

COMMITTEE
FOR THE HUNTER

HUNTER20 AGENDA26

OUTCOMES REPORT



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Awabakal, Biripi, Wonnarua, and Worimi people as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land and waters of the Hunter region. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging, and recognise their continuing connection to culture, community and Country. We thank them for their stewardship and care of this land for thousands of years, and we commit to working together for a sustainable and respectful future.

Contents

About The Hunter Agenda 2026	3
The Event: At a Glance	5
The Event: Session Highlights	8
Setting the Hunter's Priorities	13
The Committee for the Hunter's Role	14

Our Partners

PLATINUM



EnergyCo

GOLD PARTNERS



Milleen.



SILVER



INSIGHTS PARTNER



MEDIA PARTNER



BOARDROOM
DINNER HOST



VENUE PARTNER



CONTRIBUTORS



Hunter Agenda 2026

From Conversation to Alignment

13 March 2026

One of the most significant forums hosted in the region.

Hunter Agenda 2026 (HA26) brought voices from government, industry, education, unions and local community leaders, all united by a shared recognition that the decisions made in this decade will define the Hunter's trajectory for generations.

HA26 was built on a simple premise: the Hunter's future will not be shaped by any single project, policy or organisation acting alone. It will be shaped by a place-based approach that connects investment, skills, infrastructure, planning and leadership into a coherent regional agenda.

The forum created space to test evidence, draw on national and international expertise, and build shared clarity on what needs to happen next. Across keynote addresses, panels and audience contributions, the conversation traced the Hunter's foundations to the industrial transformation of today. It explored the infrastructure and investment required to unlock growth sectors, informed by global examples of large-scale transformation.

Leading practitioners from Germany and Denmark, brought firsthand experience and practical lessons from their own long-term industrial transitions and the policy, workforce and investment shifts required to deliver them at scale.

HUNTER20 AGENDA26

Alice Thompson | CEO, Committee for the Hunter
The Conversation Starts Here

One message was clear and consistent:

The Hunter isn't starting from behind, it's starting with a real advantage.

This discussion is timely, with the Hunter's investment pipeline taking shape across clean energy and industrial decarbonisation, defence and aerospace, health and medical research, and the region's education and skills ecosystem. This momentum is strengthened by gateway precincts at the Port and Airport, connecting the Hunter to national and global markets and partners.

The opportunity now is to convert momentum into lasting, region-wide gains by aligning leadership, policy settings and capital so projects can scale, delivery can accelerate, and the benefits of change are shared locally.



Success is achieved when all of these goals move forward together.

HA26 set out to answer a bigger question than growth alone: will the Hunter realise its full potential?

This aspiration is realised through six objectives that reflect interconnected outcomes that must advance together.



The Hunter has the assets, the capability and the ambition to create more jobs, generate greater economic value, and lift living standards beyond this era. The Hunter has the capacity to set a global benchmark for how industrial regions successfully transition to new energy, diversified industry and innovation.

That is Hunter Agenda.

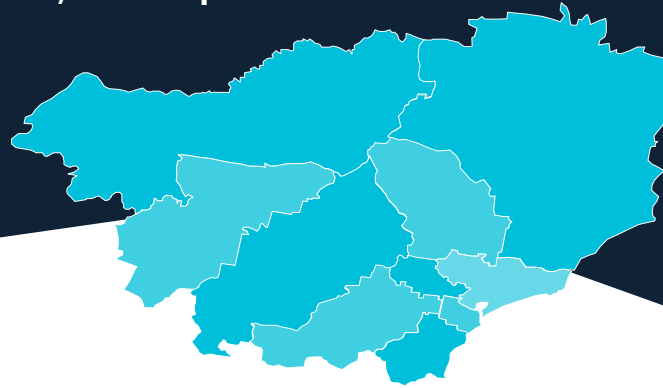
More than a conference; a defining moment for our region.

