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From the Editor



With the Australian Government's greenhouse reduction target deadlines drawing closer, the energy sector in particular is undergoing massive changes as it transitions to renewables.

The Hunter and northern Central Coast are experiencing this transition more than almost any other regions in Australia with the large coal-fired power stations closing and being replaced by a large number of renewable energy projects.

Munmorah power station, with a maximum generation capacity of 1,400 MW was fully decommissioned

in 2014. Liddell power station with a capacity of 2,000 MW closed in April 2023. The 2,880 MW Eraring station is scheduled to close in mid-2025, The 1,320 MW Vales Point power station in 2029 (but may be brought forward to 2025) and 2,640 MW Bayswater power station between 2030 and 2033.

That is a massive amount of power generation that needs to be found quickly to ensure the lights stay on in New South Wales. It will also entail a drastic change in power generation infrastructure, with a low number of large capacity power stations being replaced by a large number of smaller power generators. Although there are important renewable energy projects underway at the sites of the coal-fired stations that have existing grid infrastructure, many other projects will require extensive work to be connected to the grid.

Then of course, renewable energy such as wind and solar, mean that a substantial amount of storage capacity will be required to provide grid reliability, notably batteries and pumped hydro.

If we do not plan carefully and we experience power shortfalls, the solution will take some time to solve, with additional power generation projects requiring substantial time to be designed, approved, constructed and producing power.

The good news is that there is indeed billions of dollars being invested in renewable energy and much more planned in coming years.

The solution will require a wide range of larger and smaller projects that must be coordinated to maintain power supply.

One of the topics currently in the news is the Hunter offshore wind farm which has the potential to generate peak power of well over 5 GW. There has been quite a deal of opposition, but it is critical that we approach this subject objectively. Whilst environmental factors must be addressed, we cannot lose sight of the importance of projects such as wind farms and to not overly delay new power generation projects.

The coming years of transition to renewable energy will be a very challenging time for the NSW Government and the marketplace. A challenge that must be met if we are to maintain reliable energy supply for our state.

Garry Hardie
Editor and Publisher

ON THIS MONTH'S COVER

The central break out space at Lake Macquarie City Council offices. EJE Architecture designed the award winning fitout of the LMCC offices.



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Green light for Australia’s largest grid-forming battery

Australia’s largest battery with grid-forming inverter capabilities is set to go ahead, with AGL reaching a Final Investment Decision (FID) on a 500 MW / 1,000 MWh grid-forming battery to be located at the site of the former Liddell Power Station.

Announced in 2022 on behalf of the Australian Government, the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) conditionally approved up to \$35 million in funding to the project, as part of the \$176 million Large Scale Battery Storage Funding Round.

The grid-scale battery will be built on the site of the retired Liddell power station and will form part of AGL’s Hunter Energy Hub planned for the site. Originally planned at half the size (250 MW / 500 MWh), AGL decided to expand the size of the battery, which will help to provide important system services to the Hunter region.

ARENA’s Large Scale Battery Funding Round announced in 2022 saw conditional funding be awarded to eight grid-scale battery projects across Australia. Each battery will be equipped with grid-forming inverter technology, allowing them to provide essential system stability services traditionally provided by synchronous generation such as coal and gas.

At the time, these battery projects from AGL, Origin, Neoen, FRV, Risen and TagEnergy represented a tenfold increase in grid-forming electricity storage capacity operating in the National Electricity Market.

As Australia’s electricity system switches to higher rates of inverter-based generation such as wind and solar, new ways of delivering system services are needed to keep the grid stable. Grid-forming inverters are one of the missing pieces of the puzzle that will help to support the transition to 100% renewables.

ARENA CEO Darren Miller welcomed the FID announcement,



highlighting the importance of utilising all the capabilities available from renewable energy technologies.

“As new solar and wind connects to our grids, we’re going to need increasing amounts of energy storage to continue to provide reliable electricity to our households and businesses. However, as coal and gas generators retire, or start to play a lesser role, we’ll also need these new batteries to provide the crucial system security services that are currently provided by these traditional generators.”

“This is why it is important to fund batteries like AGL’s that are equipped with smart inverter technology which can help stabilise the grid as we transition to renewables.”

“We look forward to the construction of AGL’s battery in Liddell and expect to see the other ARENA funded grid-forming batteries reach similar milestones in 2024.”

AGL’s Managing Director and CEO, Damien Nicks, said: “We are excited to approve another major grid battery project in our development pipeline, supporting the local economy and creating energy transition jobs at our Hunter Energy Hub.”

AGL’s Liddell battery will begin construction in early 2024.



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Glenn Platt elected to prestigious academy

Emergent Group's Dr Glenn Platt has joined other globally-recognised engineering, applied science and tech leaders after being appointed Fellows of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (ATSE).

Glenn shares this honour with a Nobel prize laureate, leaders tackling the Aussie engineering shortage, climate change innovators, research translation superstars, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander STEM education champions. Each of them being among the distinguished cohort of Fellows elected to ATSE this year.

The Academy refers to Glenn as a 'Renewable energy changemaker', a fitting description given his visionary insights, new technologies, and innovative start-ups that are helping to drive the world's renewable energy transition.

Glenn, Emergent Group's Executive Director – Strategy and Innovation, has played a leading role in many pioneering energy projects across Australia, including the first Virtual Power Station. Through his work on distributed energy management, Glenn pioneered much of the "demand side" work now seen as key to the future of Australia's energy system.

He has spun out eight businesses working with solar, batteries and clean energy and has contributed expert advice and analysis on the future of energy to governments in Australia and overseas.

Glenn led the development of HVAC-management technology now installed in thousands of buildings worldwide, and his research helped catalyse an entirely new field of energy efficiency: adaptive building control.

The 2023 new ATSE Fellows have been chosen for their game-changing contributions in fields spanning artificial intelligence, marine biology, photonics, cancer therapy, battery and energy innovation, and more.



Dr Glenn Platt

ATSE President Dr Katherine Woodthorpe AO FTSE said the new Fellows are creating a better Australia through their work.

"As we face global challenges such as climate change, the digitisation of our economy and the massive challenge of building a diverse and skilled STEM workforce, technological innovation is the lynchpin for shaping our future. It's looking bright thanks to the extraordinary contributions of our 33 newest Fellows."

"It is a proud moment to be elected by your peers and acknowledged for your lifelong achievements. ATSE Fellows are truly exceptional at what they do, and Australia is all the better for them."

Airport expansion update

The Hon Catherine King MP, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development of Australia was at Newcastle Airport on 17 January for a tour of the terminal expansion construction site.

Newcastle Airport CEO Dr Peter Cock said the transformative construction project is a critical part of delivering the airport the region deserves.

"Aviation is a catalyst to our economy's growth and our region's transition."

"Newcastle Airport is committed to growing the airport the region deserves and the airport our region deserves is one that supports industry, enables greater trade, helps create jobs well beyond tourism and is a vibrant part of the Hunter."

"I would like to thank the Federal government for their support to develop aviation infrastructure (\$55 million terminal, \$66 million airfield) enabling our community's economic growth and transition," Dr Cock said.

The Minister's visit marks six-months since the project began with several key construction milestones on track to achieve the Airport's international ambitions.

The demolition of the old terminal building is complete, columns to support the new border agency are in, work on lift pits and underground baggage handling tunnels are underway, and just last week a massive concrete slab was poured. In addition, construction of a new electrical substation is underway which will allow the solar panels on the Premium Covered car park to be connected later in the year and ultimately power up to 30% of Airport's electricity.

