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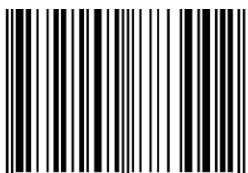
Environmental Sustainability



2024/25 HUNTER BUSINESS FUNCTION GUIDE

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2024-25 Hunter Business Function Guide

See this year's function guide between pages 20 and 21 of this issue



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From the Editor



The 2024 Small Business Conditions Survey released by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in July came up with some worrying findings, including that 45% of small business owners have considered closing or leaving in the past 12 months, 82% said red tape is having a major or moderate impact on their business, 50% said they were spending more time on red tape than 12 months ago and 40% said

they will make a reduced or a significantly reduced profit in the 2024 financial year compared to the previous year. They reported increasing input costs as the greatest pressure, followed by skills and labour shortages.

Australia's 2.5 million small businesses are a vital component of the economy, employing around 5.2 million people. This is over 40% of the total workforce and more than large businesses or the public sector.

They contribute around one third of GDP. It is also a major source of innovation for the nation and by their nature can react quickly to changing conditions or new opportunities.

Small business is a great trainer, employing many of the nation's apprentices and trainees. It is also a breeding ground for future large businesses and business leaders.

Unfortunately, small business owners often feel neglected and that their needs are not heard. They also don't have the resources to highlight their needs to legislators and through traditional and online media.

With uncertain local and global conditions, government needs to be responsive to small business needs and ensure the backbone of the Australian economy remains strong.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind local businesses that we are happy to receive article submissions for consideration for inclusion in a future issue of HBR.

Perhaps your business has expanded, had a new senior appointment, relocated, gained a major new contract or have some other news that would be of interest to HBR readers.

In recent months we have also commenced a regular Business Anniversaries section to help celebrate these important milestones. We cannot cover every anniversary so are looking at multiple of 5 years (5, 10, 15 etc).

All submissions are subject to editorial in terms of their inclusion and the form published articles take, but we do try to include as many as possible.

Feel free to email me directly at garry@HBRmag.com.au
We would love to hear from you.

Garry Hardie
Publisher and Editor

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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.

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University appoints contractor for major refurbishment at Callaghan Campus

The University of Newcastle has taken a major step forward in the transformation of the Health and Physical Education (HPE) building at Callaghan Campus, with the appointment of Graphite Projects as the main works contractor.

The six-million-dollar refurbishment funded by the University will feature upgraded offices, research facilities and teaching spaces, delivering a state-of-the-art facility with strength and conditioning laboratories conveniently located in the nearby High-Performance Gym at the forum.

Artist impression of the entry to the Exercise Sport Science Buildings southern façade.



The University of Newcastle Director of Infrastructure and Facilities, Kevin McCarthy said the project will provide current and future students with access to a cutting-edge program experience and facilities to build their skills and capabilities before entering the workforce.

“This project will enhance our world-class sporting infrastructure at Callaghan campus and expand our industry network across the Hunter and Central Coast,” Mr McCarthy said.

“We know there is continued demand for our exercise & sport science programs and creating more contemporary facilities will help maintain our national and international competitiveness.”

“Investing in our infrastructure is a strategic decision, made through careful planning to provide modern facilities for our University community,” Mr McCarthy said.

“This refurbishment will help to streamline teaching and research activities in exercise physiology and exercise & sport science so we can continue providing an outstanding student experience.”

dwp.design rebrands to ARCHdwp

dwp.design has rebranded and is now known as ARCHdwp.

While maintaining their commitment to excellence, this rebranding signifies their evolution and growth as a company, bringing new opportunities and benefits for all of us.

ARCHdwp officially launched the new name on 30 July at the ARCHdwp Assembly 2024, held at their award-winning project, The Granville Centre.

This rebranding does not alter their legal entity, which remains dwp Australia Pty Ltd.

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Boosting Hunter workforce with high-quality vocational training

NSW Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education, Steve Whan has visited the WesTrac Institute, a leading training provider offering comprehensive trade and post-trade training to support the construction and mining industries.

Funded under the NSW Smart and Skilled program, the collaboration between the NSW Government and WesTrac Institute is benefiting hundreds of apprentices and trainees in the Hunter region.

The collaboration underscores the NSW Government's steadfast dedication to revitalising and empowering regional communities – the powerhouses of our state.

At WesTrac Institute, up to 300 students annually hone their skills within state-of-the-art facilities, boasting 14 classrooms, two laboratories, and a spacious five-bay workshop. Currently, the Institute hosts 99 WesTrac apprentices, 59 post-trade students, and over 140 external students and customers.

Offering qualifications such as Certificate III in Automotive Electrical Technology, and Certificate III in Mobile Plant Technology, alongside specialised courses such as Certificate II in Automotive Air Conditioning, the Institute plays a pivotal role in upskilling the workforce.

In addition, it can cater for up to 4,000 students annually in post-trade courses, ensuring continuous upskilling of the workforce.

Since its inception in 2012, WesTrac Institute has invested in vocational education, achieving a high completion rate amongst its apprentices – a testament to its unwavering commitment to excellence and fostering a resilient, skilled workforce crucial for regional prosperity.

City of Newcastle strengthens ties with three of its neighbours

City of Newcastle will take on greater leadership in NSW through new accords with Upper Hunter, Muswellbrook and City of Coffs Harbour councils.

Newcastle has entered memoranda of understanding (MoU) with two of our Hunter neighbours, as well as fellow regional coastal council Coffs Harbour.

Newcastle Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes said the four councils will gain valuable expertise and a stronger collective voice from each MoU.

"We're in a unique position to both be a leader in the local government sector and to learn from the successes of other councils," Cr Nelmes said.

"As a financially sound and well-resourced council, we have plenty of success stories that are worth sharing and I look forward to exploring new opportunities through closer ties with our neighbours.

"Newcastle, Coffs Harbour, Muswellbrook and the Upper Hunter are each vital parts of our state, and we're stronger, smarter and better off when we collaborate."

City of Newcastle Acting CEO David Clarke said the accords would pool the knowledge of each council in many areas of expertise.

"We're exploring opportunities to share insights and capabilities, as well as the potential for staff exchange program with our MoU partners, which is a golden way to share the rich expertise of each council and just one of the many benefits of these agreements," Mr Clarke said.

"We've already applied for grants in partnership with some of the councils to fund projects together and had had success working with the NSW Government. City of Newcastle's CEO Jeremy Bath has worked hard on this and deserves a lot of credit."

As part of the MoU, City of Newcastle's planning team has already met with their Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter counterparts to outline Newcastle's award-winning Accelerated Development Assessment program.

City of Newcastle has applied for grant funding to roll out Accelerated Development Assessment - its streamlined determination tool for low-impact developments - to its three



Newcastle Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes, Upper Hunter Shire Mayor Maurice Collison and Muswellbrook Shire Mayor Steve Reynolds at a recent meeting of the Hunter Joint Organisation.

new MoU partners over the next 12 months.

In the past year, Newcastle and Coffs Harbour have worked together on a range of submissions to the NSW and federal governments on issues that affect both large coastal councils.

Coffs Harbour Mayor Paul Amos said the coastal council areas' similarities made them logical partners.

"This is a tremendous opportunity for Coffs Harbour to work closely with Newcastle on all manner of things, and the MoU will be of particular advantage in areas where challenges are common to both councils," Cr Amos said.

"It makes every sense for Coffs and Newcastle to align as two major regional, coastal cities – each with ambition for continual improvement.

"While the MoU is non-binding on either council for any actions, it paves the way for a mutually beneficial partnership."

Muswellbrook Shire Mayor Steve Reynolds said his council saw its Newcastle MoU as mutually beneficial.

"We look forward to working with the City of Newcastle and exploring opportunities for joint advocacy and funding prospects to benefit the region and enhance our capability," Cr Reynolds said.

"Improved efficiencies and learnings will support better outcomes across the board."

Upper Hunter Shire Mayor Maurice Collison said his council's new accord would bring a suite of benefits.

"By collaborating across boundaries, we can share valuable knowledge and resources, leading to enhanced service delivery and sustainable regional growth," Cr Collison said.

"This MoU represents our commitment to working together for the economic and social prosperity of our communities. Our combined efforts will ensure that we are better equipped to address the complex issues facing local government."

Whiteley opens new medical export opportunities to North America

Whiteley Corporation recently obtained Medical Device Single Audit Program (MDSAP) certification that will allow it to directly export Medical Devices into both the USA and Canada.

Whiteley's products are now certified to leave from their manufacturing location of Tomago directly to the US and Canadian Healthcare markets. This will allow Whiteley to expand and grow Hunter-made products globally, while still providing demand nationally.

Darran Leyden, Whiteley Managing Director stated "Whiteley have been licensing our Medical technology to other companies in North America for decades. This new Quality Certification allows us to directly supply into the US and Canadian Healthcare markets straight out of the Hunter which is an exciting growth step for our company."

MDSAP is a program that was established by a group of individual countries medical regulators who aimed to streamline the requirements for getting Quality Management System certifications for international companies. The single audit has two primary objectives - avoid duplication of regulatory resources across multiple countries and minimize disruptions of medical device manufacturers from multiple regulatory audits.

Darran Leyden added "This has been a huge effort from our Regulatory Team and our staff across the board and further strengthens our Quality System so customers can be certain our products comply with regulatory standards in multiple countries."

City of Newcastle has State’s most popular libraries

City of Newcastle Libraries are the best in NSW according to the State Library of NSW, out-performing library services across the state with loans of more than 1.5 million items annually.

The result puts Newcastle's libraries in first place on the annual statewide list, with Newcastle residents borrowing almost four times more than the NSW average. Newcastle Libraries smashed State averages across a range of categories, receiving more than double the number of visits, and running twice as many events and programs for twice as many attendees.

The statistics were compiled by the State Library of NSW for the 2022-23 financial year.

Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes said Newcastle Libraries are achieving excellent results across the board.

"Newcastle Libraries provide a great value, much-loved, convenient service that consistently out-performs other public libraries across NSW," Cr Nelmes said.

"With long opening hours and plenty of branches, we make it easy for our customers to visit their library when and where it suits them."

Newcastle Libraries hold the largest collection in the state, with almost a million items ranging from books, artworks and subdivision maps to countless treasures that tell the stories and history of Newcastle and the Hunter Region.

"Our libraries play a pivotal role in the local community and with more than 130,000 library members across Newcastle, we know our community values them," Cr Nelmes said.

"That's why we've invested close to \$7 million into our library facilities over five years of capital works programs, including almost \$1 million in the 2023/24 Budget to enhance and upgrade these popular community facilities and ensure the extensive collection remains up to date.

"This continued significant investment in our library



Cr Deahhna Richardson, City of Newcastle Director of Museum Archive, Libraries and Learning Julie Baird, Newcastle Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes and regular library user Benta Okumu enjoying the children's corner at Wallsend Library with Gene and Taron Walker, Harry Ballantyne and Lamara Opiyo.

infrastructure will ensure the much-loved facilities meet members' expectations and changing needs now and into the future."

City of Newcastle Director of Museum Archive, Libraries and Learning Julie Baird said Newcastle libraries are more than just buildings that holds books.

"City of Newcastle's libraries are a vibrant hub for borrowers, visitors and event attendees," Ms Baird said.

"Our libraries ran almost 1900 events and programs during the 12-month period, fostering rich cultural, social and educational opportunities for almost 30,000 incredibly engaged visitors.

"This includes everything from linguistically diverse storytime sessions for babies and toddlers, to author talks, touring and locally curated exhibitions, and sustainability initiatives such as the Repair Café.

"We also run programs to support people in our community living with dementia, encourage lifelong learning, and deliver events and activities for both Youth Week and the NSW Seniors Festival.

"This is in addition to the commitment and dedication our hard-working staff extend to other core service areas, with every Newcastle Library staff member loaning out approximately 20,000 items per year, or 36% more than the State average."

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Business superstars shine at Excellence Awards

Lake Macquarie Mayor Kay Fraser and Council CEO Morven Cameron with the Dynamic Business Technologies team

On 6 August innovative IT solutions company Dynamic Business Technologies has taken out the top prize at this year's Lake Macquarie Business Excellence Awards.

