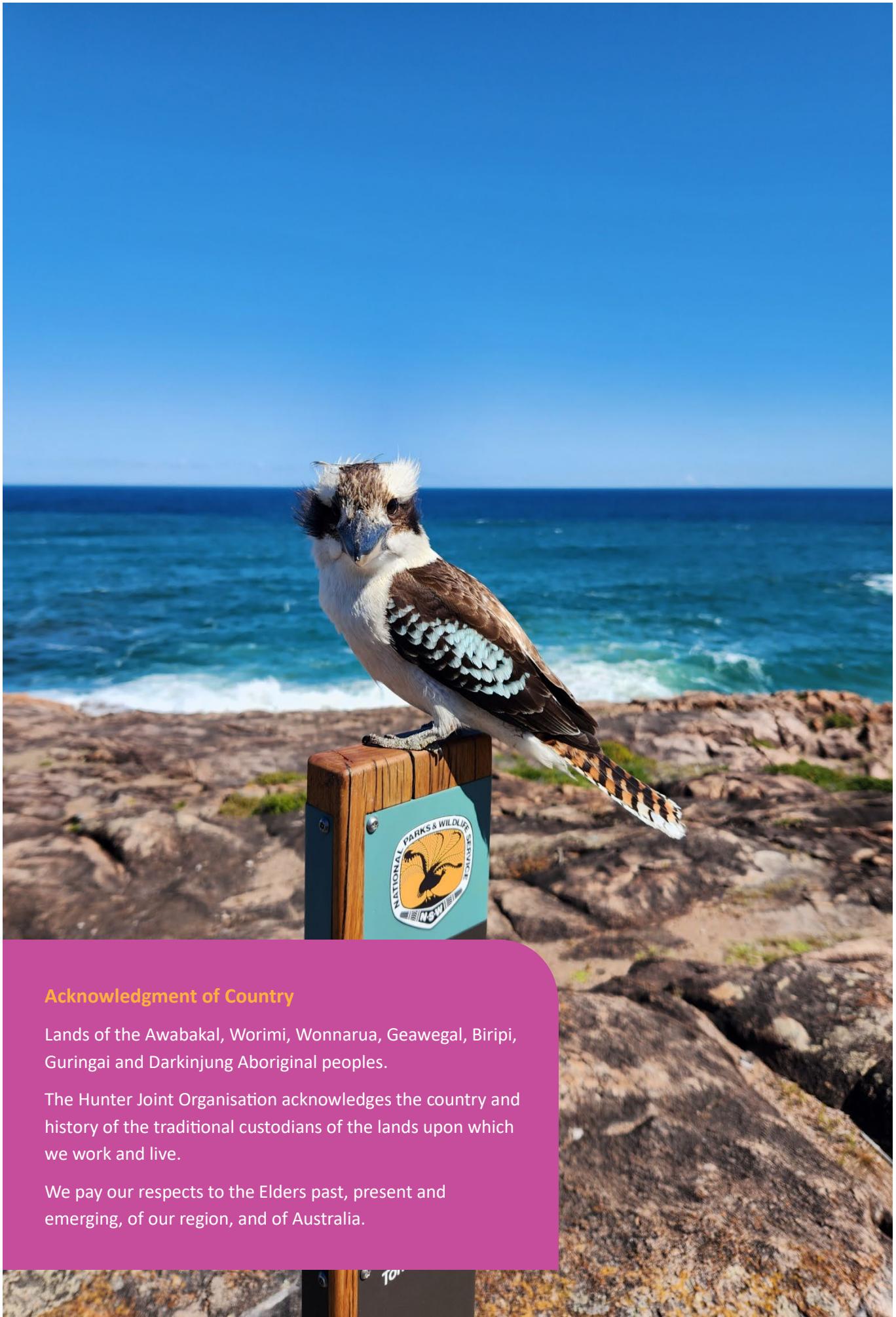




# **Hunter JO Six-monthly Performance Statement**

July – December 2025



### **Acknowledgment of Country**

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

The Hunter Joint Organisation acknowledges the country and history of the traditional custodians of the lands upon which we work and live.

We pay our respects to the Elders past, present and emerging, of our region, and of Australia.

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# Six-monthly Performance Statement

This document reports the Hunter Joint Organisation's (Hunter JO's) performance and progress in delivering the shared regional priorities identified in the [Hunter JO Strategic Plan 2035](#).

The report covers the period 1 July – 31 December 2025.

