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 265 King Street
 Newcastle NSW 2300
 PO Box 853, Hamilton NSW 2303
 Phone: (02) 4062 8133

PUBLISHER and EDITOR:

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

ART DIRECTOR:

Sandie Collie
 sandie@HBRmag.com.au

CONTENT MANAGER:

Jason Duncan
 jason@HBRmag.com.au

PRINTING:

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

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From the Editor



In the lead up to the NSW State Election, the commitment by the Liberal and National Government to slash red tape is welcome.

The Government has committed to appointing a NSW Red Tape Commissioner whose task will be to deliver \$1 billion in reductions of red tape, and in doing so making businesses across the state more efficient.

Government

Departments will be required to present regulations to be cut and Ministers proposing a new regulation will need to identify a regulation to be removed.

Particularly for small business, red tape is massive burden that takes time and energy away from the day-to-day operations and reduces business performance.

For too long, regulations have been imposed on business without properly assessing the red tape and compliance burden for business owners and managers. Even well-meaning regulations run the risk of creating an additional burden on businesses that take business owners and managers away from their business priorities, impacting on profitability and job creation.

It is only natural that this announcement will attract some degree of cynicism. Governments have talked about reducing red tape for many years, usually with little to show in terms of action. This announcement, however, does seem to have definite actions involved and would hopefully have real results.

The first problem for this plan is that the current NSW Government needs to win the March election. The opinion polls would indicate that this is unlikely, although we know that polls are not always right. Talking to people generally, there seems little voter engagement in this election, which unfortunately means that few people are actually considering policies.

It would be great if the NSW Labor Party agrees to a similar policy to support local businesses, but we will have to wait and see.

Then of course this is just at the state level. We also need action at the Federal level, perhaps even more so. There is also significant potential to reduce red tape if the Federal and State Governments could work together to remove the massive duplication of red tape.

The NSW Government is to be congratulated to somewhat belatedly announcing these measures and, more generally contributing, to the debate.

The announcement was part of a number of announcements targeted at business. These included committing to a target of 1 million businesses by the year 2030, increasing procurement by more than \$2 billion to \$10 million and grants of \$1000 for small and micro businesses to engage an expert to help their business.

These are all welcome announcements and should be valuable additions to general policy debate but it looks as though not enough are listening.

As always, time will tell, but it would certainly be of benefit for the entire economy if real measures are taken to reduce red tape for all businesses.

Garry Hardie
Publisher and Editor

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www.hbrmag.com.au/2022-hunter-business-function-guide



Bonza flights on sale for Newcastle Airport

Bonza's Bazza aircraft arrives at Sunshine Coast Airport

Flights for Australia's newest low-cost carrier Bonza have gone on sale, allowing people to take advantage of direct flights between Newcastle and two of the most popular holiday destinations in Queensland. Starting in March, Bonza will connect Newcastle Airport to the Sunshine Coast with four flights per week and to the Whitsundays Coast twice weekly.

Newcastle Airport CEO Dr Peter Cock said it's an exciting time for the region, and for the team at Bonza who have been working hard to get the airline ready for take-off.

"We are thrilled to welcome Bonza to Newcastle Airport, adding to our growing domestic route network and providing more affordable holiday options for the people of our region with airfares starting from \$50 for each hour you're in the air."

"The Sunshine Coast is known for its natural beauty, with lots of sandy beaches, national parks, and waterways to explore, while The Whitsundays have 74 islands to discover and endless opportunities for snorkelling, diving, and other water sports.

"By getting more bang for their buck on airfares, it also means travellers from the Sunshine Coast and Whitsundays flying into our region will have more funds to spend on local services and experiences which in turn will provide a boost to our local economy."

Bonza's Chief Commercial Officer Carly Povey said "We're excited to announce we are now on sale with flights from our Sunshine Coast base, which includes Newcastle Airport to Sunny Coast and the Whitsunday Coast. The wait is over - 2023 is the year to see more of your own backyard for less! We can't wait for the Newcastle community to paint the skies purple with our team of legends."

Dr Cock said the introduction of Bonza provides more choice than ever before, and heralds great things for our region in 2023 and beyond.

"We saw over one million passengers pass through Newcastle Airport in 2022, and this is only going to grow thanks to the introduction of the new service from Bonza.

"The more customers we see through Newcastle Airport, the more likely it is we'll be able to connect to more exciting destinations in the future. In the past year alone we have seen the addition of four new routes including Sunshine Coast, The Whitsundays, Cobar and Adelaide.

"The future is made even more bright with Bonza's potential to expand their route map - the Whitsundays and Sunshine Coast are only the beginning," Dr Cock said.



Before



After

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Diversified trade strengthens at Port of Newcastle

Diversified trade through the Port of Newcastle remained strong in 2022, despite the impact of multiple flood events associated with a multi-year La Niña.

CEO Craig Carmody said the results are testament to the Port's resilience during one of the wettest years in recent memory.

"In the first half of 2022 the Hunter experienced five flood events, which had implications across the supply chain," he said.

"Unsurprisingly this contributed to an overall decrease in total import/export trade volumes and ship visits through the Port compared to 2021, handling 145 million tonnes of cargo and recording 4261 vessel movements in 2022.

"Through a collaborative response and making good use of the David Allan dredger and the Port's new sweeper vessel Lydia, we were able to help reduce the impacts of the floods and return the channel to its designed depth, sooner and safely."

Executive Manager of Business Development Matthew Swan said despite the challenges of 2022, the Port continued to see strong trade volumes across a number of key export commodities.

"Meals and grain exports, predominately to China, Japan, and Pakistan recorded a 56% year on year increase, buoyed by a rise in the export of sorghum, barley and canola, with 479,000 tonnes shipped through the port in 2022.

"Wheat continued to perform strongly, the 2.7 million tonnes exported being the second-highest year following 2021.

"Port of Newcastle continued to support major projects in the region with roll on roll off and project cargo including wind turbine components for the Rye Park Wind Farm, rail wagons for the Sydney Metro project as well as grain and coal haulers, equipment for the Snowy 2.0 Kurri Power Station, and mining equipment for customers in the Hunter Valley."

The 2022 trade figures come at an exciting time for Port of Newcastle as it takes significant steps forward in its diversification.

"2023 will be an important year for the Port and our commitment to build a container terminal in Newcastle," Mr Carmody said.

"Once the valuation process for the Port of Newcastle Extinguishment of Liability Act is complete, we look forward to a future where businesses right across the Hunter, Western and Northern NSW can import and export their product through the Port more efficiently and cost effectively.

"We're also taking further steps to secure jobs and the region's future prosperity by developing a dedicated Clean Energy Precinct that will see the Hunter become a hub for the development, production and export of green energy like hydrogen."

UoN opens new International Hotel School

The University of Newcastle is opening an International Hotel School as the next phase in a plan to address labour shortages that plague the tourism sector in the region and beyond.

As the first step in addressing the challenge, a number of students have become the first group to commence a new Bachelor of Tourism, Hospitality and Events at the University of Newcastle this month.

With the tourism industry experiencing a green patch of growth, the introduction of the new degree program has come at an ideal time. Combined with the hands-on practical experience that the Newcastle International Hotel School will provide, students will graduate with the business acumen and employability skills to enjoy a vibrant and successful career in tourism, hospitality and events management.

The tourism industry has been identified as one of Australia's 'high growth' industries and has a current labour shortage, with a record 423,500 positions unfilled across tourism, hospitality and events.

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alex Zelinsky, AO said the new degree was an important milestone for the region, with tourism in the Hunter set to grow over the next decade.

"We are committed to being a University for our region and I am really excited that we are now able to offer a new degree that will address an industry gap for our own region and also the rest of Australia.


"Local tourism and hospitality businesses are looking for more staff and we know this need will only increase as the tourism industry continues to grow. We want to provide the best practical learning experience for our students and that's why as part of the next phase of this program we will work with local industry partners and vocational education providers, such as TAFE NSW, to provide a Newcastle International Hotel School."

"With projects like the Newcastle International Airport expansion already underway, we are only going to see our tourism potential grow over the coming years, so I am proud that we are at the forefront, equipping our students with the skills to meet this growing market."


The University of Newcastle's Bachelor of Tourism, Hospitality and Events sits within the Newcastle Business School in the College of Human and Social Futures and will be delivered through a unique partnership with TAFE NSW.

The University's partnership with TAFE NSW, will allow students to study at both TAFE NSW and the University of Newcastle for the first 18 months, and then move to full time study at the University of Newcastle for their final 18 months. This will provide the added advantage of allowing students to graduate with both an Advanced Diploma from TAFE NSW and a bachelor's degree from the University of Newcastle in just three years, creating more education pathways and fast-tracking employability opportunities.

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## BAE Systems to establish F-35 Asia-Pacific Regional Warehouse

BAE Systems Australia has secured a new contract with Lockheed Martin to activate an F-35 Asia-Pacific Regional Warehouse at its Williamstown aircraft sustainment operations.

Housing critical parts of the Joint Strike Fighter, the warehouse is the third facility in the global support solution for the F-35 program with locations already in the Netherlands and United States.

In addition to maintaining Royal Australian Air Force F-35 aircraft, the facility will support F-35 variants operating in the region. This includes aircraft operating out of Singapore, Japan and South Korea, from US Navy and Royal Navy carrier aircraft and US Marine Corps F-35Bs deployed in the region.

