further transform and diversify their local economies in line with State Government objectives.

Recommendation:

Collaborate with local councils and other agencies to identify and fund upgrades to local water infrastructure that supports both implementation of the transmission project itself and provides enduring infrastructure to support future housing and economic activity to support the region's economic transformation.

3. Regional Workforce Transition

The closure of major employers such as the Eraring Power Station in 2027 presents a significant risk of displacement for skilled workers with around 1,000 direct jobs affected. More broadly, nearly 12,000 direct and indirect jobs will be lost by 2030 with the closure of two mines in the Upper Hunter alone. Without intervention, the region faces the loss of critical skills just as demand for a skilled workforce is growing through major energy transition projects.

The Hunter JO calls on EnergyCo and the NSW Government to prioritise a structured transition pathway for local workers, ensuring their redeployment into the Hunter Transmission Project wherever possible. A formal workforce transition plan, developed in partnership with mining and energy companies, unions and training providers, will retain skilled labour in the region, reduce social and economic impacts on families, and support the broader transformation to a net zero economy.

Recommendation:

Guarantee preferential recruitment pathways for displaced workers, by establishing a formal workforce transition plan with mining and energy companies, unions, and training providers to redeploy skilled local workers into the Hunter Transmission Project.

Conclusion

The Hunter Transmission Project is a critical component of NSW's planned net zero energy future. In addition to the direct electricity infrastructure being constructed, projects of this scale and importance provide the opportunity to catalyse delivery of broader State Government policy objectives in the communities in which they are located. With the Hunter Transmission Project, these include contributing to long-term housing supply, enhancing water infrastructure and security, and supporting local workforce transition – all of which will directly support the region's broader economic transformation in line with State and Federal Government policy directions.

Adopting these recommendations will contribute to building community support and confidence in the energy transformation underway in the Hunter and position the Hunter Transmission Project as a national model for how transmission infrastructure can deliver enduring legacy benefits for regional communities.

The Hunter JO and its ten member councils are committed to working with EnergyCo and the NSW Government more broadly to ensure the Hunter Transmission Project contributes to delivery of the broader suite of priorities we all share for the region. This includes providing legacy benefits that will support local communities in their efforts to transform and diversify the region's economy to align with State and Federal Government net zero policy and targets.



Submission:
Statutory Review of Part 5 of the
Net Zero Economy Authority Act
2024

5 September 2025



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

Emeritus Professor Roy Green AM
Net Zero Economy Authority
Uploaded via website

5 September 2025

Dear Professor Green

Re: Recommendations to inform the 'Statutory Review of Part 5 of the *Net Zero Economy Authority Act 2024*'.

The ten Member Councils of the Hunter Joint Organisation (Hunter JO) welcome the opportunity provided by the Federal Net Zero Economy Authority to provide feedback to inform the Statutory Review of Part 5 of the *Net Zero Economy Authority Act 2024*.

The Hunter JO is the statutory Local Government entity established by the NSW Government, through the *NSW Local Government Act 1993*, to support the ten member Councils of the Hunter Region to work together for better rural and regional outcomes, and to enhance the way Local and State Governments work together to plan and deliver important regional infrastructure and investment.

Member Councils of the Hunter JO include:

- 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

The core statutory functions established by the NSW Government for the Hunter JO and joint organisations more broadly across NSW include:

1. Strategic planning and priority setting
2. Intergovernmental collaboration
3. Shared leadership and advocacy

The Hunter Region is the largest regional economy in Australia, driving around 28% of regional NSW's total economic output, of which coal exports contribute around a third (\$24 billion) and a population approaching one million people by 2040.

The ten Mayors of the Region, through the Hunter JO, are strongly aligned in recognising the economic challenges facing the region, and on the priorities and actions needed to evolve the Hunter's economy toward net zero.

We commend the objectives of the Act and Part 5 in providing structured, consistent support for workers affected by energy asset closures. However, our experience and detailed knowledge of the Hunter's communities highlights that the framework must go further to:

- Expand definitions to include all workers and industries materially dependent on coal and energy, including export coal mines.
- Mandate Regional Net Zero Plans, co-designed with Local and State Governments, to coordinate integrated action across all levels of Government and align planning and investment with local needs and priorities.
- Strengthen obligations on Closing and Dependent employers, including early action on skills, social investment, and future land use planning.
- Embed local councils and regional collaborations of Councils (e.g. Joint Organisations) as statutory partners in consultation, determination of community impact, and governance structures.
- Improve data sharing, enforcement, and compliance monitoring, measuring success by regional resilience and social outcomes, not just process completion.
- Provide resourcing to Local Government to lead delivery of place-based planning, infrastructure and service provision that directly supports the energy transition in regional communities.

I encourage you to consider our recommendations to inform the focus and scope of the Net Zero Economy Authority and would welcome the opportunity to further discuss with you, given the enormous opportunities and impacts facing the Hunter region and Australian economies more broadly.

Should you have any further queries please don't hesitate to contact Kim Carland, Advocacy and Government Relations Lead, Hunter JO at kimc@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au or on 0460 034 614.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SR Moore'.

Cr Sue Moore
Chair Hunter Joint Organisation

SUBMISSION

Introduction

The objects of the NZEA Act are to:

- Promote orderly and positive economic transformation as the world decarbonises.
- Facilitate Australia's greenhouse gas reduction targets.
- Ensure Australia's regions, communities and workers are supported to manage the impacts, and share in the benefits, of Australia's transition to a net zero economy.

The role of Local Government in the net zero transition

Local Governments are on the frontline of the nation's economic transition to net zero. They are the closest level of Government to people's daily lives, delivering the core planning, community services and infrastructure that underpin vibrant and successful local communities and their economies. Councils understand and are trusted by their local communities, and are therefore best placed to inform and support place-based Federal and State Government planning and actions to lead the transition to net zero, provided they are properly resourced and supported to:

- Work directly with communities, businesses, and stakeholders to deliver practical, place-based programs and solutions.
- Integrate net zero goals and strategies into land use, infrastructure, and community planning.
- Manage critical local assets needed to support the energy transition.
- Drive regional economic development and help attract new business and industry to provide alternative jobs.
- Inspire broader community acceptance and action by demonstrating local leadership.

However, councils need assistance to effectively support their communities deliver the scale of economic transformation that is needed. If support is provided and sustained, councils individually and/or collectively through regional collaborations of councils, can directly contribute to Federal and State Government's efforts to accelerate delivery of net zero targets.

The role of Joint Organisations (JOs)

In NSW JO's are statutory bodies established under the *NSW Local Government Act 1993* and bring together multiple councils to strengthen regional collaboration. For other levels of Government, they provide:

- Regional advice on priorities and risks
- Access to an in depth knowledge of local communities.
- A forum to engage with Mayors and senior council leaders.
- Efficient and effective delivery of Government programs through regional coordination.
- Continuity of local knowledge and relationships over successive Federal and State Government election cycles.

JOs are funded by their member councils and collaborate across regions to share best practice and align efforts, making them a valuable delivery partner for Federal and State agencies seeking impact at regional scale.

Statutory Review of Part 5 of the *Net Zero Economy Authority Act 2024*

Given the valuable understanding and important role that local councils will need to contribute to the Hunter Region's economic transformation, the Hunter JO welcomes the opportunity to provide the following recommendations to the Terms of Reference criteria (1.1–1.8) to inform amendments to Part 5 of the *Net Zero Economy Authority Act 2024*.

1.1 – Definitions of Employers and Transition Employees

Current issue:

Limited scope of the economic transformation and need for a coordinated plan

The economic transformation required to achieve net zero represents one of the most profound structural adjustments to Australia's economy since industrialisation, reshaping our energy systems, industries, and regional communities.

The Hunter region is characterised by deep economic, social, and workforce interdependencies that transcend individual industrial sites. The closure of one major facility inevitably reverberates across the broader regional economy, affecting shared labour markets, supply chains, transport corridors, housing availability, and community services. It is therefore critical that these transitions are not addressed in isolation.

A strategic, region-wide approach, one that is responsive to the cumulative impact of multiple energy and mining transitions and coordinated across all levels of Government, is essential to ensure long-term economic resilience, social stability, and just outcomes for all Hunter communities.

Limited scope to coal and gas fired power stations

While the Act's intent is to "build a world-leading and consistent approach to worker support in the context of the energy transition, while recognising the individual circumstances of each business" and to support "workers on the front line of the energy transition", the EIJP framework is currently confined to coal- and gas-fired power stations.

This narrow scope fails to address the closure of export coal mines, which will inevitably occur as global demand declines. Without extending the EIJP to encompass these workers and communities, a significant portion of those most directly impacted by the transition to net zero will be left without adequate support. Widening this scope is critical for the Hunter Region, where by 2030, nearly 12,000 direct and indirect jobs are expected to be lost with the closure of two mines alone. NSW Government estimates also identifies 22 coal mines due to close over the next couple of decades and are expected to impact almost 50,000 direct and indirect jobs in the region (FIJA Issues Paper, 2023). Without Federal Government support, the scale of disruption to communities and the regional economy will be profound.

Future land use planning for post coal mining and coal fired power stations should also be included in the scope of the NZEA Act, given their proximity to existing workforces and containing valuable reusable infrastructure (e.g. roads, rail, electricity transmission and water infrastructure). While the NSW Government has committed to planning reform to facilitate post mining land use of this nature, the timeframe for this occur and actively support job creation may not align with the objectives and timeframes currently included in the *NZEA Act*, thereby limiting the significant contribution toward job creation from the reuse of mining lands that would

otherwise directly support NZEA's objectives for a positive economic transformation as the world decarbonises.

For this reason we urge Net the Zero Economy Authority to use its leadership role to encourage urgent action from the NSW Government to undertake planning reform of land release processes, unlocking post-mining and former coal-fired power station sites for future employment-generating uses.

Limited scope to direct employees and incomplete supply chain

The Act defines Closing, Dependent and receiving employers narrowly, limiting scope to direct employees and selected supply chain businesses. This potentially excludes many contractors, logistics operators, and small to medium businesses that rely on power stations and mines.

The closure of export mines across the Hunter is expected or are already planned as the demand for coal declines in line with global net zero targets. The timing of these closures has been determined by the development approval expiry and not market conditions. As a result, the consequences of premature export coal mine closures on regional communities dependent on them are not being realised. Each premature closure will cumulatively exacerbate the economic and social disruption facing the entire region unless supported by well-resourced, strategic, coordinated, and adaptive transition planning.

Recommendation:

Regional Net Zero Plan

The Net Zero Economy Authority should consider the benefits of developing a regional plan, updated annually, to strengthen place-based delivery mechanisms for implementation of the Act to achieve net zero initiatives across Australia.

The Regional Net Zero Plans should clearly identify and establish a single Federal Government Minister with responsibility for delivering funding and coordinating the transparent delivery and reporting of the plan.

Regional net zero plans collaboratively developed between Local Government and State and Federal Government agencies should:

- Confirm and identify shared local and regional vision and priorities including broader economic opportunities and drivers to successfully deliver the region-wide economic transformation that is needed. In the Hunter for example, augmenting and accelerating investment in existing priorities and efforts being planned and delivered by Government and other stakeholders (e.g. High Speed Rail, Port of Newcastle Clean Energy Precinct, Newcastle Airport, Reuse of Mining Lands, Circular Economy Industrial Precincts, John Hunter Innovation Precinct etc) can play a direct and significant contribution to the region's economic diversification and job creation.
- Identify resourcing, delivery mechanisms, responsibilities and timeframes for implementation to coordinate planning and investment of net zero economic transformation drivers.
- Align the efficient delivery of actions to support the transformation, captured across multiple councils and agencies.
- Provide an educational and communications tool to give assurance to communities in the economic transformation to net zero, and guidance to future workforce opportunities.

- Reduce the current short-term focus, misalignment and duplication frequently occurring across multiple Government agencies.
- Require an “in region” presence to drive active collaboration across State and Federal Government agencies, local councils and regional stakeholders to more comprehensively understand and respond to local needs and priorities
- Co-design regional funding programs to ensure that programs reflect local place-based priorities, risk profiles and delivery realities.
- Hold all levels of Government accountable for the transition experienced by communities directly affected by closure of coal and gas fired power stations and export coal mines.

Best practice learnings from coal regions in transition in Germany, USA, Poland, South Africa and India highlight the importance of having a regional place-based plan to achieve a successful economic transition.

Expand definitions to all labour markets

All workers and businesses materially dependent on the coal and energy sector, including contractors, suppliers, logistics operators, and interlinked industries (manufacturing, construction) should be included in the EIJP and NZEA objectives.

Key elements of this approach should include:

- A place-focused whole of Government approach to the region’s transition planning and action that integrates Federal and State Government planning and policy into a clear strategy for the Hunter region (Regional Net Zero Plan).
- Skill mapping and transition planning across the region to anticipate workforce needs and opportunities in clean energy, advanced manufacturing, circular economy, and public infrastructure.
- Hunter region wide focussed personnel offering direct engagement, placement support, and early matching of available skills to future jobs.
- Retraining incentives and reskilling funds, particularly targeted to emerging sectors aligned with the Hunter’s renewable energy zone (REZ), green hydrogen opportunities, and defence industries.
- Support for self-employment and local enterprise creation, including accelerator programs for displaced workers to transition into entrepreneurship.
- Business incentives, such as wage subsidies or onboarding payments, for firms that take on transitioning workers or create vacancies via early retirement.

Expand geographic coverage

Determinations made under the NZEA Act should extend to encompass the whole-of-region impacts of coal fired power stations and export mine closures, and require coordinated planning and action across all levels of Government, recognising the shared nature of regional labour markets, housing, and infrastructure.

1.2 – Community of Interest Process

Current issue:

Isolated planning and responses

The current process is too narrowly scoped and risks treating each closure in isolation from broader economic and social impacts and opportunities. Not considering these broader regional

links undermines broader regional planning opportunities where closures have overlapping impacts and exacerbates cumulative disruption.

Recommendation:

Regional Net Zero Plan

Net Zero Economy Authority should be responsible for leading the multi-agency coordination to develop and implement a regional place-focused plan to achieve the economic transformation to net zero in coal reliant communities. This coordination needs to comprise and align efforts across Federal, State and Local Government authorities.

Role of Local Government

Local Governments are on the frontline of the energy transition in regional communities. Councils understand and are trusted by their local communities and are therefore best placed to inform and support place-based Federal and State Government planning and actions to lead transition processes provided they are properly resourced.

The current review of the NZEA Act should consider opportunities for providing funding and resources directly to local councils and/or regional collaborations of councils to lead delivery of place-based planning, infrastructure and service provision that directly supports the energy transition.

Expand the assessment criteria

The current EIJP assessment should include regional interdependencies such as housing supply, transport demand, and infrastructure capacity.

1.3 – Obligations on Closing and Dependent Employers

Current issue

Limited obligations

Employer obligations are currently limited to two years notice, and include training, career planning, and financial advice. These do not address the broader social impacts and economic transition needs that require several years to plan and transform successfully.

Recommendation:

Introduce earlier triggers (e.g. minimum 5-10 years before announced closure) to allow more meaningful preparation.

Planning and co-investment in post-coal land use (including power stations and export coal mines) should be obligations required of the employer, in partnership with State and Local Government, recognising that these sites are critical to generating new employment generating activities. This should include:

- Stakeholder and community consultation to inform repurposing options for land and infrastructure post coal closure (e.g. energy hubs, advanced manufacturing, circular economy precincts).
- Co-designed Masterplans funded by the employer and developed in partnership with councils identifying potential future land use in line with community and market needs, ensuring alignment with housing, transport, and economic diversification priorities.

Mandate transparent reporting on how employers' obligations are being delivered, including worker and community outcomes.

Broaden obligations of either the employer, State or Federal Government, to require early social investment, including housing, education, and mental health services in affected communities.

1.4 – FWC Determinations and Dispute Resolution

No comment

1.5 – Energy Industry Worker Redeployment Advisory Group

Current issue

Limited voice

Membership of the Advisory Group is currently limited to unions, employers, and the Authority, but not the democratically elected voice of local communities (i.e. local councils). The focus of membership of the Advisory Group needs to be extended to local councils who are key stakeholders in the transition process given their deep connection to local communities and diverse nature of functions and services they provide.

Recommendation:

Regional representation

Reforms to the NZEA Act include the requirement for Local Government representation on the Advisory Group.

Expand scope

Expand scope to advise not just on redeployment but also on regional economic diversification and future land-use planning.

1.6 – Information Management

Current issue

Lack of timely data

Councils and regional bodies lack timely access to workforce and closure data, limiting planning capacity.

Recommendation

Data sharing annually

Require data sharing annually with regional authorities and councils to support place-based planning for housing, transport, business attraction, skills and services.

Consistent protocols

Establish protocols for transparent, consistent release of closure timelines and workforce transition data.

1.7 – Enforcement, Compensation, and Injunctions

Current issue

Insufficient penalties

Current penalties may not be sufficient to ensure compliance, risking that workers and communities are left unsupported.

Recommendation

Strengthen enforcement

The Act should strengthen the provisions with clear penalties for employers that fail to meet obligations by:

- Providing compensation pathways not only for workers but also for local councils impacted by the closure activities (e.g. road infrastructure damage, housing pressure, social services).
- Ensuring independent monitoring of compliance with obligations, with findings published publicly.

1.8 – CEO’s Promotion of Compliance and Support

Current issue

Improved measures of success

Compliance is currently measured narrowly by whether employer actions are completed, not whether outcomes are achieved.

Recommendation

Expand employer monitoring

Expand compliance monitoring to assess broader economic and social outcomes, such as successful redeployment rates, community wellbeing indicators, and housing supply.

Regional progress reporting by NZEA

Net Zero Economy Authority should undertake annual public reporting on the Regional Net Zero Plan on regional progress toward a just transition.

Conclusion

The transition to net zero is one of the most profound industrial and economic shifts in Australia’s history. For coal-dependent regions such as the Hunter, this transition is not an isolated challenge but a whole-of-region transformation that will reshape workforces, industries, communities, and land use for generations.

The Energy Industry Jobs Plan is an essential tool, but in its current form its scope is too narrow and its obligations too limited to deliver on the Parliament’s stated intent of supporting workers and communities on the front line of change. Without reform, a significant portion of the workforce, supply chain businesses, and affected communities will be left unsupported.

The Hunter JO strongly supports the intent of the EIJP framework but urges that Part 5 of the Act be amended to:

- Expand definitions to include all workers and industries materially dependent on coal and energy, including export coal mines.
- Mandate Regional Net Zero Plans, co-designed with Local and State Governments, to coordinate integrated action across all levels of Government and align investment with local needs and priorities.
- Strengthen obligations on closing and dependent employers, including early action on skills, social investment, and future land use planning.
- Embed local councils and regional collaborations of Councils (e.g. Joint Organisations) as statutory partners in consultation, determination of community impact, and governance structures.
- Improve data sharing, enforcement, and compliance monitoring, measuring success by regional resilience and social outcomes, not just process completion.
- Provide resourcing to Local Government to lead delivery of place-based planning, infrastructure and service provision that directly supports the energy transition in regional communities.

With appropriate resourcing and recognition, Local Governments and regional collaborations of councils are uniquely placed to partner with the Net Zero Economy Authority to deliver this transformation in a way that is fair, inclusive, and enduring.

The Hunter JO stands ready to work with the Authority, the NSW Government, and the Commonwealth to co-design and deliver this future. Together, we can ensure the EIJP not only supports workers through closure but enables **long-term regional economic prosperity, resilience, and climate leadership.**



4 Sandringham Avenue, Thornton,
NSW 2322 - 02 4978 4020
www.hunterjo.nsw.gov.au

NSW EPA Climate Change Licensee Requirements

Hunter Joint Organisation submission – October 2025

Introduction

The Hunter Joint Organisation (Hunter JO) is the statutory local government entity established by the NSW Government, under the *NSW Local Government Act 1993*, to support the ten member Councils of the Hunter Region to work together for better rural and regional outcomes, and to enhance the way local and state governments work together to plan and deliver important regional infrastructure and investment.

Member Councils of the Hunter JO are:

- 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

The Hunter JO also serves as the voluntary regional waste group under the NSW EPA's [Regional Networks for Effective Waste Management \(RENEW\) program](#), which is comprised of the ten Member Councils, as well as Central Coast Council.

The Hunter JO is pleased to be able to provide feedback to the NSW EPA on the proposed Climate Change Licensee Requirements. This submission has been developed in consultation with staff from Hunter JO's member councils, although it does not necessarily encompass the complete view of each council. The individual councils may also make independent submissions.

Background

The Hunter JO supports its member councils with climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts through the delivery of a range of programs, including:

- The [Hunter Net Zero Program](#), supported by NSW DCCEEW's Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration (JONZA) program
- The [Waste and Circular Economy Program](#), supported by the NSW EPA's [Regional Coordination Support Program](#).
- The [Disaster Resilience Program](#), supported by the NSW Reconstruction Authority.

Through these programs, Hunter JO facilitates collaboration amongst councils and other stakeholders, gathers information and data, and delivers specific programs aimed at supporting councils to address climate change impacts by building their capacity and capability.

The Hunter JO has undertaken some recent work on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from landfills through 2023 Sustainability Partnership Program, which resulted in the development of the [Landfill Emissions Package](#). The project also involved measuring emissions of 10 council owned landfills in the Hunter and Central Coast region, as well as the development of an Opportunities Report providing policy and program recommendations for the NSW EPA to consider.

Therefore, Hunter JO and its member councils have a strong understanding of the issues, barriers and opportunities to effectively manage GHG emissions, particularly from landfills, and an appetite to work collaboratively as a region and alongside the EPA to meet NSW's greenhouse gas emissions targets.

Comments on proposed Climate Change Licensee Requirements

Overall, the Hunter JO welcomes the EPA's proposed Climate Change Licensee Requirements that will mandate reporting for licensed facilities – including landfills – that generate more than 25,000 t-CO₂-e p/a of Scope 1 and 2 GHG emissions.

Specifically, we support the proposed policy change for the following reasons:

1. The scale of emissions is significant

- As mentioned in the *Proposed Climate Change Licensee Requirements: Consultation Draft*, EPA licensees are estimated to contribute 50-60% of NSW's total GHG emissions.
- For local councils that operate a landfill, methane emissions from the landfill typically account for 60-80% of the organisation's Scope 1 and 2 emissions.
 - o For example, Lake Macquarie City Council's Awaba Waste Management Facility accounts for 91% of organisational emissions in 2025.¹
- In the Hunter JO's *Landfill Emissions Opportunities Report*², the cumulative abatement potential to 2050 of NSW's 52 largest landfills without landfill gas capture was estimated to be 9.79 Mt-CO₂-e, or 0.72% of NSW remaining emissions budget.

2. The requirements will promote transparency, accountability, and action

- Emissions reporting from licensees will ensure accurate and consistent measurement and provide the NSW EPA with reliable data upon which to formulate policies and programs to assist licensees and reduce emissions.
- Emissions reporting and action plans will encourage licensees to set emissions reduction goals, implement mitigation measures, and promote accountability.
- Applying these requirements to facilities not already captured by existing programs like the NGER Scheme or Safeguard Mechanism will promote consistency across industries.

¹ Lake Macquarie City Council. (2024). Climate Action Plan for Council Operations, unpublished.

² Hunter Joint Organisation (2025) *Landfill Emissions Opportunities Report*, prepared by 100% Renewables, unpublished.

3. Supporting development and implementation of emissions reduction measures

- Despite the widespread uptake of mitigation measures like landfill gas capture systems and organic waste diversion via FOGO, legacy landfill emissions remain a significant barrier for local councils to achieve net zero targets.
- While landfill gas management measures are mandated, incentivised (e.g. via ACCUs), or commercially viable for larger facilities, the same drivers do not always exist for smaller facilities.
- The new framework can help address this by:
 - o Providing data-driven insights into local and regional emissions and effective mitigation strategies.
 - o Clarifying expectations for best-practice mitigation
 - o Supporting councils to transition away from high-emission legacy waste systems through improved planning and regional collaboration.
 - o Sharing knowledge and information amongst licensees to build overall capacity.
- The Hunter JO supports the gradual, long-term imposition of the more stringent requirements listed in the *Proposed Climate Change Licensee Requirements: Consultation Draft*:
 - o Specific mitigation actions
 - o Emissions measurement
 - o Greenhouse gas emission license limits.
- These are necessary and reasonable steps but should be implemented at point where licensees have had sufficient time and support to adapt.

4. Reasonable implementation timeline and proposed support

- The Hunter JO supports the proposed timeline for implementation, particularly as it relates to council-owned landfills:
 - o First Climate Change Emission Report due 28 February 2027
 - o First Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Plan (CCMAP), including 10-year projections, due 31 October 2027
- The Hunter JO also supports the proposed High Emitting Industries grant to assist licensees to prepare their CCMAPs. This will be vital for local government licensees to alleviate resourcing and capacity constraints.

Recommendations

The Hunter JO recommends the following to assist the EPA and licensees to implement this program successfully:

1. Consider the financial viability of landfill emissions mitigation strategies

- For many smaller or older landfills, often owned and operated by councils, conventional landfill gas capture systems may not be financially viable due to the high capital and maintenance costs and low methane yields. Implementing these measures in smaller landfills would place unsustainable financial pressure on councils (or other landfill operators) and divert resources from other essential environmental and waste diversion priorities.
- The framework, particularly any future specific mitigation actions (requirement 3 in the Consultation Draft), should therefore acknowledge that while technically feasible, these systems are often not financially justifiable for smaller facilities.
- Instead, the framework could consider a range of alternate, lower cost landfill gas management strategies that may be appropriate for smaller or older landfills, including passive flaring, biofilters, microbial oxidation covers, and phytocapping.

2. Avoiding cost shifting to local government

- State government climate initiatives must avoid shifting additional costs to local government. Councils – especially regional and rural councils – are effectively the depository for society's waste and bear the financial and operational burden of managing materials over which they have no control in design, production, or consumption.
- Without sufficient funding support, the addition of new licensing obligations will increase pressure on already constrained council waste reserves and ratepayer-funded services.
- Any of the possible future monitoring, reporting and mitigation requirements earmarked in the Consultation Draft should be risk-based and scale-adjusted to ensure that equity and practicality across the sector.

3. Importance of true product stewardship

- Downstream emissions management, such as landfill gas systems, should not be viewed as a substitute for addressing the upstream causes of waste generation. Real progress on waste and emissions reduction requires genuine product stewardship schemes that internalise the full economic and environmental cost of materials. Producers and importers should be financially responsible for the impacts of their products, and councils must have direct access to any stewardship funds given their significant role in managing end-of-life materials.

4. Align reporting methodology and periods with other schemes

- To avoid overburdening licensees with unnecessary duplication and complexity, the EPA should ensure that where possible reporting requirements and periods align with similar schemes, namely the NGER Scheme and Safeguard Mechanism.

5. Provide data and information to assist with reporting

- The NSW EPA should, where applicable, provide relevant datasets to assist licensees to complete reporting requirements. For landfill licensees, this may include the waste contribution monthly reports provided through the Waste and Resource Recovery Portal (WARRP).
 - o This data was provided by the NSW EPA to the Hunter JO to complete emissions estimates during the Landfill Emissions Package project.
- In addition, the EPA could assist licensees understand and assess mitigation strategies by compiling and sharing data from the community of licensees. For example, the EPA could publish data that demonstrates the effectiveness of various emissions reduction strategies that have been implemented by licensees.

6. Allow regional collaboration and cooperation

- The EPA should allow for regional bodies, such as Joint Organisations (JOs) or Regional Organisations of Councils (ROCs), to undertake reporting on behalf of councils where appropriate. This can assist councils to overcome resource and capacity constraints, and to leverage expertise across multiple organisations. The Hunter JO has recent experience undertaking this work successfully through the Landfill Emission Package project.
- To enable this, funding through programs such as the proposed High Emitting Industries grant should be made available to JOs, ROCs, and similar organisations to assist with preparing reports and plans.

Overall, the Hunter JO is supportive of the NSW EPA's proposed measures to encourage GHG emissions reduction amongst its licensees, but emphasises that the solutions must be financially sustainable, practically implementable, and avoid cost-shifting on to local councils.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comment and are willing to assist the NSW EPA to further engage with our member councils and support the implementation of this scheme.

If you have any further queries, please contact Chris Dart on the details provided below.



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NSW 2322 - 02 4978 4020
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Yours sincerely,

CDart

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Hunter Joint Organisation

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**Submission to inform the
Review of the operations of
the NSW Reconstruction
Authority regarding the NSW
East Coast severe weather
from May 2025.**

26 September 2025

Hunter Joint Organisation



4 Sandringham Avenue, PO Box 3137,
Thornton, NSW 2322 - 02 4978 4040
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Mr Clayton Barr MP
Member for Cessnock
Chair of the Joint Select Committee on the NSW Reconstruction Authority
nswreconstructionauthority@parliament.nsw.gov.au

3rd October 2025

Dear Mr Barr,

Re: Submission to inform the Review of the operations of the NSW Reconstruction Authority regarding the NSW East Coast severe weather from May 2025.

The ten Member Councils of the Hunter Joint Organisation (JO) welcome the opportunity provided by the Joint Select Committee on the NSW Reconstruction Authority to provide a submission on the Review of the operations of the NSW Reconstruction Authority regarding the NSW East Coast severe weather from May 2025.

The Hunter Joint Organisation is the statutory local government entity established by the NSW Government, through the NSW Local Government Act 1993, to support the ten member Councils of the Hunter Region to work together for better rural and regional outcomes, and to enhance the way local and state governments work together to plan and deliver important regional infrastructure and investment.

Member Councils of the Hunter JO include:

- 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

The Hunter JO also works closely with Central Coast Council on a number of disaster resilience initiatives.

The core statutory functions established by the NSW Government for the Hunter JO include:

1. Strategic planning and priority setting
2. Intergovernmental collaboration
3. Shared leadership and advocacy

Through the [Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2035](#), our councils have identified climate change mitigation, adaptation and disaster resilience as one of the key priorities for the Hunter Region. The Hunter Region, particularly the MidCoast, Dungog, Port Stephens, Maitland and Newcastle

LGAs, was significantly impacted by the NSW East Coast severe weather from May 2025. The ten Mayors of the region are strongly aligned in advocating for sustainable and strategic place-based planning and resourcing of local and regional disaster resilience and recovery activities.

Hunter JO has developed this submission based on council survey responses consistent with the Review's Terms of Reference as well as insights from our extensive disaster resilience capacity building and advocacy initiatives delivered over many years. In line with our strategic objectives and advocacy priorities, the key focus areas and opportunities outlined in our submission relative to the Terms of Reference are summarised below:

Terms of Reference	Focus of regional submission
a) <i>The Reconstruction Authority's (RA) response to recent disasters</i>	Inconsistency in RA's response across LGAs, disaster events, and hazard types, including a detailed case study on the New Lambton landslide.
b) <i>Exercise of RA's planning powers under the Act</i>	Councils have not experienced RA exercising their planning powers to date.
c) <i>RA's communication with affected communities</i>	While there have been some improvements compared to previous events, a lack of communication has resulted in confusion of roles and responsibilities, community frustration and reputational damage to councils. Examples of inconsistent and inaccurate communication of waste disposal options have been included. Missed opportunity for effective community-led recovery – including a case study on the 6-month Community Recovery Officer role offered to the Hunter JO to work with communities across all impacted Councils in the Hunter JO region.
d) <i>Effectiveness of any relevant preparedness and adaptation work by RA</i>	Surveyed council representatives were unaware of any prior Reconstruction Authority preparedness and adaptation work in their region outside of social media communications. Councils and JOs continue to face significant challenges arising from a continued reliance on competitive grant programs to deliver core disaster preparedness and adaptation initiatives.
e) <i>Application of DRFA funding</i>	Council challenges experienced in accessing DRFA funding, including a detailed example from Upper Hunter on the exclusion of water and sewer assets from the DRFA.



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I encourage you to consider our submission to inform the review of the operations of the NSW Reconstruction Authority regarding the NSW East Coast severe weather from May 2025 and would welcome the opportunity to further discuss with the Committee, particularly given the significant disaster impacts experienced in the Hunter JO region.

Should you have any further queries please don't hesitate to contact Anna Flack, Senior Project Coordinator, Hunter JO at annaf@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au or on 0460 038 199.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "SR Moore".

Cr Sue Moore
Mayor Singleton Council
Chair Hunter Joint Organisation

Hunter JO Submission to inform the Review of the operations of the NSW Reconstruction Authority regarding the NSW East Coast severe weather from May 2025

As the level of government closest to the community, councils play a unique and essential role in helping their communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from the growing impacts of natural hazards and disasters. Much of the adaptation required in local communities cannot be delivered by other levels of government due to their lack of local presence and knowledge, as well as the absence of necessary skills, systems and experience delivering place-based projects ([ALGA, 2025](#)). Councils are irreplaceable partners in disaster resilience and recovery, drawing on their local expertise to strengthen state and federal government efforts.

To be most effective, recovery and resilience efforts must be built on genuine collaboration. This means co-designing programs and approaches with councils and Joint Organisations (JOs), embedding them locally within impacted LGAs, and ensuring that agencies such as the NSW Reconstruction Authority work alongside councils as equal partners. Strong, trusted partnerships enable resources to be better targeted, community needs to be more effectively addressed, and outcomes to be more sustainable over time.

The Hunter Region, particularly the MidCoast, Dungog, Port Stephens, Maitland and Newcastle LGAs, was significantly affected by the NSW East Coast severe weather from May 2025. The scale of the event stretched already limited local resources and created major challenges throughout response and recovery. The ten councils of the Hunter have a long track record of working together to strengthen resilience and support their communities in times of need, and they are united in advocating for sustainable, place-based approaches to disaster recovery and resilience planning.

This submission has been prepared by the Hunter Joint Organisation (Hunter JO) in response to the Review of the operations of the NSW Reconstruction Authority during the NSW East Coast severe weather event from May 2025. It draws on Member Councils own submissions to the Inquiry, survey responses from member councils aligned with the Review's Terms of Reference, and insights from our extensive disaster resilience capacity building and advocacy initiatives delivered over many years.

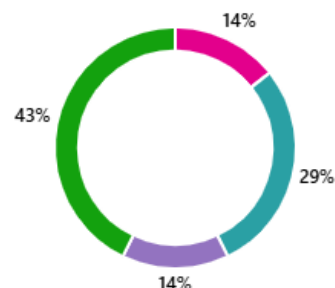
Response to the Terms of Reference

- a) The Authority's response to, and any changes or improvements to the operations of the Authority, the following recent disasters:**
- i. the severe weather caused by ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred from 3 March 2025,**
 - ii. the major electricity outages affecting Far West NSW from 17 October 2024,**
 - iii. the catastrophic floods affecting the Central West region in 2022, and**
 - iv. any other disasters that were subject to a Natural Disaster Declaration and in which the Authority exercised its functions.**

Overall, 86% of Hunter Region council respondents to our survey indicated that support received from the Reconstruction Authority in response to the NSW East Coast severe weather event was neutral, ineffective or very ineffective. Only 14% of respondents indicated effective support.