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

## Our Priorities

 <b>Housing &amp; Population Growth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.1 Housing affordability, density, diversity and availability</li><li>1.2 Integrated planning and enabling infrastructure to support housing development in priority growth areas</li><li>1.3 Supporting population growth and demographic shifts</li><li>1.4 Development planning to minimise environmental impacts and natural hazard risks</li></ul>	 <b>Economic Transformation &amp; Jobs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>2.1 Activate the reuse of mining related lands</li><li>2.2 Leveraging regional and global industries</li><li>2.3 Evolution towards renewable energy, circular economy and future industries</li><li>2.4 Business attraction, job creation and future skills development</li></ul>
 <b>Infrastructure &amp; Connectivity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>3.1 Integrated cross-agency infrastructure planning</li><li>3.2 Safe and efficient road networks</li><li>3.3 Multimodal, low-emission transport connectivity</li><li>3.4 Digital connectivity improvements</li></ul>	 <b>Environmental Sustainability &amp; Resilience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>4.1 Climate change mitigation, adaptation and disaster resilience</li><li>4.2 Circular materials and waste management</li><li>4.3 Water security and waterway health</li><li>4.4 Protection of natural environments</li></ul>
 <b>Financial Sustainability &amp; Funding Reform</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>5.1 Ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of Local Government</li><li>5.2 Securing reliable funding for place-based regional collaboration and knowledge sharing</li><li>5.3 Reforming grant funding processes to secure sustainable funding models</li></ul>	 <b>Community Liveability &amp; Wellbeing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>6.1 Enhancing access to education, health and community services</li><li>6.2 Improving open space, greening, and public amenity access</li><li>6.3 Promoting community identity, arts, culture and opportunities</li></ul>



## Housing and Population Growth

Inclusive, affordable and sustainable housing that supports population growth through integrated development, efficient land use, protection of natural environments and reduced exposure to natural hazard risk.

### Objectives (Where do we want to be?)

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

### Political Engagements

Month	Name	Focus
October 2025	The Hon Paul Scully, Minister for Planning and Public Spaces	<p>Barriers inhibiting the delivery of housing, particularly the need for enabling infrastructure, to support Councils deliver housing targets and to create healthy vibrant communities as the Hunter's population grows.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Potential alternative models for supporting Councils to fund the enabling infrastructure required to unlock housing across the Hunter region.</li></ul>
	The Hon Rose Jackson, Minister for Water, Minister for Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Potential alternative models and approaches for encouraging and incentivising more affordable housing construction in regional areas like the Hunter.</li></ul>
	The Hon Penny Sharpe, Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Providing greater upfront certainty to biodiversity assessment processes to both accelerate housing approvals and deliver more strategic regional biodiversity conservation outcomes.</li><li>• Ensuring the renewable energy roll out contributes to ongoing benefits and legacy outcomes for regional communities, for example upgrading key infrastructure or adopting innovative approaches to worker accommodation that enables repurposing for longer term housing supply.</li></ul>

### Media

Month	Focus	Coverage
July 2025	Housing - Newcastle is leading the country in an increase of birthrates	ABC Radio with Cr Leah Anderson

Month	Focus	Coverage
October 2025	Mayors push for action “Urgent: what the region needs to unlock housing, jobs and transport”	Newcastle Herald with Mayor Sue Moore and Mayor Leah Anderson

### Regional Submissions

Month	Name	Focus
September 2025	Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement	Provided recommendations on repurposing temporary worker accommodation for long term housing

### Strategic Engagements

Month	Name	Focus
July 2025	Net Zero Economy Authority (NZE), Department of Planning, Housing and Industry, Lake Macquarie Council and Muswellbrook Council	Introductory meeting to new Hunter based NZEA personnel, discussion about pilot projects, and the Govt response to the post mining land use inquiry.
September 2025	Business Hunter Event - The Infrastructure Equation: Policy, Planning and Productivity - Peter Achterstraat AM, NSW Productivity and Equality Commissioner	How do we achieve better outcomes faster as New South Wales faces growing demand for better infrastructure and housing delivery.



## Economic Transformation and Jobs

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

### Objectives (Where do we want to be?)

**2.1** Activate the reuse of mining related lands.

**2.2** Leveraging regional and global industries.

**2.3** Evolution towards renewable energy, circular economy and future industries: Transform the Hunter Region towards net zero to become a hub for renewable energy, circular economy and future industries, driving innovation, creating sustainable jobs, fostering economic diversification, attracting investment and maximising community benefits.

