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ABN: 15 112 838 945  
PO Box 853, Hamilton NSW 2303  
Phone: (02) 4062 8133

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

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

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

**PRINTING:**  
NCP Printing  
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sales@ncp.com.au  
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**SERVICING ALL AREAS**

# From the Editor



The decision to extend the life of the Eraring Power Station until August 2027 is a sensible decision in order to maintain power supply certainty in the difficult transition to renewable energy.

Whilst no doubt many parts of the community will be up in arms about the decision, the plain truth is that new renewables projects are not coming online fast enough to meet the needs of business and the community.

Whilst there has been major investment in new technology we

should be aware that this is a huge transition we are going

through. Not only does the renewable energy projects need to be constructed and produce the power but the whole electricity grid needs to be altered. Instead of having a few huge power stations, we are now looking at a numerous power projects of a wide range of capacities which need to be connected to the grid.

For its part, Government at all levels need to work with investors to bring new projects online as quickly as possible. Leadership must be shown and approval processes need to be fast tracked so that investors with capital in place can complete and commission their projects as swiftly. The required infrastructure must also be built as quickly as possible to give investors confidence that their generated power will be able to be distributed to users.

Whilst there is a huge appetite for embracing renewables in the community, we need to be realistic. It will take years to complete the transition.

Governments need to streamline and facilitate this difficult process as much as possible and keep business and the community well informed along the way.

The Eraring decision was probably one the NSW Government would have preferred not to make but it is a necessary one to keep the lights on as we transition to renewables.

**Garry Hardie**  
*Editor and Publisher*

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## Grouting fund lays groundwork for Lake Mac development

Disused mining voids beneath prime commercial real estate in Lake Macquarie are set to be filled with thousands of tonnes of cement grout, paving the way for future growth and development.

The Federal Government announced on 10 May a \$10 million Lake Macquarie Mines Grouting Fund to help cover the cost of filling the sometimes-cavernous voids left behind by historic coal mines across the Lake Macquarie local government area. The funding will arrive in two stages, with the first \$2 million spent setting up the fund in conjunction with Lake Macquarie City Council, and the remaining \$8 million available for future development requiring grouting works. Suburbs expected to benefit most include Charlestown, Cardiff, Morisset, Glendale and West Wallsend.

Grouting involves pumping a cement-like material into the void. Some cost hundreds of thousands of dollars and require thousands of cubic metres to fill, potentially making the development a commercially unviable undertaking without external assistance.

Council's Director Development Planning and Regulation David Antcliff said six recent local mine grouting projects each required an average of about 8750 cubic metres of cement to fill. The largest void alone sucked up 25,000 cubic metres of cement, enough to fill 10 Olympic swimming pools.

"The Mines Grouting Fund will contribute to these often-prohibitive costs," Mr Antcliff said.

"That not only provides certainty for developers and investors, it ensures development in Lake Mac is undertaken safely and without the threat of future mine subsidence."



*Dantia CEO Tim Browne, Mayor Kay Fraser, Shortland MP Pat Conroy, Cr Adam Shultz and Director Development Planning and Regulation David Antcliff.*

Lake Macquarie Mayor Kay Fraser said mine grouting would open the door for an estimated \$450 million of development in the city, close to shops, services and transport links.

Dantia CEO Tim Browne said the federal funding provided a key pillar to continued investment and growth in the city's urban centres.

"This financial support will put Lake Macquarie on an even playing field with other areas not affected by historical mining operations, developing new and innovative industries and providing an environment that will increase investment and jobs," he said.

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## Innovation Ready: Amplifying the Hunter Region's capabilities

**Ben Ogden**  
**Project Lead**  
**Out of the Square Media**



Out of the Square Media believes that the Hunter region has always been a powerhouse of innovation and progressive thinking. Our latest initiative 'Innovation Ready', produced in collaboration with the Hunter Innovation Festival, celebrates the Hunter's next phase of this evolution. It is also part of our broader 'Region Ready' series, designed to showcase the capabilities of our local businesses and the profound impact they have on both the region and beyond.

Innovation Ready profiles 17 local businesses, including notable names like Ampcontrol, Hedweld, The Melt, HiVis, SAPHI Engineering, and Hey Zomi. These organisations are part of a growing band of quiet achievers pushing the boundaries of what's possible. They are leaders in fields ranging from advanced manufacturing and clean tech to AI and digital transformation.

The Hunter region is uniquely positioned for such advancements. With a rich industrial history and a community that is both resilient and resourceful, we see a culture that supports and celebrates innovation. It only takes a lap around the city's networking events to understand that every sector fostering innovation is leaning into a hum of progression and opportunity.

The optimism and culture that surrounds this is infectious and one can't help to be swept up in the buzz which is also full of substance.

Our goal with Innovation Ready is to show how these organisations are leveraging the region's strengths to create solutions that not only serve local needs but also have global applications. Whether it's developing new technologies for the energy sector, creating cutting-edge AI applications, or fostering sustainable practices, these companies exemplify the innovative spirit that defines the Hunter and our future.

We also aim to inspire other businesses and individuals to see the potential in our region. By showcasing these success stories, we hope to encourage more collaboration and investment in local innovation. After all, innovation is not just about having a great idea; it's about creating an environment where those ideas can be nurtured and brought to life.

Visit [innovationready.com.au](http://innovationready.com.au) to join the celebration of innovative businesses that make the Hunter region a beacon of progress and opportunity. We're encouraging organisations far and wide to amplify the capabilities of our region and champion whatever tomorrow brings through 'Innovation Ready'.

*Marty Adnum, Managing Director, Out Of The Square Media (left) and Alex Brennan, Chair, Hunter Innovation Festival.*



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## Historic baths set for \$1 million makeover

Toronto Baths are set for a million-dollar winter makeover thanks to the NSW Government's Places to Swim program.

