

HBR

mag.com.au

Hunter Business Review

APRIL 2026
VOLUME 22 NUMBER 3
Print Post Approved 100002454

21ST YEAR OF
PUBLICATION

SUPERANNUATION,
INVESTMENT &
TAXATION

HEALTH & SAFETY

Australia \$6.60

ISSN 2202 - 8838 (Print)
ISSN 2202 - 8846 (Online)



HUNTER BUSINESS REVIEW
Connecting & informing business people



apollo

engineering

MANUFACTURING SERVICES

Your local manufacturing partner!

- CNC machining
- Fabrication
- Painting & other finishes
- Laser cutting up to 30mm
- CNC folding/sheet rolling

AUTOMATED PARTS WASHERS

Our machines clean your parts effortlessly!
Reduce labour, save time & money!

- Automatic machines to clean oily & greasy parts
- Spray & immersion washing equipment
- Variety of sizes to handle small workshop to large mining equipment requirements
- Complementary chemical range & servicing equipment
- Manufactured and supported locally in our Tamworth facility



phone 02 6765 7353

apolloengineering.com.au

sales@apolloengineering.com.au



PUBLISHED BY:
Hunter Business Publications Pty Ltd
ABN: 15 112 838 945
PO Box 853, Hamilton NSW 2303
Phone: (02) 4062 8133

PUBLISHER and EDITOR:
Garry Hardie
Mob: 0414 463 125
garry@HBRmag.com.au

ART DIRECTOR:
Sandie Collie
sandie@HBRmag.com.au

CONTENT MANAGER:
Jason Duncan
jason@HBRmag.com.au

PRINTING:
NCP Printing
Phone: (02) 4926 1300
sales@ncp.com.au
www.ncp.com.au

Published monthly (except January)
Hard copy circulation: 5,000
Also available online

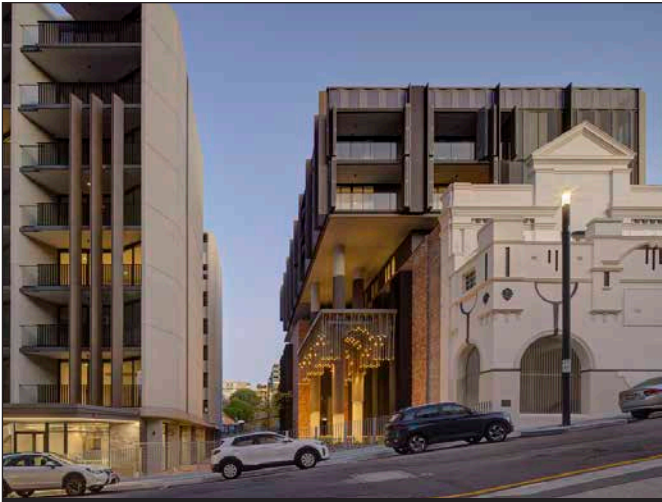
www.HBRmag.com.au



HUNTER BUSINESS PUBLICATIONS PTY LTD
2026 ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Reproduction in any part prohibited without the written consent of the publisher. While every effort has been made to ensure all information in this magazine is accurate, no responsibility is accepted by the publisher, Hunter Business Publications Pty Ltd. Opinions expressed in externally supplied stories are not necessarily those of the publisher.

- 4** From the Editor
- 5** Business News
- 16** New Appointments
- 17** Coming Events
- 18** Superannuation, Investment & Taxation
- 22** Health & Safety
- 30** Business Services Directory
- 31** Funny Business



CKDS

Architecture | Planning | Interiors

www.ckds.com.au

Level 3, 23 Watt Street
Newcastle

02 4929 1843

ARCHITECTS
oF EXCELLENCE

From the Editor



This year has certainly been unsettled in many ways for business, with global tensions again at the forefront which has once more highlighted Australia's reliance of foreign supply chains.

As this issue goes to print, there has been a ceasefire in the Middle East war and we all hope this translates to sustained peace.

The war has again highlighted the world's reliance on Middle East oil and gas, as well as other important products, in particular fertilisers.

It has made us all acutely aware

that the world economies rely on a complex web of supply chains and that nearly all countries, particularly Western nations, are dependent upon unfettered trade between nations and possibly no more so than Australia.

Going back to the 1970s, Australia had more than a dozen oil refineries and was largely self-sufficient in petrol and diesel.

Fast forward to today and we have only two oil refineries and import around 90% of our petrol and oil.

This situation, combined with the fact that we maintain fewer days of petrol and diesel than most other developed countries, means that we are at a high risk if supplies are interrupted.

And it is not just in oil refinery that we have fallen behind, there are many other areas that we are less self-sufficient than in the past, including many areas of manufacturing.

The reasons for this are complex, though mainly economic. The market will push towards lower cost products and unfortunately this often means imports rather than Australian-made. But as a nation we need to also factor in self-sufficiency and have risk assessments on foreign supply chains.

Back to the Middle East war, even if the ceasefire translates to a full cessation of hostilities, it will take some time for petrol and diesel prices at the bowser to drop and it seems likely that they will never drop back to the levels before the war broke out.

Inflation was already running above the RBA's desired 2-3% range. With the added fuel cost feeding through the economy, it now seems likely that there will be multiple interest rate rises in the rest of the year.

Globally, there is also the possibility of further tariffs and trade wars. On April 2, the US announced a 100% tariff on patented pharmaceutical products and ingredients.

The May Federal Budget will be very challenging in terms of economics. But at least the Government has a couple of years before the next election, so political pressures are not as high as some years.

It is certainly a time of uncertainty in many ways for business. Whilst we need to be aware of risks beyond our control, life goes on and we need to ensure we are not distracted from the fundamentals of our business.

Garry Hardie
Editor and Publisher

YOUR PARTNER FOR BUSINESS INFORMATION AND TARGETED B2B MARKETING IN THE HUNTER SINCE 2005

Distributed as a high quality hard copy magazine and online.
View the latest issue online now at www.HBRmag.com.au

TARGET BUSINESS DECISION MAKERS!

As the Hunter's leading hard copy and online specialist business publication, **HBR** offers unique targeted promotional opportunities for your business.

DON'T MISS YOUR OPPORTUNITY
Contact Garry Hardie and the team at **HBR** for further information on how we can help you reach the Hunter business market!

WE WANT YOUR NEWS!

HBR is always happy to consider story submissions for possible inclusion at no charge. If you have company news, major new appointments, business advice or other information of interest, we would like to hear from you.

P: (02) 4062 8133

W: www.HBRmag.com.au

E: info@HBRmag.com.au

Newcastle-born Bolero Surf launches surfboard fins made from wind turbines

ACCIONA has partnered with Australian surf brand Bolero Surf to launch the world's first retail-ready surfboard fins made from recycled wind turbine blades.

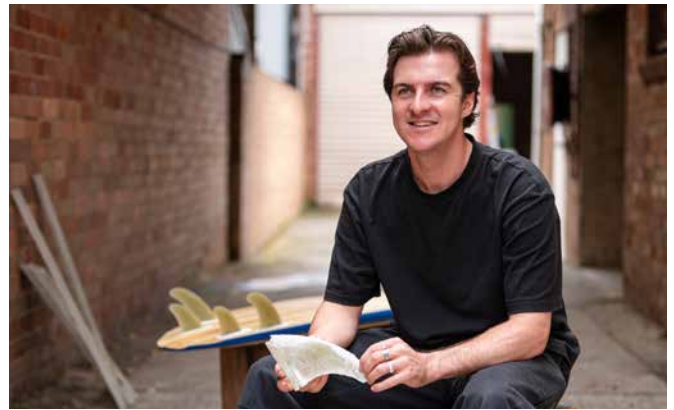
Launching at the Aussie Boardriders Battle (ABB), Darcy Crump from Bungan Boardriders will debut the fins in competition. They are the first commercially available product as a result of ACCIONA's Turbine Made initiative, which was launched in February 2025 to transform wind turbine blades into new, sustainable products.

Designed and manufactured in Australia by surf fin maker Bolero Surf, led by 26-year-old entrepreneur Banjo Hunt, the Turbine Made fins were born from the observation that many surfboards are still paired with fins made from unsustainable fin manufacturing practices.

"The fibreglass inside a wind turbine blade has so much inherent value, which for us means it can be turned into high-quality surfboard fins. By reusing this material, we avoid one of the most expensive and labour-intensive parts of traditional fin manufacturing. That advantage is helping us bring production back to Australia. Crucially, the material is super strong and stiff, which perfectly lends itself to high-performance surfboard fins."

Designed to meet the performance demands of modern surfing while highlighting the scalability of recycled wind turbine materials, the fins will be put to the test in competition by professional surfer Darcy Crump at the 2026 Aussie Boardriders Battle on the Gold Coast.

"As a surfer, performance comes first. The fins feel solid, and quick around turns, and knowing they're made from recycled turbine blades makes it even better."



The Turbine Made fins are designed to be available to Australian and international consumers and demonstrate that circular innovation can succeed at commercial scale.

The launch builds on awareness generated by ACCIONA's earlier Turbine Made surfboard prototype.

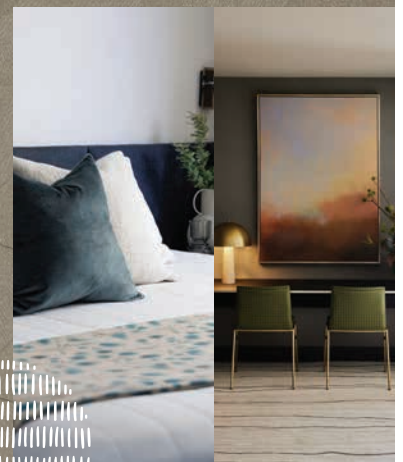
Gavin Reymond, Managing Director at ACCIONA Energía in Australia, said the fins represent a turning point for the initiative.

"Last year, we proved the Turbine Made concept by making the world's first surfboards from a retired wind turbine blade. This year, we're showing how we can scale the initiative by creating a retail product, helping surfers not just surf better, but also more sustainably."

By bringing a Turbine Made product to market, ACCIONA and Bolero Surf are demonstrating that the renewables circular economy is not a future ambition, but as something already happening in Australia today.

"This is a live case study for Australian designers, innovators, manufacturers and entrepreneurs of what is possible when we rethink end of life materials as the start of the next product."

STAY TOGETHER IN NEWCASTLE



From small teams to large groups, enjoy comfortable accommodation and spacious meeting facilities at either of our two locations.

THE EXECUTIVE

THE GATEWAY

NEWCASTLE STAYS

MYWESTS.COM.AU/STAYS

GHT0031

Out of the Square Media changes ownership

Multi award-winning creative agency Out of the Square Media (OOTS) is launching into a new chapter, with a change of ownership that took place at the start of March.

Founded in 1997 by Marty Adnum, Out of the Square began with strong foundations in TV and video before evolving into a leading full-service creative agency. Over the past 28 years, the team has delivered successful national and local campaigns for brands including Perisher Ski Resort, Greater Bank, Camera House Australia, Electrodry, Port Waratah and many more.

Under Marty's leadership, OOTS worked in partnership with hundreds of clients to achieving mutual success, including award winning campaigns, significant ROI's and multiple National Catalogue of the Year wins. At the same time, the agency became a genuine and tireless contributor to the Newcastle and Hunter Region community, a regional success story punching well beyond its post code.

This commitment has been recognised with multiple highly coveted Business Hunter Contribution to the Region Awards, won a record-breaking three times, earning Out of the Square a place in the Hall of Fame.



Marty himself was also personally recognised, receiving both the Business Hunter President's Award and the Newcastle Business Club Individual of the Year Award.