**2.4** Business attraction, job creation and future skills development: Position the Hunter Region to attract businesses and new industries and strengthen our role as a leader in innovation, skills and workforce development through strong partnerships with TAFE, universities and other educational institutions.

### Political Engagements

Month	Name	Focus
October 2025	The Hon Chris Minns, Premier for NSW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The value of the Hunter region, with its population approaching 1 million people, in partnering with the NSW Government to assist with delivery of the State's broader housing, net zero and economic policy objectives.</li><li>The urgency to plan, coordinate and accelerate efforts across all three levels of government to transform the Hunter's economy, to replace 50,000 jobs that will be lost as the region transitions away from coal.</li><li>The financial sustainability pressures impacting local government, and the need for reform to ensure long-term financial sustainability.</li></ul>
	The Hon Daniel Mookhey, Treasurer of NSW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The potential for a place-based tri-government agreement or comparable approach for the Hunter to focus, align and coordinate the objectives and collective efforts of Federal, State, and Local Governments to drive the economic transformation that is needed to replace 50,000 jobs as the region's economy transitions away from coal.</li><li>The challenges and opportunities of returning a greater share of mining royalties back to the Hunter Region to directly support efforts to transform the region's economy.</li></ul>
	Senior Advisors to The Hon Courtney Houssos, Minister for Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The Government's implementation of the recommendations arising from the Post-Mining</li></ul>

Month	Name	Focus
		<p>Land Use Inquiry and governance arrangements for delivery given the number of agencies involved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The timeframe for legislation to formally establish the Future Jobs and Investment Authority and initial priorities for the new Authority.</li> <li>• The timeframe and process for releasing funding from the former Royalties for Rejuvenation program, and the importance of Councils being able to access these resources to plan and support local communities with their economic transformation.</li> </ul>

## Media

Month	Focus	Coverage
November 2025	Funding agreement finalised to deliver master plans for two mine sites in the Hunter	Newcastle Herald

## Regional Submissions

Month	Name	Focus
July 2025	Net Zero Commission Submission	A comprehensive submission covering post-mining land use, disaster resilience, integrated transport, waste strategies, and aligning housing targets with community benefit schemes to create enduring legacies.
	Net Zero Economy Authority (NZEA) Energy Industry Jobs Plan (EIJP) Eraring Submission	Support for an Energy Industry Jobs Plan to be developed for the Eraring Power Station to assist with the energy transition but recommending expanded scope to cover all coal-dependent communities and supply chain workers across the Hunter.
September 2025	Hunter Transmission Project Environmental Impact Statement	<p>Provided recommendations on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repurposing temporary worker accommodation for long term housing</li> <li>• Considering impacts on local water infrastructure and services</li> <li>• Supporting regional workforce transition.</li> </ul>
	Net Zero Economy Authority Energy Industry Jobs Plan Legislation Review	Provided feedback to inform the Statutory Review of Part 5 of the Net Zero Economy Authority Act 2024.

## Strategic Engagements

Month	Name	Focus
July 2025	Future Jobs & Investment Authority	Further clarifying the scope of the Authority following on from 19th June Future Jobs and Authority Roundtable.
August 2025	Future Jobs Investment Authority	Status and progress of implementation of the new Authority.
	Destination Sydney Surrounds North and Newcastle Airport	Sharing updates on the Hunter Global tourism brand implementation.
October 2025	Federal Net Zero Economy Authority “Future Made in the Hunter” Workshops	<p>Inviting the views and priorities of regional stakeholders to help shape strategy and planning for the Hunter as it transitions to a net zero future, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barriers and enablers to economic diversification and future growth opportunities</li> <li>• Workforce transition opportunities and challenges</li> <li>• Opportunities for collective action</li> <li>• Avenues for ongoing regional input and engagement.</li> </ul>
	Regional Leadership Workshop – EnergyCo social risks and opportunities project	The workshop contributed to the co-design process for EnergyCo’s social risks and opportunities project, to help inform methodology and tools to create greater social value and community benefits from renewable energy development.
	Future Made in the Hunter post workshop consultation	In follow-up to October Future Made in the Hunter workshops, this event reviewed outcomes, refined shared priorities and explored forward actions, including how NZEA, DEWR and others can build long-term and meaningful engagement in the Hunter to address economic and workforce transition needs.
November 2025	Hunter Workforce Transition Advisory Group	The Hunter JO attended the first meeting of this new Federal Government led Advisory Group, which will be a dedicated sub-group of the Net Zero Economy Authority’s (NZEA) broader consultation arrangements for the Hunter region. The purpose of the Advisory Group will be to bring together employers, unions, local government, and community representatives to help support workers and communities through the energy transition in the Hunter.
August & November 2025	NSW Joint Organisation Chairs Forum	Exploring the opportunity for a more consistent and state-wide collaborative approach across alliances of councils to Community Benefits Schemes linked to energy projects and other State Significant Developments