"The people of our region are passionately behind our airport and connecting the Hunter to the rest of the world," Dr Cock added.

"They continue to fly from Newcastle Airport to connect to our 13 direct destinations and onto 65 destinations around the world. We know that the more community support we receive, the closer we get to securing our next international flights."

"I want to sincerely thank our local member, Meryl Swanson, for her tireless efforts in advocating for our airport, together with our two shareholders Port Stephens Council and City of Newcastle, and finally our banking partner Commonwealth Bank for their ongoing support."

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Major music festival for Newcastle

City of Newcastle (CN) has added another coup to its burgeoning stable of major events, with popular music festival Groovin the Moo set for Foreshore Park on 4 May.

More than 25,000 music fans are expected to converge on the city's premier events space for the popular music festival as part of its national tour, which also includes stops in Adelaide, Canberra, Bendigo, Sunshine Coast and Bunbury.

Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes said Newcastle had cemented its status as a preferred destination for live music and major events.

"City of Newcastle is a strong supporter of live music and is committed to attracting and hosting major events as a primary driver of the local tourism visitor economy," Cr Nelmes said.

"On the back of unforgettable performances last year by Elton John and Paul McCartney, and ahead of next month's sold-out Pink concert, Newcastle has become a must stop destination for promoters looking for a world-class city to include on their national concert tour schedule.

"Groovin the Moo will be a valuable addition to this year's events calendar, allowing locals to experience some of the best Australian and international acts in their own backyard.

"As the only NSW stop on the tour, the festival will play an important role in boosting tourism and the local economy by attracting thousands of music fans to travel to Newcastle for the event.

"These type of major music events have proven their value to Newcastle, with Elton John's visit injecting more than \$14 million into the local economy while Pink's concert is forecast to deliver another \$9 million economic windfall for the city.

"Ongoing investment in events and tourism is integral to building a thriving, diverse and robust economy."

A Groovin the Moo spokesperson said they were looking forward to growing the event on Newcastle's iconic foreshore.



"We're really excited to be putting on a festival in Foreshore Park. The decision to move the festival was a very difficult one for us but ultimately we felt necessary to grow the event and take advantage of Newcastle's impressive transport and accommodation options. Foreshore Park is a stunning location and we look forward to calling it home."

The line-up for Groovin the Moo 2024 is expected to be announced soon ahead of tickets going on sale.

Live music advocate and King Street Hotel co-owner Greg Mathew welcomed the announcement of the tour, and said it would provide another great addition to the city's thriving live music scene.

"Having major events such as Groovin The Moo select Newcastle is a great sign of how our city has grown and also how important it is the Australian music scene," Mr Mathew said.

"It's also a great boost for local business to have such a landmark festival call Newcastle home for its NSW leg.

"Newcastle has been a huge supporter of all genres of music and I am sure the city will embrace GTM."



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Input encouraged on city campus student accommodation

The University of Newcastle is presenting its proposed city campus student accommodation plans and design to the local community this month, encouraging public input as planning and development on the project progresses.

The proposed student accommodation is the second stage of development, in line with the University's City Campus master plan and will accommodate upward of 450 students.

University of Newcastle Vice-Chancellor Professor Alex Zelinsky AO said input from residents and business owners is critical to

ensuring their feedback is heard and respected, and ensuring the development helps address growing demand for student accommodation in Newcastle.

"We want to make sure this project is designed to provide contemporary, supportive, and comfortable student housing; help address the increasing need for student accommodation in the region; and support our local businesses and community to thrive," Professor Zelinsky said.



Concept design by Architectus of the proposed University of Newcastle City Campus Student Accommodation

A portrait of a young man with short, light-colored hair, smiling. He is wearing a dark blue jacket over a dark blue polo shirt. The background is a wooden wall with a measuring tape hanging on it.

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"We are committed to expanding housing options, increasing capacity and alleviating rental pressures, and we look forward to collaborating with the community to enhance the student experience and deliver a high-quality, welcoming facility for our region."

The initial building design proposes to include the construction of a nine-storey building on the corner of Worth Place and Civic Lane, which will also feature outdoor communal spaces and ground floor retail options. As part of the initial planning process, the University engaged with key local Indigenous stakeholders to provide input into the designs to ensure that the building is culturally safe for future students and community, with this approach to continue throughout the project.

"Continuing to respect and celebrate the Aboriginal community's extensive cultural heritage and connection to this land is a top priority for the University from start to finish on this project," Professor Zelinsky said.

"We're pleased with the interest received so far and look forward to strengthening our partnership with Indigenous communities in our regions and beyond."

In conjunction with community consultation, the project's enabling works contract has recently gone out to tender. The tender includes site preparations and the relocation of approximately 45 existing parking spaces to ensure there is no impact on overall parking capacity.

In the coming months, a State Significant Development Application will be lodged with the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, to be assessed before the main works can commence, with the project scheduled for completion in 2026.

The University currently has more than 1,700 on-campus accommodation beds across the Callaghan and Ourimbah campuses and provides initiatives to support students to find somewhere to live including a Homestay program facilitated by Australian Homestay Network.

Hunter Safety Awards commitment to safety

Highlighting a positive shift in workplace safety, over the past 11 years, Australian workplaces have made significant strides in safety, with a noteworthy 30% decrease in traumatic injury fatalities since 2012.

Despite historical challenges, such as over 1,850 reported fatalities and more than 1,140,000 workers filing significant compensation claims involving one week or more of lost working time, it's crucial to acknowledge the positive trend emerging.

This marks a considerable improvement compared to the previous decade, showcasing a collective commitment to safety in Australian workplaces. Statistics like these caused Hunter Safety Awards Founder and Judge, Sarah-Jane Dunford to spearhead the awards and bring them to the Hunter region.

Sarah-Jane said that seeing the decrease in fatalities is something she is extremely grateful to see and is a testament to the concerted efforts of organisations, not only in the Hunter, but also nationwide.

"As we pay tribute to the notable progress made in enhancing workplace safety, we are thrilled to announce our 2024 award finalists," Sarah-Jane said.

This year's finalists include businesses and individuals who have demonstrated positive approaches to Work, Health, and Safety (WHS) in their workplace. The remarkable decline in fatality statistics signifies a shift in workplace safety, highlighting the unified dedication of businesses to prioritise the wellbeing of their workforce.

The finalists include: AGL, Ampcontrol, ARTC, Asplundh, Asset Training, Body and Mind 2000, Coal Services Mine Rescue, Enviroculture Maintenance Services, Ethos Health, Fenech Demolition, Machinemonitor, Metso, Newcastle Airport, Plant



2023 winner of WHS Business of the Year, Enviroculture Maintenance Service

Assessor, Plus ES/Ausgrid, Red Insight, SafeGauge, Scratchie, Singleton Council, Swietelsky Rail Australia and Westpac Group.

In addition to AGL, there is also a large group of returning award sponsors, including the University of Newcastle, uvex, WesTrac, 3M, Red Insight, Ampcontrol, Tomago Aluminium and Fenech Demolition

In 2024, the awards have also welcomed two new sponsors, John Holland and Gunnebo.

The awards will be presented across 12 categories and will see the winners announced at a gala event on Friday 15 March 2024 at Newcastle Exhibition and Conference Centre (NEX).

