

Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation

Feedback on the
Draft Joint Organisations Review
Implementation Plan, August 2022



The implementation plan addresses the recommendations by theme

1. Governance, promotion and communication (recommendations – 8, 9, 10, 11)
2. Greater financial stability (recommendations – 4, 5)
3. Accountability and performance (recommendations – 1, 2, 3, 7)
4. Boundaries (recommendation 6).

1. Governance, promotion and communication

- a. Support the forum of JO chairs as a means of securing collaboration between chairs, MPs and NSW Government agencies (recommendation 8)

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Status	ISJO Response
Convene an independently facilitated workshop of JO executive officers to align executive officer views on the role of the JO chairs forum	OLG, Regional NSW and JO EOs	March 2022	Completed	<p>The ability to have the workshop take place was appreciated.</p> <p>Given the significant variability of the JOs across the State (in terms of resourcing, Board approach, Executive Officer skills and experience) the desire to achieve “alignment” was perhaps ambitious.</p> <p>It may be productive to focus “alignment” on the reason why the JOs exist – the core functions that all JOs are required to deliver – and take emphasis away from the delivery of the optional functions such as shared services.</p> <p>At the moment the Shared Services focus seems to dominate and feeds into a narrative where “big” = “better”. That narrative need not be the case</p>

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Status	ISJO Response
Convene an independently facilitated workshop of JO chairs and executive officers to ensure the JO chairs forum is fulfilling its potential	OLG, Regional NSW and JO chairs	March 2022	Complete	<p>The ISJO was grateful for the opportunity to participate in the workshop.</p> <p>The Chairs Forum is on a path to a more strategic role. In order for it to become truly effective, however, further time and effort needs to be put into determining what exactly is its mission. At the moment there is still a blurring of the “Advocacy for the Joint Organisation Network” forum with “Advocacy for Local Government”. They are not necessarily mutually exclusive foci however the latter role is already a crowded space. Can the Forum really add value to it?</p> <p>The note above in regard to the variability of the network and the need to focus on the core functions is relevant here</p>
Amend terms of reference for the operation of the JO chairs forum to include workshop outcomes and recommendations	JOs	May 2022	Complete	As above
Monitor the ongoing effectiveness of the JO chairs forum to ensure it is fulfilling its potential	JOs	September 2022 and February 2022	To commence	<p>A mechanism to facilitate this monitoring has not been developed nor has there been a documented discussion on what “effectiveness” might actually mean. There are many factors at play here including the infrequency of meeting, variable attendance and, to some degree, regional partisan intrusion.</p> <p>There is value in networking, sharing ideas and in the provision of a ready point of access for those wishing to talk with the JOs as a whole. Going beyond that will require resourcing and perhaps some form of secretariat.</p> <p>At the moment there doesn’t seem to be an appetite for this</p>

b. Profile successful JO projects and initiatives and showcase best practices (recommendation 9)

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Status	ISJO Response
Use OLG fortnightly newsletter to showcase JO initiatives	OLG, with content provided by JOs	Ongoing	Commenced	The ISJO is sharing its own newsletter with the OLG and has been encouraged by the OLG to provide content for sharing with the sector via the OLG newsletter. We appreciate that offer
Share examples of good JO practice and success stories across the JO network and through Regional Leadership Executive (RLE) meetings	OLG, Regional NSW and JOs	March 2023	To commence	ISJO's newsletter is shared with the Illawarra Shoalhaven RLE and we will be providing opportunities for success stories at a council and State Agency level to also be disseminated through our marketing and communications
Develop a suite of materials demonstrating the value of JOs to state agencies and councils	OLG, Regional NSW and JOs	December 2022	Underway	The ISJO is happy to provide any required input to the development of the suite of materials
Prepare and distribute targeted communications outlining the value of JOs to non-member councils, State Government agencies, councillors and senior staff	OLG and JOs	December 2022	To commence	<p>Each JO is ultimately responsible for providing mechanisms to inform member council elected representatives and senior staff as to the activities, contributions and strategic directions of the JO. The ISJO does this by targeted communications, discussions with ELTs and other means.</p> <p>The ISJO communicates well with its voting and non-voting Board Members. Having said that, there is a lot more we could and will do to ensure wider broadcasting of progress to our broader stakeholders</p> <p>The best form of advertising for JOs is unscripted positive reporting (word of mouth) communication within member Councils, State Agencies and other networks of partnership successes involving JOs.</p> <p>To put this another way, the value of JOs will be best communicated when what is being said reflects reality not "fluffy" words</p>