## Events

Month	Name	Focus
December 2025	Hunter JO Planning and Economic Development Forum	Attended by staff from all Hunter JO Member Councils, this forum tackled the challenges and opportunities for the Hunter's economic transformation, including exploring options for a Tri-Government (Federal, State and Local) Agreement to drive coordination and investment across all levels of government.

## Grant Funded Program Updates

Program	Purpose and Outcome
Economic Evolution	Scoped a more specific approach to achieving economic evolution in the Region by exploring the challenges and opportunities for the Hunter, including options for a Tri-Government (Federal, State and Local) Agreement to drive coordination and investment across all levels of government.
Circular Economy Futures Hub	Hunter JO has partnered with a broad range of stakeholders to request funding (\$4,990,348) to design a project that will support the Hunter region's transformation to a low-emissions and circular economy. If successful, the project will establish a Hub and Fund to connect government, industry and communities to coordinate industrial-scale and local circular precincts that drive job growth and assist local industry to decarbonise to achieve net zero targets. The project would develop the systems and methodologies to solve the circular and decarbonisation issues of industry and government.
Circular Procurement	The Circular Procurement for Local Government Project aims to better understand and address barriers and solutions to the uptake of circular products by councils. Concrete, the most used substance in the world after water, was identified as a target material during phase 1 of this project because it represents a large proportion of council expenditure and has significant environmental impacts.  We have been collaborating with NSW DCCEEW to codesign their Low Carbon Concrete (LCC) Accelerator Program that will roll out first in the Hunter Region. We have also been working with consultants to create a Circular Procurement Toolkit and to write a specification that will enable Hunter councils to procure LCC.  In September, this project sponsored the Hunter Innovation Festival and hosted a Low Carbon Concrete Hackathon Session which was attended by key stakeholders from industry experts, consultants, and council staff to map the challenges and opportunities in the acceleration of the uptake of LCC.



## Infrastructure and Connectivity

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

### Objectives (Where do we want to be?)

**3.1** Integrated cross-agency infrastructure planning: Foster integrated infrastructure planning that coordinates efforts across all levels of government and sectors to create a seamless, efficient, and future-ready region.

**3.2** Safe and efficient road networks: Support a safe and efficient road network across the Hunter Region by advocating for equitable and sustainable road funding.

**3.3** Multimodal, low-emission transport connectivity: Enhance the sustainable movement of people and goods by supporting diverse, multimodal, low- and zero-emission transport solutions, with a focus on regionally connected and continuous active transport networks, improved public transport service integration and investment, and infrastructure for rail, air, and active transport.

**3.4** Digital connectivity improvements: Drive digital connectivity improvements across the Hunter Region to support economic development, education, and community engagement.

### Political Engagements

Month	Name	Focus
October 2025	The Hon Jenny Aitchison MP, Minister for Regional Transport and Minister for Roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Current road funding arrangements and programs, and the opportunity for funding reform to ensure regional councils can sustainably manage their extensive road networks.</li><li>• Priorities and delivery review processes for the recently adopted Hunter Strategic Integrated Transport Plan, including the importance of ensuring future transport options are integrated into the planning of new significant urban growth areas in the Hunter.</li><li>• The status of the road re-categorisation review program, and the potential for prioritising the re-categorisation of local roads to state roads where they directly support infrastructure and assets of significance to the NSW Government or the region as a whole.</li></ul>
	Mr Dave Layzell MP, Shadow Minister for Regional Roads and Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reform of current road funding arrangements and programs to ensure regional councils can sustainably manage their extensive road networks.</li><li>• The opportunity to prioritise the re-categorisation of local roads to state roads where they directly support infrastructure and assets of significance to the NSW Government or the region as a whole.</li></ul>
	The Hon Rose Jackson, Minister for Water, Minister for Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The potential for re-categorisation of Local Roads to State Roads where they are servicing state water assets.</li></ul>

## Media

Month	Focus	Coverage
October 2025	Roads Financial Assistance Grants advocacy 'How one month of wet weather left a Hunter council with \$18m road repair bill'	Newcastle Herald with Mayor Sue Moore
	Roads Financial Assistance Grants advocacy 'Return to 1% of government taxation revenue'	NBN with Mayor Sue Moore

## Regional Submissions

Month	Name	Focus
July 2025	Net Zero Commission Submission	A comprehensive submission covering post-mining land use, disaster resilience, integrated transport, waste strategies, and aligning housing targets with community benefit schemes to create enduring legacies.
October 2025	Review of the NSW Roads Act Options Paper	Support provided for the intent of the reforms to deliver certainty in roles and responsibilities, reduce duplication, and empower councils to manage local roads efficiently while ensuring safety, accessibility and community benefit.

