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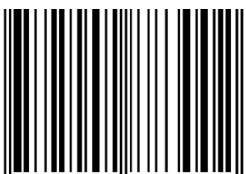
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From the Editor



It is certainly a busy time in politics.

After the Coalition looking favourites to win the Federal election for several months, there has been a shift according to pollsters and now ALP are clear favourites. There is of course still time for this to change before the election.

Neither side has decisively won over the electorate, with primary votes for both sitting in the 30 percents. This makes a hung parliament quite possible, putting a lot of power into

the hands of those holding the balance.

The recent Federal Budget was underwhelming, and the Budget reply was no better. Both lacked any real vision or contained measures on some of the big issues for the economy such as the two-year per capita recession, years of stagnant productivity and tax reform. Neither side seems willing to create too big a potential target, so they play it safe.

It is hoped the winner will have the courage to attack some of these bigger issues, at least early in the election cycle.

Of course, the current and future Governments also need to deal with a turbulent global situation.

The Trump inspired creative economics in the USA may well lead to a massive global trade war and recession, as well as a shift in global alliances. Countries such as Japan and South Korea, who have been long-term US allies, are now looking to China for leadership.

Australia is too small to make a major difference, particularly when there is no opportunity for sensible debate, so it looks like a very difficult time for the winner of the Federal election.

The Government will need to show leadership and take measures that can ease the impacts of global tariffs, without exacerbating the situation.

It will need to help those industries under threat and also help to highlight new markets and opportunities that arise.

Whatever happens, it will certainly be an interesting time and one that will be studied by historians and economists for decades to come.

Garry Hardie
Editor and Publisher

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Port Waratah releases 2024 annual reports

Port Waratah has released its suite of 2024 annual reports. These reports provide a comprehensive insight into its sustainability and financial performance, with a focus on its people, operations, environmental management and social impacts.

Port Waratah reports annual coal throughput of 100.8 million tonnes in 2024, a five million tonne increase compared to 2023, indicating that demand for Hunter Valley coal remains strong. Japan continued to be the largest destination for exports loaded by Port Waratah, with 49% of the total volume. China's share of exports increased to 30%, marking a new high of 29.8 million tonnes of coal to this destination from the Kooragang and Carrington terminals.

Contract negotiations with producer customers concluded during 2024 resulting in a new, more flexible contracting arrangement suited to the industry. These changes supported new producer contract nominations of 47 million tonnes over the next five years, on top of what had been previously expected. Contracted demand over this period remains above the 100 million tonnes a year mark.

Port Waratah's CEO, Hennie du Plooy, said he was confident that Port Waratah and the Hunter Valley coal industry were well-positioned to meet market demand.

In 2024, Port Waratah recorded six reportable injuries and four reportable environmental incidents. Mr du Plooy said that the leadership team and workforce accept the challenge to improve further.

"Our goal is to perform our operations without harm to people or the environment. We remain committed to ensure that the effort and commitment of our people translate into tangible results as reflected in a reduction in incidents."

"Air quality, noise, water and waste management performed well throughout the majority of the year with a number of targets



Port Waratah Coal Services Kooragang Wharf, Port Waratah Kooragang Reclaimer

achieved. The annual landfill diversion rate was 92.5%, which marked the eighth year that we maintained a diversion rate over 90%. We also remained focused on our climate action initiatives."

"We continued our support of early careers for the next generation with 15 hosted apprentices, seven university scholarship students, four graduate employees and three trainees."

"We are proud to have launched our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan in July. In a demonstration of employee alignment and interest, 70% of our team had attended In Country experiences with a local cultural advisor by year end."

"Our local spend on suppliers, contractors and services in the Hunter Region increased to \$147.4 million, more than 79% of our total spend."

"We also proudly invested \$850,000 back into the local community through the Community Investment and Partnership Programme, supporting more than 140 initiatives and services."

Investment in Port Waratah's operating assets is focused on delivering reliable and cost-effective services long into the future. The 2024 programme amounted to \$57.2 million, and comprised significant work and equipment upgrades in electrical, mechanical and structural disciplines.

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Double gold for Balloon Aloft at Australian Tourism Awards

Balloon Aloft achieved remarkable success at the 2024 Qantas Australian Tourism Awards, securing Gold in both the Adventure Tourism and Excellence in Accessible Tourism categories. The prestigious awards ceremony, held at the Adelaide Convention Centre on 21 March, celebrated the nation's top tourism businesses.

Balloon Aloft, with 45 years of experience and flight locations across NSW and Queensland, was recognised for its exceptional commitment to quality tourism. Notably, their innovative Accessible Hot Air Balloon Flights over the Hunter Valley earned them the Excellence in Accessible Tourism award. Launched in September 2023, this initiative, featuring a specially designed door for wheelchair access, is a state-first and only the second of its kind in Australia.

"We are incredibly honoured to receive these two awards," said Matthew Scaife, owner and senior pilot.

"Our new accessible balloon has allowed us to share the magic of hot air ballooning with a wider audience, and we dedicate these wins to all our passengers."

Balloon Aloft offers sunrise adventure flights over some of Australia's most scenic landscapes including the Hunter Valley, Mudgee, Byron Bay, Camden and Burketown with accessible flights available from their Hunter Valley location.

Rebrand for AFRM

Established locally in 1997, AFRM (Australian Financial Risk Management) has unveiled their first rebrand and fresh look for the company.

Based in The Junction with presence Australia wide, the company is using the new look to highlight their specialist, relationship-based insurance service. At the beginning of April the company celebrated two milestones - their 28th anniversary and surpassing \$360 million in life insurance related claims paid to their clients.

"Unfortunately bad things in life happen – sickness, injuries, accidents, and losing loved ones. If that happens, our clients are assured that they and their family are protected," said Rob Vitnell, Manager Director and Adviser.

"When clients are at their darkest times, we've helped deliver financial security and relief from the burden of dealing with insurance companies. This means more energy for recovery and family during challenging times."

Part of AFRM's success is working with other local professionals, including financial advisers, accountants, and solicitors.

"With our strong roots in Newcastle, our networks of local professional service referrals are ensuring convenient and comprehensive support for clients" said Damien Jones, Director and General Manager.

Rob Vitnell and Damien Jones



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Lovedale Farm display suite opens

On the 15 March the Lovedale Farm project by Capital Corporation officially launched with the opening of its display suite at Hunter Valley Gardens which provides potential buyers with a taste of the luxury lifestyle on offer at this prestigious new development.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony was officiated by Member for Cessnock, Clayton Barr, and Capital Corporation Managing Director, Jim Hunter, in front of an audience of 250 guests, including keen home buyers who have been eagerly waiting this landmark development for many years.

Lovedale Farm, located in the heart of the Hunter Valley Vineyard District, has already experienced strong demand reflected in early sales, with Capital Corporation selling over 60% of the initial release of 50 lots during VIP sales in the first few months of 2025, representing a total sales value of approximately \$50 million.

Spanning 240 hectares on Wine Country Drive in Lovedale, the billion-dollar project is set to generate around 1,250 jobs in the local area, injecting an estimated \$300 million into the Hunter during construction. The first 200 homes and championship golf course are anticipated for completion by mid-2027.

Capital Corporation Managing Director Jim Hunter said Lovedale Farm will contribute approximately \$100 million per annum to the local economy and further elevate the Hunter Valley as a key destination for domestic and international tourism.

"We developed Lovedale Farm with a view to it becoming the Hunter's premier destination, paying homage to the Hunter Valley's enviable lifestyle and natural beauty and a place that local, national and international guests will want on their bucket list," Mr Hunter said.

"Lovedale Farm will comprise 500 residential lots ranging from 500 m² to 3,000 m², a 300-key resort and day spa, dining precinct, and a world-class 18-hole championship golf course designed by renowned golf designer Darius Oliver. The new golf course will join The Vintage and Cypress Lakes as the Hunter Valley's third championship golf course."

Groundworks have officially commenced on site, with demand expected to come from Sydney and Newcastle-based buyers seeking a premium lifestyle property within one of Australia's most prized wine and golf regions and only a couple of hours reach of the city.

Globally renowned golf course designer Darius Oliver and award-winning international architectural firm Hachem have been instrumental in the creation of Lovedale Farm, which was originally a dairy farm and purchased by Capital Corporation in 2004.

Hachem Architects were appointed to the project after an Australia-wide design competition. Previous projects include the award-winning W Melbourne and Playford Adelaide hotels.

More than 50% of Lovedale Farm will be dedicated to the golf course, bushland, parks and water features. The site will retain many of its established trees and extensive planting of 2000 trees has already been undertaken across the site.



City of Newcastle strengthens commitment to affordable housing

City of Newcastle's Affordable Housing Contribution Scheme reached a major milestone after Councillors endorsed a planning proposal at the Ordinary Council Meeting on 25 March to bring it into effect. The scheme sets out how contributions towards affordable housing will be collected from new developments.