Hunter Agenda 2026

Our reach and influence

HA26 received strong local coverage across radio, TV and print.

Putting the Hunter's future on the regional and national stage.



By the numbers



>300 attendees

Local, national and international delegates spanning government, industry, education, unions and the community



8 keynote speakers

Senior national and international leaders brought perspective on economic forces, policy settings, and global lessons learned



>1000 audience insights

Quantitative signals and qualitative insights were captured during the forum through live polling



15 panellists

Sector leaders discussed practical pathways to translate the Hunter's strategy across industry, the workforce, and infrastructure



Through the Committee's Official Media Partner, the Newcastle Herald, and radio, television and digital coverage, the event's conversations reached tens of thousands across the Hunter and beyond.

Media coverage snapshot follows.

MEDIA COVERAGE

March 13, 2026

How lessons from the closure of BHP can provide the key to the Hunter's future

Matthew Kelly

THE resurrection of Newcastle from the ashes of the BHP steelworks closure was proof the Hunter had the capacity to not only survive but thrive in a post-coal future, a forum focused on the challenges and opportunities facing the region has heard.

About 300 local, national and international stakeholders gathered in Newcastle yesterday for the Committee for the Hunter's inaugural Hunter Agenda thought leadership event.

Speakers and panel participants expressed optimism about the capacity of the Hunter to not only navigate the challenges posed by the closure of coal- red power stations and mines, but also capitalise on the opportunities of new and emerging industries in the coming decades.

But this could only be achieve through local, state and national governments working together, the event heard.

Net Zero Economy Authority chief executive David Shankey told the forum that the Hunter's ability to rebuild itself after the closure of BHP in the late '90s should serve as inspiration for the region.

Full article from Newcastle Herald

Official Media Partner
Hunter Agenda 2026

NEWCASTLE
HERALD

February 11, 2026

HUNTER AGENDA 2026 'Big thinkers, local leaders' unite to discuss region's future
Former prime minister secured for major event to shape Hunter's future

Damon Cronshaw

MALCOLM Turnbull will headline a major economic event in Newcastle next month, as the Hunter prepares to reach its potential in a post-coal future.

The event, Hunter Agenda 2026, will be hosted by the Committee for the Hunter at NEX in Newcastle West on March 13.

"This will put the Hunter on the national and international stage"

Alice Thompson



Full article from Newcastle Herald

..."this place has survived and rejuvenated through that change and it was achieved through local, state and Commonwealth governments working together to come up with an agreed set of priorities and ways to respond." ...

Former prime minister Malcolm Turnbull also spoke of the power of collaboration between different levels of government during the planning and development phase of Western Sydney's infrastructure boom, which included the new airport and metro.

He urged the Hunter's state and federal parliamentary representatives to apply leverage within their respective governments to attract similar investment in the Hunter.

"You have the opportunity to work with the federal government, state government and local governments. But, above all, work together, get a plan together. There is no substitute for getting people to sit down and agree to who is going to pay for it and when it's going to be built and then getting on with it.

I want the Hunter to be to the new energy economy what it was to the old energy economy - a thriving, strong powerhouse."

Malcolm Turnbull

NEWCASTLE
HERALD



Atwea chief executive Helga Smit.



The audience at NEX Newcastle.

March 9, 2026

POST-COAL: Timely discussions, but exit plan remains unclear
It's complex, but government agencies must take front and centre in transition

Phillip O'Neill

Discussion of transition, the exit from coal continues this week with a major conference in Newcastle organised by the Committee for Hunter.

Called Agenda 2026, speakers will attempt "to forge a shared vision for the region's future with a joined-up action plan".



Bayswater power station. Picture by Jonathan Carroll

Full article from Newcastle Herald

MEDIA COVERAGE

March 12, 2026

'Many similarities': Hunter compared to Europe's first net zero valley

Sage Swinton

A GERMAN mining area being transformed into Europe's first "net zero valley" has been closely compared to the Hunter region....