The new contract will provide a foundation for jobs growth at the company's Williamstown facility. By 2031, over 360 jobs will be created through the Regional Warehouse Program at the Williamstown precinct.

The announcement follows a \$80 million Air Vehicle Support Services (AVSS) contract in December 2021 and the Commonwealth's \$100 million investment in the expansion of Williamstown facility in November 2022.

BAE Systems Australia, Managing Director for Defence Delivery, Andrew Gresham said "This contract is an integral part of building fighter jet sovereign capability within Australia and I am delighted we are able to expand our current contribution to the F-35 program.

"For 30 years, we have provided maintenance and upgrades to the Royal Australian Air Force jets and the inclusion of the Asia-Pacific Regional Warehouse not only increases Australia's global defence footprint, it cements Williamstown as an aerospace hub.

"This means more local jobs within the Hunter Region for years to come."



## Hamilton Locke acquires Morrissey Law + Advisory

Hamilton Locke is expanding across Australia with the acquisition of Morrissey Law + Advisory (MLA). With offices in Newcastle, Sydney and Port Macquarie, MLA specialised in project delivery and advisory across the construction and infrastructure sectors.

Established in Newcastle in 2017, the MLA team has worked closely with businesses across the transport, not-for-profit, financial services, and agribusiness sectors. Their specialist areas include all areas of construction and infrastructure, including major projects, contract drafting and negotiations, project delivery, dispute resolution, security of payment, and general commercial advisory.

The firm has been operating as Hamilton Locke from 1 January.

With the acquisition of MLA, Hamilton Locke will now operate in Newcastle, whilst continuing to provide services to clients from its Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and newly announced Auckland office, with the establishment of Hamilton Locke New Zealand.

Nick Humphrey, Managing Partner of Hamilton Locke said "We are delighted for the MLA team to join our expanding offering across Australia and New Zealand. MLA's business is strategically



Managing Partner of Hamilton Locke Nick Humphrey

aligned with Hamilton Locke, in particular the firm's focus on innovation and agile delivery models, as well as providing a strong people experience and culture. MLA has significant depth and breadth of expertise in the construction and infrastructure sectors, and we are looking forward to bolstering our expertise to further deliver these services to our clients."

Hamish Geddes, Managing Director of MLA said "Hamilton Locke's people-led culture and dedication to creating the best possible client

experience directly aligns with our team's values. We are thrilled to join Hamilton Locke and continue to provide our staff with opportunities for growth, as well as exceptional service to our clients with our expanded offering. We look forward to collaborating with our colleagues at Hamilton Locke and maintaining our focus on helping our clients' businesses grow and thrive."

Hamilton Locke continues to be recognised as Australia's fastest growing law firm, with the partnership now totalling 50 partners. Hamilton Locke is part of professional services firm, HPX Group, providing legal, governance, risk and compliance services. Also part of HPX Group is in-house style essential professional services firm, Source. Providing business-as-usual services across legal, governance, HR, risk and compliance, Source works with clients on an outsourced basis with a fixed amount or retainer-based pricing model.

## Visitor Economy Grants set to boost local business

Cessnock City Council has announced the latest round of Visitor Economy Grants to boost local business through mid-week tourism.

Organisations or individuals wanting to host events, run projects and hold conferences in the Hunter Valley region are invited to apply for the grants, which provide funding to support mid-week visitation. The program aims to attract organisations to the Hunter Valley and builds on Council's aim to facilitate the growth of the Hunter Valley visitor economy.

Cessnock City Mayor Jay Suvaal said attracting mid-week visitation would help create more jobs and boost the local economy.

"Figures show that with just 10% more mid-week visitors we could create up to \$15 million of extra cashflow in the Cessnock Local Government Area," Mayor Suvaal said.

Powerful Perceptions is a local business which has previously received a Visitor Economy Grant from Council. The company used the grant to launch the Plan Your Event Hunter website, an online listing site showcasing everything an individual or organisation could want to plan the perfect event in the Hunter. This includes hospitality services, entertainment, venue hire, styling hire and more.

Plan Your Event Hunter has a particular focus on increasing the revenue of local businesses by boosting midweek visitation to the Hunter region.

The website will allow local businesses to collaborate with one another, enhancing their offerings. It will also give locals with "side hustles" an opportunity to increase their profitability and grow their business.

Powerful Perceptions Director Rachel Fraser said she was passionate about improving small business growth and the socio-economic development of our "beautiful" region.

"I'm convinced that Plan Your Event Hunter will create amazing opportunities for a wide variety of local businesses," Ms Fraser said.

Applications for the second round of grants are open until 28 February. For more information on the Visitor Economy Grants, see [www.cessnock.nsw.gov.au/Residents/Community-services-and-support/Council-grants-and-club-grants](http://www.cessnock.nsw.gov.au/Residents/Community-services-and-support/Council-grants-and-club-grants)



# 2023 HUNTER INVESTMENT PROSPECTUS

Promoting the Hunter as a  
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## Vertex Project Management establishes new Hunter Street office

Following a significant growth period over the last 12 months, Vertex Project Management's Newcastle office has moved into a brand-new space at 539 Hunter Street. While the company works nationally, with offices in Sydney and a presence in Brisbane and Melbourne, Vertex Project Management has strong ties in Newcastle.

Founder and Project Director of Vertex PM, Aaron Lawrence said their team quickly outgrew their previous office space located in Newcastle West in just a few short years.

"Despite the challenges thrown at us to the pandemic, our team has experienced considerable growth, particularly in 2022," Aaron said.

"Because of this growth we knew we needed to find a new office space to fit with our growing team in Newcastle and to better represent our brand and goals."

The new office took a total of 12 weeks to fit out beginning in September and concluding with the team moving in at the end of November. Vertex PM worked with local architects, EJE Architecture who designed the space, and Fuller Building Solutions who carried out the building work. The team knew they were taking on a tricky project, as the building was in a state of disrepair when they started developments.

"Despite how the building looked to begin with, we were looking forward to breathing life back into the space," Aaron said.

"While it was a smaller project than what our team was used to, we treated it like a large-scale project because it was important that the space captured the quality and craftsmanship we are known for as a brand."

Following the 12 week project, the new office was developed with plenty of meeting rooms and desk space for their team, as well as a full kitchen, lounge area and outdoor space.



## Ampcontrol partners with Whiteley in chronic wounds research grant

Ampcontrol is partnering with Whiteley Corporation in chronic wounds research after receiving a grant in Round 13 of the Australian Government's Cooperative Research Centres Projects (CRC-P) program which totals \$5.6 million over three years.

On 19 January 2023, Minister for Industry and Science, Hon Ed Husic MP, announced \$44 million in grants for Australian companies to support 19 collaborative research projects. Cooperative Research Centres Projects support companies working to commercialise cutting-edge ideas in collaboration with researchers and innovators.

Effective management of chronic wounds requires a combination of treatments that include wound debridement, an anti-biofilm treatment, wound mapping, and a deeper tissue

perception of bacterial engagement beyond the wound surface, which cannot typically be seen.

This project brings together a collaborative team made up of Whiteley Corporation, ResTech - a joint venture between Ampcontrol and the University of Newcastle - and Western Sydney University to create a singular approach to wound care.

"This work will be of major medical impact worldwide. Chronic wounds start with a minor skin injury that doesn't heal but progresses to a problem costing \$3.5 billion in Australia alone," said Associate Professor Greg Whiteley, Executive Chairman of Whiteley Corporation.

"We are thrilled to be a partner in this industry-led medical research collaboration with the Whiteley Corporation, University of Newcastle, and Western Sydney University. The funding enables industry innovators, researchers, students, and end-users to work together to deliver real outcomes for our community and economy," said Ampcontrol Managing Director & CEO Rod Henderson.

The CRC-P grants are awarded through a competitive, merit-based selection process, assessed by an independent committee of industry experts. The CRC-P grants support industry-led research projects, offering matched funding of between \$100,000 and \$3 million. Grants are for a period of up to three years.

## Singleton's sustainable action celebrated with another major environment award

Singleton's approach to sustainability has been celebrated as industry leading after taking out the Local Sustainability Award (Division A - for councils with a population less than 30,000) in the Local Government NSW Excellence in the Environment Awards 2022.

Held annually, the Awards recognise outstanding achievements by NSW councils in managing and protecting the environment.

Singleton Council was recognised for its State of the Environment Report 2021. More than a requirement of the Local Government Act for end of term reporting, the State of Environment is a checklist of the tangible actions taken by Council and the local community in living out the ethos to value, protect and enhance a sustainable environment.

The report showcases a long list of achievements including a 31% reduction in Council electricity usage, 29% reduction in Council's greenhouse gas emissions, and a more than doubling of Council's use of renewable energy.

Justin Fitzpatrick Barr, Council's Director Infrastructure and Planning Services said these outcomes reflect the substantial shift in Council's organisational approach to sustainability with a course of actions to lead by example.

He said the Local Government NSW Environment award – Council's second in as many years – was due recognition for the wide range of projects, programs and initiatives in a continued emphasis on sustainability across the local government area.

To view the Singleton State of the Environment Report, visit [www.singleton.nsw.gov.au](http://www.singleton.nsw.gov.au)

*Singleton Council's Environmental Projects Officer Lexi Crouch, Manager Development and Environmental Services Mary-Anne Crawford and Sustainability Projects Officer Bonnie Wilson*





## Next steps in the expansion of the Newcastle Art Gallery

Artists from across Australia are being invited to make their mark on the expansion of Newcastle Art Gallery as the project takes the next step towards construction. Newcastle Art Gallery will commission four new works of art to be displayed on the hoarding (temporary fencing) erected around the site for the duration of the construction work, which is on track to begin mid-year.