2. Overall, how effective was the NSW Reconstruction Authority's (RA) support for your council during this event?

Very effective	0
Effective	1
Neutral	2
Ineffective	1
Very ineffective	3



While Council feedback was mixed, all praised the efforts of local RA regional delivery staff. One respondent indicated there was strong information sharing and operational support during recovery, including communications meetings, recovery committee meetings, and engagement with GMs and elected representatives. However, staffing constraints limited the support RA could provide to councils for community outreach. While RA Liaison Officers are generally accessible to LEMCs during business-as-usual, they are not always available to directly support their LGAs when large-scale events occur and are often deployed to other, more heavily impacted areas. In this event, councils suggested that the extensive isolation in some areas meant it would have been more effective for NSWRA to establish recovery Assistance Points prior to opening the Recovery Centre and then activate the Centre once all areas were out of isolation. This would have helped capture those who could not initially attend a RAP or who only realised the full impacts once floodwaters had receded.

Councils noted that RA's leadership of the Recovery Centres was effective and provided value. RA also assisted by triaging requests for support, such as deploying Disaster Relief Australia, NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA), and Rural Fire Service (RFS) resources. However, while this process worked well in some cases, in others the follow-up was inconsistent, with requests left incomplete. As a result, councils often found it more efficient to liaise directly with the relevant agencies.

"Whilst this was my first significant event at council, I was disappointed at the support received, and poor communication as to RA's involvement. Even when engaging RA, generally we were referred to TfNSW or Public Works for guidance, which makes me question the purpose/role RA is to play. Whilst I know this was a significant event and can't fault local RA staff who kept in contact and provided what they could, many of them were overruled at a higher level as to what support RA would provide the council"

Council survey respondent

Compared with previous events, councils indicated that RA's operations and processes remained largely the same overall. One council survey respondent shared that in prior minor weather events, RA would contact councils to ask how they could provide assistance, but during the May severe weather event it was evident they could not be as proactive or supportive given the scale of the event.

"Councils have a lot of value to add in disaster situations as they understand the area and the community. Our council in particular is very versed in emergency situations and recovery. RA should be leveraging this knowledge and supporting councils through recovery rather than directing their activities. The uncertainty of what RA would and wouldn't do and they reneging on promises made what was an already uncertain situation very difficult. Our only saving grace was that we had experienced this behaviour in the 2021 floods and therefore did not rely on RA for anything and just did the work ourselves"

Council survey respondent

Inconsistency in the Authority's response across LGAs, disaster events, and hazard types

While the NSW Reconstruction Authority has provided significant support in many disaster contexts, the level and type of support offered has varied considerably between LGAs, disaster events, and hazards. There appears to be inconsistency in the interpretation of responsibilities and processes and the corresponding provision of RA support (see following case study). This inconsistency undermines the principle of equitable recovery and creates uncertainty for both councils and affected communities.

Case Study – New Lambton landslide, City of Newcastle

In May 2025, a major landslide in New Lambton triggered by severe weather directly impacted 16 properties and over 40 residents, with many homes likely to require demolition. Despite the significant scale of the disaster, the NSW Reconstruction Authority (RA) declined to assume responsibility for recovery, creating major challenges for the City of Newcastle.

RA initially placed a coordination officer in the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), but this role was quickly withdrawn and replaced by a manager without decision-making authority. It later became clear that RA would not lead recovery, yet Council did not receive timely or formal notification of this decision despite repeated requests. Informal recovery responsibilities were left to the LEOCON until RA formally confirmed, almost eight weeks after the disaster, that Council would be responsible for leading recovery.

This protracted and unclear transition created confusion, inequity, and community frustration, undermining trust in both government and council. While the event was included in AGRN 1212, the Regional Recovery Committee refused to consider or discuss the matter, and no Recovery Centre was established in the Newcastle LGA. As a result, all critical recovery functions, including engaging a Recovery Coordinator, forming a Local Recovery Committee, commissioning geotechnical investigations, site stabilisation, and community engagement, were funded and delivered by the City of Newcastle without RA involvement.

RA did not actively participate in community meetings, provide resident support, or proactively engage with displaced families. Although senior RA staff, including the CEO and Minister, held initial meetings with Council, these were perceived as tokenistic, demonstrating minimal interest in meaningful support. This failure to meet the intent of the NSW Recovery Plan reinforced perceptions that RA is unwilling to act in complex urban settings, eroding trust in the Authority's role and compounding reputational damage for council.

In contrast, RA and the NSW Government have played active roles in recovery for other LGAs and hazards, raising concerns about inequitable treatment. For example:

- **Tweed Shire Council (landslip):** RA provided direct support and led recovery.
- **Singleton Council (2022 Broke flooding):** Ministerial intervention and funding were secured within days following advocacy by local MPs.
- **Central West floods 2022:** The NSW Government provided \$40 million in rate relief to affected residents, support not extended to Newcastle.

This case highlights inconsistencies in response and the absence of a clear process, leaving councils uncertain about the level of assistance they can expect. In New Lambton, the lack of RA leadership and support left residents feeling abandoned, generated delays and confusion, and placed substantial additional burdens on Council.

b) The exercise of any planning powers under the Act in the affected region, including:

- powers under Parts 6 to 7 of the Act following a Ministerial declaration under Part 5, particularly the power to compulsorily acquire land,**
- land and housing buybacks and disposals,**
- the effectiveness of housing resilience programs, and**
- developments subject to a ministerial authorisation order under section 68 of the Act.**

It has only been four months since the May 2025 severe weather events, so it is recognised that RA may exercise their planning powers further down the track. Nevertheless, Council representatives from a range of impacted LGAs have not experienced RA exercising their planning powers to date, including in areas where homes are no longer habitable (i.e. New Lambton landslide). There have also been no ministerial authorisation orders under section 68 or housing resilience programs applied within the authority of NSWRA.

c) How the Authority and relevant agencies communicated to and engaged with affected communities in the delivery and design of reconstruction and preparedness efforts, including whether principles of community-led recovery and culturally appropriate emergency management were considered.

Inconsistent communication is an ongoing challenge in disaster response and recovery, and as the closest level of government to the community, councils ultimately bear the brunt of community frustrations. Anecdotally, many councils reported an overall improvement in communication from RA and other agencies between the January 2025 storms and the May 2025 severe weather events and notes that inter-agency communication was relatively strong during the May 2025 flood event. However, there is clearly still work to be done, particularly around delivery and design of reconstruction and preparedness where co-design with communities did not occur. The examples below outline specific challenges faced by Hunter councils regarding waste management as a result of inaccurate agency communications:

- Some Hunter councils were notified by NSW RA that they could claim reimbursement for kerbside collection of storm waste from the January 2025 storms well after the fact, making it difficult to evidence expenses accurately
- Following the January 2025 storms, the NSW Emergency Services Minister announced all waste disposal fees would be waived, which was inconsistent with the protocols and processes in place across different LGAs
- Following the May 2025 severe weather events, the Premier's Department advised residents in all Disaster Declared LGAs to leave flood waste and debris on their kerbside for Council to collect/transport for free - a service that was being offered by some Councils but not an option for others

There was also uncertainty encountered surrounding disaster declarations. Declarations were announced for LGAs, but there was confusion in the community as funding appeared to be allocated based on predicted impacts and locations rather than actual damage. Hardship funding was allocated by suburb, which meant some areas that experienced no impacts received funding, while other areas outside the predicted impact zones, while affected by backflow and runoff, were excluded despite being inundated.

These examples and the New Lambton landslide example resulted in confusion of roles and responsibilities, community frustration and reputational damage to councils.

Council survey respondents rated RA's overall communication during response and recovery as follows:

- Overall communication with councils during response and recovery was rated good by 28.6% of respondents, 14.3% rated communication as fair, 28.6% as poor and 28.6% rated very poor.
- Communication with the community from RA was rated good by 28.6% of respondents, 28.6% rated fair, 14.3% rated poor and 28.6% rated very poor.
- 28.6% of council respondents rated communication with other agencies during response and recovery as good, 28.6% ranked as fair, 14.3% as very poor. 28.6% of respondents were unsure of communication with other agencies.

Survey respondents were asked if community led recovery principles and culturally appropriate approaches were evident in their area. 86% of respondents were either unsure or did not see any evidence of this and only 14% noted that this was done.

Example – New Lambton landslide, City of Newcastle

“There are no examples of the NSWRA directly communicating with or engaging affected residents in the New Lambton landslip. RA has provided no meaningful engagement with the community in the design or delivery of reconstruction or preparedness efforts for this disaster.

RA did not involve themselves in community meetings or information sessions or provide written correspondence to displaced residents. All engagement has been undertaken by City of Newcastle (CN) either on behalf of the LEOCON in response or CN in recovery, with limited resources, working exorbitant hours on top of regular workload causing impact to other city services.

Residents repeatedly ask why RA is not leading recovery nor involved earlier in the response phase. The written advice from RA, later shared with residents, confirmed that they would not take responsibility for recovery, effectively removing them from any meaningful engagement. There was no visible leadership from RA.

The lack of RA presence has fueled perceptions of abandonment, eroded confidence in the state’s disaster recovery framework, and placed council in the difficult position of both coordinating recovery and absorbing community frustration meant for state agencies, all compounding resident distress which has been reflected in national news.

The NSW Recovery Plan emphasises the role of state agencies in providing consistent communication and structured recovery leadership. In this case, the absence of RA communication stands out as a complete gap in practice”

City of Newcastle council survey respondent

Missed opportunity for effective community-led recovery

Local Community Recovery Officer roles are an important enabler of community-led recovery and are strongly supported by councils and JOs. However, for these types of roles to be most effective it is crucial that they are codesigned with input and support from councils and/or JOs and are placed locally within impacted Councils given their community focus and geographic scale of operations.

Case study – Community Recovery Officer opportunity for Hunter JO and Mid North Coast JO regions

Following the May flooding and severe weather event, NSW Reconstruction Authority approached Hunter and Mid North Coast JOs offering the opportunity to each host a Community Recovery Officer (CRO) role for six months - in effect splitting funds available for a 12-month role into two 6-month roles across two JOs. The roles would be funded under Category A of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA), and the CROs would work with flood-impacted communities across both JO regions to identify needs, attend local recovery events and meetings, assist communities to access accurate recovery information and resources, and provide leadership and community capacity building, supported by the RA.

While the concept of working with JOs to support recovery at the regional scale is welcomed and provides considerable opportunities for supporting council and community recovery efforts, the design of such roles and functions needs to be co-designed with JOs and Member Councils in order to effectively meet local needs, not presented with predetermined outcomes and predetermined funding requirements and guidelines. In this case, supported by council General Managers, Hunter JO and Mid North Coast JO both declined the offer to host the role for the following reasons:

- Practical limitations of the role – there was significant concern that a six-month role would not be effective in engaging local communities across both JO areas given the extensive travel and level of engagement that would be required. For example, MidCoast Council identified the need for two CRO's across two years in their LGA alone.
- Scope of CRO role – CRO's are best placed within impacted councils given their existing strong relationships with community and local networks, relationships that do not exist at the regional JO scale. Councils are also better placed than JOs to provide the emergency recovery and community engagement supervision expertise and support required.
- JO structural and financial model – the funding arrangements proposed for the role were financially unsustainable for Hunter and MidCoast JOs (i.e. we did not have the funding necessary to resource the additional administrative and supervisory support that was required by the predetermined funding requirements).

d) The effectiveness of any relevant preparedness and adaptation work by the Authority for the affected region before the disaster.

Surveyed council representatives were unaware of any prior Reconstruction Authority preparedness and adaptation work in their region outside of social media communications.

Recommendation 5 of the Colvin Review states that *The Commonwealth, via NEMA, should work with state and territory governments to adopt a leadership and oversight role in ensuring adequate capability, capacity and/or investment exists across Australia for local government and communities to adequately respond to natural disaster events, and to engage with appropriate support and funding structures.*

This is because the involvement of local councils in preparedness and adaptation work is critical. Councils play a unique and systemic role in addressing climate risks and achieving adaptation objectives. The adaptation required in local communities cannot be delivered by any other level of government due to a lack of local presence and knowledge, and the absence of necessary skills, systems and experience in delivering place-based projects (Australian Local Government Association, 2025. *Adapting Together: Local Government Leadership in a Changing Climate*).

Hunter JO has received funding through NEMA's Disaster Ready Fund towards supporting councils and the NSW Reconstruction Authority on developing regional Disaster Adaptation Plans in the coming years. This provides an important opportunity to plan for, prioritise and drive adaptation work across the Hunter Region. Many Hunter and Central Coast councils have also received funding through NEMA and the Reconstruction Authority for preparedness and adaptation activities

However, despite having had success in accessing these funding opportunities, councils and JOs continue to face significant challenges arising from a continued reliance on competitive grant programs to deliver core disaster preparedness and adaptation initiatives. Investment that enhances disaster resilience, delivers betterment of vulnerable infrastructure and sustains community engagement in preparedness planning is becoming increasingly critical, yet local councils, especially regional and rural ones, are typically under-resourced to plan and undertake this important work. To do so, they are heavily reliant on competitive grant funding for both immediate disaster recovery efforts and to deliver long-term risk reduction measures. Key challenges with this grant focused approach include:

- NSW Government figures identify that 97% of disaster grant funding goes to response and recovery rather than risk reduction.
- Short-term, competitive grants can in fact impede the long-term resilience of councils and their communities, given the challenges of sustaining community engagement and staff (and accompanying corporate knowledge) needed for their implementation due to the stop-start nature of such programs.

Case Study – MidCoast Council Recovery Officer

MidCoast Council prior to the May 2025 flood event hosted a Community Recovery Officer – a short-term grant funded role. This role provided vital capacity to engage directly with communities to facilitate preparedness and adaptation to natural disasters and to assist with recovery efforts.

Prior to the flood event, the only preparedness and adaptation work that council was aware of was delivered through this grant funded (NSWRA) Community Recovery Officer role. Unfortunately, funding for the role ceased in the months before the May 2025 flood event, meaning that this key staff resource with established connections with local communities was no longer available to assist with recovery efforts following the May flood event.

This example highlights how a dependence on stop–start, short term competitive grants for community focused adaptation and recovery roles can impede the capacity and timeliness of community recovery. This is because the need to recruit new recovery staff after each disaster event and rebuild the corporate and community knowledge and connections required within these roles loses valuable time and consumes other council resources that could otherwise be focused on direct recovery efforts.

- Many grant programs now require councils to co-contribute up to 50% of funds, leaving smaller councils excluded.
- Regional and rural councils often lack the capacity to apply, co-fund, or meet evidence requirements—further exacerbating their vulnerability and existing inequities in their capacity to fund and deliver programs that build local community resilience.

In addition to these challenges, the growing administrative burden, evidence and co-contribution obligations required of councils and JO's from RA for delivering grant funded resilience and adaptation initiatives is significantly detracting from their ability to deliver actual project outcomes and deterring organisations from making future funding applications. This directly undermines the intent of Recommendation 5 of the Colvin Review by limiting the ability of local governments and communities to respond adequately to natural disasters.

Key opportunities for improving sustainable and effective implementation of shared NSW and Local Government recovery and adaptation priorities include:

- NSW Government committing to streamlined, ongoing funding aligned with councils' four-year Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) cycles to reduce administrative burden and enable proactive, long-term adaptation planning.
- Enabling betterment funding to rebuild public infrastructure to higher standards.

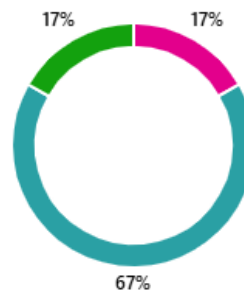
- Providing targeted investment in high-risk communities, particularly where legacy planning has increased exposure to climate-related hazards.
- Reforming road repair and betterment grant processes to give councils greater flexibility to fund locally defined recovery and adaptation priorities.
- Funding permanent, dedicated council based roles focused on community and disaster resilience and recovery.
- Investing in regional capacity, including coordination roles that support technical delivery and policy alignment across councils and the NSW Government
- Formalising place-based adaptation partnerships between NSW Government, JOs and councils to coordinate planning and investment.
- Co-designing regional funding programs to identify and address shared regional priorities.
- Engaging and co-designing programs with councils and JOs early in the process to ensure they reflect local risks, priorities and delivery mechanisms and capacity.

e) The application of any relevant funding under the Joint Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements, including the implementation of any recommendations arising from the Colvin Review published in October 2024.

Councils face ongoing challenges in applying for and reporting on competitive grant programs. All councils surveyed have requested funding under the Joint Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) following the May 2025 severe weather event, however some, such as MidCoast Council, have received little or are still yet to receive any funds. Of those who responded to the survey, 17% indicated the effectiveness of the DRFA as effective, 67% as neutral and 17% very ineffective.

9. How effective has the Joint DRFA funding process been (timeliness, adequacy, flexibility)?

Very effective	0
Effective	1
Neutral	4
Ineffective	0
Very ineffective	1



Councils suggested that the DRFA categories are too complicated and lack clarity as to what can be claimed and the purpose of each. For a significant event like that which occurred in May 2025, councils found that the process for applying for emergency funding was slow and convoluted.

Overall, support for standard Category B funding was reasonable however there was far too little available for Category C.

Councils indicated that there is an expectation that DRFA assessments be submitted before impacts are fully known or floodwaters have receded. This creates additional burden for councils, as they are often required to provide the same data multiple times throughout the initial declaration process. Councils suggested a more effective and simplified approach could include appointing a dedicated resource to work with each LGA to assess council damages, reducing confusion about what can be claimed and ensuring appropriate confirmation of loss is obtained and provided to RA in a timely manner.

Councils also expressed concern that when the responsibility for managing the DRFA claims process transfers to RA in October, processes will again change leading to further delays and other negative impacts.

Case Study – MidCoast Council

MidCoast Council were the most impacted council during the NSW East Coast severe weather event beginning in May 2025, with MidCoast Council taking on and continuing to manage the enormous response and recovery effort arising from this event, spending over \$21 million. However, at the time of writing there remains approximately \$8 million in claimed funds that remain outstanding through the DRFA. Additionally, the processes for documenting eligibility for claims, agreeing on categories and competing claims have been identified as time-consuming and representing key barriers that are diverting staff from response and recovery efforts as well as creating significant financial stress for Council.

These experiences and barriers highlight limited progress in implementing key Colvin Review recommendations relevant to funding design and delivery, reiterating the importance of accelerating implementation of recommendations 36-40.

DRFA exclusions unfairly impacting councils

While the DRFA is a much-needed mechanism for accessing funding in response to disasters, the guidelines exclude or restrict certain assets and activities, limiting critical recovery efforts. Examples include:

- Betterment funding – councils noted difficulties claiming betterment funding through Category B
- Spontaneous volunteer management and coordination – DRFA guidelines do not allow recovery of costs incurred through spontaneous volunteer management and coordination, including through third parties such as Disaster Relief Australia.
- Water infrastructure – see following case study.

Case study – Water infrastructure in Disaster Recovery Funding, Upper Hunter Shire Council

Upper Hunter Shire Council has called on the NSW Government to urgently review disaster recovery funding rules, following significant damage to local water infrastructure caused by the storm event of 3 August 2025, which was subsequently declared a natural disaster.

The storm left Council with close to \$500,000 in costs to repair essential water infrastructure. Despite the scale of the impact, water and sewer assets are currently ineligible for cost recovery under natural disaster declarations, due to their classification as “commercial activities.”

The situation highlights an inequitable and short-sighted approach that unfairly burdens small rural councils and communities. The reality is that water infrastructure are vital public assets and every bit as essential as roads, bridges, or community facilities – assets which do qualify for recovery funding. Excluding water and sewer services from disaster recovery frameworks places an unreasonable strain on rural councils. It represents targeted cost-shifting from State to Local Government where regional councils are most affected, leaving communities to carry the financial burden for damage caused by events outside of their control.

Water and sewer services are fundamental to public health, safety, and liveability. With natural disasters becoming more frequent and severe, the lack of financial support risks undermining the ability of councils to maintain these essential services.

Revising the existing criteria to ensure water and sewer assets are included in disaster recovery funding needs to be undertaken, as regional communities cannot, and should not, be expected to shoulder these costs alone.

Conclusion

The May 2025 severe weather events across the Hunter Region highlighted once again both the essential role of councils in disaster response and recovery, and the critical need for strong, consistent, and collaborative leadership from the NSW Reconstruction Authority. While there were examples of effective support, such as in the operation of Recovery Centres and facilitation of agency resources, overall, councils reported significant inconsistencies in RA’s role, communication, and processes. This created confusion for communities, uncertainty for councils, and inequity across LGAs.

To be effective, disaster recovery and resilience frameworks must recognise councils as equal partners and draw on their local knowledge, capacity, and established community trust. The challenges identified in this submission, including unclear leadership, inconsistent application of




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responsibilities, fragmented communication, and limitations in funding frameworks, must be addressed if future disaster responses are to deliver fair, timely, and sustainable outcomes.

The Hunter JO and its Member Councils are committed to working with the NSW Reconstruction Authority, the NSW Government, and the Commonwealth to strengthen disaster preparedness, recovery, and adaptation. By embedding co-designed, place-based approaches and ensuring equitable access to resources and support, together we can build greater resilience for communities across the Hunter and beyond.



**Hunter Joint Organisation
Annual Performance Statement
July 2024 - June 2025**



This document reports on the Hunter Joint Organisation's (Hunter JO's) performance and strategic progress through the 2024/25 Financial Year.

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

Acknowledgment of Country

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

If you have any feedback or questions contact us at admin@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au or at www.hunterjo.nsw.gov.au
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Front page image taken in Dungog LGA.

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Section One

About the Hunter JO

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A Message from the Chair

“2024-25 was one of significant change and new direction for the Hunter JO”

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

2024-25 was one of significant change and new direction for the Hunter JO, including welcoming six new Mayors to our Board following the local government elections and implementing a new leadership and organisational model for the organisation. I was honoured to again be elected as Chair and have enjoyed working with our new Board to reevaluate and redetermine our shared priorities for the region.

Our new organisational model seeks to enhance our focus on advocacy, while maintaining the valuable collaborative and capacity building work for which the Hunter JO has long been known. This approach includes:

- Our Board of Mayors being the spokespersons for the Hunter JO, uniting in their approach and messaging on key shared regional priorities.
- Focusing staff resources and capacity within the Hunter JO team toward advocacy, communications and intergovernmental engagement.
- Moving our Board meetings around the region, and taking a more participatory workshop-based approach to delivery to build understanding and support for each other's opportunities and challenges.



Outcomes from this new approach are proving positive, reflected in:

- Direct political engagements with Ministers, Shadow Ministers and Members of Parliament having more than tripled over the past year
- Our media activity has increased more than fourfold
- Regional submissions to State and Federal Government policy have also risen significantly, reflecting the strengthened collective voice of our ten councils in providing coordinated feedback to NSW and Federal Government departments.

These efforts throughout the year have laid strong foundations for continuing advocacy and collaboration over the years to come, and have moved us closer to our ambition for the Hunter JO to be a powerful and effective collective voice for local communities across our region.

Sue Moore
Chair - Hunter Joint Organisation
Mayor - Singleton Council

“This has seen a further strengthening in leadership and direction for our organisation, positioning us to better represent and advocate for our region’s shared interests”

The past year has been one of both renewal and action for the Hunter JO, culminating in the endorsement of a new Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2035 which establishes a clear shared vision by our Board of ten Mayors for the Hunter’s future.

With six new Mayors elected across the region, the year included a strong focus on inducting new Mayors into the role and processes of the Hunter JO, to building effective working relationships, and to identifying and confirming the Board’s shared priorities for collective action through the Hunter JO. This has seen a further strengthening in leadership and direction for our organisation, positioning us to better represent and advocate for our region’s shared interests.

In line with our new organisational model and focus, 2024-25 saw a marked rise in advocacy activities by the Hunter JO, focused on the new Board’s shared priorities and guided by more strategic advocacy planning. This work saw Mayoral delegations travelling to Canberra on two occasions, along with several visits to NSW Parliament House to engage with Ministers, Shadow Ministers and Members of Parliament around key regional issues and opportunities. This work is significantly increasing the visibility and impact of our regional voice.



Amidst the broader change in focus and leadership, our team continued to collaborate with member councils and regional partners to deliver a suite of capacity building programs. Highlights from this grant funded work include strengthening council and community disaster preparedness, supporting councils deliver their net zero targets, enhancing collective capacity to deter illegal dumping, and cementing the Hunter’s reputation as a national leader in progressing circular economy thinking and practice.

These achievements reflect the collective commitment and collaboration of our Mayors, General Managers, Hunter JO staff, council teams, and regional partners, whose shared effort continues to drive meaningful outcomes for the Hunter region and its future.

Steve Wilson
Hunter JO Executive Officer

A Message
from the
Executive
Officer

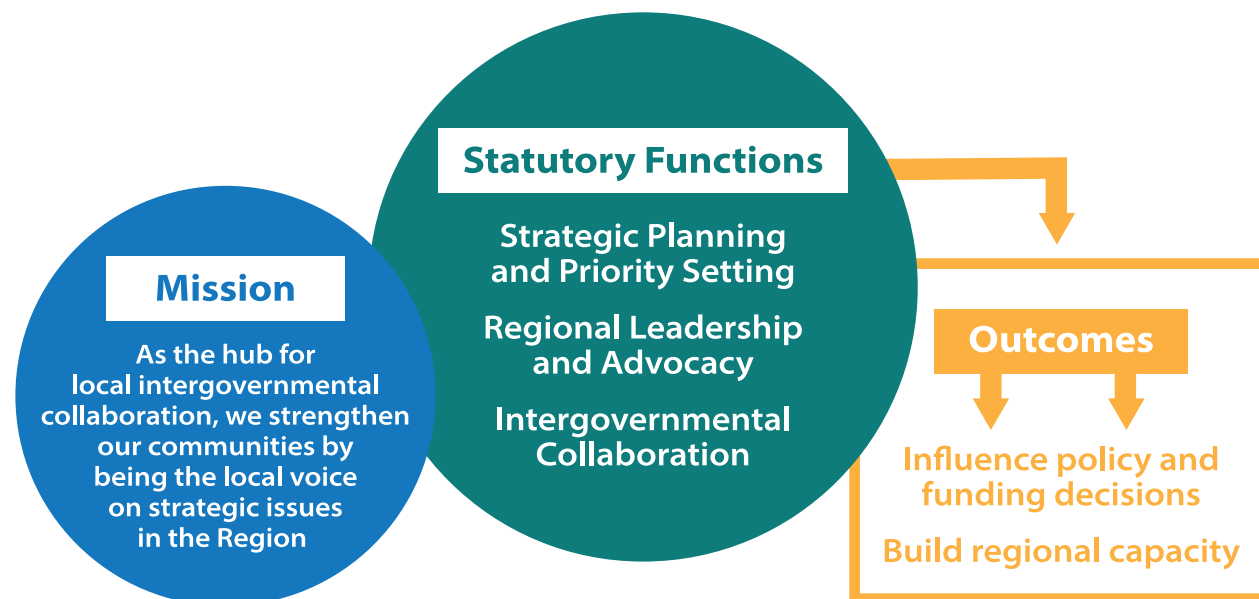
Who are we

The Hunter Joint Organisation is a collaborative body that brings together the ten councils in the region to provide a united and local voice for our communities. As the hub for local intergovernmental collaboration, our statutory mandate includes:

- identifying key regional strategic priorities
- advocating for these priorities, and;
- building collaborations around these priorities with other levels of government, industry and community.

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

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

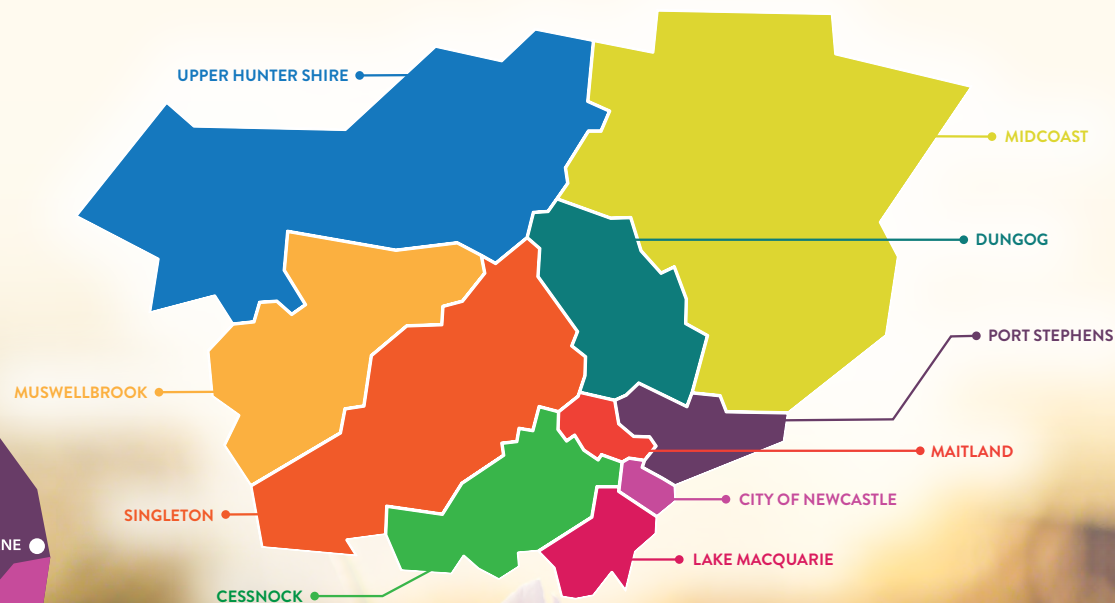


Our Members





Hunter Region
32,870 km²

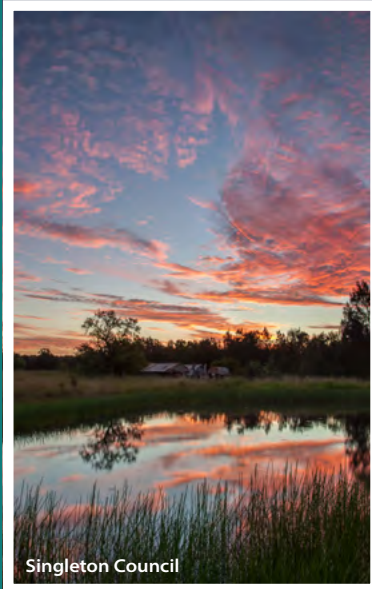
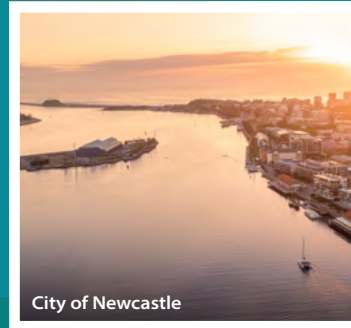


Our vision

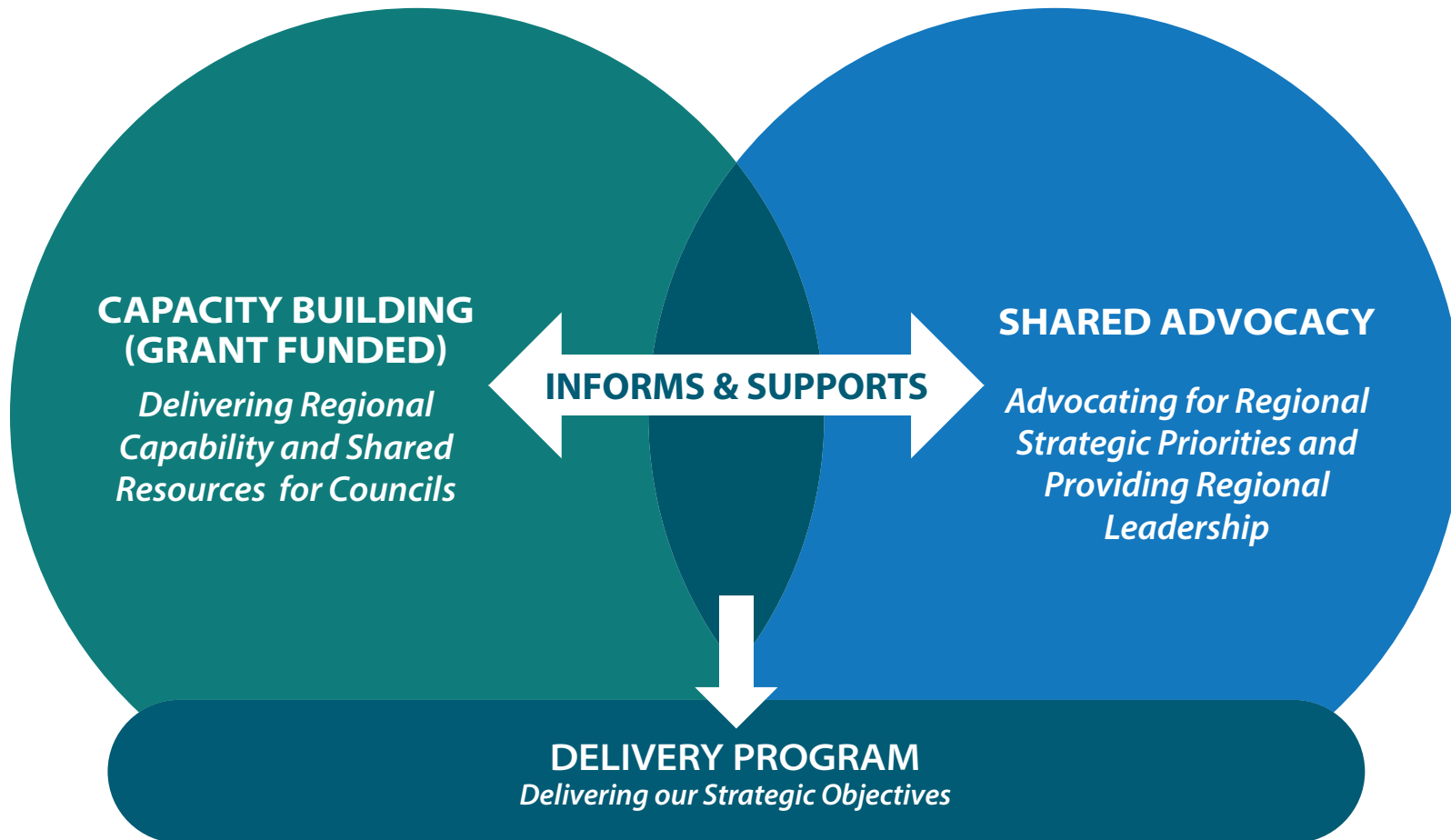
We are a region that:

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

Our Region



How we deliver



Hunter JO Board of Mayors

(Voting Members)



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
(Deputy Chair)



Mayor Sue Moore
Singleton Council
(Chair)



Mayor Maurice Collison
Upper Hunter Shire Council



Ken Liddell
GM Cessnock City Council



Gareth Curtis
GM Dungog Shire Council



Morven Cameron
CEO Lake Macquarie City Council
(GMAC Chair)