The gala presentation at Belmont 16s proved a stellar occasion for the Warners Bay-based enterprise, which also took out the Employer of Choice (20 or less employees) category, while founder Nathan Franks won the Outstanding Business Leader award for a business with fewer than 20 employees.

Lake Macquarie Mayor Kay Fraser said DBT had developed a culture of innovation and inclusivity since its launch 18 years ago.

"Nathan's dedication to his staff, his mentorship and the community involvement of his company demonstrate this company's outstanding contributions to the IT industry and beyond," she said.

Dynamic Business Technologies Managing Director Nathan Franks said "We work hard to maintain and strengthen our culture. A culture that has a place for everyone, with support for individuals to thrive no matter their personal situation. When our employees succeed, so does DBT."

CoastXP, which launched a new Lake Macquarie-based sightseeing and whalewatching vessel earlier this year, won the Outstanding Visitor Experience award, narrowly beating Matt Hall Racing's aerobatic thrill-rides.

Acclaimed waterfront restaurant 8 at Trinity won the Excellence in Large Business award and the coveted Origin Energy People's Choice Award, decided by a public online vote.

Cr Fraser said the 350-seat venue "redefines the benchmark of how Lake Mac can develop world-class hospitality landmarks".

"The ongoing transformation of that site is a sign of the changing times in our city, and marks a positive shift away from fossil fuel-based industries towards a much more diverse workforce," she said.

The Car 2 Home Project, which provides a safe place for people experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping in cars, won the Outstanding Community Organisation category.

The charity also provides access to toilets, showers and kitchen and laundry facilities to help support people in need.

Charlestown-based business definiti was the proud winner of the Excellence in Innovation award.

Chief Executive Officer Brad Woollett said "definiti is honoured to receive the Excellence in Innovation Award. We are a People First organisation whose passion is to help organisations significantly improve their productivity through the adoption of Intelligent Process Automation and Ai."

Cr Fraser said the awards recognised the tireless efforts and shared vision for success across thousands of businesses in Lake Mac.

"All our finalists and winners have played a vital role in that success story, and it is their hard work and dedication that help make Lake Macquarie a place where businesses can invest, grow and thrive," she said.

This year's awards were sponsored by Dantia, Origin Energy, Newcastle Herald, Charlestown Square, Lake Group Strata, NGM Group, Umwelt, University of Newcastle, Atune, Hunter Water, Lake Mac Holiday Parks and Ramsay Health Care.

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The winners at the Lake Macquarie Business Excellence Awards

2024 Lake Macquarie Business Excellence Awards winners

Employer of Choice - 20 or less employees
Dynamic Business Technologies

Employer of Choice - 21 or more employees
Lake Group Strata

Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion
Flying Colours Education

Excellence in Innovation
definiti

Excellence in Large Business
8 at Trinity

Excellence in Micro Business
Andersen Pest Services

Excellence in Small Business
Design Anthology

Excellence in Sustainability
Aware...the social design project

Outstanding Business Leader - 20 or less employees
Nathan Franks - Dynamic Business Technologies

Outstanding Business Leader - 21 or more employees
Melanie Bird - Lake Group Strata

Outstanding Community Organisation
Car 2 Home Project

Outstanding Employee
Alexander McCallum - Lakes Custom Computers

Outstanding New Business
Telethrive

Outstanding Visitor Experience
CoastXP

Outstanding Young Business Leader
Jye Rimmington - Rimmington Legal

Business of the Year
Dynamic Business Technologies

People's Choice
8 at Trinity

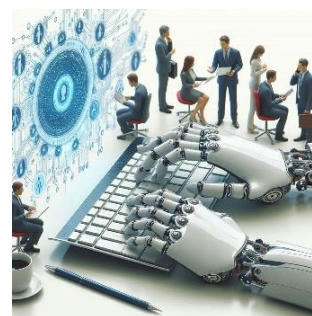
"All our finalists and winners have played a vital role in that success story, and it is their hard work and dedication that help make Lake Macquarie a place where businesses can invest, grow and thrive".

Lake Macquarie Mayor Kay Fraser



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If you would like to know more contact Brad Woollett 0408 687 662, brad.woollett@definiti.com.au

Increasing job-readiness in the IT industry for Hunter based TAFE NSW students

Preparing students with job-readiness skills can be difficult without hands-on experience, and is something Newcastle-based IT company, Strategic Group is aiming to change.

Strategic Group recently joined forces with Hunter TAFE Foundation to create the Strategic Group Scholarship for two students studying a Diploma of Information Technology at a TAFE NSW campus in Newcastle, Maitland or Glendale.

The scholarship provided work placement for the two students within Strategic Group, where they got the opportunity to gain real-life industry experience while studying. What makes this collaboration different is that Strategic Group also committed to paying the students for their time worked on site.

Strategic Group CEO Chris Boswell, said the scholarship was an important development for their team, and a way to give back to the community.

"As a company dedicated to innovation and progress, we wanted to help young people studying IT gain exposure to the industry and readiness for the workforce," Chris said.

Without on-the-job experience, it has been found to be difficult for students to enter the full-time industry and grow their skills to make them an attractive candidate to employers. The purpose of the scholarship was to help the students understand what it was like to work directly for an IT company, develop soft skills and make connections with people in the industry to benefit their future.

One of the scholarships is also specifically for female students enrolled in the course, to help increase female participation in

the IT industry. According to the ABS, women only make up 29% of the IT workforce, and only 33% of students enrolled in tertiary education are women.

In 2024, the cohort presented to Strategic Group as potential candidates were extremely impressive, so much so the team chose to take on three students in one semester.

The students were a welcome addition to the Strategic Group team where they got to try their hand at managing the Help Desk enquiries, joining client meetings and getting to know the ins and outs of the industry. Through the placement, one of the students from 2023, Jeremy Grant has since been offered a full-time position at Strategic Group.

"Working one day a week while studying was very manageable and a great way to put skills I was learning through my course at TAFE NSW into practice," Jeremy said.

"The studies through TAFE NSW have prepared me well for working in the industry. The work placement has provided a valuable opportunity to extend my learning and gain more hands-on experience, which complemented the technical learning and really cemented the concepts taught by my teachers, who have experience in the industry themselves."

Chris went on to say the scholarship has been mutually beneficial.

"This program not only benefits Strategic Group by allowing us to offer employment to promising candidates, but also enables our own staff members to step up as mentors, helping the students while developing their own leadership skills," Chris concluded.

Strategic Group and Hunter TAFE Foundation are aiming to continue the scholarship for future years, with a goal to continue increasing job-readiness skills for students and encourage female participation in the IT industry.



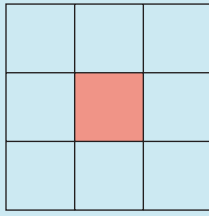
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HMA tells the world

As Hunter Manufacturing Awards (HMA) celebrates 20 years of acknowledging excellence in the sector, it is initiating significant partnerships to broaden its reach and impact.

HMA has teamed with Industry Update magazine to ensure national coverage for stories about its finalists and winners. In collaboration with partner Newy Tech People, HMA has also launched an engineering and manufacturing-themed podcast, sharing the back stories of HMA winners and showcasing their talent and innovation. Additionally, HMA is working towards supporting a national awards program, with its winners automatically qualifying as finalists.

HMA chair Jacqui Daley, the founder and managing director of The Measured Marketer, highlights the importance of sharing these stories on a national stage to enhance "Brand Hunter".

"In showcasing the outstanding achievements of HMA winners and finalists to a broader audience, our new initiatives reinforce the region's reputation for excellence," Ms Daley says.

"This visibility is vital as we navigate the evolving landscape of manufacturing, energy, and defence industries."

Bob Cowan kicked off his business manufacturing lifesaving recompression and hyperbaric chambers in 1973. He sold Cowan Manufacturing in 2018 to James Fisher Defence, the leading global subsea operations and engineering company.

"Who would have thought a little sheet-metal company at Warners Bay would invent something the United States Navy is still purchasing? That's mind-blowing for me," Mr Cowan says.

"I got to a point where I had achieved everything I was after." One of those achievements was establishing the HMA in 2004.

"Because I worked so hard in manufacturing to get my own company off the ground, I thought it was important to give something back," he says. "I thought the Hunter had a lot to offer, but no one knows if you don't tell them."

Forward 20 years, incumbent chair Ms Daley says her background as a marketer enables a "big-picture" approach to building that awareness.

"Manufacturers are often not great at telling their stories or showcasing their expertise to the world," she says. "I stepped into the role to bring that perspective to the mix."

The first female chair of the board, Ms Daley represents a shift towards greater diversity within the industry and its representative bodies.

"We are witnessing a transformation in the sector," Ms Daley says. "It's not just about recognising that the industry has been traditionally male-dominated but the manufacturing has also shifted from relatively "heavy" industry to a lot more sectors including health, food and beverage production, technology and more. There is now a diversity in the region and on the HMA board, and we see that in the award applications coming through."

"We have really tried to open up the HMA to be more representative of manufacturing across the board. So, whether it's the amazing ladies behind Hey Zomi who won last year for their reusable menstrual disk, to those dominating in the mining space. There is diversity across the mix ... gin distillers and cheese producers, companies in robotics ... we're recognising all kinds of things being manufactured right here in the Hunter."

HMA's immediate past chair, Steven Smith, Managing Director of Advitech, recalls Bob Cowan inviting him to join the HMA board. Mr Smith, who was chairman of HunterNet in 2002 and 2003 saw the passion within HMA for promoting the successes of manufacturing in the Hunter region.

"I saw a very well organised team with clear objectives," he says. "I just wanted to help maintain the great work that had been done."

He also emphasises the importance of networking opportunities provided by HMA.

"It's rare for people from such a diverse range of industries to come together," he says.

The inaugural HMA winner in 2004 was Varley Group. Current Varley chairman and CEO Jeff Phillips says in ensuring the region

appreciates and celebrates its manufacturing, HMA makes a significant cultural statement.

"One of the challenges we face is the perception that manufacturing only happens overseas," Mr Phillips says.

"HMA helps to demonstrate that significant manufacturing occurs right here in the Hunter. HMA allows us to show what we can do and promote our own worth and value."

Ms Daley says the Hunter is transforming as the nation looks for new solutions to energy and defence commitments. The transformation involves many sectors including agriculture, medtech and technology, but manufacturing sits at the heart of all of those industries.

"If we look at the broader national and global energy transformation, manufacturing is essential," she says.

"And when it rises to meet these challenges, HMA will continue to celebrate and share our region's stories with the world."

HMA encourages all manufacturers in the Upper Hunter, Lower Hunter, Central Coast, Lake Macquarie, Newcastle, Port Stephens, and Mid-North Coast regions to enter the 2024 awards. There are 14 categories available.

For all enquiries, please email info@hma.org.au or phone 0438 242 899.

The registration and nomination period closes on 30 August. Entry is free and manufacturers can find all the information they need at www.hma.org.au.

PKF's State of Origin event raises over \$15,500 for Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service

PKF Sydney and Newcastle has announced that its highly anticipated State of Origin event successfully raised over \$15,500 in support of the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service. The event, held at the Knights Centre of Excellence, attracted 130 enthusiastic guests for an evening of excitement and generosity.

The night was filled with thrilling moments, including a live broadcast of the State of Origin match, an array of raffle and auction prizes, and an opportunity for attendees to come together for a great cause. The funds raised will contribute significantly to the operations of the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service, ensuring it continues to provide life-saving assistance to those in need.

"We are incredibly grateful for the overwhelming support from our guests, sponsors, and the community," said Bob Bell, Managing Director of PKF Sydney and Newcastle.

"The Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service plays a vital role in our region, and it's heartening to see such a strong turnout and generous contributions to help sustain their essential work."

PKF thanks everyone who attended, donated and volunteered to make this event a resounding success. Special thanks go to the Knights Centre of Excellence for providing a superb venue, and to all the contributors who helped make the night memorable.



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New brand helps Hunter Medical Research

Hunter Medical Research Institute (HMRI) has launched a new brand, a key milestone, on its mission to make the Hunter New England community the healthiest on the planet.

Professor Frances Kay-Lambkin, Institute Director and CEO of HMRI explains the significance of the launch "We're implementing an exciting, ambitious and bold new business strategy, positioning HMRI to lead change and support the health and wellbeing of our communities. This new brand helps us on this journey as we confidently reconnect with the one million people across Hunter New England."