Lake Macquarie Mayor Kay Fraser, Minister for the Hunter and Swansea MP Yasmin Catley and Lake Macquarie MP Greg Piper flicked the switch on works on 22 May, with upgrades to include a new accessibility ramp into the water, new jetty decking and installation of netting around the baths to protect swimmers from sharks and other large sea creatures.

The existing L-shaped jetty will also be extended with an additional arm in the north-east corner to create a fully enclosed bathing area.

"These improvements will ensure everyone in our community can enjoy this magnificent and historic swimming spot," Cr Fraser said.

Ms Catley said the Places to Swim program supported the creation of great places for people to enjoy the state's rivers, lakes, dams and other inland waterways.

"We're working in partnership with all councils and eligible state agencies to improve access to the water," she said.

"Toronto Baths have been a magnet for generations of bathers, boaters and anglers for almost 100 years, and this work will ensure that remains the case for many more."

Mr Piper said completion of the works, expected by July, would "no doubt bring more visitors to our already popular Toronto foreshore".

Their upgrade marks the next phase of work under the Toronto Foreshore Master Plan.

Construction of the broader Wharf Road precinct is expected to start in mid-2025, allowing time for final design and approval, and providing the opportunity for the foreshore area to remain open during the peak summer period.

**NEWCASTLE & THE HUNTER**

# **INNOVATION READY**

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showcases and offers insights  
into Newcastle and the Hunter  
Regions' innovators, thinkers  
and creators.

The Hunter Region is Australia's largest regional economy and punches well beyond its weight in terms of the 'smarts' it produces. The talent within this region create change, deliver world leading solutions, and help lives locally, nationally and internationally.

**Innovation Ready** follows 15 organisations sharing their stories of innovation, ideation, manufacturing and how they play a unique role in the local community and contribute to the betterment of the world.



Watch the full series at  
***innovationready.com.au***

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UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE / I2N • ROBOTIC SYSTEMS • SAPHI • THE MELT**

## Broadmeadow's future mapped for the next 30 years

The NSW Government has welcomed the City of Newcastle releasing a bold vision for Broadmeadow to outline how housing, employment opportunities and public spaces are developed over the next 30 years.

Council's draft Broadmeadow Place Strategy envisages the revitalisation of a 313 hectare precinct, 3 km west of Newcastle's CBD, with up to 20,000 new homes and 15,000 jobs while retaining Broadmeadow as the region's premier sport and entertainment destination.

To support the supply of new housing, the NSW Government will shortly release rezoning plans for consultation that proposes the development of new homes on identified government-owned land as part of the first stage.

Together, NSW Government and the City of Newcastle are preparing for major urban renewal given Broadmeadow's central location, public transport, government-owned land and large industrial sites. The plans will outline how government-owned land can be utilised so that more housing, including affordable and diverse housing, is available for the people of the Hunter region.

Broadmeadow is well known as a leisure destination and this project builds on significant sport, entertainment, leisure and recreation opportunities that will attract major events to Newcastle with high-quality public transport so the people that live and visit can move around safely and easily.

Minister for Planning and Public Spaces Paul Scully said "This collaborative approach to create a vision for the Broadmeadow precinct from different levels of government is about securing more housing and a better future for Newcastle.

"We have been working with council on these complementary plans and I encourage the community to have its say when they go on exhibition."

Minister for the Hunter Yasmin Catley said "Broadmeadow has unparalleled potential to deliver tens of thousands of new homes and jobs for the Hunter.

"The place strategy proposes a liveable and growing community which will stimulate development, encourage population growth and provide new investment opportunities."

Newcastle Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes said "Broadmeadow offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to deliver vital affordable housing, jobs and infrastructure to support our housing strategy, as well as access to quality public open spaces and improved leisure facilities right in the heart of Newcastle."

**For more information visit the Broadmeadow Place Strategy at <https://haveyoursay.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/broadmeadow-place-strategy>**

## \$131.8 million keeps people moving in Singleton

With the ongoing extension of footpaths network and major improvements to sports and recreation facilities including Alroy Oval and Singleton Gym + Swim, Singleton Council is kicking off a \$54.7 million capital works program in 2024/2025 to keep people moving.

Endorsed at Council's ordinary meeting late May, the 2024/2025 Operational Plan includes 162 actions to make Singleton an even better place to live, work and play, with a total of \$131.8 million to be invested across the local government area.

Most notably, the Plan includes one of Council's biggest-ever capital works programs to deliver vital community infrastructure projects including:

- Alroy Oval Sports Precinct redevelopment - \$6.5 million
- Brunners Bridge replacement - \$7.2million (delivered across 2024/25 and 2025/26 budgets)

- Singleton Gym + Swim improvements - \$5.6 million
- Kilfoyles Bridge replacement - \$4.5 million
- Singleton AFL Building - \$2 million
- Upgrades to Stanhope Road - \$2.5 million
- Howe Park Tennis Court upgrades - \$1 million

Mayor of Singleton, Cr Sue Moore said there was a conscious balance between planning for the future of the Singleton local government area and providing exceptional services now.

"Every project in this Plan will help to propel our community forward, most obviously through an enormous capital works program, but also through initiatives such as exploring renewable energy sources and supporting local businesses that will contribute to the health, wellbeing and liveability of the people of Singleton.

**Council's Manager Infrastructure Services Damian Morris and Mayor of Singleton, Cr Sue Moore.**



## Awesome Newcastle reaches milestone of awarding \$85,000 in grants

Awesome Newcastle, a local chapter of the global grantmaking organisation Awesome Foundation, has announced it has surpassed \$85,000 in no-obligation cash grants awarded to grassroots ventures in the Newcastle region.

Established in the Hunter in 2015, the Awesome Newcastle chapter hosts a monthly pitch night where three applicants have three minutes to present their idea. The board then deliberates with the ultimate winner awarded \$1000, which is personally funded by local business people committed to seeing others thrive with their novel ideas.