Executive Director of Planning and Environment, Michelle Bisson, said "The Affordable Housing Contribution Scheme has been developed through extensive consultation and analysis to ensure that it does not impact on development feasibility and overall housing supply.

"It is a transparent, evidence-based framework that provides certainty for developers and recognises the importance of affordably priced housing for Novocastrians today and in the future."

The scheme was on public exhibition from November 2024 to February 2025, with amendments made based on submissions to clarify how it is to be applied, implemented and administered.

City of Newcastle's Affordable Housing Working Party Chair Councillor Elizabeth Adamczyk said the scheme was a key initiative to work towards a target of 15% of all housing being affordable housing.

"Many households in Newcastle are already in rental stress which has only increased with the cost-of-living crisis, and our population is forecast to grow significantly, so making sure there are affordable rental housing options available right across our city is incredibly important," Cr Adamczyk said.

"This is part of our comprehensive local approach to address the serious shortfall of available affordable rental housing that already exists in our city, and one that recognises it as critical social infrastructure that supports our diverse, inclusive, and strong community."

Affordable housing is available to support very low to moderate income households experiencing housing stress, which occurs where housing costs are greater than 30% of gross household income after other basic living costs.

The scheme will now be forwarded to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure for finalisation after which it will be phased in over time to allow developers opportunity to factor it in prior to purchasing sites.

New Gold Coast flight departs Newcastle Airport

FlyPelican successfully launched its inaugural direct service between Newcastle and the Gold Coast on 24 March.

The milestone moment saw passengers board FlyPelican's first direct flight connecting these two destinations, bringing greater convenience, tourism opportunities and business connectivity to both regions. The new service marks a significant expansion for FlyPelican, offering travellers a seamless and affordable option to experience the best of both cities.

With weekly flights operating on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, the airline is set to enhance accessibility for holidaymakers and business commuters alike.

FlyPelican's CEO, Marty Hawley, welcomed the occasion with enthusiasm, stating, "We are excited to officially launch our direct service between Newcastle and the Gold Coast today.

"This new route offers both leisure and business travellers a more convenient flight schedule to explore two of Australia's iconic regions.

"We look forward to enhancing connectivity, supporting tourism and helping to drive economic growth for both cities."

Powering Sustainable Solutions: GBE Group's Commitment to Energy Efficiency

In the construction industry, sustainability is increasingly a driving force behind innovation and change. Companies are under pressure not only to meet evolving environmental standards but also to adopt energy-efficient solutions that reduce their carbon footprint.

GBE Group, a leader in energy management and electrical contracting services, is committed to supporting the construction and industrial sectors in their journey toward sustainability. Through cutting-edge solutions like LED lighting, electric vehicle charging stations, and net-zero compliance strategies, **GBE Group** is helping businesses build a greener future.

Net-Zero Compliance: Achieving Long-Term Sustainability Goals



As industries move toward Net-Zero Compliance, **GBE Group** is at the forefront, providing comprehensive solutions to help businesses achieve their sustainability goals. Net-zero compliance refers to balancing the amount of greenhouse gases emitted with the amount removed from the atmosphere. With increasing government pressure to adhere to net-zero targets, businesses must implement energy-saving strategies across all operations.

GBE Group works closely with clients to assess their current energy usage, identify areas for improvement, and

implement practical, cost-effective strategies to meet net-zero goals. From installing energy-efficient LED lighting to optimizing overall electrical systems, **GBE Group** ensures that businesses are not only compliant with regulations but also future-ready in terms of sustainability.

LED Lighting: A Beacon of Energy Efficiency



One of the simplest and most effective ways to reduce energy consumption in commercial and industrial facilities is through the implementation of LED lighting solutions. LEDs consume up to 85% less energy than traditional lighting systems and have significantly longer lifespans, resulting in both cost savings and environmental benefits. **GBE Group's** LED lighting solutions are tailored to the specific needs of each client, ensuring that energy efficiency is maximized without compromising on quality or performance.

By replacing outdated lighting systems with LEDs, businesses can reduce their electricity consumption, lower their carbon emissions, and enhance overall lighting conditions in the workplace. This shift not only supports environmental sustainability but also aligns with emerging regulations aimed at reducing energy consumption in commercial facilities.

SMART TECHNOLOGIES FOR SMARTER SUSTAINABILITY

The adoption of smart technologies is central to **GBE Group's** approach to energy management. Integrating automated control systems with energy-saving solutions like LED lighting and EV charging stations allows businesses to further enhance their energy efficiency. Automated dimming, motion sensors, and time-based lighting controls help minimize energy wastage, ensuring that lights are only used when necessary.

These smart systems offer real-time monitoring and data analytics, giving businesses greater control over their energy usage and providing insights that can drive further improvements in sustainability. With **GBE Group's** expertise in smart technology integration, businesses can optimize their energy consumption in a way that's not only efficient but also easy to manage.

Charging Stations: Empowering the Future of Transportation



Sustainability isn't just about reducing energy use—it's also about adopting new technologies that promote environmental stewardship. As electric vehicles (EVs) become more mainstream, the demand for Electric Vehicle Charging Stations has skyrocketed. **GBE Group** is leading the charge by providing businesses with reliable, scalable charging infrastructure that supports

the transition to cleaner transportation.

By integrating EV charging stations into existing facilities, **GBE Group** enables businesses to cater to the growing number of electric vehicles on the road. This not only promotes sustainability but also positions businesses as forward-thinking leaders in the clean energy transition. Whether for fleet vehicles or employee and customer use, **GBE Group's** EV charging solutions are designed for ease of installation and seamless integration with other energy-efficient systems.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE TOGETHER

Sustainability is no longer a niche consideration—it is central to the future of construction and business operations. **GBE Group** is committed to helping clients meet their sustainability objectives through a holistic approach to energy management. From reducing energy consumption with advanced LED lighting systems to supporting the transition to electric vehicles with EV charging

infrastructure, **GBE Group** provides the tools and expertise necessary to build a greener, more sustainable future.

As businesses across the Hunter region and beyond look for innovative ways to reduce their environmental impact, **GBE Group** is proud to lead the way. By offering practical, cost-effective, and scalable energy solutions, **GBE Group** is not only helping businesses comply with sustainability regulations but also empowering them to take charge of their energy future.

For more information on how **GBE Group's** sustainability-driven solutions can benefit your business, visit www.gbegroup.com.au/energy-management/led-lighting/, www.gbegroup.com.au/energy-management/net-zero-compliance/ and www.gbegroup.com.au/energy-management/charging-stations/



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\$52m Hunter Sports Centre expansion opens

The \$52 million Hunter Sports Centre, Kaiyu Nungkiliko expansion has opened, delivering a world-class athletics centre and Australian-first Trampoline Centre of Excellence for the Hunter Region.

Representatives from all three levels of government cut the ribbon on Saturday 8 March at the site's official opening, ahead of a community open day which was held on 29 March.

Lake Macquarie Mayor Adam Shultz said the upgrade meant Lake Macquarie was now primed to host national and international athletics and trampolining events.

"The expanded Hunter Sports Centre will be a magnet for major sporting events for many years to come," he said.

"Not only that, it will nurture sporting talent locally and provides a massive injection for athletics – in particular trampolining – as Australia heads towards hosting the Olympic Games in 2032."

The expansion was jointly funded by Lake Macquarie City Council, the Australian Government through its Building Better Regions program, its Local Regional Infrastructure program and its Changing Places funding, and the NSW Government through its Centre of Excellence Fund, its Essential Community Sports Asset program and its Regional Sport Facility fund.

It includes a three-level, 4500 m² sport and community centre, with community and function rooms, a health and fitness centre, offices and cafe.

The new Trampoline Centre of Excellence at the western end of the site includes a 1300 m² trampoline hall with ten trampolines, two tumbling strips, a foam pit, warm-up areas and grandstand seating for 400.

Hunter Sports Centre acting General Manager Michelle Preston-Poole said the Centre of Excellence would also cater for training and provide career pathways in other aerial sports, including

skateboarding and skiing.

The expansion's opening also paves the way for the University of Newcastle's first permanent presence in Lake Macquarie, including the Trevor Height Athlete Testing Facility and the new sports and community centre.

University of Newcastle Vice-Chancellor Professor Alex Zelinsky said he was excited to see the opening of the sports centre and the opportunities that it would provide for students, the Lake Macquarie community and athletes across the region.

The expanded centre's dual name was provided by Miromaa Aboriginal Language and Technology Centre in consultation with Biraban Local Aboriginal Land Council. In Awabakal language, Kaiyu means 'power, skill and ability', while Nungkiliko means 'to be successful' or 'to obtain'.