HMRI is well known within the local medical and charitable communities, however market research, revealed a huge opportunity to grow brand awareness with more diverse audiences.

"We're so thankful to our amazing supporters who've been with us for 25 years, shaping who we are today. As we aim to expand this support, we conducted research for this project, revealing that there is a significant segment of our community that we have yet to reach. This means they might not know they can participate in our research, partner with us in business, donate to fund local research with global impact, or see how our work is relevant to their daily lives. Our new brand and strategy allow us to connect with and involve more people than ever before," says Kay-Lambkin.

Head of Marketing and Communications, Mike Collins, is buoyed by the opportunities the new brand brings, "HMRI is a brand for people who want to be their most healthy, we want HMRI to be their choice because we turn our world leading research into simple, practical and helpful advice so they can live their best lives."

"We are transforming HMRI's brand strategy from being clinical and complex to becoming approachable, relevant, and demonstrating our dedication to community and collaboration. This transformation is reflected in our new brand identity and position 'We're Taking Healthy Further,'" Collins explains.

The new brand has been developed with collaboration in mind and embodies the values of curiosity, human connection, humility and trailblazing impact in partnership with the University of Newcastle, Hunter New England Local Health District and the Hunter New England Community.

Professor Kay-Lambkin believes this is the secret to HMRI enduring success, "We're working in the lab and beyond. We're thinking long term and we're always listening and learning from our community to help us shape our research priorities, so we can make sure we're providing impact where it's needed most," says Kay-Lambkin.

Mindful of the responsibility and expectations to use funding wisely "HMRI's in-house marketing team created the new logo, colours, fonts, images, and messaging to truly represent what HMRI is and can become for and with our community. This was done within our own marketing budget, as we are mindful of how we spend our precious funding," explains Professor Kay-Lambkin.

The Hunter welcomes \$252 million investment in new local government apprentices

Newcastle Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes and Labor candidate for Mayor of Lake Macquarie, Cr Adam Shultz, have welcomed the NSW Government's \$252 million investment to support more apprentices in local government.

The new program, announced 28 July by Premier Chris Minns, will see 1,300 new apprentices employed by councils across NSW, including in the Hunter.

Electricians, carpenters, mechanics, horticulturalists, and

civil constructions are just some of the apprentices currently employed in councils.

Minister for the Hunter, Yasmin Catley MP said "The NSW Government is committed to create more opportunity for young people in the community they grew up in.

"This \$252 million investment in 1,300 new apprentices will benefit all communities in the Hunter."

Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes welcomed the announcement:

"These extra apprenticeships will give more school leavers a first step into a good career"

"In 2023, Newcastle Labor Councillors doubled the number of apprentices at City of Newcastle. There are now more than 50 apprentices and trainees getting their start in an industry with City of Newcastle.

"I thank Premier Minns, Minister Catley and the NSW Government for working with councils to support our communities. This is a great outcome for Newcastle and for New South Wales."

Labor candidate for Lake Macquarie Mayor Cr Adam Shultz celebrated the announcement:

"I know the value that extra apprenticeships will provide to young people in the Hunter, giving new opportunities for our region, and helping our councils attract and retain the best local talent"

"Local government is one of our state's largest employers. Labor's apprenticeship program will strengthen local government and local communities, and will benefit my community of Lake Macquarie."

City of Newcastle plans multimillion-dollar upgrades to support women's sport

Three Newcastle sports fields will share in more than \$3.3 million worth of upgrades aimed at encouraging increased female participation while also catering for predicted population growth.

Funded by City of Newcastle and the NSW Government's Level the Playing Field Program, the projects will see Tarro Reserve and Johnson Park at Lambton receive new amenities buildings with female friendly change rooms, an accessible toilet, canteen, referees' room and storage.

New LED floodlighting that meets modern standards for training and matches will be installed at Johnson Park and Pat Jordan Oval at Carrington.

Additional improvements to Johnson Park will include drainage, as well as the relocation and replacement of the existing playground.

Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes said the projects are all about planning for the future.

As part of City of Newcastle's 10-year Strategic Sports Plan we want to renew and upgrade existing sportsgrounds to improve their functionality in order to meet the current and future needs of the community," Cr Nelmes said.

"These upgrades will deliver benefits for our communities, and help prepare for the population increases forecast under the new housing targets set by the NSW Government and draft Broadmeadow Place Strategy."

Preliminary work has begun on the project at Lambton, with the upgrade at Carrington expected to start in September.

Construction of the new amenities at Tarro will take place in 2025.

Newcastle City Junior AFL Club President Jon Clarke said the upgrade to Pat Jordan Oval will help to grow the game.

"This will create a safer, more welcoming environment for all of our players, but particularly for women who train at the ground," Mr Clarke said.

"It will facilitate more training sessions and competition opportunities and cater to the growing female participant demand."

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Funding received for design of Thompson St shared pathway

Muswellbrook Shire Council has received \$100,625 from the State Government's Get NSW Active program to design a shared path in Thompson St, Cassidy Ave and Thompson and Kamilaroi St in Muswellbrook.

The Get NSW Active program offers funding for councils to deliver projects that create safe, easy and enjoyable walking and bike riding trips and encourage residents to walk or bike ride as part of their everyday travel.

General manager Derek Finnigan said the program, administered by Transport for NSW, contributes to continuous and connected walking and cycling networks that connect communities to local destinations.

"Ongoing investment in walking and cycling infrastructure is one way Council can create safer connections for residents to access schools, parks and other facilities and help our community stay active. This is an important and welcome initiative to commence detailed planning for a shared pathway at this high priority location," he said.

The shared path will enhance access to the Calvary Retirement Community and to the retail and services centre in Rutherford Rd.

The objective of the Get NSW Active program is to enable more people to safely walk and ride as part of their everyday travel and facilitate children's and young people's independent mobility by improving safe walking and bike riding options for travel to and from school.

"Council wants to provide greater opportunity for walking and cycling as everyday travel options for short trips and to enable all residents to move freely and safely within their communities," Mr Finnigan said.

BUSINESS ANNIVERSARIES

Hunter Wetlands Centre

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Hunter Wetlands Centre, a testament to four decades of dedicated conservation efforts. The Centre's remarkable transformation from rugby fields and dumping grounds to Ramsar-listed wetlands highlights the tireless work of volunteers and the community in preserving this vital ecosystem for future generations. On 15 September, the Centre will host a Spring Festival featuring market and community stalls, workshops, tours, a native plant sale, and various activities for families and kids. Make sure you Save the Date for 27 September as celebrations culminate with a Gala Dinner featuring guest speakers and live music.



Bulbeck Group

This month Bulbeck Group is celebrating 75 years of service to Australia and the South Pacific. Founded in 1949 by Philip D Bulbeck, Bulbeck Group began on King Street, Newcastle, and has grown into a regional leader through innovation and commitment. Their brands—CleanaWater, SpillPro, and Ovesco—play a vital role in supporting local industries. CleanaWater leads in water treatment and odour control, SpillPro provides essential oil spill equipment, and Ovesco supplies industrial fasteners and hardware for transportation and manufacturing. As Bulbeck Group mark this milestone, they honour their legacy and would like to thank their customers and partners for their continued support.



Sprocket Roasters

Sprocket Roasters is celebrating 15 years of producing coffee blends and single origins for wholesale and retail customers. John Winter, Chelsea D'Aoust, and Nick and Ross Ciavarella (two chemical engineers, a viticulturist and a lawyer) moved to Newcastle to establish a biofuels business but a change of government put paid to the plan so they decided to apply their bioenergy technology to coffee roasting. They developed what they believe is the world's first clean air commercial roaster, running on spent coffee grounds and organic material.



**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.**

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SPEAKING UP FOR BUSINESS



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Newcastle insolvency 'trailblazers' celebrate firm's four decades

Back in 1983, two young accountants tired of working for the big players, decided to branch out on their own. The following year, 1984, Jirsch Sutherland was born.

"Founding Jirsch Sutherland gave us an opportunity to specialise in the work we liked. I enjoyed insolvency because I found it more challenging" says co-founder Rod Sutherland.

When the Institute of Chartered Accountants changed the laws around marketing, it led to major growth for Jirsch Sutherland. "That's because I was one of the few people at the time that did marketing," says Rod. "Our marketing efforts helped put Jirsch Sutherland's name "on the map" and we began to receive a lot more work"

Fast forward to 1993 and the firm's first regional office was established in Newcastle. It was also the first specialist reconstruction and insolvency practice in the region. "Rod Sutherland and I were the first dedicated insolvency specialists in town. I think we've been trailblazers in that regard," says Jirsch Sutherland Partner Lloyd Kerr, who established the office. "I had already been getting some work in the region and my wife and I jumped at the opportunity to become part of the local community."

Over the decades, Jirsch Sutherland has helped many Hunter Region businesses turn-around, grow and recalibrate. "We have been providing our services across myriad industries with tailored business rescue and insolvency solutions together with individuals with personal insolvency solutions," says Lloyd.

National Managing Partner Bradd Morelli, who's a born-and-bred Novocastrian, says, "I'm very proud of our small, dedicated

"Founding Jirsch Sutherland gave us an opportunity to specialise in the work we liked. I enjoyed insolvency because I found it more challenging"

Co-founder Rod Sutherland

and experienced team: my fellow Partners Stewart Free and Emma Mos, along with our superb Principal, Tina Battye."

Jirsch Sutherland's experienced specialists provide strategies for:

- formal restructuring processes including Small Business Restructuring (SBR) plans, Voluntary Administration, and Deeds of Company Arrangement (DOCAs).
- informal 'work out' solutions (allowing a company to renegotiate the terms of trade with their creditors).
- personal insolvency solutions including bankruptcy and Personal Insolvency Agreements.
- consulting services tailored to improve a business' operations and profitability.

Should you be experiencing financial distress, contact the Newcastle team for an obligation free consultation: phone (02) 4965 6500 or email enquiries@jirschsutherland.com.au





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Newcastle Office Interiors

For refurbishment and fit out

Known nationally as

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10 YEARS... Wow!!! *They say time flies when you are enjoying yourself and enjoy ourselves we certainly have!*

Some 10 years ago I incorporated Newcastle Office Interiors (NOI) to be a simple "lifestyle company." One which would give me the freedom to find that work / life balance so ubiquitously referred to in business circles. The idea was to undertake 3-4 projects a year, giving them my undivided focus, and in the weeks or months in between, I would spend my time with family enjoying all that Australia has to offer.

Before my first year was out it became apparent that the local market was very welcoming of a full turnkey solution to the fit-out and refurbishment of commercial spaces. The offer of incorporating the provision (or reconfiguration) of all internal mechanical and electrical services, all internal building works, and continuing through to the furniture and fittings as a one-stop-shop was embraced by our clients. With their buying into the vision of handing an interior office fit out to one company to manage throughout brought comfort, so from there Newcastle Office Furniture (NOF), our furniture division was born. With both our construction and furniture entities working under the NOI umbrella, our sales, along with our market share, and inevitably our team grows without falter, year on year, not only in Newcastle and the Hunter but we now operate across most Australian States. Our use of modern-day systems and IT, whilst conversely embracing the old school approach of personalised customer care and attention is what we believe creates our winning formula.

Culture is a widely used buzz word now but has always been paramount in NOI and we all strive as a team to ensure that not only is a career with NOI successful and fulfilling, but also an enjoyable experience. A warm, friendly environment is a healthy working environment for all involved and this outlook has been pivotal in building our team. I would like to recognise each and every team member for following the morals, goals and ethos on which NOI has been built, as without their personal investment into those, NOI would not successfully provide either the service or work environment that we do, so from me, a huge heartfelt thank you.

"Our use of modern-day systems and IT, whilst conversely embracing the old school approach of personalised customer care and attention is what we believe creates our winning formula".

No business can survive without sales or clients. We incorporate a "we will lose money before we will lose a client" approach and we believe this level of care and desire to provide the best service is what bestows upon us the outstanding client retention rate we receive in return. We use our time gained experience and expertise to cater for almost every industry out there, with too many to mention, and our continued growth is attributed solely to you - the clients who provide us the ongoing opportunity to service your needs.

