

The Charter of the Hunter Pilot Joint Organisation of Councils

Introduction

Joint Organisations (JOs) provide a new way for local councils and the NSW government to work together to deliver things that matter the most to regional communities.

They represent a commitment to collaborate in the long term to develop and support a shared vision for the region.

It is anticipated that JOs will be enabled through changes to the Local Government Act and other relevant legislation in 2016. Prior to legislative change, a pilot program with five regional JOs is operating to test and refine the JO model. Hunter Councils is one of the five pilot JOs.

The operation of the pilot JO is guided by this Charter, which may be further developed by the governing body during the pilot project.

The Charter for the pilot JO is based on the conversations which occurred, and the pilot Model which was developed collaboratively, during the Joint Organisations Pilot Central Workshop held on 17 November 2014 and the Hunter Regional Workshop held on 26 November 2014.

Functions

1. The core functions of the pilot JO will be:
 - regional strategic planning
 - inter-governmental collaboration
 - regional leadership and advocacy.
2. The optional functions for the pilot JO will include:
 - creating strategic capacity.

Membership and boundaries

3. The boundaries of the pilot JO provide the strategic capacity to engage effectively, reflect a strong community of interest, and not adversely impact other councils.
4. The following councils will be members of the pilot JO:
 - Cessnock City Council
 - Dungog Shire Council

- Great Lakes Council
 - Lake Macquarie City Council
 - Maitland City Council
 - Muswellbrook Shire Council
 - Newcastle City Council
 - Port Stephens Council
 - Singleton Council
 - Upper Hunter Shire Council.
5. The boundaries of these councils align with the State Government strategic planning boundaries and form the boundary of the pilot JO.
 6. The pilot JO membership and boundary will not alter without strong justification.

Governing body

7. Each member council will have one representative on the pilot JO governing body, being the Mayor of that council.
8. The Mayors will give priority to attendance at pilot JO meetings to ensure quorum is consistently achieved.
9. Representatives will act in the interests of the region, rather than representing an individual local government area.
10. The JO will operate under the principles of representative democracy and representatives will recognise and respect majority decisions
11. There will be no alternate representatives.
12. The pilot JO will elect its Chair biannually.
13. Minimum governance standards will be maintained by the JO, including regular meetings.
14. A minimum of six meetings shall be held over the 12 month pilot process.
15. Meetings will be governed by the model Code of Meeting Practice and Code of Conduct unless the pilot JO determines otherwise.
16. There will be no sitting fees.
17. The pilot JO will consider and determine its requirements for a General Managers Advisory Group, Working Groups or other mechanisms to support its functions.

Resourcing

18. Contributions to the pilot JO for operating costs will be made by the trading entity, Strategic Services Australia, and by the contribution of staff skills from individual councils to JO projects.

19. The pilot JO will appoint or secure access to a suitably skilled Executive Officer or Chief Executive Officer.
20. Employees of the pilot JO will be direct employees under the Local Government Award.
21. The pilot JO will determine during the pilot process, and possibly on a case by case basis, the way in which regional funding and grants will be managed.

Planning and collaborating

22. The pilot JO will finalise an Action Plan, or Work Plan, in the first quarter of the pilot project to guide its operations.
23. The pilot JO will prepare a succinct Statement of Regional Priorities during the first quarter of the pilot project, including a Regional Vision.
24. The Statement of Regional Strategic Priorities will draw from the Community Strategic Plans of member councils, as well as NSW Government regional plans and strategies, including the Regional Action Plan and the Regional Growth and Infrastructure Plans, and any other documents relevant to the region.
25. The pilot JO will work collaboratively with state agencies to build maximum consensus on the identification of regional priorities.
26. The DPC Regional Coordinator and JO CEO will attend and engage actively in each other's meetings in an ex officio capacity.
27. Appropriately senior representatives of councils, other Joint Organisations of Councils, NSW Government agencies, Australian Government agencies, and other partners and key stakeholders will attend and engage in relevant meetings by invitation of the JO.

Other matters

28. The JO will avoid duplication or imposition of non-essential and administrative process or cost.
29. Hunter Councils Inc. will continue to operate during the pilot process. Further consideration about the future relationships between Hunter Councils Inc. and the Hunter JO will occur during the pilot.
30. The pilot JO will contribute to the evaluation process of the Joint Organisations Pilot Project.