



4 Sandringham Avenue, Thornton,
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www.hunterjo.nsw.gov.au

MEDIA RELEASE

Hunter Mayors head to Parliament House to start their NSW election campaign to advocate for the Hunter

17 March 2027

A delegation of Hunter Mayors and General Managers of Hunter councils are meeting with over 20 Ministers, Shadow Ministers and Hunter MPs at Sydney's NSW Parliament House this March, to discuss our shared challenges, opportunities and priorities for the Hunter region ahead of the NSW election in 2027.

The Hunter Joint Organisation (HJO) delegation of Mayors will be led by Hunter JO Chair and Singleton Mayor Sue Moore and Deputy Chair and Port Stephens Mayor Leah Anderson, engaging in a series of high-level meetings.

The meetings will discuss election priorities that have been identified by the 10 local governments:

Economic transformation and jobs

- [Increase the NSW Future Jobs Investment Fund to \\$150m per year](#)
- Investment of \$54.45m in projects that will catalyse economic diversification:
 - [Business Case – \\$3.85m International marketing of the Hunter for tourism](#)
 - [Business Case – \\$49m Air freight Precinct](#)
 - [Project – \\$1.6m Hunter Cycle Tourism](#)
- [Update & timeline on implementation of NSW Parliament's Inquiry into Beneficial and Productive Post-Mining Land Use](#)
- [Establish a community benefit funding model for the Hunter Renewable Energy Zone](#)

Housing

- [Commit to funding for enabling infrastructure for local government valued at \\$100m per year indexed to support Local and State housing targets](#)
- [Repurpose temporary housing used for the Hunter Transmission Project \(and for future REZ projects\) to contribute to long term housing across the region](#)
- [Funding Masterplans \(range \\$500k per Masterplan\) and enabling infrastructure to catalyse development of Transport Orientated Developments \(TODs\)](#)

Roads

- [Reform of road funding models to align with Council asset management cycles and to properly account for maintenance costs](#)
- [Confirm expectations for the re-categorisation of Local roads to State roads](#)

Financial Sustainability of Local Governments

- [Commit to a three-way equal shared funding model \(federal, state & local\) for funding improvements to council owned water & sewer infrastructure](#)



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- [Amend disaster recovery funding arrangements to support water & high priority community infrastructure](#)
- [Establish a non-competitive resilience and betterment funding framework that allows resilience upgrades during the emergency works phase of recovery](#)
- [Return 9% of the waste levy previously provided to Hunter councils to support delivery of the NSW Waste and Sustainable Materials Strategy 2041](#)
- [Support advocacy to Federal Government to increase Financial Assistance Grants to 1%](#)

Advocacy Priorities and Quotes

Quote Sue Moore, Mayor of Singleton Council

“We’re looking forward to meeting as a group of Mayors with the Minister for the Hunter to continue building a strong relationship with The Hon Yasmin Catley, Minister for the Hunter and Member for Swansea.

As the democratically elected representatives of local government, this meeting is an opportunity to highlight what our constituents are saying across the Hunter, including the need for support in the region’s economic transformation, housing, roads and ensuring the local government sector is financially sustainable to provide essential services to our communities.

The Hunter’s coal industry currently supports around 15,000 direct jobs and a further 37,000 indirect jobs, according to the NSW Government. With both the Australian and NSW Governments forecasting an approximate 50 per cent decline in global coal demand by 2035, increased support from the NSW Government will be critical to help the Hunter diversify its economy and support our communities through this transition.”

Economic Transformation - A key priority for 2026 is supporting economic transformation across the Hunter as the region prepares for the long-term transition from coal mining to new industries.

Quote Jeffrey Drayton Mayor of Muswellbrook Shire Council

“The Mayors of the Hunter region look forward to meeting with The Hon Emily Suvaal MLC, Chair of the NSW Inquiry into Beneficial and Productive Post-Mining Land Use, to discuss the urgent implementation of the Inquiry’s recommendations including timelines for mapping and planning future land uses across former mining sites.

Unlocking post-mining land is critical to creating new industries, supporting regional jobs, and ensuring the Hunter’s economic future beyond coal.”

Quote Leah Anderson, Deputy Chair of the Hunter JO and Mayor of Port Stephens Council

“We’re eager to meet with The Hon Stephen Kamper, Minister for Jobs and Tourism to discuss how the Hunter’s tourism and visitor economy can help drive economic diversification across the region.



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Investments to encourage international tourism by marketing our region, and promoting our destination for cycle tourism will help diversify our economy, attract investment and support new jobs for local communities.”