Succession planning at Emergent Group

Emergent Group is evolving to position the business to meet the changing needs of Australian industries and to leverage and grow talent within.

Former Managing Director and Emergent Group employee of 34 years, Steven Smith, is stepping sideways to fill the new role of Executive Director – Strategic Projects. This role will focus on progressing initiatives identified by the Board.

Stepping up to oversee all aspects of the business in the role of Group Managing Director is Dr Glenn Platt, who formerly occupied the role of Executive Director – Strategy and Innovation. Glenn is well known in scientific and engineering circles as the former head of the CSIRO Energy Centre and as a recent inductee as a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (ATSE).

Steven initiated these organisational changes, recognising that the business needed to transition the leadership of the Group in a controlled manner, rather than having to react to an unplanned event.

Glenn is very enthusiastic about leading the business into the future. "It's an honour and a privilege to be asked to be Group MD.

Emergent Group is an incredible organisation with an amazing legacy that I look forward to working with the team to build on," he said.

In addition to these two leadership changes at the Group level, Paul Reynolds, who held the position of Chief Operations Officer of Advitech, has become the Chief Executive Officer of the company. A new role, which reports to Glenn.

The Group's remote communications company Acubis, with headquarters in Mackay, Queensland, also has a new CEO. Jeff Berg, who was the company's General Manager, is moving into this newly created leadership role.

Glenn and Steven are both excited about these developments and are confident that the changes place the Group in an invigorated and stronger long-term position to meet the emerging challenges of Australian industry.

New lease arrangement for Hunter Warbirds


Upper Hunter Shire Council has resolved to enter into a five-year commercial lease agreement with aviation professionals Ross Pay and Paul Bennet for the operation of the Hunter Warbirds facility.

Under the proposed arrangement, Pay's Air Services and Paul Bennet Airshows will take on the day-to-day management of the facility while also continuing to deliver the highly anticipated Warbirds Over Scone airshow.


This decision represents a significant financial benefit for the community, with projected savings of approximately \$2 million over the next five years. These savings will allow Council to redirect funds towards other local priorities while ensuring Hunter Warbirds remains a leading aviation attraction in the region.

Council will now work through the finalisation of the agreement to support a smooth transition.

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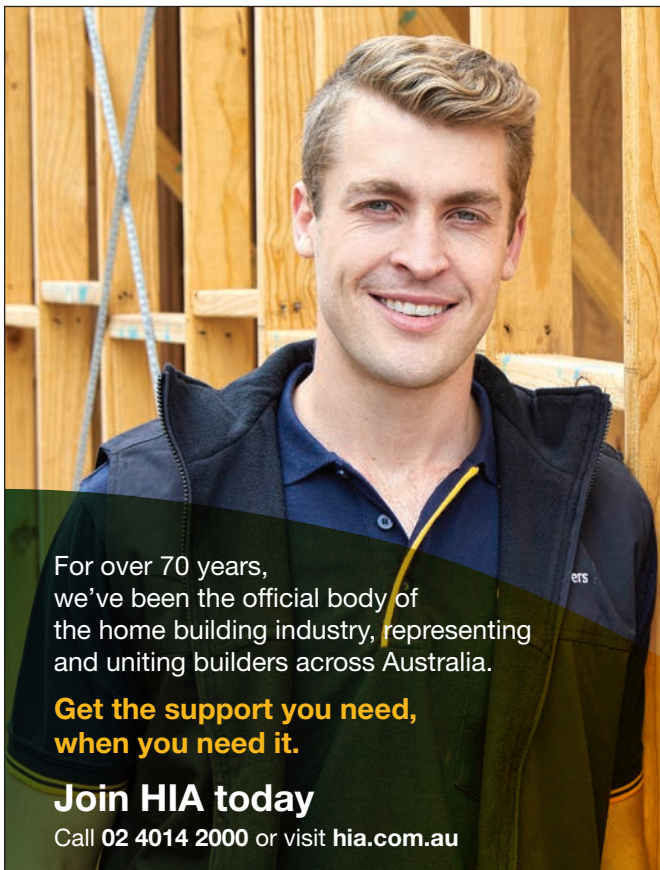
Contract signed to establish Australia's first missile factory

Defence has signed a contract with Kongsberg Defence Australia to establish Australia's first guided weapons production factory in Newcastle, NSW. This is the next step towards implementing the announcement made by the Australian Government on 22 August 2024.

The world-class factory, to be built at the Newcastle Airport precinct, will manufacture and service the Naval Strike Missile and Joint Strike Missile for the ADF and international partners.

Missile production at the factory is anticipated to start in 2027. Based on current schedules, the new Australian facility will be the first outside of Norway to manufacture and maintain both the Naval Strike Missile and the Joint Strike Missile.

The project reflects ongoing investment outlined in the Australian Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance Plan, underpinned by a commitment in the Defence Integrated Investment Program of \$16 to \$21 billion over the next decade.

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Port of Newcastle advances Clean Energy Precinct

Port of Newcastle has made another significant step to advance its Clean Energy Precinct (CEP), signing a formal Advisory Agreement with Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Ltd (MHI).

The Agreement will enable the Port to draw upon MHI's knowledge and technical expertise into the production, storage and distribution of hydrogen and ammonia, providing valuable insight to inform the CEP's Front End Engineering Design (FEED) studies, which are currently underway.

Port of Newcastle CEO Craig Carmody said: "MHI is at the forefront of the research and development of next-generation clean energy production technologies, so being able to tap into the wealth of expertise MHI possesses is going to be incredibly valuable in informing the future site layout, enablement and design of the Clean Energy Precinct."

"MHI's Takasago Hydrogen Park is the first in the world that can validate the full value chain of hydrogen from production to power and we will be able to utilise the knowledge MHI has in relation to chemical plant projects, including the production and handling of hydrogen, ammonia synthesis and storage, to best position the CEP, the Port and the Hunter Region for success as a future global hydrogen hub."

Takehiko Kikuchi, Senior Fellow and Chief Regional Officer for Asia Pacific & India at MHI, said: "We appreciate the invitation from the Port of Newcastle to be an advisor for the Port's common user facility development in the Clean Energy Precinct. It's an honour for us to be able to contribute to the project leveraging our technical expertise and experience in the hydrogen and ammonia value chain. We are looking forward to supporting the Port of Newcastle team."

Port of Newcastle's CEP is the most advanced port in Australia toward clean energy production, being the only port currently at FEED and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) studies stage, which is being undertaken by Lumea (electrical), CoNEXA (water) and GHD (general infrastructure).

The studies cover electrical infrastructure, water services, general infrastructure, storage, berth infrastructure, and pipelines to berth.

Current CEP studies are funded by a \$100 million grant for hydrogen readiness from the Commonwealth Government and administered by the NSW Government.

Federal Member for Newcastle Sharon Claydon said: "The Clean Energy Precinct is a major economic catalyst for our region and this Advisory Agreement will ensure that Newcastle continues to lead in the production, storage, and export of clean energy products and technology."

"Newcastle has powered Australia for generations and this project makes sure we will continue to do so for generations to come, as we lead the transition to net zero."

The dedicated 220-hectare Clean Energy Precinct will facilitate clean energy production, storage, distribution and export and once fully developed, will contribute \$4.2 billion to the economy and generate thousands of new jobs in the Hunter Region by 2040.



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Aboriginal-led cancer programs among NSW Govt's \$10 million research boost

The NSW Government has awarded funding to a Newcastle-based researcher focussed on improving outcomes for regional and rural cancer patients as part of a \$10 million boost to cancer research across NSW. The 18 grants, delivered by the Cancer Institute NSW, include \$798,790 to the University of Newcastle's Dr Jennifer Mackney to improve patient access to prehabilitation services in rural and regional NSW.

Surgery is essential in cancer care. In 2024 approximately 165,000 people were diagnosed with cancer in Australia, around 132,000 of these people will need surgery, often multiple times.

Greater physical fitness and wellbeing is associated with better cancer surgery outcomes. However, the impact of cancer and associated treatments reduces physical activity, nutrition, and fitness resulting in an increased risk of poor cancer outcomes.

The pre-surgery program developed by Dr Mackney will help overcome this via exercise, nutrition and psychological support which has been shown to dramatically improve patients' physical function, reduce complications and time in hospital post-op.

The hybrid model of care will be delivered by health providers via in-person care within the participant communities, along with a telehealth team based out of Newcastle.

The grant will enable Dr Mackney to extend access to the prehabilitation program for cancer patients across five regional and rural hospitals, three in the Hunter New England LHD and two in the Mid North Coast LHD.

Shared vision for Broadmeadow reaches new milestone

Newcastle Council has voted unanimously to adopt the Broadmeadow Place Strategy and request that the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces issue a Ministerial Direction under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 to give the Place Strategy legal effect.