From showcasing the Hunter's economic and natural strengths through their self-funded Region Ready initiatives, to raising over \$20,000 for Prostate Cancer through their cheeky Hand on On' Queens Wharf Tower bottle opener commemoration, Marty's passion for the region has always shone through in the work of Out of the Square.

"The long-term success of OOTS, the brand, the team and the relationships we've built with our clients, has always been incredibly important to me," said Marty.

"At some point you start thinking about the right time to secure the future of the business, slow down a little, and hand the reins to someone who can bring fresh energy and momentum, while still keeping enough fuel in your own tank to stay creative and enjoy the journey."

"I found that person in Ben Ogden, who has been with OOTS for four years and most recently led our Client Solutions team. Ben brings the right mix of passion,

empathy, entrepreneurial spirit and sense of fun to lead OOTS into its next chapter. At 57, I don't see myself as old or young, so it feels like the perfect time to support this transition while still having plenty of drive to keep creating in other ways."

"It's a privilege to step into this role and build on the proud legacy of many years of graft, hard-work and big ideas," said Ben Ogden. "Out of the Square has always stood for bold thinking and genuine relationships. Regional doesn't mean smaller ambition, we believe world-class outcomes can be built right here in Newcastle. My focus now is to ensure we honour the foundation Marty has crafted, while sharpening our edge and spreading our impact both near and afar. I now get to lead the best team in the business, capable of delivering work that stands shoulder to shoulder with any metro firm."

The name Out of the Square came from an early moment in Marty's career, when a former employer once told him his ideas were "too out of the square." Rather than taking it as criticism, it empowered Marty, a mindset that still underpins the agency today.

"I'm incredibly proud of what OOTS and every team member has built over the last 28+ years," Marty said.


"For me, it feels like the right time to focus on a few things that light me up personally, slowing down enough to stop and smell the roses, spending more time with my Mum, and reconnecting with creative outlets like picking up the camera and simply wandering Newcastle Harbour just for the joy of it. All with the confidence and comfort of knowing OOTS is in the right hands"

"I'll still remain connected to OOTS in a creative and business advisory role, I'm not 'out of' Out of the Square, but I'm excited to see the business thrive with new injection of energy while I enjoy the next phase and look for ways to support others along the way, I genuinely am still Newcastle inspired," said Marty.


"People have asked me what's changing inside the Square," Ogden laughed.

"Our foundation doesn't change, but our ambition grows. We're sharpening our focus, elevating our creative output whilst we continue to partner with brands who want bold, extraordinary outcomes. That's the next chapter and I encourage anyone to find us online to get a front row seat to the back of the house.

BUSINESS HUNTER




WE'RE IN
BUSINESS
TO HELP
BUSINESS



THE LEADING VOICE ON KEY ISSUES AFFECTING
HUNTER BUSINESSES SINCE 1886.

We engage with stakeholders at all levels of government to advocate for public and private investment that promotes the economic growth and diversification of the region and policies that support businesses to grow, prosper and create jobs.

SPEAKING UP FOR BUSINESS



www.businesshunter.com | 02 9466 4665 | info@businesshunter.com

Hunter Manufacturing Awards announce new Chair and Board appointments

The Hunter Manufacturing Awards (HMA) has announced a significant leadership transition following its Annual General Meeting on 18 March, with outgoing Chair Jacqui Daley concluding her tenure after nine years on the Board, including the past three as Chair.

Jacqui Daley, Founder, Managing Director & CMO at The Measured Marketer, reflected on her time at HMA as a period of growth and transformation, and expressed great admiration for the region's manufacturing capability and excellence.

"Serving as Chair of the Hunter Manufacturing Awards has been a genuine privilege. I have continually been inspired by the passion, ingenuity, and resilience of the people and organisations who are vital to Australia's economic future. Our region's manufacturers are world-class innovators, problem-solvers, and community builders. It has been an honour to shine a light on their achievements," commented Ms. Daley.

Under Jacqui's leadership, the HMA Board delivered several significant achievements, including launching the HMA Hall of Fame and strengthening the region's manufacturers' national visibility. The organisation formed a national media partnership with Industry Update in 2025. It also created a pathway to fast-track regional winners directly into the National Manufacturing Awards. 2025 was also a record-breaking year for the Awards, with entries up more than 50% on the previous year and the largest-ever Gala Night attendance.

Chris Kelleher, General Manager at Myo Munchee Operations, steps into the role of Chair following 13 years of experience as an HMA judge and a deep understanding of what makes the Awards significant to manufacturers across the region. His extensive involvement with the Awards and manufacturing leadership

positions him well to lead HMA into its next stage of growth.

Chris Kelleher brings extensive executive, governance, and industry experience to the role of Chair. He has held senior positions, including Chief Executive Officer, General Manager and Business Development Manager, across manufacturing, professional services, research commercialisation, healthcare, and construction, with leadership roles at Mayne Health, The University of Newcastle, the Federal Government, and PKF Corporation. Chris is currently General Manager of Myo Munchee Operations, an Australian medical device manufacturer. He has also served on multiple boards, including the Chamber of Manufacturers, the inaugural Hunter Business Chamber (now Business Hunter), WEA Hunter, NEWMACQ Housing Co., Keystone Product Development and HMA has also welcomed four new permanent Board members, together with a one-year term guest position for the winner of the previous year's Rising Star Award: Crystal Bergemann, Managing Director, The Brand People; Andrew Caska, Patent Attorney, Trademark Attorney & IP Strategist, Caska IP; Marnie Davey, Director, Integrated AI; Jeff Honniball, CEO, Varley Vehicles; and Brandon Lane, Electronics Product Design Engineer, Elecbrakes (2025 Rising Star Winner)

These appointments strengthen the Board's expertise across advanced technology, manufacturing leadership, intellectual property strategy, marketing and communication, and emerging talent.

The 2026 Awards program will be launched in May 2026.

SUBSCRIBE NOW

HBRmag.com.au

*HBR is essential reading for anyone wanting to stay informed on local **business news** and **issues** that affect business.*



OUR SERVICES INCLUDE

- International Supply Chain
- Project Shipping
- Documentation Support
- Import & Exports
- Customs Clearance
- Global Network of Agents

CONTACT US TODAY

www.scorpioninternational.com | Phone: +61(0)2 4962 1234



The Station being transformed

The NSW Government is transforming The Station Newcastle into a world class tourism, retail and hospitality precinct in partnership with Ashbridge Capital.

As part of a 99-year lease Ashbridge will further restore the heritage buildings and re-imagine the much-loved city landmark to create a new vibrant must visit destination for shopping, dining and community events.

Initial plans which are subject to approvals will deliver:

- a café, artisanal bakery and specialty fine foods retailers,
- restaurants with outdoor dining options,
- a wine bar and cellar door,
- a 'gastropub' focused on regional beers and local produce,
- a new multi-purpose function room on the top floor,
- boutique short-stay accommodation.

Ashbridge will develop a detailed design and seek approval for The Station's heritage buildings to be refurbished and activated with a carefully selected mix of new uses.

Works to restore and enhance the buildings are expected to commence in 2027 pending approvals.

After the works are completed, The Station's outdoor spaces will continue to be activated with community and public events such as markets, live music, charity events and family friendly activities, along with new types of events.

Minister for the Hunter, Yasmin Catley said:

"This is fantastic news for the Hunter. This re-development will bring the Station's beautiful heritage buildings to life as a harbourside destination for dining, shopping and great community events that will draw locals and visitors back again and again."

"This transformation will create new opportunities for events, dining and cultural experiences, bringing new vibrancy to a landmark destination on the foreshore."

Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, Paul Scully said "We're

bringing back bold, vibrant cities by enabling great new precincts like this transformative plan for The Station Newcastle.

"Projects like this are exciting because they bring new activations in our cities and put heritage buildings back to the heart of the community.

"This is another example of the Minns Labor Government working to protect the heritage and cultural value while supporting tourism, jobs and community connection."

HCCDC Chief Executive, Valentina Misevska said "Since 2018, HCCDC has kept The Station open and thriving, and delivered major landscaping, site enhancements, and a popular program of pop-up events.

"We're continuing temporary activation throughout 2026 and will work with Ashbridge through the design, planning and approvals process to ensure ongoing activity and a smooth transition to the long-term lease."

"We look forward to the next phase of The Station's life including next-level food, beverage and entertainment offerings."

Ashbridge spokesperson, Vishant Narayan said:

"We are honoured to be entrusted with The Station's future and are committed to carefully curating a mix of drawcard attractions with best-in-class operators.

"This will be a carefully considered and comprehensive transformation that enables modern use of the space while preserving and celebrating the building's wonderful heritage character.

"We're proud to have assembled a leading team, nationally and locally, to bring this vision to life, and look forward to working with the community, Council and our stakeholders."

Train manufacturing jobs coming back to the Hunter

Almost 40 years since the Tangara trains were built in Newcastle, the work to extend their life is coming back to the Hunter, with the NSW Government establishing two new production lines at the rail facility in Cardiff.

This investment will create around 100 new jobs and 20 apprenticeships in the Hunter, rebuilding the train manufacturing workforce after the former Government ended passenger train manufacturing in the region in 2013 and prioritised overseas manufacturers.

The \$447 million Tangara Life Extension program will extend the life of 55 eight-carriage trains by over a decade by replacing internal cladding, the computer operating system, installing more accessible emergency help points, emergency door release, passenger visual displays, upgrades to the passenger address system and CCTV.

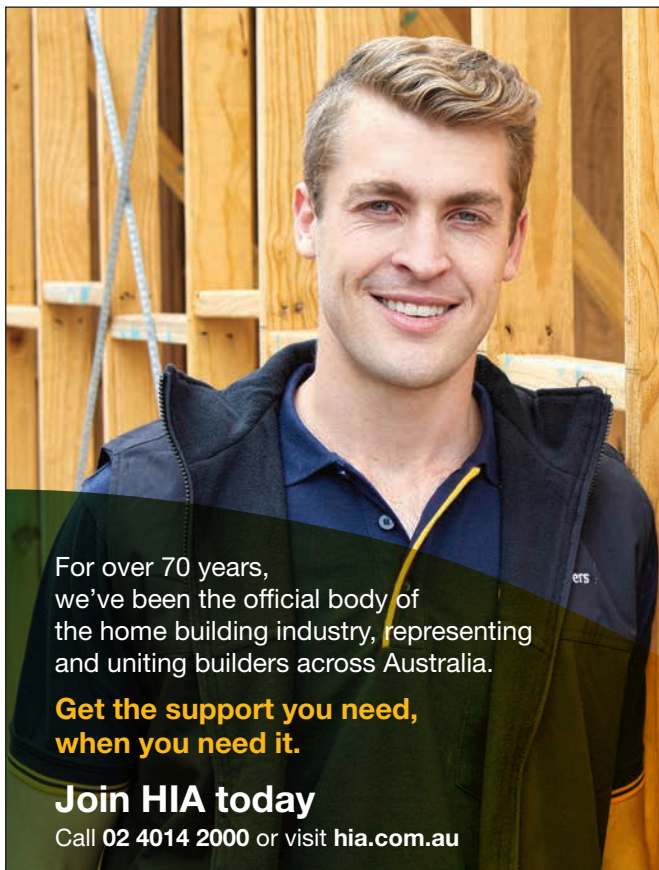
The two new production lines in the Hunter, in addition to the existing three lines at Auburn and Flemington, will increase the pace of train upgrades from 12 per year to 20. This increased capacity means more upgraded Tangara trains will be on the network sooner.

The 100 new jobs and 20 apprenticeships in the Hunter brings the total number of jobs on the Tangara Life Extension program to 320. 200 people including apprentices are already working on the program at Auburn and Flemington.

This investment in local skills will help develop the workforce that will build the new Tangara fleet in NSW, which will begin procurement by 2027 and meet the 50 per cent local manufacturing target as part of the Future Fleet Program.