An expression of interest for artists was launched by Newcastle Art Gallery, coinciding with City of Newcastle opening a tender for the four contractors shortlisted to complete the main construction works.

Newcastle Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes said these steps were a positive sign of things to come for the Art Gallery.

"It's wonderful to kick off the new year with two important milestones for this much-anticipated project continuing on time towards the planned completion of our reimagined Newcastle Art Gallery at the end of 2024," Cr Nelmes said.

"The expansion will provide greater access to our nationally significant collection and a wider range of prominent exhibitions.

"In the meantime, however, it is important to give our community as many avenues as possible to stay connected to the Newcastle Art Gallery including an outreach program at local schools, our Night Galleries digital displays throughout the city, and a new six-part podcast series, Conversations from the Collection.

"Given the site's prominent location in the heart of our city, the construction hoarding project offers a unique opportunity for established or emerging artists to reach new audiences while also improving the external view of the work zone.

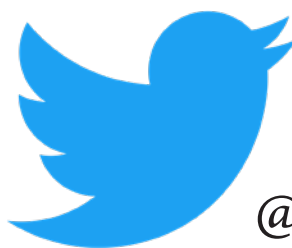
"I can't wait to see the calibre of concepts proposed by artists during this expression of interest period, and also look forward to the successful construction company and timelines being confirmed at a future Council meeting following the tender process."

Local and national artists and collectives working in all mediums are invited to apply for this project, with the chosen works of art to be digitally reproduced for display on the construction hoarding. For more information visit [www.nag.org.au](http://www.nag.org.au)

The street hoarding project is being supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW.

The \$40 million expansion project is supported by \$5 million from the Australian Government under the Regional Recovery Partnerships program and \$5 million from the New South Wales Government, as well as \$10.5 million from the Newcastle Art Gallery Foundation made possible through the Valerie and John Ryan bequest, Margaret Olley Trust, and community fundraising over many years. A further \$2.5 million is being sought through the Foundation's public fundraising campaign.

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## Hunter Valley Airshow

An all-ages aviation event will be taken to new heights in the Hunter under a \$193,458 grant from the NSW Government's Regional Events Acceleration Fund Round Two.

Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional NSW Paul Toole said some of the world's most talented pilots and about 20,000 tourists would converge on Cessnock for the annual two-day festival, showcasing hair-raising aerobatics, historical warbirds, and amusement rides.

"This funding will deliver essential offsite parking, free shuttle bus services, and improved accessibility to ensure even more people can enjoy this incredible event," Mr Toole said.

"Events like this put regional NSW on the map, attracting domestic and international tourists who pump serious dollars into the local economy, whether it be putting more heads on beds, filling restaurants and cafés or filling up your car at the local servo."

"This project builds on the more than 100 events the NSW Liberal and Nationals Government has supported through this Fund, attracting an estimated one million visitors to regional NSW."

Member for the Upper Hunter Dave Layzell said it will be an event not to be missed.

"The Regional Events Acceleration Fund has already pumped \$785,548 into the Upper Hunter electorate to support six projects over the past two rounds, including \$150,000 for the Singleton Firelight Festival in May last year, and now we're building on that investment by bringing the world's best talent to the sky above the Hunter Valley," Mr Layzell said.

"This is a huge drawcard for tourism, with the weekend of full-throttle family entertainment the perfect opportunity to promote this region, support local businesses and experience some of the best wineries Australia has to offer."

Hunter Valley Airshow Founder and pilot Paul Bennet said the funding is essential in allowing them to deliver an outstanding airshow event to the people of regional NSW.

"Hunter Valley Airshow's goal is to not only provide a fun day out for the whole family, but to showcase the amazing strengths and culture the Hunter and its surrounds have to offer," Mr Bennet said.

"As a result of this funding, we expect to be able to deliver a much-needed boost to the local economy, tourism and hospitality trade. After a difficult few years, we want to make this a flagship event and breathe new life into the region."

The \$40 million Regional Events Acceleration Fund is part of the \$3.3 billion Regional Growth Fund, designed to support growing regional centres, activate local economies and improve services and community infrastructure for regional communities.

The Hunter Valley Airshow will be held at Pokolbin from Saturday, 25 March to Sunday, 26 March 2023. For further information, visit: [nsw.gov.au/REAFund](http://nsw.gov.au/REAFund).



## Applications open to revitalise Newcastle Port Precinct

Innovative community projects will help guide the future of Australia's oldest harbour, the Port of Newcastle, with applications now open for Round Eight of the Government's Newcastle Port Community Contribution Fund.

Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional NSW Paul Toole said up to \$2 million will be available under Round Eight for projects that revitalise the Port and surrounding areas for the community and visitors.

"The Port of Newcastle is a vital economic, industrial and tourist hub and this round of funding will help deliver projects that will further showcase the area's rich history as well as provide economic stimulus and a boost to tourism," Mr Toole said.

"The NSW Liberal and Nationals Government understands the potential of the historic Port of Newcastle and we continue to showcase that by supporting projects that will benefit the wider community and give visitors even more reasons to stay."

Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter Taylor Martin said areas surrounding the Port have seen significant revitalisation in recent years through projects undertaken by local groups.

"The Newcastle Port Community Contribution Fund has backed 41 diverse and high-quality projects worth \$6.9 million since 2014, which are all helping to deliver ongoing benefits for the Newcastle community," Mr Martin said.

"The program recently delivered funding for projects including the restoration of the Stockton Community War Memorial, the expansion of a sailing program for people with disabilities and upgrades to the Carrington Bowling Club."

The Newcastle Port Community Contribution Fund provides grants of between \$50,000 and \$500,000 for projects that benefit the environment, public domain, infrastructure, heritage restoration, activation, smart technology, or communities.

The increase of the minimum grant amount to \$50,000 under Round Eight will enable the Fund to attract larger-scale community infrastructure projects, delivering increased public amenity to the area.

Applications for Newcastle Port Community Contribution Fund Round Eight are open now and close at 5.00 pm (AEDT) on 28 February. Program guidelines and eligibility criteria are available at [www.nsw.gov.au/npc](http://www.nsw.gov.au/npc)

## Cessnock Council offers community organisations extra support

Cessnock City Council is offering financial support in the form of a rates subsidy to local not-for-profit community organisations. The subsidy covers up to 50% of council rates to recognise the value of community organisations. The financial support will help with the delivery of services and activities provided by community groups in the Cessnock Local Government Area.

Cessnock City Mayor Jay Suvaal said the rates subsidy strengthens and rewards community organisations.

"This is a good initiative to make sure all of our valued community groups receive help at rates time," Mayor Suvaal said.

"Financial assistance helps support the activities and services community groups provide, this leads to improved and continued participation in community events."

"I strongly encourage all of our community organisations to apply and take advantage of the rates subsidy."

To be eligible, organisations must meet the principles of Council's Rates Subsidy Policy, which can be viewed on Council's website and complete the rates subsidy application with required supporting documentation.

Applications for the 2023-24 financial year subsidy must be lodged with Council by 15 March 2023. For further information contact Council's Customer Services department on

(02) 4993 4100 or visit [www.cessnock.nsw.gov.au/rates-subsidy](http://www.cessnock.nsw.gov.au/rates-subsidy)



## TAFE NSW Tighes Hill partners with Ramsay Health Care to build local nursing workforce

TAFE NSW Tighes Hill is helping build the Hunter's nursing workforce of the future as part of a landmark partnership with Australia's largest private hospital operator, Ramsay Health Care.

It comes as the nation's nursing ranks face a skills gap worsened by the pandemic, with the Health Department predicting a shortfall of about 85,000 nurses nationwide by 2025.

The recently launched Ramsay Cadetship Program will support enrolled nursing students by giving TAFE NSW Tighes Hill Diploma of Nursing students guaranteed work placement, the opportunity for employment while studying and a guaranteed interview for a position at a local Ramsay hospital after graduating.

TAFE NSW Nursing Discipline Leader Zachary Byfield said the partnership provided a powerful example of how Australia's largest vocational education and training provider worked closely with industry to address critical workforce needs.

"The pandemic has reinforced the vital role our nurses play in our communities and TAFE NSW is committed to ensuring a steady pipeline of nursing graduates across the state," Mr Byfield said.

"This partnership ensures TAFE NSW nursing students become part of the Ramsay workforce while still studying and gives them a practical experience of their course material."

The partnership also ensures TAFE NSW Tighes Hill students are given a mentor during work placement and work across a number of wards and departments, affording them a deeper understanding of Ramsay's culture, policies and practices.

As well as a job within a Ramsay hospital while they study, cadets receive a guaranteed graduate interview when they finish their course.



TAFE NSW Nursing Lead Zachary Byfield

Positions on offer for cadets in NSW include assistants in nursing and undergraduate enrolled nurse or registered nurse or midwifery roles in a range of areas including operating suites, maternity, mental health, cardiac and rehabilitation services.

Ramsay Health Care Chief Nurse and Clinical Services Director, Dr Bernadette Eather, said the national cadetship program will help develop leading nurses of the future.

"Ramsay Health Care has a wonderful relationship with TAFE NSW and we're excited to take this a step further by offering cadetship places to TAFE NSW Diploma of Nursing students," Dr Eather said.

