

# HUNTER COUNCILS

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**Hunter Councils Inc Board Meeting  
Thursday 31 March 2011  
Hunter River Hotel**

## MINUTES

### **Item 1 Welcomes and Apologies**

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#### **Attendees**

Alison Davey	Cessnock City Council	Lea Rosser	Cessnock City Council
Cr Harold Johnston	Dungog Shire Council	Craig Deasey	Dungog Shire Council
Cr Geoff Slack	Gloucester Shire Council	Allan Young	Gloucester Shire Council
Cr Jan McWilliams	Great Lakes Council	Glenn Handford	Great Lakes Council
Cr Greg Piper	Lake Macquarie City Council	Brian Bell	Lake Macquarie City Council
Cr Peter Blackmore	Maitland City Council	David Evans	Maitland City Council
Cr Martin Rush	Muswellbrook Shire Council	Steve McDonald	Muswellbrook Shire Council
Cr John Tate	Newcastle City Council	Rob Noble	Newcastle City Council
Cr Bob Westbury	Port Stephens Council	Peter Gesling	Port Stephens Council
Cr Sue Moore	Singleton Council	Henry Wilson (Observer)	Singleton Shire Council
Cr Lee Watts	Upper Hunter Shire Council	Daryl Dutton	Upper Hunter Shire Council

#### **Apologies**

Scott Greensill                      Singleton Shire Council

#### **Staff in attendance**

Roger Stephan                      CEO

## **Item 1 Welcomes and Apologies**

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The Chair, Cr Martin Rush, Mayor of Muswellbrook Shire Council welcomed the Mayors and General Managers to the meeting. The apologies of

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT the apologies be accepted.**

Moved:  
Seconded:

***Carried.***

## **Item 2 Minutes from the previous meeting**

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The minutes from the previous meeting of 11 February 2011 were accepted as true and correct following correction of the listing of Cr Geoff Slack as being an apology for the meeting.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT the minutes of the Board Meeting of 11 February 2011 be accepted as true and correct.**

Moved: Cr John Tate  
Seconded: Cr Bob Westbury

***Carried.***

## **Item 3 Business Arising from Previous Minutes**

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3.1 Nil

## **Item 4 Presentations**

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### **4.1 Hunter Development Corporation**

A presentation was provided by Bob Hawes, General Manager and Julie Rich of the Hunter Development Corporation in relation to the roles and strategic directions of the Corporation.

The Chair thanked the representatives for their presentation.

### **4.2 Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange (refer to Report 6.3)**

Cr Greg Piper provided an introductory statement in relation to the Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange. Following these remarks a presentation on the project was provided by Tony Farrell, Director City Strategy at Lake Macquarie City Council and Kelly Lofberg,

External Relations Specialist on planning, funding and strategic issues associated with the opportunity.

Further discussion in regard to the project was deferred until consideration of CEO's Report 6.3.

## **Item 5 Business Arising from Presentations**

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5.1 Nil

## **Item 6 CEO's Reports**

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### **6.1 Dispute Resolution**

Discussion took place in relation to the matter in response to a view expressed by Cr Peter Blackmore that, as no formal complaint had been received by the Board, no action could be taken on the matter.

Cr Moore provided an overview of concerns felt by Singleton Council in regard to recent issues covered in the local media which had impacted adversely on the Council. Cr Moore reaffirmed the expressed commitment of her Council to membership of Hunter Councils.

The Chair, Cr Rush, indicated that the relationship between Singleton and Muswellbrook Councils remained strong.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

#### **THAT:**

- 1. The report be received and noted**
- 2. The Board note the content of Cr Moore's letter in relation to the matter.**

Moved: Cr Peter Blackmore  
Seconded: Cr Geoff Slack

***Carried.***

### **6.2 Resolution by Newcastle City Council in relation to conduct of Hunter Councils Board Meetings**

Cr Tate formally presented the recent resolution of Newcastle City Council in relation to meetings of the Hunter Councils Inc Board. General discussion followed.