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Unions partner with EDF Renewables Australia for sustainable jobs

EDF Renewables Australia has committed to workers in the Hunter by announcing a significant collaboration with Australian Unions. CEO, Mr Dave Johnson, said it is one of the many steps he will take to ensure jobs stay local as offshore wind projects are developed in Australia.

"A capable, strong and most importantly a local workforce is going to be critical for the success of the Newcastle Offshore Wind Project and EDF Renewables Australia acknowledge this from the get-go," Mr Johnson said.

The Electrical Trades Union (ETU) and the Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union (CFMMEU), including both the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) and the Construction Division, have signed a letter of collaboration with the global renewable energy company. The letter outlines the shared commitment to working together to ensure that local workers are equipped with the skills and opportunities to participate in the construction and continuous operation of the proposed offshore wind farm within the Hunter declared zone.

EDF Renewables Australia plans to develop a floating offshore wind farm situated off the coast of Newcastle, close to the Port of Newcastle and existing transmission networks. The Project is expected to bolster the electricity grid supply, particularly as local coal-fired power stations phase out, thereby promoting clean energy and a sustainable future for the region. Once granted approval, the Project is likely to generate a substantial number of jobs throughout the approximately 35-year construction and operational phases, encompassing equipment manufacturing, construction, installation trades, and service providers.

The combined strength of these Unions represents nearly 200,000 workers across various industries, including electrical

and communications, power, manufacturing, diving, ferries, towage, offshore oil and gas, port services, shipping, stevedoring, and construction. Their primary objective is to secure safe and sustainable employment opportunities for their members as Australia's energy sector transitions toward renewables.

The next steps for the collaboration will be to identify the skills needed across the project, ensure that the relevant Australian qualifications framework and training facilities are up to scratch, and work through how we can ensure that the workforce is trained and available from the start of construction.

EDF Renewables submitted their feasibility license application to the Offshore Infrastructure Registrar (OIR) on 14 November 2023 and anticipates a response to their application in the middle of 2024. Mr Johnson said that this is when more detailed work will commence, including comprehensive workforce planning.

Major upgrades complete for Newcastle's century-old pump station

Hunter Water has completed major upgrades to the Newcastle West 1 Wastewater Pump Station next to Marketown Shopping Centre car park. The revitalised pump station, with its improved fixtures, now requires less future maintenance, improves amenity for surrounding residents, shoppers and businesses and supports future population growth in the area.

Following successful preparatory work carried out late last year, the upgrade work started on site in July this year. Improvements have included: removing the aging vent stack, installing an interim odour control unit (OCU) to minimise odours, delivering and commissioning a larger, permanent odour control unit, as well as restoring the concrete structures, new pipework and fencing.

Hunter Water Managing Director, Darren Cleary, said the upgrades will help protect the pump station and pipework from corrosion and improve community amenity.

"The pump station next to Marketown, Newcastle West 1, is one of the biggest wastewater pump stations in our area of operations. For that reason, these upgrades were essential to improve liveability for nearby residents and the general public around Newcastle, as well as enabling the ongoing operation and maintenance of a critical asset.

"Our team made every effort to reduce the impacts as much as possible and we appreciate the understanding and flexibility of Marketown management, nearby residents and tenants while the upgrades took place.

"It's pleasing to have been able to complete the majority of the upgrade so that all temporary changes to the carpark and access to Marketown are back to normal in time for Christmas," Mr Cleary said.

With the major work for the upgrade now complete, minor work, such as checks and testing and ground restoration within the pump station, may continue into December and January 2024. This will be contained within the pump station boundary with minimal impact to traffic access and parking.

Constructed in 1909 and located next to Marketown Shopping Centre car park, the Newcastle West 1 WWPS is one of Hunter Water's oldest WWPSs. It services customers in the western parts of the Newcastle CBD and the suburbs of Adamstown, Broadmeadow, Hamilton, Islington, Mayfield, New Lambton, Tighes Hill and Wickham.



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Revitalised Harbour Foreshore Precinct to take shape

City of Newcastle is seeking tenders for the delivery of a key element of its revitalisation of the city's much-loved Foreshore Park.

Tenders are being sought for a new amenities building to complement other elements of the Harbour Foreshore Masterplan, which will deliver enhanced connectivity between the city and the harbour's edge around Foreshore Park, and along the Joy Cummings Promenade.

The centrepiece of the Masterplan will be Livvi's Place, an inclusive regional playground and waterplay area, designed in consultation with the community and Touched by Olivia, a charity dedicated to the delivery of inclusive playspaces across Australia.

The new amenities building will serve both the new playground and the broader park, featuring accessible facilities including unisex ambulant toilets, a parent's change room and a changing places facility, which provides suitable facilities for people who cannot use standard accessible toilets, as well as a kiosk.

Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes welcomed this next step in delivering the adopted Masterplan.

"These early works help realise the full potential of our adopted Masterplan for our premier city park, creating a drawcard destination for locals and visitors from across the region to enjoy," Cr Nelmes said.

"The first stage of the works will prepare the site for delivery of a regional level playground, waterplay and new amenities block.

"This revitalised harbourside precinct will enrich the park that Novocastrians and visitors know and love, with spaces for events and areas for friends and families to connect."

Following early site preparation works undertaken last year, work will commence in the coming months to demolish the existing amenities block, playground and the former frog pond site to make way for the delivery of future stages of the Masterplan. The public toilets adjacent to the Train Shed will remain open for the community.

Once completed, the playground area will have a distinctly Newcastle character and pay tribute to the city's Aboriginal heritage. The precinct will also have a waterplay area unique to Newcastle, accessible amenities, and a kiosk that will service both the playground and the wider Foreshore Park.

Extensive tree planting and landscaping will be carried out throughout the precinct as part of the broader masterplan to significantly increase shade canopy and create greener public spaces.

The project is supported by the State Government, Variety the Childrens Charity and the Newcastle Port Community Contribution Fund.

New committee, new theme for 2024 Bean Counters Ball

The annual Bean Counters Ball has announced a new committee for its 2024 Arcade-themed event, which is due to be held Saturday 25 May 2024 at the Newcastle Exhibition Centre (the NEX).

The event is a collaborative effort between local Hunter-based members of Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand, and CPA Australia, which has raised almost \$300,000 for charities since its launch in 2011.

This year, attendees can look forward to a night of Arcade-themed entertainment and games, as well as the Bean Counters Ball signature lucky dips and raffles to raise money for the cause.

The volunteer board for the Bean Counters Ball committee has recently been elected, with many new and returning members. The committee is focused on prioritising an increase in fundraising to support their chosen charities, Samaritans and Hunter TAFE Foundation.

Daniel Drayton, Senior Manager at SV Partners, has been appointed Chair and Raj Sirimanne, Head of Strategic Projects, Research and Analytics at Compassion Australia, appointed as Co-Chair of the Bean Counters Ball for the 2023/2024 period.

"We are looking forward to holding the Bean Counters Ball event again in 2024. The Arcade theme will be great fun with classic retro gaming consoles and vibrant entertainment throughout the evening," Daniel said.

"The committee consists of a range of professionals from the local Hunter business community who have come together to support youth and education in our region," Daniel continued.

Alongside the Chair and Co-Chair, the committee consists of eight individuals, including Steven Bailey (Throsby Accounts), Lana Black (Osborn Law), Rebecca Brown (Hunter Water), Cameron Burns (PwC Australia), Emily Lane (Pitcher Partners), and Jackie Marriott (PKF). They're also joined by representatives from TAFE and Samaritans, Kate Taylor (TAFE Representative), and Yvette Elliot (Samaritans Representative).