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Status	ISJO Response
Make better use of the statement of regional priorities to feed into RLE activities	OLG to compile JO statements of regional priorities and provide to RLEs; JOs to promote through RLE meetings	December 2022	To commence	The ISJO will be preparing its Statement of Regional Priorities in partnership with the RLE. It will reflect priorities established at the RLE in consultation with ISJO, shared strategic directions and a common topology with key State Agency plans

c. Ensure member councils understand the role of JOs (recommendation 10)

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Status	ISJO Response
Conduct a survey of councillors and senior staff of member councils of JOs to gain a baseline understanding of awareness of JOs and their value to member councils and their region	OLG, Regional NSW and JOs	To commence in August/September 2022	To commence	As a matter of principle, it is always a good thing when stakeholders at every level understand how and why their aspirations and needs are being addressed. We are, however, not certain that the success of a JO is directly or necessarily tied to awareness of its value proposition. JOs are one means of resourcing / assisting / sometimes delivering regional strategy and cooperation. They are not the only – and very often not the most important – means for achieving those ends. We are happy, however, to participate in the survey process
Prepare a strategy for JOs to implement to raise awareness and understanding of the role of JOs	OLG, Regional NSW and JOs	To commence in September/October 2022 following the survey	To commence	Note the comments above. The best means of raising awareness is to actually do things, nevertheless the ISJO will be happy to participate in preparation and implementation of the Strategy

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Status	ISJO Response
Conduct a follow up survey of councillors and senior staff of member councils of JOs to measure if there has been an increase in awareness of JOs and their value to member councils and their region following delivery of the strategy	OLG, Regional NSW and JOs	June 2023	To commence	Again refer to notes above.

d. Encourage all eligible councils to belong to a joint organisation (recommendation 11)

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Status	ISJO Response
Commence discussions with mayors and general managers of eligible councils not currently a member of a JO to identify and understand barriers to membership	OLG and Regional NSW	July 2022 and on	Commenced	<p>One of the disappointments of the initial period of operation of the Joint Organisations was the degree to which some (a few) Councils chose not to engage in the initiative. A number of reasons have been offered in regard to this refusal – none of them terribly convincing in terms of tangible or verifiable barriers.</p> <p>It may be necessary here to attach a compelling motivator to engagement. This has previously not been an option for the OLG. It may be something available to other critical government agencies and their funding and strategic streams</p>
Work with JOs, NSW Government agencies and eligible councils to remove barriers to membership where possible	OLG, Regional NSW and JOs	August 2022 and on	To commence	As above

2. Greater financial stability

a. Support NSW Government agencies to showcase JOs as a strong and respected partner (recommendation 4)

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Status	ISJO Response
Establish a JO interagency group to support JOs to be an effective partner	OLG and relevant agencies	March 2022	Group established	Establishment of the Group is noted and the opportunity to engage with it is appreciated
Develop a JO review implementation plan	OLG, JO interagency group and JOs	June 2022	Commenced	<p>The opportunity to help finalise the implementation plan is welcome.</p> <p>It will be important to attach accountabilities, measures and milestones to the plan. With co-design comes co-accountability. The JOs (and their member councils) need to feel that they as well as State Agencies are responsible for the plan and its ultimate success</p>

b. Encourage NSW Government agencies to prioritise investing in the JO network (recommendation 5)