There is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to shape the future of Broadmeadow with the adoption of a 30-year strategy for the 313-hectare precinct. The Broadmeadow Place Strategy is a key planning document that sets a blueprint for the renewal of this area.

It will enable the creation of up to 15,000 jobs and 20,000 homes for 40,000 people, while retaining Broadmeadow as the region's premier sport and entertainment destination.

City of Newcastle's Executive Director of Planning and Environment, Michelle Bisson, said the Broadmeadow Place Strategy presented a unique opportunity to help set the vision and guide where key infrastructure and services should be located.

"The NSW Government has been working in partnership with City of Newcastle to develop the Place Strategy. We are the only Council in NSW involved in such a partnership, ensuring early input into the strategic planning for the renewal of the Broadmeadow precinct," Ms Bisson said.

"The Place Strategy provides a blueprint for how the area will change over time, particularly for areas where significant population growth is expected.

"Detailed technical investigations were carried out to inform precinct planning, while extensive feedback was also sought from the community including the public exhibition, which attracted more than 300 submissions.

"The Place Strategy seeks to balance the needs of housing, employment and public spaces to establish a vibrant place."

The Broadmeadow Place Strategy was developed in response to the NSW Government's Rezoning Pathways Program, which identified Broadmeadow as one of 10 precincts to significantly contribute to housing supply across NSW.

A Delivery Plan will be prepared for the precinct in collaboration with a range of NSW Government agencies and City of Newcastle.

This plan will investigate the roles and responsibilities required to deliver the outcomes identified in the Place Strategy including delivery of State and regional infrastructure.

City of Newcastle is also currently developing a Local Infrastructure Contributions Plan in line with the Broadmeadow Place Strategy. This will outline the rate levied on new developments to contribute toward the cost of local community infrastructure needed to support new residents and growth in this precinct, such as roads, footpaths, sporting facilities, parks and playgrounds.

Ms Bisson said an integrated, collaborative approach was required to fund and deliver the community infrastructure needed to support the future development.

"The precinct population growth will significantly contribute to NSW housing targets, however significant infrastructure will be needed to support this growth," Ms Bisson said.

"This will require collaboration between multiple levels of government agencies and delivery partners, across the 30-year lifespan of the project."

Applications open for Maitland City Council's Biannual Community Grants Program

Local community groups and organisations can now apply for funding through Maitland City Council's Biannual Community Grants Program, which opened on 28 March 2025, offering financial support for initiatives that benefit the Maitland community.

The program provides funding through two streams: Community Project Grants, which support initiatives that foster sustainable local communities while enhancing the wellbeing and development of Maitland residents. Community Celebrations Grants help groups and organisations host events and activities that encourage participation, promote leadership and strengthen community connections.

Maitland Mayor Philip Penfold encourages local organisations to apply, saying, "this program provides a fantastic opportunity for local organisations to secure funding for projects and events that make a real difference in our community.

"Whether it's promoting healthy lifestyles, strengthening connections or celebrating our culture and heritage, these grants help turn great ideas into reality."

This funding round is the last chance for applicants to apply before Council fully transitions to SmartyGrants, a new online grant management system.

In addition to the Biannual Grants, Mayor Penfold highlighted the availability of Council's year-round Community Grants Programs, which provide ongoing support for individuals and teams pursuing excellence in sports and creative arts.

"These year-round grants ensure that our community has flexible access to funding when needed. Applications can be submitted at any time and are assessed five times per year, allowing local talent and initiatives to receive timely support."

Applications close on 9 May 2025. For more information and to apply, visit mait.city/BiannualGrantsProgram.



2025 HUNTER INVESTMENT PROSPECTUS

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For queries or feedback regarding the **2025 Hunter Investment Prospectus**, please contact:

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New medical device remanufacturing facility in the Hunter

Cardinal Health has announced the opening of a single-use medical device remanufacturing facility in Beresfield, set to launch in late 2025.

Unveiled at the Health Innovation Living Lab at the John Hunter Hospital on 18 March, it will be Cardinal Health's first remanufacturing facility outside of the United States.

The new facility will play a crucial role in enhancing Australia's sovereign manufacturing capability in healthcare. It aligns with the country's Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) efforts by significantly reducing medical waste and landfill impact. The facility will utilise a TGA-approved cleaning and disinfection process to remove soil, contamination and bioburden from single-use medical devices. They then undergo functionality and quality testing, before being returned to hospitals for reuse, rather than contributing to landfill.

Remanufacturing offers a significant opportunity to strengthen Australia's health technology manufacturing capabilities. A well-established industry in the U.S., it has shown to substantially reduce the environmental impact of hospitals and medical device usage.

The Invest Regional team provided substantial support to Cardinal Health:

- drove understanding of key investment decision drivers and the provision of relevant information
- reviewed potential regional NSW sites to support Cardinal Health's research and due diligence process
- introduced industry networks to ensure strategic investment
- scoped Targeted Workforce Development to assist with recruitment and workforce development objectives.

Scone CBD revitalisation official opening

Upper Hunter Shire Council has announced the official opening of the Scone CBD Revitalisation Project, marking a significant milestone in the transformation of Scone's town centre. With \$24.7 million invested into the project, including \$8 million from the Australian Government, this revitalisation is delivering a modern and accessible precinct that will support local businesses, enhance liveability, and attract visitors for years to come.

The revitalisation has introduced critical infrastructure upgrades, including resurfaced roads, widened footpaths, upgraded lighting, and extensive landscaping. Essential water main and stormwater assets have also been upgraded, reducing the risk of service disruptions, mitigate flooding and ensuring reliability for the growing community. Additional parking spaces have been created to improve access for residents, visitors, and businesses, making it easier for people to enjoy all that Scone has to offer.

Upper Hunter Shire Mayor Maurice Collison acknowledged the patience and support of the community throughout the project's delivery.

"Projects like this don't happen without patience and support from our community. I want to thank everyone—residents, business owners, and visitors—for their understanding as we worked to deliver this significant upgrade. The result is a town centre we can all be proud of, one that will serve Scone well into the future," Mayor Collison said.

The Scone CBD Revitalisation not only enhances the town's visual appeal but also reinforces its reputation as the Horse Capital of Australia. A key feature of the redevelopment is the Equine Walk of Fame, celebrating the region's rich equine heritage while creating a unique drawcard for visitors.

The economic benefits of the project will extend well beyond its official opening, with the improvements expected to boost local businesses, attract new investment, and strengthen Scone's position as a key regional hub.

\$569 million contract locks in another decade of jobs in the Hunter

The Australian Government has ensured the future of the Royal Australian Air Force's E-7A Wedgetail surveillance aircraft with a \$569 million contract that also secures hundreds of highly skilled jobs across the country.

This contract with Boeing Defence Australia, announced on 7 March, will deliver enhancements to the aircraft and ground systems and ensures this critical capability is upgraded and maintained over the next decade.

This additional funding provides job security for hundreds of people in Brisbane and Adelaide, as well as the NSW Hunter Region where it will alone support 170 jobs. This is in addition to the approximately 360 existing Defence and industry personnel who support the Wedgetail at RAAF Base Williamtown.

The E-7A Wedgetail is a cornerstone of Australia's integrated air and missile defence capability, providing crucial situational awareness and airborne command and control.

The ADF's six aircraft are operated by No. 2 Squadron based at RAAF Base Williamtown.



Muswellbrook Shire Council streamlining grants

Muswellbrook Shire Council is slashing red tape around community funding, with a fresh approach including an online grant application tool.

The new process streamlines applying for a grant for a non-profit project, unlocking support for people making a difference in the Muswellbrook community.

Muswellbrook councillors endorsed the new Grants Policy at the February ordinary meeting, paving the way for Council to upgrade its support for local initiatives.

Muswellbrook Mayor Jeff Drayton said the new approach is designed to make applying for a Council community grant less daunting for everyone.

"Over the years Muswellbrook Shire Council has proudly funded many projects, with recipients including from sporting clubs and volunteer groups," Cr Drayton said.

"We're helping our community by making funding easier to navigate. This new approach will help these groups focus on what matters – delivering benefits for the people of Muswellbrook."

In 2024, Muswellbrook Shire Council awarded \$75,000 in community grant funding, including:

- Muswellbrook Junior Rugby League, for the League Ability program making sport accessible to kids with disabilities.
- Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service, for the Sandy Hollow Charity Bush Horse Ride.
- Rotary Club of Muswellbrook, for the Science and Engineering Challenge.

**HAZMAT SERVICES PTY LTD**

Kerry Baker has joined the Hazmat Team as a Principal Occupational Hygienist. With over 15 years' experience in Occupational Hygiene in Australia, Kerry has diverse knowledge and experience in all aspects of Occupational Hygiene, Environmental Science and Work Health and Safety. Kerry's skills relate to a variety of areas including asbestos, noise, vibration, welding fumes, heat stress, hazardous materials, mould and respiratory fit testing. Kerry is also a Licenced Asbestos Assessor and a Member of the Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists and a Certified Occupational Hygienist.

