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MEDIA RELEASE

Hunter Mayors return to Parliament House as election momentum builds

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Hunter councils return to Parliament House on 15 and 22 October as election momentum builds. With the 2027 NSW Election drawing closer, leaders from the Hunter's ten councils will return to NSW Parliament House, building on earlier advocacy discussions and taking a united regional voice to Ministers, Shadow Ministers and members of the crossbench.

The parliamentary visit comes at a critical time for the region. As the Hunter navigates economic transition, housing pressures, population growth and increasing demands on local infrastructure, councils are seeking commitments that will help secure long-term prosperity for communities across the region. The visits will ensure the Hunter's priorities remain front and centre as political parties continue shaping policies and election commitments ahead of 2027.

Hunter Joint Organisation Chair and Singleton Council Mayor, Sue Moore, said the region is looking for action, not just acknowledgement.

“The Hunter cannot afford to be an afterthought in the lead up to the 2027 election. Our region contributes enormously to the NSW economy, but we’re also experiencing significant change. From economic transition and housing growth to infrastructure pressures, our communities deserve a clear pathway that helps the Hunter continue to thrive.”

Representing a region of more than 800,000 people and Australia's largest regional economy, the Hunter plays a critical role in NSW’s future, supporting nationally significant industries, infrastructure and growing communities. Hunter councils have identified a series of priorities focused on creating future jobs, unlocking housing supply, improving infrastructure and strengthening the long-term sustainability of local government.

Mayor of Muswellbrook Shire Council, Jeff Drayton, said communities across the Hunter need certainty and investment as the regional economy continues to evolve.

“The Hunter is changing, but we need to make sure our communities aren’t left behind. That means investment now in infrastructure, new industries and jobs that give our workers, families and businesses confidence in the future.”

A key focus of the delegation will be advocating for investment in enabling infrastructure, including roads, water, sewer and stormwater networks needed to unlock new housing across the region. Hunter councils have identified approximately $938 million in infrastructure investment that could help unlock around 61,000 new homes across the Hunter, demonstrating the scale of opportunity available if the infrastructure is delivered.

Councils will also seek support for identified investment-ready projects across tourism, freight and post-mining land use that can help drive future economic growth and ensure the Hunter

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remains a major contributor to the NSW economy as traditional industries continue to evolve.

The delegation will also highlight growing financial pressures facing local government, including calls for a greater share of waste levy revenue to be reinvested in local communities. In 2024/25, Hunter councils contributed $116 million to consolidated revenue of the NSW Government through the NSW waste levy, with only $5.9 million returned to councils to invest back into waste initiatives.

These priorities reflect the role local government plays in turning policy into outcomes, whether that's delivering housing, supporting economic growth, maintaining infrastructure or helping communities adapt to change.

Deputy Chair of the Hunter Joint Organisation and Port Stephens Council Mayor, Leah Anderson, said the Hunter's strength lies in speaking with one voice.

"When ten councils come together behind a shared set of priorities, it reflects something bigger than local government. It reflects a collective commitment to the future of the Hunter."

"Local government is where many of these challenges are experienced first and where many of the solutions are ultimately delivered. That's why councils must be part of the conversation about the future of our region and our state."

Over two advocacy days, the delegation will meet with Government, Opposition and crossbench representatives from across Parliament, ensuring the Hunter's priorities are understood by decision-makers from all sides of politics ahead of the 2027 NSW Election.

Meetings have already been confirmed with key Government, Opposition and crossbench representatives, including:

- The Hon Courtney Houssos MLC, Minister for Natural Resources
- The Hon Jenny Aitchison MP, Minister for Roads
- The Hon Paul Scully MP, Minister for Planning
- The Hon Rose Jackson MLC, Minister for Housing and Water
- The Hon Ryan Park MP, Minister for Health and Regional Health
- The Hon Stephen Kamper MP, Minister for Jobs and Tourism
- The Hon Yasmin Catley MP, Minister for the Hunter
- The Hon Chris Rath MLC, Shadow Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and Minister for Housing
- Mr Dave Layzell MP, Shadow Minster for Resources
- The Hon Kevin Anderson MP, Shadow Minister for Jobs and Tourism
- Ms Steph Cooke MP, Shadow Minister for Water
- Abigail Boyd and Amanda Cohn, The Greens
- The Hon Robert Borsak MLC and The Hon Mark Banasiak MLC, Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party
- The Hon Jeremy Buckingham MLC, Legalise Cannabis Party

Lord Mayor of Newcastle Gavin Morris said the visit was about ensuring the region’s voice is heard where important decisions are made.

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"The Hunter has enormous opportunities ahead of us, but realising that potential requires partnership, investment and ongoing advocacy."

Mayor of Lake Macquarie City Council, Adam Shultz, said Hunter councils have spent significant time identifying shared priorities and practical solutions for the region's future.

"The Hunter has done the work. We've identified the challenges, developed practical solutions and built a shared regional vision for the future. Now we're calling on decision-makers to partner with us to deliver it."

To find out more about our NSW election advocacy priorities visit:
https://hunterjo.nsw.gov.au/election-priorities/

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
- Gavin Morris, Lord Mayor of City of Newcastle
- Pat Ryan, Mayor of Upper Hunter Shire Council
- Alan Tickle, Mayor of MidCoast Council

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