The life extension program is part of the Government's focus on improving rail reliability in response to the Independent Rail Review.

The Tangaras are some of the oldest rolling stocks and refurbished carriages will help to reduce maintenance faults. To date, four Tangara trains are undergoing upgrades with the first train now in the network undergoing dynamic testing activities before it re-enters service on the network.



For over 70 years, we've been the official body of the home building industry, representing and uniting builders across Australia.

Get the support you need, when you need it.

Join HIA today
Call 02 4014 2000 or visit hia.com.au



you're in good hands



\$2.74 million energy project for Singleton

Singleton Council is switching on a smarter, cleaner energy future with a \$2.74 million integrated energy efficiency and electrification program across three of its most important community facilities. Backed by \$1.371 million from the Australian Government and a matching Council investment, the program will modernise infrastructure at Singleton Gym + Swim, Lake St Clair amenities, and the Singleton Sewage Treatment Plant (STP), cutting emissions, lowering energy costs, and improving reliability for years to come.

From March, ageing gas, electrical and mechanical systems are being replaced with state-of-the-art electric technologies, supported by solar, battery storage, and upgraded control systems. The works are designed to deliver measurable energy and cost savings while strengthening Council assets in a constrained regional energy network.

Acting General Manager Dwight Graham said the program reflected Council's ongoing commitment to practical, community-focused sustainability.

"This program is all about making smart investments that deliver long-term value for our community," he said.

"By upgrading facilities people use every day, we're reducing costs, cutting emissions, and building resilience into our services — without passing that burden onto future generations."

At Singleton Gym + Swim, the 40-year-old facility will be transformed with electric heat pumps replacing ageing gas-fired hot water, LED lighting upgrades, and a new fast EV charger — the first Council-owned fast charger on Council land with 24/7 public access. These upgrades alone will cut 285 tonnes of CO₂-e per year, reduce gas consumption by 77%, and deliver long-term cost savings while lowering maintenance and asset-failure risks.

Visitors to Lake St Clair will benefit from a new off-grid solar and battery system powering amenities, eliminating forecasted energy costs, cutting 15 tonnes of CO₂-e per year, and delivering significant load-shifting capability during peak demand or outages.

Mr Graham said the Gym + Swim and STP projects were expected to save 1.7 million kWh of energy annually, cutting 380 tonnes of CO₂-e each year. Together with Lake St Clair, the upgrades offered a scalable, community-focused approach to decarbonising Council facilities.

"These projects show how regional councils like Singleton can lead the transition to cleaner energy in a responsible, affordable way that delivers real local benefits," he said.

"The Gym + Swim was Council's second-highest energy consumer and emitter in 2024-2025, closely followed by the Sewage Treatment Plant. These upgrades make both facilities future-ready, resilient, and more sustainable than ever.

"We're grateful for the Australian Government's support as we continue investing in local facilities, setting the example for taking action now to benefit the people and environment of Singleton for years to come."

This project is co-funded by the Australian Government's Department of Industry, Science and Resources through their Community Energy Upgrades Fund.

COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES FOR SALE

OWNER / OCCUPIER OPPORTUNITY: 21/ 74 Tudor St, Hamilton



This modern ground floor office suite offers 207m² approx. of prime corner space. It is fully fitted with new carpet and has ducted air conditioning throughout. Four secure car spaces are included. Just 250m from Beaumont Street's cafes and shops and vibrant strip. High visibility ensures excellent exposure. Easy access to all major transport links. Ideal for office or professional use.

VERSATILE FREEHOLD: 20 Fishing Point Rd, Rathmines



Freehold property housing Westlakes Medical Centre on a short term lease. Would suit investors, developers and owner/occupiers. Premises has operated as a medical centre for over 30 years. NLA of building is 220m² approx, on a site area of 677m² approx. Front and rear parking available.

DA APPROVED PROJECT: 105 Regent St, New Lambton



Attn: Owner/occupiers, investors & developers
Comprising a large 4 bedroom home, commercial suites and storage areas currently returning \$100,000 pa. Current DA approval for 3 large upmarket townhouses & a state of the art commercial space. NLA of 515m² approx. on a site area of 550m² approx.

INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT: 7/ 18 Oakdale Rd, Gateshead



Excellent opportunity to secure a freestanding strata warehouse with long term income. The high profile unit of 670m² approx. including mezz, has clear span, high bay construction and Oakdale Road exposure. Nine on-site car spaces with convenient vehicle access. Leased to a national tenant until Dec 2031, returning \$105,000 per annum net. Ideal for investors selling secure income & growth.

OWNER / OCCUPIERS & INVESTORS: 38-40 Beaumont St, Hamilton



Freehold properties on two separate titles. Can be purchased together or individually. Both properties have 180m² approx. on the ground level and 40 Beaumont Street has a two bedroom unit on the first floor. Rear access and parking from the laneway off Donald Street.

OFFICE SUITES: Level 1/ 456-460 Hunter St, Newcastle



Strata office floor in well maintained and presented 7 storey CBD commercial building. Currently provides two separate office areas of 78m² approx. and 147m² approx, but can be opened up into one large area. Would suit owner/occupier and investors.

For further details or an inspection contact **DAVID ROGERS**
admin@dowlingcommercial.com.au | 0425 267 111 | 02 4969 8000

WWW.DOWLINGCOMMERCIAL.COM.AU

DOWLING
COMMERCIAL

Hunter & Central Coast housing approvals expand in 2025

"Latest ABS figures on new home approvals indicate that total home approvals grew by 2% in the Hunter and 16% on the Central Coast in 2025 compared to the 2024 calendar year," said Craig Jennion, HIA Hunter Executive Director.

"There was a total of 5,210 building approvals across the Hunter in 2025 and 1,223 on the Central Coast. Combined, this is 5% stronger than in 2024, and 4 per cent higher than the pre covid year of 2018.

"The total value of new building approvals was \$2.97 billion in 2025, an increase of 11%. In the Hunter the value of building approvals was \$2.35 billion, whilst on the Central Coast the value was just shy of \$625 million."

"Detached house approvals in the Hunter declined with a fall of 17% in the 2025 calendar year. Across the region Muswellbrook saw the strongest growth in detached house approvals, up by 66% compared to 2024, be it off a low base. This was followed by Newcastle (42%), Scone (41%), Port Stephens (38%) and Dungog (30%)."

"The largest declines were recorded in the Great Lakes (66%), Gloucester (50%), Lake Macquarie (35%), Cessnock (21%) and Singleton (9%)."

"On the Central Coast, detached dwellings contracted marginally, with a fall of 1% compared to the 2024 calendar year," said Mr Jennion.

"In contrast approvals data for multi-unit dwellings demonstrated that market confidence continued to pick-up, especially in the latter half of the year. Multi-unit approvals increased in all local government areas except for Dungog. Approvals were up 38% in the Hunter and 50% on the Central Coast compared to the previous year."

"In the Hunter growth was greatest in the Great Lakes (166%), Muswellbrook (100%), Maitland (54%), Lake Macquarie (35%) and Port Stephens (33%)."

"On the Central Coast, multi-unit dwellings increased 68% in Gosford and 34% in Wyong," said Mr Jennion.

"Much of the heavy lifting for the residential sector continues to occur in the local government areas of Maitland, Central Coast, Lake Macquarie, Newcastle and Cessnock. These top five locations for approvals accounted for 88% of total approvals."

Whilst detached homes remained the preference for home buyers, accounting for 53% of total approvals in the Hunter and 56% on the Central Coast, multi-unit approvals saw double digit growth in both regions."

"This suggests that some households are turning to more affordable smaller homes as a means of securing home ownership."

"The value of approved major renovations and alterations was overall steady in 2025. In the Hunter approvals decreased by 2% to \$308.5 million, while on the Central Coast the value increased by 4% to \$165.4 million."

"Despite the varied results, especially for detached dwellings, it is clear that the region worked through the challenges of 2024 that were characterised by the higher cost of borrowing, land, materials and labour."

"Whilst these concerns remain, interest rate cuts in 2025 have helped bring more households back to the market, supported by the fact that many households remain in employment, which provides certainty of income."

"Looking forward the growth in approvals is pleasing, demonstrating that the Hunter and Central Coast remain critical housing locations in New South Wales due to the combination of relative affordability compared to Sydney, rapid population growth, and diverse lifestyle options."

"However, increased support by all levels of government to reduce the barriers on land development and new home building are required if the relative affordability benefits the region is known for are to be taken advantage of in 2026," concluded Mr Jennion.

University Skills Hub to accelerate transition to new energy economy

Construction has commenced on the University of Newcastle's New Energy Skills Hub, a purpose-built facility that will help develop the critical skills needed for the Hunter's energy transition.

The goal of the new facility will be to provide hands-on training for students from university, TAFE and training providers. The facility will provide access to specialist equipment and direct exposure to industry, ensuring graduates are job-ready for the region's new energy opportunities.

The building will consist of an open plan workshop area with specialised equipment across five dedicated functional zones for education, training, testing and demonstration. The Hub will also serve as a testbed for industry, providing the tools and capability to test and enhance systems and components in a range of environments.

The \$20 million Hub is funded by a \$16 million Australian Government investment under the Priority Community Infrastructure Program, recognising the Hunter's central role in building Australia's future clean-energy workforce. The University is contributing \$4 million towards construction and delivery.

Acting Vice-Chancellor Professor Belinda Tynan said the New Energy Skills Hub will help prepare students for the jobs of the future.

"The University of Newcastle is, first and foremost, a university for our regions. As the Hunter prepares for carbon neutral future, the New Energy Skills Hub will ensure our students have access to the practical, industry-ready training they need to step into the jobs of tomorrow," said Professor Tynan.

Construction of the Hub marks the first step in the development of the University's Next Generation Resources Park, an expansion of its industrial innovation precinct to meet the needs of the region's changing economy.

Professor Alan Broadfoot, who will oversee this project, said the new facility will build on the University's enduring commitment to innovation, education and community impact.

"A first of its kind facility in the Hunter, the New Energy Skills Hub will facilitate a cooperative approach to accelerating skills development in the nation's critical sectors, acting as a regional catalyst to foster the existing and emerging industries which sustain our communities," Professor Broadfoot said.

"The Hub will be used by STEM students from both tertiary and VET sectors, secondary schools as well as industry," Professor Broadfoot said.

Grindley Construction has been appointed to deliver the main construction work, with the project expected to be complete in Q1 of 2027.

Is your business celebrating a major anniversary?

We would like to hear from you if you are marking 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 years etc.

Email us at garry@HBRmag.com.au for further information.

Paul Howden honoured with Lifetime Achievement Award for outstanding contribution to the advice industry

In a moment of well-deserved recognition, Paul Howden has been awarded the prestigious Astrum Lifetime Achievement Award, celebrating more than 30 years of dedication, leadership, and innovation within the advice industry.

The award recognises individuals whose careers have made a profound and lasting impact on the profession. For Paul, this honour reflects not only longevity but a career defined by integrity, mentorship, and an unwavering commitment to client outcomes.

As one of the founders of Crest Financial Services more than 25 years ago, Paul helped build a practice grounded in trust, professionalism, and a client-first philosophy. Over time, the firm has evolved into a respected business now transitioning to a new generation of leaders—many of whom were personally mentored by Paul himself.

Paul's journey in financial advice has been shaped by resilience and determination. Early in his career, he was mentored by another adviser who helped shape his values and approach—principles he has carried forward throughout his career. Despite facing significant personal challenges, Paul remained steadfast in his ambition to build a lasting legacy, earning respect across both his team and the broader industry. His contributions extend well beyond his own business. Paul was recognised early in his career as one of the youngest recipients of the Gerald Lippman award and has played an active role in shaping the industry's direction, including his time on the ARA board during a period of significant transformation toward holistic financial advice.