Germany Trade and Invest CEO Julia Braune said the agency's programs included support for regions under-going structural change, specifically those phasing out coal. Germany has a legally-mandated deadline to end coal led power generation by 2038.

Ms Braune said there were a lot of similarities between the Hunter and Lusatia, a major coal-mining region in Germany which is transforming into Europe's first net zero valley.

"What we've found and experienced is that it's important to take the community with you on the road towards a transformation of the area."

Germany began its energy transition in the 1990s. Ms Braune said it was a "bottom-up process" using lessons from Germany's reunification. "Many industries were stopped abruptly," she said, adding that many people lost their jobs in the process.

"So, this time when we were thinking about phasing out coal, there was really a huge concern within the population that something like this could happen again. "So, the main target was really to involve them in the process."

Ms Braune said as well as transitioning to green energy, a focus for Lusatia had been diversifying to other industries, including tourism and establishing a medical hub.

She said she was impressed with how open the discussions were in the Hunter about energy transition.

NEWCASTLE
HERALD



"What I take from here is that there is an openness to learn, to exchange, but that there are also many ideas and this understanding that you have to also invest in teaching and education.

It is key also to look at how can we stay innovative, how can we involve the population, how can we give teaching and perspectives for new jobs."

Julia Braune

Full article from Newcastle Herald



March 13, 2026

NBN News covered Malcolm Turnbull's participation at Hunter Agenda 2026, highlighting role of innovation and skills in building the Hunter's next economy.

NBN
NEWS



February 11, 2026

High-powered leadership forum for Newcastle



March 13, 2026

'This decade is not a rehearsal': why the Hunter is critical to Australia's industrial transformation

Matthew Kelly

THE Hunter is uniquely positioned to lead Australia's industrial transformation but the process must be coordinated if the region's potential is to be fully realised.

That's the message that AGL's chief commercial officer, David Moretto, will deliver as part of a keynote address to local, national and global leaders who will gather in Newcastle today for the Committee for the Hunter's inaugural Hunter Agenda thought leadership forum.

The Hunter has what it takes, but the transition only works if we move together, and we move with pace... If alignment moves too slowly, the cost shows up as disruption - in jobs, investment and system reliability.

David Moretto

Full article from Newcastle Herald

March 23, 2026

BELIEVE Solid Hunter future after coal depends on all pillars being in place

Hunter given direct German insight into what commitment looks like

Phillip O'Neill

URTE Hertrampf, from Germany's Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, was a key-note speaker organised in Newcastle by the Committee for the Hunter....

By 2038, said Ms Hertrampf, coal in Germany would be gone. About 25,000 jobs would disappear, a similar number to the current coal sector workforce in NSW....

The German commitment has two "pillars". The first targets basic rehabilitation and refit of the coal regions - including public transport, digital infrastructure,

and landscape enhancement - to which more than \$A22 billion has been allocated for the wind down years. The second pillar allocates an eye-watering \$A42 billion for the economic diversification of these regions, targeting new jobs, infrastructure, and research... It exposed the financial dimensions of the transition task Australia faces as it exits fossil fuels. As the most affected region, the Hunter needs to worry. Fiscal commitments by state and federal governments in Australia to fund transition in coal regions are minuscule in comparison to Germany's....

Full article from Newcastle Herald

Hunter Agenda 2026

Speakers, panellists and facilitators

Event open



Opening address

The Hon Sharon Claydon
Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives and Member for Newcastle



Introduction to HA26

Alice Thompson
CEO, Committee for the Hunter

Session 1

Economic Overview



Keynote

Richard Yetsenga
Group Chief Economist, ANZ

Session 2

Transforming Regions



International Keynote – Germany

Urte Hertrampf
Head of Department (GER), Office for Structural Change in Coal Regions