"The cadets will gain valuable experience and genuine insight into what it's like working in the healthcare industry as a nurse. They will get to partner with experienced Ramsay Health Care nurses who are committed to providing excellent health care for their patients."

"Best of all, they will become part of the Ramsay family and be surrounded by a team committed to helping them grow their skills and excel in their nursing careers."



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## Empty Container Park expands Port's container service offering

Port of Newcastle's container ambitions continue to grow, with container operations now forming part of the Multipurpose Terminal's services at the Mayfield 4 Berth.

The Empty Container Park compliments Port of Newcastle's Multipurpose Terminal container capability and growth, with Empty Container Park storage ideally located adjacent to the Multipurpose Terminal minimising additional landside movements.

Port of Newcastle CEO, Craig Carmody, said that in the financial year ending 30 June 2022, over 60% of NSW container export were empty containers.

"Empty container management is a vital function for efficient container trade operations," Mr Carmody said.

"Empty container parks aid in managing the imbalance between imports and exports that exists within Australian container operations by assisting container flow," he said.

Beneficiaries of the Empty Container Park will be agri-businesses throughout the Hunter, New England and North-West, who historically have found it challenging to access empty containers to package produce for export.

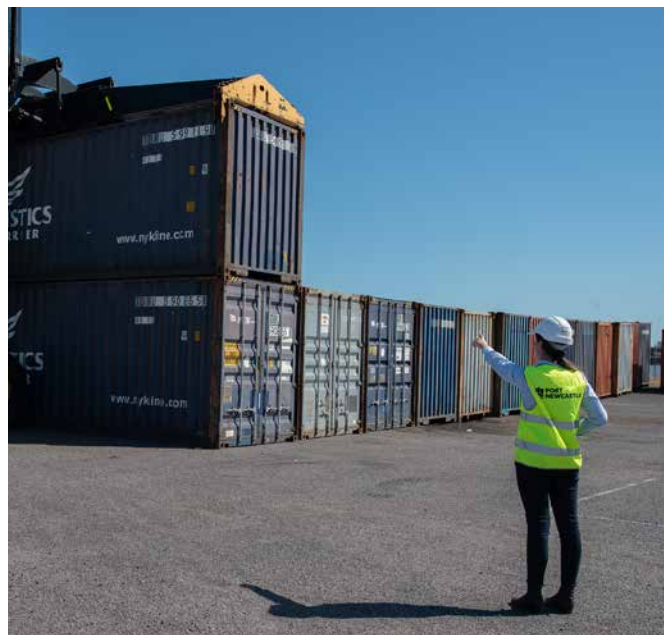
Senior Manager of Business Development at Port of Newcastle, Kate McArthur, said in the future, access to a ready supply of empty containers will allow farmers to export more produce.

"Having access to empty containers aids speed to market, which allows exporters to take advantage of opportunities and capitalise on good prices. We are hopeful by working with farmers, business owners and other key stakeholders we can continue to develop infrastructure to better serve the needs of our future customers," Ms McArthur said.

"A challenge for agri-businesses, particularly in the last few seasons, has been accessing empty containers to fill and send back to port."

"With growth of our operations and capabilities, we aim, over time, to fill this gap in the market and ensure our farmers and agri-businesses have every opportunity to take full advantage of large harvest seasons and export their product effectively and efficiently," she said.

Back-of-berth hardstand expansion works are currently underway at the Multipurpose Terminal, with waterside works to begin later in the year to accommodate larger vessels. Once complete, the Multipurpose Terminal will be able to accommodate 85 percent of container vessels that arrive in Australia.



## Central Maitland reserve to be transformed into youth and events space

Harold Gregson Reserve in Central Maitland will be transformed into an expansive and exciting youth and events space in a \$7 million project delivered by Maitland City Council in partnership with the NSW Government.

Kids of all ages are the big winners from the project, with a brand new playspace, full sized basketball and multipurpose court, parkour equipment, and an upgraded skate park on the way to Harold Gregson Reserve. An events lawn and amphitheatre, an amenities block, large picnic shelter, RV parking, public electric vehicle charging and new parking and shade for the existing offroad remote control track are among the other features on the way thanks to the \$7 million project.

Positive environmental outcomes are a priority of these works, with the planting of large legacy trees like figs to provide deep shade and improve canopy cover. The site has also been identified by Council as one which will be targeted for further revegetation in the future. The fourth and final stage of the Maitland Regional Sports Complex, this project funded by the NSW Government in association with Maitland City Council, with \$3 million in funding from NSW Public Spaces Legacy Program and \$2,708,640 from Resources for Regions Round 9. Council have contributed a further \$1.2 million. Speaking at a sod turning ceremony with Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter, Taylor Martin, Mayor Philip Penfold celebrated the recreation area as the incredible final stage of almost a decade of works at the site.

"We've watched over the past eight years as this site has developed from a humble sportsground and grass running track into the much loved, modern Maitland Regional Sports Complex that we now know, and to see this final stage of works get underway is fantastic," Mayor Penfold said.

"To bring such a wide variety of play options to one place – a playspace, multipurpose court, parkour equipment and upgrades to the skate park – will create a hub for Maitland's kids to head out and enjoy themselves.

"It will transform this underutilised space in the heart of our city into a place of activity, recreation and respite. I'm looking forward to the works being completed and the people of Maitland get out and spend time among what will be an amazing space in the centre of our city."

Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter Taylor Martin said Resources for Regions has been very successful, with Rounds One through Nine delivering eight projects for Maitland worth more than \$15.3 million.





**MORAY & AGNEW LAWYERS**

**Kathryn Burrows** has commenced at Moray & Agnew Lawyers as Special Counsel – Insurance Law. Kathryn has extensive experience in major and complex compulsory third party (CTP) insurance claims, representing insurers in defending catastrophic claims. She implements effective strategies for the resolution of matters to ensure favourable outcomes are achieved on behalf of her clients in the Personal Injury Commission, District Courts of NSW, and the Supreme Court of NSW.

**NEWCASTLE AIRPORT**

Newcastle Airport has welcomed **Burcak Sezer** as Executive General Manager, Marketing and Communications. Burcak is responsible for leading the airport's marketing and communication efforts. It's a return to Newcastle for Burcak, who completed her Marketing degree at University of Newcastle two decades ago. Since that time, Burcak has worked across iconic consumer brands like Schick, Kleenex and Huggies, leading teams in global companies in Australia, Europe and most recently in Asia Pacific.

**AMPCONTROL**

Ampcontrol has appointed **Stacey Sleeman** as Finance Director and Chief Financial Officer. Stacey joins Ampcontrol from Tomago Aluminium, where she has served as CFO and Company Secretary since 2019. Stacey brings over 20 years of corporate finance, operational performance, business improvement, and senior leadership in resources, industrial manufacturing, and renewable energy. During her impressive career, Stacey has held senior financial roles with Anglo American Coal, PanAust, Deloitte, and PricewaterhouseCoopers.

**MORAY & AGNEW LAWYERS**

Moray & Agnew Lawyers has appointed **Natalie Oliver** as Special Counsel – Commercial Litigation and Disputes. Natalie is sought after for her expertise as a commercial litigator. She focuses on infrastructure disputes, class actions, arbitration and complex litigation, drawing on her years of experience as a litigator on behalf of clients in the infrastructure, oil and gas, resources and finance sectors.

**MORAY & AGNEW LAWYERS**

**Erin Woodward** has commenced as Special Counsel – Insurance Law at Moray & Agnew Lawyers. Erin is a skilled lawyer with an outstanding reputation in the Mid North Coast and Hunter region. She has a wealth of experience in personal injury insurance law, having worked exclusively in this field for 20 years. Her experience spans motor accident claims, workers compensation, public liability and medical negligence. Erin is a Law Society of NSW Accredited Specialist in personal injury law.

**UNESCO**

The University of Newcastle's **Professor Penny Jane Burke** has been appointed a UNESCO Chair in Equity, Social Justice and Higher Education – a role that will see her working to improve the lives of marginalised groups around the world. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation is a specialised agency of the United Nations, with Chairs appointed to create a network by partnering with institutions across the globe to address pressing challenges, reduce inequalities and improve equitable access to education.

# THIS COULD BE YOUR PERSON



## 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](mailto:editorial@HBRmag.com.au)**

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



# Small Business Restructuring (SBR): Factsheet for directors

**Paul Gidley**

**Shaw Gidley Insolvency and Reconstruction**

In 2021, the Government made changes to Australia's insolvency laws to provide a restructuring alternative specifically designed for small businesses in financial trouble. The process allows financially distressed small businesses to access a single, streamlined process to restructure their debts, while allowing the owners to remain in control of their business.

It's designed to help small businesses to survive, giving better outcomes for businesses, creditors, employees and the economy.

## Accessing the SBR process

To be eligible to access an SBR your company must:

- Be incorporated under the Corporations Act.
- Have total liabilities which do not exceed \$1 million on the day the company enters the process. This excludes employee entitlements.
- Resolve that it is insolvent or likely to become insolvent at some future time and that a small business restructuring practitioner should be appointed; and
- Appoint a small business restructuring practitioner to oversee the restructuring process, including working with you to develop your debt restructuring plan and restructuring proposal statement.

## The SBR plan

The SBR plan sets out how a company's creditors would be repaid. The plan is flexible and describes how creditors will get paid, how much they will get paid and when they will get paid. The plan is accompanied by a restructuring proposal statement, which includes a schedule setting out the company's creditors, and the amount they are owed by the company.