Jeff Smith
GM Maitland City Council



Adrian Panuccio
GM MidCoast Council



Derek Finnigan
GM Muswellbrook Shire Council



Jeremy Bath
CEO City of Newcastle



Tim Crosdale
GM Port Stephens Council



Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr
GM Singleton Council



Greg McDonald
GM Upper Hunter Shire Council

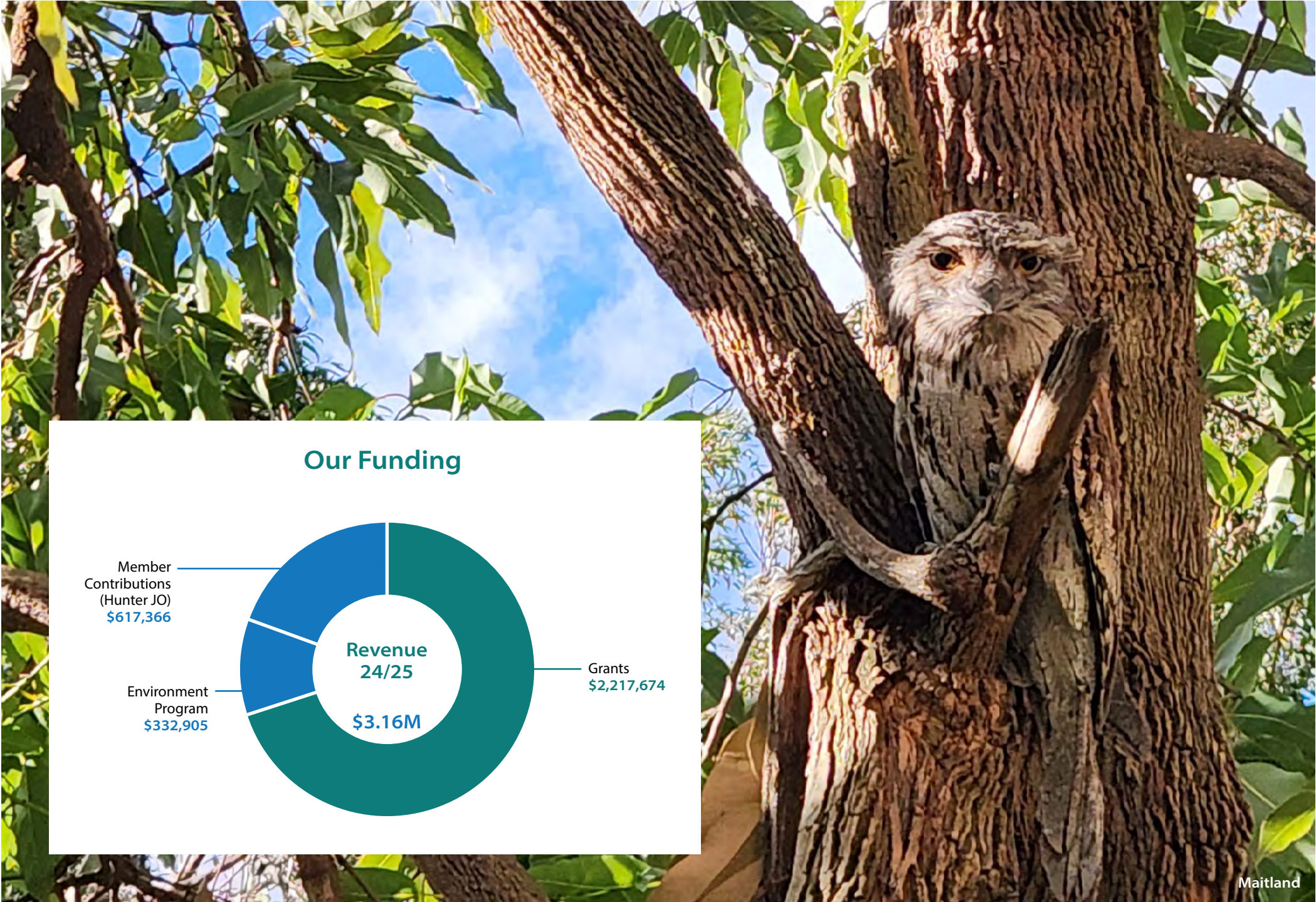


Shaun O'Sullivan
Director North
Regional Coordination
Premiers Department NSW

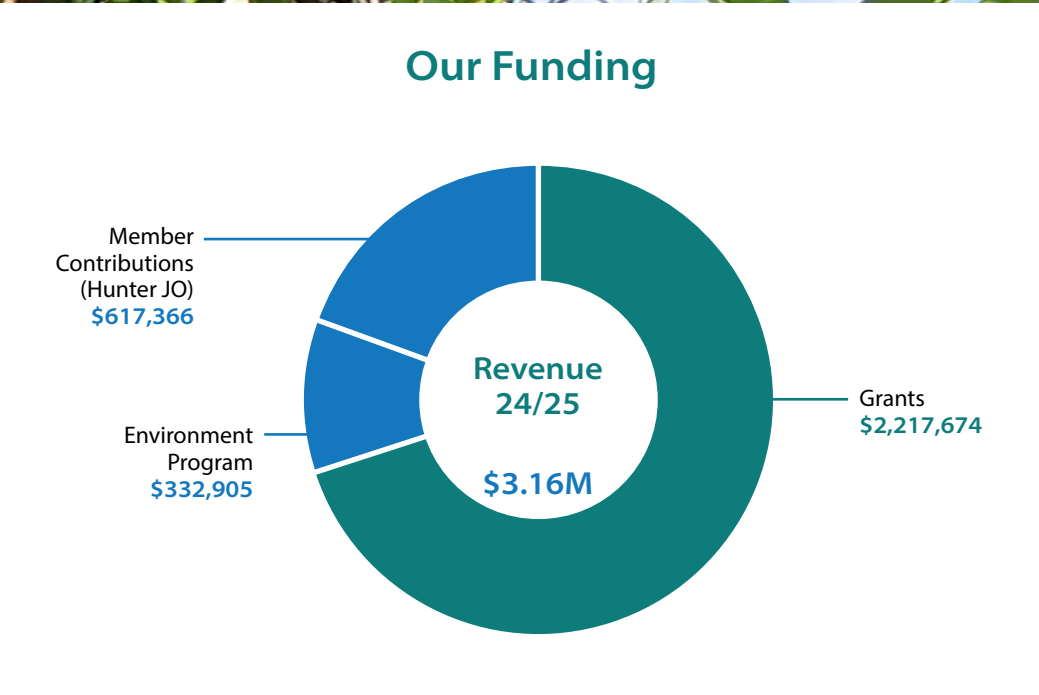


Virginia Errington
Council Engagement Manager
NSW Office of Local
Government

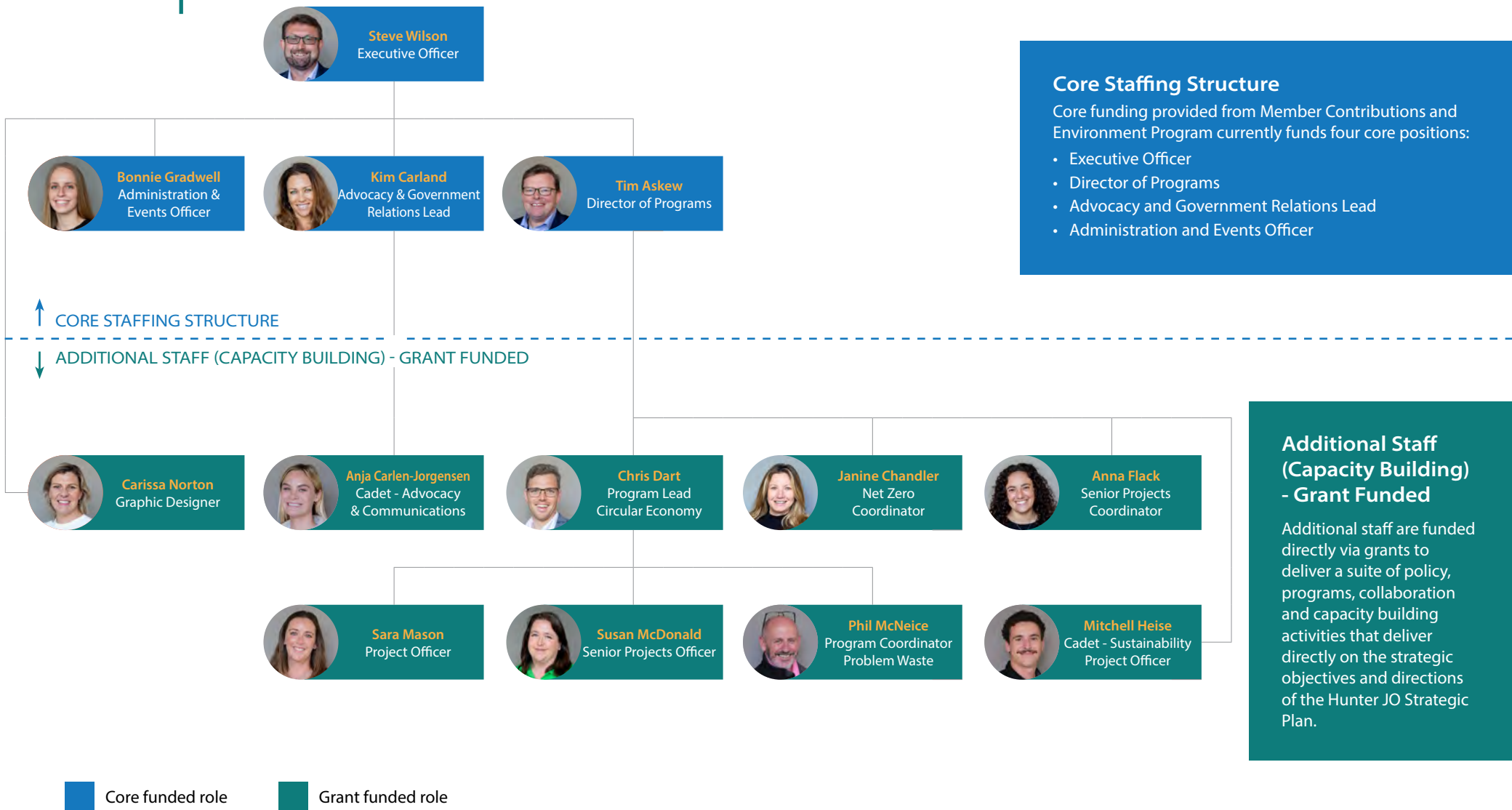
Hunter JO Board (Non-voting Members) and General Managers Advisory Committee (GMAC)



Our Funding



Hunter JO Team





Upper Hunter

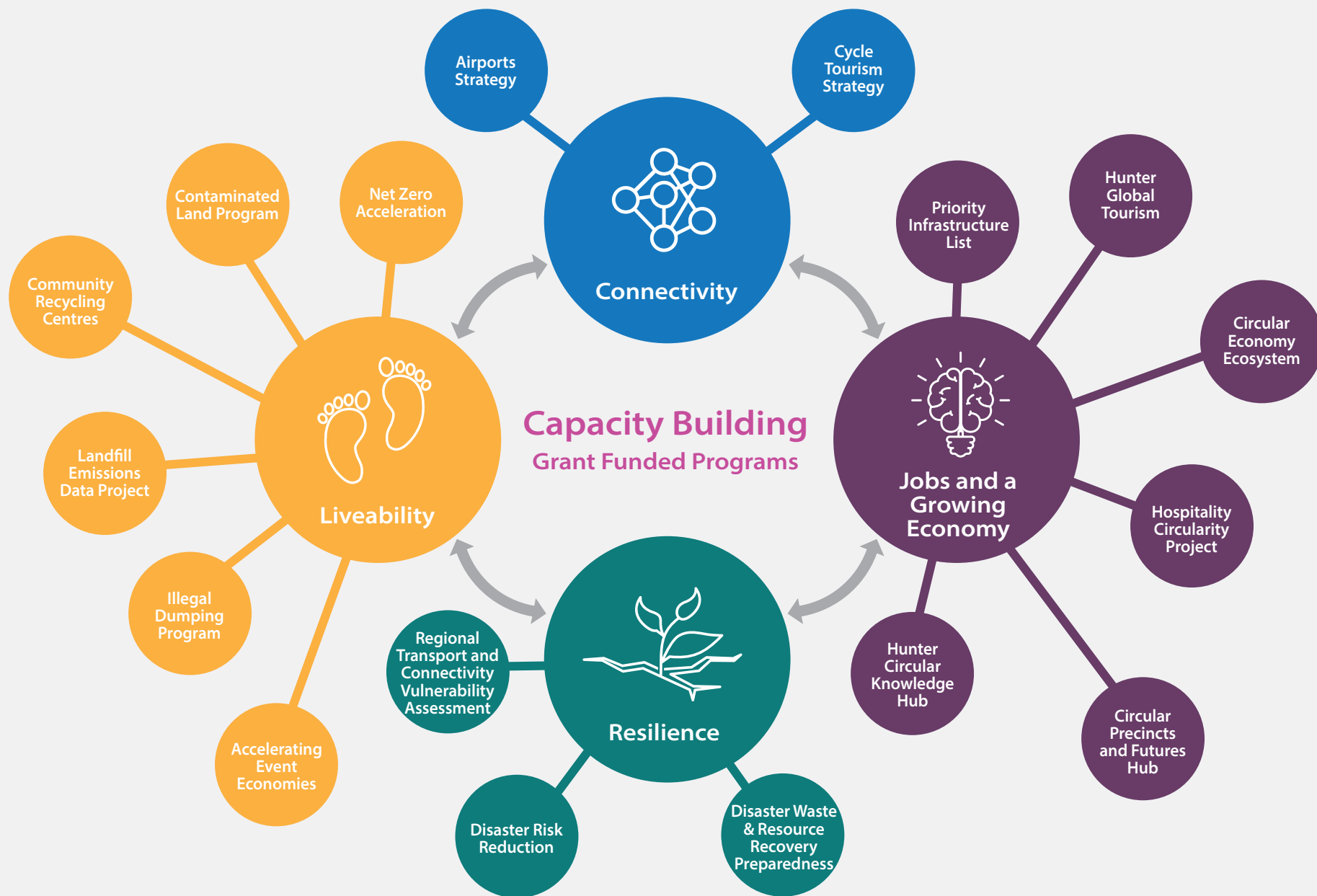
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Valued at \$2.2M in 2024 - 2025



Port Stephens

Section Three

Our Delivery

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Connectivity

Strategic Objectives

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

Program

Purpose and Outcome

Airports Strategy (Freight and Logistics)

To develop strategy and business case for airfreight and passenger infrastructure and connectivity logistics for the region to leverage the new international terminal investment into Newcastle Airport.

This project funded by the Regional NSW Business Case and Strategy Development Fund project was completed. Since then, we have been working in partnership with Newcastle Airport in using the evidence and results from the Business Case to advocate for catalytic investment into constructing an airfreight precinct to stimulate business growth across the region and assist in attracting international routes.

Cycle Tourism Strategy (Shiraz to Shore)

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

This project funded by the Regional NSW Business Case and Strategy Development Fund project was completed. Since then, we have been advocating for funding to deliver the 100km connected cycleway from the Hunter Valley to the shores of Newcastle and Lake Macquarie.

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





Connectivity

Political Engagements

- **Mikaela Wangmann, Tourism Advisor to Hon Don Farrell, Minister for Trade and Tourism**
6 February
Focus: Freight Precinct for Newcastle Airport.
- **Hunter Federal Labor Caucus**
6 February 2025
Focus: Freight Precinct for Newcastle Airport.
- **Hon Kristy McBain - Minister for Regional Development and Local Government and Territories**
6 February 2025
Focus: Road funding, Freight Precinct for Newcastle Airport.
- **Hon Catherine King – Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**
5 February 2025
Focus: Roads, Freight Precinct for Newcastle Airport.
- **Molly Hughes, Senior Advisor to the Hon Peter Dutton, Leader of the Opposition**
5 February 2025
Focus: Freight Precinct for Newcastle Airport.
- **Phoebe Drake, Senior Policy Advisor to the Hon Anthony Albanese, Prime Minister**
5 February 2025
Focus: Freight Precinct for Newcastle Airport.
- **Senior Advisor to the Hon John Graham, NSW Tourism Minister, Angud Chawla.**
10 December 2024
Focus: Freight Precinct for Newcastle Airport.
- **Hon Yasmin Catley, MP, Minister for the Hunter, and the NSW Hunter Labor Caucus**
21 November 2024
Focus: Freight Precinct for Newcastle Airport.
- **Hon Jenny Aitchison MP, Minister for Regional Transport and Roads and Member for Maitland**
13 November 2024
Focus: Hunter Global Freight Precinct Business Case outcomes.
- **Hon Anoulack Chanthivong, Minister Industry and Trade**
30 October 2024
Focus: Hunter Global Freight Business Case outcomes.
- **Ms Sharon Claydon, MP for Newcastle**
4 September 2024
Focus: Hunter Global Freight and Hunter Cycle Tourism Plan (Shiraz to Shore) Business Case outcomes.



- **Hon Pat Conroy, MP Shortland, Minister for Defence Industry, Minister for International Development and the Pacific**

16 August 2024

Focus: Hunter Global Freight and Hunter Cycle Tourism Plan (Shiraz to Shore) Business Case outcomes.

- **Hon Catherine King, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

5 July 2024

Focus: Business Case outcomes for Hunter Global Freight and Hunter Cycle Tourism Plan (Shiraz to Shore).

- **Hon Don Farrell, Minister for Tourism and Trade**

3 July 2024

Focus: Business Case outcomes for Hunter Global Freight and Hunter Cycle Tourism Plan (Shiraz to Shore).

- **Hon Carol Brown, Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Transport**

2 July 2024

Focus: Shiraz to Shore Business Case outcomes.



Submissions

- **Hunter Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan**

28 February 2025

Focus: Regional scale input to the draft Hunter Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan, drawing on advice of the member councils.

- **NSW Transport Freight Policy Reform Program**

23 October 2024

Focus: Recommendations for building the international freight capacity and capability of the Hunter Region's primary international gateways, the Port of Newcastle and Newcastle Airport.

- **Federal Net Zero Transport and Infrastructure Roadmap**

6 August 2024

Focus: Recommendations to inform Federal Government transport programs implemented by the Net Zero Economy Agency.



Strategic Engagements

- **Newcastle Airport**

10 April and 20 June 2025

Focus: Update to Hunter JO Board on the International terminal, advocacy for air freight precincts and Astra Aerolab economic development opportunities.

- **Transport for NSW**

19 February 2025

Focus: Invite only session for Mayors and GMs to inform stakeholder feedback to the draft Hunter Strategic Regional Integrated Transport Plan.

11 December 2024

Focus: Presentation to Mayors and GMs on the Hunter Strategic Transport Integrated Regional Plan prior to public exhibition on Monday 16th December.

- **Tourism Australia and Destination NSW**

26 November 2024

Focus: Alongside our project partners Destination Sydney and Surrounds North and Newcastle Airport, we met with senior representatives from Tourism Australia and Destination NSW to:

- Communicate the outcomes and recommendations of the Hunter Global Tourism Business Case
- Explore avenues and opportunities for further developing and integrating shared Hunter region marketing collateral (trade focused) into the marketing systems and processes of these national and state tourism bodies.

- **Hunter Central Coast Regional Development Team, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.**

12 November 2024

Focus: Communicating outcomes and recommendations from the Hunter Global Tourism, Air Freight and Shiraz to Shore Business Cases.

- **High Speed Rail Authority**

16 August 2024 and 11 September 2024

Focus: Attended consultation workshops where feedback and insights were provided into potential alignment, economic and land use opportunities arising from high-speed rail development.

- **Hunter Valley Wine Tourism Association**

14 August 2024

Focus: Communicating outcomes and recommendations from the Hunter Global Tourism and Shiraz to Shore Business Cases.





Media

- **Newcastle Airport Air Freight**
3 June 2025
Coverage: ABC Radio.
- **Newcastle Airport Tour**
12 May 2025
Coverage: NBN News.
- **Hunter Mayors in Canberra Advocating for priorities including jobs, roads, housing and reuse mining lands**
February 2025
Coverage: Newcastle Herald and NBN.
- **Newcastle Airport terminal expansion Hunter JO tour - "Construction Milestone for Newcastle Airport International Terminal"**
8 August 2024
Focus: Hunter JO Board tour of the Airport upgrade
Coverage: NBN, Newcastle Herald and ABC Radio.
- **Hunter Cycle Tourism Plan - "Shiraz to Shore: \$89m plan for 100km cycle trail linking wineries to beach"**
2 August 2024
Focus: Outcomes and recommendations from Hunter Cycle Tourism (Shiraz to Shore) Business Case.
Coverage: NBN, Newcastle Herald and ABC Radio.



Resilience

Strategic Objectives

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

Program

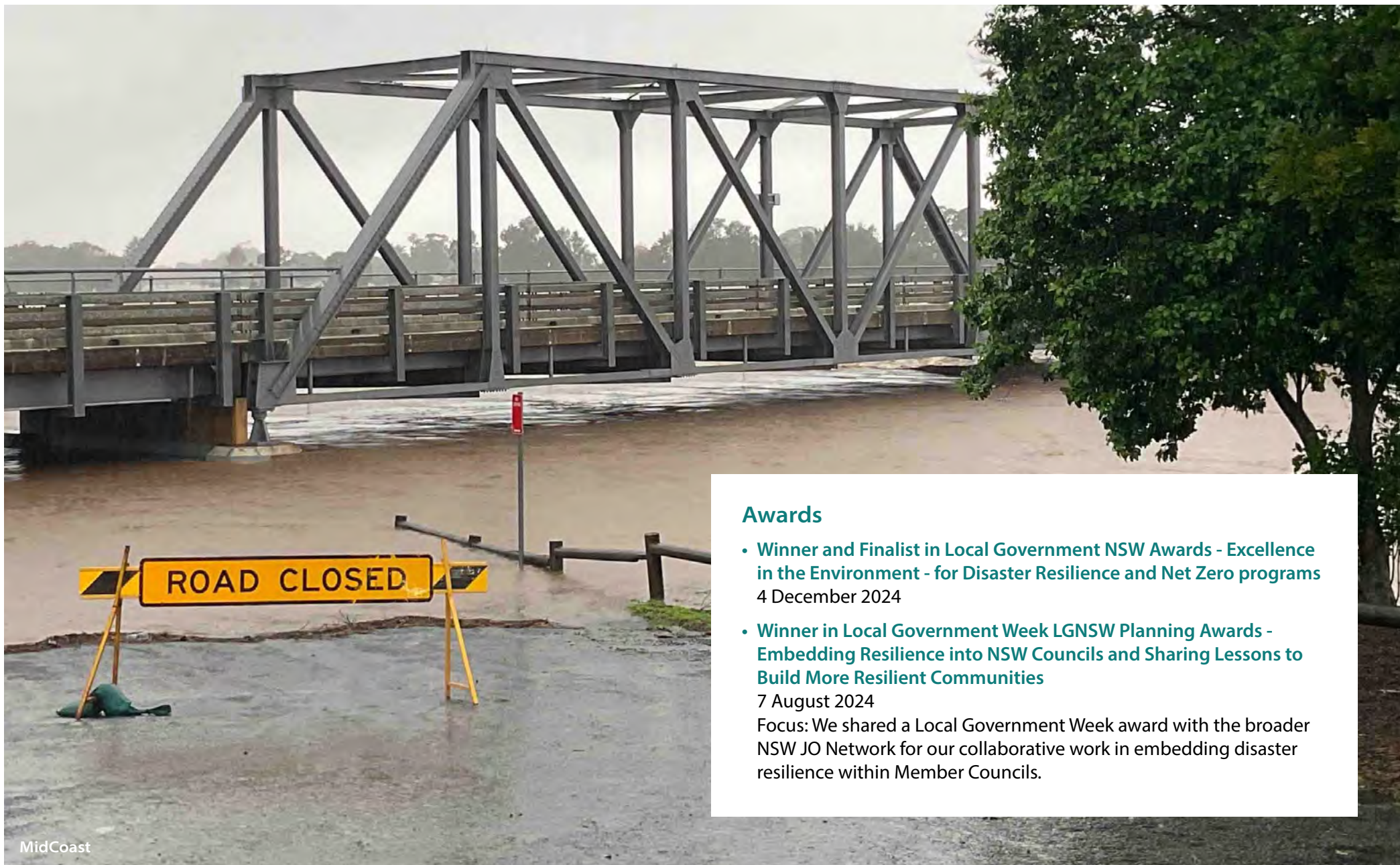
Purpose and Outcome

Disaster Resilience Capacity Building for the Hunter and Central Coast

Funded under the National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA) Disaster Ready Fund, this 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 of a regional Disaster Adaptation Plan in collaboration with the NSW Reconstruction Authority, embedding resilience into councils' IP&R framework, facilitating a regional resilience network and supporting community engagement.



“We are prepared for change and ready to withst and, adapt and recover from natural and human induced risks”



MidCoast

Awards

- **Winner and Finalist in Local Government NSW Awards - Excellence in the Environment - for Disaster Resilience and Net Zero programs**
4 December 2024
- **Winner in Local Government Week LGNSW Planning Awards - Embedding Resilience into NSW Councils and Sharing Lessons to Build More Resilient Communities**
7 August 2024
Focus: We shared a Local Government Week award with the broader NSW JO Network for our collaborative work in embedding disaster resilience within Member Councils.



Resilience

Strategic Engagements

- **NSW Rural and Regional Summit**

8 May 2025

Focus: Challenges facing NSW rural and regional communities, focusing on State and local governments success and challenges in dealing with disaster events.

- **Adapt NSW Forum**

29 and 30 October 2024

Focus: Hunter JO Resilience team and council representatives attended the NSW Government's AdaptNSW Forum, exploring themes of adaptation and building resilience to climate change impacts.

- **NSW Reconstruction Authority**

8 July 2024

Focus: Hunter JO, member councils and key stakeholders joined the NSW Reconstruction Authority for a workshop to better understand the purpose of Disaster Adaptation Plans (DAPs) Guidelines, our role in and the indicative process for developing a DAP. It was also an opportunity to provide local insights and feedback to influence the final DAP Guidelines.



Political Engagements

- **Senator Perin Davey, Shadow Minister for Emergency Management**

2 July 2024

Focus: A more sustainable and strategic approach to local and regional recovery and resilience planning and funding aligned with councils' four-year statutory planning time frames.



MidCoast

Submissions

- **Independent Review of Commonwealth Disaster Funding**

The Final report of the Commonwealth Government's Independent "Colvin Review" into Disaster Funding was released on 25th October. Key recommendations (including a direct extract) are consistent with those included in Hunter JO's 2023 regional submission, including;

- ensuring adequate investment, support and funding for local government to respond to natural disaster events (R5)
- prioritisation of data coordination across all levels of government (R9)
- an evidence-informed, risk-based approach to disaster funding (R24)
- streamlining of administrative arrangements (R33)
- increased funding allocated to disaster risk reduction and resilience (R42).

- **Draft Disaster Adaptation Guidelines**

22 August 2024

Focus: Hunter JO's submission expressed support for a regional approach to developing Disaster Adaptation Plans, but also communicated concerns on resource implications of the process for Councils and JO's.



Jobs and a Growing Economy

Strategic Objectives

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

Program	Purpose and Outcome
Economic Evolution - Mining Land Reuse / Redevelopment	<p>To seek support and investment from State and Federal Government to look at reusing the existing infrastructure on mining lands for economic development opportunities and streamlining the process for rezoning the land to incentivise new businesses.</p> <p>Our focus has included meeting with State and Federal Ministers and Members of Parliament to raise awareness and to advocate for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy and planning reform to facilitate the reuse of mining lands to create new employment opportunities across the region.• Provision of funds to directly support the Hunter JO, Lake Macquarie, Muswellbrook and Singleton Councils to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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• 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.
Hunter Global Tourism	<p>To identify the international tourism opportunities of the Hunter region in preparation of the Newcastle Airport international upgrade.</p> <p>This project funded by the Regional NSW Business Case and Strategy Development Fund project has been completed. Since then, we have been using the evidence and results from the Business Case to advocate for catalytic investment into delivering the marketing and business training activities to increase international tourism across the Hunter region.</p>

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

Program	Purpose and Outcome
Regional Waste and Circular Economy Coordination	<p>To build circular economy knowledge through education, data sharing and capacity building opportunities for Hunter JO member councils and Central Coast Council.</p> <p>This program continued to support a number of circular economy ecosystems initiatives including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating fortnightly Circular Economy Facilitators Group meetings • Delivering quarterly Hunter JO Regional Waste Managers Network meetings • Participating in quarterly metro and regional waste group meetings • Facilitating bi-monthly meetings of the Sustainability Educators Group • Contributing to the Hunter IF Action Group, who collaboratively work to develop the Hunter region's circular economy • Maintaining the Hunter Circular website, including compiling and updating new case studies for the site. • Coordinating and preparing submissions to consultation opportunities on behalf of member councils. • Facilitating knowledge sharing, information exchange, and collaboration between councils and other levels of government.
Circular Economy Precincts and Futures Hub	<p>To advocate for the funding of the Circular Economy Futures Hub to help facilitate the development of a circular economy in the Hunter Region.</p> <p>Over the past 12-months, the focus of this initiative has been to progress the implementation actions from the Circular Economy Precincts and Futures Hub Business Case, completed in 2024. This has involved engaging stakeholders and familiarising all levels of government with the results of the business case and requesting core funding to realise the business case benefits.</p> <p>The Hunter JO hosted the “Hunter’s Circular Economy and Net Zero Future: Making it Happen” event on 23 May 2025 alongside Beyond Zero Emissions and GHD. The objective was to co-design practical solutions, governance models, and partnerships that could drive a regional transition to a circular economy and net zero future. The event aimed to lay the groundwork for a regional alliance, shape the design of a “Futures Hub,” and define clear steps for collaboration and implementation towards decarbonisation and circular economy outcomes for local industry.</p> <p>The Hunter JO is now working on a funding proposal to the Australian Government’s Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program (rPPP) to establish the renamed New Economy Precincts Project.</p>



Jobs and a Growing Economy

Program	Purpose and Outcome
Hunter Circular Knowledge Hub	<p>To create a digital circular knowledge hub for council staff and community to address the information accessibility and knowledge barriers that prevail and frustrate uptake of circular services and recovery pathways in the region.</p> <p>The project is divided into two streams with their own unique objectives: Stream A – Council Hub and Stream B - Community Hub.</p> <p>Stream A - Council Hub is further broken down into two distinct sub-projects;</p> <p>1. Research - on key material streams, combined with co-design processes with industry, enabling councils to collaboratively evaluate new recovery pathways and off-takers. From this research, an immediate opportunity to increase circular outcomes of plastic waste was identified and a Circular Plastics Pilot initiated with Upper Hunter, Singleton, Cessnock, Maitland and Newcastle Councils and Resourceful Living, a recycled plastic manufacturer located In Kurri. The pilot commenced In September with councils collecting HDPE Type 2 plastics and transferring them to Resourceful Living to be recycled and made into new items.</p> <p>2. Council Portal - a new council-only access digital portal has been developed and is hosted on the Hunter Circular website. The portal aims to support the implementation of circularity best practises in council-managed waste streams and promote knowledge sharing between councils. A webinar demo for council staff provided an overview and demonstrated how to navigate the portal and outline how it can be leveraged to support their work.</p> <p>Stream B - Community Hub 'ReUse Hunter'</p> <p>The development of a digital map tool designed to encourage the uptake of sharing, hiring, reuse and repair behaviours by connecting community members with circular solutions provided by businesses (B2C) and councils (C2C). The outcome of this project, ReUse Hunter, is hosted on the Hunter Circular website.</p> <p>Since launching ReUse Hunter in September, the Hunter Circular website has seen a dramatic increase in traffic, with views Increasing from 3,104 to 12,962 compared to the four month period prior to launch.</p>

Program

Purpose and Outcome

Circular Economy Procurement

To support Councils to prioritise recycled materials and circular economy services in their procurement systems and processes.

- Initial meetings held with Hunter councils to introduce the project and begin mapping council specification processes
- Working Group/champions re-established with representatives from Councils, University of Newcastle, MECLA and Circular Economy Living Lab (CELL)
- Collaborated with NSW DCCEEW Low Emissions Specification program working with three Hunter Councils (MidCoast, Lake Mac, and Newcastle) and NSW DCCEEW Supplier Directory
- Scanned and reviewed best practice circular procurement tools/practice in Australia
- Test product 1 selected - low carbon concrete (LCC). LCC specification developed leveraging NSW DCCEEW low carbon program resources promoted by MECLA.
- Continued engagement with councils and suppliers in the region to gain understanding of the barriers to the uptake of LCC as well as the opportunities and intervention points for circular procurement within councils.
- Use case for LCC developed
- Low Carbon Concrete (LCC) in the Hunter Event held where local councils and suppliers in the region were brought together to understand the availability of LCC for projects within the region and identify the opportunities, barriers, and challenges associated with the future use of LCC in the Hunter region.
- Twelve-week collaboration with University of Newcastle MBA students to make proposals and write a report for potential approaches by council to increase the uptake of low carbon concrete.
- Collaborating with NSW DCCEEW to codesign a Low Carbon Concrete Accelerator Framework (LOCCA) with Hunter councils. LOCCA will provide Hunter JO Councils with awareness, skills, and understanding across council staff about LCC and enable councils to take action. It will also support the pilot of LCC by councils in their LGA.

Hospitality Circularity Project

To engage hospitality SMEs across the region, to build their capacity to evaluate and adopt circular solutions for their business operations and supply chains, focusing on organics and single use items.

Funded by the NSW EPA's Bin Trim Networks program, this project focused on assisting hospitality businesses in the region to adopt waste reduction and circularity solutions, with a focus on food organics and single use item prevention. The program aims to build collaborative networks and partnerships amongst businesses and solution providers to support ongoing sustainability improvements.

Go Circular, the consultant delivering this project, has completed two rounds of Bin Trim assessments with 157 hospitality businesses across Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Singleton, Port Stephens, and Cessnock. These businesses have each been provided with action plans to help them reduce the amount of waste they generate and dispose of to landfill. Go Circular has also delivered several co-design workshops with participating business to identify waste reduction solutions.



