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**HUNTER COUNCILS INC: EXPRESSION OF INTEREST IN SELECTION AS A PILOT JOINT ORGANISATION WITH THE FIT FOR THE FUTURE FRAMEWORK**

Please find attached Hunter Councils Incorporated expression of interest in selection as a pilot Joint Organisation within the Fit for the Future framework.

Our expression of interest addresses the criteria identified in the *Fit for the Future, Joint Organisations* document and is representative of the enthusiasm with which local government in the Hunter Region has greeted the Fit for the Future package and, most particularly, the Joint Organisation model.

We would be delighted to participate in the pilot Joint Organisation phase and would expect to learn a great deal during the process about the issues and opportunities the new entities might present.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require further information.

Yours sincerely



**ROGER STEPHAN  
CEO HUNTER COUNCILS**

## Hunter Councils: Submission for nomination as a Pilot Joint Organisation:

<i>Criterion</i>	<i>Evidence Required</i>	<i>Hunter Councils' Response</i>
<b>Boundaries</b>	<p>Demonstrate that the proposed Pilot aligns/nests in State strategic planning regions</p> <p>Preference will be given to proposals that align with the Panel's Joint Organisation boundaries. Alternatives must be justified, including reference to impact on affected councils and other JOs</p>	<p>The boundaries of Hunter Councils' proposed Pilot Joint Organisation will align with the Region for Growth Planning boundaries as ultimately determined by the Department of Planning and Environment and endorsed by the Office of Local Government.</p>
<b>Statement of Intent</b>	<p>Outline why your region seeks to be involved in the Pilot process</p> <p>Demonstrate why your region would make a good Pilot, including how your proposal would contribute to an evaluation of the Pilot process.</p> <p>In doing so, consider the proposed purpose of Joint Organisations to build strategic capacity and the proposed core functions of Joint Organisations to facilitate strategic regional planning and intergovernmental collaboration</p>	<p>Since the early 2000s Councils in the Hunter Region have formally developed and operated joint activities on a wide range of key areas of local government activity including but not limited to environmental programs, training, procurement, records management, legal services, film and television approvals and strategic planning.</p> <p>Hunter Councils has also developed consultancy services that have assisted regional organisations in New South Wales and in other states to refine structures and deliver better and more sustainable outcomes.</p> <p>In breadth of activity, income generation and self-funding status Hunter Councils is the largest, most diverse and most advanced regional organisation of councils in Australia.</p> <p>Hunter Councils has role modelled what is effectively a one stop shop approach to strategic communication between, most importantly the State Government but also the Commonwealth Government on areas of strategic opportunity and planning. It has done so in an apolitical and regionally focused way that has seen the councils of the region – through their Mayors – able to engage effectively with other levels of government and to demonstrate to those levels of government how intergovernmental ambitions and aspirations can be cooperatively resourced and delivered.</p> <p>Given the level of cooperative strategy and capacity building already evident in the way Hunter Councils operates, the organisation's participation in the piloting of the joint organisation structure will provide "fast tracked" insights into the potential operation of the new entities and the verifiable outcomes that can be achieved.</p> <p>The experience would also be invaluable to Hunter Councils in the exploration of new ideas, frameworks and partnerships and in the sharing of insights and expertise with other pilot joint organisations and the wider sector.</p>

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Evidence Required</b>	<b>Hunter Councils' Response</b>
<b>Commitment from member councils</b>	<p>Demonstrate a level of support for the proposed purpose and core functions of Joint Organisations and the Pilot process.</p> <p>Demonstrate evidence of formal commitment from proposed member councils to fully participate in the Pilot process for the duration of the timeframes proposed (see above). This may be by way of member council resolution.</p>	<p>Hunter Councils' submissions to both the Independent Review Panel and the Local Government Acts Taskforce called for creation of regional joint organisations of the kind and for the purpose outlined in the Fit for the Future package.</p> <p>These submissions were based on the success of the Council of Mayors structure role modelled by Hunter Councils through its Board and the high regard thus generated for the Board's operation and strategic effectiveness as the voice of the Hunter.</p> <p>Hunter Councils' application for Pilot Joint Organisation status has been unanimously supported by the Board of Hunter Councils Inc. which is comprised of the Mayors of the Hunter Region's local government areas.</p> <p>Hunter Councils appreciates the commitment by the State Government of funds to support the pilot Joint Organisations. It is worth noting, however, that local government in the Hunter Region has already committed to long term funding support for the operation of a Joint Organisation via contribution by the member council owned trading entity formally known as Hunter Councils Ltd.</p>
<b>Evidence of collaboration</b>	<p>Demonstrate evidence or a track record in the region of collaborative engagement</p> <p>Include evidence of collaboration between proposed member councils and with other levels of government.</p>	<p>The Councils of the Hunter Region have worked together at a regional organisation level since 1955.</p> <p>Since creation of the Hunter Council of Mayors in 2009 Councils in our region have worked cohesively with Government agencies to present a united front on key matters of concern.</p> <p>Examples include the identification and prioritisation of regional infrastructure priorities and the identification of mechanisms to link Council Community Strategic Plan priorities with the NSW Regional Planning process coordinated by the Department of Premier and Cabinet.</p> <p>Local Government in the Hunter has also proactively engaged at a series of levels with State Government and Commonwealth Government agencies on a range of strategic issues ensuring – through the development of regional strategies and operational plans – the achievement of state and national priorities and the imbedding of those priorities in the work plans and operations of member councils.</p> <p>A prime example is the development of a Regional Weeds Strategy directly targeted to State Government priorities and which has led to a fundamental reconfiguration of the way councils manage weeds issues and how the human resources attached to those programs can be utilised to greater effect as a strategic regional rather than local area resource.</p>