A defining feature of Paul's career has been his commitment to developing others. He has mentored advisers, paraplanners,

and operational staff—many of whom have progressed into senior leadership roles both within his practice and across the industry. His leadership has fostered a culture focused on excellence, continuous learning, and strong client relationships, with some clients remaining with the business for over 25 years.

Colleagues consistently point to Paul's belief in empowering others as central to his leadership style. He has invested heavily in training and professional development, even hosting multi-day conferences to support the growth and motivation of his team. His legacy is reflected not just in business success, but in the people and careers he has helped shape.

Throughout more than two decades of industry change—including regulatory reform, rising professional standards, and technological advancement—Paul has remained at the forefront. He has embraced innovation, integrating new technologies and processes to enhance efficiency, accuracy, and client experience, while consistently maintaining standards above industry requirements.

Beyond the workplace, Paul has demonstrated a deep commitment to community and charitable initiatives, particularly through his support of children's charities and advocacy for education. His contributions reflect a belief that success carries a responsibility to give back and make a meaningful difference.

The Astrum Lifetime Achievement Award is reserved for advisers who have shaped the profession through leadership, innovation, and service to the advice community. Paul Howden exemplifies these qualities, having built a legacy defined by integrity, resilience, and enduring impact.

As the advice profession continues to evolve, Paul's career stands as a benchmark for excellence—an inspiring example of what can be achieved through dedication, vision, and a genuine commitment to others.



Working closely to reach your goals



Crest provides expert financial and accounting advice to help you achieve your goals with confidence, security, and peace of mind. Our friendly team delivers tailored, professional service every step of the way.

Crest Financial Services

- Superannuation
- Risk Protection
- Investment Advice
- Budgeting & Debt Management
- Retirement Planning
- Estate Planning

Crest Accounting

- Taxation Services
- Personal Returns
- Payroll Processing
- Cloud Accounting
- Bookkeeping Services
- Business Consulting
- BAS Services
- SMSF Accounting



Contact
(02) 4933 3466



More Information
www.crestfs.com.au



Locations
93 High Street, East Maitland
22A Christo Road, Georgetown

Port Waratah launches 2025 Annual Report Suite

On 26 March Port Waratah Coal Services released its 2025 Annual Report Suite, providing a comprehensive overview of the organisation's performance across safety, environmental management, community contribution and operational delivery.

In 2025, Port Waratah loaded 96.5 million tonnes of coal across 1,144 vessels. Despite significant rainfall impacting the first half of the year, terminal throughput finished strongly and was consistent with recent years.

Safety performance improved significantly compared to 2024, with an All-Injury Frequency Rate of 1.86, down from 6.04. Environmental performance highlights included a 94.4% landfill diversion rate (the ninth consecutive year above 90%) and a reduction in electricity intensity per tonne of coal handled compared to the previous three-year average.

Investment in Port Waratah's operating assets remains focused on delivering reliable and cost-effective terminal services long into the future. The 2025 capital programme totalled \$86.9 million and included major electrical, mechanical and structural upgrades, as well as the successful delivery of the organisation's Shiploader Investment Programme outage at Kooragang.

Port Waratah CEO Hennie du Plooy said the report demonstrated the organisation's commitment to operating sustainably while continuing to deliver safe, reliable and efficient terminal services.

"Our commitment to safety and environmental performance delivered improvements against most targets in 2025, and this report highlights the initiatives that supported that progress," said Mr du Plooy.

"Despite challenging weather conditions, our people worked closely with coal chain partners to recover performance and finish the year strongly. The scale and success of the major outage at Kooragang demonstrated what can be achieved through strong planning, collaboration and a shared focus on safe, reliable operations.

"Trust is earned through our actions every day. We are proud of our safety culture, our focus on environmental performance and the relationships we have built with our workforce, the local community and our partners, and we remain committed to listening, engaging and contributing meaningfully to the Hunter Region," said Mr du Plooy.

Port Waratah continued to support the local economy and employment, spending \$147 million with suppliers and contractors in the Hunter Region. More than 80% of employees live locally across Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and Port Stephens.

An investment of \$850,000 was given back to the community through the Community Investment and Partnership Programme, supporting more than 125 initiatives. More than 25% focused on health outcomes while 20% was dedicated to partnerships for reconciliation.

The Annual Report Suite includes the Sustainability Performance Report, Annual Financial Report, Sustainability Report and Modern Slavery Statement. The Sustainability Performance Report has been prepared in accordance with Global Reporting Initiative standards and aligned with the Mineral Council of Australia's Enduring Value Framework.

Regional boutique firms producing nationally recognised legal talent

Two Newcastle solicitors have been named finalists in the national 30 Under 30 Awards in Law, reinforcing the strength of the opportunities available to early career lawyers.

Caity Walker of The Family Law Co. and Georgina Price of Hamilton Janke Lawyers have been recognised in the national program, which celebrates high-performing young professionals across Australia's legal sector. Their nominations reflect not only individual achievement, but the evolving role boutique regional firms are playing in developing the skills of talented juniors.

For decades, major metropolitan firms were seen as the primary pathway for ambitious law graduates. Increasingly, however, specialist boutique practices in regional centres are offering a compelling alternative, and simultaneously combining complex, high-level work with early responsibility and strong professional mentorship.

Admitted in 2022, Caity Walker practises exclusively in family law and appears regularly in the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia (Divisions 1 and 2). Her experience includes appellate advocacy, defended hearings and urgent parenting and property proceedings. Operating within a regional specialist boutique environment has enabled her to rapidly develop skills early in her career which has meant she is highly sought after by clients.

Georgina Price, Senior Solicitor at Hamilton Janke Lawyers, practises in criminal defence and appears in courts across NSW. Her background includes roles with Legal Aid ACT, the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT and as Associate to both a Magistrate and a District Court Judge. She regularly conducts bail applications, defended hearings and appeals, having also developed from an early-stage extensive advocacy experience available within regional-based practices.

Industry leaders note that boutique firms in centres such as Newcastle are increasingly able to offer sophisticated legal work traditionally associated with capital city practices. By maintaining specialist focus and leaner structures, these firms often provide younger lawyers with substantial client responsibility, direct court exposure and closer involvement in strategic decision-making.

The recognition of both Walker and Price at a national level highlights the growing competitiveness of regional legal markets and the capacity of local firms to nurture emerging leaders. It also signals to law graduates that career progression and professional excellence are not confined to metropolitan jurisdictions.

Former Liddell site powers Hunter's clean energy future

With backing from the Federal and NSW Governments, the giant Liddell Battery, built on the site of one of Australia's largest retired coal-fired power stations, is gearing up to provide enough power to support around 200,000 homes on the nation's main electricity grid within months.

Located on the site of the former Liddell Power Station, the battery shows how the Hunter can continue its proud role powering Australia, while creating the infrastructure needed for a cleaner, more reliable energy system.

Backed by \$35 million from the Federal Government through the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA), the Liddell Battery is part of a plan to deliver reliable renewable energy and support jobs in regional Australia.

The NSW Labor Government backed the project with a long-term contract for revenue underwriting under a Long Term Energy Service Agreement (LTESA) awarded in November 2023. The NSW Government also funded more engineers to speed up grid connections to the battery.

At the peak of construction, more than 600 workers were involved in the project.

With construction of the 500 MW/1000 MWh battery now complete, commissioning is underway with a target for the battery to be operational by mid-year.

The battery will help keep the grid stable and reliable and as more renewable energy comes online.

Charged by renewable energy during the day when it is abundant and dispatching it when demand is high, it will provide firming capacity to the National Electricity Market (NEM) by helping to balance supply and demand and supporting grid reliability.

This is what a Future Made in Australia looks like in practice, with the significant employment of apprentices, local procurement – including 95% of steel being sourced locally – and working with First Nations businesses.

2NURFM 103.7 WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE 186,000 LISTENERS *who tune in each month!**



**2NURFM is Newcastle and
The Hunter Valley's favourite
community radio station that
packs a big punch!**

**Proudly locally owned and operated
by a top-notch bunch of radio professionals**

Reaching 186,000 listeners each month*
we boast a track record of achieving outstanding cost
effective results for clients with our broad and affluent
40+ years demographic*

**Promote and market your business brand
to our engaged and loyal audience**

*Partner with the station
that is making waves*

**Our professional sales team listens
to what your business needs and prepares
creative solutions, helping you connect with
our audience.**

Contact | sales@2nurfm.com

2NUR FM103.7
GOOD TIMES & GREAT MUSIC
2NURFM.COM.AU

*[National Listener Survey - conducted by McNair Yellow Squares - Greater Newcastle 2024 Survey Wave 2].

NWS NUWEIGH CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

NWS NUWEIGH is proud to mark 50 years of supporting Australian industry, with our roots firmly planted here in Newcastle. Since our founding in 1976, we have grown alongside the Hunter region, building a reputation based on trust, reliability, and a genuine commitment to our customers.

From day one, our business has been built on care. Care for our customers, their operations, and the critical role that accurate, dependable weighing plays in their success. That mindset continues to guide us today. We understand that weighing is not just a compliance requirement; it is a core part of operational performance. When weighing systems are reliable and efficient, businesses move faster, reduce risk, and maximise output.

At **NWS NUWEIGH**, we focus on delivering complete weighing solutions that support these outcomes. This includes everything from supply and installation of weighing solutions, through to their ongoing verification and calibration. Our team works closely with customers to ensure their systems are not only compliant, but optimised for the way they operate day to day. Whether it is improving throughput, reducing downtime, or ensuring accuracy across complex environments, our goal is always the same; to help our customers run better businesses with confidence.

Being based in Newcastle has shaped who we are. The Hunter is a region built on industry, resilience, and strong relationships. We are proud to be part of that community and to support the businesses that keep it moving.

As we look ahead, we see significant opportunity. We are investing in capability, technology, and people to support a broader national footprint. This includes expanding our physical presence through new branches in key markets, allowing us to be closer to our customers and deliver faster, more responsive service.

Our ambition is to extend the same high level of service and responsiveness that we are known for in the Hunter across Australia. Alongside this, we continue to strengthen our service network, expand our reach, and evolve our solutions to meet the changing needs of modern industry.

FIFTY YEARS IS A MILESTONE WE ARE PROUD OF. WHAT EXCITES US MOST IS WHAT COMES NEXT.





2026

HUNTER INVESTMENT PROSPECTUS

YOUR NEXT SMART BUSINESS,
INVESTMENT & LIFESTYLE
CHOICE

Published by Hunter Business Publications Pty Ltd, the **Hunter Investment Prospectus** is an important promotional project for the Region that is distributed as a high-quality hard copy as well as online.

View a copy of the 2026
Hunter Investment Prospectus
online at www.hunterinvest.com.au

SUPPORTERS

The **Hunter Investment Prospectus** is only made possible by the following organisations that have supported this project and are active supporters of the growth of the Hunter Region.

GOLD SUPPORTERS

BAE Systems
Cessnock City Council
Department of Primary Industries and
Regional Development
Hunter Land
Kongsberg Defence Australia
University of Newcastle

SILVER SUPPORTERS

Dantia
Dungog Shire Council
Glencore
HunterNet
Lovedale Farm
McNamara Adams
MidCoast Council
NCP Printing
Newcastle City Council

NGM Group
NSW Mining
Regional Development Australia -
Hunter
Scorpion International
Singleton Council
Upper Hunter Shire Council
Varley Group

BRONZE SUPPORTERS

Business Hunter
EJE Architecture
Housing Industry Association – Newcastle
Hunter Water
Knight Frank Newcastle
Maitland City Council
Port of Newcastle
Port Stephens Council
Zeal Futures

For queries or feedback regarding the **2026 Hunter Investment Prospectus**, please contact:

Hunter Business Publications Pty Ltd P: +61 2 4062 8133 E: info@HBRmag.com.au W: www.HBRmag.com.au



EVANS & WISLANG

Evans & Wislang are pleased to formally welcome **Carly McGee** as their new Practice Manager. Carly brings strong operational leadership and a genuine passion for developing both people and systems. She specialises in implementing robust policies and streamlined processes that strengthen performance while fostering a positive, high-engagement team culture. Her commitment to mentoring staff, aligning individual growth with firm objectives, and building high-performing teams will play a pivotal role in the next phase of Evans & Wislang growth.