Foundation board member Andy Howard said Awesome Newcastle's mission is to support grassroots initiatives that have a positive impact on the local community.

"We're super proud of reaching this funding milestone and the awesome initiatives we've supported over the past nine years.

"We know \$1000 isn't a huge amount of money, but it often starts the momentum finalists are looking for. We've been told by past winners that it's the belief in their idea that has meant the most. That's a really awesome outcome," Howard said.

Previous grant winners have gone on to establish successful businesses including Newy Rides, Newcastle Afoot, OneWave, Feedback Organic, Secret Book Stuff, Surfing the Spectrum, Soul Cafe, Splash of Colour, Frontline Yoga, Survival Candles, Kid Biz Academy, Hunter Homeless Connect and Urban Botanica.

Awesome Newcastle is always looking for new applicants to put forward their ideas.



## Hunter Region Business Excellence Awards

The 29th Annual Hunter Region Business Excellence Awards were held on 24 May at Ben Ean in Pokolbin in the presence of hundreds of business people and dignitaries.

The long running awards celebrated business excellence across 18 categories, attracting 88 finalists of all business sizes and a wide spectrum of industries.

The major prize of Business of the Year was taken out by Dynamic Business Technologies who had earlier also taken out the Professional Services Award.

They were excited with the win, saying "Winning Business of the Year and the Professional Service category is acknowledgment of all the hard work our team has put into DBT over the years. It also gives us time to reflect on how far we have come, and the challenges we have overcome together."



**Dynamic Business Technologies – winners of Business of the Year and the Professional Services award**

The winner of the Business Leader of the Year was Steven Georgalas, LJ Hooker Belmont who said "We are immensely proud of these achievements, which reflect our unwavering commitment to excellence and customer satisfaction. To be recognised among such esteemed businesses in our region is a testament to the dedication of our entire team."

Laxmi Nahar of the Morpeth Family Medical Practice won the Business Woman of the Year award and said "This award would encourage me even more to look after my patients and community. I dedicate this award to our patients and practice staff. It's a wonderful feeling being acknowledged for what I have done for so many years. I am sure this would keep me motivated."

Scott Papas of Pursue Ability was also a major winner taking home the Young Entrepreneur of the Year award.

He said "What a night - Words cannot describe how immensely honoured I am to have been awarded Young Entrepreneur of the Year for 2024!"

The night was a tremendous success and is a testament to hard work of the organisers The Hunter Region Business Hub.

The 2025 Awards will be the 30th Hunter Region Business Excellence Awards, so keep an eye out for entry details and sponsorship opportunities for this landmark event.

### WINNER'S AT THE 29TH ANNUAL HUNTER REGION BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS

**Business of the Year:** Dynamic Business Technologies

**Business Leader of the Year:** Steven Georgalas, LJ Hooker Belmont (Highly Commended: Shane Meister, Network ICT)

**Business Woman of the Year:** Laxmi Nahar, Morpeth Family Medical Practice (Highly Commended: Clara Riddle, Supreme Sandstone)

**Young Entrepreneur of the Year:** Scott Papas, Pursue Ability

**Customer Service - Whole Business:** Balanced Beans (Highly Commended: Beam Bookkeeping and Picture This! Custom Framing)

**Customer Service – Individual:** Mikayla Deans, LJ Hooker Belmont  
**Access & Inclusion:** Hunter Valley Tours

**Online Based:** Network ICT (Highly Commended: Telethrive)

**Professional Services:** Dynamic Business Technologies (Highly Commended: Balanced Beans and The Marketing GP)

**Home Based:** Newcastle Lymphoedema & Lipoedema Clinic (Highly Commended: Outback Jess)

**Personal Services:** Earth & Elm Studio and Wellness Services (Highly Commended: Evolution Hair Co)

**Financial & Real Estate Services:** LJ Hooker Belmont

**Not For Profit:** The Mai-Wel Group (Highly Commended: Dungog District Chamber of Commerce)

**Trades & Industry:** RAS Training & Services (Highly Commended: Connect Cleaning Group)

**Hospitality & Tourism:** McCaffrey's Estate

**General Business:** Picture This! Custom Framing (Highly Commended: Betty Loves Books)

**Health Services:** Get Fit For Life (Highly Commended: CK Health and Wellbeing)

**New Start Winner:** Betty Loves Books (Highly Commended: MarriedbyLobby)

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## The Kent Hotel unveils renovations

The Kent Hotel, a landmark in the heart of Hamilton, is set to embark on an exciting new chapter with the announcement of renovations to its main bar and the launch of a new upstairs Veranda Bar.

With a rich history in Hamilton, dating back a century, The Kent Hotel has long been a destination for locals and visitors alike. Now, in a bid to revitalise this iconic venue and revive a part of its history, extensive renovations are underway to enhance the overall guest experience in the main bar of the venue.

"We are incredibly excited to announce the revitalisation of The Kent Hotel," said Stephen Hunt Managing Director of Hunt Hospitality.

"With these renovations, we aim to honour the venue's heritage while providing our guests with an enhanced and memorable experience."

The renovations to the main bar, which commenced on 29 April, will introduce a contemporary, Art Deco-inspired design that has a welcoming ambience, complete with upgraded facilities and a refreshed aesthetic that pays homage to The Kent Hotel's storied past. Introducing a new U-shaped bar that allows for smooth bar service, a complete view of the action behind the bar and ample places for patrons to sit. The renovations are set to finish in July just in time for The Kent's 100th Birthday.

"The Kent Hotel feels like a home away from home for many," said Stephen Hunt, "I'm lucky enough to have been a part of this building's story for the past 22 years. It's seen many changes over the years, but this is a chapter I am truly looking forward to sharing with everyone who considers The Kent as a second home."