Jobs and a Growing Economy

Political Engagements

- **Hon Greg Piper, NSW Member for Lake Macquarie**
5 June 2025
Focus: Raise urgency of mining land re-use, and investment into four pilot projects.
- **NSW Hunter Labor Caucus (Hon Yasmin Catley, NSW Minister for the Hunter, Hon Jodie Harrison, NSW Member for Charlestown and Tim Crakanthorp, NSW Member for Newcastle**
5 June 2025
Focus: Raise urgency of mining land re-use, and investment into four pilot projects.
- **Hon Paul Scully, NSW Minister for Planning and Public Places**
7 April 2025
Focus: Mining land redevelopment.
- **Hon Emily Suvaal**
12 March 2025
Focus: Detailed overview of the four pilot projects for post mining land use.
- **Mikaela Wangmann, Tourism Advisor to Hon Don Farrell, Minister for Trade and Tourism**
6 February 2025
Focus: Export Tourism and Freight.
- **Hon Barnaby Joyce (New England)**
6 February 2025
Focus: Post Mining Land Use.
- **Hunter Federal Labor Caucus**
6 February 2025
Focus: Post Mining Land Use, Export Tourism and Freight.
- **Hon Darren Chester - Shadow Minister for Regional Development and Local Government**
6 February 2025
Focus: Post Mining Land Use.
- **Hon David Littleproud - Leader of the Nationals and Senator Ross Cadell**
6 February 2025
Focus: Post Mining Land Use.
- **Hon Kristy McBain - Minister for Regional Development and Local Government and Territories**
6 February 2025
Focus: Post Mining Land Use, Export Tourism and Freight.
- **Hon Josh Wilson - Assistant Minister for Climate Change and Energy**
6 February 2025
Focus: Post Mining Land Use.
- **Holly Friedlander and Sarah Cantrill, Senior Policy Advisors to Hon Tim Ayres, Assistant Minister for Trade and Future Made in Australia.**
5 February 2025
Focus: Post Mining Land Use.
- **Georgia Tree and Laurence Coleman, Senior Policy Advisors to Hon Madelaine King, Minister for Resources**
5 February 2025
Focus: Post Mining Land Use.



- **Hon Catherine King – Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Gov**
5 February 2025
Focus: Housing, Export Tourism and Freight, Post Mining Land Use.
- **Molly Hughes, Senior Advisor to the Hon Peter Dutton, Leader of the Opposition**
5 February 2025
Focus: Post Mining Land Use, Export Tourism and Freight.
- **Phoebe Drake, Senior Policy Advisor to the Hon Anthony Albanese, Prime Minister**
5 February 2025
Focus: Post Mining Land Use, Export Tourism and Freight.
- **Senior Advisor to the Hon John Graham, Minister for Jobs and Tourism, Angud Chawla**
10 December 2024
Focus: Hunter Global Tourism Business Case outcomes.
- **Hon Yasmin Catley, Minister for the Hunter, along with the Hunter NSW Labor Caucus, and Angud Chawla - Policy Advisor to Hon John Graham, Minister for Jobs and Tourism**
21 November 2024
Focus: Confirming support from NSW Hunter Labor MPs for the Hunter

Global Tourism Business Cases, and opportunities for progressing their implementation in collaboration with both State and Federal Governments.

- **Ms Emily Suvaal MLC and Lizzie Butterworth, Policy Advisor to the NSW Minister for Jobs and Tourism, Hon John Graham**
13 November 2024
Focus: Hunter Global Tourism Business Case Outcomes.
- **Ms Sharon Claydon, MP for Newcastle**
4 September 2024
Focus: Hunter Global Tourism Business Case outcomes.
- **Hon Pat Conroy, MP Shortland, Minister for Defence Industry, Minister for International Development and the Pacific**
16 August 2024
Focus: Hunter Global Tourism Business Case outcomes.
- **Prime Minister's Office (Senior Advisors)**
17 July 2024
Focus: Economic evolution and the need to diversify our economy through various industries and the need to activate mining and industrial lands for economic opportunities.





Jobs and a Growing Economy

Political Engagements cont.

- **Hon Sussan Ley, Deputy Leader of the Opposition**
4 July 2024

Focus: Economic evolution and the need to diversify our economy through various industries and the need to activate mining and industrial lands for economic opportunities.

- **Hon Barnaby Joyce, Member for New England**
4 July 2024

Focus: Economic evolution and the need to diversify our economy through various industries and the need to activate mining and industrial lands for economic opportunities.

- **Hon Don Farrell, Minister for Tourism and Trade**
3 July 2024

Focus: Business Case outcomes for Hunter Global Tourism and Hunter Cycle Tourism Plan (Shiraz to Shore).

- **Hon Darren Chester, Shadow Minister for Regional Development and Local Government**
3 July 2024

Focus: Economic evolution and the need to diversify our economy through various industries and the need to activate mining and industrial lands for economic opportunities.

- **Hon Kristy McBain, Minister for Regional Development and Local Government**
3 July 2024

Focus: Economic evolution and the need to diversify our economy through various industries, and the need for more equitable grant funding allocation for roads.

- **Senator Susan McDonald, Shadow Minister for Resources**

3 July 2024

Focus: The activation of mining and industrial lands for economic opportunities.

- **Hon Jonathon Duniam, Shadow Minister Environment, Fisheries and Forestry**

3 July 2024

Focus: Economic evolution and the need to diversify our economy through various industries and the need to activate mining and industrial lands for economic opportunities.

- **Hon Chris Bowen, Minister for Climate Change and Energy**

3 July 2024

Focus: Economic evolution and the need to diversify our economy through various industries and the need to activate mining and industrial lands for economic opportunities.

- **Hon Madelaine King, Minister for Resources**
3 July 2024

Focus: The activation of mining and industrial lands for economic opportunities.

- **Federal Hunter Labor Caucus, Mr Dan Repacholi MP, Ms Meryl Swanson MP, Ms Sharon Claydon MP, Hon Pat Conroy MP**
3 July 2024

Focus: Business Case outcomes in tourism to leverage the Newcastle Airport upgrade.

- **Hon Peter Dutton, Leader of the Opposition**
2 July 2024

Focus: Economic evolution and the need to diversify our economy through various industries and the need to activate mining and industrial lands for economic opportunities.

- **Mr Ted O'Brien, Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Energy**

2 July 2024

Focus: Economic evolution and the need to diversify our economy through various industries and the need to activate mining and industrial lands for economic opportunities.

- **Hon David Littleproud, Shadow Minister Agriculture and Leader of the Nationals**
2 July 2024

Focus: Economic evolution and the need to diversify our economy through various industries and the need to activate mining and industrial lands for economic opportunities.





Submissions

- **Issues paper on the NSW Future Jobs and Investment Authority**
12 July 2024
Focus: Recommendations to inform the governance and activities of the proposed NSW Future Jobs and Investment Authority.
- **NSW Draft Waste and Circular Infrastructure Plan**
7 July 2025
Focus: Submission on the first chapter of the NSW EPA's Draft Waste and Circular Infrastructure Plan, aiming to address critical infrastructure shortfalls and build a more resilient circular economy. The first chapter was focussed on guiding urgent decisions and preventing a looming waste crisis in Greater Sydney.
- **NSW State Budget Submission**
17 December 2024
Focus: Identifying advocacy priorities to influence the NSW budget.
- **Australian Government Productivity Commission: Inquiry into Australia's Opportunities in the Circular Economy**
Date: 1 November 2024
Focus: The submission communicated the nature and recommendations arising from the considerable work undertaken by the Hunter JO and its partners in the Circular Economy space over recent years, with a view to encouraging the Productivity Commission to engage more directly with the Hunter JO during the next more detailed stages of the Inquiry.
- **Committee Hearing: Beneficial and productive post mining land use**
21 August 2024
Focus: Providing evidence to the Inquiry into post-mining land use on the Hunter JO submission.



Jobs and a Growing Economy

Strategic Engagements

- **Office of Local Government Victoria – Grants Commission**
16 June 2025
Focus: Learnings from Victoria on their Financial Assistance Grants (FAGs) review and recommendations to change their distribution model.
- **NSW Local Government Grants Commission**
11 June 2025
Focus: Overview of the Financial Assistance Grants (FAGs) methodology for distribution.
- **Ausgrid**
04 June 2025
Focus: Community Power Networks pilot projects.
- **Productivity Commission Roundtable on Place-Based Circular Economy Initiatives**
29 May 2025
Focus: How can government (at a federal, state and local level) better support, facilitate or broker business, community and other organisations to collaborate and coordinate on place-based circular economy initiatives.
- **CRC TIME (Cooperative Research Centre – Transformations in Mining Economies)**
27 May 2025
Focus: Meeting to explore opportunities with the CRC re post mining land use opportunities and initiatives in the Hunter.
- **Hunter's Circular Economy and Net Zero Future: Making it Happen**
23 May 2025
Focus: co-design practical solutions, governance models, and partnerships that could drive a regional transition to a circular economy and net zero future via a New Economy Futures Hub. Attended by local industry representatives and government agencies, including Port of Newcastle, AGL, Ampcontrol, NALG, NSW DCCEEW and EnergyCo.
- **Hunter New Energy Symposium**
21 and 22 May 2025
Focus: Bringing together industry, government and researchers to stimulate innovation, foster collaboration, and drive economic development to accelerate the growth of new energy.
- **Global Coal Transitions Workshop**
13 and 14 May 2025
Focus: Learnings from coal regions in transition across the world, including Germany, USA, India, South Africa and Poland.
- **Regional Leadership Executive (RLE) Energy Transition planning session**
6 May 2025
Focus: Agency brainstorming session to identify cross agency projects to facilitate and support the Hunter's energy transition.
- **Destination Sydney Surrounds North (DSSN)**
10 April 2025
Focus: Update to Hunter JO Board on the work underway by DSSN to bring cohesion under the Hunter brand for international trade audiences.
- **Productivity Commission of Australia**
8 April 2025
Focus: Discussion with Hunter Circular Economy Facilitators Group on the interim report released by the Productivity Commission on how to implement circular economy principles in Australia.
- **Business Renewables Centre Australia, Renewable Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) Bootcamp**
26 March 2025
Focus: Funded by EnergyCo and targeted at businesses and councils to share the basics of renewable energy procurement. The Hunter JO was invited to present on the Regional Councils NSW PPA that we jointly facilitated with the Mid North Coast JO for 13 councils across NSW.





- **Net Zero Economy Authority**

5 February 2025

Focus: Discussion of key challenges and opportunities for transforming the Hunter's economy with senior agency representatives.

- **Dr Iain Ross, Chair of Net Zero Economy Agency**

24 October 2024

Focus: Presentation from Net Zero Economy Agency to the Hunter JO Board providing information about the purpose and objectives of the new Agency.

- **Australian Circular Economy Forum 2024**

10 October 2024

Focus: Attended forum to learn more about the challenges and opportunities of embedding a circular economy, with Chair of Circular Economy Ministerial Advisory Group and former Victorian Deputy Premier, John Thwaites.

- **Beyond Zero Emissions - Delivering Australia's Energy Future**

19 September 2024

Focus: Participated in this event where Beyond

Zero Emissions reported on data and discussed the challenges and opportunities of delivering renewable energy projects and a changing workforce.

- **Australian Bio-Economy Conference**

11 September 2024

Focus: Presented the Hunter JO Circular Economy Precincts and Futures Hub business case recommendations and next steps.

- **Launch of Federal Government's Circular Economy Precincts Report (convened by Minister Plibersek)**

9 September 2024

Focus: Attended launch of the Ministerial Advisory Group's Circular Economy Precincts Report, involving Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Minister for Environment and Water; and Hon Kristy McBain MP, Minister for Regional Development and Local Government.

- **Future Made in Australia Industry Workshop (convened by Minister Ayres)**

6 September 2024

Focus: Attended Future Made in Australia Industry Workshop, involving Hon Tim Ayres MP, Assistant Minister for Trade; Hon Pat Conroy MP, Minister for Defence Industry and Capability; and Sharon Claydon, Member for Newcastle.

- **Circular Precincts Workshop (convened by Circular Australia Taskforce)**

16 August 2024

Focus: Circular Australia is the leading national body on the circular economy with strong links to Federal Government through the Circular Economy Ministerial Advisory Group. Circular Australia convened a specific workshop with national experts from across Australia to help review and develop the Hunter JO Circular Economy Precincts and Futures Hub project.





Jobs and a Growing Economy

Hunter JO Events

- **Low Carbon Concrete in the Hunter – Facilitated Discussion**

6 March 2025

Focus: The Hunter JO and NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water held a facilitated discussion between councils within the Hunter region and local suppliers to understand the availability of low carbon concrete for projects within the Hunter region and identify the opportunities, barriers,

and challenges associated with the future use of low carbon concrete in the Hunter region.

- **Regional Council Economic Development Forum**

28 Feb 2025

Focus: Meeting of Council Economic Development staff to share information and collaborate on local and regional economic development initiatives.

- **Regional Council Economic Development Forum**

26 July 2024

Focus: Outcomes and recommendations from Hunter Global Tourism Business Case and Events10 initiatives.



Media

- **Hunter Roundtable – NSW Future Jobs and Investment Authority**
19 June 2025
Focus: Commenting on the announcement of the establishment of the Future Jobs Investment Authority in response to the recommendations in the NSW Inquiry into the Beneficial and Productive Post Mining Land Use.
Coverage: ABC Radio.
- **Mining Mayors call for Action**
1 May 2025
Focus: Raising awareness of the extensive job losses across the Hunter region with the expected global downturn in coal demand and opportunities in post mining land use and re-using infrastructure.
Coverage: Coalface Newspaper.
- **Federal Government election commitment in mining land redevelopment**
30 April 2025
Focus: Labor makes \$5m pitch to repurpose old Hunter mining land across two pilot projects; in Muswellbrook and Lake Macquarie.
Coverage: Newcastle Herald.
- **NSW Government Inquiry Report released on Beneficial and Productive Post Mining Land Use**
14 April 2025
Focus: Acknowledging and thanking the NSW Government Standing Committee for releasing their Inquiry Report, outlining key recommendations supported by the Hunter JO.
Coverage: ABC Radio.
- **Post mining land use**
26 March 2025
Focus: Raising awareness of the opportunities in post mining land use and re-purposing infrastructure to create new employment opportunities.
Coverage: Newcastle Herald, NBN.
- **Job losses in the Hunter**
17 March 2025
Focus: Raising awareness of the extensive job losses across the Hunter region with the expected global downturn in coal demand.
Coverage: ABC Radio.
- **Hunter Mayors in Canberra Advocating for priorities including jobs, roads, housing and reuse mining lands**
5 Feb 2025
Focus: Delegation of Mayors meet with various Ministers ahead of the Federal election to advocate for our regional priorities.
Coverage: Newcastle Herald, NBN.
- **Hunter Circular - ReUse Hunter Community Map**
Date: 1 Nov 2024
Coverage: Social media launch of the ReUse Hunter web page - connecting the community to circular businesses who provide a service to repair, hire, donate, refurbish and buy second hand; within their own LGA and across the broader Hunter region.

- **Circular Economy procurement grant - “Councils score Circular Economy funding”**
22 August 2024
Focus: Announcement of EPA funding for Circular Economy Procurement Project. Launch included a site visit to mattress recycling facility at Redhead, attended by the Hon Yasmin Catley, Minister for the Hunter and Cr Kay Fraser, Mayor of Lake Macquarie.
Coverage: Newcastle Herald.





Strategic Objectives

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

Program

Purpose and Outcome

Regional Illegal Dumping Program

To support member councils manage and reduce the impacts of illegal dumping on local communities and the environment.

During the year this program continued to build momentum among the eleven participating councils in the program. Key achievements included:

- Delivery of an illegal dumping social media campaign.
- Establishment of a legal service desk to provide councils with support to investigate illegal dumping incidents and taking of regulatory actions where appropriate.
- Coordinating the attendance of council regulatory staff at the annual RIDstock Conference in Parramatta.
- Organising for the EPA to deliver training to council regulatory officers - Protection of the Environment Operations Act (POEO) Act and Statement Taking and Interviewing Suspects / Witnesses.
- Arranging for the Senior Ranger from Shoalhaven Council to provide peer-to-peer training to Singleton Council staff, and a presentation to the Regional Illegal Dumping (RID) Officers Forum.
- Facilitating training in the deployment of covert surveillance equipment including the legislative requirements that govern their use.
- Sourcing and provide equipment to councils, including signage, PPE, promotional / educational collateral , covert surveillance cameras and related consumables.

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

Program

Purpose and Outcome

Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration (JONZA) Program

To support member councils reduce their carbon emissions to achieve their part in the State's Net Zero target of 50 per cent reduction by 2030 and Net Zero by 2050.

With funding support provided through the NSW Government's Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration (JONZA) program, a staff member is employed within the Hunter JO who is dedicated to supporting member councils progress their net zero targets, and to provide a link between councils and other NSW government support mechanisms.

Key initiatives delivered during the year (including in collaboration with the broader JO network) included:

- Facilitating bi-monthly meetings of the Hunter Net Zero Network, a network for council staff working on emissions reduction.
- Completing the Regional Councils NSW Power Purchasing Agreement (PPA), a buyer's group of 13 councils across regional NSW (including four Hunter JO councils) to purchase renewable energy supply until 2030. The PPA will result in an estimated 185,000 tonnes of CO2-equivalent avoided, and combined savings of \$5.2M for the participating councils. The buyers group included Maitland, MidCoast, Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter Councils, who will collectively save over \$2M over the course of the agreement (compared to 2024 electricity costs) and be protected from future energy price fluctuations.
- Facilitated a trial of the Kinesis community emissions data platform for councils.
- Supported NSW DCCEEW with the roll out of the Carbon Compass emissions calculator, helping councils to measure their operational emissions.
- Organised the installation of a rooftop solar system and two EV chargers at the Hunter JO office.
- Provided support and advice to councils on the procurement of Small Market Electricity supply.
- Provided legal advice to councils on the leasing of council owned land and crown land for EV charging.





Program	Purpose and Outcome
Landfill Emissions Data Project	<p>To establish a landfill emission data management program for councils to improve understanding of baseline emissions.</p> <p>Hunter Joint Organisation partnered with the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) through the Sustainability Partnerships program to support NSW councils with landfill emissions measurement and reporting. This project was completed in March 2025.</p> <p>Deliverables included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Mastering Emissions with the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Scheme (NGER) Solid Waste Calculator” package, to help councils estimate their landfill emissions using best practice methodology.• Completing a National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Scheme (NGER) Solid Waste Calculator for ten council managed landfills.• Scenario modelling estimating the emissions reductions that could be achieved by implementing Food Organics Garden Organics (FOGO), landfill gas capture systems, and landfill closure at each of the ten landfills.• A data dashboard for councils to visualise and analyse the above data.• Six factsheets providing guidance on landfill emissions management for councils.• An Opportunities Report outlining the challenges and barriers councils face in the management of landfill emissions, and opportunities for the NSW EPA to provide assistance, support, and regulatory reform.
Community Recycling Centres (CRC) Education and Communication Plan	<p>To deliver a regionally coordinated approach to promoting community awareness of Community Recycling Centres (CRC’s).</p> <p>Promotions commenced in September with the key activities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Direct Mail Campaign – 160,647 CRC flyers were distributed to households across the Central Coast, MidCoast, Singleton, Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter. 2000 additional flyers were distributed to waste facilities across the Hunter and Central Coast.• Social Media Campaign – across the Small Acts Big Change platforms Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. There has been significant growth totalling a 4.6K% increase on Facebook and Instagram. Reach and engagement on both accounts has also improved with impressions increasing from 1,154 to 707,322 since November.• CRC Survey – inaugural digital survey trialled at CRC locations.• Radio Advertising – Upper Hunter on 2NM, three ads playing on rotation across all radio time slots (Breakfast, Morning, Afternoon, Drive BMAD) with a potential audience of 58,000 listeners. Lower Hunter on Triple M and HIT 106.9, dedicated ads to suit audience demographics also played across BMAD reaching over 293K target audience weekly.• Cinema Advertising – three different ads running across cinemas Event Glendale, Event Kotara, HOYTS Charlestown, HOYTS Green Hills, Reading Charlestown and Reading Maitland. Advertising includes dedicated battery recycling messaging. Advertising to reach guaranteed minimum of 100K cinema attendees over duration of campaign.

Political Engagements

- **Hon Clare O'Neil - Minister for Housing and Minister for Homelessness**
6 Feb 2025
Focus: Housing.
- **Hunter Federal Labor Caucus**
6 Feb 2025
Focus: Housing.
- **Hon Catherine King – Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**
5 Feb 2025
Focus: Housing.
- **Hon Michael Sukkar, Shadow Minister Housing**
4 July 2024
Focus: Enabling infrastructure for housing.
- **Hon Sussan Ley, Deputy Leader of the Opposition**
4 July 2024
Focus: Circular economy business case outcomes.
- **Hon Jonathon Duniam, Shadow Minister Environment, Fisheries and Forestry**
3 July 2024
Focus: Circular economy business case outcomes.
- **Hon Tim Ayres, Assistant Minister for Future Made in Australia**
2 July 2024
Focus: Circular economy business case outcomes.
- **Mr Ted O'Brien, Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Energy**
2 July 2024
Focus: Circular economy business case outcomes.





Strategic Engagements

- **UoN Built Environment Research Forum**
29 April 2025
Focus: Attended event and workshops driving housing development and policy reforms.
- **Hunter Central Coast Regional Leadership Executive Working Group – Housing and Homelessness**
29 April 2025
Focus: Exploring cross agency opportunities and approaches for addressing housing and homelessness.
- **Lake Macquarie Housing Forum**
3 April 2025
Focus: Participated in this forum bringing together industry, experts and government to identify barriers and discuss solutions.
- **Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (SSROC) Summit: Buying in. Buying Back?**
1 April 2025
Focus: Attended summit bringing together stakeholders in the emerging organics recycling industry. The summit examined the range of technologies and processes available, applications of recycling organics products and how to support markets for these products, and risks and barriers to the industry.
- **Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration (JONZA) face-to-face event**
18 and 19 March 2025
Focus: Hosted 7 NSW JOs and NSW Government Sustainable Councils team, collaborating to drive net zero and sustainability outcomes.
- **Hunter Climate and Investment Summit (convened by University of Newcastle)**
19 February 2025
Focus: Delivered presentation providing an overview of the Hunter's economic situation and opportunities in the Circular Economy.
- **Urban Development Institute of Australia**
3 March 2025
Focus: Sharing barriers and advocacy opportunities around the provision of housing (e.g. enabling infrastructure and biodiversity).
- **No Time to Waste Conference (presenting)**
30 and 31 October 2024
Focus: Presented outcomes on Hunter JO's Landfill Emissions partnership project with EPA to identify strategies to reduce emissions from council owned landfills.



- **Regional Illegal Dumping annual RIDstock 2024 Event**

29 and 30 October 2024

Focus: Attended the annual capacity-building event for illegal dumping enforcement officers.

- **UDIA NSW Housing Event**

12 September 2024

Focus: Attended event with UDIA and Department of Transport presenting on the challenges and opportunities of unlocking the region's major housing growth fronts.

- **Western Sydney Regional Councils Waste Managers**

14 August 2024

Focus: Sharing the Hunter's Regional Circular Economy Program with Western Sydney Councils.



Media

- **Outcomes of Meeting with Hon Paul Scully**

8 April 2025

Focus: Housing and the challenges councils face to fund the enabling infrastructure required for new housing developments.

Coverage: 2NUR FM.

- **Power Purchasing Agreement - Hunter councils save millions**

12 November 2024

Focus: Power Purchasing Agreement (PPA) finalised securing a renewable electricity supply and financial savings for Maitland, MidCoast, Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter Councils.

Coverage: NBN, ABC Newcastle, Newcastle Herald, Muswellbrook Chronicle, Hunter Valley News, Maitland Mercury, Manning Times, Council Magazine, Inside Local Government, Renewables Now, PV Magazine Australia, PV Tech, Port Stephens Examiner, New of the Area.



Hunter JO Events

- **Circular Economy and Net Zero Future**
23 May 2025
Focus: Workshop bringing together business leaders, innovators and government to shape collective action and practical next steps for developing an alliance to progress our region into the circular economy and net zero future.
- **Net Zero Economy Agency - Communications Workshop**
15 October 2024
Focus: Hunter JO organised a workshop with NZEA and council communication managers to improve the level of information being shared with our community on our net zero future.
- **Illegal Dumping Program**
17 and 18 September 2024
Focus: Shoalhaven City Council shared their illegal dumping expertise and approach with Hunter councils.



Submissions

- **NSW Energy from Waste Framework (EfW) Review**
2 May 2025
Focus: Response to the EPA's proposed changes to the EfW Framework, including the addition of Tomago as a permissible location for EfW developments.
- **Resource recovery innovation pathway**
24 April 2025
Focus: Providing recommendations on the NSW EPA's proposed innovation pathway aimed at supporting science-based technologies and processes that enhance resource recovery and helps achieve government waste diversion targets.
- **Resource Recovery Order and Exemption Framework**
24 April 2025
Focus: submission on the NSW EPA's updated guidelines on the resource recovery order and exemption framework including updated information on how to apply for an order and exemption, how applications are assessed and how decisions are made.
- **NSW Plastics: The Way Forward (Draft Discussion Paper for Consultation)**
4 November 2024
Focus: Providing general support for the proposed measures identified in the EPA discussion paper, but further recommending:
 - A more holistic circular economy approach for removing problematic plastic items from the marketplace to reduce items being littered or deposited as waste in landfill facilities.
- The return of funds collected through the NSW Waste Levy to support local and regional local government waste management and circular economy initiatives that would contribute to reducing plastic pollution.
- **NSW Waste levy review**
1 August 2024
Focus: Recommendations to reform the design and operation of the NSW Waste Levy to better support Councils and Industry to take up circular economy opportunities.
- **Food and Garden Organics Mandates Proposal Paper**
22 July 2024
Focus: Recommending waste levy revenue be utilised to support FOGO mandated implementation.
- **Review of the NSW Waste Levy: Issues Paper**
25 July 2024
Focus: Recommending a greater portion of the waste levy revenue be provided to local government to implement waste and circular economy initiatives.



Section Four

Financial and Statutory Statements

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Statutory Statements

Issues raised by Anti-Slavery Commissioner

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

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

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

Overseas travel

Nil.

Expenses and provision of facilities to Board Members

Nil.

Details of contracts awarded (exceeding \$150,000)

During 2024/25 Arrow Collaborative Services provided administration support services to the Hunter JO via a Service Level Agreement between the two entities. Total value of services was \$294,996.

Summary of amounts incurred in relation to legal proceedings

Nil.

Financial assistance to others

Nil.

External bodies exercising functions delegated by the Hunter JO

The Hunter JO has not delegated any of its functions.

Holding of controlling interests (other bodies)

Nil.

Bodies in which Hunter JO participated

Nil.

Equal employment opportunity management Plan

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

Executive Officer remuneration

The total remuneration package of the Executive Officer for the 2024/2025 financial year was \$215,954 inclusive of salary and superannuation, plus full private use of a motor vehicle and FBT of \$9592.75.

Senior staff remuneration

Nil.

Government Information Public Access (GIPA)

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

Public Interest Disclosure activity

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

ARIC Attestation

Hunter JO continued the process of developing a shared ARIC with other JO's during 2024-25 with a view to commencing in 2025-26.

Capital Works

Nil capital works undertaken.

Total number persons performing paid work

Eleven persons employed on 4th December 2024.



Community Benefit Sharing – Potential for JO State-wide approach

Report Authors:	Sharon Houlihan, Executive Officer Canberra Region Joint Organisation
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Recommendations:

That the NSW Joint Organisations' Chairs Forum:

- 1. Notes the report on known advocacy and action underway statewide for establishment of arrangements for community benefits-sharing payments by energy companies to councils,**
- 2. Identify initial shared issues, opportunities and priorities across the JO network relating to the need for more effective community benefit schemes arising from the renewable energy infrastructure roll out.**
- 3. Agrees to maintain a 'watching brief' via inclusion of a standard item on agendas of future meetings of the NSW Joint Organisations' Chairs Forum regarding progress of advocacy and action for establishment of arrangements for community benefits-sharing payments by energy companies to councils.**

Introduction

Many NSW councils, in and out of renewable energy zones, have had renewable energy developments such as wind farms, solar farms and battery storage facilities on rural land undertaken in their local government areas in recent years, along with electricity transmission, energy distribution and waste to energy projects. Most developments have occurred without appropriate agreements to ensure local host communities benefit positively from development in their local areas, let alone offset negative impacts of development.

It is within all councils' power and is common practice to require developers to pay contributions to councils to contribute to negating impacts of their projects and/or to contribute to community benefits.

There is merit in all councils considering adopting policy setting out their expectations to energy companies and state government for negotiation of voluntary planning agreements, and in the making of submissions to state government in the case of state-assessed developments, to include requirements for payment by renewable energy developers to councils to be used for implementing projects of benefit to local communities.

There is also merit in adopting consistent policy across councils with consistent parameters for such negotiations and submissions for community benefit sharing payments, to clearly communicate to energy companies, to the state government and to our communities what councils are seeking by way of fair contribution by energy companies towards broad community benefits, above and beyond negating direct construction impacts.

Background

On this subject, the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum (JO chairs forum) invited the chair of the Coalition of Renewable Energy Councils (CoREM), Cr Sam Coupland, Mayor Armidale

Regional Council, to its 8 August 2024 meeting to present on the successful approach of five New England councils to adopt consistent community benefit-sharing policies as guidance for negotiating with renewable energy developers in their individual councils.

The CoREM mayors agreed a set of expectations to put to the NSW Government with respect to community benefit-sharing payments by renewable energy developers, provided to state government in 2022.

CoREM member councils then adopted individual council policies or frameworks to implement the agreed expectations and these have evolved over time. Refer attached community benefits framework adopted by Armidale Regional Council in May 2024, as an example.

The JO chairs forum agreed that the joint organisations' chairs would ask their respective member councils to consider implementing similar policies or frameworks to bring about benefits sharing with local communities when energy developments occur in their local government areas.

In November 2024, the NSW Government Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure published its *Benefit Sharing Guideline – Guidance for large-scale renewable energy projects, November 2024*. Refer attached. This guideline makes it much easier for councils to agree on payment amounts to be negotiated into voluntary planning agreements with energy companies for those project types covered by the guidelines, being solar, wind and battery storage on rural land.

On 7 May 2025, the JOs Chairs Forum adopted a number of resolutions to encourage progression of community benefits-sharing arrangements in member councils and for advocacy by councils to state government for better community benefits-sharing arrangements.

Councils' Community Benefits-sharing Policies

The new state guideline provides a clear position the individual councils can use for negotiating voluntary planning agreements with renewable energy developers and can be applied by all councils, not just in state government renewable energy zones, and for all wind, solar and battery storage on rural land developments whether council-assessed or state-assessed via council lobbying.

Despite the new guidelines' applicability to specific types of developments, namely solar, wind and battery storage on rural land projects, the new state guideline and similar guidelines developed for different purposes such as for transmission lines, distribution infrastructure and other storage projects as well as community benefits-sharing guidelines developed in other states, may also be useful to adapt and adopt in council policies and frameworks as the basis for:

- negotiations with developers for voluntary planning agreements for all energy-related developments whether energy generation, storage, transmission or distribution,
- submissions to state and federal governments when approvals or consents are provided by other levels of government, and
- negotiating with energy companies retrospectively for better community benefits-sharing payments schemes, for those companies which are already established in local communities.

Adopting policies at council level provides clear communication to energy companies, state governments and our communities as to what councils will seek by way of fair contribution by energy companies establishing operations in their local government areas. It provides certainty for energy companies which can then build in costs to their business cases and signals to communities that their councils are fighting for energy companies to contribute to broad community benefit projects for the whole of their operating life, not just at the time of construction and that all of community can benefit from these companies becoming established in their area.

Advocacy and Actions – Canberra Region Joint Organisation

Most councils with renewable energy or other energy projects in their local government areas are negotiating voluntary planning agreements with energy companies. Councils are starting to seek community benefits-sharing payments from energy companies as per the new state guidelines.

Aside from New England region councils, many councils' actions with respect to adopting policy for ongoing broad community benefits-sharing payments by energy companies to councils appear to be in their infancy. Voluntary planning agreements are being negotiated as the main mechanism for agreeing community benefits programs but, in general and with some exceptions, these programs do not feature ongoing annual payments to councils for the purpose of delivering community benefits-sharing.

Since consideration by the JOs Chairs Forum in August 2024 and again in May 2025, the following known advocacy and actions are underway across NSW regions regarding establishing arrangements for community benefits-sharing payments to councils by energy companies.

Canberra Region Joint Organisation

- In-principle support by all member councils' mayors to adopt policy at individual council level for community benefits-sharing payments to councils by energy companies, planning directors currently workshopping model policy for individual member councils' consideration and considering implementation mechanisms and implications for such a policy.
- Advocacy with other councils with Transgrid HumeLink transmission lines in their local governments areas to state government, federal government, federal energy commissioner, Australian Energy Regulator and to Transgrid directly regarding establishment of legislated mandatory community benefit-sharing payment schemes with ongoing annual payments to councils by energy companies for transmission lines projects.
- One member council reports that, since the new state guidelines have been published, lesser amounts are now able to be negotiated via voluntary planning agreements than the council was previously able to negotiate via s.712 developer contribution agreements, this will be explored and possibly disputed via continued regional advocacy.

Central NSW Joint Organisation

- Considering development of a Regional Community Benefit Sharing Framework for member councils, including leveraging the JO Chairs' Forum where possible for this work, to support member councils to have informed and timely discussions with developers in relation to renewable developments

Riverina Eastern Regional Organisation of Councils

- March 2025 capability building workshop for member councils with expert legal facilitator for member councils to use voluntary planning agreements to leverage economic development including with respect to community benefits-sharing payments.
- One member councils' advocacy with other councils with Transgrid HumeLink transmission lines in their local governments areas to state government for establishment of legislated mandatory community benefit-sharing payment schemes with ongoing annual payments to councils by energy companies.
- One member council reports advocacy that, since the new state guidelines have been published, lesser amounts are now able to be negotiated for battery storage projects via voluntary planning agreements than the council was previously able to negotiate.

Regional Australia Institute

- Recent research paper recommending energy companies' community benefits-sharing payments funds be pooled regionally and used to fund regional-scale projects, reflecting an even more aspirational approach than current actions by state and local governments.

NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum Role?

It is recommended that the JOs Chairs Forum, as a minimum, maintain a 'watching brief' via inclusion of a standard item on agendas of future meetings of the NSW Joint Organisations' Chairs Forum for all joint organisations to report regularly to the JOs Chairs Forum on progress of advocacy and actions for establishment of arrangements for community benefits-sharing payments by energy companies to councils.

Discussion is sought as to the role the JOs Chairs Forum might play, supported by the JOs Executive Officers Network, to progress a consistent state-wide approach towards advocacy, policy frameworks and resources to support the establishment of community benefits-sharing payment schemes, in collaboration with a broader range of stakeholders including Country Mayors Association, Mining and Energy Related Councils and the Coalition of Renewable Energy Mayors and other organisations working in this area such as the Regional Australia Institute.

For example, there may be benefit in mapping the outcomes of all renewable energy development voluntary planning agreements statewide to determine whether consistent and appropriate outcomes for community benefits-sharing are being achieved and to understand how the state government is applying its new guidelines and whether they are resulting in better outcomes for local host councils and communities.

There may also be merit in researching community benefits-sharing guidelines and similar in other states and their implementation progress, to better understand how to achieve net community benefit.