## Events

Month	Name	Focus
July 2025	Regional Directors Forum – Planning and Economic Development	Hunter JO Strategic Plan, local and regional investment attraction and transport planning advocacy.



## Environmental Sustainability and Resilience

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

### Objectives (Where do we want to be?)

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

**4.2** Circular materials and waste management: Promote a circular economy and enhance waste management practices, focusing on regional waste opportunities, maximising resource value, reducing landfill reliance, and fostering circular waste solutions that support decarbonisation, environmental and economic sustainability in the Hunter Region.

**4.3** Water security and waterway health: Ensure a reliable, safe and secure water supply for the Hunter Region through coordinated and sustainable water management practices, infrastructure investment, and proactive measures that safeguard waterways and water resources for current and future generations.

**4.4** Protection of natural environments: Protect, enhance and restore our natural environments and open space including bushland, estuaries, waterways, beaches and biodiversity and incorporate nature-based solutions into urban planning.

### Political Engagements

Month	Name	Focus
October 2025	The Hon Penny Sharpe, Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Providing greater upfront certainty to biodiversity assessment processes to both accelerate housing approvals and deliver more strategic regional biodiversity conservation outcomes.</li><li>• The status of the current NSW waste levy review process and the appropriateness of waste levy funds being returned to councils to invest in local and regional waste infrastructure and circular economy initiatives that deliver on the NSW Government's net zero and waste reduction targets.</li></ul>
	The Hon Rose Jackson, Minister for Water, Minister for Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The financial challenges for regional councils in continuing to deliver and maintain vital water and wastewater infrastructure in their local communities, and the importance of ongoing funding support through programs such Town Water Risk Reduction Program or alternative funding models.</li><li>• The significant financial difficulties facing Councils to repair local water and sewer infrastructure impacted by disaster events.</li></ul>

Month	Name	Focus
	The Hon Janelle Saffin, Minister for Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appreciation for the significant ongoing efforts of the NSW Government to review and improve disaster management frameworks and responses and to build the resilience capability of local communities.</li> <li>The need to support Local Councils with long-term, non-competitive funding options to improve preparedness and support more rapid and effective council and community disaster responses.</li> <li>The importance of enhancing access to funding to “build back better” to improve long term infrastructure resilience and financial sustainability.</li> <li>Financially supporting Councils to build and sustain staff capacity and capability in their organisations, to ensure they are proactively resourced to handle the greater disaster adaptation planning and recovery needs that are increasingly required of them.</li> <li>The importance of the NSW Reconstruction Authority committing resources for the management of local spontaneous volunteers during the disaster recovery phase.</li> <li>The significant financial difficulties facing Councils to repair local water and sewer infrastructure impacted by disaster events, funding that not currently available through disaster recovery funding arrangements.</li> </ul>

## Media

Month	Name	Coverage
October 2025	Hunter JO Simtables engagement featured in media coverage of Emergency Services and Community Resilience Expo	NBN News
December 2025	Hunter JO and Mid North Coast shared Net Zero Emission Award	2NURFM Mayor Sue Moore and Leah Anderson

## Regional Submissions

Month	Name	Focus
July 2025	Draft NSW Waste Infrastructure Plan	Providing recommendations to streamline planning and energy from waste solutions.
	Net Zero Commission Submission	A comprehensive submission covering post-mining land use, disaster resilience, integrated transport, waste strategies, and aligning housing targets with

Month	Name	Focus
October 2025	Review of the operations of the NSW Reconstruction Authority regarding the NSW East Coast severe weather from May 2025	community benefit schemes to create enduring legacies.
	NSW Legislative Council Select Committee on Proposed Energy from Waste (EfW) Facilities	A joint regional submission outlining Hunter and Central Coast Councils' experiences during and following the NSW East Coast severe weather from May 2025.
	NSW EPA Climate Change Licensee Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential role and standards for EfW relative to other waste management approaches</li> <li>• The need for rigorous health risk assessments and pre-sorting of feedstocks</li> <li>• The need for EfW to be complemented by circularity</li> <li>• The need for NSW Government to lead state-wide community engagement and consultation efforts to build social license.</li> </ul>
December 2025	Australian Energy Market Commission: Establishing a regulatory framework for retail customer-initiated gas abolition	Provided technical advice around proposed measures to encourage GHG emissions reduction amongst licensees, including emphasising the need for solutions to be financially sustainable, practically implementable, and avoid cost-shifting on to local councils.
		Implications of proposed regulatory changes for customer-initiated gas connections and disconnections in the context of household electrification.