**HIA**

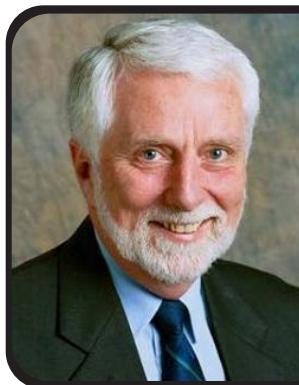
Kaine Tarlinton, Managing Director of Buildcert, has been elected the President of the Housing Industry Association HIA Hunter Region. A Hunter based certifier and licensed builder with over 20 years' experience Kaine has become the HIA Hunter's 8th Regional President. For the next two years Kaine, along with newly elected Vice-President Rodney Tullipan of Valletta Homes, will lead the HIA Hunter Regional Executive Committee.

**EMERGENT GROUP**

Former Managing Director **Steven Smith**, is stepping sideways to fill the new role of Executive Director – Strategic Projects. This role will focus on progressing initiatives identified by the Board. Steven has a wealth of manufacturing, engineering and project management experience across all sectors which will be invaluable in the new position. Steven's specific areas of expertise include problem analysis, feasibility investigations, engineering assessments, risk management, project development and project management.

**NEWCASTLE AIRPORT**

Newcastle Airport has appointed **Linc Horton** to the position of CEO. Linc Horton has been Global Head of Property for Toll Group for the last few years. Toll Group's revenue for FY22 was \$7.6 billion. Prior to that he was part of the Melbourne Airport (Australia Pacific Airports Pty Ltd) executive team as their Chief of Property from 2008 - 2020. He has previously worked in the UK as part of the BAA Lynton executive team as Investment Director accountable for the company's investment strategy and their Airport Property Partnership.

**RDA HUNTER**

Ian Pedersen is the new Chair of RDA Hunter. He is a past National President of Engineers Australia (EA), a past Chair of EA's National Honours and Awards committee and past Chief of Judges for the Australian Engineering Excellence Awards. Ian has also been a Director & Chair of the Australian Construction Industry Forum. In 1996-98 Ian was President of the Newcastle Regional Chamber of Commerce and until 2008 a Director of the Hunter Business Chamber. Ian was a Councillor on the NSW Business Chamber Council between 2007 and 2021.

**EMERGENT GROUP**

At Emergent Group stepping up to oversee all aspects of the business in the role of Group Managing Director is **Dr Glenn Platt**, who formerly occupied the role of Executive Director – Strategy and Innovation. Glenn is well known in scientific and engineering circles as the former head of the CSIRO Energy Centre and as a recent inductee as a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (ATSE).

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Keystone Lawyers marks 15 years of service

Keystone Lawyers is proudly celebrating 15 years of dedicated service in the legal industry.

Established with a vision of providing unparalleled legal expertise and client-centric solutions, Keystone has grown into a premier boutique law firm known for its commitment to excellence and integrity. Over the years, the firm has successfully navigated complex legal landscapes, achieving remarkable outcomes for its clients. As Keystone Lawyers marks this significant milestone, it reaffirms its dedication to delivering high-quality legal services and looks forward to many more years of success and innovation.

Founded with a mission to offer exceptional legal services, Keystone Lawyers has consistently placed its clients' interests at the forefront. The firm's team of highly skilled professionals brings together a wealth of experience and a deep understanding of various legal domains. This expertise has enabled Keystone to handle an extensive range of cases, from intricate commercial disputes to personal legal matters, with utmost precision and care.

One of the cornerstones of Keystone's success is its unwavering commitment to a client-centric approach. By prioritising the needs and goals of their clients, Keystone has built lasting relationships based on trust and reliability. The firm's tailored strategies and personalised solutions have set them apart, ensuring that each client receives the attention and advocacy they deserve.

Throughout its 15 years, Keystone Lawyers has garnered a reputation for delivering outstanding results. The firm has been



The team at Keystone Lawyers

involved in numerous high-profile cases, earning accolades and recognition within the legal community. Their ability to adapt to the ever-evolving legal landscape has demonstrated their resilience and forward-thinking mindset.

As Keystone Lawyers celebrates this significant anniversary, it does so with an eye on the future. The firm remains committed to embracing innovation and continuing to expand its services to meet the diverse needs of its clients. The dedication to maintaining the highest standards of legal practice ensures that Keystone will remain a trusted partner for many years to come.

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Pinpoint IT celebrates 25 years of success

It all started in 2000 when Paul and Anne Martinovic launched Pinpoint Computer Services, now known as Pinpoint IT Australia Pty Limited.

Before the start of the company, Paul had been in business as a sole trader since 1998, with Anne joining him in 1999. Paul has always had a natural talent for figuring out how things worked, from car engines at a young age to computers as an adult, and Anne brought 16 years of administration and finance experience. They were passionate about creating a great working environment, being good bosses, and delivering 5-star IT service to clients.

Once they had established the company in 2000, they employed a few techs to expand the team and opened the Pinpoint office in Thornton.

Technology rapidly advanced through the 2000s with the development of wireless networks, Internet Telephony, and 3G. As it did, Pinpoint IT was seeing great success due to the team's ability to think ahead and evolve with the rapidly changing environment.

In 2012, they could see the rising need for cloud solutions and launched a world-class data centre. By this stage, they had clients in the Hunter, across Australia, Papua New Guinea and beyond. The company continued to evolve and launch new service offerings to suit the market's needs, including Business Security audits and Security-as-a-Service.

In 2024, they received ISO27001 accreditation. This globally recognised information security standard reflects their commitment to establishing, implementing, maintaining, and continually improving an Information Security Management



First day in Thornton office

System (ISMS) in line with the evolving threat landscape to protect an organisation's data and assets.

Now, as they celebrate 25 successful years of business, they are focusing on extending their cyber security offering and expanding their skills to encompass automation and AI. They still have many of their original clients from 2000, which is a testament to their outstanding service.

Paul and Anne are extremely proud of the company they have created and couldn't have done it without the amazing, creative, talented team behind them in the past 25 years and the present. Pinpoint continues to go above and beyond to help clients power their businesses with the right IT solution.

25

Proudly serving the Hunter and beyond for 25 years.



PINPOINT I.T
AUSTRALIA



Legacy pensions: key changes

Deidre Molloy

TSP Accountants & Business Advisors

In December 2024, significant changes came into effect regarding legacy retirement products, offering individuals greater flexibility in managing their retirement income streams. These changes, implemented by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), grant a member to exit certain legacy retirement products at any time within five years, providing an important opportunity for those with older superannuation income stream products to reassess their retirement arrangements.

What are legacy retirement products?

Legacy retirement products refer to superannuation income streams that generally commenced before 20 September 2007 or were converted from earlier products dating before that threshold. These include various types of pensions and annuities, such as lifetime pensions, life expectancy pensions, market-linked pensions and term allocated pensions. However, it is important to note that large APRA-regulated super funds offering defined benefit products are excluded from these changes.

Key features of the 2024 changes

The recent legislative update, effective from 7 December 2024, introduces two primary changes:

- **Exit Flexibility:** Individuals holding eligible legacy retirement products now have the ability to exit these products within a five-year period. This flexibility can be beneficial for those seeking to realign their retirement income strategy, switch to a different retirement product, or take advantage of evolving market conditions.

- **Reserve Allocations Impact:** The changes also affect the treatment of allocations from reserves, particularly in relation to contribution caps. This aspect underscores the importance of understanding how legacy product conversions interact with the broader framework of superannuation regulations.

Who can benefit?

The flexibility provided by these changes is available to members of any superannuation fund - whether it be small APRA-regulated or self-managed - subject to the fund's trust deed. This broad application ensures that a wide range of individuals with legacy retirement products can consider their options during this transition period.

Looking ahead

Members with legacy pensions should seek professional advice before commuting these pensions.

TSP Accountants are able to offer informed advice, ensuring that any transitions away from legacy retirement products are managed effectively and in line with regulatory requirements, ensuring both compliance and optimal retirement planning outcomes.

For further information please contact TSP Accountants & Business Advisors via phone (02) 4926 4155 or email to admin@tspaccountants.com.au



The banner features a background image of a coastal town and harbor. In the top left, there is a graphic of five triangles (green, blue, and teal) arranged in a larger triangular shape. The TSP logo is prominently displayed in the upper right, with the tagline 'TRUSTED. RELIABLE. FOCUSED.' below it. A large, stylized '40 years' graphic is in the bottom right corner. The main text on the left side of the banner reads: 'TSP Accountants have been providing Hunter individuals and businesses with professional accounting & business advisory services for 40 YEARS. If you need assistance with your accounting or other business services contact us on 4926 4155 or email us at admin@tspaccountants.com.au'. Below this, a list of services is provided: 'TAXATION > ACCOUNTING > BUSINESS ADVISORY > SUPERANNUATION > SMSF AUDITING > TRUST ACCOUNTS'. The website address 'tspaccountants.com.au' is at the bottom left.