HUNTER REGION BUSINESS HUB

The Board of The Hunter Region Business Hub is delighted to announce the appointment of **Alena Pople** as its new General Manager commencing on March 9, 2026. A highly respected regional leader with more than 20 years' experience across economic development, tourism, marketing and community engagement, Alena brings a strong track record in business support, revenue development and strategic growth to the role. Her skills align strongly with the Hub's mission to empower and connect small businesses across the Hunter Region.



THE PROPERTY COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

The Property Council of Australia has appointed **Stephen Crowe** as its new Regional Director for the Hunter and Central Coast. Mr Crowe is a highly respected government relations and corporate affairs leader, having held executive roles with Port of Newcastle, Newcastle Airport, Port Stephens Council, and the Newcastle Knights. His career reflects a strong record of navigating complex policy environments, securing major investment, building high trust relationships across all tiers of government, and driving strategic outcomes for rapidly growing regions.

LET US KNOW
ABOUT YOUR
PEOPLE!

We would be pleased to receive information about your new appointments. Just email around 80 words on the employment plus a high resolution head shot to **editorial@HBRmag.com.au**

Submissions are **FREE** but subject to editorial control.



COMING EVENTS

21 April 2026, 4:15pm to 7pm

HunterNet

HunterNet General Members Meeting – Hosted by Myrtec
Venue: Newcastle Cruising Yacht Club
<https://hunternet.com.au/event/future-manufacturing-forum-total-cost-of-ownership-series-2/>

23 April 2026, 7:10am

Mentor Walks

Mentor Walks Newcastle: Get guidance and grow your network
Venue: The Train Sheds at Foreshore Park
<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/mentor-walks-newcastle-get-guidance-and-grow-your-network-tickets-1976584202558?aff=ebdssbcategorybrowse>

7 May 2026, 9:00am – 1:30pm

HIA

2026 HIA Hunter Building Women Lunch and Learn
Venue: HIA Hunter Office
Cost: \$85 - \$170
<https://hia.com.au/awards-and-events/events/business-partner-hunter-nsw/2026/business-partners-network-mayfield-may07>

8 May 2026

Hunter Safety Awards

Venue: Newcastle Exhibition Centre – NEX
Cost: \$185.00 + \$18.50 GST + \$5.09 ticket service fee
<https://www.huntersafetyawards.com.au/2026-hunter-safety-awards>

19 May 2026, 9:00am – 11:00am

HIA

Industry Trade Night
Venue: HIA Hunter Office
Cost: \$25 - \$50
<https://hia.com.au/awards-and-events/events/trade-night-hunter-nsw/2026/hia-information-session-mayfield-may19>

21 May 2026, 8:00am – 9:30am

HunterNet

Future Manufacturing Forum – Total Cost of Ownership Series
Venue: HunterNet Office
<https://hunternet.com.au/event/future-manufacturing-forum-total-cost-of-ownership-series-2/>

27 - 28 May 2026

New.E and HunterNet

The Hunter New Energy Symposium
Venue: Newcastle City Hall
Cost: \$750.00
<https://hunternewenergy.com.au/events/2026-hunter-new-energy-symposium/>

28 May 2026, 5:00pm – 7:00pm

HIA

Industry Trade Night
Venue: Club Forster
Cost: \$25 - \$50
<https://hia.com.au/awards-and-events/events/trade-night-hunter-nsw/2026/hia-information-session-mayfield-may19>

29 May 2026, 7:00pm

Hunter Region Business Hub (The Hub)

Hunter Region Business Excellence Awards
Venue: Ben Ean, Pokolbin
Cost: \$160.00
<https://www.huntervalleyhub.com.au/business-community/awards/>

18 June 2026, 7:30am – 9:30am

HIA

Industry Outlook Breakfast
Venue: South Merewether
Cost: \$120 - \$240
<https://hia.com.au/awards-and-events/events/industry-outlook-hunter-nsw/2026/industry-outlook-breakfast-merewether-jun18>



**ARE
YOU ORGANISING
A COMING
BUSINESS EVENT?**

We would be pleased to receive basic information as above for consideration for inclusion in a coming issue of **HBR**.

Advertising opportunities in **HBR** and the **HBR** email newsletter are also available.

Please email garry@HBRmag.com.au

Why we recommend Self-Managed Super Funds for the right clients

Robert Coyte
Shartru Wealth

Self-managed super funds can be a very effective structure for the right client. The main attraction is control. Rather than having decisions, which includes investment decisions largely dictated by a large institutional trustee, clients can take a far more direct role in determining how their retirement savings are managed.

For many clients, that is highly appealing. They want to control their own financial destiny rather than simply choose from a menu of options designed by someone else. An SMSF allows them to have a direct say in the assets held, the investment strategy adopted, the way cash is managed and the overall direction of the fund. For clients who value involvement and want a structure that reflects their own objectives, this can be a significant advantage.

Transparency is another major benefit. In many larger superannuation funds, clients receive periodic reporting and broad asset allocation summaries, but they often do not have a detailed understanding of the underlying investments. In an SMSF, the structure is much more visible. Clients can generally see exactly what the fund owns, what income it is producing, how the portfolio is positioned and how decisions are being implemented. That level of visibility often leads to better engagement and a stronger sense of ownership over long-term retirement planning. This is paramount for clients when markets get turbulent and they need to be able to ride out the noise. It is much easier to do this if you understand what you own and why you own it.

That said, our position is not that an SMSF is attractive simply

because it offers control. We also recognise that these structures come with responsibilities. Running an SMSF is not just about choosing investments. It also involves other strategic decision and strategies, maintaining records, lodging annual returns, arranging an annual audit and ensuring the fund remains compliant with its legal and tax obligations.

Those responsibilities are real and should not be understated.

This is why we believe an SMSF works best where clients want the strategic benefits of control and transparency, but also understand that the structure must be properly administered. In practice, we utilise a specialist service provider to assist with the execution of these duties. That includes helping with administration, annual reporting and the audit process so that the fund's compliance obligations are met in an orderly and professional manner.

This means clients are not left to deal with every operational requirement on their own. Instead, they retain control over the important strategic decisions while using professional support to assist with the practical execution of the structure. In our view, that is often the right balance. The client remains actively involved in shaping their superannuation strategy, but the administration and compliance framework is supported by specialists who understand the requirements.

We also acknowledge that an SMSF is not suitable for every person or every family. The structure needs to be worthwhile relative to the time, cost and responsibility involved. As a general guide, where combined family superannuation balances are above \$300,000, an SMSF may start to become a structure worth considering. That does not mean every family above that level should establish one, but it can be a useful point at which the benefits of control, transparency and strategic flexibility may justify closer review.

Our recommendation is therefore selective. We recommend



Shartru Wealth Management connects individuals and families to best of breed financial advisers right across Australia to help them reach their financial goals. We empower you to work towards achieving your financial goals. We're focused on building strategies that work, and developing relationships that last.

From experience, we know that wealth accumulation takes time, persistence, energy and diligence. And these are the qualities that make us who we are.

We'll never stop short on taking the time to understand your needs, expectations, limitations and possibilities, now and over time. Our aim is to provide you with the financial freedom to do more. It's your wealth, your way.

14 Macquarie Street, Belmont NSW 2280 PO Box 565, Belmont NSW 2280

P: 1300 478 424 E: adviserservices@shartru.com.au W: www.shartruwealth.com.au

SMSFs where the client values direct involvement, wants better visibility over their retirement capital and is prepared to operate within a properly supported compliance framework. We do not recommend them simply because they are fashionable or because they allow more investment choice.

Ultimately, the real value of an SMSF is that it allows the right client to take greater ownership of their superannuation. They are not simply accepting decisions made by an external trustee. They are actively involved in building and overseeing their own retirement strategy, while using professional services to assist with the ongoing obligations that come with that control.

For clients who want transparency, involvement and the ability to shape their own financial future, an SMSF can be a very effective structure. The key is ensuring that control is matched with proper support, sound administration and a clear understanding of the responsibilities involved.

For further information contact Shartru Wealth on 1300 478 424, email enquiries@shartru.com.au or visit www.shartruwealth.com.au



Robert Coyte is the CEO of the Shartru Group, with over 25 years experience across banking, stockbroking and financial planning. Having run his own practices for two decades, he previously held roles at Westpac and AMP before securing his own AFSL in 2008. Robert also serves on Investment Committees and is Responsible Manager for the AFSL. He holds a Bachelor of Commerce and a Graduate Diploma in Applied Finance and Investment.

Temporary help for businesses

The Federal Government has announced that it is working with the business and finance sectors to help ease the pressures created by the war in the Middle East.

Tax system flexibility

The ATO will provide temporary relief for businesses unable to meet their tax obligations due to fuel supply issues, where appropriate.

This will include more generous payment plans, remission of interest and penalties, and support in varying PAYG instalments where there has been a downturn in taxable income.

Some compliance actions will also be limited across the worst affected industries and some debt collection actions may be paused where appropriate.

The ATO will establish a dedicated channel that businesses can use to access these relief provisions, or they can contact their registered tax professional to request access on their behalf.

The ATO will also continue to provide support for individuals experiencing serious financial hardship and will monitor conditions in the lead up to Tax Time.

Helping small businesses access credit

The Government has also announced help to allow small businesses access easier and faster credit by extending the Small Business Responsible Lending Obligation exemption for a further 10 years.

This will ensure small businesses are not hit with additional regulatory burdens and delays when accessing loans.

Finance sector and broader industry support

There has been commitments from businesses and peak industry bodies to proactively work with their customers, suppliers and employees to respond to pressures in the economy.

Australian banks and non-bank lenders have put in place specialist teams to support small businesses, farmers and communities struggling with cost pressures and supply chain disruptions as a result of the conflict in the Middle East.

A number of options are available to customers doing it tough,

including temporary payment deferrals, loan restructuring and emergency credit limit increases, depending on individual circumstances.

The Australian Banking Association will kickstart a new campaign Don't tough it out on your own – banking support when it matters most to help raise awareness about the options available to customers.

The Customer Owned Banking Association and Australian Finance Industry Association are also calling on customers experiencing hardship to get in contact with their lender to discuss options.

Individual Business Council of Australia (BCA) members have taken a range of actions in response to the crisis, including:

- Paying suppliers more frequently to help to improve cash flow and resilience
- Ensuring higher fuel costs are being reflected in what suppliers are paid
- Providing targeted support for vulnerable customers, like concession discounts and structured support such as bill pauses, tailored payment plans and account reviews to reduce cost

The Insurance Council of Australia (ICA) has committed to work with member companies to better support consumers seeking hardship assistance and will encourage small businesses to talk to their insurer about adjustments to premiums during this time.

The ICA will lead work across sectors to anticipate supply chain disruptions arising from the war in the Middle East and develop mitigation strategies in advance.

The Government is urging customers experiencing financial hardship to reach out to their bank, energy retailer, telecommunication provider and insurer to see what support is available.

The Government will continue to work with industry, regulators and the broader community to support Australians during this

HBR
Hunter Business Review

BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE FOR VIEWING ON OUR WEBSITE!