Half of the funds raised at the annual Bean Counters Ball goes towards supporting Samaritans Student Accommodation in Newcastle, providing a safe place for students to live while they are completing their studies. The other half of the funds are donated to the Hunter TAFE Foundation, providing scholarships that support youth education in business, accounting, or finance.

An impressive effort at the 2023 Vegas-themed event saw the committee raise over \$50,000 for their charity partners.

"We are proud to continue our partnership with Samaritans and the Hunter TAFE Foundation. At the Ball, we will hear from young individuals who have received support from the charities that we partner with. It is a great reminder of the positive impact the Ball has within our region," Raj said.

"With the help of our generous guests and sponsors, we hope to make the 2024 event a huge success, raising more funds for our charity partners," Raj concluded.

Sponsorships packages for the 2024 event are now available, with the proceeds going towards a worthy local cause.

2023-2024 Bean Counters Ball Committee



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Maitland City Council

Rowan Cox transitions to new role within Atwea College

Atwea College, a leading community-based not-for-profit education and training provider, announces a strategic leadership transition as Rowan Cox, current Chief Executive Officer, assumes a new role within the organisation.

Since Rowan's appointment as General Manager in 2013 and CEO in 2016, she has demonstrated exceptional leadership, guiding Atwea through industry and funding changes, compliance regulations as well as successfully operating throughout the Covid era. Under her guidance, the company has achieved significant growth and expanded its presence in the Hunter and Mid North Coast.

Rowan will be transitioning to the Principal role, of the very successful Alesco Secondary College within Atwea, effective January 2024. In this new capacity, she will take leadership of the school, and focus on continuing to support the educational needs of school students across the region, as Alesco continues to offer more opportunities to access an Alesco Campus. As one of the co-founders of the Alesco model, Rowan's intrinsic knowledge of the school and the needs of students will be invaluable.

"We are thrilled to announce Rowan's transition to Principal for Alesco Secondary College. She has been instrumental in driving our success and positioning us as a leader in the alternative education and vocational training industry. We are confident that her expertise and strategic vision will continue to contribute to the growth and success of our organisation in her new capacity," said Jane McConville, Chairperson of Atwea College's Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors has initiated a search for a new CEO to lead Atwea College into its next phase of growth and innovation. During this transition period, Rowan Cox will continue to support both Atwea and Alesco and looks forward to onboarding and supporting the next CEO.

Rowan expressed gratitude for the support and collaboration with Atwea's and Alesco's dedicated teams and stated, "I am beyond excited to be able to focus energy and attention, my capabilities, and skills to improve the capacity of Alesco to provide learning opportunities that enhance people's lives and unlock their potential. I know the next CEO of Atwea will take the organisation into the future with clear vision and strong leadership to ensure success continues to follow where they lead".



2024 Hunter Investment Prospectus released

The Hunter Investment Prospectus is the most comprehensive document promoting the Hunter as a smart business, investment and lifestyle choice. Published by Hunter Business Publications, the 2024 edition of this 84 page publication is now being distributed as a high quality hard copy book as well as online at www.hunterinvest.com.au

The Hunter Investment Prospectus is an important project for our region and is supported by a range of organisations that are active in the Hunter and share the goals in promoting the Hunter to the world. It is also supported by three levels of Government, including welcomes from the Prime Minister of Australia and NSW Premier as well as input from the councils located in the region.

Hunter Business Publications MD Garry Hardie said "The Hunter has a very strong story to tell as a smart business, investment and lifestyle location. With the help of many supporters, we are proud to produce the Hunter Investment Prospectus and provide a comprehensive publication that showcases the many strengths of the Hunter and helps to attract continued investment and growth for the region."

Supporters of the 2024 edition included AGL, Business Hunter, Catalyst Project Consulting, Cessnock City Council, Dantia, Dungog Shire Council, Emergent Group, Evoke Projects, GHD, Glencore, Hi-Vis Group, Housing Industry Association – Newcastle, HunterNet, Maitland City Council, McNamara Adams, NCP Printing, Newcastle City Council, Out of the Square Media, Regional Development Australia – Hunter, Scorpion International, Singleton Council, TAFE NSW and The University of Newcastle.

Hunter Business Publications would welcome your feedback / comments on the 2024 Hunter Investment Prospectus or enquiries regarding the 2025 edition via email at garry@HBRmag.com.au

2024 HUNTER INVESTMENT PROSPECTUS

YOUR NEXT SMART BUSINESS, INVESTMENT & LIFESTYLE CHOICE IS ON THE HORIZON



CESSNOCK BUSINESS CHAMBER

As the new Town Coordinator, **Clint Ekert** brings a wealth of expertise to the forefront. With a robust background in business, event management and community engagement, Clint is not just a seasoned professional but a dedicated advocate for fostering a thriving local community. His multifaceted experience positions him as a dynamic leader, ready to orchestrate initiatives that will not only boost the business landscape but also strengthen community bonds in Cessnock.



SWS LAWYERS

SWS Lawyers has announced the promotion of **Emma Sheen** to Senior Associate. Emma joined SWS Lawyers in February 2019 as a Lawyer in the Litigation and Dispute Resolution team. Emma has had significant experience in a wide range of commercial disputes in the Supreme and Federal Courts, including contractual disputes, intellectual property issues and competition and consumer law. In addition to her disputes practice, Emma regularly advises clients in the area of employment law.



ADVITECH

Paul Reynolds has been recruited to the newly created position of COO at engineering, environmental and technical services consultancy Advitech. Paul has over 20 years of experience in the engineering and manufacturing sector including design, project management, business management and strategic leadership. As COO of Advitech, Paul aims to grow the business and take it into new areas of endeavour, leading Australia in fields such as Renewables and ESG.



MORAY & AGNEW LAWYERS

Danielle Sweeney has been promoted to Partner in Moray & Agnew's Insurance team. Danielle brings a wealth of expertise and proven track record from more than ten years in the insurance sector. Regularly representing clients in all Australian jurisdictions, Danielle handles CTP and workers compensation claims, including major and catastrophic claims and those involving fraudulent conduct by plaintiffs. She has achieved multiple withdrawals of claims and satisfactory judgments in cases where fraud was alleged.



EMERGENT GROUP

Emergent Group has welcomed **Professor Chris Kellett** to join them for a year while he is on sabbatical from Australian National University. Emergent Group's companies Advitech, Novecom and Acubis will all benefit from Chris' broad engineering and mathematics background and his approach to problem solving. Chris is passionate about building deeper relationships and understanding between academia and industry and he believes being embedded in an SME working across industry sectors is the way to do it.

LET US
KNOW ABOUT
YOUR
PEOPLE!

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

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



COMING EVENTS.....