Housing - Hunter councils are committed to working with the NSW Government to meet Housing Accord targets and support population growth across the region.

Quote Leah Anderson, Deputy Chair of the Hunter JO and Mayor of Port Stephens Council

“We look forward to engaging with The Hon Paul Scully, Minister for Planning and Public Spaces on how planning reform and infrastructure investment can help unlock housing supply across the Hunter.

“Councils across the region are ready to deliver new housing, but we need support for enabling infrastructure such as roads and drainage. We’re advocating for funding valued at \$100m per year indexed to support Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure’s Local and State housing targets.”

Financial Sustainability of Local Government - Ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of local government is a key priority for the Hunter region, with councils facing increasing cost pressures, growing infrastructure demands and significant cost shifting from other levels of government.

Quote Dan Watton, Mayor Cessnock City Council

“Local councils are being asked to do more every year, but the funding simply hasn’t kept pace. Financial Assistance Grants once represented 1 per cent of Commonwealth taxation revenue, but today they sit at just over half that level. Restoring them to 1 per cent would give councils the certainty needed to maintain infrastructure, support growing communities and plan for the future. We’re asking for NSW Government to help us advocate to Commonwealth Government to restore the Grants to 1%.

At the same time, NSW Government has the opportunity to update the distribution methodology to better support councils with greater need would ensure funding is fairer and more equitable across NSW, particularly for regional and remote communities.”

Quote Charlotte McCabe, Deputy Lord Mayor City of Newcastle

“Our meeting with The Hon Penny Sharpe MLC, Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, and Minister for the Environment will discuss a variety of topics given the breadth of her portfolio”

“One key area we’re advocating for is to return a greater percentage of the waste levy that NSW Government collects from local government ratepayers. Each year, over \$70 million is collected from Hunter Councils, and less than 3% of that is returned for local governments to manage



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their waste facilities. A greater investment will directly support local governments in delivering the NSW Waste Management and Sustainability Materials Strategy”

Quote Maurice Collison Mayor of Upper Hunter Shire Council

“We are committed to working with Ministers like The Hon Ron Hoenig, Minister for Local Government, to discuss strengthening the financial sustainability of regional councils.

Local governments play a critical role in delivering essential infrastructure and services, but increasing cost shifting and funding pressures are placing significant strain on councils. We are calling to discuss practical reforms and fairer funding models that will ensure regional councils can continue supporting their communities.”

Roads – Maintaining and improving the Hunter’s extensive regional road network remains a critical priority, with councils responsible for thousands of kilometres of local roads that support freight movement, regional growth and safe connections for our communities.

Quote Digby Rayward, Mayor of Dungog Shire Council

“We are keen to engage with The Hon Jenny Aitchison, Member for Maitland, Minister for Regional Transport, and Minister for Roads, to discuss strengthening investment in regional road infrastructure across the Hunter, so councils can maintain these critical transport corridors and ensure safer, more reliable roads for residents, businesses and freight operators

“Regional councils maintain extensive road networks that support freight, industry and state significant infrastructure. Ensuring funding models reflect the scale and cost of maintaining these networks, and a council’s ability to fund the works, will be essential to keeping our communities connected and our regional economy moving.”

Mayors represented by the Hunter Joint Organisation

- Sue Moore, Mayor of Singleton Council and Chair of the Hunter Joint Organisation
- Leah Anderson, Mayor of Port Stephens Council and Deputy Chair of the Hunter Joint Organisation
- Dan Watton, Mayor of Cessnock City Council
- Digby Rayward, Mayor Dungog Shire Council
- Philip Penfold, Mayor of Maitland City Council
- Jeffrey Drayton, Mayor of Muswellbrook Shire Council
- Adam Shultz, Mayor of Lake Macquarie City Council
- Charlotte McCabe, Deputy Lord Mayor of City of Newcastle
- Maurice Collison, Mayor of Upper Hunter Shire Council
- Claire Pontin, Mayor of MidCoast Council

Contact details:

Please direct media or project inquiries to comms@hunterjo.nsw.gov.au or contact Kim Carland on 0460 034 614.



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About the Hunter Joint Organisation:

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. Find out more at www.hunterjo.com.au

The Mayors provide a united and local voice for our communities, working across council boundaries to ensure that the diverse needs and aspirations of the Hunter region are effectively represented and addressed. The councils of the Hunter have been working closely together for nearly 70 years.

The Hunter JO includes the following councils: Cessnock, Dungog, Lake Macquarie, MidCoast, Maitland, Muswellbrook, Newcastle, Port Stephens, Singleton, and Upper Hunter.