Following discussion it was determined that the Board was supportive of current policy in relation to the matter and that it would be appropriate to call for the tabling at the next meeting of a formal review of current policy and a draft response, consistent with that review, to the Newcastle City Council resolution. Cr Rush noted that an important component of both the review and response would be awareness raising in regard to membership of Hunter Councils being held by Councils as corporate entities. The members are not the aggregation of the individual councillors of each member council.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT:**

- 1. A formal review of current policy in relation to access to Board Meetings, agendas and minutes be provided to the next meeting of the Board**
- 2. Newcastle City Council be informed as to the outcomes of that review.**

Moved: Cr Greg Piper  
Seconded: Cr Jan McWilliams

***Carried.***

**6.3 Regional Development Australia Fund**

Discussion took place in relation to both the Regional Development Australia Fund and the presentation provided earlier in the meeting on the Lake Macquarie Interchange. As a result of that discussion it was resolved that the General Managers Advisory Committee be delegated authority to prepare a prioritised list of projects for presentation to an Extraordinary Meeting of the Board on 28 April 2011.

Strong support was expressed for the Lake Macquarie Interchange proposal.

*Notation:*

Cr Tate indicated, for the information of the Minutes, that he was the Deputy Chair of RDA Hunter and that he would be attending the next meeting of the RDA Hunter Committee. Cr Tate took no part in the discussion of the matter.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT:**

- 1. An Extraordinary Meeting of the Board be held on 28 April 2011 to consider projects for inclusion in a Hunter Councils submission for funding from the Regional Development Australia Fund.**
- 2. The General Managers Advisory Committee be delegated authority for preparation of a prioritised list of regionally significant projects for the Board's consideration at the Extraordinary Meeting.**

Moved: Cr Sue Moore  
Seconded: Cr Jan McWilliams

***Carried.***

**6.4 Funding Request from Hunter Valley Research Foundation**

The Board considered a report on a request from the Hunter Valley Research Foundation for financial support to enable publication of a report on the ‘well-being’ of residents of the Hunter Region. The Board had previously been provided with a presentation and report on the matter.

As a result of its consideration of the report, the Board resolved to support \$20,000 sponsorship of the report and further contribution – to a maximum of \$9,900 – for creation of a specific “Upper Hunter” well-being document.

Hunter Councils, the organisation will fund the \$20,000. A view was expressed by Darryl Dutton, General Manager of Upper Hunter Shire Council, that it would be appropriate for the Councils of the Upper Hunter to consider provision of a level of funding support (perhaps 50% of the total cost) in relation to the Upper Hunter study.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT:**

1. **\$20,000 sponsorship be allocated to support publication of the Hunter Region Well-Being research developed by the Hunter Valley Research Foundation**
2. **Funding of \$9,900 be provided to enable production of an Upper Hunter specific Well- Being Report.**
3. **The CEO liaise with the Councils of the Upper Hunter in relation to a possible contribution to costs associated with the Upper Hunter study.**

Moved: Cr Sue Moore  
Seconded: Cr Alison Davey

***Carried.***

**6.5 Board Advisory Groups**

Discussion took place in regard to the meeting minutes. It was noted that one of the groups had yet to meet this year and that some concern had been expressed in regard to some Councils not being regularly represented at the meetings.

The CEO indicated that minutes of meetings would be distributed at the conclusion of each meeting round.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT the report be received and noted.**

Moved: Cr Peter Blackmore  
Seconded: Cr Sue Moore

***Carried.***

**6.6 Proposed partnership with Goroka ULLG, Papua New Guinea**

Both a presentation and a late report on the proposed partnership with Goroka Urban Level of Local Government were provided by the CEO.

As noted in both the presentation and report there exists significant potential for Councils within the Hunter to contribute in a significant way to the enhancement of local governance and Council performance in Goroka. In doing so, the participating Councils will also be affording their staff with an opportunity to expand their skills and awareness, with positive outcomes for the Councils on their return.