Facilitator

Alice Thompson, CEO, Committee for the Hunter



Keynote

David Shankey
CEO, Net Zero Economy Authority

Session 3

Innovation, Skills and the Next Economy



Keynote

The Hon Malcolm Turnbull
29th Prime Minister of Australia

Facilitator

Professor Belinda Tynan, Acting Vice-Chancellor, University of Newcastle

Panellists

James Cudmore, Chief Customer and Digital Innovation Officer, NGM Group

Cory Robertson, CEO, Booma Food

Myles Egan, Youth Committee for the Hunter Member and PhD Candidate, University of Newcastle

Helga Smit, CEO, Atwea

Session 4

Next Generation Industry Precincts



Keynote

David Moretto
Chief Commercial Officer, AGL

Facilitator

Matthew Kelly, Newcastle Herald

Panellists

Dr Chris Levi, Director, John Hunter Health and Innovation Precinct, Hunter New England Local Health District

Gavan Reynolds, Development Director, EXP Capital

Professor Alan Broadfoot, Executive Director, Newcastle Institute for Energy and Resources, University of Newcastle

Darren Clarke, Director, EnergyCo

Session 5

A Story of Reinvention



International Keynote – Denmark

Henrik Stiesdal
Founder and Chief Technical Officer, Stiesdal

Facilitator

Justin Page, Co-ordinator, Hunter Jobs Alliance

Session 6

Hunter Global Futures



Keynote

Jennifer Westacott AC
Chair, Bradfield Development Authority

Facilitator

Kyle Loades, Chair, Vision Super

Panellists

Linc Horton, CEO, Newcastle Airport

Dominic May, Chair, Newcastle Tourism Industry Group and Managing Director, Coast XP

Steve Wilson, Director, Hunter Joint Organisation

Session 7

High Speed Rail



Keynote

Tim Parker
CEO, High Speed Rail Authority

Facilitator

Alice Thompson, CEO, Committee for the Hunter

Panellists

Emmanuel Genlot, General Manager, Keolis Hunter

Andrew Stones, General Manager and Director, Milleen Group

Lyndall Robertshaw, CEO, Home in Place

Valentina Misevska, Chief Executive, Hunter and Central Coast Development Corporation

Hunter Agenda 2026

Session Highlights

HA26's sessions focused on defining an actionable roadmap, translating ambition into coordinated delivery across investment, skills, and infrastructure.



Session 1 Economic Overview

THE ECONOMIC CASE FOR ACTING NOW

HA26 opened with an economic briefing from **Richard Yetsenga**: The Hunter is an \$86B economy with deep industrial capability, a proven track record of transition, and a critical role in national productivity. The conditions of the Hunter's transition are different to anything the region has navigated before, and how effectively it responds will be shaped by choices made now, not later.



Capital is selective, not scarce

Regions are competing globally to attract investment, and the Hunter's ability to align policy, skills, infrastructure and leadership will determine whether capital flows here or elsewhere.



55,000 jobs need to be created over time

This level of job growth is required not only to replace roles gradually released from coal, but to replace the scale of economic output coal has generated. It must also be delivered against a tightening demographic backdrop of lower birth rates, and a rapidly ageing population, shrinking the pool of available workers and increasing the competition for skills.



The economic clock is ticking

Maintaining and building on the Hunter's strong economic position will require decisions on policy, investment and institutions to keep pace with a faster-moving global environment. Capital is increasingly selective, competition for talent is intensifying, and trade settings are shifting; the regions that move slowly will fall behind.



This is not a world where assets are looking for capital.

It is a world where capital is looking for assets.

Richard Yetsenga

Richard Yetsenga
Chief Economist, ANZ



Richard Yetsenga
Group Chief Economist, ANZ





Consensus before legislation

Germany convened a Coal Commission before legislation was drafted. It delivered genuine buy-in from the communities closest to the change, and a program that has held across many governments without legal challenges or protests.



Legislated funding creates business certainty

Germany's ~\$64B structural investment program is written into law, not just a political promise. When businesses can see a reliable, legally anchored funding roadmap, they commit capital and plan with confidence.