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40 years



Deidre Molloy has over 25 years' experience of providing taxation and business advisory services to clients across a range of industries. She has a keen interest in superannuation with a focus on self-managed superannuation funds. Deidre is a Member of Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand, ASIC Registered SMSF Auditor, Registered Tax Agent, Bachelor of Commerce, The Law Society of New South Wales External Examiner, Justice of the Peace.

ATO releases new small business benchmarks for 100 industries

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) has released a new set of updated financial benchmarks to help small business owners take the pulse of their business.

Updated annually, the ATO's benchmarks act as a health check, allowing small business owners to compare their performance including average expenses against other businesses in the same industry.

ATO Assistant Commissioner Tony Goding said "The benchmarks are a valuable tool for small businesses wanting to stay in good financial health.

"Think of our benchmarks like a routine test you take with your GP each year. These can help small businesses diagnose their strengths or spot the early warning signs.

"Whether you're running a pizza shop, pet store or a plumbing business, the benchmarks can help you see how your business stacks up.

"If your numbers are outside of the benchmark range compared to others in your industry it may be time for a closer look at your business plan.

"Businesses that remain within industry benchmarks are

generally less likely to attract the ATO's attention."

"While we never use the benchmarks in isolation, small businesses who fall outside the ATO's benchmarks are more likely to trigger a closer examination from us to identify if they are making mistakes or deliberately doing the wrong thing."

The ATO takes non-compliance with tax seriously. Small businesses avoiding their tax obligations are participating in the shadow economy which puts pressure on Australians who are doing the right thing.

Deliberate shadow economy behaviours contribute nearly 60% of the gross small business income tax gap or around \$11.2 billion per annum in missing tax. Approximately \$8.9 billion of this is associated with under reporting of income and over claiming of deductions.

"The benchmarks are just one of the tools we use to tackle the shadow economy, along with community tip-offs and data matching.

"It's all about levelling the playing field for honest businesses who are being undercut by their dishonest competitors that aren't paying the tax they're supposed to," Mr Goding added.

The benchmarks cover 100 industries and over 2 million small businesses around the country. The industries include:

- Accommodation and food
- Building and construction trade services
- Education, training, recreation and support services
- Health care and personal services
- Manufacturing
- Other services
- Professional, scientific and technical services
- Retail trade
- Transport, postal and warehousing.

Small business owners who need help understanding how to improve their business performance can consult a business adviser or registered tax professional. The ATO's online learning platform Essentials to strengthen your small business can support small business owners to prepare for these conversations, as well as further understand their tax and super obligations.

The benchmarks are accessible on the ATO website and via the ATO app business performance check tool. The key benchmark ratios can also be downloaded from data.gov.au.

Planning a business FUNCTION?

WORK PARTY, CONFERENCE, MEETING, WORKSHOP, EXPO OR OTHER BUSINESS EVENT



View the 2024-25 Hunter Business Function Guide for information on venues and supporting services.

www.hbrmag.com.au/2024-hunter-business-function-guide

Trusts under the microscope: Key taxation issues to watch

David Pring
PKF

With the company tax return deadlines behind us, the spotlight turns to trust taxation as a key area of focus for the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). Trusts remain a popular structure for asset protection and income distribution, but they also present unique challenges due to evolving interpretations of tax laws. Here's an overview of the ATO's current approach and what trustees and beneficiaries need to know to stay compliant.

Trust Distributions and Division 7A

The ATO has been applying Division 7A rules to distributions from trusts to companies since 2009, treating them as dividends taxable under company rules. While this practice has gone largely unchallenged, a recent Federal Court case may impact how these distributions are treated in the future.

What this means for Trustees:

- **Review trust structures:** Trusts that distribute income to associated companies should ensure compliance with Division 7A requirements.
- **Monitor legal outcomes:** The outcome of the Federal Court case could bring significant changes to how these distributions are taxed. Trustees should stay informed and be ready to adapt their practices.

Alignment of income and cash distributions

The ATO is closely examining situations where there is a mismatch between income distributions from trusts and cash payments to beneficiaries. A common scenario involves:

- Income allocated to adult children as beneficiaries.
- Cash payments used for family expenses or other non-beneficiary purposes.

Key risks

The ATO may assess tax liabilities under existing trust rules if discrepancies between income and cash flows are not properly documented.

Recommendations for Trustees

- **Detailed record-keeping:** Maintain clear records of all distributions and payments, specifying amounts spent on behalf of beneficiaries.

- **Direct payments:** Make payments directly to the beneficiaries' bank accounts wherever possible to avoid potential scrutiny.
- **Document family expenses:** If trust funds are used for general family expenses, ensure these transactions are well-documented and supported by clear agreements.

Emerging areas of concern

The ATO's approach to trusts includes the potential for retrospective application of rules, creating uncertainty for trustees. Key areas to watch include:

- **New interpretations:** The ATO may "retrofit" existing rules to apply to trusts in ways that were not previously enforced.
- **Changes to legislation:** While the government has been slow to reform trust tax rules, trustees should anticipate updates that could impact trust management and taxation.

How to stay ahead

Trustees and beneficiaries can take proactive steps to ensure compliance:

- **Regular reviews:** Work with a qualified tax advisor to review trust structures and practices annually.
- **Compliance checks:** Ensure all distributions and payments align with current tax laws and ATO guidance.
- **Stay informed:** Monitor legislative changes and legal outcomes, particularly those that could affect how trusts are taxed.

With heightened ATO scrutiny on trusts, maintaining accurate records and aligning trust management practices with regulatory expectations is critical. By staying informed and proactive, trustees can reduce the risk of compliance issues and ensure their trusts operate smoothly in 2025 and beyond.

For more information please contact David via phone (02) 4962 2688 or email to dpring@pkf.com.au



David Pring has over 30 years of experience in advising public, private companies and family-owned businesses. He brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the table by specialising in taxation advisory services. At the core of his practice, David seeks to grow alongside his clients to deliver tangible and sustainable business outcomes, focusing on understanding Australian private businesses and help owners develop and scale effectively. He firmly believes the success of Australian private businesses is integral to the strength of our economy.



Did you know sexual harassment equates to one single incident ...

Faith Eeson
FOCCALE Safety Management

Sexual harassment can be a single incident or repeated behaviour, such as a suggestive comment or offensive joke. It may involve one or more individuals and can be physical, verbal, written, or other conduct, occurring at work, school, or social events.

Workplace harassment, including sexual harassment, can have devastating effects on individuals and workplaces. A clear, structured and legally compliant approach to investigating and responding to harassment is critical in ensuring a safe and respectful work environment.

Due diligence and duty of care

Workplaces have a legal duty of care under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth) to ensure a safe environment, free from sexual harassment. Employers must take reasonable steps to prevent risks, including clear policies, training, and complaint procedures. Due diligence requires leaders to stay informed, enforce compliance, and provide resources to protect workers from harm. Failure to meet these obligations can lead to legal consequences, reinforcing the need for consistent enforcement and a workplace culture of respect and accountability.

Legal and ethical obligations

Workplaces can prevent and manage sexual harassment by establishing clear policies, providing training, ensuring a supportive reporting system, promptly investigating complaints, and enforcing disciplinary action, while fostering a culture of respect and open communication.

Preventing sexual harassment in the workplace requires a proactive and structured approach, aligned with legal obligations under workplace safety and anti-discrimination laws. In Australia, the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) and the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth) outline employer responsibilities to prevent and address sexual harassment. Additionally, under work health and safety (WHS) laws, employers have a duty of care to provide a safe working

environment free from harassment and psychological harm.

A robust anti-harassment policy must clearly define unacceptable behaviours, enforce a zero-tolerance stance and provide clear reporting procedures that guarantee confidentiality and fair investigations. Employees should be empowered with regular, tailored training to recognise, prevent, and report harassment. Interactive learning methods, such as role-playing and discussions, enhance engagement and understanding.

Creating a safety culture

Workplace culture plays a significant role in preventing harassment. Leaders must demonstrate commitment by promoting inclusivity, fostering open communication and encouraging bystander intervention. Additionally, a well-structured physical environment, with safe spaces and privacy considerations, helps reduce risks.

When complaints arise, swift action is critical. Employers must ensure fair and impartial investigations while maintaining confidentiality, as required under legal frameworks. Disciplinary measures should be applied consistently, ranging from warnings to termination where necessary. Supporting complainants with access to Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and other resources is vital in building trust and ensuring compliance with legal standards.