The image shows a collage of three HBR magazine covers. The top cover features a large 'HBR' logo and the text 'Hunter Business Review'. Below it, the text 'BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE FOR VIEWING ON OUR WEBSITE!' is displayed. At the bottom, three magazine covers are shown: one with a ship and the headline 'Defence in THE HUNTER', one with a person wearing a gas mask and the headline 'SUPERANNUATION INVESTMENT & TAXATION', and one with a man and woman and the headline 'LEADERSHIP & HR'.

Payday Super commencing 1 July

Changes to how employers calculate, pay and report super guarantee are happening under Payday Super commencing 1 July 2026.

How Payday Super works

Payday Super is a change to how you calculate and when you pay your employees' super guarantee. From 1 July you must pay employees their super guarantee on payday, at the same time as their salary and wages.

Super guarantee is:

- calculated as 12% of an employee's qualifying earnings (QE), which is a new term that brings together ordinary time earnings (OTE) and other payments
- paid to an employees' super fund on payday and received by the super fund within 7 business days (unless an extended timeframe applies, such as for new employees).

What you need to do

Check the information below about what's changing.

Plan ahead. Review your payroll systems and super processes and get ready to pay super guarantee more frequently.

Stay informed. Keep checking these pages for updates or speak to your tax professional for advice.

You don't need to wait until 1 July to start paying super at the same time as you pay salary and wages – you can start now.

Deadline for super payments

Currently super guarantee payments must be received by a super fund within 28 days of the end of the quarter, but can be paid quarterly or more frequently, e.g. monthly.

The due dates are 28 October, 28 January, 28 April and 28 July.

From 1 July super guarantee payments must be paid to an

employees' super fund at the same time as paying qualifying earnings (QE), on payday, and received by the super fund within 7 business days.

There are some exceptions to the 7-day deadline, such as for new employees.

Calculating super guarantee amounts

Currently the super guarantee amount is calculated as 12% of ordinary time earnings (OTE).

From 1 July the super guarantee amount is calculated as 12% of qualifying earnings (QE). QE includes OTE, salary sacrifice contributions and other amounts that are currently included in an employee's salary or wages for super guarantee.

Reporting super payments

Currently you report either OTE or super liability through Single Touch Payroll (STP).

From 1 July you report both QE and super liability through STP.

Late payments and the super guarantee charge (SGC)

Currently the SGC applies when amounts aren't received by a super fund within 28 days of the end of a quarter. The SGC:

- is self-assessed by the employer, who must lodge an SGC statement
- is calculated based on salary and wages
- includes interest at 10% per annum
- includes a flat administration fee
- is not tax deductible.

From 1 July the SGC applies when amounts aren't received by a super fund within 7 business days of payday (unless an extended timeframe applies, such as for new employees). The SGC:

- is assessed by the ATO
- is calculated based on QE
- includes interest that compounds daily at the general interest charge rate
- includes an administrative uplift, which can vary based on an employer's history of meeting super guarantee obligations and may be reduced by a voluntary disclosure
- is tax deductible.

Penalties

Currently penalties are a maximum of 200% of the SGC, which can be remitted in part or in full.

From 1 July penalties are 25% or 50% of the unpaid SGC, depending on any prior penalties.

Small Business Superannuation Clearing House (SBSCH)

The SBSCH closed to new users on 1 October 2025.

Existing users have access to the service until 30 June 2026. All users must transition to an alternative option to pay their employees' super.

Checking employee data and processing payments

Currently super payments may take a number of days to be received by a super fund.

- Employers receive incomplete or inaccurate data from their employees, which causes errors when they try to contribute to a super fund and delayed payments.
- Employers are unaware of key changes to large super fund's details.

From 1 July to help employers and intermediaries meet the new deadlines, the SuperStream data and payment standards will be revised to:

- allow near real-time payments through the New Payments Platform
- improve error messaging so you can address errors faster
- provide a new member verification request, which enables employers to confirm that a super fund can match their employee contribution to the super fund for the first time and will accept a contribution for them.



**WE WANT TO
HEAR ABOUT
YOUR NEWS!
4062 8133**

Improvements to the Fund Validation Service will also give employers early notice of key changes to large super fund's details, such as fund mergers, that could affect their ability to make contributions to super funds.

Offering employees a stapled fund

Currently you must provide your employees with a choice of super fund and request stapled super fund details from the ATO if you don't receive a choice form from an employee.

From 1 July you can request a stapled super fund and offer this to your employee at the same time you provide their choice form.

You must still provide your employees with a choice of super fund and request stapled super fund details from the ATO if you don't receive a choice form from an employee.

Allocations by super funds

Currently super funds have 20 business days to allocate or return contributions.

From 1 July super funds have 3 business days to allocate or return contributions.

Actions for employers to take

All employers need to ensure they are familiar with the changes that Payday Super brings and that they comply with the new regulations from 1 July 2026.

For most employers, it will entail some additional administrative workload and changes to cash flow. The good news is that most of the actions can be automated if you are using quality Australian accounting software,

If you are unsure or need help, it is recommended that you consult with your accountant or appropriate adviser.



Accountants & Business Advisors

TRUSTED. RELIABLE. STILL YOUR LOCAL TEAM.

WE'VE RELOCATED!

You'll now find us overlooking Newcastle's stunning harbour. Rest assured, it's the same great team providing the same trusted service we've delivered to Hunter businesses and individuals for **42 years**.

NEW ADDRESS: Unit 2, 265 Wharf Rd, Newcastle
 Need help with your accounting, tax or business advisory?
 Call us on 4926 4155 or email admin@tspaccountants.com.au

OUR SERVICES: ▶ TAXATION ▶ ACCOUNTING
 ▶ BOOKKEEPING ▶ SUPERANNUATION ▶ SMSF AUDITING
 ▶ BUSINESS ADVISORY ▶ TRUST ACCOUNTS AUDITS

tspaccountants.com.au

42

years

BEYOND THE SURFACE:

A GUIDE TO PROFESSIONAL MOULD REMEDIATION IN AUSTRALIA

Andrew Russell
Hazmat Services Pty Ltd

Whether it's the aftermath of a catastrophic east coast flood, a sudden ceiling collapse during a storm, or a slow, insidious leak from a faulty bathroom pipe, water damage is a precursor to a secondary disaster: mould. In Australia's increasingly volatile climate, managing mould has evolved from a simple DIY cleaning chore into a rigorous, four-stage professional process.

For homeowners and Persons Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU), understanding this process is vital. Under Australian Work Health and Safety (WHS) laws, employers have a duty of care to provide a safe environment, while homeowners must protect their primary asset. Navigating the journey from identification to final clearance is the only way to ensure a building is truly "healthy."

1. The initial assessment: Pinpointing the source

The process begins with a professional Mould Assessment. In a workplace, this is often triggered by staff complaints of respiratory issues or visible dampness following heavy rain. In a residential setting, it might be the discovery of warped floorboards or a persistent musty odour.

Professional assessors—typically Occupational Hygienists—do more than just look at spots. They use advanced tools like infrared cameras to detect hidden moisture trapped behind "water-resistant" plasterboard and moisture meters to find the exact source of the intrusion.

Following the AS-ICRC S520:2025 standard, an assessment must

identify the root cause. Whether it is an overflowing gutter from a storm, a burst flexi-hose under a sink, or "Category 3" (black water) flood ingress, the moisture source must be rectified first. The assessment concludes with a "Scope of Works," a detailed blueprint that tells remediation contractors exactly what needs to be removed, cleaned, or dried.

2. Preparation and containment: Preventing cross-contamination

Once the plan is in place, the area must be secured. This is the Containment phase, and it is where many DIY attempts fail. When mould is disturbed, it releases millions of microscopic spores and fragments into the air. Without containment, a small repair in a tea room can contaminate an entire office floor.

Professionals use heavy-duty polyethylene sheeting to seal off the affected zone. Crucially, they establish negative air pressure. By using HEPA-filtered air scrubbers to pull air out of the containment zone and vent it outside, they ensure that disturbed spores aren't pushed into unaffected bedrooms or workspaces. This "pressure differential" is the gold standard for preventing cross-contamination during a strip-out.

3. Remediation: Removal, drying and cleaning

The Remediation phase is the heavy lifting. In the context of disasters like floods, timing is critical. Within 24 to 48 hours of water exposure, mould begins to colonise.

WH&S



FIRST AID KITS & SUPPLIES

- **Reliable Service**
- **Free Delivery**
- **Online Catalogue**
- **Extensive Range**
- **Site Signage**
- **First Aid Courses**

WE COME TO YOU

~ Where quality service is Affordable ~



Mobile: 0412 498 240

Email: afasnewcastle@optusnet.com.au

www.affordablefirstaidsupplies.com.au

AFFORDABLE

FIRST AID

SUPPLIES

SERVICING ALL AREAS

According to Australian industry standards, materials are classified by their porosity. In a flood or major plumbing failure:

- Porous materials: Items like plasterboard, MDF cabinetry, insulation, and carpets act like sponges. If they have been soaked by "grey" or "black" water (from floods or sewage), they generally cannot be salvaged. They are stripped out, double-bagged, and disposed of.
- Semi-Porous/Non-Porous: Structural timber, bricks, or concrete can often be saved. These are cleaned using HEPA vacuuming (to remove the bulk of the spores), followed by mechanical agitation—like wire brushing—or antimicrobial treatment to remove the mould's root system, known as hyphae.
- Structural Drying: After cleaning, industrial-grade dehumidifiers and air movers are used to return the building materials to "dry standard" before any new materials are installed.

4. Post-Remediation Verification (PRV): The final exam

The final, and most critical, step is Post-Remediation Verification (PRV), often called "Clearance Testing." To ensure transparency and avoid a conflict of interest, this should be performed by an independent third party—never the company that performed the cleaning.

The PRV involves a two-part test:

1. Visual Inspection: The assessor confirms the area is "white-glove" clean, completely dry, and that all moisture sources have been resolved.

2. Environmental Sampling: Air and surface samples are taken. These results are compared to a "baseline" (usually the outdoor air). If the indoor spore count is significantly lower than or similar to the natural outdoor environment, and no "indicator" species (toxic moulds) are present, the project is "cleared."



Why the professional process matters

Following a disaster, the temptation to "just get back to normal" is high. However, cutting corners is a gamble with both health and finances. By following the professional path - Assessment, Containment, Remediation and Verification - property owners and employers ensure they aren't just hiding a problem.

A "Clearance Certificate" is the ultimate peace of mind. For a business, it satisfies WHS compliance and protects against future liability; for a homeowner, it provides a vital record for insurance and future property sales, proving the building is safe, dry, and fit for occupation. Whether the cause was a 1-in-100-year flood or a faulty 50-cent washer, the process remains the same: Identify, Contain, Remediate, and Verify.

Does your current workplace or home have a history of moisture issues that might require a professional assessment? Or are you currently dealing with the aftermath of a leak or storm, and do you have a plan in place for independent clearance testing?

For further information contact Hazmat Services on (02) 4961 1887, email andrew.russell@hazmat-services.com.au or visit www.hazmat-services.com.au



HAZMAT SERVICES

OHS | WASTE | ENVIRONMENT

HAZMAT SERVICES is a locally owned and operated Specialist OHS | Waste | Environmental services consultancy with a highly experienced and qualified team providing a range of hazardous materials and occupational hygiene services to assist our clients to fulfill various legislative requirements relating to the management of hazardous materials and chemicals in the workplace.