## Staying in control of the business during the SBR

Once a company enters the process:

- The company stays in control of the process, and may undertake transactions that are in the ordinary course of business;
- The company develops a debt restructuring plan and a restructuring proposal statement which is put to creditors for a vote; and
- The company is assisted in this process by its small business restructuring practitioner.

## Frequently asked questions

### How do I know if my company is insolvent?

A company is insolvent when it is not able to pay all the company's debts when they become payable.

Warning signs that a company is insolvent include accruing losses, cashflow difficulties, overdue taxes and lodgements, legal issues, and difficulty gaining access to new credit.

If you are unsure of whether your company is insolvent, you may wish to seek advice from your Shaw Gidley or your external financial or legal advisor.

### What does it mean to trade 'in the ordinary course of business'?

A company may continue to trade in line with its normal, day-to-day operations.

Certain transactions are deemed to be outside the ordinary course of business.

These are:

- Satisfying a debt or claim that would otherwise be dealt with under the restructuring plan.

- The transfer or sale of the whole or a part of the business; and
- The payment of a dividend.

If a transaction is outside the ordinary course of business, the restructuring practitioner must approve the transaction.

### What do I need to do before putting a SBR plan to my creditors?

Before you can put a plan to your creditors, your company must be in substantial compliance with the following requirements:

- Employee entitlements which are due and payable must be paid. This excludes leave and other entitlements that are not currently due to be paid.
- Tax lodgements must be up to date. That means that all relevant tax returns and activity statements are lodged with the ATO. Tax debts do not need to be paid for a plan to be put to creditors.

### What debts are included in the plan?

All unsecured debts which were incurred prior to the company entering restructuring are included in the restructuring plan.

- The exception is employee entitlements (including those not yet payable, like leave or redundancy entitlements), which are not included in the plan.

Debts incurred after the company enters restructuring are not part of the plan and must be paid off outside of the plan.

### How long does the SBR process take?

The company must put a restructuring plan to its creditors within 20 business days of entering the process. The company's small business restructuring practitioner can extend this period by up to 10 business days where an extension is reasonable in the circumstances.

Once a plan is put to creditors, they have 15 business days to vote to accept or reject the plan.

### What action can creditors take during this period?

When a company enters restructuring, a moratorium is applied on unsecured creditor claims and some secured creditor claims. This means:

- Unsecured creditors cannot begin, continue, or enforce their claims.
- Owners of property (other than perishable property) used or occupied by the company, or people who lease such property to the company, cannot recover their property.
- Secured creditors cannot enforce their security interest in the company's assets in some circumstances.
- A creditor holding a personal guarantee from the company's director/s or their relatives cannot act under the personal guarantee without the court's consent; and
- Ipso facto clauses (which are triggered during insolvency-related events) are stayed for some contracts.

### How do creditors vote on a SBR plan?

The restructuring practitioner provides creditors with the restructuring proposal statement and the restructuring plan.

Once a plan is put to creditors, they may vote to accept or reject the plan. They have 15 business days to vote to accept or reject the plan. The restructuring practitioner oversees the voting process.

During this 'proposal period', creditors can seek to vary the debt the restructuring statement says they are owed if they believe it is not accurately reflected in the restructuring proposal statement.

A plan is accepted if more than 50 % of the creditors by value that vote, vote to accept the plan.

To ensure integrity, related party creditors (that is those linked to the company, its directors, or its shareholders) are not entitled to vote on a restructuring plan.



**What happens once a plan is made?**

Once a plan is made, payments must be disbursed to a company's creditors in accordance with the terms set out in the plan.

All admissible debts and claims rank equally upon repayment of the plan. That means that all creditors are paid the same 'cents in the dollar' and all are paid at the same time.

When a company pays off its obligations under the restructuring plan, it is released from all debts or claims that were admissible under the plan.

A company 'exits' a plan if, for example, it fails to make payments under the plan. If this happens before its obligations are paid off, it remains liable for the original debt owed prior to the plan commencing, minus any repayments that occurred under the plan.

**What happens if the SBR plan is not accepted by creditors?**

The plan must be supported by more than 50 % of the creditors by value that vote.

If the restructuring plan is not accepted, the restructuring process ends.

You remain in control of the company but creditors are no longer prevented from enforcing their rights and you are no longer protected from liability for insolvent trading.

You may wish to consider placing the company into liquidation.

**What is the role of the SBR practitioner?**

The small business restructuring practitioner oversees the debt restructuring but the company's directors remain in control of the business.

The small business restructuring practitioner assists the company to:

- Prepare its restructuring plan and restructuring proposal statement; and
- Circulate the restructuring plan and restructuring proposal statement to creditors.

The practitioner must also certify to creditors that they believe the company is eligible for restructuring, and that the company is likely to be able to meet its obligations under the plan. They must take reasonable steps to verify this.

Once a plan is made, the small business restructuring practitioner manages the disbursement of payments to the company's creditors based on the terms set out in the plan.

**What qualifications do SBR practitioners have?**

SBR practitioners must be Registered Liquidators.

They must possess suitable experience, knowledge, and abilities, and have their registration granted by an independent committee convened by ASIC.

Businesses should only deal with a practitioner who is registered.

**What is the cost of a small business restructuring?**

The cost of the restructuring will vary depending on the company and the complexity of the restructure.

However, the SBR practitioner must offer a flat fee to assist you to prepare the restructuring plan and to put the plan to creditors.

You and the SBR practitioner must agree on this cost before the restructuring commences.

In addition to the planning flat fee, once a plan is agreed by the creditors, the small business practitioner will be paid an agreed percentage of the disbursements to creditors under the plan.

Creditors will be made aware of, and must consent to, this proposed remuneration when voting on a plan.

**For further information contact Shaw Gidley Insolvency and Reconstruction on (02) 4908 4444, email [newcastle@shawgidley.com.au](mailto:newcastle@shawgidley.com.au) or visit [www.shawgidley.com.au](http://www.shawgidley.com.au)**



**Paul Gidley** is a Director of Shaw Gidley Insolvency and Reconstruction. He has specialist expertise and experience in both corporate and personal insolvency and has practiced in corporate recovery and insolvency since 1991 whilst working at Ernst & Young, Jirsch Sutherland, Lawler Partners and Ferrier Hodgson Newcastle before Shaw Gidley.



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## Increased demand in Newcastle office market

The Property Council of Australia's latest Office Market Report for Newcastle has shown demand for office is strong with increased supply coming online over the past year to January 2023.

Property Council of Australia's Hunter Regional Director Anita Hugo said while there was an increase in overall vacancy rate to 11.7, this is largely due to additional supply - rather than tenants moving out.

"What the results are showing are that despite the pandemic and changes in working habits, we have a strong, emerging regional office market with growing population, local economic growth and a strong supply pipeline."

Ms Hugo said the Newcastle CBD would continue to prosper with 12,334 sqm of space due to come online in 2023 and 16,266 sqm in 2024.

"Businesses are continuing to recognise how attractive the regional office is to employees as we continue to see more people migrate from large cities post pandemic," she said.

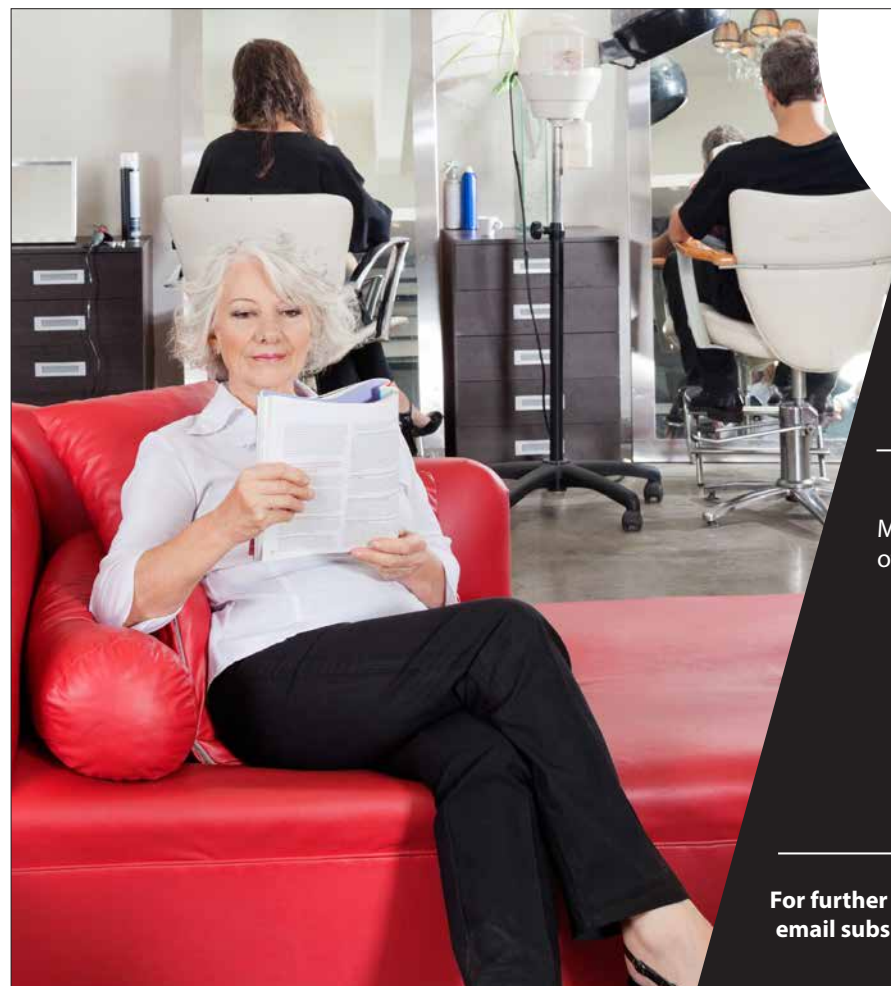
"We know that places like Newcastle are increasingly attractive as centres of economic activity as they also offer the lifestyle that more and more people are seeking, and we need to harness this opportunity.