It has been our utmost pleasure to fulfil your requirements over the past 10 years, and as a team we thank you for all your support, past and present and we look forward to collaborating with you well into the future.

Jock Whyte
Managing Director



Known nationally as

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HUNTER PRIMARY CARE

Hunter Primary Care (HPC) has a new CEO, **Keith Drinkwater**, HPC's previous Chief Operating Officer, stepped into the role on 1 August 2024 following the retirement of Brenda Ryan. Keith has been an invaluable asset to HPC, demonstrating exceptional leadership, and dedication throughout his 12 year tenure with the organisation. He has consistently shown a deep understanding of HPC's vision and mission and has played a pivotal role in driving the organisation's success. Keith has worked in the health sector for over 40 years.



PEOPLEFUSION

peoplefusion has announced the appointment of recruitment professional **Amanda MacGregor**. Amanda joins peoplefusion as their Executive & Finance Principal Consultant, bringing with her an in-depth understanding of the executive and accounting space from a career spanning close to 25 years in HR, and the past 6 years in the recruitment industry. Amanda has established for herself a well-respected and highly trusted reputation in the business community.



SV PARTNERS

SV Partners has promoted Daniel Drayton to Associate Director. The appointment reinforces SV Partners' broad expertise in both corporate and personal insolvency matters, and their path of continued success as leading experts in the insolvency sector.



HAMMERSLEY PRODUCTS AUSTRALIA PTY LTD

Bede Boyle has joined Hammersley Products Australia Pty Ltd as strategic advisor to the Managing Director to grow the business through developing mining and industrial applications and establishing distributorships in Australia and Internationally. Bede has 20 years' engineering and management experience in the Australian mining industry and a strategic growth advisor to industrial clients since 1994.



PEOPLEFUSION

peoplefusion has appointed **Krystle Parker** to the role of Senior Recruitment Specialist, leveraging her 16-years' experience within the Recruitment industry, including 11 years leading Construction, Property & Engineering teams. With Krystle's appointment, peoplefusion also announce their expansion into engineering, manufacturing and construction recruitment.



THE FAMILY LAW CO

The Family Law Co. has announced the addition of **Sacha Mastras** as their new Senior Solicitor. As an Accredited Specialist in family law, Sacha has a keen interest in the areas of surrogacy and donor agreements, enhancing the firm's ability to serve clients. Sacha's extensive experience in handling complex property matters ensures that clients receive top-tier advice and representation in their financial settlements. Her deep understanding of property law helps clients navigate legal battles, protecting their interests and optimising outcomes.

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.





2024-25

Hunter Business

FUNCTION GUIDE

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GARRY



SANDIE



JASON

Welcome to the **2024–25 Hunter Business Function Guide**, an annual special coverage by HBR to help business people with planning and running a successful event in the Hunter region.

The Hunter has a well-earned reputation as an ideal location for business functions, with a growing number of local, Australian and overseas business people experiencing the excellent locations and services available.

One of the exceptional strengths of the Hunter is its extremely broad range of venues available, satisfying all tastes and budgets. The Hunter can readily accommodate any type of function, from small, intimate gatherings, to large expos and international symposiums. The locations vary immensely, from the CBDs of major centres, to water-front venues, vineyard experiences and rural retreats.

The Hunter also has a wide range of excellent support services to help ensure that you have a successful event. Whether you need help with just one aspect of an event or someone to take responsibility for almost the entire event, the Hunter has an experienced organisation ready to work with you.

The region is also unique in its range of accommodation, dining options and activities for delegates and visitors.

The Hunter is truly the perfect location for almost any type of business function

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**NEWCASTLE'S PREMIER BEACHFRONT
FUNCTION VENUE**

FUNCTION GUIDE TABLE 2024

Venues	Location	Room Capacity					Facilities	Onsite activities	Accom. rooms	See page
		Conference rooms	Max Area/m²	Max Cocktail	Max Theatre	Max Banquet				
Amanda's on the Edge	Pokolbin	2	N/A	75	N/A	75	In house catering	Restaurant	3 Cottages 1 Homestead	15
Anchorage Hotel & Spa	Port Stephens	7	144	160	160	110	AV equipment, screens, whiteboard, flip chart, sounds system and WiFi	Spa treatments at on-site Spa Lucca, cocktail masterclasses, whisky tastings, high tea by the sea, sailing experience, The Galley Kitchen – all-day dining, Moby's Bar – Bar, onsite parking, two pools, one adults-only, poolside Bar	80	2
Bluebush Estate	Lovedale	1	40	80	40	35	Projector and screen, WiFi	Self contained houses with BBQs, Tennis Court, Volley ball, Pool tables, grassed area for picnics and outdoor sports, mobile massage, group yoga, group wine tasting, inhouse chef	16	15
Emma's Cottage	Lovedale	1	92	100	80	80	Microphone and sound system, TV and HDMI cord, WiFi	Lawn games, swimming pool, cellar door & gift shop	5 cottages (35)	8
Fort Scratchley Historic Site	Newcastle	1	246	200	150	40	Data projector unit, screen wired Microphones and lectern, Flipchart, Whiteboard and WIFI, Dedicated hospitality team * fees apply for additional microphones	Guided tours	N/A	7
HIA Home Inspirations	Mayfield West	3	N/A	N/A	80	N/A	Data projector unit, Microphones, audio, video conferencing (Board room only), WiFi	N/A	N/A	14
Hunter Wetlands Centre	Shortland	1	88	N/A	80	N/A	TV display, wireless internet, teleconferencing, breakout room on request/small meeting room	Canoeing, Bush walks, team building activities	N/A	13
Murrook Culture Centre	Williamtown	3	502	600	420	240	3 data projectors and motorised screens, In-room sound system with wireless microphones, Wi-Fi, whiteboards, flip charts, lectern, tea and coffee station in each function room, catering packages available, ample carpark	Cultural Workshops & Training, Sand Dune Adventures Quad Bike tours, Cultural Services, Murrook Café, Cultural Gallery and Interactive Experience Centre, Retail, Parklands.	N/A	5
Newcastle City Hall	Newcastle	7	382	500	805	290	Onsite Catering, private bar facilities	N/A	N/A	7
Newcastle Racecourse	Newcastle	5	600	500	400	400	Hand held microphones, data projector and screens, TV monitors	Race Day functions, lawn areas for outdoor break out sessions	N/A	9
NOAH'S On The Beach	Newcastle	8	382	300	300	200	Lectern, lectern microphone, roving microphone, Data projector, projector screen, wireless internet, whiteboard, flipchart stand	Restaurant & Bar, Free Parking	90	3
Novotel Newcastle Beach	Newcastle	3	166	140	150	140	WiFi and dancefloor available complimentary. All audio-visual equipment can be hired via our preferred supplier for an additional cost, eg, LED TV, data projector and screens, lectern, microphones, flipcharts and whiteboards.	Novotel In balance meetings includes 2 complimentary team activities when taking our day delegate packages. Other team building activities can be arranged at an additional cost via our preferred supplier. Onsite restaurant and bar, room service, secure underground self-parking, gym, spa, steam room.	88	8
Pacific Dunes - Greenhouse	Medowie - Port Stephens	1	270	180	200	144	1 function room can be split in half for 2 smaller functions/ conferences with our soundproof internal wall, full integrated data projector, drop down projector screen, 4 roaming microphones, mic stand, wifi internet, lectern, iphone / HDMI / PC / mac / connectors etc, white board, flip chart, black out blinds, free onsite parking, accessible amenities, covered terrace for break in the kitchen garden, tea & coffee station and catering all available.	Greenhouse - Restaurant & Bar (Breakfast & lunch 7 days a week & dinner Wed-Sat nights). 18 hole championship golf course with practice facilities, fully stocked golf shop, outdoor bar terrace, kids play area, Thursday night trivia, Sunday live music	N/A	11

FUNCTION GUIDE TABLE 2024

SUPPORTING SERVICES

The Hunter Region is blessed with a wide variety of organisations that can provide services and expertise to help make your event be a success.

COMPANY	SERVICES	PAGE
Blueberry Events	Event Planners	6
Hunter Valley Wine & Tourism Association	Hunter Valley Event planners	10
Scion Audio & Events	Audio, visual, staging & event equipment	12



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TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR NEXT EVENT A SUCCESS

It can be an arduous task to organise a successful event, particularly if it is large. The disappointing aspect for the organiser is that most attendees probably have no comprehension of how much work has been involved. Those without function organising experience often think it is just a matter of booking a venue and sending out the invitations. The organisers are often not really thought about unless there is a really big wow factor or if something major goes wrong.

Every event is different and will have its own requirements; however, the following general tips will help you to achieve a successful event.

Getting help

There are a range of local businesses that can help with your event, from assisting with one aspect (like catering) to organising almost the entire event.

Even if you gain the services of an event planner, this does not mean that you will have no responsibilities in the planning stages. First and foremost you must have good communications with the



planner and ensure both sides have a clear understanding of the type of event, its goals and its budget. The event planner will also require input from you along the way with necessary information and options requiring a decision. These should be attended to promptly but with due consideration. In the end the event planner wants the event to meet the client's expectations, so your input is important and required.

Initial planning

The first task is to clearly define what your event is trying to achieve. Finalise the type of event or function it will be – launch, networking session, end of year party, exhibition, seminar, team building etc. Next set the budget available, including both revenue streams (if applicable) and expenses. If it is re-run of a similar earlier event, these stages will be much easier. Make sure to also have realistic and measurable targets.

Event budget

Set a budget at the start and monitor it as each stage progresses. It is usually best if you can allocate some of the budget for unforeseen expenses as these often occur.

Date and venue

Much care must be taken when setting the date and venue as it is not usually easy to change these. When considering the date take into account public and school holidays, other major or competing events, staff and equipment availability and any other issue that may restrict the timing.

Risk management

Create a risk management plan and ensure any appropriate insurance is in place and current. Create a contingency plan for factors outside of your direct control on the day.

Timeline

Prepare a project timeline with tasks that must be accomplished by specific dates. These may include:

- When to announce the event
- Preparation of promotional material
- Selection of caterer and menu
- Selection of entertainment
- Organisation of audio-visual needs
- Selection and confirmation of speakers
- Selection of accommodation
- Organisation of insurance or permits
- Preparation of a contingency plan for the event
- Organisation of transportation
- Organisation of marketing, signage and social media
- Finalisation of program
- Confirmation of attendees
- Preparation of event material
- Organising set up



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At the event

The better the planning and preparation, the better the chance that all will go smoothly on the day. Often it won't go exactly to plan, but most attendees will be unaware. Try to stay calm, even if there are a few hiccups, and finally try to enjoy yourself.

After the event

When the event is finished you will need to remove equipment and possibly rubbish from the venue. Depending upon the

nature of the event, sponsors and participants may be thanked and possibly given a questionnaire for feedback. In the days following the event have a debrief session on the event, covering the successful aspects as well as those that could have been improved. If appropriate, a report on the event can be sent to participants and sponsors. Plans for future events can also be included.



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TRENDS IN BUSINESS EVENTS

Manda Duffy
Hunter Valley Wine Tourism Association

The Hunter Valley business events industry is highly regarded and attracts valuable business, both domestic and international. Keeping abreast of the changes over the last 5 years has been challenging however the opportunities we are seeing this year and into the future are exciting.

Length of stay in regional conferencing in NSW remains steady at 2.4 days as an average. Visitation is up by 4.02% YTD versus LY. Expenditure in the sector is also up which is a positive reflection on industry valuing conferencing within own business objectives.

The deeper engagement of the face-to-face conference experience still dominates, with networking and interaction being pivotal. This is well balanced by the valuable flexibility of virtual and hybrid events.

The strongest trend, well suited to this region, is where venues support experiences. Even in more challenging fiscal times, event and conference organisers are wanting venues to support interactive experiences, sourcing unique locations and working with providers who champion experiential events to engage attendees.

In 2025, we will also see more experimentation with AI to develop event and conference planning. Importantly, sustainable, inclusive and accessible events reflect how the attendees see the brand, properties and venues go to great lengths for these accreditations.

When planning your next event in the region, Hunter Valley Business Events is here to guide you every step of the way. Our network of local hospitality experts understand your event objectives and will work with you to create tailored offerings that provide a unique experience for your guests.