Following mapping, it may be appropriate to consider investment by joint organisations in procuring expertise to:

- Develop a joint statewide advocacy strategy to state and federal governments and to energy companies, commissioners and regulators on this matter, and
- Develop implementation actions that all councils can progress to work towards establishing community benefits-sharing in their local government areas, and
- Build capability of councils planning and executives to understand the opportunities and technical, planning and legal implications and requirements of implementing community benefits-sharing payments schemes via voluntary planning agreements.

This discussion is in line with the resolutions endorsed by the JOs Chairs Forum at its 7th May meeting.

More Information

- Armidale Regional Council [Renewable Energy Community Benefits Framework 2024](#)
- NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure [Benefit-Sharing Guideline](#)

Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

dphi.nsw.gov.au

Benefit-Sharing Guideline

November 2024



Guidance for large-scale
renewable energy projects



Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land, and we show our respect for Elders past, present and emerging through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.

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Glossary of terms

Term	Explanation
Applicant	The applicant of a large-scale renewable energy project application or modification
Battery energy storage systems	Grid-scale rechargeable batteries that can store energy from different sources and discharge it into the electricity grid when needed
Benefit-sharing	Benefit-sharing aims to distribute benefits generated by a project between the applicant and the community through mutually agreed opportunities such as funding or sponsoring local community initiatives, programs or projects
Large-scale renewable energy project	Development of solar energy, wind energy, and/or a battery energy storage system that is State significant development (SSD) or critical State significant infrastructure (CSSI)
Local community benefits	Benefits provided to communities at a local government area scale, including nearby hubs for employment, accommodation, and social infrastructure and services
Neighbourhood benefits	Benefits provided to individual landholders, businesses or townships and villages in the immediate vicinity of a project
Planning agreement	Planning agreements are voluntary agreements between one or more planning authorities (such as a council) and an applicant
Regional benefits	Benefits provided to communities across multiple local government areas that are coordinated by EnergyCo as part of the REZ Community and Employment Benefit Program
Secretary's environmental assessment requirements	The Planning Secretary's environmental assessment requirements, that set out the matters that must be addressed in an environmental impact statement

1

Introduction



Three of the remaining 4 coal-fired power stations in NSW will come to the end of their scheduled lives by 2035. We need to increase renewable energy generation, storage and transmission infrastructure to transition the electricity sector and meet the state's renewable energy targets. Most of this infrastructure will be in regional NSW as that is where our best solar and wind resources are located.

Transitioning to renewable energy sources will help us meet our legislated targets to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. It will also create new jobs, reduce energy costs for households and attract investment to NSW.

The NSW Government's [Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap](#) (the Roadmap) sets out a 20-year plan to deliver the infrastructure required to ensure NSW has continued access to cheap, clean and reliable energy.

As part of the Roadmap, the NSW Government will deliver at least 5 renewable energy zones (REZs). These will be in the Central-West Orana, New England, South-West, Hunter Central Coast and Illawarra regions of NSW. REZs are modern-day power stations. They combine renewable energy generation such as wind and solar, storage such as batteries and network infrastructure such as high-voltage poles and wires in dedicated areas in NSW.

Transitioning to renewable energy will also provide a range of direct and indirect benefits for host communities including:

- construction jobs (around 6,300) and ongoing operational jobs (around 2,800)¹
- lease payments to landholders and farmers to help diversify their income streams and protect against the financial impacts of drought and natural hazards
- payments to neighbours on land adjoining renewable energy infrastructure
- boosts to services and hospitality industries that service the new workforce
- upgrades to local infrastructure
- business for local companies and contractors

While the communities that host these developments benefit from employment and investment, they also experience the most pressure from the changes. This includes direct impacts from individual projects, as well as broader changes to the local landscape and community that may be difficult to foresee and plan for.

The process for assessing and approving large-scale energy projects under the NSW *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) ensures that impacts are minimised and appropriately managed. Whole-of-government strategic planning in REZs also

¹ Estimated employment figures from *NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap Detailed Report* (Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, 2020)

helps manage the roll-out of energy generation, storage and transmission infrastructure. Even with these measures in place, the on-ground effects of the state's energy transition will be predominantly felt in regional areas.

The wider benefits of renewable energy projects are often strategic in nature. Broader benefits (such as decarbonisation) are shared across the state, not just with the communities where the development is undertaken. Local revenue mechanisms, such as Section 7.11 and 7.12 contributions under the EP&A Act, are not usually suitable to address this issue as they have limited application to renewable energy projects.

This means that host communities, which bear the brunt of the changes, may not necessarily experience a proportionate level of benefits from the uptake of renewable energy. We need to make specific efforts to fairly share the proceeds from the transition within the areas in which it is focused.

This guideline provides advice on how benefit-sharing can be incorporated into the consideration and delivery of large-scale renewable energy development and outlines:

- a benefit-sharing policy approach, objectives and implementation strategy
- benefit-sharing mechanisms that operate at neighbourhood, local and regional levels
- a proposed model, including guidance on the expected value of benefit-sharing for individual projects.

This approach encourages applicants to include benefit-sharing when preparing and delivering large-scale renewable energy projects. It will help local communities be more resilient to change and will deliver estimated benefits of up to \$414 million to host communities over a 25-year period (in present value terms)² in REZs alone (see Figure 1). This will supplement hundreds of millions of dollars in funding which will be made available to REZ communities under the REZ Community and Employment Benefit Program.

The policy will ensure that communities in and outside REZs benefit from renewable energy development in their regions and that the benefits will be proportionate to the amount and scale of development. For instance, a typical 700 MW wind energy project will provide benefits of around \$18 million to communities from rates prescribed in this guideline alone.

² Based on known or declared capacities for each REZ and assuming 25 years of energy generation. It does not include the benefits that will be generated by renewable energy projects outside REZs or battery energy storage systems.

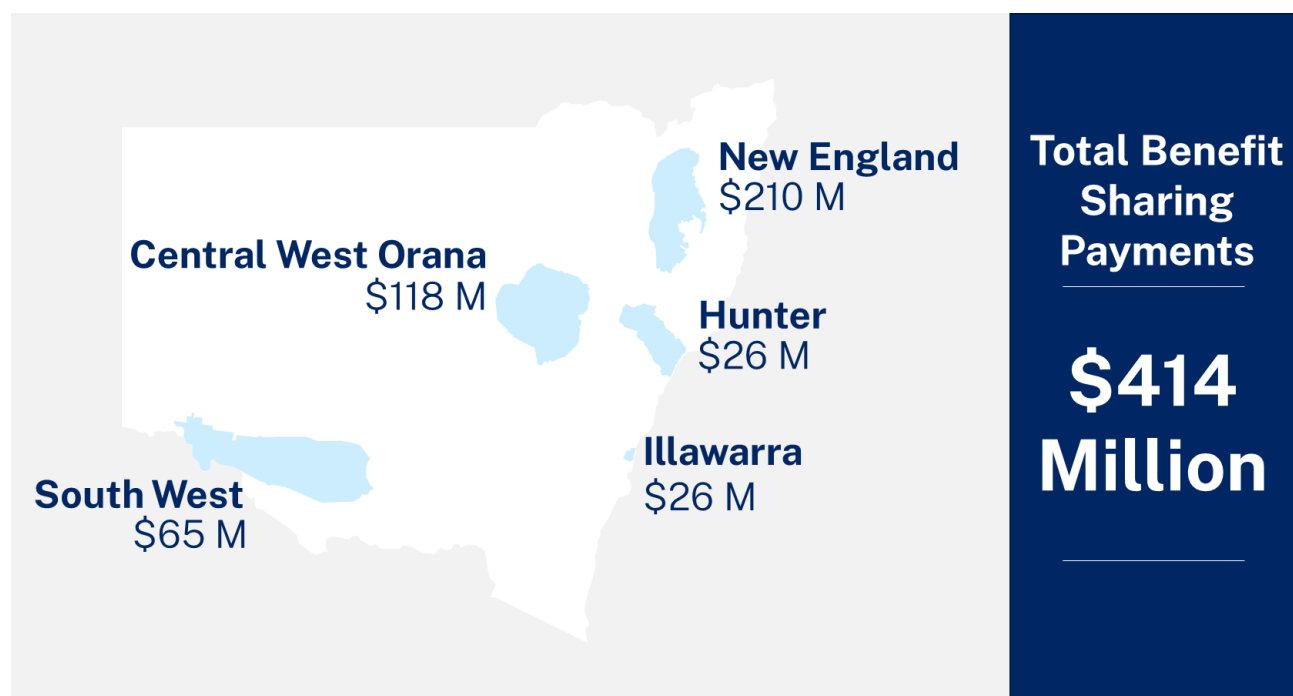


Figure 1. Estimated benefits in renewable energy zones from this guideline²

1.1 Purpose of the guideline

The purpose of this guideline is to:

- provide information to applicants, councils and the public about the importance of benefit-sharing for large-scale renewable energy generation and storage in NSW
- outline how benefit-sharing should be incorporated into State significant development (SSD) and critical State significant infrastructure (CSSI) applications for solar, wind and battery energy storage systems (BESS)
- encourage coordination of benefit-sharing programs
- support the rapid roll-out of solar and wind energy generation and storage in NSW, including in REZs, while ensuring that host communities experience tangible, long-term benefits from the transition to renewable energy.

1.2 Application of the guideline

This guideline applies to solar, wind and BESS projects (where BESS projects are proposed on rural zoned land only) that are declared to be SSD or CSSI (large-scale renewable energy projects), whether they are located within or outside a REZ. The guideline does not apply to:

- hydrogen projects
- pumped hydroelectric projects,

- BESS on non-rural zoned land
- electricity transmission infrastructure.

In contrast to solar and wind energy, hydrogen generation and some BESS are more likely to be co-located with other energy and industrial developments (typically in industrial areas or brownfield sites). These projects would be subject to standard council rates and contributions based on their land use zoning and any relevant impacts on local infrastructure and services. On rural zoned land, existing contributions arrangements for BESS may not be appropriate.

The guideline does not prescribe benefit-sharing rates for pumped hydro projects; however, benefit-sharing is strongly encouraged and should be evaluated on a project-by-project basis. In determining an appropriate rate, applicants and planning authorities should consider the nature and magnitude of change likely to be experienced by communities relative to the other infrastructure types prescribed in this guideline.

Transmission projects are subject to a range of existing benefit-sharing arrangements, including landowner payments under the NSW Strategic Benefits Payments Scheme. While this guideline does not apply, benefit-sharing is strongly encouraged, and this should be developed in recognition of these arrangements. Additional guidance can be found in [The National Guidelines for Community Engagement and Benefits for Electricity Transmission Projects](#).

Applicants for large-scale renewable energy projects will need to consider this guideline where it is referenced in the Planning Secretary's environmental assessment requirements and prepare the project's environmental impact statement (EIS) according to the requirements set out in the guideline.

This guideline should also be considered when preparing and assessing applications to modify a consent or approval in instances where it would increase the generating or storage capacity of the project. In these cases, the guideline and the prescribed benefit-sharing rates only apply to the increase in capacity and not the existing, approved capacity of the project.

1.3 Relationship to other guidelines

This guideline is part of the NSW Government's Renewable Energy Planning Framework and should be read in conjunction with the other documents making up this framework (where relevant), including the [Large-scale Solar Energy Guideline](#) and [Wind Energy Guideline](#).

2

Benefit-sharing for renewable energy



2.1 Overview of benefit-sharing

Benefit-sharing is a general term used to describe different approaches and mechanisms that aim to distribute the financial and other benefits of a project between the applicant and the host community through mutually agreed opportunities.

In the context of large-scale renewable energy projects, arrangements with landholders, councils and local communities (including local Indigenous communities) provide opportunities for community members to directly share in the benefits of projects and for the applicant to enhance their social licence to build and operate the project.

Specific benefit-sharing programs can enhance the benefits for the people in the vicinity of, and most affected by, renewable energy development. This includes neighbours that may be affected by projects nearby, as well as members of the broader community that hosts the development.

Benefit-sharing programs can also help to mitigate the wider intangible impacts of projects that may be otherwise difficult to avoid or minimise. It does this by delivering positive social and economic outcomes for affected communities. However, benefit-sharing is not intended as a means to manage or mitigate the impacts of a project on individual properties or landholders.

If a consent authority finds that a project would have significant negative impacts on the environment or the community, it will ensure appropriate action is taken, such as requiring amendments to the project design or including mitigation measures in consent conditions.

While private agreements between applicants and landholders to host project infrastructure or to manage and mitigate impacts from projects may provide benefits to individual landowners (see the [*Private Agreements Guideline*](#)), they are not considered to be forms of benefit-sharing.

Section 3 of this guideline outlines different benefit-sharing arrangements (including examples of programs or schemes) that can operate at different levels or spatial scales, from neighbourhoods to local communities to the broader regional area.

2.2 The importance of benefit-sharing

Benefit-sharing programs can offer a clear and transparent way to demonstrate how renewable energy development contributes to and benefits host communities and can help build community support. The following sections outline the 3 key reasons that make benefit-sharing particularly relevant to the consideration and assessment of large-scale renewable energy proposals and why it warrants a unique approach.

Impacts and benefits are not always proportional

Our society benefits from the growth of the renewable energy sector. However, the impacts of renewable projects are not evenly distributed. Regional communities experience the most pressure and changes, including impacts from individual projects, as well as broader changes to the landscape and community that may be difficult to foresee and plan for in advance.

Standard contribution methods are not always the best fit

Other forms of development are commonly accompanied by financial contributions to local government. However, the standard methods of collecting revenue are not always suitable for large-scale renewable energy projects, or they have limited application.

Individual renewable energy projects generally have limited impacts on local infrastructure and services, which limits the scope to collect local infrastructure contributions under section 7.11 or 7.12 of the EP&A Act. Where there are such impacts, they are addressed through the assessment process and conditions of consent (for example, requiring the applicant to upgrade roads before beginning construction).

The NSW Government is also undertaking separate work to understand and respond to any cumulative impacts that might be caused from multiple and concurrent projects within renewable energy zones. This will consider impacts on social infrastructure and services including waste management, health care and education.

Renewable energy generates relatively less employment

In contrast to other types of industrial development, large-scale renewable energy projects often generate lower levels of ongoing employment. As a result, regional communities may experience significant changes without the long-term benefits of increased local economic activity and improved public and commercial services that often accompany high employment-generating development and related urbanisation.

Benefit-sharing for large-scale renewable energy projects provide a practical and transparent method of addressing these concerns. They can ensure that affected local communities receive direct social, environmental and economic benefits from projects in their area.

3

Policy for benefit- sharing



This section sets out the policy that should be used when developing, assessing, and managing benefit-sharing programs for large-scale renewable energy projects.

3.1 Policy principles



1. Benefit-sharing is standard practice

Benefit-sharing should be incorporated as standard practice. Applicants should offer a reasonable rate consistent with the value prescribed in this guideline.



2. Benefit-sharing is collaborative

Benefit-sharing programs should be designed in partnership with councils. Opportunities to centralise administration should be prioritised to help leverage funds to further enhance community benefits.



3. Benefit-sharing is transparent

Information on benefit-sharing arrangements should be publicly available, including clear details on the administration and distribution of proceeds.



4. Benefit-sharing is community focused

Benefit-sharing should be informed by consultation with the community or community representatives, tailored to the local context and the community's needs and produce outcomes that align with the priorities of the public.



5. Benefit-sharing is proportionate

The distribution of community benefits should reflect the scale of the project and the level of change experienced by the community.



6. Benefit-sharing delivers a positive outcome

Benefit-sharing should have a positive, lasting, and meaningful impact on the community and provide tangible social, environmental, and economic outcomes.

3.2 Benefit-sharing arrangements

The following sections provides advice on how different benefit-sharing arrangements can be used to distribute the proceeds of renewable energy projects to neighbours, local communities and regional communities around a proposed development. The benefit-sharing mechanisms generally differ in the:

- proximity of beneficiaries to the proposed development and its effects
- scale of benefits distributed (i.e. financial value and number of recipients/benefactors)
- administrative mechanisms used to distribute the proceeds of a project (i.e. who receives or administers the funding and how program funds are managed and expended).

These components can be arranged in different ways to ensure that benefit-sharing meets the needs of the affected communities (see the examples in section 5 of this guideline).

3.2.1 Neighbourhood benefits

The first level of benefit-sharing is identified at the 'neighbourhood' level, which includes individual landowners, businesses and small neighbourhoods and villages in the direct vicinity of a proposed development.

Due to their proximity to the development site, neighbours are more likely to be aware of and experience the effects of nearby renewable energy development more acutely.

We encourage renewable energy applicants to explore options for benefit-sharing with the immediately affected community.

Examples of neighbourhood benefits may include:

- minor capital works and improvements such as providing rooftop solar to residences
- funding or constructing neighbourhood community facilities
- sponsorship of local community events, groups or clubs
- offering neighbours subsidies (such as energy discounts or free connections) or investment/co-ownership opportunities.

Benefit-sharing is not intended as a means to manage or mitigate the impacts on individual landowners. For example, the applicant can negotiate private agreements with individual landowners to provide vegetation screening, or monetary compensation to mitigate high visual impacts from a project. This is not considered to be a form of benefit-sharing.

Depending on the benefits to be provided, neighbourhood benefit-sharing programs may form part of a broader local community benefit program that is centrally administered and distributed (see below) or may be negotiated directly between the applicant and individuals

(such as through a contract or other agreement specifically related to the benefit-sharing program).

Applicants should outline the details of any proposed neighbourhood benefit-sharing arrangements in the EIS for the project.

Case Study 1 – Neighbour benefit program

The Bowmans Creek Wind Farm involves the development of up to 56 turbines and associated infrastructure, including a new 330 kilovolt (kV) transmission line. The applicant (Ark Energy) has established a program to share benefits with neighbouring landowners.

Property owners with a dwelling within 3.3 km of a turbine are eligible for an annual payment based on the number of wind turbines within a 3.3 km radius of their dwelling.

Those with a dwelling between 3.3 km and 5 km of a turbine (where no other agreement exists) are invited to participate in the project's Neighbour Benefit Program, which offers annual rebates on electricity charges as follows:

- residents between 3.3 - 4 km from a wind turbine will be eligible for an annual rebate of \$1,000 on their household electricity costs
- residents between 4 - 5 km from a wind turbine will be eligible for an annual rebate of \$500 on their household electricity costs.

Participation in the program does not prevent residents from expressing their views on the project, privately or publicly, at any time.

3.2.2 Local community benefits

Benefit-sharing at the local community level applies more broadly and should be targeted at a local government area scale, including any nearby hubs for employment, accommodation, and social infrastructure and services.

The scale of local community benefits will generally be greater in both financial value and the number of potential recipients or benefactors.

Given the broader application of local community benefit programs, we recommend they be primarily administered and distributed through the councils of the relevant local government areas. Alternatively, these programs could be administered by the applicant in partnership with a community, community organisation or institution (if appropriate and relevant to the type of program on offer) or other applicants in the local government area.

Irrespective of how the programs are administered, the benefit-sharing program must be designed in line with the policy principles set out in section 3.1 of this guideline.

Given the diverse composition of our communities, benefit-sharing at the local community level should consider opportunities for different community groups, particularly local Aboriginal communities. This should always be informed by meaningful and culturally appropriate, place-based engagement that is respectful and authentic.

Examples of local Aboriginal community-specific benefit-sharing programs include:

- capability and/or capacity support for economic participation, including direct or indirect employment
- scholarship programs with partnering education institutions to enable local Aboriginal students to complete courses in specific fields
- sponsorship of Aboriginal community and cultural events such as fundraising events, local markets, cultural sites, community clean up events and garden days
- additional or improved community facilities.

The most appropriate administrators will vary depending on the type of program and may include the NSW Aboriginal Land Council, the relevant local Aboriginal land council, native title groups and local councils.

Council-managed programs

Council-managed benefit arrangements can provide opportunities to consolidate funds from multiple renewable energy projects. This gives councils the ability to deliver bigger community projects or services than would otherwise be possible if funds were directly managed by individual applicants.

The community must be at the forefront of decision-making for any council-managed programs. Committees should be established to decide how money should be spent and should include representation from different community groups.

Benefit-sharing funds must not be used to fund works or services of any kind that should be delivered by a council in the ordinary course of business.

For council-managed programs, we recommend using a planning agreement to establish a community benefit fund. The policy principles should be applied to the establishment and administration of the fund and when distributing proceeds within the fund.

Planning agreements are subject to various requirements under section 7.4 of the EP&A Act. Council must consider these requirements and the guidance set out in [Planning agreements – Practice note – February 2021](#) (or latest version) if entering into a planning agreement.

Planning agreements should include a review mechanism that allows the terms of the agreement to be renegotiated in the event of any material changes to this guideline.

Examples of expenditure that might be suitable under a council-managed community benefit fund include:

- recurrent costs of infrastructure, services or facilities
- additional or improved open spaces, public facilities or infrastructure such as upgrades to local parks, libraries, community centres, showgrounds, museums and transport infrastructure
- providing funding or works for neighbourhood community facilities (e.g. solar panels)
- initiatives delivered in partnership with other local organisations including scholarship programs to enable local students to complete courses in specific fields (e.g. engineering and project management)
- sponsorship of community events such as fundraising events, local produce markets, nature walks, community clean-up events and gardening days
- sponsorship of local groups such as sporting clubs, biodiversity volunteering groups and community gardens.

Case Study 2 – Planning agreement

Squadron Energy entered into a planning agreement with Inverell Shire Council to support the development of the Sapphire Wind Farm. The agreement provides \$187,500 per annum, shared between Glen Innes and Inverell Shire council based on the number of turbines within the LGA.

Using these funds, Inverell Council formed the Sapphire Wind Farm Community Fund Committee under Section 355 of the NSW Local Government Act 1993. The committee is administered by Council and is responsible for assessing funding applications for groups, projects or programs within the Inverell local government area.

Community-led programs

The types of community benefit programs listed above could also be established directly in partnership with the applicant and community organisations or institutions (also see section 5). For instance, initiatives such as scholarship programs and training courses could be offered by the applicant and managed by a relevant educational establishment or other organisation. Similarly, the applicant could offer sponsorships, capital works and other benefits directly to a recipient organisation or community group.

Applicants are also free to directly manage their own community benefit programs and invite the broader community to participate. We encourage applicants to explore different options and offer local communities a range of opportunities to benefit from the project's proceeds.

Case Study 3 – Community reference group

The New England Solar Social Investment Program is managed by a Community Reference Group comprised of five local community members and overseen by ACEN Australia.

The reference group is responsible for assessing two rounds of grant funding each year and has provided over \$200,000 to the local community since its inception. The program has funded local sporting groups, community events, health and fitness groups, historical projects, schools and sustainability projects.

Members of the group meet at least four times annually and are reimbursed for expenses in carrying out their roles.

Neighbourhood benefits could equally operate at a broader community level. For instance, applicants could consider providing direct community support through capital works, sponsorships, in-kind assistance, energy subsidies or investment/co-ownership opportunities. However, any capital works that would become the responsibility of council (or incur ongoing maintenance costs for councils) must be delivered as a council-led program.

Further examples of benefit-sharing programs and ways to design these programs are outlined in the Clean Energy Council's [A Guide to Benefit Sharing Options for Renewable Energy Projects](#).

3.2.3 Regional benefits (REZ benefit programs)

Generation and storage projects in REZs pay access fees if they connect to new network infrastructure projects. These access fees help pay for the new network and contribute to dedicated funds for community and employment-related initiatives in each region. EnergyCo is coordinating this funding under a [Community and Employment Benefit Program](#), which will invest millions of dollars into regional communities.

Unlike the neighbour and local community benefits described above, these programs can deliver regional-scale benefits across multiple local government areas. The funding will be spent in consultation with communities but could include things like upgrades to telecommunications and internet infrastructure across a region.

Whether or not REZ access fees apply to a large-scale renewable energy project depends on the type of project, whether it is in a REZ, and whether it successfully tenders for access to REZ network infrastructure.

While these regional initiatives are an important component of benefit-sharing, the principles in this guideline do not apply to them. Their consideration and accounting will be managed separately from the planning assessment process for individual projects.

3.3 Distributing benefits

Benefit-sharing funds should be targeted towards the people and communities that are most likely to experience the effects of the proposed development. The amount of funding provided should be distributed based on a balanced consideration of:

- the impacts experienced – funding should be targeted at communities likely to experience the more localised effects of development and not minor ancillary aspects such as long-haul transportation on state roads
- the presence and size of different population centres and communities – larger communities may be eligible for a higher portion of benefits compared to smaller affected communities.

For instance, a wind farm project with many neighbours or a distinct neighbourhood-scale community may apportion a significant share of its total benefit-sharing value to this group through a specific community enhancement fund or via direct negotiation.

On the other hand, a BESS project may have minimal or no neighbourhood-scale community with which to share the benefits. In this case, all the benefits could be shared with the local community through a planning agreement with the local council.

There may be instances where the effects of the development would be experienced outside the local government area (LGA) hosting the development, or the effects could be felt across multiple LGAs. In these instances, the benefits should continue to be distributed towards the communities that are most likely to experience the effects of the development. That means, there may be circumstances in which a project is located wholly in one LGA, but most of the benefits are shared with the neighbouring LGA.

As a general guide, councils should administer no less than 85% of the relevant portion of the total benefit-sharing value. This will help ensure funds are consolidated from multiple renewable energy projects, allowing councils to deliver more valuable community projects or services.

See section 5 for examples on how benefits could be distributed.

3.4 Reporting

The details of any benefit-sharing arrangements are to be made publicly available to ensure transparency and a clear connection between the benefits delivered and individual projects. Councils are responsible for reporting any arrangements that they manage, including programs undertaken through a planning agreement. Applicants are responsible for publicly reporting on any other programs.

This reporting should include a public register that identifies:

- governance arrangements implemented to administer the benefit-sharing arrangements (e.g. representative community board appointment for grant funding)
- the amount of funding provided
- the source of funding including the renewable energy applicant and related renewable energy project (if it is being managed by the council)
- each program funded and how it meets or contributes to the policy principles
- the consultation that was undertaken to identify and develop each program.

Registration, notification and public access requirements may also apply where programs are established through a planning agreement (see our [*Planning agreements – Practice note – February 2021*](#) (or latest version)). The general planning agreement requirements can be used to satisfy some of the requirements of this policy.

3.5 Implementing the guideline

The Benefit-Sharing Guideline will be implemented through the assessment process under the EP&A Act for large-scale renewable energy projects.

The following sections outline what applicants of large-scale renewable energy projects should do when preparing EISs and what the consent authority will consider when assessing those applications.

3.5.1 Applicant considerations

In developing benefit-sharing models, applicants are required to:

- engage with the relevant council, local communities (including aboriginal communities), and neighbours in the vicinity of the proposed project to consider options for distributing and sharing the benefits of projects at different levels

- develop a proposed model for community benefit-sharing (including neighbourhood and local community benefits where applicable) that is consistent with the policy principles set out in section 3.1 of this guideline
- outline the expected total value (financial amount or equivalent) of community benefits (calculated in accordance with section 4 of this guideline) in the EIS for the project
- implement or otherwise give effect to any benefit-sharing arrangement or requirements specified in any conditions of consent.

3.5.2 Consent authority considerations

When assessing the merits of projects, the consent authority should:

- consider the relative benefits of the project, including the applicant's proposed benefit-sharing model
- determine whether any conditions of consent may be appropriate to ensure the applicant's proposed benefit-sharing model will be implemented
- not impose any additional conditions requiring other contributions under section 7.11 or section 7.12 of the EP&A Act unless they are specifically required to address direct impacts on services and infrastructure.

3.6 Review of benefit-sharing approach

The benefit-sharing approach outlined in this guideline has been developed in recognition of current planning and land use revenue settings, including infrastructure contributions and the local government land rating system.

We will review the policy approach (including the benefit-sharing rates outlined in section 4 of this guideline) if changes are made to the infrastructure contributions or the local government land rating systems that materially affect large-scale renewable energy projects (for example, the introduction of a new land category rating or a new contributions framework that explicitly apply to these projects).

Planning agreements should include review mechanisms that allow the terms of the agreement to be renegotiated:

- if there are any material changes to this guideline
- where the final installed capacity of a large-scale renewable energy project is materially different to that included in any initial agreement.

4

Model and value of benefit- sharing



Applicants for large-scale renewable energy projects are required to outline their proposed model for community benefit-sharing in the EIS. The applicant's proposed model must include:

- an indication of the types and scale of benefit-sharing (including neighbourhood and local community benefits) that will be offered by the applicant and used to distribute and share the proceeds of the project with neighbours and the broader community
- the estimated total value (financial amount or equivalent) of community benefits (both neighbourhood and local community benefits) that will be provided as part of the renewable energy proposal, including any funding to be included in a planning agreement and the financial value of any other programs
- details of specific benefit-sharing programs if known at the time.

4.1 Value of benefit-sharing

We expect applicants to use the following benefit-sharing rates when determining the total funding value for community benefits for a given renewable energy project.

Benefit-sharing rate

Total funding for benefit-sharing should be:

- \$850 per megawatt per annum for solar energy development, or
- \$1,050 per megawatt per annum for wind energy development, or
- \$150 per megawatt hour per annum for stand-alone battery energy storage systems located in a rural zone (i.e. RU1 Primary Production, RU2 Rural Landscape, RU3 Forestry, RU4 Primary Production Small Lots),

based on installed capacity and paid over the life of the development and indexed to the Consumer Price Index³.

The total value of benefit-sharing, calculated by adding together the proposed funding amounts for any neighbourhood and local community benefit programs (whether council-managed or otherwise), should not exceed the rates outlined above. An example for a wind energy development within 2 local government areas is shown in Figure 2.

³ As an example, the dollar rate would be \$850 per megawatt for a solar energy project for the 2024–25 financial year. The dollar rate would then be adjusted for CPI in each subsequent financial year

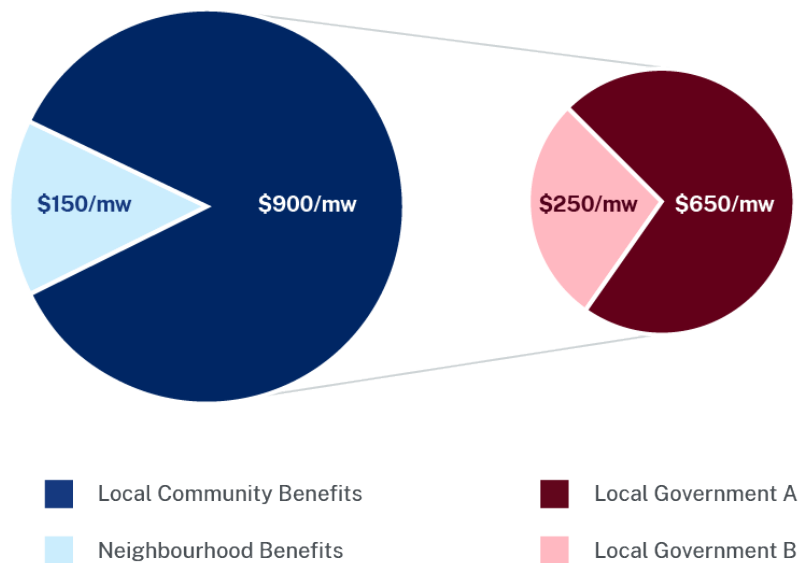


Figure 2. Potential composition of benefit-sharing for wind energy (per annum)

If the proposed development includes both wind and solar generation, the total amount of benefit-sharing should be calculated by:

- separately determining the amounts of wind and solar based on their respective generation capacities and the rates outlined above, and
- adding these amounts together.

The BESS benefit-sharing rate only applies to stand-alone systems and must not be applied to a battery that is developed alongside solar and wind energy generation. An example of how to determine the benefit-sharing amount for mixed infrastructure types is provided below.

Mixed generation and storage example

The proposed development includes:

- 300 MW of wind generation capacity
- 200 MW of solar generation capacity
- a 200 MWh battery.

Benefit-sharing values for each development type are:

- Wind – \$315,000 per annum
- Solar – \$170,000 per annum
- Battery – \$0 per annum.

Total benefit-sharing value = \$485,000 per annum

The image is a full-page background featuring an aerial photograph of a suburban neighborhood. The left half of the image is covered by a dark blue semi-transparent overlay. On this overlay, the number '5' is written in a large, white, sans-serif font. Below the number, the word 'Examples' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. The right half of the image shows the actual aerial view of the neighborhood, including residential houses with red-tiled roofs, green lawns, and a large green field in the distance. The sky is overcast.

5 Examples

The following examples illustrate the application of the principles and guidance in a variety of scenarios.

Example 1 – 600 MW solar energy development

The proposed development is wholly located within LGA A. However, the effects of the development are more likely to be experienced by the ‘local community’ in the nearest town (3,000 population), which is in neighbouring LGA B. Almost all the workers are expected to reside in a nearby regional city located in LGA B.



Neighbourhood – 20 nearby properties

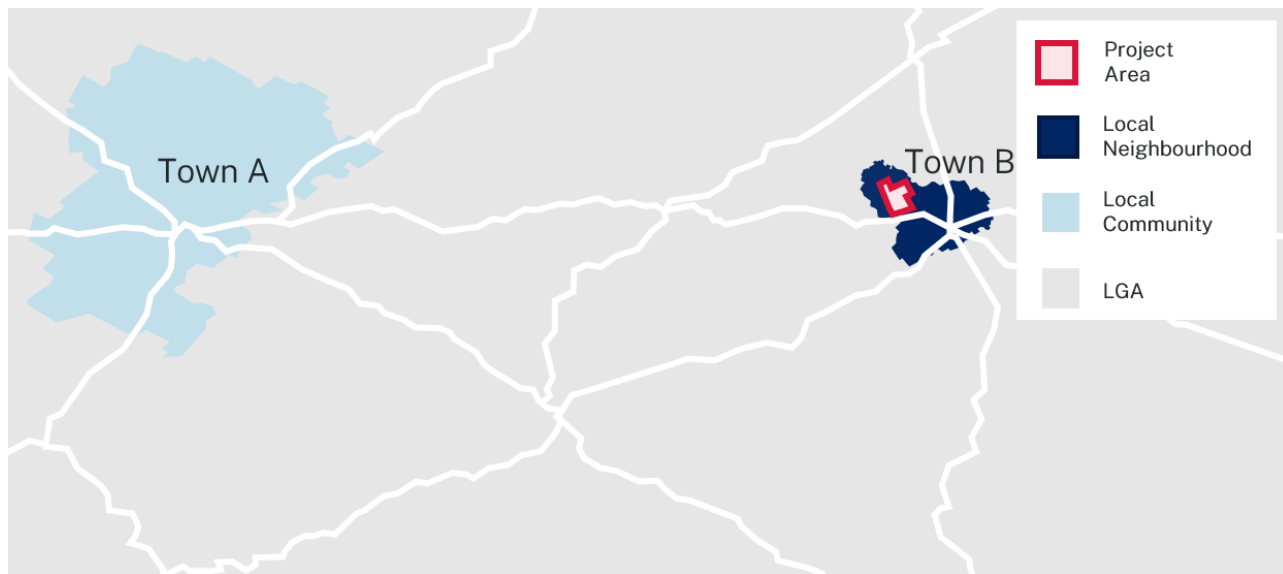
\$20,000/year Neighbourhood enhancement fund	\$1,000 - annual residential energy rebate
---	---

Local community

\$55,000/year Community enhancement fund	\$35,000 – TAFE/Traineeship grants \$20,000 – Men’s Shed sponsorship
\$125,000/year Planning agreement Local government A	\$70,000 - LGA local grants fund \$35,000 – Main street beautification \$20,000 – Cycleway upgrades
\$310,000/year Planning agreement Local government B	\$140,000 - LGA local grants fund \$90,000 – Waste management upgrades \$80,000 – Swim centre upgrades

Example 2 – 1,000 MWh battery energy storage system

The proposed development is wholly within a single LGA. The effects of the development will be experienced by a small number of landholders located near the development and the nearest town (Town B). A slightly larger town (Town A) is located 7 km away.