Rici-lee Wheeler, Chief Operations Officer at Hunt Hospitality added "We're working hard to improve the experience at The Kent Hotel while also restoring key features of the original venue with a modern twist."

In addition to the main bar renovations, The Kent Hotel is thrilled to unveil its new Veranda Bar, situated upstairs, and boasting 12 new beer taps. The charming additions to their upstairs bar will offer guests an improved experience and service to the beloved balcony where guests can relax and unwind, with a curated selection of beverages and a cosy atmosphere.

The Kent Hotel will remain open throughout the renovations, with the Veranda Bar serving as a delightful retreat for patrons to enjoy during this period.

## Celebrating 20 years of Hunter Manufacturing Awards

The Hunter Manufacturing Awards (HMA) have launched their 2024 season, celebrating 20 years of excellence in manufacturing. This year's launch event was on 22 May, hosted by HViS Group, the 2023 Manufacturer of the Year (more than 50 employees), and co-hosted by Senquip.

Jacqui Daley, Chair of the HMA Board, reflects on the journey: "Twenty years ago, manufacturing in the Hunter region was characterised by a strong industrial heritage and traditional production methods. The inaugural award winners included prominent names such as Varley, Newcastle Machine Shop, M&S Fabrications, Steel River Manufacturing, Onesteel, and Cowan Manufacturing. HMA was established to recognise and encourage excellence in this vital sector, and since its inception, the awards have seen local manufacturers embrace new technologies and innovative practices."

Today, the Hunter region boasts a vibrant and diverse manufacturing sector, gaining momentum and recognition for its productivity and innovation. Local manufacturers are at the forefront of technological advancements, driving efficiencies and sustainability. The HMA continues to play a crucial role in showcasing these achievements and supporting manufacturers in their pursuit of excellence.

The manufacturing industry in the Hunter employs over 20,000 people and is a major driver of the local economy, contributing



around \$3 billion in value-add to the regional economy and 6.6% of GDP.

This year, HMA is excited to announce a new partnership with Industry Update. This partnership will enhance the visibility of local manufacturers on a national stage, providing a platform to showcase the innovation and excellence that the Hunter region has to offer.

The 2024 awards programme features several updates to streamline the application process and increase engagement. New in 2024 is the launch of the inaugural HMA Hall of Fame, recognising individuals or organisations that have significantly impacted the manufacturing industry in the region. This award will be selected by the HMA board, with nominations open to the manufacturing community.

With a special, perpetual trophy and prize for the winner, Ms Daley said the new category is unique among the 15 coveted awards available on the Awards night. "Every year, our judges are amazed by the diversity and quality of manufacturing businesses in our region, and the winners are always stand-outs in their categories", she said. "However, we've noticed that there are people and organisations that repeatedly appear in the applications year after year, and we feel that kind of longevity in the manufacturing industry should also be recognised".

Thanks to HMA's sponsors and partners, a range of incentives and prizes are being offered, including:

- A 12-month board position for the Rising Star winner
- A 12-month membership to HunterNet for the startup award winner
- Travel prizes, including international flights for the Manufacturer of the Year

Jacqui Daley underscores the benefits of participating: "Entering the awards not only boosts your company's reputation and increases visibility but also gives your team a morale boost by highlighting their achievements. It's a worthwhile exercise that reflects the positive progress within your organisation."

The nomination period for the 2024 awards is now open and will remain so for the next 13 weeks, closing on 21 August. HMA encourages all eligible companies to participate and help spread the word about the nomination period.

As HMA looks to the future, it remains committed to presenting a strong presence for manufacturing in the region to a national and international audience. The 20th year of HMA promises to be the best yet, showcasing the innovation and excellence of the Hunter's manufacturing sector.

The 20th HMA Awards will be celebrated at a Gala Dinner at The Newcastle Exhibition and Convention Centre (NEX) on Friday, 18 October 2024 – and, by all accounts, is shaping up to be a night to remember. Details on the event will be available soon on the HMA website.

Applications for the Awards are open until 21 August, with finalists announced on 19 September.

**For more information on the HMA, to submit a nomination, or to learn about sponsorship opportunities, please visit [www.hma.org.au](http://www.hma.org.au) or email [info@hma.org.au](mailto:info@hma.org.au).**

# CALLING ALL MANUFACTURERS IN THE HUNTER REGION



Applications are **NOW OPEN** for the prestigious  
2024 Hunter Manufacturing Awards



This year, The Hunter Manufacturing Awards celebrates 20 years of supporting and encouraging manufacturing excellence in the Hunter Region.

If your business is actively engaged in the manufacturing sector within our Region - this is your time to shine!

Participating in these awards showcases organisations small and large, opening doors to valuable business opportunities and boosting your company's reputation and visibility.

## APPLICATIONS CLOSE 21 AUGUST

### AWARDS NIGHT

Friday 18th October 2024  
NEX Newcastle

There has never been a better time to be recognised for your hard work and dedication, and no better way to celebrate your achievements!

Learn more and explore the 2024 award categories at [www.hma.org.au](http://www.hma.org.au)

WITH THANKS TO OUR 2024 SPONSORS AND PARTNERS



## Concussion clinic launched

Heal Specialist Urgent Care has launched a new Concussion Clinic in response to the growing concern from patients about the long-term impacts of concussions across all sporting disciplines.

Recent research has highlighted that whilst short-term symptoms are reversible, a single knock to the head can have serious consequences in later life (Queensland Brain Institute, 2021). According to the Australian Government guidelines, an athlete should not be allowed to return to sport until cleared by a medical practitioner (Concussion in Sport Australia, 2022).

In response to these findings, Heal Specialist Urgent Care is pioneering an expert concussion assessment and rehabilitation clinic for our local sporting teams. The service supports players of all ages and skill levels, spanning from little leagues to elite first-grade athletes.