The transition pipeline in the Hunter is shifting from concept to delivery

NZEA is supporting practical actions that make the region investable and ensure local firms capture the upside: 360+ suppliers are being mapped into the transmission build, two mine-site masterplans are progressing, and a precinct investment prospectus is being developed, while REZ proposals signal ~\$100B in private investment interest.



What role should government play in shaping the future of industrial regions?



Top 3 roles



Economic infrastructure & precinct development



Industry growth & investment attraction



Minimise planning & bureaucratic barriers



Bottom 3 roles



Minesite rehabilitation



Independent data tracking progress



Let the markets decide

Session 2

Transforming Regions

WHAT GLOBAL EXPERIENCE TELLS US

Regions that manage large-scale industrial transition successfully start by establishing genuine community buy-in and creating funding certainty before detailed policy design begins. This session brought that lesson directly to the Hunter. **Urte Hertrampf** drew on Germany's coal-region experience to show how institutions, legislated settings and sustained funding help regions maintain momentum through multi-decade change. NZEA CEO **David Shankey** then linked these principles to action already underway locally, including Commonwealth-supported master planning to repurpose major mine sites in the Hunter and build investment-ready pathways for the next stage of the region's economy.



Session 3

Innovation, Skills and the Next Economy

PEOPLE, PATHWAYS AND THE PRODUCTIVITY GAP

The Hunter's workforce challenge is not a lack of ambition, but a lack of clear and connected pathways into the jobs of the next economy. In this session, **Malcolm Turnbull** led the discussion on the practical task of building a workforce capable of meeting future demand. He highlighted the scale of the transition, with 40,000-75,000 new jobs expected over the next decade, around three quarters of them requiring higher-level qualifications. It also underscored a structural education gap, with degree attainment in the region sitting at ~13%, compared with ~26% nationally.



How important will a university education be for a child born today in the workforce of the future?



The next economy is not on the horizon, it's already hiring

Hunter businesses are hiring today for roles that did not exist a decade ago. The constraint is not job availability; it is whether the pathways to those roles are visible enough for people to pursue them.



Productivity comes from applying innovation, not merely discussing it

Regions that adapt, invest and move early stay competitive. Education, lifelong learning and an entrepreneurial culture are the infrastructure of a knowledge economy.



Young people are leaving and not returning, many face barriers to education & employment

Without visible pathways, the Hunter risks losing the generation it most needs to retain. Showing people what a job looks like, and how to reach it. This is an economic imperative.

Malcolm Turnbull

29th Prime Minister of Australia



Session 4

Next Generation Industry Precincts

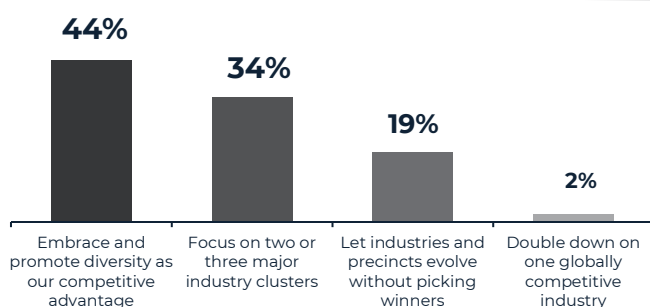
MOVING FROM SITES TO SYSTEMS

The Hunter's major precincts are active; including AGL sites at Bayswater and Liddell, the John Hunter Health and Innovation Precinct, Newcastle Airport's defence and aerospace expansion, University of Newcastle campuses, and the Port of Newcastle Clean Energy Precinct. In this session

David Moretto examined what it takes to move from individual sites to coordinated systems, ensuring that infrastructure, workforce, capital and policy move together, in sequence, at the scale and pace the transition demands.



The Hunter is often told to “pick one thing” to be known for. What approach should guide its future?