- ◆ Anticipation, Recognition, Evaluation, Control and Review of hazards in the Workplace
- ◆ Workplace Risk Assessments
- ◆ Personal Exposure Monitoring
- ◆ Indoor Air Quality Assessments
- ◆ Mould Assessments and Clearances
- ◆ Asbestos and Hazardous Materials Surveys
- ◆ Asbestos and Hazardous Materials Management Plans
- ◆ Asbestos Air Monitoring (NATA Accredited) **Same Day Results!**
- ◆ Emergency response to Catastrophic Events
- ◆ Silica, Dust, Chemical, Noise Monitoring
- ◆ Occupational Hygiene Management Plans
- ◆ Occupational Hygiene Monitoring Programs for Environmental Remediation Projects
- ◆ Respirator Fit Testing



Level 1, 45c Fitzroy Street, Carrington NSW | www.hazmat-services.com.au
 E. admin@hazmat-services.com.au | T. 02 4961 1887 F. 02 4969 5887



STAYING AT WORK DURING RECOVERY: THE VALUE OF WORKCOVER SUITABLE DUTIES

Dr Tim Stewart
HEAL Specialist Urgent Care

When a worker is injured, it does not always mean they must stop working completely. Under SafeWork NSW, many injured employees can safely remain at work through light or suitable duties. For employers, providing modified duties is not only a legal obligation in many situations but also one of the most effective ways to support recovery and reduce the cost and disruption of workplace injuries.

What are suitable duties?

Suitable duties are temporary adjustments to a worker's role that align with their current medical capacity following a workplace injury. These duties are based on medical guidance provided by the worker's Nominated Treating Doctor (NTD) through the Certificate of Capacity.

Suitable duties may include:

- Reduced hours, such as shorter shifts during recovery
- Modified tasks that avoid heavy lifting or physical strain
- Administrative or office duties instead of physically demanding work
- Observation or supervisory tasks that allow the worker to stay engaged without risk

The purpose is to allow injured workers to remain safely active while avoiding tasks that could delay recovery.

Remaining connected to work during recovery has strong benefits for both employees and employers. Workers who stay engaged in the workplace often recover more quickly and maintain confidence about returning to their normal role.

For employers, suitable duties help:

- Meet obligations under the NSW workers compensation framework
- Reduce claim duration and associated costs
- Maintain productivity and team stability
- Retain experienced staff during recovery
- Demonstrate genuine commitment to employee wellbeing
- Providing appropriate suitable duties also helps reduce the likelihood of prolonged absence from work.

The key role of the Nominated Treating Doctor (NTD)

The NTD plays a central role in determining what work an injured employee can safely perform.

After assessing the worker, the doctor issues a Certificate of Capacity that outlines:

- The worker's current capacity for work
- Specific restrictions, such as lifting limits or movement limitations
- Whether the worker can perform modified or alternative duties
- The expected timeframe for review

This medical guidance forms the foundation of any suitable duties plan. Employers should rely on the certificate when identifying appropriate tasks and avoid assigning duties that fall outside the documented restrictions.

Regular medical reviews allow the NTD to update the worker's capacity as recovery progresses, enabling a gradual increase in duties and work hours.

In conclusion

Supporting suitable duties is a key part of effective injury management. By working closely with the worker and their Nominated Treating Doctor, employers can ensure duties remain safe, appropriate, and aligned with recovery—helping employees return to full capacity sooner while reducing disruption to the workplace.



An open and collaborative partnership between the Nominated Treating Doctor and the employer is essential. Clear communication helps the NTD understand what suitable duties are available in the workplace, allowing these suitable duties to be accurately reflected in the worker's Certificate of Capacity.

For further information contact HEAL Specialist Urgent Care on 1300 9090, email admin@healurgentcare.com.au or visit www.healurgentcare.com.au



Dr Tim Stewart is CEO at HEAL Specialist Urgent Care and an experienced Emergency Medicine Physician with almost 20 years of working in Public Emergency Departments, 15 years working in Private EDs and ICU, and 3 years working on the helicopters as a prehospital and retrieval specialist. He is skilled in Customer Service, Communication, Research, Employee Training and Data Analytics. He is also a Specialist Fellowship in Emergency Medicine from the Australasian College of Emergency Medicine.



Your

WORKCOVER Specialists

Everything in one place



Walk-in purpose built clinics

Open 7 days a week, HEAL clinics offer emergency specialist-led medical care. All WorkCover is billed directly to the insurer.



Experts in work injury and capacity

HEAL treats all non-life-threatening injury and illness. From fractures and crush injuries to wash outs and strains, HEAL knows workplace injuries.

Heal are a 'one stop shop' for workplace injury assistance... reducing the cost and impact of workplace injuries should they occur. They provide high quality medical care for our team.

Brad, Safety Manager
Australian Construction Group



Understands your business

The health & wellbeing of your workforce is our priority. HEAL partners with you to understand suitable duties and RTW pathways.



Coordinates appointments and paperwork

HEAL takes care of it for you. Our multi-disciplinary team work together to manage the needs of your injured worker, saving you time and stress.



Work Health Hub

A membership-based service that offers a complete medical pathway solution for your business.



The liability you didn't hire:

How pre-existing psychological conditions become compensable workplace claims

Faith Eson
FOCCALE Safety Management

The confronting conversations are not wrongdoing; they are exposure. Employers who have followed process are often left questioning how a pre-existing condition became a compensable claim.

In this regulatory environment, psychosocial hazards must be managed with the same diligence as physical risks. A common and contested issue arises where a worker, deemed capable through recruitment and probation later presents psychosocial symptoms, resulting in an accepted workers compensation claim following reasonable management action.

From a business perspective, this is often seen as unjust. However, the legal framework does not assess fairness; it assesses contribution and compliance.

Contribution is sufficient

Under Australian workers compensation legislation, the test is not causation but whether employment is a substantial contributing factor to psychological injury. A pre-existing condition, diagnosed or otherwise, may still give rise to liability where workplace interactions, including lawful management action, aggravate that condition. Pre-existing does not equate to non-compensable.

A limited defence

Employers often rely on the defence of "reasonable management action carried out in a reasonable manner;" however, it is not absolute. For the defence to apply, both the action and its execution must be reasonable. Claims are commonly accepted where communication is poorly managed, procedural fairness is lacking or escalation occurs without appropriate support. The issue is not the decision itself, but how it was implemented.

The core risk

The primary risk to the workplace is not the worker's pre-existing condition, but the failure to identify and manage psychosocial hazards within the system of work. While employers cannot control what a worker brings into the workplace, they are legally responsible for how the work environment interacts with the individual. Where these factors are not effectively managed, the likelihood of aggravation and liability increases.

Limited protection

There is a misconception that recruitment processes and probationary periods mitigate this risk. They do not.

Workers are not required to disclose all psychosocial conditions and many conditions are episodic or concealed due to stigma. A worker may perform adequately during probation and deteriorate only when exposed to sustained workplace pressures. Once employment is established, the full scope of WHS and workers compensation obligations applies.

Management action as a trigger

Performance management, disciplinary action and operational direction are necessary components of business; however, they may trigger psychological injury where vulnerabilities exist. Risk increases where communication is inconsistent, expectations unclear, processes lack transparency and support is absent. In psychosocial matters, perception carries significant evidentiary weight and a process that is technically correct may still result in a compensable outcome if perceived as unreasonable or harmful.

Proactive risk management

To mitigate exposure, workplaces must adopt a structured and defensible approach by embedding psychosocial risk into the Safety Management System, ensuring consistent processes, early intervention and clear documentation of management actions. If not documented, it cannot be defended.

In summary

Employers may act appropriately and face an accepted claim, where employment is a contributing factor to injury. Risk must be demonstrably managed through identification of psychosocial hazards and reasonably practicable controls to meet duty of care and avoid liability.

For further information contact FOCCALE Safety Management on 0414 686 053, email info@foccale.com or visit www.foccale.com

Faith Eson 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.



Beyond Safety Compliance



Safety Management


**"Your Systems Alone, Don't Protect You.
Your Evidence Does."**

Where compliance ends: defensibility begins.

- **WHS Systems**
- **Safety Training**
- **Safety Audits**
- **Business Portal**

Contact Us

M: 0414 686 053 **www.foccale.com**



New mental health safety inspectors now supporting workers and businesses

The NSW Government is boosting workplace mental health, with additional SafeWork NSW mental health-focussed inspectors now deployed.

The NSW Government is adding 20 psychosocial inspectors as part of 51 additional inspectors overall – SafeWork NSW’s largest ever uplift in inspectors. This move represents an increase of more than 12% to active inspectors.

This boost forms part of the NSW Government’s record investment of \$127.7 million over four years to SafeWork NSW to improve work health and safety outcomes.

The major uplift also forms part of the \$344 million of the NSW Government’s Workplace Mental Health package for strengthening mental health support and injury prevention strategies.

It demonstrates the Minns Labor Government’s commitment to better supporting workers and businesses to understand and prevent psychological harm in modern workplaces.

These new inspectors bring expertise in areas such as psychology, workers compensation, anti-bullying, youth mentoring, and trauma-informed approaches that will be used to prevent and address psychosocial risks in workplaces across NSW.

This expansion to the inspectorate will help prevent workplace hazards before they lead to injury and become workers compensation claims.

SafeWork NSW undertakes hundreds of proactive visits for psychosocial safety each year.

The expanded SafeWork NSW inspectorate sharpens the agency’s nation-leading focus on psychological health at work by:

- Issuing on-the-spot fines and improving compliance and enforcement.



- Responding to psychosocial incidents reported to SafeWork NSW.
- Developing dedicated resources and promoting psychological injury prevention.
- Giving workers and employers a specialised first point of contact for all mental-health related concerns.
- Helping employers meet their return-to-work obligations to injured workers.

The NSW Government is also establishing the Psychosocial Advisory Service, that will provide workers and business owners with tailored advice on managing psychosocial safety at work.

NSW was also the first state to implement a psychosocial specific code of practice that covered all psychosocial hazards and all workplaces. NSW led the country in creating a focus on workplaces to focus on work design to prevent psychosocial hazards from occurring.

SafeWork NSW has a commitment to its regulatory priority of managing psychosocial risks at work, including sexual harassment.

Other common psychosocial hazards include excessive workloads, exposure to traumatic events, bullying and harassment.



**You’re important at work.
At home, you’re irreplaceable.**

Stay safe from harm and harassment in the workplace. This includes preventing physical injuries and unfair treatment like bullying or aggression. Let’s work together to stay safe at work to get home to those who matter most.



SafeWork NSW

Safe at work. There for them.

WHS law feedback summary

Safe Work Australia has published a summary of feedback received during public consultation for the Best Practice Review of the model Work Health and Safety (WHS) laws.

Safe Work Australia received 1055 written responses, of which 118 were written submissions and the rest were survey responses, visited each capital city and 2 regional centres (Bunbury in Western Australia and Geelong in Victoria), and held over 100 meetings – gathering insights from employers, industry associations, unions, regulators, government agencies, academics, WHS professionals, community organisations, individuals, and families affected by workplace fatalities and serious injuries.

The consultation summary published today outlines key themes and issues raised through submissions, surveys and meetings.

Key messages:

- Strong ongoing support for the model WHS laws and the goal of national harmonisation - but growing concern about jurisdictional variations
- Differences in compliance and enforcement are undermining harmonisation and creating complexity
- Unions want to improve worker consultation, representation and participation rights
- Businesses want WHS laws that are simple to understand and industry based
- There needs to be a greater focus on emerging risks, including digital work, artificial intelligence and climate-related hazards.

The feedback provided will inform the final report to WHS ministers, which will be provided for consideration in August 2026.

You can view the summary at www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/best-practice-review-consultation-summary

SafeWork NSW releases first half-yearly update

SafeWork NSW has published its first set of reporting requirements since commencing operation as a standalone regulator on 1 July last year.

Under recent law reforms, the SafeWork Commissioner is required to publish the report every six months. This first report covers the period between 1 July 2025 and 31 December 2025.

It shows SafeWork NSW completed 79 investigations and made an enforcement decision on matters arising from workplace fatalities, serious injuries or illnesses and dangerous incidents within the six months. Of those, 52 matters progressed to prosecution.