As an emergency specialist, Dr Tim Stewart, the CEO and Medical Director of Heal Specialist Urgent Care, knows the risks involved in concussion. "In my career I've seen first-hand the effects of head injuries and the impact of delayed treatment. We love our local sport and we're here to help keep our community safe by offering urgent care to determine if a player can return to sport or needs further treatment."

14 year old Scarlett was concussed while playing Rugby Union. Her parents were understandably very concerned and took her straight to Heal.

Her mum Eliza explains the stress she felt; "I was feeling nervous and the team at Heal went through everything step by step. Everyone was so knowledgeable. Marianne was amazing, she wasn't letting us go until she was 100% certain Scarlett was OK. They made me feel better about the whole situation, I think it's so necessary."

By prioritising early intervention and comprehensive care, Heal aims to safeguard the well-being of the community and promote a culture of safety and longevity in sport. To be assessed immediately, patients can go directly to Heal Specialist Urgent Care's Newcastle or Maitland clinic. There is no need to book.

Heal Nurse Niki, Heal patient Scarlett Tresside and her mother Eliza Tressider



## Joint regional identity project to be driven by the community

Muswellbrook Shire Council has announced a joint place branding initiative aimed at defining the regional identity of the Upper Hunter. The project, a collaboration with Upper Hunter Shire Council and led by branding agency For the People, aims to capture the unique attributes of the Upper Hunter community to drive economic growth, increase regional recognition, and strengthen community ties. The project is part-funded by a Resources for Regions grant and is a community driven initiative.

For the People, known for their transformative work with regions such as The Blue Mountains and West Coast Tasmania, will guide the project, while working directly with the local community. The agency brings a wealth of experience and a collaborative approach to place branding that has consistently delivered both economic and social benefits to communities across Australia.

The branding project includes a strategic examination of the region's unique attributes, strengths and potential, aiming to craft a coherent narrative that is developed with and for the

communities of the Upper Hunter. The approach will ensure locals are able to use and own the outputs of the work – making them participants in the transformation of their own community.

The process will consider the region's heritage, diverse industries, and community stories, to create a sense of place that reflects each town's unique character, while helping to unite the Upper Hunter region.

Community input is vital to the project's success. For the People will engage extensively with neighbouring local government areas, local residents, business owners, and stakeholders to ensure the brand authentically represents the collective voice and vision of the Upper Hunter. There will be an online survey and a series of community workshops and public consultations taking place across the region, to capture a wide range of perspectives and ideas.

The place branding project is a major step in mobilising Council's Strategic Community Plan, with a strong focus on deepening connections between communities, empowering local businesses, and attracting more visitors and potential residents to the area. The project will support the region's long-term vision of providing residents with a quality rural lifestyle in a vibrant, caring and sustainable community. By engaging with residents in a meaningful and inclusive way and tapping into the unique attributes and characteristics of the region, the project will provide a long-term place identity that adds tangible value to the community today, and well into the future.

## Seed People Consulting celebrates 10

When Stacey Kelly registered the business name Seed People Consulting in May of 2014, her hopes to provide support and resources to increase HR capability across the Hunter Region were still coming into focus. Whilst starting and running a small business isn't always easy, Seed People Consulting is now celebrating their 10th successful year of business.

Stacey started Seed with the purpose of providing practical, people-focused advice and resources across the Hunter Region, and beyond. Over the past 10 years, the close-knit team at Seed have honed their strategy to focus on the Organisational Development space, delivering over 500 workshops, thousands of coaching sessions, and numerous other solutions in their 'sweet spot' of Leadership, Teams and Culture.

"With changing landscapes of technology, talent shortages, wellbeing and hybrid work, it's clear that organisations might have the people, but sometimes lack the skills and/or experience to deliver results", said Stacey Kelly, Founder & Principal Consultant of Seed People Consulting.

"Often, it's not that organisations lack the willingness to train skills in-house, but they may lack the capacity or expertise required to get a good result and get it quickly. Over the past 10 years, we're proud to have worked with over 160 clients, more than 60% of whom have come back for multiple projects with us", said Stacey.

To mark this significant milestone of 10 years, Seed recently took the opportunity to bring together their clients who have been with them on many years of the journey, their team, local partners and family to show their gratitude and celebrate all the achievements of their history and continue to build connection and excitement and about the future.



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## Murrook Culture Centre receives National Trust Heritage Award

The Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council (WLALC) has been awarded the prestigious Aboriginal Heritage award at the special 30th National Trust (NSW) Heritage Awards for the Murrook Culture Centre in Williamtown.

The awards, held at Pyrmont's Doltone House on 17 May are the most anticipated celebration of heritage excellence in NSW and recognises excellence and outstanding achievements in the conservation, protection and interpretation of Aboriginal, built, natural and cultural heritage.

Murrook Culture Centre was recognised for its exceptional work in preserving and promoting Aboriginal heritage. The accolade highlights the Centre's dedication to safeguarding the rich cultural history and traditions of Worimi Elders and the Aboriginal community, ensuring their stories are honoured, preserved and shared with future generations.

Winner of the Aboriginal Heritage award and finalist in the Education and Interpretation category, Murrook Culture Centre's newly completed immersive, permanent digital exhibition was praised for capturing the beauty of Country and immersing visitors in cultural stories that showcase Worimi culture and the Gathang language.

"The recognition of Murrook Culture Centre is a testament to the years of hard work we've put in, and a true reflection on the passion of our Board and Community Members committed to the preservation and education of Worimi culture," said Andrew Smith, CEO of the Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council (WLALC).

"I am still pinching myself because; we didn't do this for the accolade or awards, we did it because we have a responsibility to do this and be accountable to the preservation of knowledge, relationships and connection.

"I'm so proud that our efforts in education and conserving Aboriginal heritage have set a benchmark for excellence and that wider Australians and the National Trust have recognised our community in this field," Mr Smith said.

