

# Embedding climate action into integrated planning and reporting

## COUNCIL NAME

Hunter Joint Organisation, in collaboration with the 10 councils of the Hunter region and Central Coast Council

## WEB ADDRESS

[hunterjo.com.au](http://hunterjo.com.au)

## SIZE

34,551 km<sup>2</sup>  
(including Central Coast Council)

## POPULATION

1,120,000 (including Central Coast Council)

## FUNDING PROGRAM

Increasing Resilience to Climate Change

## Overview

When a council is mapping out its future, it makes sense to consider how it will address climate change and its impacts. But how do councils translate a commitment to climate action into key governing resources and strategic plans?

The Hunter Joint Organisation is a collaborative body that brings together the 10 councils of the Hunter region: Cessnock, Dungog, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, MidCoast, Muswellbrook, Newcastle, Port Stephens, Singleton and Upper Hunter. Central Coast Council also participates in the Hunter JO's environment program.

With an expansive reach, an experienced team and a strong collaborative network, the Hunter JO has developed an easy-to-use guide, the Climate Change Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Package.

This package provides user-friendly, practical tools and templates that translate strategic commitment to climate change into resource allocation for action.

## Background

The Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework was introduced by the NSW Government in 2009, changing the way councils established local priorities and linked them to operations.

The IP&R process begins with a community's aspirations for a period of at least 10 years, providing a suite of integrated plans that set out a vision, goals and strategic actions to achieve them.

"The Hunter JO identified a disconnect between the IP&R framework and climate change action, often due to the complexities of each field, which led to the development of the Climate Change IP&R Package," Hunter JO's Regional Policy & Program Manager Melinda Curtis explains.

## Implementation

Hunter JO's geographic reach is expansive – from the Coolah Tops National Park in northwest NSW to Morisset in the southeast, and from Wollemi National Park in the southwest to Harrington in the northeast. The Hunter region's communities are just as diverse as its geography, ranging from coastal hamlets, country towns and historic villages to growing suburbs, regional centres and an emerging global city.

In the past few years, the Hunter region has been hit by bushfires, coastal erosion, Covid and three floods back-to-back, stretching council budgets and testing the resilience of communities.

Hunter JO's project team understood that the package needed to allow for varying council resources and capacities. IP&R package was structured around three levels of commitment – leading, motivated and committed.



While the three levels provide a typical narrative, they are not binding. Each commitment level is accompanied by a set of ready-to-go templates that inform the IP&R document development, including strategic statements, objectives and actions.

The package provides an evidence base, process and text for councils to embed into their overarching IP&R documents: the Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

## Outcomes

Since the package has been released, the Hunter JO's website page has attracted 1,300 hits. "We have received amazing feedback from councils and state-wide uptake," Melinda says.

"The Climate Change IP&R Package is such an easy package to pick up," Melinda notes. "Because it is based on evidence, councils can have the confidence to choose a commitment level, or to adapt the templates to suit their own needs."

Hunter JO intends to evolve the package over time so that it remains relevant. There are opportunities to develop additional videos and resources to align with the next IP&R cycle, Melinda adds. "Dependent on funding, part two of the package would go into more detail at the delivery program and operational plan levels."

## Key Learnings

The project was not without its challenges because there was no example of what Hunter JO was trying to do. But the secret success formula is found in evidence-based resources, written in language that resonates with local governments.

Another key factor to the project's success was the existing strong relationships and extensive collaborative history between Hunter and Central Coast councils. The demand for and positive feedback on the package within and outside of our region has been extremely high.

## More information

Download the [Climate Change Integrated Planning and Reporting \(IP&R\) Package](#).

## Contact

**Name:** Melinda Curtis

**Position:** Regional Policy and Program Manager – Environment

**Phone:** 02 4978 4042

**Email:** melindac@hunterjo.com.au



Funded by the  
NSW Government  
in association with  
LGNSW