As at 31 December 2025, there were 168 active investigations.

The report details the 7,570 requests for service received by SafeWork NSW during the reporting period relating to work health and safety concerns.

The construction industry contributed the highest number of requests for service at 3,120, representing 41 per cent of all requests.

There were 1,476 requests for service related to psychosocial harms.

These bi-annual reports provide an evidence-based view of work health and safety in the State and will drive continuous improvement, accountability and transparency.

The full report can be read at www.safework.nsw.gov.au/about-us/statutory-reporting.

SafeWork Commissioner Janet Schorer said “This report is an important part of SafeWork NSW’s commitment to being a strong, robust and fit-for-purpose regulator capable of effectively securing safer and healthier workplaces in New South Wales.”

“The report strengthens public confidence about SafeWork NSW’s integrity, independence and effectiveness.

“SafeWork NSW is committed to transparent reporting, improving complaints handling and strong engagement with workers, industry, unions and stakeholders.”



New resources to help manage risk of gender-based violence in construction

Safe Work Australia has released a new set of resources to help employers identify, assess and manage the risks of gender-based violence in the construction industry. The resources include practical case studies, posters and infographics designed for use on construction worksites.

Gender-based violence is behaviour that humiliates, intimidates or threatens a person because of their sex, gender, sexual orientation or because they don’t conform to gender stereotypes. It includes physical violence, as well as sexual harassment, verbal abuse, bullying, and offensive languages and behaviours.

Gender-based violence is a mental health (psychosocial) hazard that can occur in any workplace. However, certain workplace factors can increase the risk of it occurring if they are not effectively managed. In construction, these factors can include workforce characteristics such as a male-dominated, young or transient workforce, work design such as high job demands, and organisational or environmental factors such as low job support or isolated work environments.

The new resources were developed by Safe Work Australia in collaboration with construction industry stakeholders to ensure they reflect specific WHS challenges experienced by women in the construction industry. They are designed to raise awareness of what gender-based violence can look like on construction sites, the impact of these harmful behaviours, and what employers must do to prevent them.

Hunter Safety Awards finalists announced

The finalists for the 2026 Hunter Safety Awards have been announced. The winners will be announced at a gala ceremony to be held at The Nex in Newcastle on 9 May 2026.

This night will be a celebration of excellence, innovation, and dedication to WHS, featuring an awards ceremony, networking opportunities, and an evening of entertainment.

This year’s finalists include:

- **Large Organisations** - Acciona, Ampcontrol, ARTC, Asplundh, Avetta, Centennial Coal, City of Newcastle, CMA Contracting, Coal LSL, Morgan Engineering, NCI, PLUS ES, Port of Newcastle, University of Newcastle
- **Small & Medium-Sized Enterprises** - Applied Ultrasonics International, Body and Mind 2000 - Christine Atkins, Carter Heavy Haulage & Transport, Enviroculture, GCG, Howsafe, Hunter Valley Coal Chain Coordinator, Machinemonitor, Quarry Mining, Red Insight, SafeGauge, Swietelsky Rail Australia
- **Best Training Course** - John Holland- Rail Services NSW/ACT/QLD, Key Consultation, Machinemonitor, Neon Shed, University of Newcastle
- **WHS Champion of the Year** - Brendan Boyd, Daryl Marshall, Jemma Murphy, Kathy Clarkson, Mathew Pfeifer, Nikhita Kale, Rebecca Lehmann
- **WHS Rising Star Award** - Chelsea Wood, Jemma Walters, Katelin O’Hara, Mohamed Mohamed
- **Young WHS Leader of the Year** - Kimlarney Park, Russel Driver

Psychosocial hazards in the workplace

Work Health & Safety regulations are no longer just focussed on physical risks. Workplaces must also address the psychosocial or mental health hazards to ensure a safe work environment for their employees.

Employers have a legal responsibility to manage hazards and risks in the workplace, and mental health is an important part of work health and safety.

Psychosocial hazards at work may relate to the work environment, the design or management of work, plant or equipment at work, or workplace interactions and behaviours. These hazards may cause stress or physical or psychological harm.

According to SafeWork NSW, some common psychosocial hazards include:

- Role overload or underload
- Exposure to traumatic events
- Remote or isolated work
- Harassment, including sexual harassment.

Changes included in the Work Health and Safety Amendment Regulation 2022 require the management of psychosocial risks in the workplace. The Regulation defines 'psychosocial hazard' and 'psychosocial risk' and clarifies the measures that businesses are required to manage those risks.

SafeWork NSW has developed a Code of Practice to identify and manage psychosocial risks as businesses must implement measures that are reasonably practicable to remove or minimise these risks. Regular training for all employees on psychosocial hazards such as bullying and harassment is a way to prove that reasonable steps have been taken. While no specific timeframes for training are included in the legislation, best practice is to provide bullying and harassment training for all new employees during induction then annual refreshers to reinforce policies. Workplaces can also supply training when new policies are introduced or there is an incident or formal complaint.

Hunterlink is an Employee Assistance Provider and experienced in workplace training around psychosocial hazards. Hunterlink can work with organisations to provide training for business owners, management and workers on a range of topics including stress management, effective communication in the workplace, mental health awareness and many more. The mental health and wellbeing training packages are designed to strengthen the working relationships among staff, build resilience and improve productivity. A reduction in psychosocial hazards in the workplace and increased awareness on mental health leads to happier, healthier and more efficient employees.

If you or your colleagues are facing any sort of psychosocial risks, Hunterlink also has a range of employee resources available on its website, detailing steps that can be taken to address your concerns. Whether that involves bullying and harassment, workplace stress or other issues, there is advice at hand.

“Businesses must implement measures that are reasonably practicable to remove or minimise psychosocial risks”



Hunterlink delivers:

- 24/7 confidential counselling via phone, video, email and WhatsApp.
- Mental Health First Aid and wellbeing training to build resilience in teams.
- Critical incident onsite support when workplaces need immediate care.
- Specialist management and organisational consultancy to address psychosocial risks.

Hunterlink works across industries from maritime and mining to retail, hospitality, and community services. Its not-for-profit status means the focus is where it matters most — protecting your people from psychosocial hazards and strengthening your organisation as part of a comprehensive workplace health and safety initiative.

Hunterlink is your link to local, confidential mental health support and training services.

- ✓ 24/7 Helpline and Counselling
- ✓ Mental Health and Wellbeing Training
- ✓ Critical Incident Support
- ✓ Management & Organisational Consultancy
- ✓ Psychosocial Awareness Sessions
- ✓ Career Support
- ✓ Managed Phonelines

1800 554 654 (Toll Free)
+ 61 439 382 204 (WhatsApp)
+ 61 (0) 2 4929 6625 (Head Office)
enquiry@hunterlink.org.au

[HunterlinkEAP](https://www.hunterlink.org.au)
www.hunterlink.org.au



business services

BORRELLI-QUIRK NEWCASTLE REAL ESTATE NEWCASTLE - HUNTER TOURISM & ACCOMMODATION

- Leading suppliers of quality, fully furnished and self contained accommodation for short or long stays in and around Newcastle.
- Beachfront, harbourfront, suburbs, 1 to 4 bedroom apartments and homes. Cleaning service available.
- A cost effective, more flexible and comfortable alternative for visitors and business colleagues.
- A phone call or email is all it takes to match your requirements promptly.



P: 49615566 E: joanne@bqnre.com.au W: bqnre.com.au 1/91 Hannell Street, Wickham @ NCYC

ENGINEERING CONTRACTS MEDIATION

- Expert Determination and Mediation
- Secure online mediation option
- Economical and prompt dispute resolution
- Engineering, construction and commercial disputes



bruce@basacon.com.au www.ecmediation.com.au 0425 358 897

ADAMSTOWN CLEANING SERVICE

- Strata Cleaning Services
- Medical Centre Cleaning
- Commercial Office Cleaning
- Over 25 years experience in Newcastle & Lake Macquarie



P: (02) 49610145 E: john@adamstowncleaning.com.au

THE MOBILE SHREDDING COMPANY

- Security bins and one-off shredding
- Totally secure in-truck on-site shredding
- NAID AAA Certified
- Locally owned and operated
- Servicing Newcastle, Hunter Valley, Port Stephens & Central Coast



Phone: 4957 9903 www.mobiles shredding.com.au

"SECURE DESTRUCTION - GUARANTEED"

Really pleased to get a full tank of petrol for \$50 today.
It was for the lawnmower, but I'm trying to stay positive.

A woman was found guilty in court of a traffic violation, and when asked for her occupation, she said she was a school teacher.
The judge rose from the bench and said, "Ma'am, I have waited years for a school teacher to appear before this court."

"Why is that, Your Honour?" asked the teacher.

The judge smiled with delight and said, "I'm going to need you to sit down at that table and write 'I will not run a red light' 500 times."

Just before Grandpa died, they put him in a wheelchair.
After that, he went downhill pretty fast.

A wedding photographer was tragically crushed by a 100 kg wheel of cheese that fell off the catering truck.
The guests all tried to warn him but he just took their photo.

The waiter asked, "Sir, how do you like your steak?"
Husband explained, "Like winning an argument with my wife."
The waiter replied, "Rare it is."

"Can people predict the future with cards?" Jessica asked Danny.
"My mother can," Danny replied.
"Really?"
"Yes," Danny told her, "she takes one look at my report card and can tell me exactly what will happen when my Dad gets home."

"Hey Grandpa!, can you make a noise like a frog?"
"I think I can do that. Why?"
"Cuz Dad says when you croak, we're going to Disneyworld"

My Tinder bio says that I have a corner office with views of the entire city, drive a \$500,000 vehicle, and that I'm paid to travel.
My dates never seem too happy when I tell them I'm a bus driver.

My wife texted me this morning and said, "Your great."
I replied, "No, you're great."
She's been in a great mood ever since. I should correct her grammar more often.

A computer programmer is overweight, so his doctor puts him on a diet.

"I want you to eat regularly for two days, then skip a day, and repeat that for two weeks," said the doctor. "The next time I see you, you'll have lost at least 3 kg."

When the guy returns, he's lost nearly 10 kg.

"Wow, that's amazing!" the doctor says. "Did you follow my instructions?"

The guy nods. "I'll tell you, I thought I was going to drop dead that third day."

"From hunger, you mean?" said the doctor.

"No, from skipping," replied the guy.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Safety doesn't happen by accident." - Jerry Smith



At NCP, we provide a comprehensive suite of print and related services including:

- Award-winning Offset Printing
- Digital Printing
- Graphic Design
- Packaging
- Celloglazing and Coating
- Prepress Services
- Embossing and Foiling
- Die-cutting and Carton Making
- Wide Format
- Print Management
- On-line Ordering
- Transactional Mail/Intelligent Mailing
- Variable Data Printing
- Warehousing and Distribution
- Kitting and Packing
- Inventory Management
- PUR Binding

NEWCASTLE OFFICE

14 Channel Road, Steel River Industrial Estate, Mayfield West NSW 2304
P 02 4926 1300 E sales@ncp.com.au
ncp.com.au

SYDNEY OFFICE

8-10 Frank Street, Wetherill Park NSW 2164
P 02 9757 3000 E sales@brightprintgroup.com.au
brightprintgroup.com.au



NCP is a division of the Bright Print Group.

Forged by purpose

The agility of the Royal Australian Air Force ensures Australia's security in an unpredictable world.

In partnership with the RAAF, BAE Systems Australia supports our nation's sovereign defence capability.

Here in the Hunter Region, we sustain the backbone of Australia's fast jet combat and training fleet, ensuring the F-35A Lightning II and Hawk 127 Lead-In Fighter are always mission ready.

Together with the Commonwealth and local industry, we're proud to continuously meet the operational needs of the RAAF and support the delivery of air power as part of an integrated and focused force.