## Strategic Engagements

Month	Name	Focus
July 2025	REGEN: Empowering the transition to a circular economy	Insights and learnings from government and industry on developments and innovation in the circular economy.
	New-E Energy Industry Cluster and EnergyCo's Logistic Precinct event	Insights into the new logistics hub being built at Port of Newcastle to facilitate the movement of renewable energy components through the Hunter to the REZ areas.
	Fleet Management Training Day	Fleet Procurement, Maintenance and Financial Management - emission reduction, introduction of EV to fleet, 'replacement' planning and implementation of EV lease-back plans.
	EnergyCo	Sharing advocacy priorities for community benefit sharing in the REZ and discussing opportunities for collaboration in circular economy.
	Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association Australia's (WMRR)	Sharing knowledge and identifying opportunities, pathways, and models to enhance waste management and resource recovery outcomes.

Month	Name	Focus
August 2025	Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association Australia's (WMRR)	Sharing knowledge and identifying opportunities, pathways, and models to enhance waste management and resource recovery outcomes.
September 2025	Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration (JONZA Event)	Data reporting training with a new tool, site visits to learn about net zero initiatives at sewage treatment and resource recovery centres.
November 2025	AdaptNSW Forum	This annual NSW Government conference brings together multi-disciplinary climate change leaders to showcase adaptation knowledge and action. Hunter JO staff attended to inform our regional disaster adaptation, net zero acceleration, climate risk and circular economy initiatives.

## Events

Month	Name	Focus
July 2025	Hunter Hospitality Food Waste Event	Hospitality industry focused workshop on how to reduce waste, save money, and take real steps towards sustainability in hospitality across six local government areas.
	NSW Waste and Circular Infrastructure Plan workshop	Co-hosted with the NSW EPA, this workshop facilitated input from Member Councils to the next chapter of the NSW Waste and Circular Infrastructure Plan, focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addressing the unique waste management challenges and infrastructure gaps facing regional and remote areas of NSW</li> <li>Increasing investment in reuse and recycling infrastructure to reduce.</li> </ul>
September 2025	Circular Futures Forum	Policy reform, education, circular procurement, and strengthening circular markets and offtake opportunities.
	Living Smart Festival (Simtable demonstrations)	Provided Simtable demonstrations at the festival to support the community understand fire movements; discuss the actions to take to reduce level of risk and provide resources to develop household emergency plans.
November 2025	Asbestos Awareness Workshop	To coincide with the Asbestos Awareness Week, Hunter JO collaborated with Local Government NSW and Safe Work NSW to deliver a workshop in Lake Macquarie with Council field staff involved in our Regional Illegal Dumping (RID) Program. The event offered participants the opportunity to review asbestos regulation from a council perspective.