"Our proximity to Sydney, our large and skilled workforce and excellent work-life balance, makes Newcastle a key employment destination and we must continue working together to support good strategic planning and the growth of our city.

"This means working strategically with key stakeholders and all levels of government to the economic growth of our city, backed by good decision making and planning that supports business and investment in our CBD."

### Key market indicators, Newcastle (aggregate)

| GRADE        | VACANCY<br>JAN 23 (%) | VACANCY<br>JAN 22 (%) | NET ABSORPTION 12 MONTHS TO<br>JAN 23 (SQM) |
|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| A            | 11.1                  | 8.5                   | 4,211                                       |
| B            | 13.7                  | 11.5                  | -843                                        |
| C            | 10.4                  | 14.4                  | 1,394                                       |
| D            | 1.6                   | 11.0                  | -1,107                                      |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>11.7</b>           | <b>10.8</b>           | <b>3,655</b>                                |



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## Plenty of investment money still looking for a home

**Jason Morris**  
**Movable**

With the unrelenting interest rates rises of the past 8 months, you would think that a heading like this would be long gone and the doom and gloom would have set in by now.

But for many investors, that certainly is not the case and they are still paying good money for commercial investments.

From our side of the fence it hasn't mattered what the investment class has been, as we have seen strong results in retail, commercial and industrial sectors; and not only our agencies sales either as our competitors have seen the same continued interest.

But what is a strong result?

We are talking multiple sales showing annual yields of 4 to 5%, all the while commercial interest rates are at 6 to 7% and climbing.

So what do we put it down too? Well apart from the fact that Aussies generally love the safe haven of good old bricks n mortar, it seems as though there is a pent up amount of buyers that have unspent funds through the covid years. Supply was slim pickings in 2020/21 and with 2022 came a lot more opportunities; they just happened to come along when interest rate rises did as well.

Will we see it continue in 2023; we think not but who can pick it right? Quite rightly, the banks will want to see a lot more security of tenure when it comes to a tenancy or tenant mix, so those that may have sold before with a low WALE (Weighted Average Lease Expiry) may need to have price adjustments or could potentially be on the market for some time if the security of income is risky.

One thing for sure is you certainly wouldn't want to commit to anything based on the reserve banks say so .... we all know how that turned out!

**For further information contact Jason Morris on 0425 302 775,  
email [jasonmorris@movable.com.au](mailto:jasonmorris@movable.com.au) or visit [www.movable.com.au](http://www.movable.com.au)**



**Jason Morris** is a Partner and Commercial Specialist at Movable. Jason was 19 when he moved to Newcastle in 1998 and has worked in residential sales, property management, auctioneering and as a commercial sales and leasing agent, and now an equity partner.

## Property Council calls for more housing supply for Upper Hunter

The Property Council of Australia has voiced concern over the latest Domain Rent Report for the December quarter showing the Upper Hunter has the highest rent rise in regional NSW.

Property Council's Hunter Regional Director Anita Hugo said action was needed fast as NSW faces record low vacancy rates and rapid rent rises.

"Delivering more housing supply is the best chance we have of easing the regional rental squeeze across the Hunter region," Ms Hugo said.

"The Property Council's 2023 NSW Election Platform has called on the incoming government to implement a range of measures to improve housing supply at this critical time.

"Across the Hunter we are calling for infrastructure investment to enable the delivery of housing as well as measures that allow the use of surplus government land to deliver housing diversity, such as build to rent and community housing.

"The quicker we allow the private sector to deliver on BTR projects and improve tax concessions, the quicker projects such as this can hit the ground.

"What is needed is a diverse supply of housing and serviced, development ready land, and it is needed now."

According to Domain, the Upper Hunter and Muswellbrook council regions had the largest annual rent increases, recording jumps of 15.2% and 15% to respective median house rents of \$425 and \$460 in December last year. Maitland was not far behind, experiencing an increase of 14.6% over that quarter.

Median asking rents for houses across regional NSW jumped 10.3% last year, lifting by \$40 to a median of \$535 per week.

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**LEASE**



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\*Approximate

# Health, Fitness & Wellbeing

## Breathwork facility opens

Breathwork is the new cool kid on the block in the wellness community. It is new age respiratory and neuro science with ancient meditation and mindfulness practices that most wellness modalities are built from. Integrating breathwork techniques in the workplace reduce sick days, increase productivity, improves your business's resilience and a whole host of other benefits.

The Breath Shed is Newcastle's first dedicated breathwork space, providing weekly classes, online programs as well as corporate consultancy and workshops. Lead by breathwork expert, Bek Nutter, who also runs Nutter by Nature, a naturopathy and nutrition business that has been operating in the Hunter since 2017, The Breath Shed opened at the end of 2022 with the goal of providing access to these life changing skills to everyone in Newcastle.

Bek says, "The Breath Shed is like a gym for breathwork. We run programs and classes to help you master the power of breath. Whether it be for relaxation, improved sports performance, emotional regulation or just getting more out of life."

The stresses of everyday life, let alone the increasingly busy pace of today's corporate lifestyle, increase our breath rate. Our bodies' unconscious response to stress and anxiety is to increase our breath rate. The more frequent the stress, the faster our breathing becomes and each instance can permanently elevate our breath rate. Faster breathing sends signals to our brain that we are under threat and so our bodies start producing fight or flight responses putting all our body systems under increased stress. This results in higher levels of anxiety, lowered levels of focus and productivity, greater chances of conflict and more sick days needed to recover. But this doesn't have to be the case.

Incorporating breathwork in your workplace and investing in your staff's health has been shown to increase productivity, reduce sick days and improve stress resilience while also making your staff feel valued and improve the overall attitude of the workplace. Because breathing is an involuntary action and happens over 20,000 times per day, it is often taken for granted. However, every moment, your breath provides nourishment to your cells. Every moment your breath is transported to your blood and pumped through approximately 100,000 kilometres of veins and arteries, delivered and released to the cells giving your body life and vitality. The way you breath influences your emotions, your sleep, your energy, your mood, your recovery & your mental clarity.

Attendees of the workshops run by Bek report greater sense of connectedness to their teammates as well as renewed vitality. The best part is not only does The Breath Shed offer individualised workshops tailored to your business and teams, they also have an online program that your office can provide to all your staff, allowing access to breathwork support whenever they need it. It's a truly unique offering in Newcastle's wellness landscape.



## Workplace Wellbeing Assessment Tool

A digital Workplace Wellbeing Assessment Tool (WWAT) was released last year which will help improve understanding and management of workplace mental health by businesses.

Head of SafeWork NSW, Natasha Mann, said while 80% of NSW workplaces take a reactive or ad-hoc approach to mental health at work, there are health and economic benefits from having a mentally healthy workplace including reduced absenteeism and staff turnover.

"This is not just about the mental health of your workers, this is about making the best workplace environment in your workplace both mentally and physically," Ms Mann said.

"A mentally healthy workplace provides many benefits back into the business, including increased staff engagement and productivity. But despite the benefits, many people in NSW are not aware of the role workplaces play in preventing mental health issues and supporting recovery.

"The free self-assessment tool helps set up a survey which businesses can use to confidentially survey their staff, with the results informing businesses how to plan and respond to risks and create workplaces where mental health thrives.

"The tool measures and monitors a workplace's capability by identifying gaps and areas for improvement. It also provides actions for the business to take to reduce risks and allows them to compare themselves with others across the State.

"As a free resource, it's a great investment for any small business to make in looking after the mental health of their workers."

The WWAT was developed as part of the NSW Mentally Healthy Workplace Strategy, whose key priorities include free training programs and coaching services and building the capability of businesses in NSW to create positive and safe environments promoting good mental health.

**For further information visit [www.nsw.gov.au/mental-health-at-work/workplace-wellbeing-assessment](http://www.nsw.gov.au/mental-health-at-work/workplace-wellbeing-assessment)**



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# Health, Fitness & Wellbeing

At **Hunterlink**, as an employee assistance program (EAP) provider we understand reaching out to talk with someone about mental health is difficult. This is why we aim to be more than a 24/7 helpline we want to work with workplaces to deliver training in mental health awareness so employees and employers have a greater understanding of psychological hazards in the workplace and the their impact.

**Hunterlink** provides a range of mental health and training programs that are tailored to the workplace needs and are available to deliver accredited Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training.

The Standard Mental Health First Aid course will teach you how to provide initial support to others who may be experiencing a mental health problem or mental health crisis until appropriate professional help is received or the crisis resolves. Using practical, evidence-based Action Plans the course is based on guidelines developed through the expert consensus of people with lived experience of mental health problems and health professionals. It is delivered by Mental Health First Aid training Accredited Instructors through **Hunterlink**.