## City of Newcastle offers \$900,000 to fund fresh ideas

Community groups, residents and business owners are being given the chance to share in almost \$900,000 from City of Newcastle to enhance the culture, environment and economy of Newcastle. City of Newcastle's grants and sponsorships program covers a range of initiatives such as community support, sustainability, the environment and event sponsorship.

Funding through City of Newcastle's Special Business Rate program will be allocated to projects that support the promotion, beautification and development of Wallsend and Hamilton, prior to applications opening for the City Centre later this year.

Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes said funding can be used for a wide range of activities and projects.

"This is the community's chance to secure grants for initiatives that improve our local way of life," Cr Nelmes said.

"Our grants and sponsorships program can also help to alleviate the cost of living crisis with funding for things such as social inclusion.

"Last year our funding helped Grainery Care maintain an Outdoor Foodcare Delivery Space, allowed the University of Newcastle to create an employment clinic for the newly arrived migrants and maintain a student grocery hub.

"Our environmental and sustainability grants helped Apnom, a sustainable technology developer, create a program aimed at saving energy while maintaining food security and community nutrition, assisted the Diocese of Newcastle with the operation of a community garden, and funded Newcastle's first Community Textile Recovery Hub at Wallsend.

"Our Special Business Rate program is an important way of

involving businesses and the community in the continued improvement of their local precincts.

"It's played a part in the Newcastle Fringe Festival at Hamilton, Streets Alive Wallsend and the Wallsend Op Shop Trail.

"The funding for projects in Wallsend and Hamilton will be assessed on their impact, creativity and innovation."

Hamilton and Wallsend SBR funding expressions of interest open close 23 June. Applications for the grants and sponsorships program close 30 June.

## New technology harvests water from air

The University of Newcastle has officially unveiled technology capable of harvesting up to 1000 litres of drinkable water per day from air. The Hydro Harvester absorbs water from the atmosphere. Solar energy or waste heat is used to produce hot, humid air – the hotter the air, the more water it holds. This hot air is then cooled using ambient air as a heat sink to extract water for drinking or irrigation.

This project received funding from the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund, enabling Laureate Professor Behdad Moghtaderi and his University of Newcastle team to scale up the from pilot form generating 20 L of drinkable water per day to the modular 1000 L/day system it is today.

Nearing market readiness, the 1000L Hydro Harvester has the capacity to produce enough drinking water to sustain a small rural community or up to 400 people – a potentially lifesaving tool during drought or emergencies.

Chemical engineer and Director of the University's Centre for Innovative Energy Technologies, Laureate Professor Moghtaderi, said unlike commercially available atmospheric water generators (AWGs), the Hydro Harvester worked by heating air instead of cooling it.

"By using solar thermal energy or waste heat, the Hydro Harvester has a lower electrical demand and lower average cost of water per litre than commercial AWGs," Professor Moghtaderi said.

"Our technology is designed to operate independent of the ambient temperature and humidity, so it's suitable in virtually any environmental condition, and is cheaper to run."

The technology behind the Hydro Harvester was demonstrated at a launch event at Newcastle Institute for Energy and Resources (NIER) – one of the University's flagship research institutes, focused on working with industry to provide solutions for energy, resources, food and water sectors.

"We look forward to trialling the Hydro Harvester in several remote communities later in the year," Professor Moghtaderi said.

While the main intent of the Hydro Harvester is to provide drinking water to drought-affected communities, Professor Moghtaderi said there were several potential applications.

"It can provide emergency water supply for livestock to avoid complete destocking during droughts and allow faster economic recovery.

"Or it could be used to temporarily supply communities when water is disconnected during repairs of leaking infrastructure. There's also potential to provide emergency water supply during disasters.

"We look forward to connecting with a range of potential partners to explore how our communities can benefit from this technology," Professor Moghtaderi said.

Dr Priscilla Tremain from the University of Newcastle



# Wish you were here!

Wouldn't it be wonderful if employees said this about the office instead of holidays?! It probably doesn't happen too often given that research shows 64% of employees feel their work environments don't empower them to perform at their best.<sup>1</sup> How can we change this?

Workplace design and fit-out company Evoke Projects shares tips about creating a workplace where everybody wants to be.

## Attracting people to the workplace

So whom do you want to love your office? Perhaps it's those employees who prefer to work at home and show reluctance for office days. You will also want your best workers to love the office rather than be tempted to look for a new one! In addition, it would be great if word spreads about your wonderful new office design to tempt new talent.

The last couple of years have seen employers struggle to get people back to the office. Workers feel they are just as productive at home, and they save money on commuting and workwear. Many of the same workers acknowledge that they miss the social and creative interaction from the office. If you create a place where people want to be, everybody is a winner.

Workplace design and fit-out has a major influence on how people feel in their work environment. It affects their physical and mental health, motivation and productivity. A positive workplace experience benefits employees and employers.

For employees who may be considering a new job, a change is as good as a rest, as they say. A new workplace fit-out will make them feel as if they've joined a new company. And the word soon spreads. "Have you heard about Company X? They have this amazing lounge for workers and an e-games room. Check out their Instagram!" Soon, you will have the pick of the talent.

## Create a workplace with character

WORKTECH Academy writes about a "flight to character". They cite Amanda Stanaway, global head of user strategy at consulting firm ERA-co, who describes this as a "yearning to find meaning, purpose and authenticity" at work. While quality of the workplace design and fit-out is undoubtedly important, organisations are linking "storytelling, history and purpose to create 'difference' rather than perfection for the users of their work environments"<sup>2</sup>

## What do workers miss when WFH?

Working from home has its benefits, but as mentioned earlier, people miss the buzz, collaboration, creativity and social interaction of the office. At home, the furniture and technology may not be as good as the workplace, and family noise may be distracting. Focus on what people miss about the office when brainstorming your workplace design and fit-out ideas. Give them a reason to want to come into the office with social events and perks they would miss at home.