<i>Criterion</i>	<i>Evidence Required</i>	<i>Hunter Councils' Response</i>
<p><b>Work Program</b></p>	<p>Identify a proposed work program and indicate how it is appropriate. At a minimum, the work program would be likely to develop and commence implementation of a shared regional vision and two to three priority regional strategies to help achieve that vision.</p> <p>Demonstrate preliminary consultation with relevant State Government agencies in relation to the proposed strategies, where appropriate</p> <p>The work program would be further refined during the co-design process</p>	<p>In its final submissions to the Independent Review Panel and Local Government Acts Taskforces, Hunter Councils set out an agenda for a proposed joint organisation (Council of Mayors) that clearly focused on the creation and delivery of key strategic processes to drive regional performance.</p> <p>The submissions committed to development of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A ten year Regional Community Strategic Plan built on individual Council Community Strategic Plans and to be imbedded in future council planning and delivery processes</li> <li>• Whole of region advocacy / intergovernmental relations</li> <li>• Strategic regional and sub regional land use plans</li> <li>• Regional and sub regional infrastructure and transport plans</li> <li>• A regional economic development strategy to give coherence to the multiplicity of strategies already in place</li> <li>• Regional environmental and waste strategy</li> <li>• Regional social and cultural strategy and such other strategies as are determined as being strategically important and which accord with and contribute to State Government established priorities.</li> </ul> <p>The Pilot Joint Organisation work program will embrace these commitments and will have as further priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formalisation, with DPC, of protocols, frameworks and content of the Hunter Regional Plan</li> <li>• Cooperative strategy with the Department of Planning and Environment in regard to the rollout of the Lower Hunter Regional Growth Plan and a future Upper Hunter / Whole of Hunter Plan</li> <li>• Cooperative strategy with the HIIF and HDC on regional infrastructure priorities and strategies</li> <li>• Cooperative strategy with relevant State Government agencies on the Hunter placed-based service delivery framework</li> <li>• Building, on our role as the Hunter's regional tourism organisation, a regional tourism strategy linking industry, government and neighbouring region stakeholders</li> <li>• Identification of an agreed regional approach to shared service delivery and the development of accountability mechanisms.</li> </ul> <p>An absolute priority in the work program will be to ensure that the high level strategies created are actuated at a local as well as regional level and that they are operationalised as appropriate in individual council community strategic planning, reporting and funding processes.</p>

<i>Criterion</i>	<i>Evidence Required</i>	<i>Hunter Councils' Response</i>
<p><b>Operational matters including Entity and Executive Officer</b></p>	<p>Identify the entity or body that will be used for the purpose of the Pilot process.</p> <p>Existing entities may be used. Support will be provided to regions who may wish to establish a new entity for the Pilot process</p> <p>Include plans to identify and, if necessary, recruit an Executive Officer with the necessary skills to build key relationships and drive the Joint Organisation work program</p> <p>Identify and address any other operational matters necessary to assess the viability of the proposal</p> <p>Operational matters would be further refined during the co-design process</p>	<p>Hunter Councils Incorporated (an incorporated association under the Associations Incorporation Act 2009) will be used for the pilot process.</p> <p>Hunter Councils Incorporated currently houses the advocacy and some business operations of Hunter Councils.</p> <p>Regardless of the success of its application to become a Pilot Joint Organisation, Hunter Councils Incorporated is to become solely the regional advocacy / strategic direction focus of the Hunter's councils. The business units are already in process of being transferred to our company limited by guarantee.</p> <p>The Joint Organisation role will ultimately be transferred to an entity under the Local Government Act should the Act ultimately be amended to provide for such a function.</p> <p>It is proposed to utilise the services of the CEO Hunter Councils to build relationships and drive the joint organisation.</p> <p>The General Managers Advisory Committee would assist the Board of the Joint Organisation – the Mayors of the Region – both in driving the work program and in ensuring that the work program becomes part of and is funded through the strategic processes of the member councils. The General Managers Advisory Committee will also have an important role in facilitating accountability of the Hunter Councils trading entity to both support the regional agenda and to fund the Joint Organisation.</p> <p>There are no matters impinging on the ability of Hunter Councils to act as a pilot Joint Organisation.</p>