In the workplace you are sometimes faced with people in heightened emotional states, unexpectedly sharing personal problems, sounds off in anger or frustration, upset or distresses or desperate for a listening ear. Without MHFA training it can be an overwhelming minefield. The course will offer professional insight and practical skills to give you greater confidence in handling these situations with respect, wisdom and boundaries.

Evaluations consistently show that MHFA training is associated with improved knowledge of mental illnesses, their treatments, appropriate first aid strategies, and confidence in providing MHFA to individuals. It is also associated with decreased stigma and an increase in help for Mental Illness.

At **Hunterlink**, we know wellbeing peer support programs that direct employees struggling with their mental health to professionals does assist to reduce psychological hazards in the workplace and encourages greater useage of their EAP. Linking employees to Hunterlink's 24/7 mental health specialists can provide the necessary support that someone who is struggling with their mental health needs. Delivering MHFA training to a recognised mental health peer in the workplace will provide them the necessary tools to acknowledge the signs and symptoms and seek help.

**Please contact Huntelink on 02 4929 6625 for further information on our range of services that are available through our employee assistance program. For 24/7 mental health specialist support call 1800554654 to speak with one of our qualified professionals.**



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# Health, Fitness & Wellbeing

## Exercising when you are time poor

Running a business can be a demanding task and usually involves long work hours that can make it difficult to find the time to exercise.

We should however remember that exercise can bring many benefits to your general wellbeing and your business.

Even incorporating a little regular exercise can improve your health, resulting in you being more productive at work, improving your decision making and reducing illness. Whilst exercise has major impacts on your physical wellbeing, it can also help significantly with your mental health. In fact exercise is one of the most powerful ways to combat stress and help with a broad variety of mental health issues, including anxiety and depression. It can also help to promote better sleep patterns, making you more refreshed in the morning and able to face the day's challenges.

The problem many businesspeople face is that they are very time poor. Finding time to exercise can be a real challenge.

The first thing to remember is that spending time to exercise is an investment in you and your business. The benefits are likely to easily outweigh the time spent. A great goal is to find 30 minutes a day for exercise.

The following are some tips for reaching this daily goal:

- **Break up the 30 minutes** – If 30 minutes in one stretch is just too difficult, consider breaking it up into 2 x 15 minutes or even 3 x 10 minutes.
- **Schedule exercise** – It is best to schedule exercise, especially until you create the habit, otherwise it will be all too easy to miss exercising.
- **Increase your incidental exercise** – There are many things you can do throughout the day to contribute. Consider parking a little way from work and walking, taking the stairs instead of a lift, walk to the nearby shop instead of driving – there are countless ways to introduce little bits of exercise into your day.
- **Have a walk at work** – A regular lunchtime walk can contribute greatly to your goals. It is also a great way to clear

the head and return refreshed. You may even like to consider a walking meeting. If you would like to have a discussion with a work colleague, perhaps you can have a walking meeting. This will also remove you from distractions in the office.

- **Consider a gym membership** – You may wish to consider a gym membership. This can be advantageous because of the equipment and advice on offer. Tell them for example you can only do 20 minute sessions and they can map out an exercise plan. Time spent at the gym can be intense, meaning you can cram a lot of exercise into a short period. Select a gym that is close to your work, home or on your daily travels. If time is tight, you don't want to spend extra time traveling to exercise.

Running a business can be difficult and stressful. Remember that you are one of the greatest assets of your business. It only makes sense to invest some time in your health so you can be even more effective for your business.

## \$5.2 million in grants to target medical conditions

Both the body and the mind will be a key focus for innovative researchers from the University of Newcastle, who were successful in the latest round of National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Ideas Grants.

More than \$5.2 million will be allocated to seven Newcastle research projects aiming to understand, address and reduce the severity of specific diseases and conditions.

The University of Newcastle and Hunter Medical Research Institute (HMRI) researchers will tackle some of the world's biggest health challenges – including the burdens of infertility, pre-term birth, and developing an effective way to predict, prevent and treat bone metastasis in prostate cancer – of which there is currently none.

Associate Professor Brett Graham and his team will investigate the spinal cord origins of chronic pain and new treatment opportunities, diving deeper into understanding chronic pain signals by de-coding spinal activity.

Two successful projects will aim to gain a better biological understanding of mental health disorders in order to improve treatments. Research into underlying mechanisms and novel treatments for common disorders including depression and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) will receive more than \$831,000 in a project led by Professor Chris Dayas and Dr Lizzie Manning. Dr Manning was also awarded funding for a study dedicated to better understanding behaviour and symptoms of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

Almost \$1 million will be used to explore new therapies for inflammatory bowel diseases. This work will use 3-dimensional 'mini-guts' and trial a ground-breaking way to use artificial intelligence (AI) for drug target discovery.

University of Newcastle Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation) Professor Zee Upton said it was this level of innovation that had earned the University its stellar reputation for health and medical research.

"The number of successful projects in this funding round is a testament to the creative and modern thinking being done at the University of Newcastle and our ongoing commitment to drive discoveries that help people live better, healthier lives," Professor Upton said.

"We are proud to see our researchers leading the way in the treatment of conditions like stress-induced disorders, which have been impacting communities globally, or for undetectable bone metastasis that impacts the survival and life of cancer patients.

"Through these projects, our researchers are driving collaborations with experts from more than one dozen Australian and international institutions, to ensure we bring the best and brightest minds together to tackle these critical health challenges."

The 2022 NHMRC Ideas Grant round is the fourth instalment of its kind and is open to researchers at all career stages.





# Workplace Design 2023



As we all return fresh-faced to the office for the start of a new year, workplace design company Evoke Projects looks at interior office design trends for 2023. Get some inspiration to update your office fit-out!

## **Industrial Style Interior Design**

Industrial-factory style is a major workplace design trend for 2023 with exposed pipes, bricks, low carbon raw concrete walls and metal design elements. Resimercial office fit-outs will also remain popular for 2023, with home-inspired lounge and kitchens in the workplace.

## **Hybrid Working will Deliver Lower Real Estate Costs**

Hybrid working is definitely here to stay as employees and managers recognise the benefits of focused work at home and collaboration and social connection in the office. As leases come up for renewal, businesses will reduce their real estate space needs to fit with hybrid working practices. This will deliver lower real estate costs to improve the bottom line.

## **Multi-sensory biophilic design**

Multi-sensory biophilic design that creates a more natural holistic physical environment is the latest workplace design trend for 2023:

- Visual elements (e.g., light, colour and plants)
- Auditory elements (e.g., the sound of waves)
- Tactile elements (e.g., natural timber office furniture, room temperature)
- Olfactory elements (e.g., the smell of flowers)

## **Pod, Booth and Bench Furniture**

Office furniture within the 2023 commercial fit-out needs to be versatile and flexible.

- Video booths are perfect for training or video conferences as well as saving vital real estate dollars on meeting room space.
- Window benches with stools offer natural light and potentially a pleasant view. Make the most of these under-utilised spaces.
- An open plan physical environment provides the best opportunities for installing and relocating agile furniture such as pods, booths and work benches.

# OFFICE DESIGN & FITOUT

## Plants for a healthy workplace

Indoor office plant hire has become an integral part of providing fundamental benefits for the overall health and wellbeing of employees and in turn contributes to the success of the organisation in which they work. While most of us appreciate the visual beauty of healthy, living indoor plants, the health benefits they provide are not always clear.

Indoor plants can instantly enhance any indoor environment and play a vital role in providing a happy and healthy place to work. Plants have so many benefits for our health, not only absorbing noise, improving the indoor air humidity, but also reducing blood pressure, stress and fatigue. This leads to reduced absenteeism.

It has been estimated that 80% of the population live in urban areas and most of us spend around 90% of our time indoors. Indoor air can be more polluted than the outdoor air and contain toxins such as sulphur oxides, carbon dioxides, carbon monoxide, fine particle matter, ozone and Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC's) such as formaldehyde, benzene and xylene. These can have a major detrimental effect on our health. VOC's are emitted from such products as paints, varnishes, adhesives, carpet, composite wood products, air fresheners, cleaning products and photocopiers just to name a few.

Nothing compares to the ability of indoor plants in cleaning the air inside your office environment. Indoor plants remove pollutants from the air by absorbing these gases through their leaves and roots, thus making the indoor air we breathe cleaner and healthier. The microorganisms that live in the soil of potted plants also play an instrumental role in neutralizing VOCs and other pollutants.

Plants and their soil contain beneficial bacteria. This bio-culture has the ability to purify the air of harmful chemicals and toxins, reducing sickness and fatigue within the working environment.

Research by scientists at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) has shown the many benefits of indoor plants and that they contribute to meeting at least 75% of indoor environmental quality (IEQ) criteria. IEQ aims to improve occupants' experience and enhance the comfort and well-being of occupants.

Some of the UTS findings conclude that plants:

- Reduce indoor air pollution
- Reduce workplace illness
- Reduce sick leave absences
- Reduce stress and negativity
- Do not create unhealthy mould problems
- Raise performance and productivity
- Improve job satisfaction
- Enhance business image with visitors & potential clients

With benefits like these, plants become a compelling workplace essential for any HR management strategy.

### How does indoor plant hire work?

Organising indoor plant hire is easier than you might think. Tropical Plant Rentals has a simple four step process that will have your indoor environment looking healthy and inviting, as well as improving your indoor air quality.