21 February 2024 - 22 February 2024

**HunterNet Cooperative
Hunter New Energy Symposium**

Venue: Newcastle City Hall

Cost: Full Conference Package: 2 days Symposium access, morning/afternoon tea, lunch, Networking Drinks + Industry Dinner \$1,190 +GST

Symposium Only Package: 2 days Symposium access, morning/afternoon tea, lunch, Networking Drinks \$1,050 +GST

<https://hunternet.com.au/event/hunter-new-energy-symposium/>

2 March 2024, 2:00 pm – 5:30 pm

**Margs & Mingle
Business Networking Event**

Venue: Salty Lux Studio

Cost: \$100 - \$140

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/business-networking-event-tickets-764350110757>

6 March 2024, 8:00 am – 9:00 pm

**University Of Newcastle I2N
Start-Up Stories – Jordan Freeman and Kate Maslan (Ariel Community)**

Venue: I2N Hub Honeysuckle

Cost: Free

<https://www.energyinnovation.net.au/event/startup-stories-jordan-freeman-and-kate-maslan-ariel-community>

15 March 2024, 7:00 am – 2:00pm

**HIA
HIA Golf Day**

Venue: Rydges Resorts Hunte Valley

Cost: Member team of four: \$750 - Non Member team of four: \$850

<https://hia.com.au/awards-and-events/events/golf-day/hunter-nsw/2024/golf-day-lovedale-mar15>

22 March 2024, 6:30 pm – 11:00pm

**HunterNet Cooperative
The HunterNet Industry Excellence Awards**

Venue: Newcastle City Hall

Cost: Apprentice/trainee - \$176

General Admission - \$198

Table of 10 - \$1980

<https://hunternet.com.au/event/hunternet-industry-excellence-awards/>

26 March 2024, 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm

**Business Hunter
Business Hunter Infrastructure**

Venue: Merewether Surfhouse

Cost: \$125 – \$180

<https://events.humanitix.com/bh-infra-march>

9 April 2024, 9.00 am – 3:30 pm

**HIA
Builders Coach Workshop**

Venue: HIA Office, Mayfield West

Cost: Member \$110 - Non member: \$220

<https://hia.com.au/awards-and-events/events/workshop/hunter-nsw/2024/workshop-mayfield-west-apr09>

16 April 2024, 4.00 pm – 8:00 pm

**HIA
Industry Info Roadshow**

Venue: Club West, Taree

Cost: Members: \$50 – Non Members: \$100

<https://hia.com.au/awards-and-events/events/trade-night/new-south-wales/2024/hia-information-session-taree-apr16>

7 May 2024, 7.00 am – 9:00 am

**HIA
Trade Breakfast**

Venue: HIA Office, Mayfield West

Cost: Members: \$25 – Non Members: \$50

<https://hia.com.au/awards-and-events/events/trade-night/hunter-nsw/2024/hia-information-session-mayfield-west-may07>

8 May 2024, 5.00 pm – 7:00 am

**HIA
Trade Night**

Venue: Club Foster

Cost: Members: \$25 – Non Members: \$50

<https://hia.com.au/awards-and-events/events/trade-night/hunter-nsw/2024/hia-information-session-forster-may08>

30 May 2024, 5.00 pm – 7:00 pm

**HIA
Trade Night**

Venue: Scone Mitre 10

Cost: Members: \$25 – Non Members: \$50

<https://hia.com.au/awards-and-events/events/trade-night/hunter-nsw/2024/hia-information-session-scone-may30>

ARE YOU ORGANISING A COMING BUSINESS EVENT?

We would be pleased to receive basic information as above for consideration for inclusion in a coming issue of HBR. Advertising opportunities in HBR and the HBR email newsletter are also available. Please email garry@HBRmag.com.au

CREATING A MENTALLY HEALTHY WORKPLACE

In a mentally healthy workplace, people feel supported, happy coming to work and comfortable talking about mental health. A mentally healthy workplace is generally one in which:

- there is a positive workplace culture and an understanding that mental health is everyone's responsibility
- stress and other risks to mental health are managed
- people feel safe and supported to talk about mental health
- mental health support is tailored for individuals and teams.

Benefits of creating a mentally healthy workplace

Creating a mentally healthy workplace has many benefits to the people around you as well as your business operations. It's also a legal requirement for business owners.

The benefits include:

- less staff absenteeism and lost working days
- increased productivity
- greater job satisfaction
- reduced staff turnover
- you attract talented workers.

Work health and safety obligations

As a business owner, you have a duty under work health and safety (WHS) laws to manage risks to your workers' mental health arising from their work. You're legally required to look after your workers' mental health under a variety of laws. This includes:

- Providing a physically and mentally safe workplace and managing any risks to the mental health of your workers arising from the work of your business (WHS laws).
- Preventing discrimination against workers with a mental health condition (anti-discrimination laws).
- Protecting your workers' personal information – don't tell anyone about your workers' mental health conditions unless they agree to it (privacy laws).
- Not taking any unfair action against someone because of their mental health condition (fair work laws).

Manage mental health risks

Risks to mental health can be managed through the same process as you use for physical risks:

- identify the hazards
- assess the risks
- control the risks
- continually review the control measures to make sure they are working.

As with physical risks, you should involve and consult your workers throughout this process. Your workers are a great source of information on the risks in their work and options to manage these.

To identify the hazards:

- have regular conversations with your workers to find out how they are
- understand causes of stress in the workplace and manage them
- look out for signs of stress in your workers.
- Stress is the physical, mental and emotional reactions you have when the demands of your job exceed your ability or resources to cope. Stress itself is not an injury but if prolonged or severe can cause psychological and physical injury.

Promote good mental health in your business

There are simple steps you can take to build and promote a mentally healthy workplace:

- Protect your employees from bullying, harassment or discrimination.
- Ensure your staff have the right level of training and

support.

- Talk to your employees about mental health in the workplace - be open about mental health and check in to see how they are going.
- Provide a healthy work/life balance.
- Make sure your employees know where to go for help.
- Look after yourself - running a business can be tough, but there is help available.

For further information visit <https://business.gov.au/risk-management/mental-health/create-a-mentally-healthy-workplace>

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, takes 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.

NEW STUDY AIMS TO UNLOCK THE SECRETS OF EFFECTIVE STRESS MANAGEMENT

Researchers at the Hunter Medical Research Institute and the University of Newcastle are hoping to better understand which stress management techniques and tools actually work, and who they're working for.

In a new long-term citizen science project dubbed FOCUS-R (Focus on Understanding Stress, Resilience and the Capacity to Adapt), the study aims to find out what internal and external resources people are using to manage stress, and what impact those resources are having on their ability to cope.

Participants in the study will be asked to fill out a fortnightly survey that asks them about their experiences of stress in the past two weeks, and what they have done to manage it.

Public health researcher Dr Madeleine Hinwood says, "Gathering perspectives from a broad cross-section of the Australian population will allow us to identify effective stress management strategies, as well as identifying social and systems-level barriers to achieving adaptability or resilience."

The outcome of the research will be to identify which stress management techniques work best for which type of people, and also to figure out who is at the highest risk of cumulative stress. The research aims to match people with the stress management resources that have been found to be most effective for them.

"We know that stress causes and contributes to a whole range of health issues, but we don't yet know how best to prevent and manage stress. What we're hoping to do is find out what actually works for people, by asking them regularly to tell us what they're doing and how they're feeling. Past research into things like mindfulness has variable results- it's great for some people, but not all people. By asking the community directly to tell us what is causing them stress, what they're doing about it and whether it's working, helps us to build a data-backed profile that we can then use to develop more effective interventions for stress management.

"Terms like 'resilience' are spoken about frequently, but often place a burden on individuals to be more resilient. We want more detailed information about all of the nitty gritty of what helps people manage stress, particularly people experiencing the same or similar stressors, without simply splitting them into groups of resilient or not resilient," says Dr Hinwood.