As a result of discussion it was determined to support in principle a Hunter Councils link with Goroka, with a further report to the Board following detailed consideration of the matter by the General Managers Advisory Committee.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT:**

- 1. The concept of a strategic partnership between Hunter Councils and the Goroka ULLG be endorsed**
- 2. A further report on the matter be provided to the Board following detailed consideration of the matter by the General Managers Advisory Committee.**

Moved:

Cr Greg Piper

Seconded:

Cr Bob Westbury

***Carried.***

**6.7 February 2011 Profit and Loss Statement**

A profit and loss statement for the period ending February 2011 was considered.

Discussion took place in regard to the statement and to the fact that it contains commercially sensitive information relating to Hunter Councils business activities.

It was indicated that, given the commercial in confidence nature of the report, its widespread dissemination would be inappropriate.

It was agreed, however, that the "bottom line" within the report could be released.

That bottom line indicated:

- An accounting surplus to date (end February 2011) of \$448,663. This represented an increase over the period year to date result of \$419,119 – a result considered all the more praiseworthy because of the elimination, this financial year, of all member council contributions to the administration of Hunter Councils
- A cash surplus to date of \$388,663.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT the report be received and noted.**

Moved: Cr John Tate  
Seconded: Cr Jan McWilliams

***Carried.***

## **Item 7 Notified General Business**

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### **7.1 National Broadband Network**

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT the correspondence be received and noted.**

Moved: Cr Greg Piper  
Seconded: Cr Peter Blackmore

***Carried.***

### **7.2 Heavier Trucks on Local Roads**

Discussion took place in relation to correspondence received from Gloucester Shire Council in relation to the Roads and Traffic Authority's implementation – without prior consultation with local government - of a Livestock Transport Productivity Package. This package will impose a policing role on councils in regard to "last mile" and weight of loads and may adversely impact on council road assets and ability to fund those assets maintenance.

As a result of discussion it was resolved to write to the Roads and Traffic Authority seeking a moratorium in relation to the changed provisions until such time as consultation with local government on the measures and related compensation is completed.

Moved: Cr Greg Piper  
Seconded: Cr Bob Westbury

***Carried.***

## **Item 8 General Business**

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### **8.1 Coal and Gas Strategy Consultation**

Discussion took place in relation to the consultation being carried out by the Department of Planning in relation to the NSW Coal and Gas Strategy Scoping Paper.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**THAT Hunter Councils lodge a submission in relation to the NSW Coal and Gas Strategy Scoping Paper.**

Moved: Cr Greg Piper

Seconded:

Cr Harold Johnston

***Carried.***

### **8.3 Proposed legislative amendment in relation to the leasing of Community Land**

Cr Piper sought feedback from General Managers on possibilities in relation to a logical extended timeframe for the maximum allowable period for leasing of community land (the current maximum period following Ministerial consent is 21 years).

A range of views were expressed with any further information to be provided to Cr Piper.

### **8.3 Resignation of Cr Sue Moore as Vice Chair**

Cr Moore formally advised the Board of her resignation as Vice Chair of the Hunter Councils Inc Board.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

#### **THAT:**

- 1. Cr Moore's resignation as Vice Chair of the Board be noted.**
- 2. An election process for the position of Vice Chair be undertaken at the next meeting of the Board**
- 3. Cr Moore be thanked for her contribution as Vice Chair.**

Moved:

Cr Greg Piper

Seconded:

Cr Jan McWilliams

***Carried.***

### **8.4 Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service Update**

Cr Slack, as the Board's representative on the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service, provided a report to the Board.

Items discussed included:

- the pending arrival of the Service's new helicopter and associated training and housing requirements.
- Negotiations taking place with Westpac in relation to continuation of its naming rights sponsorship
- the potential for a future Board Meeting to take place at Rescue Helicopter Service's premises.

The report was noted, with the CEO to follow up at a later date in regard to meeting venue opportunity.

## **8,5 Confidential Reports**

Discussion took place in relation to the possibility or otherwise of inclusion of confidential reports within the Board Business Paper. As a result of that discussion the CEO will include a recommendation on the matter in the pending report on Board policy on meetings.

## **Item 9 Next Meeting**

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Extraordinary Meeting

28 April 2011, 9:30am

The Mecure Hotel, Rutherford