David Moretto

Chief Commercial Officer, AGL



Investors ask the same three questions before they commit

- 1) Is the planning pathway certain?
- 2) Is the infrastructure accessible?
- 3) Is long-term energy supply reliable?

These questions are being asked before projects reach a decision point; the absence of clear answers has often already disqualified the opportunity.



Precincts are systems, not individual sites

Transformation happens when infrastructure, workforce, capital and policy align and sequence together. Early decisions on planning, energy supply and skills will determine whether precincts operate as one system or break into disconnected parts.



Proximity accelerates innovation

Co-locating research, clinical practice, education and industry into one ecosystem, as demonstrated by the John Hunter Health and Innovation Precinct, demonstrates how proximity shortens the path from discovery to deployment by enabling rapid collaboration, faster testing and smoother translation into practice.



Henrik Stiesdal

Founder and Chief Technical Officer of Stiesdal



New industries are not competitive at the outset. They become competitive through scale, standardisation and sustained commitment.

Henrik Stiesdal



Session 5

A Story of Reinvention



WHAT COMMITMENT LOOKS LIKE OVER TIME

Denmark did not become a global clean-energy leader because it started with perfect conditions. It became one by making long-horizon choices in the face of disruption, maintaining policy certainty long enough for private investment, supply chains and capability to compound over decades.

Henrik Stiesdal, credited with designing the modern wind turbine and a central figure in Denmark's transformation, brought that reality to life. He stated that reinvention is built through repeated decisions that hold, including sustained R&D, investable market settings, and a clear pipeline that allows firms and skills to scale with confidence.



New industries require ongoing support to become competitive

Denmark's wind industry emerged from sustained policy commitment, demand creation and long-term investment in research, manufacturing and skills. Scale, standardisation and persistence are what convert early-stage industries into global leaders.



The goal is an industry, not a single project

A single investment will not deliver transformation, a pipeline does. The opportunity for the Hunter is to build something that supports multiple proponents, develops deep local supply chains and creates long-term employment that outlasts any individual project decision.



Reinvention is built by committed policy action

The Hunter has the industrial capacity, workforce capability, infrastructure, and strong foundation of institutions. What it needs now is long-term policy settings that enable the formation of industries that can mature around them.



Jennifer Westacott
Chair, Bradfield Development Authority &
Specialist Advisor, KPMG



The biggest opportunities Newcastle Airport creates?

Global connectivity	42
Business access & investment	28
Visitor economy	14
Convenience	12
Jobs & career pathways	9
Freight & exports	6



Bradfield's lesson: build the precinct

Bradfield shows that airports create regional growth only when the land around them is planned as an 'airport precinct'. Newcastle Airport is already advanced, with an anchor industry tenant and strong foundations. The next step is to accelerate and scale growth. ~\$50B investment has already converted plans into sustained growth, jobs and connectivity around the Western Sydney International Airport.



Airport's numbers already moving in the right direction

Newcastle Airport CEO Linc Horton confirmed the airport is on track for a record 1.334M passengers in 2026, with the expanded terminal already proving that demand follows investment. The airport's expansion is forecast to generate ~\$12.7B in economic activity and 4,400+ long-term jobs over the next 20 years.



Partnerships are the mechanism that unlock region-wide growth

Unlocking the Airport's regional benefits requires an explicit partnership model across the airport, councils, tourism operators and planning bodies, with clear roles, shared priorities and practical decision pathways. Without that alignment, actions stay siloed, and the Airport's growth is less likely to compound into region-wide outcomes.



Comfort with the Hunter having a growing role in Australia's defence capability

55%



21%



16%



5%



3%



Session 7 High Speed Rail

AN HOUR FROM SYDNEY, A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

The journey from Sydney to Newcastle takes roughly the same time today as it did over a century ago. High Speed Rail (HSR) Authority CEO **Tim Parker** is determined to change that. A shovel-ready project is the goal by 2028, with the Central Coast to Newcastle leg targeted for completion by 2037. This session examined what HSR would mean not just for expediting travel time, but the benefits it can unlock for housing, liveability, investment and the region's long-term economic identity.