To start with, the FOCUS-R study is hoping to recruit 1000 people nationwide. The study will run for three years.

Study participants will receive feedback and information on the best stress management techniques for them as the study progresses.

To participate in the FOCUS-R study, visit. www.focusr.com.au

READY FOR HIGH-TECH HEALTHTECH

Healthcare and the potential it presents our local companies to enter an emerging, opportunity-rich industry sector has recently become a stronger focus for the Hunter.

The Hunter's health & medtech industry base is burgeoning. Compared with our mining, logistics, wine-making, and equine industries its small - but it's motivated. There's a shared ambition to grow, build capability and capacity, and be part of a local supply chain solution. We have the chance right now to help our local companies uncover and seize opportunities in a new and profitable sector.

RDA Hunter through its Health & Medtech Industry Cluster is one of the enabling organisations that's helping to make it happen.

The Health & Medtech Industry Cluster (HMIC) was established by RDA Hunter in 2020. Its stakeholder base is, like the region's wider economy, large and varied. Companies with technical

expertise in health & medtech, advanced manufacturing and engineering, Local Health Districts, clinicians, allied health providers, healthtech-focused professional services companies, researchers, educators, government and industry peak bodies are represented.

HMIC is working with its 125 stakeholder companies towards the collective aim of regional growth through new partnerships that result in new commercial projects which solve clinical and process problems. The vision is to see the region's own clinicians, advanced manufacturers, health providers, technology developers, researchers, engineers, project managers, design thinkers, CROs, enablers and government representatives uniting to produce and commercialise new-to-the-world innovations.

HMIC is excited to be facilitating engagement between the John Hunter Health Innovation Precinct, its foundation partners and the region's health & medtech focused industry base to explore how we can turn this ambition into reality.

HMIC also recently released a suite of awareness raising materials that highlight the region's strengths as a location for HealthTech and insights about its existing health & medtech companies. Together with a brand-new video, Region Ready: HealthTech produced in partnership with Out of the Square Media, our HealthTech Investment Prospectus outlines a strong case for the Hunter Central Coast having all the elements needed to contribute to advancements in health.

Visit www.hmic.org.au to view/download and sign up to become part of the HMIC community.

MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH IN HYPERTENSION DIAGNOSIS COULD SAVE BILLIONS

HMRI and University of Newcastle researcher, Professor Murray Cairns, along with his Precision Medicine team have discovered a way of predicting who will respond to blood pressure treatments to lower sodium in the body. Their findings were published this week in *Circulation*, a prestigious international cardiology journal.

Professor Cairns says, "High blood pressure – or hypertension related disease – kills up to 20 per cent of people. At least 30 per cent of the adult population has it – that's one in three Australian adults – and only 30% of those people get it under control.

"A 25% reduction in the prevalence of hypertension could save the Australian Government \$34 billion per year," says Professor Cairns.

Professor Cairns and his team have figured out how to use each person's individual genetics to inform treatment.

"The way people respond to drugs is different. We can measure an individual's genetic risk of developing high blood pressure with respect to the physiological systems responsible – including kidneys, heart or smooth muscle - and then target medications accurately," says Professor Cairns.

Some hypertension medications work to lower sodium – and subsequently blood volume – in the body. Professor Cairns says that while many people have a genetic predisposition to high blood pressure that is triggered or exacerbated by a high salt modern diet, they will respond well to treatment that reduces sodium. He also says that for some people, salt is not a significant factor in their hypertension so they may benefit more from treatments that target other biological aspects of their genetic risk.

With 80% of people ending up with some form of chronic disease, and 20% with two or more, genetic insights driving precision medicine could have a massive impact on global health.

The team used real world data from the UK biobank in order to measure the interaction between sodium-associated genetic scores, sodium levels and blood pressure.

To download the *Circulation* paper titled 'Utilising genetics to inform interventions related to sodium and potassium in hypertension and a headshot of Professor Murray Cairns, visit www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/CIRCULATIONAHA.123.065394

SINGLETON COUNCIL HEALTH AND WELLBEING INITIATIVE

Inspiring residents to discover everyday ways to support their health and wellbeing is the aim of a new Singleton Council initiative to build resilience and wellbeing in the entire community.

The Singleton Explore Wellbeing initiative is filled with resources and activities to get residents active, find ways to nourish their mind, body and soul, connect to their local community and thrive through the experiences and opportunities available to them.

Vicki Brereton, Council's Director Organisation and Community Capacity said local government is uniquely placed to play a role in enhancing community health, wellbeing and resilience and the Singleton Explore Wellbeing was helping Singleton Council achieve that.

"Our purpose is to Create Community and a community that feels healthy, safe and connected contributes to its vibrancy, its overall success and is better able to respond to challenges," she said.

"This fun and purpose-filled Singleton Explore Wellbeing initiative will provide our residents with opportunities to move, make time to play and enjoy the simple things, discover fun ways to connect with family, friends, neighbours and their community and thrive by appreciating local experiences and opportunities to learn and grow in Singleton.

"By inspiring our residents with ideas on how to improve their mental and physical health and providing them with opportunities to do that, we're creating a liveable, happy, healthy and thriving community."

Singleton Explore Wellbeing, launched in late 2023 and running until June 2024, has been funded by the NSW Government's Resources for Region program.

Residents can find inspiration and resources for supporting their health and wellbeing under Singleton Explore Wellbeing on Council's website.

Information includes where to find parks, playgrounds, sportsground, reserves, walks and cycleways for staying active, ideas for nourishing the mind, body and soul like visiting the Seed Library at Singleton Public Library to learning how to grow food at home, ways to connect to community such sending specially-created Singleton Explore Wellbeing Kindness Cards to someone in the community and activities and tips to help residents thrive in the places they live, work and play.

A number of free Singleton Explore Wellbeing events exploring the program's themes of move, nourish, connect and thrive will be held this year to support the online resources.

To learn more about Singleton Explore Wellbeing, visit: www.singleton.nsw.gov.au/wellbeing



HUNTERLINK

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

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

As one of Australia's specialist Employee Assistance Provider, we know better than anyone that workplaces who fail to invest in psychological health suffer more critical incidents, higher

staff turnover, worse team cohesion and culture, lower productivity, increased absenteeism, and diminished overall employee well-being.

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

This comprehensive program goes beyond merely raising awareness; it actively empowers your employees and leadership to proactively address psychological health challenges and recognise psychological hazards that may be in your workplace.

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

Together, we can build a better future for your organisation and employees. Get in contact with us to learn more.

HUNTERLINK EAP SUPPORTING WORKERS' WELLBEING SINCE 2010

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Office Design & Fitout

Workplace design trends for 2024

Jerry Kennard
Evoke Projects

If you're looking for interior design inspiration, workplace design and fitout company Evoke Projects takes a look at office design trends for 2024.

Smart people designing the smart office

Using technology to create smarter offices is nothing new. With so much technology on offer, the trend for greater analysis and discernment is what turns smart into really smart. Workflow analysis, proper trials and customisation will ensure that technology succeeds in improving efficiency, collaboration and communication.

Evaluation of technology increasingly takes into account the impact on remote workers as well as the office based team.

Hybrid workspaces

For 2024, office designs encompassing hybrid workspaces look set to continue. The jury is still out on the long-term future of working from home vs the office. Larger companies have been in the headlines lately for ordering employees back into the office, with some required to return five days a week. A recent Fair Work Commission decision supported an employer who declined an employee's request to work at home full time.

