

Hunter Joint Organisation Event Operations Group

Notes of meeting of the **Hunter Event Operations Group (HEOG)** of Tuesday 10 July 2018 in the Board Room, Local Government Training Institute, 4 Sandringham Avenue, Thornton.

Attendees

Cessnock	Jane Holdsworth	JTSSE (Chair)	John Trevillian
Dungog	Ivan Skaines	JTSSE	Sharon Boyd
Mid Coast	Debbie Knowler	JTSSE	Kevin Simmonds
Upper Hunter	Jane Callinan	Dept Premier & Cabinet	Colin Perry

Apologies

Singleton	Claire Briggs	Port Stephens	Janelle Gardner
Maitland	Adam Franks	Muswellbrook	Gerry Bobsien

1. Welcome and introductions

John welcomed Debbie Knowler, Jane Callinan and Colin Perry to the meeting as “first time” attendees to this group. Particular appreciation was recorded to those who had travelled some distance to make the meeting.

It was noted that the clash with school holidays made attendance at off-site meetings difficult for smaller councils and John apologised for not taking this into consideration when setting meeting dates earlier in the year.

2. Overview of project activities since the last meeting

Sharon outlined the JTSSE team’s main activities since the May meeting of the group:

- All 10 Hunter councils had been visited and meetings held with mayors, General Managers and Executive team members had been both interesting, and useful in gaining real insights into each council’s program and event ambitions.
- Business events is continuing to emerge as an area of keen interest throughout the region and the JTSSE team has opened discussions with a number of key people to explore the implications of this further.
- Meetings with Hunter Valley Wine and Tourism Association (HVWTA), Business Events Sydney (BES), Destination NSW (DNSW) and others have been held or scheduled with a view to bringing leaders together for more detailed discussions on opportunities for the Hunter.
- The main focus of the team’s work has been on exploring options for an events entity for the Hunter which will drive the region’s signature events program.

3. **Presentation by Kevin Simmonds: Event entities and how they can work**

Kevin outlined event entities established since 2000 in NSW. He noted these were often a response to particular phases in the state's events and tourism development.

He also noted that nearly all of the Hunter's competitors for tourism and events dollars have already established professional events bodies to drive their programs.

The next steps will include:

- developing more detail around a business case for the entity;
- further analysis of governance arrangements; and
- discussion with the JO on options for partnerships to establish the events entity.

Kevin's presentation is attached.

4. **The Hunter's events review and discussion**

John moderated a discussion about Hunter councils' events based around the questionnaire circulated prior to the meeting.

Dungog, Mid Coast, Upper Hunter and Cessnock reported on their Highlight Event, Aspirational Event and Annual Events. Emerging themes:

- Highlight events were community initiated and led, and very dependent on volunteer committees for their delivery.
- Highlight events were identified with the town where they were held rather than the LGA or Hunter region.
- Local communities had a very strong attachment to their events.
- Aspirational events discussed, (Dungog's *Tea Cosy* Event, the Upper Hunter's *War Birds Over Scone*, Mid Coast's *Chill Out*, and Cessnock's *Advance Cessnock City* program, were also dependent on local initiative and funding support.
- All of the four councils reported growth and on-going support for annual events such as ANZAC Day, NAIDOC Week, Youth Week, Seniors Week, Christmas Carol events and New Year's Eve.

Additional take-outs from the discussion included:

- Benefits of sharing event information across LGAs could assist in scheduling events and activities to encourage longer stays by visitors.
- Regional event planning would particularly help smaller councils.
- Diversity of activities at festivals encouraged longer stays.
- Noted that Cessnock's wineries drew large numbers of visitors from Brisbane and SE Queensland.

5. **Next meeting – third and final meeting scheduled for Tuesday 4 September 2018**

Attendees noted that only 4 of the 10 Hunter Councils could attend this meeting. This raises the question of what is the best way for 10 very different councils to share information and event planning so that the region is "event ready" and well placed to act quickly to secure "footloose" events, or a share of significant events such as the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023 for the region should Australia win the hosting rights?

So this will be the focus of the next meeting.

Let's explore the options that might really add value to the region's event capability:

- An operations group that only forms for a particular event?
- Sub-regional LGA groups with a community of interest or sub-regional identity?
- Working groups to tackle specific issues such as particular types of events; regional alignment of information and websites; regional event approval processes; regional event delivery skills development; or other?