With world class landscapes and an abundance of unique experiences available, the Hunter Valley is a perfect conferencing and events destination where you can feel a world away from everything, without the hassle of being a world away.

For further information contact the Hunter Valley Wine & Tourism Association on (02) 4990 0900, email businesssevents@hvwtta.com.au or visit <https://www.winecountry.com.au/business-events>

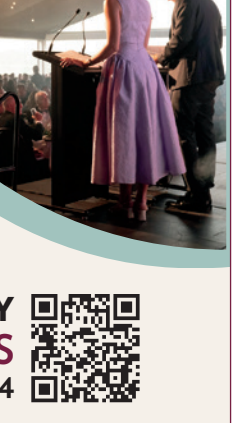


Manda Duffy represents the Hunter Valley Wine and Tourism Association. She commenced her career in logistics and then public relations and recruitment in the RAAF. A final posting into the Hunter Valley saw her pivot into studies to join the wine industry and tourism. Her career in wine business management and regional tourism spans 27 years and has seen her hold various state and local board positions, and represent the region on the global stage in wine, wine tourism and business development.

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HUNTER VALLEY BUSINESS EVENTS
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ORGANISING A WORK SOCIAL DAY

The Hunter region offers a wide spectrum of activities for organising a work social day, from adventure parks, race days, wine tours, brewery tours, team building events and many more.

Many businesses organise activities for their staff in an effort to build a more effective team, use it as a reward, to increase job satisfaction and to help get to know staff. Work social days are a great way to achieve these outcomes but if they are poorly organised these activities can fail to produce and even dampen morale if it is seen as just a work obligation.

The following tips will help you with planning your team building activities.

Decide on objectives and a budget

What is the purpose? Different activities will gain different outcomes. Is it to celebrate a significant business accomplishment, reward staff, let staff get to know each other better without work pressures, help staff see the "bigger picture" or some other purpose? The activity needs to be selected to meet the goals and keep within budget, for example a wine tour would be a great way to celebrate a business accomplishment, whereas an informal lunch is better way to introduce a new staff member.

Select an activity suitable for your whole team

If you have less active members, it is not a great idea to organise anything too strenuous. Don't select an activity that is likely to have an extreme range in abilities. Don't let the activity be overly competitive – you can have winners if you want, but make sure that others don't feel like losers. Also not everyone drinks alcohol or feels comfortable around people who are drinking.

Pick a convenient time

Employees will be most receptive to an activity that is during work hours and does not interfere with their personal time. When scheduling the activity, keep your employees' schedules and personal obligations in mind. If you have employees with children in day care or school, make sure that the social day does not interfere with their pick-up schedule or require them to plan additional childcare.

Ease work pressure

Make sure that you reduce the employees' workload that typically gets done during the scheduled team building time so that they do not have to work nights or weekends to get their jobs done. You may need to hire temporary staff. Take into account the downtime when setting schedules and targets.

Consider help

Ask possible venues for tips, what has worked before etc. You can even consider hiring an external professional to organise the whole or some of the activities.

Don't forget travel time

You may find a great location, but staff may not be happy if they have to travel an extra hour or two each way. If you are really set on a location a little more distant, consider hiring a mini-bus and also use the travel time effectively.



Provide food

Make sure food is involved in the planning as no one is happy if they are hungry or if finding something to eat is a chore.

Don't make it about the business

Don't bore staff with speeches or work-related talks. Make the day interesting and memorable. The best activities are those a bit different, not something many of the staff do on a regular basis.

Encourage staff to mix

Forget about staff hierarchy. Make all staff feel like they are on an equal footing. If you have a large number of staff, consider nametags with just their first name. If the activity involves teams, try to have teams comprised of staff members that normally don't work closely.

Get post-event feedback

After the event, have employees provide anonymous feedback on the team building day. By knowing what your employees liked and disliked about the event, you can better plan team-building activities in the future. If you planned the day for a specific reason, evaluate the outcome after the event.

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SCION AUDIO CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

Scion Audio celebrates 50 years in business this year. Over the years so much has changed – not only technology but what we do, how we do it and the customer base that we look after.

Starting as a rock and roll hire company in 1974 Scion was one of the very first touring companies in NSW and every Thursday afternoon all the Pantech trucks would come out and be packed for the weekend of concerts ahead.

50 years later we are still here as Scion Audio and Events and our weeks are full of events ranging from conferences to gala balls and large outdoor concerts. It is safe to say that I love working on events. Before I bought Scion in 1999, I had worked in public relations, hospitality, theatre and nightclubs. It was always about events and to this day the passion remains.

Since Covid we have seen an enormous increase in the number of events that we work on every week and I don't think that we could have managed this without this passion, plus the years of experience that we have,

This is what you need to see in your events team - from your Audio-Visual supplier, your florist, your decorator and your entertainment provider plus any other stakeholders. We like to explain everything to our clients in person – sometimes an email is just not enough. The more information that we all share the better the outcomes.

Even as an event co-ordinator you may not know all the questions that your event professionals need to ask. I always say talk to me – phone me and that way I can ask the questions but explain why we are asking them. That way people learn what we do and why we do it. This communication will build a trust between the client



Photograph courtesy of AJM Photography

and the supplier and enable them to work together to create an event that is on budget yet looks great and will run without a hitch.

Speaking of hitches, we all need to be aware of suppliers being compliant. Risk assessments are a necessary part of all our lives, and they do indeed save lives. As an event co-ordinator you need to make sure that your suppliers carry the right insurances like Public Liability and Workers Compensation. You want your event to be safe so asking for a risk assessment is a necessary practise. Each industry will have varying risks – eg all electrical leads need to be tested and tagged so that no-one is electrocuted, manual handling rules need to be in place, PPE needs to worn and trip hazards need to be addressed. There is so much to cover and having a compliant supplier reduces any risk to event guests.

We are so proud that Scion Audio and Events has reached the 50-year milestone even through the tough times of Covid, and we are equally proud of our staff for their passion and knowledge in helping us create a business with such a high care factor for each and every client. For Anthony and I we believe that our staff is our biggest asset.

As an event co-ordinator you rely on your suppliers for their experience, their creativity and their passion to put together your dream. They need to be on your wavelength to create your dream in a safe manner and come in on budget. If you surround yourself with an event team of professionals that you trust, then you have nothing to worry about.



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SELECTING YOUR VENUE

One of the most important decisions when planning a business event is the venue. Assuming you do not have suitable in-house facilities, you will likely be faced with a range of venue options and these must be evaluated early in the process.

The following are factors to consider when you are deciding upon the venue for your next event:

Location – The venue should be easy to get to for participants and attendees. It is usually good to be located close to most of attendees to minimise travel time and increase attendance. If you think many will use public transport then these links should be evaluated. If most will be driving then close-by parking facilities will be an important consideration.

Venue suitability – Obviously the venue must be the right size for your event. If it is too small you will not have enough room for everything you need as well as attendees. But if it is too large, it may feel quite dead and empty. If the venue is not air-conditioned or is set outdoors you should consider ventilation or heating options, particularly if the event is being held in summer or winter. If extensive setting up is required, such as in an expo, then ease of access to the venue can be important. The venue also may need to be available for ample time before and after the event. Wheelchair and invalid access may also be a consideration.

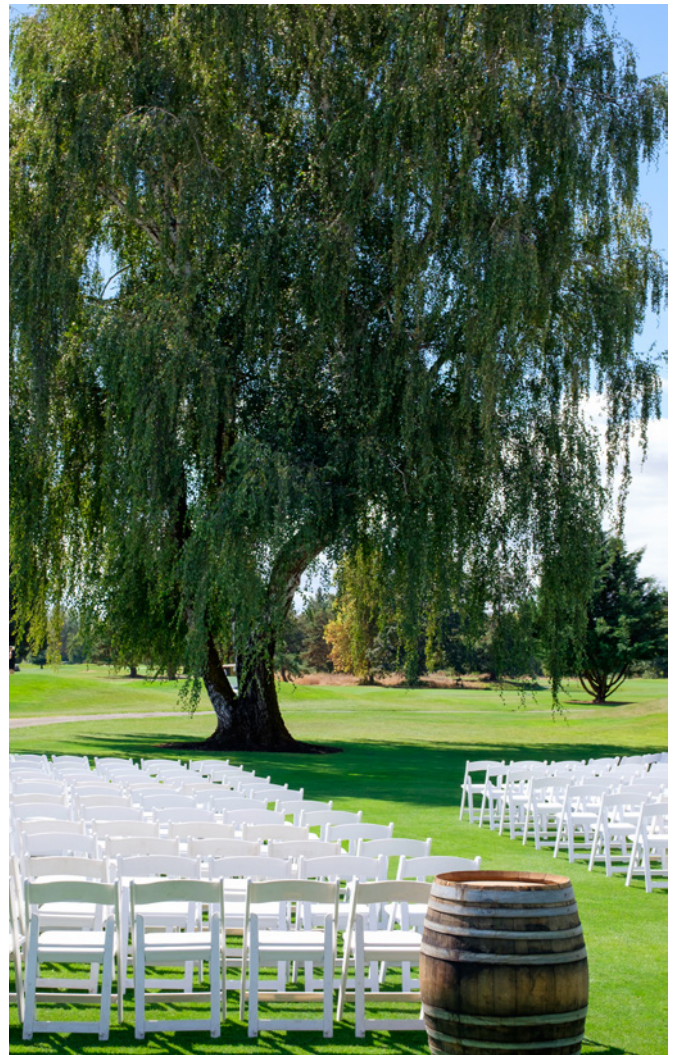
Facilities & services – The available facilities and services provided by a venue can be of major benefit in the quality of an event, the total cost of an event and the ease of organisation. Check there is sufficient chairs and tables (if required). These days' microphones, audio visual facilities and internet access are essential for many functions. If food and drink facilities are not available, or not available to the desired quality, then there are a number of excellent caterers available in the Hunter that can help.

Availability – The venue does of course need to be available. The earlier the venue is locked away, the better the chance of having it for your desired time. You will also have more flexibility in settling on a date if you start early.

Cost – Cost is always a factor to consider, particularly if operating on a tight budget but make sure you are taking all costs into account. For example a more expensive venue that provides additional facilities at no charge may well work out cheaper in the long run than a cheaper venue that provides little and you need to arrange additional facilities.

Venue staff – The quality of the venue staff is sometimes overlooked. Good venue staff are a major help both in the organisational phase and on the actual event day. Alarm bells should start ringing if you find them disinterested or they fail to respond to enquiries.

Other help – Don't be shy to ask other organisations that have had similar types of events about their experiences. Event organisers can take away most of the venue selection work. They also have more detailed intelligence on possible venues and the range of options available.





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ENGAGING YOUR AUDIENCE

We have all been to business functions that failed to engage the audience. They were too long or just plain boring and had attendees watching the clock or even making excuses to leave early.

When organising a business event you can fall into the trap of putting so much effort into the purpose of the event and the logistics that you forget about the most important people, the attendees – keeping them engaged and providing them with a positive experience.

Each event is different, but the following tips should be remembered when you plan an event:

Always keep attendees in mind – The event may well have some very serious messages to get across but to ensure the audience remains engaged you must organise the event from their point of view. This may sound blatantly obvious but is still often forgotten and must be one of the key aspects of organising.

Make attendees feel welcome – Upon arrival, it should be clear where attendees should go. If applicable, signs or welcoming people should direct attendees. Upon arrival at the room or location there should be people welcoming them. Light refreshments are often good at this stage.

Run on time – Businesspeople are busy people. The last thing you want is to make them feel like they are wasting time waiting for an event to commence or stressed because the event is running overtime and clashing with other activities on their schedule.



Networking time at the start is often useful for some attendees but you should be upfront with the attendees about any networking time and the commencement of the more official parts of the event.

Keep presentations short and sharp – The reality is that most attendees to a business event are not interested in the very fine details of your organisation or the same message repeated by multiple presenters.

Keep speeches short and to the point, focusing on the key points, but with an open invitation for attendees to obtain additional information. It is also often well worthwhile to have some printed information available, particularly if media representatives are present. For awards ceremonies consider if every recipient really needs an acceptance speech and ensure that any acceptance speeches are short.