Neighbourhood and local community – 10 nearby properties

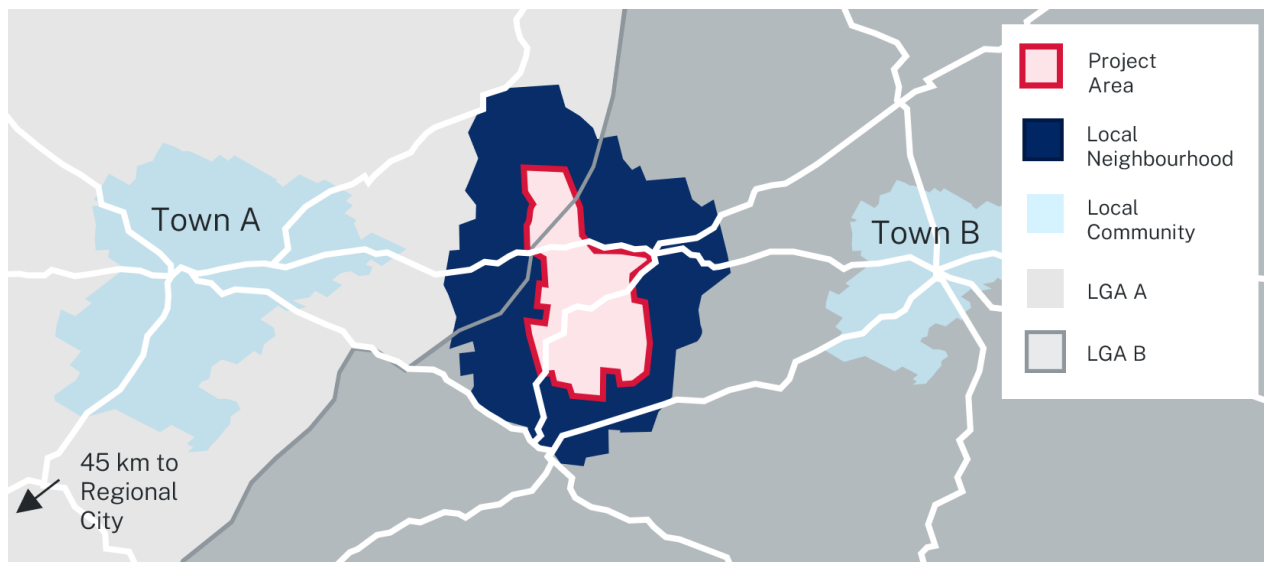
\$10,000/year Neighbourhood enhancement fund for Town B	\$6,000 – Local community hall upgrade \$4,000 – Local RFS equipment
--	---

Local community

\$3,000/year Community enhancement fund	\$3,000 – Traineeship grants
\$137,000/year Planning agreement Local government	\$65,000 – LGA local grants fund \$27,000 – Community hall upgrades \$25,000 – Cycleway upgrades \$20,000 – Cultural events fund

Example 3 – 400 MW wind energy development

The proposed development is located across LGA A and LGA B. While most of the footprint is within LGA B, the effects will be predominately experienced in LGA A, which is a more established urban area (population of 5,000) and is likely to host more of the workforce. However, LGA B has a larger network of neighbouring landowners and contains a small town (population of 1,500) that will see the project.



Neighbourhood – 50 nearby properties

\$25,000/year Neighbourhood enhancement fund	\$15,000 - annual residential energy rebate \$10,000 – local neighbourhood grants
---	--

Local community

\$38,000/year Community enhancement fund	\$10,000 – Country Women’s Association funding \$8,000 – Community garden fund \$15,000 – Indigenous vocational training grants
\$195,000/year Planning agreement Local government A	\$110,000 - LGA local grants fund \$60,000 – High streets activation \$35,000 – Community hall upgrades
\$162,000/year Planning agreement Local government B	\$75,000 - LGA local grants fund \$47,000 – Heritage trail development fund \$40,000 – Sports field upgrades

NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum

When: Thursday, 7 August 2025

Time: 9am – 11.30am

Where: McKell Room, NSW Parliament House
6 Macquarie Street, Sydney

MEMBERS MEETING INVITEES

Canberra Region JO	Chair Executive Officer	Cr Russell Fitzpatrick, Mayor Bega Valley Shire Council Sharon Houlihan
Central NSW JO	Chair Executive Officer	Cr Kevin Beatty, Mayor Cabonne Shire Council (Deputy Convenor) Kate Barker
Far North West JO	Chair Executive Officer	Cr Jarrod Marsden, Mayor Cobar Shire Council Ross Earl
Far South West JO	Chair Executive Officer	Cr Daniel Linklater, Mayor Wentworth Shire Council Jay Nankivell, General Manager Broken Hill City Council
Hunter JO	Chair Executive Officer	Cr Sue Moore, Mayor Singleton Council (Convenor) Steve Wilson
Illawarra Shoalhaven JO	Chair Executive Officer	Cr Chris Homer, Mayor Shellharbour Council Roger Stephan
Mid North Coast JO	Chair Executive Officer	Cr Steve Allen, Mayor Bellingen Shire Council Liz Fairweather
Namoi Unlimited JO	Chair Executive Officer	Non-Operational Non-Operational
New England JO (Coalition of Renewable Energy Mayors, CoREM)	Chair Executive Officer	Cr Sam Coupland, Mayor Armidale Regional Council Unconfirmed
Northern Rivers JO	Chair Executive Officer	Cr Chris Cherry, Mayor Tweed Shire Council Phil Rudd
Alliance of Western Councils	Chair Executive Officer	Cr Glen Neill, Mayor Bogan Shire Council Lisa Schiff
Riverina and Murray JO	Chair Executive Officer	Cr Ruth McRae OAM, Mayor Murrumbidgee Shire Council Yvonne Lingua
Riverina JO (Riverina Eastern Regional Organisation of Councils, REROC)	Chair CEO	Cr Rick Firman OAM, Mayor, Temora Shire Council Megan Mulrooney

INVITED GUESTS

NSW Minister for Local Government	The Hon. Ron Hoenig MP	
NSW Office of Local Government	Deputy Secretary, Local Government	Brett Whitworth
	Director, Office of Deputy Secretary	Patrick Doyle
	Manager Council Engagement	Sharne Colefax
	Council Engagement Manager	Louise Taylor
Local Government NSW	President	Cr Phyllis Miller OAM Mayor Forbes Shire Council
	Chief Executive Officer	David Reynolds
Australian Local Government Association	President	Cr Matt Burnett Mayor Gladstone Regional Council
	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 August 2025 be accepted.**

The secretariat will call for any additional attendees and apologies.

Apologies have been received from the following:

- Cr Chris Cherry, Mayor Tweed Shire Council, Chair Northern Rivers JO
- Phil Rudd, Executive Officer Northern Rivers JO

Apologies have been received from the following guests:

- Hon Ron Hoenig, Minister for Local Government
- Cr Matt Burnett, President Australian Local Government Association
- Amy Crawford, Chief Executive Officer Local Government Association

Additional attendees: Nil

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

3.1. Confirmation of Previous Meeting Minutes

Recommendation:

- That the minutes of the NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum held on 7 May 2025 be received and noted.

NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum Minutes**3.00pm, Thursday 7 May 2025****McKell Room, NSW Parliament House****Present - Chairs**

Cr Sue Moore (Convenor)	Mayor Singleton Council	Hunter JO
Cr Kevin Beatty (Deputy Convenor)	Mayor Cabonne Shire Council	Central NSW JO
Cr Jarrod Marsden	Mayor Cobar Shire Council	Far North West JO
Cr Steve Allan	Mayor Bellingen Shire Council	Mid North Coast JO
Cr Chris Cherry	Mayor Tweed Shire Council	Northern Rivers JO
Cr Ruth McRae OAM	Mayor Murrumbidgee Shire Council	Riverina & Murray JO
Cr Rick Firman OAM	Mayor Temora Shire Council	Riverina JO
Cr Julia Ham	Mayor Snowy Valleys Council, Deputy Chair representing Cr Russell Fitzpatrick	Canberra Region JO

Present – Executive Officers

Sharon Houlihan	Canberra Region JO
Kate Barker	Central NSW JO
Ross Earl	Far North West JO
Steve Wilson	Hunter JO
Roger Stephan	Illawarra Shoalhaven JO
Liz Fairweather	Mid North Coast JO
Yvonne Lingua	Riverina and Murray JO
Megan Mulrooney	Riverina Eastern ROC

Additional Attendees

The Hon. Ron Hoenig MP	NSW Minister for Local Government	
Brett Whitworth	Deputy Secretary, Local Government	NSW Office of Local Government
David Reynolds	Chief Executive Officer	LGNSW
Virginia Errington	Council Engagement Manager	NSW Office of Local Government

Apologies from forum members

Cr Russell Fitzpatrick	Mayor Bega Valley Shire Council	Canberra Region JO
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Cr Chris Homer	Mayor Shellharbour Council	Illawarra Shoalhaven
Jenny Bennett	Central NSW JO	
Lisa Schiff	Alliance of Western Councils	
Phil Rudd	Northern Rivers JO	

Apologies from guests

Cr Matt Burnett	President	ALGA
Cr Phyllis Miller OAM	President	LGNSW

Formal meeting opened at 3.00pm.

Item 1 Welcome & Acknowledgement of Country

Convenor, Cr Sue Moore welcomed members and guests and made an acknowledgement of country.

The meeting commenced at 4pm.

Item 2 Attendees and Apologies

The convenor called for any additional attendees and apologies. Apologies were received from forum members and guests.

The convenor and deputy convenor acknowledged the significant contribution of Jenny Bennett, Executive Officer Central NSW JO, to both the broader NSW joint organisation network and specifically to the success and achievements of the Central NSW JO. On behalf of the Chairs Forum, the convenor and deputy convenor expressed thanks and appreciation to Jenny for her enormous commitment and generosity and wished her all the very best for the future.

Resolved: That the attendees and apologies of the NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum held on 7 May 2025 be accepted.

Moved: Cr Kevin Beatty, Seconded: Cr Rick Firman OAM, Carried.

Item 3 2025 Meeting Dates

Resolved: That the NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum endorse the proposed meeting dates for 2025.

Moved: Cr Chirs Cherry, Seconded: Cr Rick Firman OAM, Carried.

Item 4 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

4.1 Confirmation of Previous Meeting Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum held on 14 November 2024 be received and noted.

Moved: Cr Ruth McRae OAM, Seconded: Cr Kevin Beatty, Carried.

4.2 Action Register

Resolved: That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum notes the progress of actions from previous meetings.

Moved: Cr Ruth McRae OAM, Seconded: Cr Kevin Beatty, Carried.

Item 5 Correspondence

Resolved: That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum notes the incoming and outgoing correspondence.

Moved: Cr Kevin Beatty, Seconded: Cr Rick Firman OAM, Carried.

Item 6 Presentations

6.1 Dams Safety NSW

Presenters: Paul O'Connor, Chair and Chris Salkovic, CEO - Dams Safety NSW

This briefing by Dams Safety NSW (DSNSW) covered the evolution of dam safety regulation, emphasising effective asset management, transparent regulation, and decision-making. It highlighted the need for strategic planning for climate change resilience and improved stakeholder engagement. Additionally, discussed 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

This briefing provided an insight on the Commission's first [report](#) which 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 acknowledged they are currently running a [consultation](#) to help shape its work plan and would welcome submissions from JOs and local governments. A PDF of the Consultation paper can be downloaded [here](#)).

A meeting will be arranged between the Net Zero Commission and JO Executive Officers to further explore opportunities for collaboration.

Item 7 Reports

7.1 Benefit sharing for communities impacted by the transition to renewable energy

Resolved: 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.***

Moved: Cr Ruth McRae OAM, Seconded: Cr Julia Ham, Carried.

7.2 Recommendations for a Joint Organisation Shared ARIC Model

Resolved:

- 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.***

Moved: Cr Steve Allen, Seconded: Cr Kevin Beatty, Carried.

7.3 Update on new state-wide JO Disaster Adaption Planning Program

Resolved: That the Joint Organisation Chairs' Forum note the update on NSW Disaster Adaptation Planning and Readiness projects being delivered across the JO network.

Moved: Cr Steve Allen, Seconded: Cr Kevin Beatty, Carried.

7.4 JONZA Program Update

Resolved: That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum:

1. Notes:

- *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*
- 2. Subject to consultation with agency representatives write to the NSW Minister for the Environment advocating for lengthening the period of funding for the JONZA program from the current 18 months to a period of 5 years to allow Councils to implement the actions needed to achieve the NSW Net Zero targets.**

Moved: Cr Chris Cherry, Seconded: Cr Julia Ham, Carried.

Item 8 Standing Reports

8.1 NSW Office of Local Government Report

Brett Whitworth, Deputy Secretary Local Government – Office of Local Government provided a verbal update.

8.2 LGNSW Report

Resolved: That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum notes the update from Local Government NSW.

Moved: Cr Rick Firman OAM, Seconded: Cr Chris Cherry, Carried.

8.3 Australian Local Government Association Report

Resolved: That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum notes the update from the Australian Local Government Association.

Moved: Cr Ruth McRae OAM, Seconded: Cr Julia Ham, Carried.

8.4 Minister for Local Government Address

NSW Minister for Local Government The Hon Ron Hoenig MP attended the forum to respond to queries from the Chairs'.

Item 9 General Business

The convenor, Cr Sue Moore called for any general business.

- *Distribution of business papers: Cr Ruth McRae OAM queried if NSW JO Chairs Forum business papers could be shared with member councils. This was supported and encouraged.*

Item 10 Close

The convenor, Cr Sue Moore closed the meeting at 5.10pm

Formal meeting closed 5.10pm

3.2. Action Register

Recommendation:

- That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum notes the progress of actions from previous meetings.

Key: Complete In progress Incomplete

Date and Agenda Item No.	Action	Responsibility	Status	Target Date	Progress Comments
7/5/2025 2.0	Acknowledgement of contribution – Jenny Bennett Write to Jenny Bennett, Executive Officer Central NSW JO to acknowledge and thank Jenny for her significant contribution to both the broader NSW joint organisation network and to the success and achievements of the Central NSW JO.	Hunter JO	Complete	30 June 2025	Refer Correspondence
7/5/2025 6.2	NSW Net Zero Commission Executive officers to further engage with Net Zero Commission to explore opportunities for collaboration.	Hunter JO	Complete	30 June 2025	<p>Meeting held between JO Executive Officers and Net Zero Commission representatives on 4th June to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further explore the remit and focus of the Net Zero Commission (including current consultation process underway) • Explain the nature and function of JO's and examples of how we are successfully collaborating with agencies • Explore potential opportunities for collaboration between JO's and the Commission <p>Further engagement is continuing with the Commission through the monthly meeting of Executive Officers. A number of JO's have also provided submissions to the recent Net Zero Commission consultation process. Refer Agenda Item 7.2.</p>
7/5/2025 7.1	Benefit Sharing for communities impacted by the transition to renewable energy	Central NSW JO	In progress		Workshop scheduled for 7th August 2025 JO Chairs Forum to further explore a consistent state-wide approach towards

	<p>That the Joint Organisation Chairs' Forum note the Benefit Sharing for communities impacted by the transition to renewable energy report and</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Note that the impacts to communities from the transition to renewables are poorly understood and likely to be highly understated. 6. 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; 7. Advocate for better benefit sharing arrangements for the communities of regional NSW; and 8. Support a greater focus on the roll out of Distributed Energy Resources. 			7 August 2025	advocacy, frameworks and resources to support the establishment of Community Benefit Sharing schemes.
7/5/2025 7.2	<p>Shared ARIC</p> <p>That Joint Organisations nominate their intent to participate in the shared ARIC by 30 May 2025.</p>	All Joint Organisations	Complete	30 May 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hunter JO and Central NSW JO Boards have resolved to pursue a shared ARIC model. Mid North Coast JO have also advised they are considering the opportunity to join. Action to progress development of shared model has commenced.
7/5/2025 7.4	<p>JONZA Program Update</p> <p>Subject to consultation with agency representatives, write to the NSW Minister for the Environment advocating for lengthening the period of funding for the JONZA program from the current 18 months to a period of 5 years to allow Councils to implement the actions needed to achieve the NSW Net Zero targets.</p>	Hunter JO	In progress	31 July 2025	To be discussed with agency representatives at the 6 th August 2025 Executive Officers' meeting.

Previously Completed Actions

Date and Agenda Item No.	Action	Responsibility	Status	Target Date	Progress Comments
8/8/2024 6.2	Coalition of Renewable Energy Councils Presentation Mayor Sam Coupland to provide suitable wording for council reports and recommended motion in support of CoREM Statement of Expectations content and statewide guidelines	Mayor Sam Coupland, Armidale Regional Council	Completed	14 November 2024	November 2024. Action completed CoREM's Statement of Expectations and Armidale's Renewable Energy Community Benefit Statement provided with request from Mayor Coupland for all councils to adopt similar documents
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.
8/8/2024 5.2	Statewide JO Network Projects and Opportunities Write to Minister for Local Government the Hon. Kristy McBain MP and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Mayor Russell Fitzpatrick supported by 14 November 2024 14 August 2024 Completed Response received from Minister King included in incoming correspondence for 14 November meeting NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum Action Register Page 2 of 2 Projects and Opportunities Local Government the Hon. Catherine King MP, for Cr Fitzpatrick, Chair NSW JO Forum to send.	Illawarra Shoalhaven JO	Completed		Nov 2024. Action completed Response received from Minister King included in incoming correspondence for 14 November meeting

<p>21/03/2024</p> <p>4.3</p>	<p>New Waste Tendering regulation Write to the Premier, Minister for Local Government and Minister for Environment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise concerns with the regulatory amendments for tendering of local government waste contracts; • 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 	<p>Mayor Russell Fitzpatrick</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<p>8th August 2024</p>	<p>May 2025. Action Completed. Correspondence forwarded to LGNSW December 2024 – refer correspondence</p> <p>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.</p>
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4. Correspondence

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

- **That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum notes, discusses or 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 Jenny Bennett re Acknowledgement and thanks for her contribution to the NSW Joint Organisation Network, 20 June 2025

Correspondence Received: Nil

*Attachments are provided as a separate document to provide supplementary information and context.

5. Workshops and Presentations

5.1. Workshop - Community Benefit Sharing – Potential for JO State-wide approach

Presenter: Kate Barker, Central NSW JO & Sharon Houlihan, Canberra Region JO

This session will further explore a consistent state-wide approach across the JO network towards advocacy, frameworks and resources to support the establishment of Community Benefit Sharing schemes, in collaboration with a broader range of stakeholders (e.g. Country Mayors Association, Mining and Energy Related Councils, Coalition of Renewable Energy Mayors). This focus is in- line with the resolution endorsed by the Chairs Forum at its 7th May meeting.

Refer Agenda Item 7.1 for further background.

5.2. Briefing – Individual JO Spotlight

Presenter: Steve Wilson, Hunter JO

This session will become a standing agenda item to showcase the operating structure, systems, Board processes, priorities, challenges and opportunities for each JO around the state. A different JO will present at each meeting. The first JO to provide a presentation will be Hunter.

6. Standing Updates

6.1. Minister for Local Government

NSW Minister for Local Government The Hon Ron Hoenig MP is an apology.

6.2. NSW Office of Local Government Report

Brett Whitworth, Deputy Secretary Local Government – Office of Local Government will provide a verbal update. Areas of interest include:

- JO framework review and potential resulting changes to joint organisation model
- Status of changes to proclamations for new JO member councils and/or bringing in Associate Members
- Reduction in compliance obligations for joint organisations
- Aligning ARIC requirements to nature and scope of activities delivered by joint organisations
- Status of changes to Code of Conduct and Code of Meeting Practice.

6.3. Australian Local Government Association Report

Report Author:	Mayor Cr Matt Burnett, President of Australian Local Government Association
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Recommendation:

- **That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum notes the update from the Australian Local Government Association.**

Executive Summary: Nil

Background: Nil

Discussion:

- 2025 National General Assembly

A record crowd of more than 1300 mayors, shire presidents, councillors, and local government leaders attended the successful 2025 National General Assembly in Canberra from 24-27 June.

ALGA's annual conference is often referred to "local government week" in the capital, with its own gravitational pull of getting the right people in the right room at the right time.

There were many memorable moments and highlights across the four-day event, including the welcome address by Australia's Governor General Her Excellency the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC, who spoke about community resilience, local engagement and the need to nurture civic leadership in our young people.

During the week, delegates heard from several Federal Ministers, including Finance Minister Senator Katy Gallagher, Local Government and Emergency Management Minister Kristy McBain and Assistant Minister for Climate Change Josh Wilson. Shadow Ministers also spoke at the NGA, including Shadow Special Minister for State James McGrath, Shadow Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories Dr Anne Webster, Shadow Veterans Affairs Minister Darren Chester, and Shadow Minister for Trade and Tourism Kevin Hogan.

We enabled a record 50 side events during the NGA from member associations and key local government groups. I valued my discussions on how to better support councils with renewable transitions with Climate Change Authority Chair, the Hon Matt Kean and Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner Tony Mahar.

I sincerely thank everyone who took part in this year's NGA. A summary of the annual conference is outlined in the [NGA Communique](#), and you can enjoy some [photos](#) and [watch a video](#) featuring comments from mayors and councillors at the event.

- [New climate adaptation report](#)

During the 2025 NGA, we launched ground-breaking new climate research highlighting the leadership of councils in adapting to the changing climate.

The [Adapting Together: Local Government Leadership in a Changing Climate report](#) outlined how councils are expected to spend more than \$2 billion over the next five years to support their communities from the changing climate.

As part of the launch, I did several media interviews, including with [The Australian](#) newspaper, and discussed how significant formula-based funds could provide councils the certainty to continue this important work.

ALGA also hosted a climate adaptation webinar on 30 June to showcase how local governments were approaching the risks and opportunities around the changing climate. The free webinar also enabled discussion among council leaders about their approaches, wins and challenges in managing climate change impacts.

- [Financial sustainability inquiry](#)

We are maintaining pressure on the Federal Government, and continue to engage with Ministers and Shadow Ministers about the Parliamentary inquiry into local government sustainability.

It was encouraging to see political leaders from both sides of Parliament recently make statements that the inquiry needs to be reinstated and progressed. We are calling on the Government to respond with a major increase in formula-based, untied funding for all councils.

Released earlier this year, the inquiry's [interim report](#) shone a spotlight on the extent of the financial challenges councils are facing, as funding programs haven't kept pace with increased responsibilities.

Importantly, we need significant increases across Financial Assistance Grants before refining the distribution models. Every council across Australia wants to support the current and future needs of our communities, and budget certainty is essential to achieving this goal.

We will continue to work hard to ensure the long-term sustainability of the entire sector, and the outstanding support you provide every day in your communities.

- FA grants early payment

ALGA welcomed the Federal Government's [early payment](#) of \$1.7 billion in untied Financial Assistance Grants to all councils, who received 50 per cent of their 2025-26 allocation just before the new financial year.

We understand the ongoing challenges of not knowing when these funds are received each year, given that this was previously provided to local governments as a stimulus payment.

We are working hard to break the 'catch-up cycle', and seeking for this to be addressed in the final report of the financial sustainability inquiry.

- Emergency management funding

It's been so impressive to see councils stepping up to support their communities during recent natural disasters, including the severe flooding across mid and northern New South Wales.

I say a sincere and heartfelt thank you to all Mayors, Councillors, staff and volunteers for their outstanding service during these challenging times.

The Federal Government's independent emergency management reviews – the Colvin and Glasser reviews – recently recommended better support for local government to improve capacity and capability.

ALGA's response to these reviews highlighted the need for a sustainable funding model for disasters through a non-competitive pathway, and dedicated funding for local government.

As a result, we are calling for \$900 million per year in funding for mitigation and resilience measures, and "building back better" must be a core element in all these programs.

- 2025 Roads Congress in Bendigo

I invite you to [register](#) for ALGA's 2025 National Local Roads, Transport and Infrastructure Congress to be held in Bendigo, in regional Victoria from 11-12 November.

The program will feature leading industry experts, federal and state government representatives, and innovative councils sharing their insights on how we plan, build, and maintain our local road networks and community assets.

The Congress is an opportunity to share the latest ideas on managing local road networks to help reduce the death toll and increase national productivity. We will release more details about the guest speakers soon. [Register now](#)

Attachments*: Nil

*Attachments are provided as a separate document to provide supplementary information and context.

6.4. LGNSW Report

Report Author:	Mayor Phyllis Miller OAM, LGNSW President
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Recommendation:

- **That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum notes the update from Local Government NSW.**

Executive Summary: Nil

Background: Nil

Discussion:

2025 cost shifting report

In July LGNSW launched our latest Cost Shifting Report, demonstrating that cost shifting imposed onto NSW councils amounted to **\$1.5 billion** in 2023-24.

Alarming, this is the equivalent of almost **\$500 per ratepayer** per year across the state.

The unrelenting growth of cost shifting to councils, coupled with rate pegging and insufficient state and federal funding, is increasingly eroding the possibility of financially sustainable local government and risking the capacity of councils to deliver the essential infrastructure and services required by their communities.

The NSW Parliamentary inquiry into financial sustainability recognised this problem in its November 2024 report, recommending that the NSW Government identify opportunities to reduce cost shifting to local government.

There have been some positive developments in recent years: the new rate pegging methodology now captures population growth as well as any increases in the Emergency Services Levy. Action on the Red Fleet dispute, including associated maintenance costs, is within reach.

LGNSW has prepared a **template mayoral minute** and **template letter** to the NSW Government to assist councils in joining our sector in urgent advocacy. These resources, along with the full cost shifting report and a summary brief, are [available online](#). Councils are also encouraged to consider sharing this information with their communities to assist in improving community understanding of the extent to which the already constrained resources of local government are being diverted to state-imposed costs.

Thank you to all councils that returned surveys to inform this important report. LGNSW will continue to call on the NSW Government to fairly address this matter and stop shifting its costs to councils.

NSW inquiry – Ability of local governments to fund infrastructure and services

In May 2025, the NSW Government responded to the recommendations of the inquiry into the ability of local governments to fund infrastructure and services. Councils are united in recognising the need for action to address the serious financial sustainability challenges facing the local government sector, and I welcomed many of the aspects of the Government's response to the inquiry that similarly recognise this need for action.

It is positive that the NSW Government response acknowledges the need to review unfair rate exemptions and the rating of Build to Rent properties and reassess and index inadequate fixed fees and charges.

It is especially welcome that the NSW Government response commits to strong advocacy to the federal government on the need to increase Financial Assistance Grants to 1% of Commonwealth taxation revenue.

However, some parts of the NSW Government response will require further detail and action, and LGNSW would like to see decisive steps taken to implement the inquiry's recommendations. LGNSW is particularly determined to ensure that the Special Variation process be streamlined for sensible and justified variations, that the collection and expenditure of development contributions is improved and that action is taken to address cost shifting.

The Minister for Local Government is now establishing an Expert Advisory Panel to inform the next steps in the reform process. This panel will result in the advice and input from LGNSW and the local government sector more broadly being front and centre in ensuring reforms are fit for purpose.

Red Fleet

After many years of consistent and principled LGNSW and sector advocacy, I am so pleased with the recommendations of the NSW Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) [report](#) for the Inquiry into the assets, premises and funding of the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS), tabled in May.

In a significant win for local government, all 14 recommendations contained in the report are strongly consistent with the [positions advocated by LGNSW](#) and councils.

The Committee is recommending that:

- The *Rural Fires Act 1997* be amended to vest ownership of red fleet assets in the RFS.
- The RFS be made fully responsible for the maintenance and repair of red fleet assets; and
- The NSW Government conduct a comprehensive review of the Rural Fires Act to ensure it reflects the RFS's current standing as the state's primary bush fire response agency.

Councils strongly support the RFS and recognise that it is a world leading firefighting service. Over many years, the RFS has evolved from a purely community-based initiative, through to then being part of the local council, and now to being a State Government agency with responsibilities under national emergency management arrangements.

Councils no longer have a say in the acquisition, deployment, usage or disposal of RFS assets. This evolution needs to be reflected in the Rural Fires Act so that the accountability and the responsibility for the RFS are fully aligned.

Addressing this issue is a longstanding advocacy priority for LGNSW and I thank all councils that have joined in concerted advocacy on this matter over many years. LGNSW is calling on the NSW Government to support these recommendations and work with councils to implement them.

IPART's final report on Valuer General's pricing for councils

IPART has reviewed maximum prices for the monopoly land valuation services provided by the Valuer General to local councils. The Valuer-General had proposed price increases of between 21% and 38%.

LGNSW made submissions in response to IPART's issues paper and draft report, strongly opposing the Valuer-General's pricing proposals as excessive and unjustified.

IPART's final decision rejects the Valuer-General's proposal of an average fee of \$10.45 and provides for an average fee of only \$7.93, which is an increase of just 0.2% on the current average price. This is an excellent outcome and a sensible decision that avoids unjustified cost increases on councils and ratepayers. If the Valuer-General's pricing proposal had proceeded, councils and communities would have had to fund an additional \$17.4 million over the four years from 1 July 2025.

Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill 2025

I was pleased to appear at the [Inquiry into the Local Government Amendment Elections Bill](#) on 15 July.

It was a good opportunity to reiterate our calls for greater oversight of the costs being charged to councils for local government elections, alongside supporting a pre-poll duration from the Saturday to the Friday prior to the election (as was the case in 2024).

I also highlighted the need for a longer nomination period, and faster declaration of results post-election.

I appreciate that there is a wide diversity of views across the local government sector on how casual vacancies on councils should be filled and indeed, the electoral contexts for the 128 councils in NSW are very diverse.

LGNSW does not support the NSW Government's original proposal that all casual vacancies must be filled from the same group on the ballot paper as the departing councillor, and by-elections used in all other cases. This imposes a one-size-fits-all method on councils, including the many councils that do not have groups on their ballot papers, and would result in far more by-elections, which in many cases are more expensive than a full ordinary election.

The most suitable approach, reflecting the diversity of our councils, is for councils to retain the ability to select, at their first meeting of a new term, the method for filling casual vacancies.

This might include by-elections, countback elections where possible, or countback from within the same group as the departing councillor where possible.

The newly elected council has a democratic mandate to make this decision, in the interests of both the stability of the council and with an understanding of the costs that may be imposed on their council through each option.

Ultimately, this is a Bill that does not need to be rushed as these provisions would not take effect until the 2028 local government elections. It is so important that the NSW Government gets this right, in close consultation with councils.

More information on LGNSW's position on the Bill is in [our submission to the Inquiry](#).

Final report on invasive species impacts in NSW

In May, the NSW Government published the [final report of the NSW Invasive Species Management Review](#), with a number of excellent key findings and recommendations.

- **Longer-term funding** – The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) has proposed a five-year program (as in the current Weeds Action Program), but with funding allocated in five year terms. LGNSW has consistently called for more secure funding for the program.

- **Compliance and enforcement** – The report recommends establishing a dedicated invasive species compliance and enforcement function to support the local control authorities (LCAs) and the NSW Government with legal cases for prosecution under the Biosecurity Act. LGNSW has called for this support to be available for LCAs. The report also calls for strengthened enforceability of the ‘general biosecurity duty’.
- **Public awareness** – The report recommends a risk-based awareness and education program be delivered to increase understanding of the importance of invasive species management, shared responsibilities and how to participate. This aligns with LGNSW advocacy, particularly regarding the need for education campaigns on the general biosecurity duty.
- **Cat containment** – The report recommends the amendment of the *Companion Animals Act 1998* to enable councils to introduce cat containment policies in their LGAs. This is a longstanding position of LGNSW, and one which we are also advocating on via the current review of the Companion Animals Act. [See LGNSW submission here.](#)

The report also proposes an Invasive Species Investment Program which would include ‘additional funding for aligned pest animal monitoring and surveillance functions to be undertaken by LCAs and coordinated by Local Land Services. LGNSW has been clear that we do not support additional responsibilities being given to councils. However, acknowledgment of the need to fund and resource this function is welcome.

New Australian Drinking Water Guidelines

The National Health and Medical Research Council has published [updated Australian Drinking Water Guidelines](#), confirming new, lower values for per- and polyfluroalkyl substances (PFAS) in Australian Drinking Water supplies.

The NSW Government has confirmed that all NSW drinking water supplies – including those in rural and regional areas operated by council local water utilities (LWUs) currently meet these new guidelines.

The NSW Government has advised it will continue to work with councils to ensure appropriate long term measures are in place to ensure the safety and quality of drinking water.

The growing challenge in managing PFAS – whether in water supplies, landfill, food packaging or elsewhere – requires concerted action from all levels of government. While LWUs are committed to safeguarding drinking water quality and PFAS risks, they cannot do this alone and this is a point LGNSW has been reiterating, including at the [parliamentary inquiry into PFAS drinking in water supplies](#) earlier this year.

LWUs are not responsible for PFAS contamination, which has multiple different sources including firefighting foams and everyday consumer products such as food packaging and cosmetics.

LGNSW will continue to call on the NSW Government to provide financial assistance to LWUs to upgrade drinking water treatment systems where this may be required in the future and to undertake PFAS cleanup measures.

Regional Communities Consultation Guide

The NSW Government has published its [Regional Communities Consultation Guide](#), outlining its intended approach to consulting with regional, rural and remote communities in an effort to make better decisions and improve the lives of people across NSW.

The *Regional Communities (Consultation Standards) Act 2024* requires compliance with the Guide for certain consultations.

Earlier this year, [LGNSW made a submission](#) in response to a draft version of the Guide, raising council concerns about the inadequacy of past engagements our sector.

Our submission also made clear that this Guide cannot be just for show. It must be meaningfully implemented by the NSW Government in its consultations with rural, regional and remote communities to they are meaningful, transparent, localised, inclusive and flexible – as proposed.

LGNSW will hold the NSW Government to account to ensure it meets its obligations under the Guide.

NSW State Budget 2025-26

Positive announcements for councils in this year's State Budget, include:

- \$4.2 billion in disaster relief across the forward estimates, with the government anticipating that this figure would increase in response to previous and potentially new natural disasters.
- A range of budgetary measures to promote housing development, which reflect recognition that emphasis on the planning system alone will not resolve the housing crisis.
- Welcome boosts for biosecurity measures, including to protect against pest animal and weed incursions. This includes an additional \$100 million to develop an improved detection, protection and response model.
- \$472.9 million for improving the Biodiversity Offset Scheme and associated measures.
- Increased investment in rural and regional health, including dental and mental health.
- A commitment of \$6 million over two years to support Central Darling Shire Council's transition back to elected representation and assist the council in achieving long-term financial stability.