HSR's biggest benefit is housing

The business case frames the project's strongest value as unlocking new housing supply by expanding access to well-located centres along the corridor. It identifies significant housing capacity uplift and relocation potential across Newcastle, the Central Coast and Sydney, with Broadmeadow positioned as the Hunter's primary station and the anchor for integrated precinct renewal.



This infrastructure serves those who cannot work remotely

Tim Parker was direct about who HSR is really built to serve: nurses, tradespeople, and the tens of thousands of people from the Hunter who navigate the M1 every day because the existing rail line is too slow and unreliable. An hour between Newcastle and Sydney doesn't just shorten commutes, it changes what jobs are accessible and where people choose to live.



HSR must work with land use

Panellists brought operational delivery experience alongside a housing and regional planning perspective. The discussion made a clear point: HSR will only deliver its full value if governments lock in integrated planning decisions early, including corridor preservation, housing strategy and coordinated station precinct development.



Tim Parker
CEO High Speed Rail Authority



What needs to happen to make High Speed Rail real for you?

2nd

Visible construction underway

1st

Government commitment

3rd

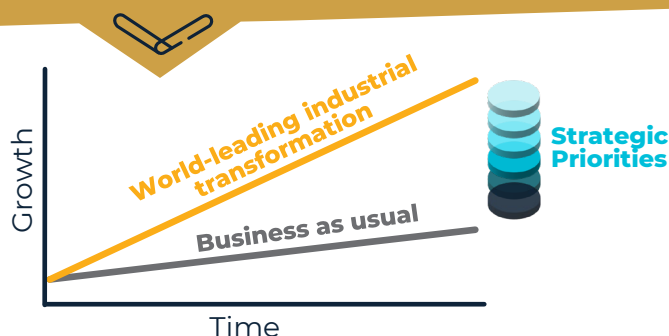
Clear timeframe & value

Hunter Agenda 2026

revealed what the Hunter needs next



Six priorities emerged as a connected set of conditions the region needs to move from a position of strength to its full potential during this transition.



1 From activity to outcomes – the Hunter's delivery gap

The Hunter is not short of vision, plans, projects, institutions or activity. There is significant work underway across the region, and considerable alignment on priorities. The problem is that this momentum is not consistently translating into delivery and visible outcomes. Effort is dispersed, often unconnected, and lacks a clear, coherent logic that can be explained to our community or to external investors. Projects are progressing, but often slowly, encountering a range of challenges and without the impetus needed to deliver results.

2 The scale of response must match the scale of transition

This is a full-scale industrial transformation, not an incremental shift. It requires sustained focus and investment at a fundamentally different level. International and national examples show what this looks like in practice. In Germany and Denmark, transition has been delivered through decades of coordinated policy, long-term investment and deliberate industry building. In Western Sydney, a ~\$50 billion program is aligning airport, rail, roads and precinct development to reshape a regional economy.

3 Infrastructure enables growth – activation delivers it

The Hunter has international gateways, major transport investments and large industry precincts. These create the platform for growth, connectivity and investment. But infrastructure on its own does not deliver outcomes. Airports need to attract international carriers and freight users. Ports rely on strong landside transport links and connected supply chains. High speed rail depends on aligned housing strategies, precinct planning and corridor development to realise its value. Without this, infrastructure remains underutilised and the economic and social returns fall short of what it should deliver.

6 Coordination = alignment + cut through

The consistent message was that the challenge is not ambition or activity, but how the system works together. Coordination does not mean more plans, studies, staff or institutions. It means clear alignment that connects decisions, removes friction and enables delivery. A portfolio approach, not project by precinct by policy by program, multiplies impact. It identifies common constraints and resolves them in advance. There was support for a role for government. Not to direct outcomes, but to enable them by aligning decisions, providing stable settings and working to remove barriers ahead of investment. This points to the need for a practical regional delivery framework; one that sequences action, assigns responsibility and aligns investment across the system over entities, place and time.