## Grant Funded Program Updates

Program	Purpose and Outcome
Disaster Risk Reduction	Funded under the National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA) Disaster Ready Fund, this three-year project is building disaster resilience capacity and capability within 11 Hunter and Central Coast councils and their communities. This is being 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.
Joint Organisation Net Zero Acceleration (JONZA)	The JONZA program is a capacity-building initiative being delivered in partnership with the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). It is supporting Member Councils reduce their emissions and contributing to the state's net zero targets. The JONZA grant provides a valuable opportunity to address the resourcing challenges our member councils face by funding a dedicated staff member to lead net zero initiatives.
Embedding Climate Risk in Enterprise Risk Assessment	In collaboration with NSW DCCEEW, this project is developing a Council Toolkit for Climate Change Risk Assessment to support councils to embed climate risk into enterprise risk management, using the latest climate data.
Regional Waste Coordination	Funded by the NSW EPA's Regional Coordination Support Program (RCSP), this program provides resourcing to facilitate collaboration between council waste teams, the EPA and other stakeholders. The program also supported the development and delivery of the Hunter Central Coast Circular Materials Strategy 2022-27, the regional response to the NSW EPA's Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2022-27 (WaSM).
Community Recycling Centres (CRCs)	With funding from the NSW EPA, Hunter JO is supporting councils to promote their CRCs and led the Never Bin a Battery campaign (July–November 2025) to improve correct battery disposal behaviour through a coordinated regional approach. These initiatives demonstrate progress in waste management, community safety, and regional collaboration.
Illegal Dumping Program	Funded by the NSW EPA, the Hunter Central Coast Regional Illegal Dumping (RID) Program is a coordinated approach led by the Hunter JO across eleven participating Councils to address this unlawful activity from a regional perspective. This collaboration between Councils and other public land management agencies seeks to achieve consistent regulatory responses and build the capacity of Council field officers who investigate such incidents. Engagement with the community to increase the number of meaningful reports received and increasing awareness about lawful waste disposal options available are also crucial in driving down these acts which can have such an adverse impact on the environment.
Hospitality Circularity Project	Funded by the NSW EPA's Bin Trim Networks program and delivered by consultant Go Circular, this project has involved working with small hospitality businesses across the Hunter region to identify and implement strategies to reduce the amount of waste that ends up in landfill. The project has taken a focus on diverting food waste, a major waste stream for the hospitality sector, supporting the upcoming NSW EPA's food waste mandates. More than 150 businesses across Cessnock, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Newcastle, Port Stephens and Singleton have been assessed and provided with waste reduction action plans during the project, resulting in an estimated 450 tonnes per annum of waste being diverted from landfill.
Hunter Circular Value Chains	Funded through the NSW EPA's Local Government Waste Solutions Fund (Round 3), the project supports the Hunter and Central Coast region's transition to a more circular

Program	Purpose and Outcome
	economy by strengthening understanding of the regional circular economy landscape and undertaking a detailed textiles value chain analysis.



## Financial Sustainability and Funding Reform

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

### Objectives (Where do we want to be?)

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

**5.2** Securing reliable funding for place-based regional collaboration and knowledge sharing: Advocate for consistent, long-term and non-competitive funding to deliver effective place-based regional collaboration under the Joint Organisation / Regional Organisation of Councils model.

**5.3** Reforming grant funding processes to secure sustainable funding models: Advocate for reforms to grant funding models, systems and processes aligned to the IP&R Framework to support improved efficiency and impact of council-led programs.

### Political Engagements

Month	Name	Focus
October 2025	The Hon Ron Hoenig, Minister for Local Government	<p>Exploring solutions to ensure local government financial sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improving the financial sustainability of local government, including a focus on addressing cost shifting and pursuing reforms to road and broader grant funding systems and programs.</li><li>• Supporting local government in their advocacy to the Federal Government to return Financial Assistance Grants to 1% of Commonwealth taxation revenue.</li><li>• Supporting the current review by the Local Government Grants Commission of the Financial Assistance Grants methodology, with a view to improving equity in the allocation of these funds to better support high-need regional councils across NSW.</li></ul>
	The Hon Chris Rath, Shadow Minister Local Government	

### Media

Month	Focus	Coverage
July 2025	Cost shifting financial sustainability of local government	ABC Radio with Mayor Claire Pontin
August 2025	Cost shifting	2NUR radio with Mayor Claire Pontin

## Regional Submissions

Month	Focus	Focus
June 2025	Local Government Grants Commission – Financial Assistance Grants	Advocating for equitable and sustainable funding models.
December 2025	NSW Budget Submission	Highlighting the shared priorities of the Hunter region and request for budget or in-kind support from NSW Government.

## Strategic Engagements

Month	Name	Focus
October 2025	Queensland OLG Grants Commission	Sharing learnings of their Financial Assistance Grants major review of methodology which resulted in greater equity.



## Community Liveability and Wellbeing

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

### Objectives (Where do we want to be?)

- 6.1** Enhancing access to education, health and community services: Advocate for equitable access to education, health and community services.
- 6.2** Improving open space, greening, and public amenity access: Improve access to open spaces, green areas, and public amenities, fostering vibrant, healthy communities and enhancing the quality of life for the community through sustainable and inclusive urban design.
- 6.3** Promoting community identity, arts, culture and opportunities: Promote and celebrate the region's unique community identity and culture, fostering opportunities for cultural expression, supporting the arts, community engagement, and social inclusion for the community.