Companies are playing a delicate balancing act between attracting/retaining talent (who favour flexibility) and providing a collaborative and motivating office environment. The trend for workplace fitouts with flexible spaces to cover all eventualities will dominate 2024 office design decisions.

Inclusive workplace design

Companies are designing workspaces that cater for people of different ages, gender, abilities and ethnicity. This includes better ergonomics, gender-neutral facilities, accessible offices and a mix of workspaces for different working styles. Evoke's workplace designers are experts in incorporating diversity seamlessly into the office fit-out so that people feel equal, not different.

Overhauling Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)

EAPs are defined as work-based intervention programs designed to enhance the emotional, mental and general psychological well-being of all employees. Many companies have EAPs. Most staff do not use them or even know about them. With so much focus on mental health in the workplace, companies are brushing the dust off the EAP and revisiting its relevance to staff today. The trend is for greater personalisation, better communication and leadership training to encourage proactive use of EAPs. Visit the EAPAA website at <https://www.eapaa.org.au/> for a list of members who can help you design an EAP for your business.

Blending sustainability and biophilic workplace design

In 2024, workplace design will look to integrate natural and sustainable elements within the office fit-out. Much has been written about sustainable workplace design and biophilia over the past few years. They are not new and arguably not trends. However, we are seeing a more holistic approach to both concepts, unleashing the synergy of blending eco-friendly choices with nature.

As an example, improving air quality with an inefficient air filtration system that chews through electricity is not a sustainable solution. Instead, fresh air, reducing chemicals in furniture/cleaning products, cleaning air vents, replacing filters, and adding spider/rubber/cane plants are both sustainable and biophilic choices.

Healthy buildings nurture the well-being of people who work in them. They also support the planet.

2024 colour trends

Interior design trends are never complete without a look at the latest Dulux colour palettes. For 2024, the Dulux colour forecast at <https://www.dulux.com.au/colour/colour-trends/2024/> is presented in three palettes: Solstice, Muse and Journey.

Solstice is influenced by Scandinavian design, Mediterranean and desert landscapes. The warm colours with cooler accents are soothing, nurturing and joyful. Tactile décor such as braided textiles and primitive sculptural forms add sensory delight to this theme.

Muse has a strong '70s influence with modern twists. It is colourful with warm browns, cool blues and timeless greens. Fun and relaxed, Muse works well with velvet upholstery, chrome detailing, dramatic décor and glossy surfaces.

Journey celebrates global influences with an eclectic palette of rich reds and plums, yellow-greens and mid-tone blues. Paired with furniture and fabrics that are heavily patterned and textured, the Journey palette honours memories and traditions. Modern meets past with sustainable décor and recycled items.

To discuss a new workplace fit out for 2024, please call Evoke Projects on 1300 720 692.



Jerry Kennard is a highly focused and results driven Managing Director who leads through example and motivates the Evoke team to work to their full potential. He inspires his team to think outside the box when delivering creative and visionary office design and fit-out solutions to ensure that every client not only achieves their operational objectives but also increases the engagement, productivity and retention of their team. He believes the physical environment is like the soil for every team to grow in, and ultimately the determinate of their success.



We create well—places™

1300 720 692
evokeprojects.com.au

We always consider the whole.

Taking a holistic approach in turn helps to improve occupant health, wellbeing and productivity, while fostering an organisation's culture through place.

We aim to create environments that set people up for success — however that might look for them.

**We are creators of well—places.
Places that enable people to do well.**



 **evoke**

Office Design & Fitout

Four reasons you need plants at work...and how to get started

Now you can boost your workplace oasis and transform your productivity and well-being with office plants! In the quest for a sustainable and healthy lifestyle, one trend gaining momentum worldwide is the incorporation of office plants through professional plant hire services.

This article explores the four advantages of embracing this green initiative, focusing on the physical, psychological, financial, and environmental benefits for a thriving workplace. We look at the reason Biophilic Design has become the norm, not the exception. Finally, we'll give you some ideas to help you get started. Let's start with four good reasons to include plants at work.

1. Physical benefits:

Air quality improvement: Plants act as natural air purifiers by absorbing pollutants and releasing oxygen, contributing to a healthier indoor environment.

Humidity regulation: Plants release moisture during transpiration, helping to maintain optimal humidity levels and reducing the risk of respiratory issues.

Reduced sick leave: Improved air quality and a healthier environment may lead to fewer instances of illness among employees, resulting in decreased absenteeism.

2. Psychological Benefits:

Stress reduction: Exposure to nature, even in the form of indoor plants, has been linked to reduced stress levels and increased feelings of calm and relaxation.

Enhanced mood: Greenery in the office can positively impact mood and create a more pleasant and uplifting atmosphere, potentially reducing feelings of fatigue and irritability.

Increased productivity: Studies suggest that the presence of plants in the workplace can enhance cognitive function, creativity, and overall productivity.

3. Financial Benefits:

Decreased absenteeism: A healthier workplace with improved air quality may contribute to a reduction in employee sick days, translating to potential cost savings for the organization.

Higher productivity: Enhanced employee well-being and satisfaction can lead to increased productivity, ultimately positively impacting the organization's bottom line.

Cost-effective decor: Plants offer a cost-effective and aesthetically pleasing way to enhance office decor, providing a visually appealing alternative to more expensive interior design elements.

Contrary to the misconception that professional plant hire might be expensive, it actually leads to cost savings in the long run. Consider the hidden costs associated with maintaining plants independently, such as commuting to nurseries, delivery charges, and labour for plant care. Professional plant hire companies streamline the process, providing a stress-free solution and reducing overall costs.

4. Environmental Benefits:

Carbon footprint reduction: Indoor plants contribute to carbon sequestration by absorbing carbon dioxide during photosynthesis, helping to offset the carbon footprint of the workplace.

Sustainable design: Incorporating plants aligns with principles of sustainable and biophilic design, promoting a greener and more environmentally conscious approach to office spaces.

Reduced energy consumption: Well-placed plants can provide shade contributing to energy efficiency in the workplace.

Biophilic design: More than a trend

Biophilic design goes beyond being a mere trend; it represents a transformative approach to architecture and interior design. The incorporation of nature into indoor spaces has all the above proven benefits. As the world prioritises sustainability, biophilic design becomes a pivotal force in shaping future cities and communities.

What can you do?

Incorporating more plants into workspaces can be achieved through a combination of education, engagement, and creating a positive environment. Here are some effective strategies:

- Highlight health benefits
- Educate on easy maintenance: Use professional, cost effective, plant hire companies
- Create green zones at work
- Offer personalised plant options
- Incorporate biophilic design
- Run green challenges or competitions
- Host workshops and events
- Share success stories
- Implement a plant adoption program
- Provide company-sponsored plants

Cultivating a Green Workspace for a Better Tomorrow

By combining these strategies, you can create a workplace culture that not only encourages but celebrates the incorporation of plants, contributing to a healthier and more vibrant work environment.

For further information contact Green Design Indoor Plant Hire on (02)4931 9263, email customerservice@greendesign.com.au or visit www.greendesign.com.au





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Office Design & Fitout

EJE AND EVOLVING WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENTS

Office design is a growing area of specialty for EJE. The recent award-winning fitout at Lake Macquarie City Council Administration office and the new 727HQ in Newcastle are testament to this. The way we work and the places we work in have changed and EJE is remaining ahead of this evolving workplace environment.