However, there were some disappointing announcements and funding gaps.

- The government is yet to make a funding commitment to renew or replace the Safe and Secure Water Program (SSWP). LGNSW has been advocating for a commitment of \$1 billion over 4 years.
- An increase of 7% in Emergency Services Levy (ESL) council contributions from last year. While the cost of the increase to councils will be largely recovered through an increase in the rate peg for each council, it is still a cost to ratepayers that councils will have to collect.
- No new funding for public and social housing.
- Insufficient investment in enabling infrastructure to support housing.
- A conspicuous lack of investment in infrastructure betterment and resilience, so our communities can better withstand future disasters and a changing climate.

Separately, LGNSW welcomed the Commonwealth Government’s recent decision to bring forward more than \$1.7 billion in untied Financial Assistance Grant funding. This is a positive development for all councils and particularly critical for those facing cash flow challenges or recovering from recent extreme weather events, helping ensure they can continue delivering essential services to their communities. LGNSW continues to call on the NSW Government to restore Financial Assistant Grants to 1% of Commonwealth taxation revenue.

LGNSW submissions

LGNSW has lodged the following submissions since March 2025. LGNSW always welcomes input from all LGNSW members, including JOs and ROCs, to inform our submissions.

Topic	Submitted to	Date
Works in Kind Guidelines - Housing and Productivity Contribution Scheme	Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure	July
Community Participation Plan Changes	Department of Planning Housing and Infrastructure	July
2025 Independent Market Monitoring Review - Early Childhood Education and Care	IPART NSW	July
Draft NSW Heritage Strategy	Heritage NSW	July
Inquiry into LG Elections Bill 2024	Inquiry into LG Elections Bill 2024	July
NSW Waste and Circular Infrastructure Plan	NSW EPA	June
National Child Safety Review	Australian Government, Department of Education	June
National Principles for the Regulation of Assistance Animals	Department of Social Services (Fed)	June
Evaluation of the Public Spaces (Unattended Property) Act 2021	Office of Local Government (OLG)	June
Sydney Water Licence Review	NSW Environment Protection Authority	June
Explanation of Intended Effect: Illegal Tree and Vegetation Clearing	Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure	June
Inquiry into Infrastructure for Electric and Alternative Energy Source Vehicles in NSW	NSW Parliament - Committee on Transport and Infrastructure	May
Energy from Waste Framework and Options Paper	NSW EPA	May
Draft Submission to the Review of the Companion Animals Act 1998	Office of Local Government	May

IPART Review of Valuer General Prices to Local Government 2025	IPART	May
NSW Housing Pattern Book	Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure	April
Resource Recovery Innovation Pathway	NSW EPA	April
Quarterly Budget Review Statement (QBRs)	Office of Local Government (OLG)	April
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 Recategorisation	Transport for NSW	March

Mayor Phyllis Miller OAM
LGNSW President

6.5. Country Mayors Association

Verbal update on key priorities and activities of the Country Mayors Association to be provided by Cr Rick Firman, Chair Country Mayors Association.

7. Reports

7.1. Community Benefit Sharing – Potential for JO State-wide approach

Report Authors:	Sharon Houlihan, Executive Officer Canberra Region Joint Organisation
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Recommendations:

That the NSW Joint Organisations' Chairs Forum:

- 1. Notes the report on known advocacy and action underway statewide for establishment of arrangements for community benefits-sharing payments by energy companies to councils,**
- 2. Identify initial shared issues, opportunities and priorities across the JO network relating to the need for more effective community benefit schemes arising from the renewable energy infrastructure roll out.**
- 3. Agrees to maintain a 'watching brief' via inclusion of a standard item on agendas of future meetings of the NSW Joint Organisations' Chairs Forum regarding progress of advocacy and action for establishment of arrangements for community benefits-sharing payments by energy companies to councils.**

Introduction

Many NSW councils, in and out of renewable energy zones, have had renewable energy developments such as wind farms, solar farms and battery storage facilities on rural land undertaken in their local government areas in recent years, along with electricity transmission, energy distribution and waste to energy projects. Most developments have occurred without appropriate agreements to ensure local host communities benefit positively from development in their local areas, let alone offset negative impacts of development.

It is within all councils' power and is common practice to require developers to pay contributions to councils to contribute to negating impacts of their projects and/or to contribute to community benefits.

There is merit in all councils considering adopting policy setting out their expectations to energy companies and state government for negotiation of voluntary planning agreements, and in the making of submissions to state government in the case of state-assessed developments, to include requirements for payment by renewable energy developers to councils to be used for implementing projects of benefit to local communities.

There is also merit in adopting consistent policy across councils with consistent parameters for such negotiations and submissions for community benefit sharing payments, to clearly communicate to energy companies, to the state government and to our communities what councils are seeking by way of fair contribution by energy companies towards broad community benefits, above and beyond negating direct construction impacts.

Background

On this subject, the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum (JO chairs forum) invited the chair of the Coalition of Renewable Energy Councils (CoREM), Cr Sam Coupland, Mayor Armidale Regional Council, to its 8 August 2024 meeting to present on the successful approach of five New England councils to

adopt consistent community benefit-sharing policies as guidance for negotiating with renewable energy developers in their individual councils.

The CoREM mayors agreed a set of expectations to put to the NSW Government with respect to community benefit-sharing payments by renewable energy developers, provided to state government in 2022.

CoREM member councils then adopted individual council policies or frameworks to implement the agreed expectations and these have evolved over time. Refer attached community benefits framework adopted by Armidale Regional Council in May 2024, as an example.

The JO chairs forum agreed that the joint organisations' chairs would ask their respective member councils to consider implementing similar policies or frameworks to bring about benefits sharing with local communities when energy developments occur in their local government areas.

In November 2024, the NSW Government Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure published its *Benefit Sharing Guideline – Guidance for large-scale renewable energy projects, November 2024*. Refer attached. This guideline makes it much easier for councils to agree on payment amounts to be negotiated into voluntary planning agreements with energy companies for those project types covered by the guidelines, being solar, wind and battery storage on rural land.

On 7 May 2025, the JOs Chairs Forum adopted a number of resolutions to encourage progression of community benefits-sharing arrangements in member councils and for advocacy by councils to state government for better community benefits-sharing arrangements.

Councils' Community Benefits-sharing Policies

The new state guideline provides a clear position the individual councils can use for negotiating voluntary planning agreements with renewable energy developers and can be applied by all councils, not just in state government renewable energy zones, and for all wind, solar and battery storage on rural land developments whether council-assessed or state-assessed via council lobbying.

Despite the new guidelines' applicability to specific types of developments, namely solar, wind and battery storage on rural land projects, the new state guideline and similar guidelines developed for different purposes such as for transmission lines, distribution infrastructure and other storage projects as well as community benefits-sharing guidelines developed in other states, may also be useful to adapt and adopt in council policies and frameworks as the basis for:

- negotiations with developers for voluntary planning agreements for all energy-related developments whether energy generation, storage, transmission or distribution,
- submissions to state and federal governments when approvals or consents are provided by other levels of government, and
- negotiating with energy companies retrospectively for better community benefits-sharing payments schemes, for those companies which are already established in local communities.

Adopting policies at council level provides clear communication to energy companies, state governments and our communities as to what councils will seek by way of fair contribution by energy companies establishing operations in their local government areas. It provides certainty for energy companies which can then build in costs to their business cases and signals to communities that their councils are fighting for energy companies to contribute to broad community benefit projects for the whole of their operating life, not just at the time of construction and that all of community can benefit from these companies becoming established in their area.

Advocacy and Actions – Canberra Region Joint Organisation

Most councils with renewable energy or other energy projects in their local government areas are negotiating voluntary planning agreements with energy companies. Councils are starting to seek community benefits-sharing payments from energy companies as per the new state guidelines.

Aside from New England region councils, many councils' actions with respect to adopting policy for ongoing broad community benefits-sharing payments by energy companies to councils appear to be in their infancy. Voluntary planning agreements are being negotiated as the main mechanism for agreeing community benefits programs but, in general and with some exceptions, these programs do not feature ongoing annual payments to councils for the purpose of delivering community benefits-sharing.

Since consideration by the JOs Chairs Forum in August 2024 and again in May 2025, the following known advocacy and actions are underway across NSW regions regarding establishing arrangements for community benefits-sharing payments to councils by energy companies.

Canberra Region Joint Organisation

- In-principle support by all member councils' mayors to adopt policy at individual council level for community benefits-sharing payments to councils by energy companies, planning directors currently workshopping model policy for individual member councils' consideration and considering implementation mechanisms and implications for such a policy.
- Advocacy with other councils with Transgrid HumeLink transmission lines in their local governments areas to state government, federal government, federal energy commissioner, Australian Energy Regulator and to Transgrid directly regarding establishment of legislated mandatory community benefit-sharing payment schemes with ongoing annual payments to councils by energy companies for transmission lines projects.
- One member council reports that, since the new state guidelines have been published, lesser amounts are now able to be negotiated via voluntary planning agreements than the council was previously able to negotiate via s.712 developer contribution agreements, this will be explored and possibly disputed via continued regional advocacy.

Central NSW Joint Organisation

- Considering development of a Regional Community Benefit Sharing Framework for member councils, including leveraging the JO Chairs' Forum where possible for this work, to support member councils to have informed and timely discussions with developers in relation to renewable developments

Riverina Eastern Regional Organisation of Councils

- March 2025 capability building workshop for member councils with expert legal facilitator for member councils to use voluntary planning agreements to leverage economic development including with respect to community benefits-sharing payments.
- One member councils' advocacy with other councils with Transgrid HumeLink transmission lines in their local governments areas to state government for establishment of legislated mandatory community benefit-sharing payment schemes with ongoing annual payments to councils by energy companies.
- One member council reports advocacy that, since the new state guidelines have been published, lesser amounts are now able to be negotiated for battery storage projects via voluntary planning agreements than the council was previously able to negotiate.

Regional Australia Institute

- Recent research paper recommending energy companies' community benefits-sharing payments funds be pooled regionally and used to fund regional-scale projects, reflecting an even more aspirational approach than current actions by state and local governments.

NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum Role?

It is recommended that the JOs Chairs Forum, as a minimum, maintain a 'watching brief' via inclusion of a standard item on agendas of future meetings of the NSW Joint Organisations' Chairs Forum for all joint organisations to report regularly to the JOs Chairs Forum on progress of advocacy and actions for establishment of arrangements for community benefits-sharing payments by energy companies to councils.

Discussion is sought as to the role the JOs Chairs Forum might play, supported by the JOs Executive Officers Network, to progress a consistent state-wide approach towards advocacy, policy frameworks and resources to support the establishment of community benefits-sharing payment schemes, in collaboration with a broader range of stakeholders including Country Mayors Association, Mining and Energy Related Councils and the Coalition of Renewable Energy Mayors and other organisations working in this area such as the Regional Australia Institute.

For example, there may be benefit in mapping the outcomes of all renewable energy development voluntary planning agreements statewide to determine whether consistent and appropriate outcomes for community benefits-sharing are being achieved and to understand how the state government is applying its new guidelines and whether they are resulting in better outcomes for local host councils and communities.

There may also be merit in researching community benefits-sharing guidelines and similar in other states and their implementation progress, to better understand how to achieve net community benefit.

Following mapping, it may be appropriate to consider investment by joint organisations in procuring expertise to:

- Develop a joint statewide advocacy strategy to state and federal governments and to energy companies, commissioners and regulators on this matter, and
- Develop implementation actions that all councils can progress to work towards establishing community benefits-sharing in their local government areas, and
- Build capability of councils planning and executives to understand the opportunities and technical, planning and legal implications and requirements of implementing community benefits-sharing payments schemes via voluntary planning agreements.

This discussion is in line with the resolutions endorsed by the JOs Chairs Forum at its 7th May meeting.

More Information

- Armidale Regional Council [Renewable Energy Community Benefits Framework](#) 2024
- NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure [Benefit-Sharing Guideline](#)

7.2. Shared Priorities provided to NSW Net Zero Commission Consultation Process

Report Authors:	Steve Wilson, Hunter JO
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Recommendation:

- That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum note the report

Executive Summary:

This report provides a collation of the shared priorities and recommendations provided across JO's to the recent consultation process undertaken by the NSW Net Zero Commission.

Background:

Dr Will Rayward, Executive Director of the NSW Net Zero Commission provided a briefing to the JO Chairs Forum at its 7th May 2025 meeting. This focused on the role of the [Net Zero Commission](#), an independent statutory body established in 2024 to monitor action on climate change in NSW, including how NSW is tracking on its climate goals.

Dr Rayward communicated the interest of the Commission in further engaging with the JO network on ideas and levers for accelerating progress toward the NSW targets, including the role that local councils can play. This has been followed by subsequent meetings between representatives from the Commission and Joint Organisation Executive Officers.

In addition to these meetings a number of submissions have been made by member JO's to the Commission's [consultation process](#) to help shape its work plan. This paper provides an overview of the shared priorities included in those submissions across the network.

Discussion:

Those network members providing submissions included:

- Central NSW JO
- Riverina and Murray JO
- Hunter JO
- Riverina East Regional Organisation of Councils (REROC)

Key shared focus areas across the submissions are summarised in the following table:

Focus	Key points / Recommendations
Community benefits from the build out of infrastructure for the energy transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Councils and communities feel that their feedback is not being genuinely considered or incorporated into meaningful action during the build out of infrastructure.• The roll out of infrastructure is not considering broader government objectives (eg the potential for planned temporary worker housing to enhance longer term housing supply in regional communities)• Communities are experiencing traffic disruption and damage to local road networks with no compensation on to fund their repair, further stretching already stressed council road networks and resources.

Focus	Key points / Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lack of local investment or community legacy projects are being generated from the construction of renewable energy and/or transmission projects • There is a lack of transparency over benefit funds where they exist, and the short-term focus of such funds do not consider the longer term cumulative social and environmental impacts on local communities • REZ developments must deliver tangible benefits to the communities directly affected by them, in a consistent and fair manner. • Community Benefit Schemes have the potential to be transformational enablers. By providing funding to local councils, these schemes can directly support place-based planning, infrastructure readiness, business attraction, and skills development. Councils are well placed to align these initiatives with local needs, enabling communities to maximise the socio-economic opportunities created by the renewables rollout.
Local Government Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councils play a vital role in emissions reduction and climate adaptation through their management of infrastructure, facilities and planning functions. However, in the current NSW Government's Net Zero Plan, Councils are barely acknowledged. • We recommend more recognition and funding to help councils deliver local and community-wide net zero actions. • The NSW Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Framework offers a consistent and statutory mechanism to embed climate and emissions reduction priorities across all councils, and in doing so enable councils to plan and deliver climate action in lockstep with both community and state priorities. • Through regional economic development and workforce planning, councils can help attract and grow clean industries that support the local economy. Local governments can play a critical role in diversifying regional economies, supporting transitions and identifying infrastructure gaps that might otherwise hinder new investment and the transition of regional economies to net zero.
Working with Joint Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JOs are set up to coordinate regional efforts. With long-standing relationships and trusted reputations, JOs if resourced, are ideally placed to lead and coordinate regional, place-based programs across their member councils, significantly enhancing the efficiency by which NSW Government agencies can deliver net zero focused programs into regional communities across the state. • Recommended that Net Zero Commission partner with JOs to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop regional net zero plans that reflect rural and regionally appropriate policy instruments that respond to the practical realities of service delivery, capacity constraints and geographic challenges. • Co-design funding programs.

Focus	Key points / Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align investment with four-year regional priorities via IP&R. • Build regional and local capacity.
Council-led Emissions Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councils need targeted capacity building and funding to move from planning to delivery, particularly in smaller and resource-constrained councils. This includes support for regional coordination, shared tools and resources, and peer learning. • Provide long-term funding commitment by the NSW Government to an ongoing JONZA program (min 5 years) • Establish a fund that offers interest-free loans or matched co-investment for shovel-ready projects with quantifiable emissions reduction outcomes. Many councils face significant barriers accessing competitive grant funding and need alternative mechanisms to deliver strategic projects at scale. • Provide dedicated support for community-based energy initiatives recognising that councils play a pivotal enabling role. For example, supporting bulk solar buys, EV infrastructure, and regional energy savings through joint procurement, including shared Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) and collective energy efficiency projects.
Distributed Energy Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There needs to be a stronger focus on enabling the roll-out of Distributed Energy Resources (DER), to ensure regional communities are empowered to become more energy independent and resilient. • DER technology is generally significantly quicker to deploy, ensuring immediate electricity needs can be addressed. DER technology can often be constructed with significantly less interruptions to local communities and businesses.
Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently, there is confusion about what actions are being taken, what is planned, who is responsible, and how the community will benefit, reflecting multiple agencies with different objectives and engagement approaches involved in the net zero space. • Communities need clearer and more consistent (whole of government) information about net zero. • Recommend a whole-of-government approach to regional engagement and tracking community understanding over time. • Engage with councils and JO's to engage local communities to set long-term strategic directions through IP&R, and to embed climate priorities and actions via meaningful, measurable, and aligned responses aligned with existing governance processes.
Waste and Circular Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local councils are crucial to driving the transition to decarbonisation via the circular economy, including implementing strategies that minimise waste, promote resource efficiency, and support sustainable practices within their communities. They also play a key role in educating residents, businesses, and other stakeholders about circular economy principles and initiatives.

Focus	Key points / Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landfills will continue to be significant greenhouse gas emissions sources for the foreseeable future, and generally the largest source of emissions for any individual council who operates such a facility. Further action is required to reduce and mitigate these emissions, for example, supporting Councils with funding to deliver landfill gas capture and organic waste processing. Reinvest funds from the NSW Waste Levy to support local waste and circular economy initiatives and infrastructure and their associated job creation.
Climate Risk and Adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local governments play a unique and systemic role in addressing climate-related risks and achieving climate adaptation objectives. The adaptation required in local communities to address climate risk cannot be delivered by any other level of government due to a lack of local presence and knowledge, as well as the absence of necessary skills, systems and experience delivering place-based projects (Australian Local Government Association, 2025. Adapting Together: Local Government Leadership in a Changing Climate) Most councils lack funding for adaptation planning and action. The 2023 Local Government Climate Change Action Survey (NSW Energy, Climate Change and Sustainability and Local Government NSW) revealed that only 18 councils in NSW have a dedicated budget for climate adaptation. Metropolitan councils were four times more likely than regional councils to have this funding in place. The most common barrier to adaptation action was lack of funding; the top enablers were allocated budgets and access to external funding. To meaningfully assess progress toward the adaptation objective, the Commission should consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whether councils have secure, ongoing funding to plan and deliver adaptation. Whether funding mechanisms support long-term, integrated, place-based approaches. The presence of dedicated staff or capacity within councils and Joint Organisations to drive adaptation planning and implementation.

More Information:

Copies of all submissions provided to the consultation process are available on the [consultation website](#)

7.3. State-wide JO Disaster Adaption Planning

Report Author:	Canberra Region JO, Central NSW JO, Hunter JO, Illawarra Shoalhaven JO, Mid North Coast JO, Riverina and Murray JO & REROC
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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:

The JO network continues to collaborate on a number of disaster preparedness projects funded under the Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) administered by National Emergency Management Agency via the NSW Reconstruction Authority. Illawarra Shoalhaven JO is also providing a statewide Network Coordination role.

These projects 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:

Project Updates

The status of projects being delivered across the network include:

Region	Update
Canberra Region	<p>The objectives and outcomes for the project are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 <p>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.</p> <p>This variation was accepted with the implementation plan approved on 05/05/2025 marking the official start date for the project. CRJO subsequently received the fully executed funding agreement on 30/06/2025.</p>

Region	Update
	<p>CRJO has engaged 1.10 FTE of internal resourcing for project delivery, with contractors/consultants to be identified and procured during Milestone 2 implementation to provide technical support.</p> <p>Unusually onerous administrative burden with respect to grant administration is being placed on the joint organisation with unreasonable evidence requirements being imposed for demonstrating in-kind co-contributions including redacted pay slips and timesheets for council officers. giving their time to work on the project. Other onerous requirements include demonstrating time fractions spent by project officers on individual funded activities of the project and evidence requirements to demonstrate administrative costs claims. These requirements far exceed usual grant administration requirements and are limiting funded project officers' work on delivery of project outputs and outcomes.</p> <p>CRJO did not make an application to Disaster Ready Fund Round 3, however at least one individual member council did.</p>
Central NSW	<p><u>Evacuation Centre Audits</u></p> <p>A project is underway 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 JONZA Round 3 project. The contractor is expected to be engaging by the end of July.</p> <p><u>Integrated Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy & Implementation Plan</u></p> <p>CNSWJO's program includes the development of a localized template that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidates and builds on past work • Includes pre-filled content clearly identifying what's relevant to each council. • Aligns with the State Disaster Mitigation Plan (SDMP) and integrates with council IP&R processes • Supports councils to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify local risks ○ Prioritise actions ○ Align with SDMP actions and IP&R processes (an integrated approach) <p>Scoping is underway with member councils.</p>
Hunter	<p>Hunter JO's three-year Disaster Ready Fund Round 2 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.</p> <p>Deliverables completed during Milestone 1 included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 50 hours of consultation with councils and key stakeholders

Region	Update
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Resilience Maturity Matrix based on previous work (to be refined in collaboration with other JOs) • Draft Council Resilience Capacity Needs Report including insights from resilience health checks, feedback from council representatives and focus areas identified by GMAC • Review of councils 2022-26 IP&R documents and assessment of climate adaptation and resilience commitment level – review of 2025-29 IP&R documents to be completed during Milestone 2 to assess change over time • Ongoing Simtable loans to local RFS brigades and landcare groups • Interim MOU for Emergency Operations and Resource Sharing being trialed for three-month period following the May flooding and severe weather event • NSW Reconstruction Authority addressed May GMAC during flood recovery and June Hunter JO Board meeting to discuss upcoming DAP process • July GMAC workshop with NSW RA and EPA to focus on challenges and opportunities in disaster waste management <p>Hunter JO continues to work with the broader JO network on shared opportunities and challenges including DRF grant reporting evidence requirements.</p>
Illawarra Shoalhaven	<p>At its April 2025 meeting, the Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation Board endorsed the submission of a revised application for funding under the Commonwealth Government’s Disaster Ready Fund Round 2. This resolution followed negotiations with the NSW Reconstruction Authority, which resulted in substantial enhancements to the original funding proposal. These changes addressed key concerns around financial viability and organisational capacity, enabling a more strategic and regionally focused program design.</p> <p><u>Project Overview</u></p> <p>1. Regional Delivery Program (Illawarra Shoalhaven Focus)</p> <p>This stream will support councils across the Illawarra Shoalhaven to embed resilience thinking into core planning processes, while also addressing region-specific risks and vulnerabilities.</p> <p>Key activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity Building Workshops: Tailored workshops will be delivered to build staff capability across participating councils. These sessions will focus on the integration of disaster resilience into the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework, ensuring that long-term community planning reflects local risk profiles and adaptation needs • Energy Supply Vulnerability Assessment and Resilience Modelling: A regional study will be commissioned to assess vulnerabilities across the energy network, identifying critical points of failure and modelling potential adaptation and mitigation strategies to enhance energy security during natural hazards • Critical Infrastructure Resilience Planning: Plans will be developed in consultation with relevant asset owners and service providers across the transport, energy, water/sewer, and telecommunications sectors

Region	Update
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring, Evaluation and Improvement of Multi-Hazard Sensor Network: Ongoing oversight of the Attentis sensor network across the region, including data interpretation, performance review, and continuous improvement recommendations to ensure real-time hazard detection contributes meaningfully to preparedness and early warning systems. • Support for Regional Disaster Adaptation Plans (DAPs): In partnership with the NSW Reconstruction Authority, this work will contribute to the development of regional-scale DAPs. These plans aim to align local knowledge with broader state strategies, enabling a coordinated approach to climate risk and disaster management. <p>2. Network Coordination Program (Statewide Focus)</p> <p>This stream addresses the cross-boundary nature of disaster resilience by working across JOs, ROCs, state agencies, and key infrastructure and community partners.</p> <p>Key activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Network Facilitation: Establishment and coordination of a statewide disaster resilience network to enable knowledge exchange, peer learning, and alignment of regional efforts with state and national policy directions. • Disaster Ready Maturity Matrix Development: Co-design and rollout of a practical maturity matrix for councils to self-assess their resilience capability. This tool will provide clear benchmarks and guide targeted investment and support. • Translation of Best Practice into Practical Tools: Development of toolkits, templates, and guidance materials that convert complex disaster risk reduction policies and academic research into user-friendly resources for councils and their communities. • Targeted Capacity Building: Delivery of training and support services tailored to the needs of individual councils or regions. This may include grant writing assistance, planning support, guidance on regulatory compliance, and professional development for staff in resilience-related roles. <p><u>Project Variation Pending</u></p> <p>We are currently finalising a project variation which will reflect an enhanced methodology and weighting attribution in regard to in kind contributions and revisions to scope relating to the DAP process and learnings from the Regional Adaptive Pathways project.</p>
Mid North Coast	<p>The Mid North Coast Joint Organisation (MNCJO) has been successful in progressing to the next stage of the Australian Government's <i>Disaster Ready Fund Round 3 (DRF R3)</i>.</p> <p>An application was submitted with a total project value of \$1.6 million over three years. We have now been advised that the MNCJO has advanced to Stage 2 and the application has progressed up to the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) for assessment. Funding announcements are expected in September 2025, with project commencement scheduled for January 2026.</p>

Region	Update
	<p>The proposed project will strengthen disaster resilience across the Mid North Coast by enhancing both council and community capacity through the following key components:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implementation of Disaster Adaptation Plans (DAPs): Coordinating local and regional stakeholders to deliver priority adaptation actions. 2. MNCJO Inter-Council Regional Resilience Network: Building internal council capability and shared regional approaches to resilience. 3. Simtable Program: Supporting community preparedness and capacity building through interactive, place-based scenario planning. 4. Participation in the Statewide Joint Organisation Network Coordination Program: Aligning with other Joint Organisations (JOs) across NSW to maximise collaboration and impact. <p>Key Components of the project include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Land Use Planning Maturity Assessments – helping councils identify gaps in disaster resilience planning and embed improvements into Local Strategic Planning Statements (LSPS). • Development of a Regional Critical Infrastructure Resilience Plan – identifying systemic infrastructure vulnerabilities and long-term strategic mitigation actions. <p>This opportunity reflects MNCJO’s ongoing commitment to leading regional coordination and building long-term resilience for its member councils and communities.</p>
<p>Riverina and Murray</p>	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>The Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) Round 2 is an initiative by the Australian Government that aims to enhance Australia’s capacity to respond, adapt and recover from disaster. The DRF Round 2 is jointly funded by the Australian and New South Wales governments and administered by the NSW Reconstruction Authority (NSW RA).</p> <p>The RAMJO DRF Round 2 Project commenced 16 April 2025 and comprises three components, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Critical Infrastructure Risk Assessments that will assess council critical infrastructure assets and supporting asset management plans and identify and prioritise actions to increase the resilience of council critical infrastructure to natural hazard shocks and long-term stressors. 2. Land Use Planning Maturity Assessments that will assess the maturity of council strategic land use planning and housing documents to determine how well future natural hazard risk is embedded into strategies/plans/statements. Action plans will identify priorities for councils to include in future strategic land use planning activities. 3. Synthesis and Embedment Workshops (2) will help incorporate priorities from the risk and maturity assessment action plans into Integrated and Planning documents, asset management plans, local housing strategies and strategic land use planning documents. <p>RAMJO is also developing a Regional Disaster Risk Profile. The purpose of this document to provide a disaster risk profile for the region and for each council that RAMJO and the councils can use to:</p>

Region	Update
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support grant funding applications; • Justify business cases; • Input into NSW Reconstruction Authority Disaster Adaptation Plans (DAPs) consultation; and, • Discuss council disaster resilience needs and priorities with other state and federal government departments. <p>This activity is not included in the project funding deed but is considered to value-add to the project for councils and can be undertaken by the Project Manager in less busy periods of the overall project. An outline of the proposed document was presented to the Project Control Group who supported this piece of work. This regional and individual council profiles will include Balranald Shire Council and Wentworth Shire Council.</p> <p>RAMJO will also continue working in collaboration with the Joint Organisation (JO) 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.</p> <p><u>Outcomes and Timeframes</u></p> <p>The project deliverable timelines include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p><u>Budget</u></p> <p>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 \$200,000 for assessments and a workshop. The Land Use Planning project component has a budget of approximately \$100,000 for assessments and a workshop.</p> <p><u>Current Workstreams</u></p> <p>Current work includes:</p> <p><u>Critical Infrastructure Risk Assessments</u> – The Tender for this project component was released on 10 June 2025 and closed on 8 July 2025. Four responses were received, and an evaluation panel meeting is scheduled for 17 July. It is expected that a consultant will be engaged by the end of July.</p> <p>The DRF Round 2 Project Control Group and the NSW RA provided feedback on the Tender before its release. An NSW RA staff member working on</p>

Region	Update
	<p>‘Community Consequences of Infrastructure Resilience Assessments’ for the NSW RA Disaster Adaptation Plans (DAPs) will participate in the Evaluation Panel to provide expertise and ensure the engaged consultant and project activities will align with future DAPs undertaken by the NSW RA.</p> <p><u>Land Use Planning Maturity Assessments</u> – The Tender for this project component was released on 16 June 2025 and will close on 15 July 2025. It is expected that a consultant will be engaged by mid-August which aligns with the overall project timeline.</p> <p>The DRF Round 2 Project Control Group and the NSW RA provided feedback on the Tender before its release. An NSW RA staff member working on land use planning actions in the State Disaster Mitigation Plan will participate in the Evaluation Panel to provide expertise and ensure the engaged consultant and project activities will align with future Disaster Adaptation Planning undertaken by the NSW RA.</p> <p><u>Regional Disaster Risk Profile</u> – The Project Manager has begun work on the Profile and will present a very basic first draft to the PCG at its next meeting on 20 August 2025 to ensure that the document direction and content meet the needs and expectations of councils.</p>
REROC	<p>DRF R3 project – We have received advice that the REROC application has progressed to the next assessment phase received on 9 July 2025.</p> <p>The project is called Building and strengthening partnerships for effective disaster management in the Eastern Riverina NSW</p> <p>This project has four key components and aims to address identified gaps to improve disaster preparedness and management in Eastern Riverina NSW.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 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. 2. Create a Regional Disaster Waste Management Plan, in partnership with REROC Waste Forum (including Wagga Wagga City Council) and NSW EPA. 3. Identify Disaster Alternate Regional Transport routes, in partnership with TfNSW, NHVR, Council and other key stakeholders. 4. Deliver Disaster Preparedness community information sessions to support and a Telstra Connected Communities workshop for council staff professional development in connectivity capability. <p>We now await the outcome of the tender, expected in late September 2025.</p>

Invitation to host Community Recovery Officers

Following the May flooding and severe weather event, NSW Reconstruction Authority approached Hunter and Mid North Coast JOs offering the opportunity to each host a Community Recovery Officer (CRO) role for six months - in effect splitting funds available for a 12-month role into two 6-month roles across two JOs.

The CROs would work with flood-impacted communities across both JO regions to identify needs, attend local recovery events and meetings, assist communities to access accurate recovery

information and resources, and provide leadership and community capacity building, supported by the RA. The roles would be funded under Category A of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA).

Following engagement with General Managers, Hunter JO and Mid North Coast JO both declined the offer to host the role for the following reasons:

- Scope of CRO role
 - Given the strong community focus of the role, our councils feel CRO's are best placed within impacted councils, given their existing strong relationships with community and local networks, relationships that do not exist at the regional JO scale.
 - Councils are better placed to provide the emergency recovery and community engagement supervision expertise and support recommended in the Guidelines.
- JO structural and financial model
 - The funding arrangements proposed in the guidelines were financially unsustainable for the JOs (ie funding is not available to resource the administrative and supervisory support that would be required from the JO).
 - Hosting a CRO would represent a significant shift in the focus and operations of the JO's
- Practical limitations (regardless of whether hosted by a JO or a Council):
 - There was concern that a six-month role would not be effective in engaging local communities across both JO areas given the extensive travel and level of engagement that would be required. For example, we understand that MidCoast Council has identified the need for two CRO's across two years in their LGA alone.
 - The monthly reporting obligations would detract from the already limited capacity to effectively deliver outcomes within the six-month period
 - Challenges in recruiting an appropriately experienced person (ie a new additional resource with the requisite skills and relationships) for a limited 6-month period.

Based on the feedback received from the General Managers, it was recommended that:

- Roles of this nature are best placed locally within impacted Councils given their community focus and geographic scale of operations
- While the opportunity to host CRO's is welcomed, opportunities of this nature would be most effective if initially codesigned with input and support from councils and/or JOs

7.4. State-wide JONZA Program Update

Report Author:	Canberra Region JO, Central NSW JO, Hunter JO, Illawarra Shoalhaven JO, Mid North Coast JO, Northern Rivers JO, Riverina and Murray JO & REROC
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Recommendation:

- That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum note the project updates provided on the JONZA Program.

Executive Summary:

This report provides an update on the initiatives of the Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration (JONZA) Program which is 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.

Discussion

Project Updates

The following table provides an update on JONZA initiatives currently being delivered across the network.