- **Consult & Design** – A consultant will visit your site to understand your design goals as well as assess the ambience, lighting and overall space of your office. Tropical Plant Rentals can assist with design or collaborate with your architect or designer to achieve a beautiful indoor plantscape.
- **Proposal** – After consultation, a proposal will be prepared based on your requirements. Tropical Plant rentals can provide suitable options with plant, pot and / or green wall selection to meet your budget and design brief.
- **Install** – With thorough preparation, Tropical Plant Rentals will provide an efficient, fuss free installation with great attention to detail.
- **Maintain** – The fully trained and qualified maintenance program team will ensure your plants and pots are always looking their best.

### Buying indoor plants vs hiring indoor plants

Professionally maintained indoor plants create a friendly and welcoming environment to your staff and clients.

There are financial savings associated with professionally maintained plants.

Poorly maintained plants can create a negative impression of your business, so it is better to have no plants than poor quality plants.

Appropriate plant species are chosen for the available lighting for plants to thrive and not just survive, it's imperative to have the correct plant variety for your environment.

Replacement of plants from Tropical Plant Rentals is included at no additional charge.

You are guaranteed a high quality range of plants sourced from the finest Australian growers.

The range of stylish designer pots are sealed to ensure no spills or leaks. This prevents floor damage and safety hazards.

**For further information contact Tropical Plant Rentals on (02) 4942 2011, email [info@tpr.com.au](mailto:info@tpr.com.au) or visit [www.tropicalplantrentals.com.au](http://www.tropicalplantrentals.com.au)**





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# OFFICE DESIGN & FITOUT

Good office design is an investment in your business

As business owners and managers, we are always careful of expenses. The benefits of renewing your office design can be overlooked because of the cost and challenges involved.

The benefits of a good office design, however, are many and can easily outweigh the cost and inconvenience involved.

Good office design will provide your business with many benefits. These include:

**Higher productivity** – Light, noise, temperature and general comfort can all have major impacts on the productivity of your team. Efficient office layouts can also increase workflow. The office can also be designed to more easily integrate the latest technology.

**Increased employee happiness** – An improved office layout can have a direct impact on the happiness of employees, helping to build team morale, boosting output, reducing absenteeism and lowering employee turnover.

**Better use of office space and resources** – Perhaps you think your workspace is too small and you need to relocate? Maybe all you need is to plan the office space more efficiently. Particularly in larger offices, you may even be able to reduce the cost of some resources, such as office equipment, if it is placed more efficiently.

**Impress visitors** – Of course if your business has clients visiting, the office design and appearance can have a direct impact on their perception of your business. It doesn't have to be the most expensive finish, but a layout that is clean, aesthetically appealing and looks well organised will always make your clients feel more comfortable doing business with you.

Whilst the cost is one consideration, the perceived difficulties involved in the process, impact on workflow and just knowing where to start can lead the busy owner or manager to put it in the too hard basket.



The best suggestion is to seek the advice of an office layout expert. The cost involved will usually be easily repaid by gaining a more efficient and quality layout. They can often also access products at a lower cost. They can take most of the stress and load off your shoulders and ensure that any impact on the workflow of your business is minimised. They will also ensure that all possible factors are incorporated into the design at the beginning, instead of having to make potentially costly changes later in the process.

Remember, the biggest cost to your business can be to pay for a layout that doesn't provide the benefits it should. When considering an office design expertise is invaluable.



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# OFFICE DESIGN & FITOUT

## How do Green Walls affect air humidity?

Plants have a natural ability to regulate humidity, and this is especially evident when they are clustered together. A Green Wall is a great example of this. While most of us don't pay any attention to the humidity in our offices or homes, it can be critical not only to our comfort levels, but to our health!

What level of humidity is optimal? When looking for optimal humidity in the air for good health, neither too dry or too moist will bring good results. Ideally, the temperature in offices should be around 20-22 degrees Celsius, and the humidity somewhere between 40 and 60.

Low levels of humidity can lead to dryness of the mucous membranes, eye irritation, increased headaches, and aggravated skin problems. This can be prominent in winter and air-conditioned rooms, where we are exposed to too low humidity (in the coldest months, it may drop to 30-25% or even lower).

High levels on the other hand, can stimulate the growth fungi, mites, and other microorganisms, which in extreme cases may lead to mould on clothing and even damage to electronic equipment and timber. However, we must consider that such a scenario is unlikely and usually results from faulty ventilation.

### Sick Building Syndrome

The concentration of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in interiors is often higher than outdoors (this applies to toluene, formaldehyde, benzene, or xylene, among others). This is due to the significant changes in lifestyles and the new materials used in construction and interior fit outs, and further compounded by secondary pollutants. These pollutants add to the issues we described in the above chapter to aggravate the problems.

Collectively these symptoms are sometimes described as the sick building syndrome – it affects not only our health, in the long run potentially leading to asthma and heart disease, but also our efficiency, thus reducing office productivity (Bako-Biro et al. 2004 and 2005, Wargocki et al. 1999).

### How do Green Walls act as humidifiers?

The use of Green Walls, and indeed Vertical Gardens and clusters of plants, in interior design proves to be supportive in combating these problems. Green Walls, on the one hand, humidify the air, and on the other, act as a pollutant absorbing filter. These two processes occur partly simultaneously – increasing humidity and decreasing dust and mites.

Aside from the many other benefits, the installation of Green Walls can regulate humidity levels in offices, with office workers

reporting a decrease in problems with dry mucous membranes or headaches.

The national president of the Australian Institute of Architects, Richard Kirk, said "Certainly, introducing landscaping inside a building has a functional purpose in that it cleans the air and provides a visual relief in internal spaces," though he believes there should be more work done to discuss all the benefits of green walls and in what areas they are most beneficial.

### What do the studies say?

Polish company, 4NatureSystem, studies the outcomes and noted the below discoveries (we made bold the core results):

In 2019, we completed a report summarizing PLGBC and Silesian University of Technology research analysing physical parameters in office spaces where green walls have been introduced. We commissioned it as part of R&D work on the design of innovative furniture with built-in vegetation. Measurements showed that the vertical gardens had a positive effect on the air's relative humidity. The air quality in the tested rooms was also assessed as good and very good (concentrations of PM2.5 and PM10 particles were measured, among others).

Research on employees' self-assessment also produced fascinating conclusions. Before introducing vegetation, as many as 60% of respondents complained about the air being too dry. However, when the test walls were placed in the office, more than 70% of people believed that the air humidity is "just right"; when they were removed, as many as 80% of respondents assessed the air as excessively dry. The conclusion? The perception of humidity in office spaces is strongly correlated with plants' presence and their concentration in the right places.

Other researchers also noticed a similar relationship. After measurements lasting 10 months, Tudiwer and Korjenic (2017) noted that increased relative humidity in winter improved the comfort of users of a classroom where a green wall was installed. Significant differences in humidity levels were also observed in a study focusing on vertical gardens positioned in corridors (Ghazalli et al., 2018). These and other studies demonstrate that the presence of systemic greenery has a measurable impact on our well-being

Above all, people love the biophilic effect of being around plants and it makes them happier, healthier, and more productive at work.

**For further information contact Green Design Indoor Plant Hire on (02) 4931 9263, email [sales@greendesign.com.au](mailto:sales@greendesign.com.au) or visit [www.greendesign.com.au](http://www.greendesign.com.au)**



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An accountant is walking down the street when he comes across a man who says "Spare some loose change?"

"And why should I do that?" asks the accountant.

"Because I'm broke. Haven't got a dollar to my name and nothing to eat," says the man.

"I see," says the accountant. "And how does this compare to the same quarter last year?"

I quit my position as a scuba diving instructor the first day of the job.

Deep down, I realised it wasn't for me.

A guy goes into a pub.

He orders 7 pints of beer. He drinks the first pint, the third pint, the 5th and the 7th pint, and gets up to leave.

The barman says, "Why are you not drinking the other three pints?"

He says, "Doctor's orders."

"What do you mean by that?" asks the barman.

"I am on medication and my doctor said the odd pint is okay."

Yesterday, I drank a bottle of invisible ink.

I was in the hospital all night waiting to be seen.

The director of HR stood up and said "If anyone has any comments or anything they'd like to say please come up to the microphone."

An employee stood up and walked over. He picked up the microphone and pointed it directly at the speakers. A loud obnoxious noise screeched out and filled the room. Everyone covered their ears as he held it there. He then turned it away and handed it back to the HR director.

To which the HR director said "Thank you for your feedback."

A man joins a big corporate as a trainee.

On his very first day of work, he dials the pantry and shouts into the phone, "Get me a coffee, quickly!"

The voice from the other side responded, "You fool you've dialed the wrong extension! Do you know who you're talking to, dumbbo?"

"No," replied the trainee.

"It's the CEO of the company, you fool!"

The trainee shouts back, "And do you know who YOU are talking to, you fool?!"

"No," replied the CEO indignantly.

"Good!" replied the trainee, and slams down the phone.

A man passes away and his funeral is set to be held in his hometown where one of his sons lives.

The other son, a wealthy businessman, unfortunately can't make it to the ceremony so instead he offers to pay for the entire thing.

A few months later, the businessman is looking over his finances and notices a recurring bill of \$120 a month.


Confused, he called up his brother and asks him if he knows anything about it.

"Oh yeah," the brother replies. "Dad always wanted to go out in style so we rented him a tuxedo."

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds you plant."

- Robert Louis Stevenson



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