## Seven tips for a "wish you were here" workplace

The commercial interior design team at Evoke Projects has listed (in no particular order) their top seven tips for creating a "wish you were here" workplace.

- 1. Biophilic design elements** – help people feel close to nature with artwork, plants, natural light and calming spaces.
- 2. Instagrammable features** – be talked about for all the right reasons.
- 3. Positive workplace culture** – remember that the most prestigious office fit-out won't fix a negative culture or values problem.
- 4. Create a well-place™** – cultivate an environment designed to enable people to 'do well', supporting physical and mental health while engaging and motivating staff to be their best and most productive selves.
- 5. Collaborative environment** – design spaces for easy collaboration in small or large groups. Teamwork makes people feel a sense of belonging, which is important to the human psyche.
- 6. Home-style furniture** – make the office feel like a home by including lounge furniture in the breakout spaces, soft furnishings and natural wood desks and cabinets.
- 7. Smart office** – integrate technology into the workplace to improve the employee experience. Examples include hoteling systems for efficient desk-sharing, collaboration and file-sharing tools, subscriptions to health/wellness apps and online skills development and training.

For "wish you were here" workplace design and fit-out solutions, please call Evoke Projects on 1300 720 692.

1. <https://www.hrmonline.com.au/section/strategic-hr/workplace-design-to-enable-best-work/>

2. <https://cdn.worktechacademy.com/uploads/2024/01/The-World-of-Work-in-2024.pdf>



# COMING EVENTS.....

**20 June 2024, 8.00 am – 9:30 am**

**HunterNet**

IP Seminar Series – Event 3: Patents, Design and Confidential Information

Venue: HunterNet Cooperative

Cost: Free (Members Only Event)

<https://events.humanitix.com/ip-seminar-series-seminar-3-patents-designs-and-confidential-information>

**24 July 2024**

**Business Hunter**

Business Development Forum

Venue: To be announced

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

**27 June 2024**

**Business Hunter**

Business Hunter Summit 2024 – ‘A Future Made In The Hunter’

Venue: To be announced

<https://form.jotform.com/240981048231857>

**24 July 2024**

**Business Hunter**

Business Development Forum

Venue: To be announced

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

**2 August 2024**

**Business Hunter**

Business Infrastructure Forum

Venue: To be announced

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

**7 August 2024**

**Business Hunter**

Business Development Forum

Venue: To be announced

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

**21 – 22 August 2024**

**Hunter Defence**

2024 Hunter Defence Conference

Venue: Rydges Hunter Valley

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

**23 August 2024**

**Business Hunter**

Energy & Resource Lunches

Venue: To be announced

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

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

**HIA**

Finance and Admin Workshop

Venue: HIA Office, Mayfield West

Cost: \$110 – \$220

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

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

**Port Stephens Women in Business**

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

Venue: Tanilba House

Cost: \$110 – \$220

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

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

**HIA**

Hunter Apprentice Awards

Venue: City Hall, Newcastle

Cost: \$110 – \$160

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

**4 September 2024**

**Business Hunter**

Business Development Forum

Venue: To be announced

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

**23 September 2024, 8.30 am – 2.30 pm**

**Regional Angel Investor Network**

RAIN PitchFest Newcastle – Session 1

Cost: Free

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

**26 September 2024, 8.30am – 2.30pm**

**Firewire Digital**

Newcastle SEO Conference 2024

Venue: Rydges Newcastle

Cost: \$375

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

**07 October 2024, 6:00 pm - 11:30 pm**

**HIA**

HIA-CSR Hunter Housing and Kitchen and Bathrooms Awards

Venue: NEX, Newcastle

Cost: \$240 – \$480

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

**16 October 2024**

**Business Hunter**

Business Development Forum

Venue: To be announced

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

**18 October 2024**

**HMA**

Hunter Manufacturing Awards 2024

Venue: Nex, Newcastle

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

**18 October 2024**

**Business Hunter**

Business Infrastructure Forum

Venue: To be announced

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



**RECENT COMMERCIAL SALES**

**Sydney investors purchase Hunter Street property**

342 Hunter Street, Newcastle sold at auction to Sydney based investors for \$2,100,000. The building is fully leased to three local businesses with multiple income streams guaranteeing a stable and secure income. Sitting at 480 sqm of gross floor area, the property has four separate suites and is situated close to the Newcastle Light Rail network. The sale was made through the team at Commercial Collective.



**Beresfield facility sold for nearly \$4 million**

Situated in the heart of the Beresfield industrial estate at 5 Elwell Close, this prominent facility was offered with vacant possession and presented a great opportunity for a company headquarters with an imposing street presence.

Constructed on the site is an impressive office complex spread over two levels with great natural light plus 600 sqm of warehouse space which is split into two sections, enclosed by a chain wire security fence & accommodates 23 car parks.

Sold through MOVABLE, it was purchased by an owner occupier in the allied health services industry.



**Industrial warehouse facility sold for over \$4 million**

A modern industrial warehouse facility at 9-11 Elwell Close, Beresfield was sold at auction to local investors with a yield of 6.27%. It boasts an income of \$252,000 net per annum + GST.

With a total building area of 2051 sqm and a site area of 3718 sqm, it is positioned in the heart of the popular Beresfield industrial estate.

It is leased to renowned business Coastline Plumbing on a three + three + three-year lease. The site offers future opportunity for multiple tenancies due to the layout of its buildings.

The sale was through Commercial Collective.



**Hard rock quarry sold**

Sold for an undisclosed price through Commercial Collective, a hard rock quarry at 29 Station Street, Martins Creek has a long term 25 years +10 years leasing agreement in place.

Sitting at 127 ha, this state significant resource provides a net passing income of \$1,610,000 pa.