### Political Engagements

Month	Name	Focus
October 2025	NSW Hunter Labor Caucus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Hon Yasmin Catley, Member for Swansea</li><li>• The Hon Kate Washington, Member for Port Stephens</li><li>• The Hon Jodie Harrison, Member for Charlestown</li><li>• Mr Clayton Barr, Member for Cessnock</li><li>• Mr Tim Crakanthorp, Member for Newcastle</li></ul>	Our advocacy priorities for 2025-26 on behalf of the Hunter's local communities

### Regional Submissions

Month	Name	Focus
October 2025	NSW Legislative Council Select Committee on Proposed Energy from Waste Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The need for NSW Government to lead state-wide community engagement and consultation efforts to build social license.</li><li>• The need for rigorous health risk assessments and pre-sorting of feedstocks for proposed EfW facilities</li></ul>

### Strategic Engagements

Month	Name	Focus
August 2025	Destination Sydney Surrounds North and Newcastle Airport	Sharing updates on the Hunter Global tourism brand implementation.

# Overall Strategic Priorities and Engagements

## Media

Month	Focus	Coverage
August 2025	Adoption of Hunter JO Strategic Plan	Newcastle Herald (all regions), ABC Radio with Cr Sue Moore, NBN News
	Ten Hunter Mayors head to Macquarie St to press their case	NBN News with Mayor Sue Moore and Mayor Leah Anderson
October 2025	Hunter Mayors take united voice to Parliament	ABC Radio with Mayor Sue Moore, 2NUR FM with Mayor Leah Anderson, ABC Radio with Mayor Leah Anderson
December 2025	Chair and Deputy Chair share advocacy priorities 2026	2NUR FM - with Mayor Sue Moore, Mayor Leah Anderson

## Strategic Engagements

Month	Name	Focus
Quarterly	Regional Leadership Executive – Hunter & Central Coast	<p>Convened by NSW Premier's Department, the purpose of the Regional Leadership Executive is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drive Government's priorities in the region, responding to emerging opportunities and issues, lead actions that are cross-government and/or involve multiple agencies</li> <li>• Provide strategic advice, broker solutions and make decisions using a whole of region and whole of government lens</li> <li>• Be responsible for setting the regional strategic context, including regional strategic planning and prioritisation, monitoring of outcomes, ensuring alignment of activities and actions</li> <li>• Establish sub-committees and taskforces as needed</li> </ul>
Bi-monthly	Regional Development Australia - Hunter	Bi-monthly meeting to identify opportunities for shared alignment and collaboration.
Bi-monthly	Unified Voice – Hunter Advocacy Organisations	Bi-monthly meeting to share advocacy priorities and updates and to build alignment and shared narrative across Hunter Advocacy Groups.
October 2025	Regional Development Australia Hunter Board	Hunter JO presented an overview of the Hunter JO's structure, operations and priorities as part of ongoing engagement with RDA Hunter to facilitate collaboration and engagement with the Federal Government.
November 2025	Business Hunter Regional Infrastructure Committee	Hunter JO presented an overview of the Hunter JO's structure, operations and priorities.
November 2025	LGNSW Conference 2025	Seven shared regional motions lodged by the Hunter JO Member Councils were included in this year's conference

Month	Name	Focus
		business paper. All seven motions were endorsed by the conference.

## Events

Month	Name	Focus
August 2025	Hunter JO Board meeting day (Lake Macquarie)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption of Hunter JO Strategic Plan and Delivery Program</li> <li>• Refining logistics, advocacy messaging and focus of Ministerial questions for October meetings with NSW Government Ministers, Shadow Ministers and MPs</li> <li>• Overview of recent waste advocacy initiatives, program updates and waste infrastructure planning</li> <li>• Exploring opportunities to more collaboratively showcase the work of the Hunter JO through enhanced communications and social media</li> <li>• Presentation from Regional Development Australia, Hunter and Federal Net Zero Economy Authority.</li> </ul>
October 2025	NSW Parliament House Board meeting day	Our delegation of Hunter Mayors and General Managers engaged in a series of high-level meetings with Ministers to advocate for the shared priorities of the Hunter JO Board.
December 2025	Hunter JO Board meeting day (MidCoast)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impacts of MidCoast Council May 2025 Extreme Flood Event,</li> <li>• Debrief on Sydney Parliament House Meetings with NSW Government Ministers, Shadow Ministers and MPs</li> <li>• Exploring the potential for a Tri-Government Agreement for the Hunter's Economic Evolution</li> <li>• MidCoast Council Waste Strategy and Operations</li> <li>• NSW Code of meeting Practice Roundtable and discussion with NSW Office of Local Government</li> </ul>