In summary

Ultimately, prevention is the most effective strategy. Workplaces must cultivate a safety environment that actively discourages harassment, enforces policies consistently and upholds the legal rights of employees. By adhering to federal and state legislation, ensuring ongoing training, and fostering a culture of respect, thus creating a safer, more productive workplace where employees feel valued, protected and empowered to speak up.

For further information contact FOCCALE Safety Management on (02) 4968 2199, email info@foccale.com or visit www.foccale.com



Faith Eeson is a Safety Consultant, RTW Work Coordinator and Trainer with a passion for transforming workplace health and safety (WHS) standards across industries. As the founder of FOCCALE Safety Management, she specialises in tailored safety managements systems, consulting, comprehensive audits, WHS management plans and hands-on mentoring to businesses ranging from micro-enterprises, to large corporations. Faith specialises in helping leaders and teams build robust safety cultures that enhance compliance, productivity, and employee well-being.



Landmark blueprint targets WHS reforms in construction

Australia's construction industry is set for transformative changes with the release of the draft Blueprint for the Future: A Building and Construction Industry That Works for Everyone. Developed by the National Construction Industry Forum (NCIF), this first-of-its-kind strategy outlines a pathway to improve workplace health and safety, culture, and productivity across the sector.

The 20-page draft blueprint, available on the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations website, calls for immediate reforms, including legislative amendments mandating access to workplace amenities and personal protective equipment (PPE) on all construction sites. These measures aim to create safer and more equitable environments, particularly for underrepresented groups such as women. Similar regulations were introduced in Queensland last year, requiring gender-specific amenities on construction projects.

Federal Employment and Workplace Relations Minister Murray Watt emphasised the collaborative nature of the initiative, which brings together government, unions, and industry leaders. "This blueprint demonstrates the strong action and cooperation needed to build an industry that works for everyone," he said.

Key recommendations include:

- **A Joint Industry Charter:** Establishing clear behavioural standards to improve safety culture.

"Changing the culture of our industry is critical to unlocking productivity and ensuring a future that benefits everyone."

Australian Constructors Association CEO Jon Davies

- **Proactive Regulation:** Urging WHS regulators to adopt a more visible enforcement approach.
- **Investigations into Discrimination:** Calling on the Fair Work Ombudsman to examine sexual harassment and discrimination in construction workplaces.
- **Training Overhaul:** Mandating safe and respectful workplace training for employees, supervisors, and managers while revising apprenticeship qualifications to address gendered violence and psychological risks.

The blueprint also advocates leveraging procurement frameworks to enforce lawful behaviour, reduce reliance on labour hire, and eliminate gender inequities. Additionally, it recommends enhancing regulatory compliance across jurisdictions.

Australian Constructors Association CEO Jon Davies welcomed the initiative, highlighting its potential to drive long-term sustainability. "Changing the culture of our industry is critical to unlocking productivity and ensuring a future that benefits everyone," he said.

A full NCIF meeting will soon determine the final endorsement of the draft blueprint. If implemented, these reforms promise to reshape Australia's construction industry into a safer, more inclusive sector.

WH&S



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NSW MINES RESCUE: LEADING THE WAY IN SAFETY TRAINING

"At **NSW Mines Rescue**, workplace health and safety is the foundation of everything we do," said Lachlan Grant, State Operations Manager.

As a leading Registered Training Organisation (RTO), Mines Rescue specialises in delivering industry-leading training to equip workers with the skills they need to stay safe and prepared for any challenge they may face.

Lachlan explained that while Mines Rescue was originally established to provide emergency response services to the NSW coal industry, today the organisation has expanded its offerings to provide a broad range of safety training across the mining sector, as well as local government, utilities, and community groups.

"Our expertise extends to a wide variety of industries and training needs. From first aid and working at heights, to confined space entry, firefighting, risk management, and emergency management, we ensure that workers are not only trained but also equipped with the confidence to handle

a range of potentially hazardous situations," he said.

Mines Rescue's trainers, with backgrounds in mining and other emergency response agencies, bring decades of real-world experience to the classroom. They don't just teach theory; they lead by example, setting the standard in safety training.

One of the cornerstones of our approach is blending classroom-based learning with hands-on, immersive training experiences. Our purpose-built training facilities feature underground training galleries, fire cells, confined space areas, and heights towers to create realistic and potentially dangerous environments.

"Our organisation's purpose is 'To Protect'. Exposing students to simulated hazards like fire and smoke in a safe and controlled setting helps to build their confidence to respond safely in emergency situations. Our methods deliver results - workers are better prepared; risks can be managed more effectively and workplaces become safer," he continued.

NSW Mines Rescue is more than just a training provider – they are your partners in safety, protecting workers today, and in the future.



Mines Rescue

Training solutions for safe workplaces

Our training courses are not limited to mining.

We offer safety training for all industries that:

- Builds knowledge of essential safety fundamentals
- Includes specialised training
- Fosters leadership and a safety culture

Our range of courses include:

- First Aid (inc. CPR and pain management)
- Confined Space
- Safe Working at Heights
- Fire Fighting
- Emergency Warden
- Low Voltage Rescue

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Workplace exposure standards, changes and compliance

Andrew Russell
Hazmat Services

The Australian Workplace Exposure Standards (WES) are regulatory limits set to protect workers from exposure to hazardous airborne contaminants. These standards are part of the model Work Health and Safety (WHS) Regulations, which mandate that persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBUs) ensure that no person at the workplace is exposed to airborne contaminants above the specified limits. The WES list has been periodically updated to reflect new scientific data and regulatory decisions. For instance, the WES for welding fumes was recently reduced from 5 mg/m³ to 1 mg/m³.

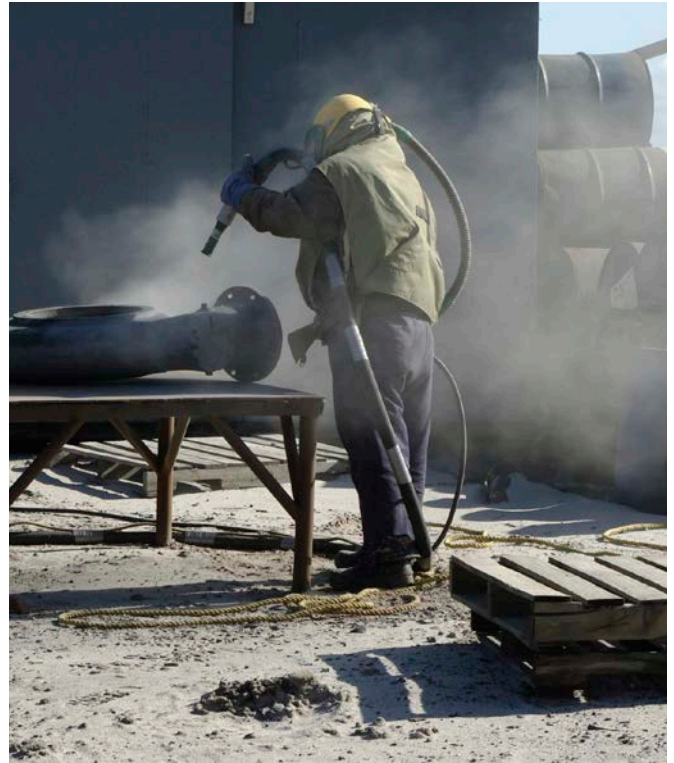
Review of the WES and introduction of the WEL

The WES are currently undergoing a significant review, leading to the introduction of Workplace Exposure Limits (WEL). This change, effective from December 1, 2026, aims to align Australian standards with international terminology and practices. The WEL will replace the WES, emphasizing that these limits are not to be exceeded. The review has resulted in several changes, including reductions in 160 exposure limits, increases in 11, and amendments to 79 limits. Additionally, 33 chemicals identified as non-threshold genotoxic carcinogens (NTGCs) will be regulated differently due to their lack of a safe exposure limit.

Another significant change is the addition of a new notation for ototoxic substances. Exposure to these substances can cause hearing loss or can exacerbate the effects of noise (make it louder). They can damage the cochlea in the inner ear and/or the auditory neurological pathways leading to the loss of hearing, tinnitus or vertigo. Hearing damage is likely from exposure to a combination of chemicals or exposure to a combination of noise and chemicals in the workplace. Some ototoxic chemicals include solvents in paints, thinners, glues and degreasers, for example toluene, xylene, ethyl benzene, lead in old paint, solder or batteries, styrene in resins and carbon monoxide in engine exhaust.

Impact on workplace compliance

The transition from WES to WEL will have a significant impact on workplace compliance. PCBUs will need to ensure that their workplace practices and monitoring systems are updated



to meet the new limits by the December 2026 deadline. This includes revising risk assessments, updating safety data sheets, and implementing new control measures where necessary. The introduction of WELs will likely increase the need for more rigorous monitoring and documentation to demonstrate compliance, ultimately aiming to enhance worker safety.