Consideration of workplace patterns, flexibility and dynamic engagement are all undertaken when EJE looks at a new workplace design. Spaces are tailored to suit the new adaptable work cultures which have evolved in recent years, and we pride ourselves on responding to each individual client's needs. We bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to each project, providing spaces that support each business's existing needs and supporting them for future growth and expansion.

EJE takes into consideration sustainable solutions, ergonomics, material innovation and design principles that resonate with our clients, be they biophilic elements of the natural environment or evolving technological solutions.



The central break out space at LMCC offices which earned the project the 2022 Newcastle Institute of Architects Interior Architecture Award.



The bespoke steel and stone stairway which becomes the focal point of the design and links directly to each of the common kitchen spaces in the 727HQ fitout.

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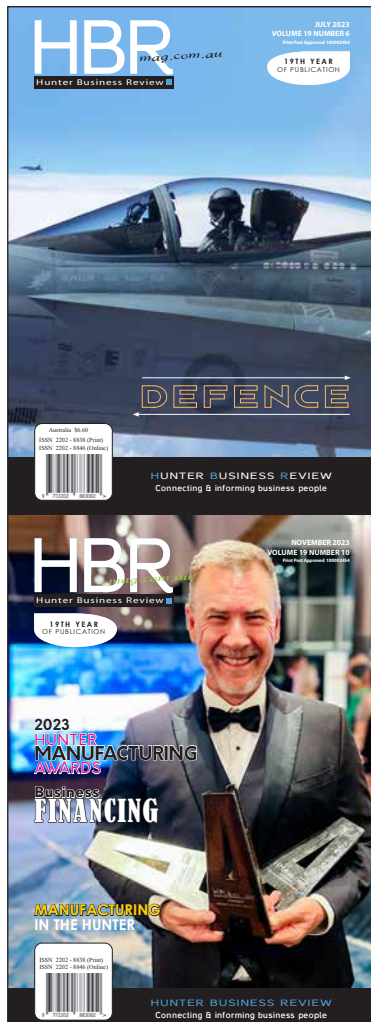
Is your office a destination workplace?

Kristine Piggford
Webber Architects

How we view the workplace has undergone a major change over the last few years. Many organisations are still unsure of their future investment in office space with seemingly competing needs and wants of employers and employees. The simplistic view is that employers want employees back in the office and employees want to work from home. It is not as simple as that.

Post Covid many employers have tried to entice employees back into the office, competing with the commute via a variety of means including new furniture and free snacks. People are more likely to come to a great workplace, but employees need more than that.

Above all the modern employee wants flexibility in where and when they work. As such, the Hybrid work model now dominates the work landscape. Hybrid working is the where of work and allows for a combination of remote and office-based work. Flexible working is the when based on hours and how the traditional 9-5 can be adapted.



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The benefits of the Hybrid/Flexible work model include:

- Better Work/Life Balance
- Less travel – More sustainable
- Ability to attract staff unlimited by location
- Opportunity to reduce real estate costs through better space efficiency
- Improved recruitment and retention

Designing the modern workplace to support differing ways of working means creating adaptable spaces that allow for growth and change, ensuring that technology supports flexible work, providing a variety of spaces to allow for a variety of activity including dedicated space for in-office staff to collaborate with remote staff and clients, quiet spaces to focus, zones to facilitate collaboration, and breakout spaces to socialise.

Employees want their workplace to be a destination that offers the benefits of connection, collaboration, continuous learning, a sense of community and wellbeing. Spaces should feel inviting and comfortable and include ergonomic furniture, an abundance of natural light, natural materials, plants, well considered acoustics, and air quality.

A professionally designed workplace attracts, retains, and engages staff, boosts morale and motivation and leads to a positive workplace culture and staff wellbeing. It is the ultimate expression of your brand in physical form and creates a critical first impression for staff and clients, reinforcing your company identity.

Investing in a professional workplace design not only enhances aesthetics but also contributes to overall business success. Of course, workplace design is not a 'one size fits all'. At Webber we engage in a thorough process to understand your business and your needs. It's about space efficiency and function and creating spaces that enhance employee experience.

For more information on transforming your workplace contact Webber Architects via (02) 4026 1078 or email enquiry@webberarchitects.com



With more than 20 years' professional experience Kristine's areas of responsibility have encompassed projects, practice and people. She has a proven track record in designing, developing and delivering projects from concept to handover and has implemented significant projects in a multiple stakeholder environment. Creative, organised and an excellent communicator, she is experienced in building and nurturing relationships with clients, stakeholders and team members. Kristine has experience in commercial, institutional, workplace, aged care and seniors living and residential design with extensive, specialist experience in education design and space planning.

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Two guys are walking through the woods one day when they stumble across a big deep hole so they throw a few pebbles in but hear no noise.

The first guy says, "Jeeez. That is really deep. I know, let's throw one of these great big rocks down there."

So they pick up a couple football-sized rocks and toss them into the hole and wait... and wait... Again, nothing.

They look at each other in amazement. Then the first guy gets a determined look on his face and says, "Hey, over here is a railroad sleeper. When we toss that sucker in, it's gotta make some noise."

So the two of them drag the heavy sleeper to the hole and heave it in. Once again, not a sound comes from the hole.

Suddenly, out of the nearby woods, a goat appears, running like the wind. It rushes toward the two men, then right past them, running as fast as it's legs will carry it. Suddenly it leaps in the air and into the hole. The two men are astonished.

Then, out of the woods comes a farmer who ambles over and asks them, "Hey, you two guys seen my goat out here?"

The first guy says, "You bet we did! Craziest thing I ever saw. It came running like crazy and just jumped into this hole and disappeared!"

"Nah", says the farmer, "That couldn't have been my goat. My goat was chained to a railroad sleeper."

* * *

A husband and wife who work for the circus go to an adoption agency looking to adopt a child, but the social workers there raise doubts about their suitability.

So the couple produce photos of their 50-foot motor home, which is clean and well maintained and equipped with a beautiful nursery.

The social workers are satisfied by this but then raise concerns about the education a child would receive in their care.

The husband puts their mind at ease, saying, "We've arranged for a full-time tutor who will teach the child all the usual subjects along with and computer and business skills."

Next though, the social workers express concern about a child being raised in a circus environment.

This time the wife explains, "Our nanny is a certified expert in pediatric care, welfare, and diet."

The social workers are finally satisfied and say the couple, "Well, you seem like you would be ideal parents. What age child are you hoping to adopt?"

The husband says, "It doesn't really matter, as long as the kid fits in the cannon."

* * *

Tommy bought a horse from a farmer for \$250 and the farmer agreed to deliver the horse to Tommy the following day.

The next day though, the farmer turned up at Tommy's house and said, "Sorry son, but I have some bad news, the horse died and I can't give you back the money as I already spent it"

Tommy then said, "Okay, then, just bring me the dead horse. I will raffle him off."

The farmer laughed and said, "You can't raffle off a dead horse! Who'd buy a ticket?"

Tommy answered, "Sure I can, just watch me. I just won't tell anybody the horse is dead."

A month later, the farmer met up with Tommy again and asked, "What happened with that dead horse? Did you raffle him off?"

Tommy said, "I sure did. I sold 500 tickets at \$5 a piece."

The farmer said, "Didn't anyone complain?"

Tommy smiled and said, "Just the guy who won so I gave him his \$5 back."

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Take care of your body. It's the only place you have to live."

- Jim Rohn

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