Entertain attendees – The event may well have a very serious purpose but you need to entertain the attendees. This provides them with a more positive overall experience and can keep them in a more receptive frame of mind for your message. Sometimes event organisers fear that entertainment may trivialise any messages they are trying to get across but properly organised entertainment can enhance attendee receptiveness and provide them with a more positive opinion of your organisation. Entertainment may take many forms, from keynote speakers to music to comedians to magicians and much more.

Create a theme – For major events, organisers can consider creating a theme. This will make the whole experience more enjoyable and also allow attendees to join in.

Provide breaks – For longer events ensure that frequent breaks are scheduled for attendees to have a refreshment, visit toilets, talk with others, check on emails or contact the office. This also helps attendees to maintain their attention levels.

Provide attendees with a positive ending to the event – Make sure that attendees have a positive ending to the event. Ensure they are thanked and consider a small gift if applicable. Also ensure that key members of the organisation are available to meet with attendees who wish to make personal contact or have additional queries.

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MARKETING YOUR EVENT

One of the most important parts of organising an event is letting people know about it. If there are no attendees, there is no event.

There are many paths available to do this. Advertising for your event should involve a mixture of the tactics depending on your target audience and where they seek out event information.

Traditional marketing tactics

Direct mail marketing campaigns, press releases and hard copy advertising are a great way to announce the event and know that it is getting to the right target audience.

Social media

Social media can be an effective way to advertise your event. Platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn and X (Twitter) are an easy way to reach people.

Use attendees

When people sign up for your event, provide them with opportunities to share the information about your event on social media or via email.

Invite major industry players

Contact prominent people in the industry, who also have a following on their social networks. Invite these people to your event and it's sure to get coverage on a lot of related socials.

Market the speakers

If your business has the budget to book a well-known speaker, it will create more hype. When marketing your speakers focus on their education, experience, and interesting facts about their lives. This will generate interest in hearing these facts and experiences live. Feature your speakers in your media releases, hard copy advertising and social media.

Testimonials

Testimonials are great if your business organises an annual event that is well attended, especially by regular attendees and repeat vendors. Get testimonials from attendees and vendors about your key outcomes for the event e.g. the event was informative, fun and I made some key contacts.

Corporate sponsorships

Gaining corporate sponsors for your event is a plus for both parties. When the sponsors advertise the event, not only is it good marketing for the event, it is also a good marketing strategy for their company.

Free tickets

Another great way to promote your event is to offer the participating sponsors, speakers, industry players and vendors free admission tickets. You can request that they mention the event to all their contacts or share it on social media.




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HUNTER BUSINESS FUNCTION GUIDE

COMING EVENTS.....

21 – 22 August 2024

Hunter Defence

2024 Hunter Defence Conference

Venue: Rydges Hunter Valley

<https://www.hunterdefence.org.au/hunter-defence-conference-2024/>

22 August 2024, 5pm – 7pm

Newcastle Tourism Industry Group/NTIG

Upcoming events in Newcastle and how your business can participate and benefit

Venue: Rydges Newcastle

<https://ntig.org.au/news-events/>

23 August 2024

Business Hunter

Energy & Resource Lunches

Venue: To be announced

<https://www.businesshunter.com/hunter-business-events/our-events/business-energy-resources-lunch-series>

27 August 2024, 9:00 am - 3:30 pm

HIA

Finance and Admin Workshop

Venue: HIA Office, Mayfield West

Cost: \$110 – \$220

<https://hia.com.au/awards-and-events/events/workshop/hunter-nsw/2024/workshop-mayfield-west-aug27>

28 August 2024, 5:30 pm - 7:30 pm

Port Stephens Women in Business

PSWIB August Event - Tips on growing your business" with Financial

Planner Kathy Rimmer

Venue: Tanilba House

Cost: \$110 – \$220

<https://www.pswib.com.au/events#!event/2024/8/28/pswib-august-event>

30 August 2024, 6:00 pm - 10:00 pm

HIA

Hunter Apprentice Awards

Venue: City Hall, Newcastle

Cost: \$110 – \$160

<https://hia.com.au/awards-and-events/events/apprentice-awards/hunter-nsw/2024/apprentice-awards-newcastle-aug16>

4 September 2024

Business Hunter

Business Development Forum

Venue: To be announced

<https://www.businesshunter.com/hunter-business-events/our-events/business-development-forum>

12 September 2024, 7.00 am – 8.30 am

Business Port Stephens

Business Breakfast – Newcastle Airport Roadshow

Venue: Nelson Bay Golf Club

<https://www.businessportstephens.com/events#!event/2024/9/12/september-business-breakfast-save-the-date>

13 September 2024

Business Hunter

2024 Business Hunter Awards

<https://www.businesshunter.com/hunter-business-events/business-hunter-awards>

23 September 2024, 8.30 am – 2.30 pm

Regional Angel Investor Network

RAIN PitchFest Newcastle – Session 1

Cost: Free

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rain-pitchfest-newcastle-session-1-tickets-826219443597>

26 September 2024, 8.30am – 2.30pm

Firewire Digital

Newcastle SEO Conference 2024

Venue: Rydges Newcastle

Cost: \$375

<https://www.firewiredigital.com.au/newcastle-seo-conference/>

14-19 October 2024

Lake Mac Libraries Fab Lab

FAN7 (7th Fab Lab Asia Network Conference)

Venue: Warners Bay Theatre

Cost: \$250 – \$775

<https://https://fan7.fablabs.au/>

16 October 2024

Business Hunter

Business Development Forum

Venue: To be announced

<https://www.businesshunter.com/hunter-business-events/our-events/business-development-forum>

17 October 2024, 5:30 pm - 7:30 pm

Business Port Stephens

October Mix & Mingle

Venue: NEX, Newcastle

Cost: \$240 – \$480

<https://www.businessportstephens.com/events#!event/2024/10/17/october-mix-mingle-save-the-date-more-details-to-come>

18 October 2024

HMA

Hunter Manufacturing Awards 2024

Venue: Nex, Newcastle

<https://www.hma.org.au/>

18 October 2024

Business Hunter

Business Infrastructure Forum

Venue: To be announced

<https://www.businesshunter.com/hunter-business-events/our-events/business-infrastructure-lunch-series>

19 October 2024, 6:00 pm - 11:30 pm

HIA

HIA-CSR Hunter Housing and Kitchen and Bathrooms Awards

Venue: NEX, Newcastle

Cost: \$240 – \$480

<https://hia.com.au/awards-and-events/events/housing-awards/hunter-nsw/2024/hia-housing-awards-newcastle-oct19>

24 October 2024

Business Hunter

Business Hunter Innovation Series

Venue: To be announced

<https://www.businesshunter.com/hunter-business-events/our-events/business-innovation-lunch-series>

31 October 2024

Business Hunter

Hunter Nexus Gala Dinner

Venue: To be announced

<https://www.businesshunter.com/hunter-business-events/our-events/hunter-nexus>

8 November 2024

Business Hunter

Energy & Resource Lunches

Venue: To be announced

<https://www.businesshunter.com/hunter-business-events/our-events/business-energy-resources-lunch-series>

13 November 2024

Business Hunter

Business Development Forum

Venue: To be announced

<https://www.businesshunter.com/hunter-business-events/our-events/business-development-forum>

Hunter Water taps into sustainability with innovative electricity

The Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) will see renewable electricity power critical infrastructure and operations across Hunter Water's water and wastewater operations.

The six-year deal, which will formally begin in January 2025 and last until 2031, will provide a stable and cost-effective energy supply while supporting Hunter Water's commitment to a low-carbon economy.

Under the terms of the agreement, AGL will sell all electricity consumed by Hunter Water's largest sites and renewable electricity certificates to match a proportion of that consumption, which will gradually increase to 100% by 2030.

Hunter Water Managing Director, Darren Cleary, expects the project to lower Hunter Water's operational carbon footprint by around 70 per cent.

"We look forward to partnering with AGL in this agreement to supply our larger sites with electricity.

"Sustainability is central to our purpose at Hunter Water and this PPA aligns with our goals and demonstrates our commitment to working towards a more sustainable future that benefits our customers, our community, and the environment," he said.

AGL General Manager Commercial and Industrial Customers Ryan Warburton said renewable-linked PPAs can be an important step in the energy transition journey.

"We are proud to partner with Hunter Water, operating near AGL's generation assets in the Hunter Valley, and assist them on their energy transition journey. There is a clear synergy between AGL and Hunter Water as we are both dedicated to providing essential services to the local Hunter community, as well as being committed to a lower carbon future," he said.

Alongside this, Hunter Water continues to roll out its onsite renewable energy generation program, with 6.5 megawatts of



renewable energy capacity to be installed across treatment plants and pump stations by early 2025.

These initiatives highlight just some of the ways sustainability is embedded into Hunter Water's daily operations and will complement a new, five-year sustainability strategy slated to launch this month.

The strategy will build on Hunter Water's foundations of providing safe and reliable water services to the community for over 130 years. Positioning sustainability at the centre of the organisation's purpose, it will serve as a guide for navigating the complexity of interconnected environmental, social, and economic challenges while taking advantage of future opportunities.

To learn more, head to hunterwater.com.au/sustainability

HUNTER WATER

We are creating a sustainable future for all.

Scan the QR code to learn how we're championing sustainability

Sustainability Snapshot sets your business up for a better future

Are you aware that your business could do more about sustainability but aren't sure where to start? You're definitely not alone. Navigating sustainability expectations and regulations, like mandatory reporting, can be perplexing for many Australian companies.

The good news is that you're probably already on the sustainability journey and you're likely doing more towards your sustainability goals than you realise. Do you measure your energy use? Have you implemented policies around social issues such as equity and diversity? If so, you're already on a positive path to sustainability.

Newcastle-based Engineering and Environmental consultancy, Advitech has a long history of helping businesses solve complex challenges with engineering and scientific approaches. It now has a specialised capability in advising businesses on Sustainability, including Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) and Path to Net Zero.

Advitech's Manager – Sustainability, Abby Yates, has a background in environmental science and a Masters degree in Environment and Business Management. Abby worked for Mitsubishi Power Systems Europe as a Senior Quality and Environment Manager, implementing strategies, policies, and practices across multinational business operations and supply chains as well as fulfilling compliance obligations under mandatory climate-related reporting. Originally hailing from Newcastle, Abby has now returned to the Hunter to apply her international experience locally.

Abby firmly believes that most businesses are already on the right track to sustainability and probably don't even realise it.

"I've found that many businesses are doing great things towards being sustainable, it's just that they are often piecemeal activities and not connected through an overall strategy," said Abby.

Abby and her team have recently developed an online tool to help businesses assess where they are on the sustainability journey.

Advitech's 'Sustainability Snapshot' is free to use and provides businesses with a brief report based on their responses to 15 questions.

"It's a very tangible way to 'start the ball rolling' on your way to greater sustainability. Small steps all count towards the final goal," said Abby.

The tool encourages consideration of issues such as energy and water use, procurement practices and work conditions for employees. It evaluates whether businesses are merely being compliant with legislation or driven by intrinsic motivations to improve.

Advitech defines the five stages of sustainability maturity as Compliant, Strategic, Integrated, Innovative and Leading the way. No matter where your business is on that journey, there's always room for improvement and the Advitech Sustainability Snapshot outlines some of the ways businesses can move in a positive direction.

The Advitech Sustainability Snapshot is available on the Advitech website at <https://www.advitech.com.au/services/sustainability-and-esg/>

It's free, quick to complete, and can help your business to advance along its sustainability journey, ultimately leading to efficiencies, cost savings and contributing towards a better future for everyone.



Abby Yates



Take a Sustainability Snapshot of your business

Advitech's Sustainability and ESG services, backed by years of trusted expertise in Engineering and Environmental Consulting, has developed an online tool to help you understand where your business is on the sustainability journey.

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Demystifying the Australian ACCU market for small business investors

Gary Wyatt
Corporate Carbon

Australian businesses are increasingly recognising climate change as a material and financial risk.

To be sustainable, resilient, and profitable in the long-term, many business owners are considering their role in the global and national transition to a lower carbon future.

Demand from those seeking to reduce their carbon footprint has surged since 2015, the year when the United Nations set the Paris Agreement—an objective to limit the global average temperature's increase, and to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Since then, countries covered by the agreement, including Australia, have set out policies and regulatory frameworks to achieve their respective targets.