How Hazmat Services can assist

Hazmat Services offers a range of occupational hygiene services to help PCBU's comply with WHS Regulations and the new WELs. From undertaking initial Workplace Risk Assessments to identify potential hazards and assessing the risk of exposure, to conducting routine workplace and personal exposure monitoring to measure individual workers' exposure to hazardous substances

Almost one in five employees state their work often triggers mental health challenges, yet nearly nine in ten managers' report they are satisfied with their organisation's ability to create psychologically healthy workplaces for workers, according to a recent study by Allianz.

These shocking results highlight exactly why Hunterlink EAP is passionate about delivering comprehensive mental health care and training.

As one of Australia's specialist Employee Assistance Provider, we know better than anyone that workplaces who fail to invest

in psychological health suffer more critical incidents, higher staff turnover, worse team cohesion and culture, lower productivity, increased absenteeism, and diminished overall employee well-being.

Our Mental Health Awareness training is designed to equip your workplace with the guidance, tools, skills, and insights necessary to cultivate a supportive and resilient environment.

This comprehensive program goes beyond merely raising awareness; it actively empowers

your employees and leadership to proactively address psychological health challenges and recognise psychological hazards that may be in your workplace.

No workplace is the same, which is why Hunterlink is committed to delivering our services tailored to your unique needs and preferences.

Together, we can build a better future for your organisation and employees.

Get in contact with us to learn more.



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SafeWork NSW established as a standalone regulator

The NSW Government has passed legislation to officially establish SafeWork NSW as a standalone regulator. The new structure is designed to ensure SafeWork NSW will become a strong, robust and fit-for-purpose workplace health and safety regulator.

SafeWork NSW was formerly hidden within the Department of Customer Service and was not able to fully fulfil the functions expected of the state's work health and safety regulator.

The new executive agency will be led by a SafeWork Commissioner, with recruitment currently underway.

The SafeWork Commissioner will lead the agency with clear authority to enforce compliance, promote best practices and engage meaningfully with workers, unions and businesses across all industries in NSW.

The new standalone regular will also feature an Advisory Council of experts to provide advice to the Minister for Work Health and Safety and SafeWork NSW on how it can support both workers and businesses in creating the safest possible workplaces.

The Council will be made up of representatives from employer organisations, unions, a WHS expert and injured workers.

for comparison to the WES and WEL, and providing expert advice on control measures, personal protective equipment, and best practices for maintaining a safe work environment.

By leveraging these services, PCBU's can effectively manage their occupational health and safety risks, ensuring compliance with the new WELs and protecting their workforce from harmful exposures.

For further information contact Hazmat Services on (02) 4961 1887 or email info@hazmat-services.com.au



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2025 HUNTER SAFETY AWARDS

Hundreds of industry representatives gathered at NEX in Newcastle on the evening of 21 March for the Hunter Safety Awards. The Awards recognise local businesses who have integrated work, health and safety as part of their core business. In its eighth year, the Hunter Safety Awards announced winners in 12 categories.

Best WHS Improvement (SME): Multivalve Flow Solutions

Having used both quantitative and qualitative data, the ADAM Mobile PLC module has transformed the way Multivalve Flow Solutions approach power simulated testing. The improvements have meant that they can ensure smoother and more efficient testing, resulting in clients having less down time as well as safer outcomes for those using the equipment.

Best WHS Management System (SME): Enviroculture Maintenance Services



Enviroculture Maintenance Services Operations Manager Kelly Gillard

Enviroculture Maintenance Services (EMS) has built a strong reputation in commercial open space and land maintenance since 1999. Their ethos and commitment to the safety and well-being of their workforce is embodied in their continuous efforts to apply and enhance their Work Health & Safety Management System (WHSMS). This proactive approach has ensured they don't just meet regulatory requirements; it means they are consistently satisfying customer needs and ultimately safeguarding their people.

Best Health and Wellbeing Program (SME): Body and Mind 2000

Christine Atkins – Body and Mind 2000 – has shown dedication to supporting organisations with health and wellbeing programs. The dynamic nature of the program allows it to be adapted across different organisations and teams with ease.

Most Innovative WHS Idea (SME): Carpentry Australia

Their Safety Start app offers a suite of features tailored to address the unique challenges faced by carpentry professionals. One of its standout innovations is the Online Site Induction Form, which simplifies the onboarding process for new workers and visitors.

Best WHS Improvement (Large): Asplundh

Through sharing key knowledge and information during safety tailgate meetings, Asplundh has seen large improvements in employee engagement, safety conversations and overall experience in dealing with Asplundh.

Young WHS Leader of the Year: Tahnee Sumner

As the HR Manager at (SRA), Tahnee Sumner has demonstrated outstanding commitment to integrating Work Health and Safety



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(WHS) principles into her day-to-day activities and broader organisational initiatives. Beyond her core HR responsibilities, which include recruitment, onboarding, and employee lifecycle management, Tahnee actively prioritises the health, safety, and wellbeing of the workforce across all levels of the organisation.

Upon accepting the award, Tahnee shared insight around being a young female leader in a male-dominated industry.

"My experiences working in rail have shown me leadership isn't about gender; it's about commitment, expertise and a relentless determination to make workplaces safer and healthier for everyone," Tahnee said.



Tahnee Sumner with Swietelsky Rail Australia Managing Director Anne Modderno

Best Health and Wellbeing Program (Large): Pacific National Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Pacific National has shown they recognise that supporting the health and wellbeing of their workforce, and fostering meaningful interactions across their business allows them to create a stronger and safer workplace for employees.

Best WHS Management System (Large): John Holland Rail Services NSW/ACT

John Holland has an established Integrated Management System (IMS) which combines management documents and

systems, including Quality, WHS and Environment, into a single framework, ensuring consistency and alignment across all management procedures and operations.

Most Innovative WHS Idea (Large): Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group

NCIG recognised a critical challenge in measuring safety performance due to the limitations of traditional lag indicators. They developed the Safety Culture Score - an innovative framework designed to holistically measure and enhance safety performance by integrating lead indicators across four key dimensions: Environment, Practices, People, and Leadership.

Best WHS Training Program: Infrabuild Leading Safety Program

The Leading Safety program is a comprehensive 6-9 month development journey designed for frontline operational leaders, equipping them with the knowledge, skills and confidence to lead safety effectively.

WHS Champion of the Year: Emma Meldrum

Emma Meldrum's passion and lived experience with mental health has seen her take on an instrumental role in the rollout of the Pacific National Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Emma utilises her internal relationships with the business, as well as internal communication platforms to connect, share knowledge, develop training and more.

WHS Business of the Year: Pacific National

Pacific National has shown that it prioritises safety above all else by bringing safety into every moment, every interaction, every day. Operating within a high-risk industry, they are committed to being curious to benefit the safety, wellbeing and continuous improvement of the workplace.



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At a job interview, the company director asks the candidate, "Why are you asking for such a high salary when you have no experience in this field?"

Candidate says, "Well, the job is much harder when you don't know what you're doing."

A man comes home from a game of golf to be greeted by his young son.

"Daddy, Daddy," cried the boy excitedly. "Did you win?"

"Well, son," replied the man. "In golf, it doesn't matter so much if you win. But I tell you one thing, I got to hit the ball more times than anyone else!"

Customer: "Look, I bought this shirt yesterday and when I got it back home, I found this huge great rip in the back. I want my money back."

Shopkeeper: "I'm afraid we don't give refunds, sir."

Customer: "But that sign says 'Money refunded if not satisfactory.'"

Shopkeeper: "It certainly does, sir, but there was nothing wrong with your money."

Two friends go fishing. One of them catches a gold fish, who offers him a present in exchange of her life.

"What present?" asks the fisherman.

"You choose – great love, a million dollars or great wisdom"

"Wisdom" says the fisherman.

"Voila" says the gold fish and jumps into the water.

Sometime later his friend asks him: "Say something wise."

"Should've taken the money."

Why was the Pepsi worker fired from his job?
He tested positive for Coke.

A man is interviewing for a new job:

"What is this big gap on your resume?" a recruiter asked.

"I went to Yale for 4 years," he says.

The recruiter is impressed and offers him the position.

The man is excited and responds:

"That's awesome, I am so happy about this because I badly needed this job."

A rookie Secret Service agent assigned to the President of the United States hears a loud sound and screams, "Mickey Mouse!"

A team of agents run towards the sound.

The President turns to him and asks, "Mickey Mouse?"

The flustered agent says, "I panicked... I meant to say Donald, duck!"

Girl friend: "If you won't stop pretending you're Sherlock Holmes, then I think we should split up."

Me: "Ah, that's a great idea, my dear Watson. That way we'll be able to quickly search more places!"

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"We contend that for a nation to try to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle."

- Winston Churchill



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