Region	Update
Canberra Region	<p>CRJO's Joint Organisation Net Zero Accelerator (JONZA) Round 3 is based on preparing our member councils for mandatory greenhouse gas emission reporting by establishing their emission baselines, continuing to embed emission reduction processes in council operations as well as developing a number of communications tools and opportunities to assist our members and to promote the net zero work being done by the councils.</p> <p>\$253,200 was secured for program management with \$50,503 being rolled over from last round's EV variation.</p> <p>The project planning for Round 3 is currently underway with continued engagement and cross member council collaboration being at the centre of CRJO's JONZA3.</p> <p>Status of CRJO's deliverables under JONZA 3 and EV variation projects is as follows:</p> <p><u>Carbon Compass (emissions inventory tool)</u></p> <p>By the end of the last funding cycle all 11 of CRJO's councils had chosen to participate in the Carbon Compass project. Out of the 11, two baselines have</p>

Region	Update
	<p>been submitted to Sustainable Councils with another four currently being finalised.</p> <p>CRJO will also use 20% of the grant salary funding to offer a member council employee the opportunity to be seconded as the Net Zero Data Officer. The person will be upskilled in using the C Compass Tool for the member councils and be trained in basic carbon accounting in order to undertake this task.</p> <p>Recruitment will take place in August.</p> <p><u>Electric vehicles</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EV Training Package <p>To streamline the delivery of resources for JONZA councils, CRJO is delivering this project together with the Hunter JO and Northern Rivers JO.</p> <p>A series of videos are almost complete which will serve to upskill council staff in all aspects of transitioning to electric vehicles and the approval processes associated with the installation of EV charging infrastructure.</p> EV Trial <p>A barrier identified to the uptake of EV technology is the lack of opportunities to test drive EVs and to first hand test if an electric passenger vehicle will allow the same delivery of services as its petrol equivalent.</p> <p>6 of the CRJO councils have elected to participate in the trial which will see a KIA EV5 (provided through Origin 360 subscription service) be shared by the councils and the JO for 6 months.</p> EV transition plans <p>To date CRJO's councils have engaged at various levels regarding transition to low emissions vehicles.</p> <p>An amount of the EV variation funding has been earmarked for assisting four of our member councils to start developing, or review existing, transition plans.</p>
Central NSW	<p><u>Electric Vehicle Interactive Tourism Map</u></p> <p>CNSWJO has been leading the development of a state-wide interactive map that promotes spontaneous tourism. While the map is yet to be launched, the website link is live and accessible. Promotion of the map will occur via various formats in the coming months. The map can be found at www.eventuremap.nsw.gov.au. Thanks to ISJO and FNWJO for their helping in driving this project by being on the steering committee.</p> <p><u>Landfill emissions abatement</u></p> <p>CNSWJO was successful in receiving funding from the EPA to put on an 18-month resource to support councils (and other councils within the broader JONZA program) with education and opportunities to reduce emissions from landfill emissions. This program has been flagged through CNSWJO's Regional Emissions Reduction Plan.</p>

Region	Update
	<p><u>Advocacy</u></p> <p>CNSWJO has lodged a number of energy related submissions in recent months:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inquiry into infrastructure needed to support electric and alternate source vehicles ○ Proposed Type 9 Metering Approach Under Flexible Trading Arrangements 2025 ○ Net Zero Commission – 2025 Consultation <p><u>Grants</u></p> <p>CNSWJO is working with its member councils on a regional approach to an application under the Grid Enhancing Technologies (GET) grant program. The focus of the grant is to roll-out batteries and VPPs at 12 water and wastewater sites including treatment plants and pumps. This program links to the findings of the Business Case on the Nexus Between Energy Security and Emissions Reduction.</p>
Hunter	<p><u>Electric Vehicle (EV) Project</u></p> <p>Development of EV Educational Videos: Electric Vehicles (EV) & Charging Infrastructure for councils and community – led by Hunter JO in collaboration with CRJO and NRJO. Three councils have participated in video interviews – Lake Macquarie, Maitland and City of Newcastle along with representatives from JONZA, Hunter JO, DCEEW EV team and EV Council.</p> <p><u>Regional Councils PPA</u></p> <p>Council consultation with Resourced Energy has commenced across the 13 councils of the ‘Regional Councils PPA’ with a comparison of the first four – six months of billing taking place providing actual savings. For example, Upper Hunter savings Jan – April 2024 to 2025 \$16,713 and 46.1t-CO²-e</p> <p><u>Grant Funding - assisted by DCCEEW Sustainable Councils</u></p> <p>CEUF R2 - Four Hunter councils submitted applications with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Coast • Lake Macquarie • Maitland • Singleton <p>Arena Community Batteries Funding Round 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Newcastle <p><u>Collaboration</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EVCI on Public Land Guidance, Leading Practice Framework • EVenture Map (EV Tourism Map) https://eventuremap.nsw.gov.au/ • Maitland, Cessnock and Singleton submitted an EOI to join an Energy Accelerator Program delivered by UTS

Region	Update
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Grant Funding Working Group’ established with Sustainable Councils and JONZA members to provide tools and resources for councils to be future grant ready. <p><u>Networks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivered six Hunter Net Zero Network meetings, 12 guest presenters. <p><u>Carbon Compass Emissions Calculator</u></p> <p>SW DCCEEW has provided free of charge, the Carbon Compass – an emissions reporting tool developed by 100% Renewables – to many councils across NSW for an initial 12-month period. Uptake in the Hunter has been minimal with councils preferring to use existing platforms. Digital tool to be introduced within the next month.</p> <p><u>Landfill Emissions Data Management Project</u></p> <p>Landfill emissions dashboard - emissions estimates and trajectories calculated for 10 landfills using best practice methodology are demonstrated on the landfill emissions dashboard. Council staff can easily interpret SWC outputs via the dashboard, and investigate the potential impact of FOGO, landfill gas capture and landfill closure on emissions. The landfill emissions dashboard hosted on the Hunter Circular website council portal.</p> <p><u>Kinesis CCAP and Net Zero Pathways Trial</u></p> <p>NSW DCCEEW provided Hunter JO and ISJO councils with a trial of the Kinesis Community Emissions Platform. Hunter JO supported the trial by facilitating engagement and providing support to councils facilitating a series of three training workshops, communication between councils and Kinesis and collecting feedback from councils. Currently access is still available.</p> <p><u>Solar system and EV Charger installation for Hunter JO</u></p> <p>Managed by the JONZA coordinator, will significantly reduce the organisation’s emissions and operational costs. A rooftop solar system and two EV chargers were installed at 4 Sandringham Ave, Thornton with estimated savings of \$6266 and 46t-CO₂-e per annum.</p>
<p>Illawarra Shoalhaven</p>	<p>The ISJO was funded for a second twelve-month period through the JONZA 2.0 program, building on the success of Round 1 and continuing to deliver climate change mitigation initiatives for member Councils across the ISJO region.</p> <p>Key ISJO deliverables from Year 2 of the JONZA program included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of initiatives identified within the Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Energy Strategy • Identification of opportunities to develop waste diversion or reprocessing pilot programs • Development of regional Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure guidance

Region	Update
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of regional opportunities for procurement of low emission goods and services • Implementation of a regional Community Renewables Program • Standardisation of corporate emissions reporting • Piloting of a regional standardised community emissions reporting framework • Facilitation of regional grant applications aligned with strategic net zero initiatives. <p>Across regional NSW, the JONZA program has been successful in establishing nine net zero coordinator positions who are working with a total of 69 Councils and a range of NSW Government agencies. Locally, the JONZA network has enabled ISJO member Councils to access supportive climate change mitigation programs, decision-making tools, and potential funding sources at both State and regional levels.</p> <p><u>Priority ISJO Projects Proposed for JONZA Program Year 3</u></p> <p>Key draft priority areas of focus proposed for the JONZA 3.0 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of a Regional Energy Forum with Council and Industry stakeholders • Development of a regional solar servicing and maintenance contract template • Development of a regional fleet transition plan • Develop opportunities to embed sustainability measures into the contract renewal process • Develop opportunities to procure low carbon alternatives to high emission materials • Collaborate to deliver landfill emissions modelling project for strategic waste planning • Facilitate the delivery of the Community Renewables Program • Develop of an opportunities assessment for carbon offsetting potential • Implement an emissions reporting workshop for member councils • Embed emissions reporting tools and structures into Council operations • Deliver regional resilience projects including a regional energy vulnerability assessment • Develop regional grant applications that align with strategic net zero initiatives • Facilitate net zero PCG network across ISJO Member Councils and key stakeholders • Collaborate on net zero initiatives identified through the JO network <p>The next stage is to validate these priority projects with the net zero PCG and include them in the Project Management Plan submission for review and approval by the DCCEEW Sustainable Councils Team. Once approved, these projects and any further project opportunities that arise in the net zero space will be delivered over the 18-month term of the JONZA 3.0 program.</p>

Region	Update
Mid North Coast	<p>The Mid North Coast Joint Organisation (MNCJO) has commenced implementation of Round 3 of the Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration (JONZA) Program, a strategic NSW Government initiative delivered through the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). The awarded \$253,200 grant enables the continuation of a dedicated Net Zero Manager role, ensuring consistent leadership and coordination of net zero actions across the member councils of the MNCJO. Planning is underway to guide project delivery over the next 18 months. A regional Project Control Group continues to support collaborative governance, and regular workshops have strengthened engagement across council departments.</p> <p><u>Emissions Data Collection and Carbon Compass Implementation</u></p> <p>MNCJO is working with member councils to finalise data entry into the Carbon Compass emissions tracking tool, developed by 100% Renewables. One council has completed baseline reporting, with others progressing well. This data will inform tailored Energy and Emissions Reduction Plans incorporating outcomes from energy audits and infrastructure assessments.</p> <p><u>Energy Assessments and Emissions Reduction Planning</u></p> <p>Large site energy audits have been undertaken across member councils to identify energy efficiency opportunities and assess the feasibility of solar PV and battery storage systems. These assessments have included on-site inspections, analysis of historical energy usage, and engagement with facility managers. The audits have already led to several practical recommendations being adopted by councils, demonstrating tangible progress in reducing operational emissions.</p> <p>These audit findings will be synthesised into strategic Emissions Reduction Plans tailored to each council. These plans will prioritise low-cost, high-impact actions and seek alignment with Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) frameworks, supporting both environmental and financial sustainability.</p> <p><u>Electric Vehicle Transition Support and Site Readiness</u></p> <p>To support the transition to low-emission fleets, MNCJO will be assisting each council in finalising Electric Vehicle (EV) Readiness Plans. These plans, scheduled for completion by December 2025, will map fleet replacement timelines, identify priority vehicles for electrification, and highlight supporting infrastructure needs. The Chargeworks Fleet Transition Tool is being used to analyse fleet usage and optimise vehicle transition pathways.</p> <p>In parallel, site assessments have been conducted at council depots and administration buildings to evaluate infrastructure readiness for EV charging. This includes identifying suitable switchboards, cable routes, load constraints, and future expansion potential. The resulting master plans will guide staged implementation of EV charging infrastructure, ensuring scalability and cost efficiency. Recent EV infrastructure has recently been installed at 2 council venues as a result of these assessments.</p>

Region	Update
	<p><u>EV Friendly Towns Framework</u></p> <p>In a partnership with the Far North West Joint Organisation (FNWJO), MNCJO has co-developed an EV Friendly Towns Framework designed to assist councils in making their towns more accessible to EV drivers. The framework includes a practical self-assessment checklist based on both essential and desirable criteria, reflecting the expectations of EV travellers.</p> <p>The development process included direct engagement with stakeholders such as the Australian Electric Vehicle Association (AEVA), the Electric Vehicle Council, Destination North Coast and Destination NSW Outback and Country. Insights were also drawn from a statewide survey targeting EV drivers, promoted via AEVA's national network. The final product supports councils in enhancing EV infrastructure, signage, amenities, and tourism alignment, contributing to regional economic development and sustainability objectives.</p> <p><u>Reciprocal Use of EV Charging Infrastructure</u></p> <p>MNCJO is in the process of drafting a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between member councils to allow for the shared use of EV chargers installed at council facilities. This arrangement will permit council fleet vehicles and authorised staff to recharge vehicles when operating in neighbouring council areas, promoting operational flexibility and cross-council collaboration.</p> <p>The initiative aligns with broader goals of maximising investment in infrastructure and fostering regional partnerships. Once finalised, the MoU will include protocols for access, and shared resourcing and will serve as a model for other regions.</p> <p><u>Statewide Collaborative Projects</u></p> <p>MNCJO is actively participating in and contributing funding to two key statewide initiatives being led by other Joint Organisations. The first is the development of a standardised Public EV Charging Policy, spearheaded by the Illawarra Shoalhaven JO. This policy will serve as a best-practice template for all NSW councils, ensuring consistency and clarity in the deployment of public EV charging infrastructure.</p> <p>The second project, led by Central NSW JO, involves the creation of an interactive digital mapping tool that consolidates EV charging locations across regional NSW. The map will incorporate tourism and economic data, helping to position regional towns as accessible destinations for EV drivers and supporting investment in regional visitor economies.</p> <p><u>LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards - Submission</u></p> <p>The MNCJO, in collaboration with the Hunter Joint Organisation, has nominated the <i>Powering Tomorrow: Regional Councils NSW Power Purchase Agreement (PPA)</i> for the 2025 LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards (Division D). This landmark initiative secured renewable electricity for 13 regional councils, including all MNCJO members, through a long-term agreement extending to 2030.</p>

Region	Update
	<p>The PPA will deliver over 390 GWh of electricity, avoid an estimated 185,000 tonnes of carbon emissions, and generate savings of approximately \$5.2 million across participating councils. The project demonstrates the power of coordinated procurement, strategic governance, and evidence-based decision-making in achieving net zero outcomes and budget certainty.</p>
<p>Northern Rivers</p>	<p><u>Progress</u></p> <p>Applications for round 3 of the JONZA program (Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration) program were opened in June 2025. The NRJO applied and was successful in the funding application. JONZA 3 will be funded for 18 months through the NSW Department of Climate Change Energy Environment and Water (DCCEEW) Sustainable Councils team. The JONZA Round 3 grant will fund an employee, and support functions, to undertake Net Zero activities for the NRJO with its 7 member councils.</p> <p>As part of the previous round 2 of JONZA, an end of year report was produced in June 2025 outlining the activities undertaken during the year.</p> <p>Work has also continued on the Electric Vehicle (EV) variation program and the Net Zero projects, as outlined below –</p> <p><u>EV Variation</u></p> <p>As part of the funding for 2024/25, the DCCEEW Sustainable Councils team supplied extra funding through an EV Variation contract. As part of the funding, the NRJO has undertaken the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a public charging policy for Councils <p>As previously reported, all 9 Joint Organisations in the Sustainable Councils program have contributed to an EV contract variation funding to a consultant, Astrolabe, to develop a framework public charging policy for EVs. This policy framework and guidelines will be for councils who wish to develop their own EV charging policies and will include advice on subjects such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Government policies and guidance • Planning pathways • Grants • Processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ownership models ○ Approvals ○ Implementation • Case studies and examples for policies from other councils • Policy frameworks • Tools and templates <p>The Net Zero Program Manager from the NRJO is working with the project control group to guide the delivery of the work. The draft was delivered before June 30 and the final document is expected in mid-July 2025.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Educational Videos: Electric Vehicles (EV) & Charging Infrastructure <p>The NRJO is working with other JOs on the production of a series of videos to help councils understand how EVs work, are charged, and the financial and environmental benefits of EV introduction. A total of 6 short videos are being</p>

Region	Update
	<p>produced. The first drafts were released on 30 June 2025, and the final videos will be published mid-July 2025. Phil Ridler from the NRJO was filmed for the videos and contributed to the project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subscription service for trialling EVs at councils and EV awareness training To generate interest within the councils on EVs, and to give an opportunity for councils to experience some of the latest offerings, 2 vehicles have been obtained through an Origin Energy subscription service. These vehicles will be paid for by the NRJO under funding supplied by the NSW Government through the EV variation agreement. The subscription period will be for 4 months, both cars will be subscribed at the same time and lent to councils for trials and training and familiarisation sessions will be arranged. The cars were delivered in June 2025 and Richmond Valley Council and Byron Shire Council have both completed the 2-week loan. The cars supplied were a KIA EV3 and EV5, both were the long-range models with a total range of approximately 550 – 600km. Interactive EV Tourism Map All the JOs are supplying funding to produce an interactive map to highlight features for tourists to visit near charging infrastructure around the State. The initiative is designed to help with the visitor economy. Data collection and reporting - Compass Tool This tool has been supplied by the NSW Sustainable Councils team and developed by an external company, 100% Renewables. The tool is used to calculate the scope 1 & 2 emissions of each council. Two (2) NRJO councils have completed their emission boundaries for their councils and the others are being encouraged to complete them in the next couple of months. A new tool will be available shortly which will use the functionality of the Compass tool but allow it to be used online. Trial of Electric Foton Tipper Truck A trial was conducted by 6 councils with the Electric Foton truck. This is a 6-tonne tipper truck and supplied at no cost to the interested councils in the Northern Rivers by Foton and each council had use of it for 1 week. This trial was aimed at giving councils an opportunity to operate an electric vehicle as part of their fleet and to evaluate its fit for purpose for future council requirements. Overall, the trials were successful, and the quiet operation and performance of the truck were key positive takeaways. Limited range and charging infrastructure were 2 areas that needs to be improved with the trucks and will need to be addressed in the future. Energy cost reduction and efficiency programs Work continued 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. The latest review was undertaken for Byron Shire Council, which highlighted a possible \$30,000 in savings.

Region	Update
	<p>Continued regular meetings have taken place with each of the councils in the last month. These include regular monthly NRJO Net Zero working group meetings with representatives from each of the councils as well as individual one on one meetings, mentoring sessions, resource and information sharing.</p> <p><u>Forecast for next month</u></p> <p>Continuation of the EV Variation funding programs in view of delivering most of the activities by September 2025.</p> <p>Continue to support the subscription service trial EVs at each council. Activities to be arranged include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule of participating councils • Arranging the logistics of the EVs to be moved to each council • Induction of the new drivers on vehicle operation, charging, and emergency contacts / documentation etc • Training materials for councils <p>Prepare the new Project Management Plan (PMP) for JONZA 3</p> <p>Continued work on the emissions boundary reporting with all councils, this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping councils with the data collection • Reviewing alternative metering and monitoring platforms for the councils • Support on the 100% Renewables compass tool <p>The EV variation has some money left in the budget and this will be used to arrange for 5 councils to have an electrical audit at the administration buildings or depots to understand the practicality and costs to put EV chargers at the sites. This is part of the initial fleet transition planning and an approved activity of the EV variation grant.</p> <p><u>Key Milestones & Deliverables</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the JONZA 3 Project Management Plan by Mid-August. • Complete the EV trials by September 1st, 2025. • Add 2 more EVX chargers to 2 LGAs by the end of July. • Select suitable councils for the EV electrical charger audits and implement the program.
<p>Riverina and Murray</p>	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>RAMJO was successful in securing Round 3.0 funding of the Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration (JONZA) Grant 2025 - 2027. Off the back of two previous successful rounds, the team at Sustainable Councils within NSW DCCEE were able to secure a longer term for the program which is now an 18-month program in lieu of 12 months.</p> <p>Continuing from previous years, Sustainable Councils have invested in an improved digital version of the Carbon Compass tool to support robust data collection to baseline regional NSW Council GHG emissions, in an effort to direct and inform grant and funding opportunities offered at a State and Federal levels as well as prepare Councils for reporting emissions from 2027.</p>

Region	Update
	<p>In addition, the success of the JONZA program has seen an increase in collaboration from interconnected departments such as waste and resource recovery through an EPA sponsored role focusing on landfill gas capture, or disaster and risk resilience through an updated and NSW Local Government specific Adaptation program that focuses on land use planner and sector leadership.</p> <p>These opportunities and collaborations recognise that councils are often the first to respond to the impacts of climate change and are seeking to support councils with this challenge</p> <p><u>JONZA 3.0 Program Plan</u></p> <p>The RAMJO JONZA 3.0 Program includes the following eight (8) outcomes. Each outcome shall be achieved through various projects that align with NSW Governments Net Zero Plan and what our member councils have identified through communication via the Energy Sub Committee members.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Our Member Councils understand their GHG emissions 2. Increased engagement from Councils across all levels 3. An increase in the number of funding applications 4. An increase in capabilities and knowledge of net zero and learning opportunities available to our member councils 5. Increase the presence of net zero principles in Council Planning 6. Increased connection to Industry and Business 7. Contribute to Policy and Planning that benefit our Member Councils at the state and federal levels 8. Access to more resources associated with the transition to EV's <p><u>JONZA 3.0 Program Key Actions</u></p> <p>The key actions associated with the commencement of the 2025 – 2027 JONZA Program include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce the program to the Energy Sub Committee meeting schedule for 17 July 2. Establish a new informal working group – Net Zero Unit 3. Map each Councils current progress, identify key areas for progress and develop a way forward 4. Confirm interest in Sustainable Council sponsored Carbon Compass license (limited number available)
REROC	<p><u>Advocacy - submission to consultation of NSW Net Zero Commission</u></p> <p>REROC contributed to the sharing of draft submissions by a few JONZA members, providing extra material for consideration for colleague JOs for their submissions. REROC's submission included highlighting the need for energy market changes to lessen market power being exercised to raise electricity prices, which affects our communities and councils.</p> <p><u>Accelerated NSW Kickstart EV funding</u></p> <p>REROC member councils took up the opportunity for accelerated Kickstart funding for at least nine electric vehicles, including two utes, and the smart charging for each vehicle.</p>

Region	Update
	<p><u>Assessments of capacity of depots to charge multiple electric vehicles</u></p> <p>Consultants ChargeWorks have conducted site visits on four Member Councils' depots to provide guidance on how many EVs could be charged (and where on the site) and what upgrades would be needed in the long term. These assessments have been funded by the EV Variation funding that REROc got through the JONZA program at the beginning of FY2025. Draft assessments have been completed.</p> <p><u>Video to help promote local businesses become EV friendly</u></p> <p>A video focused on the benefits of EV charging to the tourist economy and regional towns has been completed. The video has also been funded by the EV Variation funding.</p> <p><u>Grants & Community Energy Upgrade Fund</u></p> <p>In the second round, an additional application for the CEUF was submitted. Several round 1 site visits have been completed by ChargeWorks, which will prepare RFQs for the project work and provide technical advice from procurement through to completion. REROc is participating in the effort, within Sustainable Councils and the JONZA members, to build capability in the tools available to assess paybacks and other benefits of solar, battery and Power Factor Correction (PFC) upgrades.</p>

ISJO Community Renewables Program

In partnership with delivery provider Shine Hub, the ISJO region's Community Renewables Program provides an end-to-end solution to support the community's shift to solar power, battery storage, and participation in a Virtual Power Plant (VPP).

The Program is designed to reduce energy bills, cut carbon emissions, and empower households and businesses to take control of their energy future. It will remove major barriers to renewable energy while building local economic resilience and reducing emissions across all four council areas.

Key goals of the program include:

- Reducing upfront costs of solar and battery storage technologies.
- Expanding access to renewable energy for households and businesses, including renters and those without suitable rooftops.
- Supporting job creation through partnerships with local installers and service providers.
- Educating the community on energy efficiency and the benefits of distributed energy systems.

The Community Renewables Program represents a major step toward the region's shared goal of achieving net zero emissions and sets a strong precedent for collaborative climate action across local government boundaries.

Residents and businesses can express interest and access further information by going to [ShineHub Illawarra Shoalhaven](#).

8. General Business

The convenor will call for any general business.

9. Close

The convenor will close the meeting.

NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum Minutes

When: Thursday, 7 August 2025

Time: 9am – 11.30am

Where: Jubilee Room, NSW Parliament House
6 Macquarie Street, Sydney

Present - Chairs

Cr Sue Moore (Convenor)	Mayor Singleton Council	Hunter JO
Cr Russell Fitzpatrick	Mayor Bega Valley Shire Council	Canberra Region JO
Cr Kevin Beatty (Deputy Convenor)	Mayor Cabonne Shire Council	Central NSW JO
Cr Steve Allan	Mayor Bellingen Shire Council	Mid North Coast JO
Cr Ruth McRae OAM	Mayor Murrumbidgee Shire Council	Riverina & Murray JO
Cr Rick Firman OAM	Mayor Temora Shire Council	REROC

Present – Executive Officers

Sharon Houlihan	Chief Executive Officer	Canberra Region JO
Kate Barker	Interim Executive Officer	Central NSW JO
Steve Wilson	Executive Officer	Hunter JO
Roger Stephan	Chief Executive Officer	Illawarra Shoalhaven JO
Yvonne Lingua	Executive Officer	Riverina and Murray JO
Megan Mulrooney	Chief Executive Officer	REROC

Additional Attendees

Brett Whitworth	Deputy Secretary, Local Government	NSW Office of Local Government
Cr Phyllis Miller OAM	President	LGNSW
David Reynolds	Chief Executive Officer	LGNSW
Cr Doug Curran	Mayor	Griffith City Council (Observer)
Cr Sharon Cadwallader	Mayor Ballina Shire Council	Deputy Chair Northern Rivers JO, (Observer)
Scott Grant	General Manager	Griffith City Council, (Observer)
Julie Briggs	Policy Advisor	Country Mayors Association (Observer)
Louise Taylor	Council Engagement Manager	NSW Office of Local Government

Apologies from forum members

Cr Chris Homer	Mayor Shellharbour Council	Illawarra Shoalhaven JO
Cr Jarrod Marsden	Mayor Cobar Shire Council	Far North West JO

Cr Chris Cherry	Mayor Tweed Shire Council	Northern Rivers JO
Ross Earl	Executive Officer	Far North West JO
Phil Rudd	Executive Officer	Northern Rivers JO
Liz Fairweather	Executive Officer	Mid North Coast JO

Apologies from guests

The Hon. Ron Hoenig MP	NSW Minister for Local Government	
Cr Matt Burnett	President	ALGA
Amy Crawford	Chief Executive Officer	ALGA
Virgina Errington	Council Engagement Manager	NSW Office of Local Government
Cameron Templeton	Council Engagement Manager,	Office of Local Government

Formal meeting opened at 9.07am.

Item 1 Welcome & Acknowledgment of Country

Convenor, Cr Sue Moore welcomed members and guests and made an acknowledgement of country. The meeting commenced at 9.07am.

Item 2 Attendees and Apologies

The convenor called for any additional attendees and apologies. Apologies were received from forum members and guests.

Resolved: That the attendees and apologies of the NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum held on 7 August 2025 be accepted.

Moved: Cr Kevin Beatty

Seconded: Cr Steve Allan

Carried.

Item 3 Minutes of Previous Meeting

3.1 Confirmation of Previous Meeting Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum held on 7 May 2025 be received and noted.

Moved: Cr Steve Allan

Seconded: Cr Kevin Beatty

Carried.

3.2 Action Register

Resolved: That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum notes the progress of actions from previous meetings.

Moved: Cr Rick Firman OAM

Seconded: Cr Kevin Beatty

Carried.

Item 4 Correspondence

Resolved: That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum notes, discusses or provides guidance for further action regarding incoming and outgoing correspondence.

Moved: Cr Steve Allan

Seconded: Cr Kevin Beatty

Carried.

Item 5 Workshops and Presentations

5.1 Workshop – Community Benefit Sharing – Potential for Jo State-wide approach

Presenter: Sharon Houlihan, Canberra Region JO & Kate Barker, Central NSW JO &

Following the resolution endorsed by the Chairs Forum at its 7th May 2025 meeting, this session explored a consistent state-wide approach across the JO network towards advocacy, frameworks and resources to support the establishment of Community Benefit Sharing schemes, in collaboration with a broader range of stakeholders (e.g. Country Mayors Association, Mining and Energy Related Councils, Coalition of Renewable Energy Mayors).

5.2 Briefing – Individual JO Spotlight

Presenter: Steve Wilson, Hunter JO

This session presented the operating structure, systems, Board processes, priorities, challenges and opportunities for the Hunter JO around the state. A different JO will similarly present at each meeting of the Chairs Forum.

Item 6 Standing Updates

6.1 Minister for Local Government

NSW Minister for Local Government The Hon Ron Hoenig MP was an apology.

6.2 NSW Office of Local Government Report

Brett Whitworth, Deputy Secretary Local Government – Office of Local Government provided a verbal update.

6.3 Australian Local Government Association Report

Resolved: That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum notes the written update from the Australian Local Government Association.

Moved: Cr Russell Fitzpatrick

Seconded: Cr Steve Allan

Carried.

6.4 LGNSW Report

Cr Phyllis Miller OAM, LGNSW President spoke to the report.

Moved: Cr Russell Fitzpatrick

Seconded: Cr Rick Firman OAM

Carried.

6.5 Country Mayors Association

Cr Rick Firman OAM, Chair Country Mayors Association, provided a verbal update on key priorities and activities of the Country Mayors Association.

Moved: Cr Russell Fitzpatrick

Seconded: Cr Steve Allan

Carried.

Item 7 Reports

7.1 Community Benefit Sharing – Potential for JO State-wide approach

Resolved: That the NSW Joint Organisations' Chairs Forum:

- ***Notes the report on known advocacy and action underway statewide for establishment of arrangements for community benefits-sharing payments by energy companies to councils.***
- ***Identify initial shared issues, opportunities and priorities across the JO network relating to the need for more effective community benefit schemes arising from the renewable energy infrastructure roll out.***
- ***Agrees to maintain a 'watching brief' via inclusion of a standard item on agendas of future meetings of the NSW Joint Organisations' Chairs Forum regarding progress of advocacy and action for establishment of arrangements for community benefits-sharing payments by energy companies to councils.***
- ***That the NSW JO Chairs Forum write to all joint organisations, regional organisations of councils and other regional groups of councils to recommend and seek their support for and participation in a collaborative approach to: understanding and applying the new benefit-sharing guideline for large-scale energy developments; developing council policies and procedures for negotiating community benefits-sharing arrangements and; advocating for clear planning processes, additional guidelines and retrospective arrangements to ensure net community benefit for regional host communities for all energy developments.***

Moved: Cr Russell Fitzpatrick

Seconded: Cr Rick Firman OAM

Carried.

7.2 Shared Priorities provided to NSW Net Zero Commission Consultation Process

Resolved: That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum note the report

Moved: Cr Russell Fitzpatrick

Seconded: Cr Rick Firman OAM

Carried.

7.3 State-wide JO Disaster Adaption Planning

Resolved: That the Joint Organisation Chairs' Forum note the update on NSW Disaster Adaptation Planning and Readiness Projects being delivered across the JO network.

Moved: Cr Rick Firman OAM

Seconded: Cr Steve Allan

Carried.

7.4 State-wide JONZA Program Update

Resolved: That the NSW Joint Organisations Chairs Forum note the project updates provided on the JONZA Program.

Moved: Cr Rick Firman OAM

Seconded: Cr Steve Allan

Carried.

Item 8 General Business

Cr Ruth McRae OAM, Chair Riverina and Murray JO (RAMJO) acknowledged the significant contribution of Yvonne Lingua, RAMJO Executive Officer who will soon be leaving the organisation. Thanks and appreciation were also communicated by participants to Yvonne for her contributions to the broader JO network, and best wishes extended for her future.

Item 9 Close

The convenor, Cr Sue Moore closed the meeting at 11.34am.

Formal meeting closed 11.34am.

YTD INCOME STATEMENT

YTD			
SUMMARY BY COMPANY	HUNTER COUNCILS INC	HUNTER JOINT ORGANISATION	GROUP TOTAL
REVENUE			
Membership Subscriptions	-	164,452	164,452
Project Funding	-	251,031	251,031
Management Fees	-	-	-
Training Revenue	-	-	-
Consultancy Fees	-	-	-
Rent & Overheads	13,191	-	13,191
Miscellaneous	-	10,970	10,970
Legal Fees	-	-	-
Client Fees	-	-	-
Arrow Contribution	-	12,402	12,402
Revenue - Total	13,191	438,854	452,046
COST OF SALES			
Cost of Sales	-	68,001	68,001
Direct Labour	-	124,836	124,836
GROSS PROFIT / (LOSS)	13,191	246,018	259,209
Gross Margin	100%	56%	57%
EXPENSES			
General & Admistration	4,872	70,473	75,345
Occupancy Costs	14,930	4,883	19,812
Depreciation	7,758	5,021	12,778
Information Technology	888	6,332	7,220
Overhead Labour	-	148,954	148,954
Employee Costs	-	3,815	3,815
Travel & Accomodation	-	6,592	6,592
Motor Vehicle	-	8,220	8,220
Overhead Expenses - Total	28,448	254,288	282,736
NET PROFIT / (LOSS) - OPERATIONS	(15,257)	(8,270)	(23,527)
Net Profit Margin	-116%	-2%	-5%
OTHER INCOME / (EXPENSES)			
OTHER INCOME			
Profit / Loss on sale of asset	-	-	-
Interest	-	-	-
Other - Extraordinary	-	-	-
OTHER EXPENSES	-	-	-
HJO Contributions	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-
EXTRAODINARY EXPENSESS	-	-	-
Other - Extraordinary	-	-	-
Redundancy	-	-	-
Other Income / (Expenses) - Total	-	-	-
NET PROFIT / (LOSS) BEFORE TAX	(15,257)	(8,270)	(23,527)
EBITDA - NET PROFIT	(7,499)	(3,250)	(10,749)
EBITDA Margin	-57%	-1%	-2%

YTD BALANCE SHEET

SUMMARY BY COMPANY

HUNTER COUNCILS INC

HUNTER JOINT ORGANISATION

CURRENT ASSETS

Cash & Cash Equivalents	3,368	1,400,906
Receivables	7,620	460,635
Prepayments	8,775	23,887
Other Receivables	(17,666)	1
	2,098	1,885,429

NON CURRENT ASSETS

Buildings	791,290	-
Land	351,302	-
Computers	-	12,412
Fixtures and Fittings	12,022	5,857
Building Improvements	356,691	-
Motor Vehicles	-	34,274
ROU	-	-
Other	-	-
Intercompany Loans	(652,412)	56,402
	858,893	108,945

TOTAL ASSETS

860,990 1,994,374

CURRENT LIABILITIES

Payables	27,689	82,611
Accruals	7,459	957
Loans	-	-
Employee Payables	-	81,936
Other Payables	1,117	3,946
GST	(32)	81,279
Employee Entitlements	-	241,322
Unearned Income	-	841,008
Unspent Grant Funding	-	782,612
Other Payables	-	-
	36,233	2,115,669

NON CURRENT LIABILITIES

Term Debt	-	-
Employee Entitlements - non current	-	-
Lease Liability	-	-
Intercompany Loans	226,000	-
	226,000	-

TOTAL LIABILITIES

262,233 2,115,669

NET ASSETS

598,758 (121,295)

EQUITY

Retained Earnings	614,015	(113,025)
Current Year Earnings	(15,257)	(8,270)

TOTAL EQUITY

598,758 (121,295)

YTD CASHFLOW

SUMMARY BY COMPANY

	HUNTER COUNCILS INC	HUNTER JOINT ORGANISATION	GROUP TOTAL
CASH FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Cash inflows from			
Trade debtors	14,788	882,680	897,468
Other receivables	-	-	-
Other Income	-	9,481	9,481
	14,788	892,161	906,949
Cash outflows to			
Trade Creditors	(18,710)	(191,623)	(210,333)
Employee Expenses	-	(199,682)	(199,682)
Funding Disbursements	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-
	-	-	-
Taxes	222	(36,895)	(36,673)
	(18,488)	(428,200)	(446,688)
Net cash from/(used)	(3,700)	463,961	460,261
CASH FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
Cash Inflows from			
Proceeds from sale of P&E	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-
	-	-	-
Cash outflows to			
Purchase of CAPEX	-	-	-
Repay / (new loans) - Finance Lease	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-
	-	-	-
Net cash from/(used)	-	-	-
CASH FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES			
Cash inflows from			
Intercompany (Arrow)	11,136	-	11,136
Other	-	-	-
	11,136	-	11,136
Cash outflows to			
Intercompany (Arrow)	(4,136)	-	(4,136)
Other	-	-	-
	(4,136)	-	(4,136)
Net cash from/(used)	7,000	-	7,000
Movement in cash			
Cash at the beginning of the period	68	936,945	937,013
Net increase/(decrease) in cash	3,300	463,961	467,261
CASH AT THE END OF THE PERIOD	3,368	1,400,906	1,404,274