

## Joint Organisations:

## Getting the boundaries right



## Why are we building Joint Organisations?

Joint Organisations are a vital part of the NSW Government's plan to strengthen councils and communities.

A network of robust, connected Joint Organisations (JOs) will provide a forum for councils, State agencies and others to come together at a regional level to work on shared priorities. This will help to deliver important regional projects, delivering better outcomes for communities.

We are working with councils to develop a shared model for JOs. This model has been built through consultation and the experiences of five Pilot regions, which trialled options for the model during 2015.

JOs will work with local councils and State agencies to develop new ways of working together and with others, and a real commitment to change from everyone involved.

## What will they do?

JOs will undertake three core functions:

- regional strategic planning and priority setting
- intergovernmental collaboration
- regional leadership and advocacy

The Office of Local Government recently consulted on a proposed model through the paper, *Joint Organisations: Towards a new model for regional collaboration*. That paper in turn reflected feedback in response to an initial paper, *Joint Organisations: Emerging Directions*, released in October 2015.

There has been positive feedback and strong support to date. An independent evaluation has confirmed that JOs can enhance regional strategic planning and intergovernmental collaboration to benefit regions.



## Why are boundaries important?

Regional and rural councils will each be a voting member of a JO, providing a stronger voice for their local community at a regional level. In light of their unique circumstances, separate regional arrangements are being developed for Far West councils as part of the Far West Initiative.

Building a robust, reliable body for councils at a regional level will help to connect member councils' local plans and priorities with planning by other levels of government. It will also promote the active participation and commitment of all councils and agencies in each region. Clear boundaries will provide everyone with certainty and provide a basis to build the strongest possible relationships over time.

## How big should Joint Organisations be?

While fifteen JOs were originally considered, the Government has yet to make a decision about the number of JOs or their final boundaries.

Our most recent feedback indicates that councils are open to considering forming part of a larger JO, perhaps with sub-regional arrangements. This would help to reduce resourcing costs for member councils and help to accommodate existing council relationships.

## Which councils should work together?

Each JO will focus on delivering its three core functions through a shared model, helping to strengthen collaboration to deliver better community outcomes. As such, the boundaries will need to bring together members to fulfil those core functions for a specific region.

Importantly, councils will still be able to work with other councils outside their JO. This could be achieved by becoming an Associate (non-voting) member of another JO or simply continuing existing initiatives to deliver shared services, procurement, etc.

## What are the boundary criteria?

The NSW Government has consulted councils on criteria for setting JO boundaries several times since releasing *Fit for the Future* in 2014. The final criteria, which are set out in the box below, have been generally supported by councils.

Each JO should

- ✓ align or 'nest' within strategic growth planning boundaries
- ✓ demonstrate clear **community of interest** between member councils and regions
- ✓ not adversely impact on other councils or JOs, for example, leaving too few councils to form a JO
- ✓ be based around a strong regional centre, where possible
- ✓ be of appropriate **scale and capacity** to partner with the NSW Government, Commonwealth Government and other partners.

## What is a *community of interest*?

For the purposes of determining JO boundaries, a community of interest may exist where member councils and the local communities they serve share common or closely related interests and goals, are geographically connected, share similar social and cultural identities and the sense that they 'belong together' as part of a cohesive region. Community of interest also relates to the ways that councils are bound together by common planning and growth interests.