5 Workforce outcomes follow investment and delivery

A highly skilled and adaptable workforce is critical to the Hunter's future, with strong support for closer alignment between industry and education. Workforce capability, both employer investment and individual participation, is driven by clear demand and sustained pipelines. While policy continues to focus on defining the jobs of the future, as our Youth Committee representative noted, you can't be what you can't see. Greater focus needed on creating tangible opportunities today and making pathways into them clear. Barriers to participation persist, including transport, access to education and training, and institutional pathways, which must be addressed alongside job creation.

4 Investment is mobilised by certainty, not ambition

There is strong appetite to invest in the Hunter, supported by its assets and strategic position. The issue is not access to capital, it is the conditions that allow it to commit. We learned that money moves when policy and planning settings are stable, infrastructure is sequenced, and there is confidence that energy, workforce and delivery systems will align. It does not mobilise on intent alone. Investors are seeking clarity on planning pathways, long-term energy supply and coordinated infrastructure before decisions are made. Where these conditions are in place, capital commits. Where they are not, projects stall and investment moves elsewhere.

From Hunter Agenda to Plan Hunter

Across Hunter Agenda 2026, one message came through consistently: the Hunter's opportunity will be determined by its ability to align decisions, sequence investment and deliver outcomes over time.



The Committee for the Hunter will now commence development of two connected pieces of work:

- The Committee's next **Strategic Plan**
- **Plan Hunter**, a practical regional delivery framework shaped by the priorities, opportunities and constraints identified through Hunter Agenda.

Plan Hunter will not be another broad vision or strategy document, statutory plan or additional institutional layer. It is not intended to duplicate the considerable work already underway across governments, industry and the community.

Its purpose is to align projects, precincts, policy and programs across sectors, organisations, place and time. It will provide recommendations on strengthening coordination, improving sequencing and clarifying accountabilities for delivery.

Hunter Agenda reinforced that no single institution can deliver this alone, and there is strong appetite for a practical mechanism that helps the system work together more effectively.

The Committee for the Hunter is uniquely positioned to lead this work:

- Independent and non-partisan
- Long-term focus beyond electoral cycles
- Cross-sector membership spanning business, industry, government, education, unions and the community
- Proven convening power across complex regional and intergovernmental issues
- Policy, economic and strategic capability
- Footprint across the Greater Hunter, connecting the Lower and Upper Hunter
- Ability to integrate across systems, rather than operate in silos

The work will be shaped through high engagement with the Committee Board, our membership, government and priority stakeholders.

Attendance at Hunter Agenda 2026 was the beginning of this conversation. Organisations seeking to stay involved in shaping the Hunter's direction, priorities and delivery agenda are encouraged to engage with the Committee via membership as this work progresses.



Hunter Agenda 2026 provided a platform for an important conversation we need to have about our region's future. It's about us as a region deciding our own destiny and singing from the same hymn sheet."

Katie Brassil

Chair, Committee for the Hunter



One Plan



**Shaped by
six priorities**



**Working toward
six objectives** for
success

ABOUT THE COMMITTEE FOR THE HUNTER

The Committee for the Hunter is an independent and inclusive champion for the people of the Hunter and their enterprises, providing advocacy, thought leadership and partnerships to build a sustainable and prosperous future for the region.

Representing over 70 organisations including the largest employers and institutions in the region, we provide a unified voice for the Hunter. Our members are drawn from the private and community sectors and all three levels of government. We come together with a shared interest in building a sustainable, prosperous and equitable future for our region. The Committee delivers through advocacy on regionally-significant priorities, thought leadership and partnerships.

More information about the Committee including membership can be found at www.hunter.org.au or ceo@hunter.org.au

COMMITTEE
FOR THE HUNTER

HUNTER20
AGENDA26