This has seen new markets (which put a price on pollution and allow carbon emissions to be traded as units) emerge.

What are carbon credits?

Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs) are a pragmatic mechanism for businesses to invest in projects that contribute to reducing the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

One carbon credit unit represents an emission reduction of one tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent in the atmosphere.

Essentially, a carbon credit is the recognition of either avoiding a tonne of greenhouse gas emitted into the atmosphere or drawing down a tonne from the atmosphere.

Credits are usually denominated in tonnes of carbon dioxide, although they can also be associated with other greenhouse gases.

Corporate Carbon develops emissions reductions projects, primarily under the Australian federal government's scheme, known as the Australian Carbon Credit Units scheme. We develop projects to either draw down or sequester carbon, and those can be done in different ways.

The ACCU scheme provides a structured framework for generating and trading these credits, offering opportunities and challenges for small business investors seeking to participate in environmental sustainability initiatives.

How are ACCUs generated?

Carbon abatement projects are broadly categorised by those that reduce emissions or avoid them from being generated, and sequestration projects that remove emissions from the atmosphere.

Under the ACCU scheme, projects must adhere to approved methodologies established by the Clean Energy Regulator (CER). These methodologies provide detailed guidelines for measuring, monitoring, and reporting carbon reduction activities. Projects undergo rigorous assessment to ensure they go beyond business-as-usual practices, a concept known as additionality.

Projects eligible for ACCU generation span various sectors including land use, energy efficiency, transport and waste management. Common activities that earn ACCUs include environmental planting, soil carbon sequestration, and savanna fire management.

Markets for carbon credits – compliance and voluntary

In Australia, there are two types of carbon markets: compliance and voluntary.

Compliance markets, like Australia's ACCU scheme, operate under government-mandated regulations to help achieve national emission reduction targets.

The Australian government's policy for reducing the emissions requires top emitting facilities to keep their greenhouse gas emissions below a baseline—if they exceed the baseline, they



Seedlings from a Corporate Carbon environmental planting project.

must offset their exceedance by purchasing ACCUs generated through the Clean Energy Regulator's dedicated scheme.

Voluntary markets, however, are driven by organisations and individuals voluntarily purchasing credits to neutralise their carbon footprints beyond regulatory requirements. This sector allows for broader participation in carbon offsetting initiatives and supports corporate social responsibility goals.

With two distinct investor markets, the ACCU Scheme presents promising opportunities for small business investors interested in expanding their sustainability portfolios.



Managing Director **Gary Wyatt** joined Corporate Carbon Group having spent the previous 13 years working in commodities trading for ANZ Banking Group and Rand Merchant Bank. With a master's degree in electrical engineering and a BSc (Honours) degree in financial mathematics, Gary's trading experience spans the metals markets, electricity and environmental certificates.

Muswellbrook Pumped Hydro declared Critical State Significant Infrastructure

AGL and joint venture partner, Idemitsu Australia, have welcomed the Muswellbrook Pumped Hydro project receiving Critical State Significant Infrastructure status from the NSW Government.

The proposed 400 MW 8 hour storage Muswellbrook Pumped Hydro plant is expected to provide power and grid support services at critical times, pumping water uphill when there is excess energy from solar and wind and releasing water to generate power in times of high energy demand.

AGL's General Manager, Energy Hubs, Travis Hughes outlined the important role the plant could play in providing long-duration storage for NSW.

"We are pleased the Government recognises the critical role this project could play in providing essential long-duration storage for the NSW electricity grid.

"The 400 MW Muswellbrook Pumped Hydro plant is expected to have a 100 year asset life and provide eight hours of energy storage. That's four times the storage duration and five times the asset life of most current battery storage systems. The project has the potential to create 250 jobs during construction and 20 ongoing jobs during operation."

The plant would be located near Muswellbrook in the Hunter Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone and has been awarded \$9.45 million funding under the NSW Government's Pumped Hydro Recoverable Grants Program.

First generation is targeted for 2029 if advanced development studies are successful, and the project receives final investment decision and government approvals.

Collaboration is key for Clean Energy R&D

The Trailblazer for Recycling and Clean Energy (TRaCE) is no stranger to collaborating to solve complex clean energy problems. At the nexus between academic research, industry and government, TRaCE is a test model for moving recycling and clean energy technologies out of the lab and into the market. Hosted by NIER at the University of Newcastle in partnership with UNSW, collaboration is central to how the Australian Government supported program operates. TRaCE works with a network of industry partners to accelerate sustainability solutions with tailored academic expertise, equipment and co-funding from government.

De-risking R&D

Through TRaCE, enterprises are benefitting from access to world-class researchers and an ecosystem of support to de-risk R&D opportunities.

Kardinia Energy partnered with the University of Newcastle in 2021 to move a revolutionary solar product to market. Professor Paul Dastoor's printed solar is 100% recyclable - made of carbon-based inks printed on plastic sheets. They're working together to build a world-first printed solar manufacturing facility through a TRaCE research project.

"With the support from TRaCE to build a printed solar manufacturing facility, we'll employ Australian graduates to manufacture printed solar modules on a commercial scale for the first time. The facility's successful operation will mark the final step before printed solar can enter the market," said Anthony Letmon, CEO of Kardinia Energy.

HydGene Renewables is testing if they can expand their biocatalyst technology into new markets with the help of the TRaCE team through the TRaCE R&D Voucher program, partnering with Laureate Professor Behdad Moghtaderi from the University of Newcastle to confirm if farmers could produce eco-friendly fertilisers right on home soil.

"Within two months from meeting the TRaCE team at the University of Newcastle, we had created a research project and signed an agreement. It's practically unheard of to enter into a research agreement that quickly with a university. If anything, we were the ones to slow down the process," said Dr Louise Brown, CEO of HydGene Renewables.



Members of the Trailblazer for Recycling and Clean Energy (TRaCE) team from UNSW and the University of Newcastle.

Powering tomorrow's talent

Through research projects co-designed and co-supervised with industry partners, the TRaCE Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Program empowers a new generation of researchers with support, motivation, and a multidisciplinary context to explore industry challenges and accelerate solutions.

Four aspiring TRaCE PhD candidates are currently working on their research question with industry partners to solve real world problems.

Lab to market

The TRaCE Enterprise Academic and Mobility Fellowships activities aim to build enduring partnerships between researchers and industry, contribute to academics' career growth and the development of commercial solutions.

These programs support close engagement between a researcher and industry partner to work on an existing research problem, or a researcher to focus on accelerating commercial outcomes for up to three years.

To collaborate through the TRaCE program, get in touch at hello@trace.org.au.



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Port of Newcastle signs Taskforce for Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD)

Port of Newcastle has long been a leader in sustainability practices, being the first Australian port to be certified as an environmentally sustainable port by Lloyds through the International EcoPorts network.

The Port has also made significant progress in net zero and decarbonisation efforts in and around the port. Recently, this leadership and commitment to sustainability has been demonstrated through signing a public commitment as one of 320 early adopters of the Taskforce for Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) worldwide.

The TNFD guidelines, introduced in addition to the well-established Taskforce on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD), are designed to guide organisations in identifying, assessing, and managing nature-related risks and opportunities. The aim is to foster greater transparency on impacts and dependencies on nature for businesses, ultimately leading to more informed decision-making that benefits both the environment and the economy. Participation is currently voluntary and will be done in addition to the mandatory climate disclosure standards. Biodiversity loss has been identified by the World Economic Forum as one of the most severe global risks and the emphasis on biodiversity and nature has not been historically present in current reporting frameworks.

The Port of Newcastle, the largest port on the east coast of Australia, is situated in a region of high biological significance, with adjacent wetlands and habitats for endangered species such as the green and golden bell frog. The port's adoption of the TNFD guidelines is, therefore, particularly noteworthy. By integrating these guidelines into its operational framework, the Port of Newcastle is setting a benchmark for environmental responsibility within the maritime sector.

To date, the port has completed a high-level location study of impacts and dependences within the maritime industry and port boundaries and is now undertaking comprehensive assessments to determine the material impacts and dependencies and how these relate to the Port of Newcastle operations. This information will be used in the final report which will be included within the 2025 sustainability report.

By adopting TNFD guidelines, the Port of Newcastle commits to transparent reporting on its nature-related risks and opportunities. This transparency helps stakeholders understand the port's environmental footprint and the measures it is taking to minimise it. The Port of Newcastle's commitment to the TNFD guidelines represents a significant step towards a more sustainable and environmentally conscious maritime industry. As global awareness of nature-related risks grows, the port's leadership serves as a model for others.

Ampcontrol challenges business sustainability to surpass net zero targets

Ampcontrol has announced the release of its first annual Sustainability Report to provide transparency surrounding its sustainability undertaking and operating emissions reductions while joining the call for a just energy transition.

As a private Australian company, Ampcontrol is publishing its first annual Sustainability Report to consider stakeholder interests, including investors, customers, employees, suppliers, government authorities, and the community. The report summarises the three-year sustainability action plan, measures, and targets for the period August 2023 - August 2026, with objectives and initiatives aligned to achieve six priority United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

- Good Health and Wellbeing
- Affordable and Clean Energy
- Decent Work and Economic Growth

- Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- Responsible Consumption and Production
- Climate Action

Speaking at the Siemens Beyond 1% Summit in Sydney NSW, Rod Henderson, Ampcontrol Managing Director & CEO said, "It is our vision to lead the global energy revolution that sparked the development of our ambitious plan to contribute in a greater way to decarbonise the world. We are accelerating and driving sustainable outcomes through world-leading innovation, advanced technology, and collaborative partnerships to deliver industry and business success and strengthen the economy and communities in which we operate.

"We recognise that the work needs to begin with us by taking a leading role in reducing global greenhouse gas emissions, which is why we are challenging ourselves to go beyond legislated requirements to benefit our business and stakeholders."

Ampcontrol has set emissions reduction targets that aim to go beyond the agreed decarbonisation pathways to limit warming to well below 2 degrees (preferably 1.5 degrees) on pre-industrial levels.

This includes an interim target of 60% reduction of absolute operational greenhouse emissions by 2030 from a 2020 baseline and net zero emissions by 2040. In 2023, Ampcontrol reported a 30% reduction in operational emissions against the 2020 baseline, which is 12% ahead of the pathway to our 2030 interim target.

To achieve these targets, Ampcontrol has implemented several decarbonisation initiatives, including:

- The rollout of rooftop solar PV on Ampcontrol operating sites and facilities.
- Signing of a 10-year renewable power purchase agreement for our NSW sites
- Optimisation of electricity usage through energy efficiency and smart energy projects, including LED lighting upgrades and equipment power monitoring.
- Implementation of a low emissions vehicle policy and transition plan for the global Ampcontrol vehicle fleet
- Phased transition of Natural Gas heating at Ampcontrol operating sites and facilities to renewable electricity heating.

The Ampcontrol Sustainability Report also reflects the broader commitment of Ampcontrol to positive community impacts on the journey to net zero, including:

- Championing its people and communities
- Leading in manufacturing and innovation
- Supporting the global climate effort

Living Smart Festival 2024

Alone Australia season one winner Gina Chick, 'Frugal Foodie' Steph de Sousa and River Cottage Australia host Paul West are set to spearhead this year's bumper Living Smart Festival in Lake Macquarie.

The Saturday 21 September festival is one of Australia's largest sustainability events, with a mission to encourage people to learn about and embrace everyday sustainability practices.

This year's festival, supported by the NSW Government's Stronger Together Major Festival Local Council Grants program, will take place across a single day, with a longer duration of 9am-3pm.

A range of workshops, stalls and presenters will cover all things sustainability, while a multicultural zone will invite people from around the world to showcase practices, traditions, dancing, music and cooking from their home countries.

Gina Chick, who spent 67 days solo in the Tasmanian wilderness to take out the inaugural season of Alone Australia in 2023, will talk to festival-goers about her experience, what she learnt from it and how connecting with nature can strengthen and enrich the soul.

De Sousa rose to fame as a contestant on Masterchef, but has enjoyed even greater success as a social media star.

The Lake Mac resident has gained an army of more than one million followers through her cheap and cheerful recipes and cooking videos, and will teach Living Smart Festival-goers about keeping things sustainable – environmentally and financially – in the kitchen.