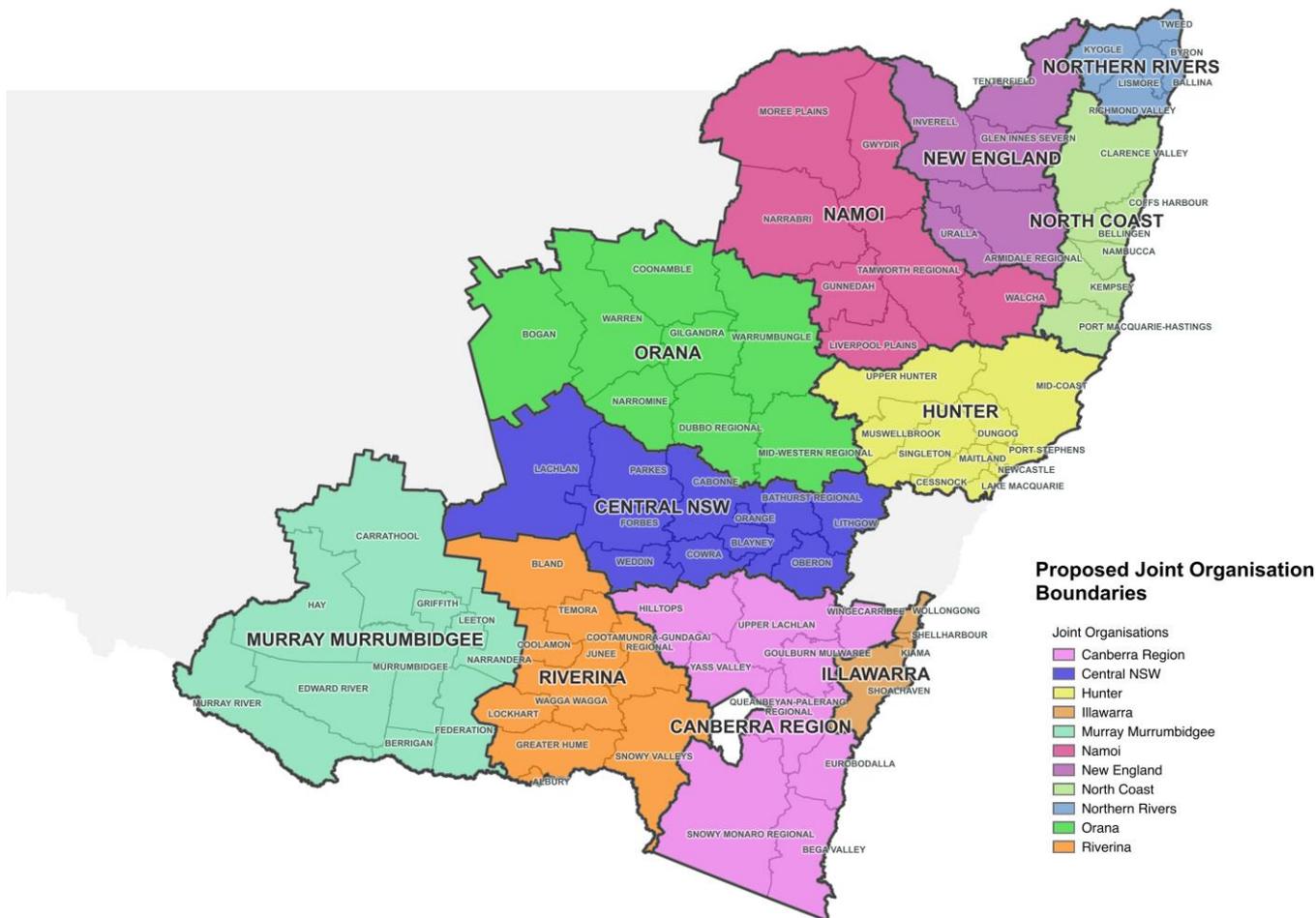
## Why do JOs need *scale and capacity*?

Feedback received to date has emphasised that JOs need to be both viable and workable. They will need to promote consistent regional strategic planning, priority setting and collaboration.

JOs will also need to be capable of supporting member councils through coordinating optional functions such as sharing data, systems, staff, services, tools and expertise.

# What are the proposed boundaries?

The proposed map below is based on the final boundary criteria and feedback to date. This is designed to be a basis for further discussion and consideration.



## Have your say

All councils in regional and rural NSW are invited to provide feedback on the proposed map of JO boundaries by **5pm on Thursday 27 October 2016** via email to [jointorganisations@olg.nsw.gov.au](mailto:jointorganisations@olg.nsw.gov.au).

A decision on boundaries will then be made and the final members of each JO announced. It is intended that each JO will be proclaimed under the *Local Government Act 1993* to begin operation in early 2017.

## Further information

Please contact the Joint Organisations Team at the Office of Local Government on 02 4428 4100 or via email at [jointorganisations@olg.nsw.gov.au](mailto:jointorganisations@olg.nsw.gov.au).