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Status	ISJO Response
Identify funding opportunities for JOs	OLG, Regional NSW and JOs	June 2022 and on	Commenced	<p>The ISJO recognises that for some JOs the issue of funding has assumed an overwhelming importance.</p> <p>It would, again, be helpful to focus on the core functions of a JO – which can be delivered relatively economically – and to compartmentalise the focus on service delivery / shared services – activities that are complex to manage, generate their own costs and potentially blur focus on why JOs exist</p>

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Status	ISJO Response
Identify where investment is not being made in the JO network and remove barriers to investment	Interagency working group	September 2022	Underway	The greatest investment that member Councils and State Agencies can invest in local government is strategic interest and a genuine desire to partner in strategy. "Investment" need not equate with cash

3. Accountability and performance

a. Develop a performance framework for JOs and review performance against targets (recommendation 1)

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Status	ISJO Response
Prepare a performance monitoring framework as part of OLG's monitoring program	OLG	December 2022	To commence	<p>The ISJO is not sure how useful a generic performance monitoring framework might be and wonders what form it might take.</p> <p>The most critical performance measures for a JO relate to the degree to which its Statement of Strategic Priorities distils the essence of its member council's aspirations within the framework of regional plans, the quality of its annual operational planning and its success in meeting its strategic goals as outlined in the SoSP and AOP.</p> <p>Performance monitoring needs to focus on strategy, outcomes and partnerships. It would be a shame if it came across as a compliance exercise</p>

b. Develop tailored capacity building and investment in JOs (recommendation 2)

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Status	ISJO Response
Work with the Auditor General to seek to lower audit costs	OLG	September 2022	Initial meeting held – further meetings to follow	In the scheme of things, the costs attached to the audit process are not onerous – especially given the increasingly high level of engagement and value deriving from them

c. Strengthen governance processes in identified JOs (recommendation 3)

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Status	ISJO Response
Informed by the performance monitoring framework	OLG	2023	To commence	Refer to notes above on this aspect

d. Support JOs to work more effectively within the framework of the Local Government Act (recommendation 7)

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Status	ISJO Response
Review the regulatory and legislative requirements of JOs to determine if they remain fit for purpose	OLG and in consultation with JOs	December 2022	To commence	The ISJO will be happy to participate in this review
Support JOs with the establishment of the ARIC framework	OLG and JOs	June 2022	Commenced	Given, as noted above, the level, complexity and increasing value of external audit processes as well as the cost and time involved in the ARIC process, it may be that a different approach to ARICs is warranted in the context of a JO. The ISJO will be happy to participate in a review of requirements but, in the meantime, will work towards complying with current provisions
Identify opportunities for JOs to streamline regulatory and legislative compliance	OLG and JOs	October 2022	To commence	The ISJO will be happy to participate in any review process

4. Boundaries

a. Ensure boundaries are suitably aligned (recommendation 6)

Action	Responsibility	Timing	Status	ISJO Response
Review current design principles to ensure they remain fit for purpose	OLG, Regional NSW and JOs	September 2022	To commence	<p>The ISJO is not entirely sure what the current design principles are in relation to JO boundaries.</p> <p>It is more than evident that some of the current JOs are not viable because of low council membership numbers / resource poor membership / regional fragmentation and lack of access to required skills at the EO level.</p> <p>It may be appropriate to look at the boundaries in their current form, take into account State Agency boundaries (most particularly RLE boundaries) and then build direct alignment through strategic partnering / co-funding of an EO (if not direct amalgamation).</p> <p>This could result in the creation of seven or eight financially strong, strategically powerful regional groupings – and is an approach well worth considering.</p>
Establish a process to alter JO boundaries where warranted	OLG and Regional NSW and JOs	September 2022	To commence	<p>The ISJO recognises the complexities associated with the above, but maintains that maintenance of the status quo seems not to be a sensible, strategic option</p>