Continues on page 28



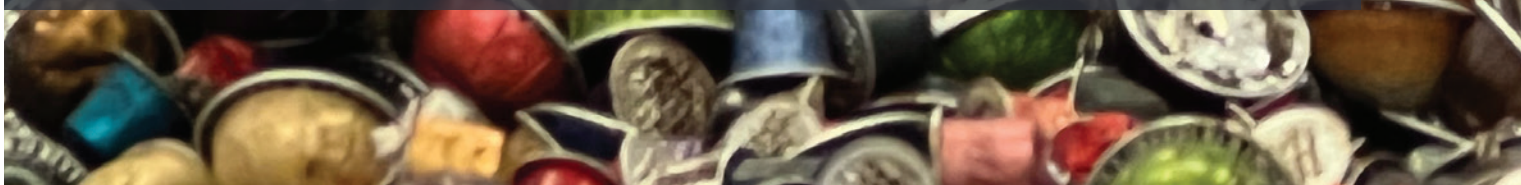
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West, who describes himself as a “food grower, family feeder and yarn spinner”, hosts the cult-hit ABC show *River Cottage Australia*, and co-founded the ‘Grow It Local’ movement.

Grow It Local encourages more Australians to grow, share and eat locally grown food, with more than 37,000 members and 6100 registered food growing patches nationwide.

Lake Macquarie Mayor Kay Fraser said this year’s festival line-up covered a broad range of sustainability themes and topics.

“Living Smart Festival is one of Lake Mac’s landmark annual events,” she said.

“It’s a celebration of living sustainably, and has played a major role instilling a more environmentally friendly mindset into the mainstream.”

The Living Smart Festival is proudly sponsored by the NSW Government’s Multicultural NSW, Hunter Resource Recovery, Hunter Water, Allambi Care, the University of Newcastle, Newcastle Weekly, and Greater Bank.

Multicultural NSW CEO Joseph La Posta said the festival was an opportunity to bring communities together to share their cultures.

“Multicultural NSW is pleased to support an initiative that provides meaningful ways for culture to be shared by individuals and local cultural groups,” he said.

“The creation of three culturally diverse zones in 2024 is a testament to a strong commitment to the values of diversity and inclusion.

Expressions of interest are now open for people interested in presenting at the event, and for stallholders whose values and products aligned with the ethos of Living Smart Festival.

Go to www.lakemac.com.au/Events-directory/Council-events/Living-Smart-Festival for more information.

Hunter offshore wind industry a step closer

Equinor and Oceanex have been preliminarily offered a feasibility licence for the potential Novocastrian Wind Pty Ltd project in the Hunter Offshore Wind Zone. Only one feasibility licence is being proposed because other applications were for overlapping areas and found to be of lower merit.

Should the project go ahead, it would employ around 3,000 workers during construction and create around 200–300 permanent local jobs. It would inject development expenditure worth hundreds of millions of dollars into the Hunter region and leverage existing heavy industry.

It could generate over 2 GW of electricity, equivalent to powering 1.2 million homes or two Tomago smelters.

Minister for Climate Change and Energy Chris Bowen will conduct further consultation with applicants and First Nations groups before a final decision is made. Consultation with First Nations groups, communities, unions and marine users will continue throughout the feasibility licence process, while environmental studies and a detailed management plan is prepared.

As well as providing reliable renewable energy to Australian industry, offshore wind projects will be required to maximise their use

workers on their project plans to ensure local workers and businesses benefit from the establishment of this new industry.

There are also clear requirements for the offshore wind developer to consult with fishers and avoid, mitigate and offset any impacts on fishing.

The Minister also announced, that he expects recreational fishers will be able to travel and fish within the offshore wind zone, which already occurs internationally in the United Kingdom and Denmark. In those jurisdictions turbines are around 2 kilometres apart with an exclusion zone of just 50 metres around turbines. It means fishing vessels can go about their normal operations within the wind farm.

If feasibility for the Novocastrian Wind Pty Ltd project is proven, the developer can then apply for a commercial licence to build an offshore wind project to generate electricity commercially.

University of Newcastle researchers to play key role in Offshore Wind Energy progress

The University of Newcastle will play a key role in supporting the growing offshore wind energy sector after being named a key partner of the new Australian Centre of Offshore Wind Energy (ACOWE) on 30 July.

As a newcomer to Australia’s renewable energy portfolio, offshore wind faces several significant challenges including a complex regulatory environment, social acceptance, workforce shortages, environmental management, supply chain gaps, and the need for site-specific engineering. These challenges, if not addressed promptly, could become roadblocks to progress.

The Australian Centre for Offshore Wind Energy is a collaboration between the University of Melbourne, the University of Western Australia, the University of Newcastle, Deakin University, Federation University, and the University of Wollongong.

The initiative aims to develop the labour force by offering training and education in the energy sector, which will equip the future workforce with the necessary skills for building and maintaining offshore and onshore infrastructure.

University of Newcastle Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alex Zelinsky said, “We are delighted to be part of the Australian Centre for Offshore Wind Energy. Through this Centre, our researchers will play a critical role in advancing next generation technologies and ensuring our communities are engaged as part of the transition to a sustainable energy future.”

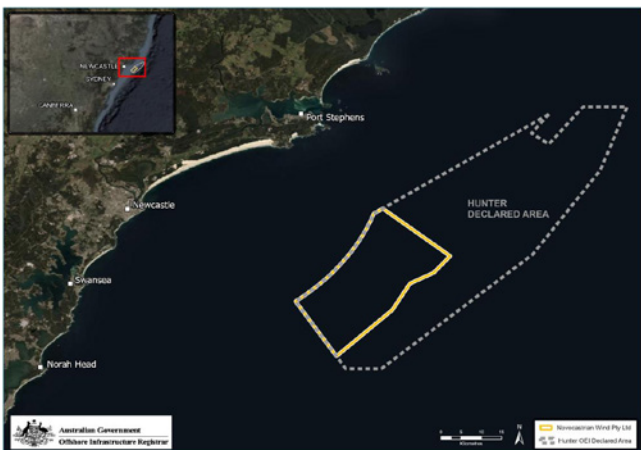
“The University of Newcastle is strategically placed in the region to deliver cutting edge research and high-quality training in several fields directly linked to the offshore wind energy field, such as social and economic science, ocean and geotechnical engineering, marine and coastal science, structural monitoring, electrical and renewable energy engineering,” Professor Zelinsky said.

The Centre will drive development and remove knowledge barriers, making Australia a prime location for offshore wind energy investment. ACOWE will provide evidence-based community engagement, offer government policy insights, and serve as a research hub and workforce development portal for the industry.

ACOWE Director and University of Melbourne Associate Professor Shiao Huey Chow said the Centre will collaborate with stakeholders to advance research, teaching and training to support the growing offshore wind energy sector.

“ACOWE’s collaborative approach is essential to unlocking Australia’s renewable energy portfolio because no single organisation can deliver the cross-functional support needed by governments, communities and industry,” Professor Chow said.

University of Newcastle School of Engineering Professor Anna Giacomini said, “By enhancing research collaboration between the Australian universities involved, ACOWE will offer excellent opportunities to improve knowledge, drive development and train the next generation of workers for the future offshore wind and renewable energy industry in Australia.”



Solar panel recycling plant and solar cable manufacturing plant for AGL's Hunter Energy Hub

AGL and Elecsome have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to develop a feasibility study for the establishment of a solar panel recycling plant and solar cable manufacturing plant at AGL's Hunter Energy Hub Bayswater e-Recycling Precinct.

The feasibility study will determine the engineering and infrastructure requirements as well as the key environmental and regulatory approvals required for the development, construction, and operation of both facilities.

If developed, the recycling plant would be Elecsome's first commercial-scale solar panel recycling facility in NSW and is expected to upcycle up to 500,000 residential and grid-scale solar panels per year. The company has also developed a patented technology to use the glass which makes up over 70% of a solar panel to create SolarCrete – a pre-mixed concrete that can be used in construction activities such as for driveways and footpaths. This product will form part of the feasibility study at the Hunter site.

The solar cable manufacturing plant is expected to produce up to 20,000 km of solar cable per year and is expected to be used in residential and commercial solar installations, as well as utility scale solar farms.

If successful the new plants are expected to generate approximately 20 jobs during the two-year construction phase, and approximately 50 jobs when fully operational.

AGL's General Manager, Energy Hubs Travis Hughes, said AGL's vision for the Hunter Energy Hub is starting to take shape with partners from across the renewables value chain signing deals with AGL in the past year.

"Since the closure of Liddell Power Station one year ago, we have signed MOUs that could bring battery recycling with

Renewable Metals and solar panel manufacturing with SunDrive to the Hunter Energy Hub. Today we add solar panel recycling and solar cable manufacturing to that list of partners," he said.

"If successful, the establishment of a solar panel recycling plant and solar cable manufacturing plant with Elecsome will mean we are hosting several parts of the solar energy value chain with both manufacturing and recycling of grid-scale and residential solar panels at the Hunter Energy Hub.

"These partnerships have the potential to make a significant contribution to the economy of the Upper Hunter by creating new jobs in the renewable energy sector."

Elecsome CEO, Neeraj Das said: "We are thrilled to join the Hunter Energy Hub and contribute to the journey toward net zero, while also advancing resource recovery and onshore manufacturing."

Elecsome has successfully commissioned its first solar PV upcycling facility in Melbourne, where it transforms solar panels into new products used in the construction and manufacturing industries.

If the feasibility study is successful, a second stage of the recycling facility is planned to focus on the extraction of high value materials for the Hunter Energy Hub. The extraction of the materials used in a solar panel includes using silicon wafer for re-use in PV and battery grade silicon, electric conductors for re-use in electrical appliances, silver and copper extracted for other industries, and the aluminium frames repurposed for cans and new solar PV frames.

AGL's vision for the Hunter Energy Hub is to create a low carbon integrated energy hub – designed with circular economy principles – that brings together industries that can make a positive contribution to the energy transition, including renewable energy generation, grid-scale batteries, green advanced manufacturing, and associated industries.



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■ My email password got hacked again.
That's the third time I've had to rename the cat.

■ A car with two city men in it worked its way down a country road and passed a tumbledown shack with a stubble-faced farmer on the front porch.

It had been a dull day and the driver felt he could use a little fun so he stopped the car and said 'hey mister, can you change an 18 dollar bill?

The farmer nodded. "Sure thing, but I have to go inside to get the money."

With that, he disappeared inside.

The driver's companion said, "What are you planning to do?"

"I'm giving him a ten," snickered the driver. "I'll mark up the zero to look like an eight. He'll never know the difference."

The farmer reappeared with a battered wallet. He took the bill offered him with the barest glance and put it into his pocket.

Then he looked up and said, "How do you want the change? Two nines or three sixes?"

■ I took a urine test at the hospital yesterday.
Man, my kleptomania is out of control.

■ George was going to bed when his wife told him that he'd left the light on in the shed. George opened the door to go turn off the light but saw there were people in the shed in the process of stealing things.

He immediately phoned the police, who asked, "Is someone in your house?"

George said, "No," and explained the situation.

Then they explained that all patrols were busy, and that he should simply lock his door and an officer would be there when available.

George said, "Okay," hung up, counted to 30, and phoned the police again.

"Hello, I just called you a few seconds ago because there were people in my shed. Well, you don't have to worry about them now because I've just shot them all."

Then he hung up. Within three minutes three squad cars, an Armed Response unit, and an ambulance showed up. The police caught the burglars red-handed.

One of the policemen said to George, "I thought you said that you'd shot them."

George said, "I thought you said there was nobody available."

■ Tom walks into the psychiatrist's office, very stresses, and says "Doc, you have to help me. I keep thinking I'm a dog. I bark, have a constant craving for dog biscuits and keep chasing cars!"

The psychiatrist says "First of all, calm down and we will see what we can do to help. Here, come and lie down on the couch."

Tom says "Sorry doc, I can't do that. I'm not allowed on furniture!"

■ A customer walks into a coffee shop and asks the barista for the wifi password.

"You need to buy coffee first," the barista says.

"Okay, I'll have an espresso," the customer says.

After paying, the customer asks, "Can I have the password now?"

The barista replies, "Of course! It's 'youneedtobuycoffeeirst'. All lowercase, no spaces."

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little."

— Edmund Burke

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