**Mixed-use investment fetches \$3.05 million**

Commercial Collective facilitated the sale at auction of 89-91 Young Street, Carrington for \$3,050,000 to local investors.

A standout mixed-use investment, the property features a new ten-year lease with Bottlemart, alongside a renowned bakery, a first-floor commercial office and a popular takeaway shop.

This investment generates \$187,000 net annually plus GST.



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# Five reasons postgraduate study is right for you

Whether you're ready for a complete career change, or want to upskill and land that next promotion, postgraduate study at the University of Newcastle can help get you there.

And you don't have to jump in headfirst. The University's Graduate Certificates are a great way to test the water and find out if postgraduate study fits in with your lifestyle. These short courses also provide up to 40 units of credit into relevant Master's degrees upon completion. There are also over 25 degrees that offer government-subsidised places, meaning you can save up to 85% off course fees.

## Stay relevant

Postgraduate study helps you to keep on top of emerging trends and develop specialised skills to advance your career. And with 93+% postgraduate employment rate - above the national average<sup>1</sup> - graduates of the University of Newcastle are in demand.

<sup>1</sup> Graduate Outcomes Survey 2020-2022

## Flexible study options

With the choice to study either part-time or full-time, and with the option to complete online, face-to-face or a combination of both, the University's flexible postgrad programs can be tailored around a busy lifestyle.

"What I needed living overseas was flexible access to the University lecturers, the courses, all the information I needed. Through all the online portals it was fantastic. It was important to me because I was travelling a lot...so I needed that sort of flexibility."

*Jeff Mannering, Managing Director, Audi Australia  
Master of Business Administration, The University of Newcastle*

## Earn more

Postgraduates earn more. In 2022, the median salary for an undergraduate Bachelor's degree holder was \$68K, compared to \$91.6k for postgraduate coursework graduates<sup>2</sup>. If you study at the University of Newcastle, the future could be brighter still - postgraduates earn a median salary of \$98.8k, well above national average<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Graduate Outcomes Survey 2022

<sup>3</sup> Graduate Outcomes Survey 2019-2021

## Expand your global network

When you graduate from the University of Newcastle, you'll join our 174,000+ strong global alumni community spanning 154 countries. With networking events, meet-ups, and mentoring opportunities, you can connect the dots and grow a global career.

## Online study

The University's online learning platform is learner centred and caters for the needs of busy professionals, giving you complete control over when and where you study. Regardless of distance, you can interact with fellow students in a highly collaborative environment, guided by an online University educator.

Convinced yet? The University of Newcastle offers over 85 postgraduate degrees, FEE-HELP options, and the flexibility to shape study around your lifestyle.

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# Three ways to create a valuable culture inside your business

**Richie Williams**  
**P.R.I.D.E. Business Coaching**

Many factors drive your company's value, but perhaps the most important is how your business would perform without you. To get your company to flourish when you're not around, you need owner-like effort from your team. Inspiring this effort comes from cultivating a vibrant culture inside your business.

Here are three ways to get your employees to care as much as you do:

### 1. Cast your employees as stars in a "David vs. Goliath" movie

Positioning your company as the underdog can foster a strong sense of unity and purpose among your employees. When facing a formidable competitor, be transparent about the challenges and rally your team around the idea of being the smaller player fighting against the odds. This mentality can inspire dedication and creativity, as employees feel they are part of a significant, collective effort to overcome a larger adversary. By humanizing the company and emphasizing personal connections with customers, employees can be motivated to go the extra mile, contributing to the company's growth and resilience.

### 2. Provide perks others can't

Creating a thriving culture often involves offering unique perks that make your company stand out as a great place to work. One effective strategy is implementing a four-day workweek. Research suggests that a shorter workweek can lead to a healthier workplace culture and higher employee satisfaction. By reducing working hours without compromising productivity, employees can enjoy a better work-life balance, which can boost morale and loyalty. This perk not only attracts and retains talent but also fosters an environment where employees are more engaged and motivated, driving consistent business growth.

### 3. Gamify your business

Gamification can be a powerful tool to inspire owner-like effort among employees. By introducing game elements into the workplace, you create a competitive yet collaborative

environment. For example, implementing a virtual scoreboard that tracks performance metrics such as gross margin can make work more engaging. Employees can see real-time results of their efforts and strive to improve their standings. Tying compensation to these metrics further incentivizes employees to perform at their best. This approach not only boosts individual performance but also encourages a healthy competitive spirit that can drive the company's overall success.

### In Review

One of the secrets to building a valuable company is to get your employees to work as hard as you do. Owner-like effort comes from making your people feel like part of a shared mission and giving them a working environment that brings out the best in them. By casting your employees as underdogs in a compelling narrative, offering unique and attractive perks, and gamifying the workplace, you can cultivate a culture where employees are motivated, engaged, and aligned with the company's goals. This vibrant culture not only enhances performance but also significantly increases your company's value, making it more attractive to potential buyers and resilient in the face of challenges.

**For further information contact Richie Williams on 0408 215 032 or email [rwilliams@pridecoaching.com](mailto:rwilliams@pridecoaching.com)**



With an extensive background in sport, both as a professional player and coach, **Richie Williams** brings with him a wealth of knowledge in developing teams. Alongside having spent more than 14-years working across education, both in high-schools and at a tertiary level, he has transferred his education and sports skills into the business environment at corporate, SME and non-for-profit sectors. Richie is the director of P.R.I.D.E Business Coaching and has been assisting businesses for more than 30 years in identifying and fulfilling their potential.

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**P.R.I.D.E Business Coaching** is a leader in driving workgroup, business results and performance to the level of success desired by our clients.  
Delivery beyond expectation is the foundation of our business, and our acronym represents the qualities that we drive into our client's business.



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- Recognition
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- Excellence

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# Build the skills your business needs

TAFE NSW offers a wide range of training solutions to support Hunter professionals and businesses working in the Manufacturing and Mining industry.

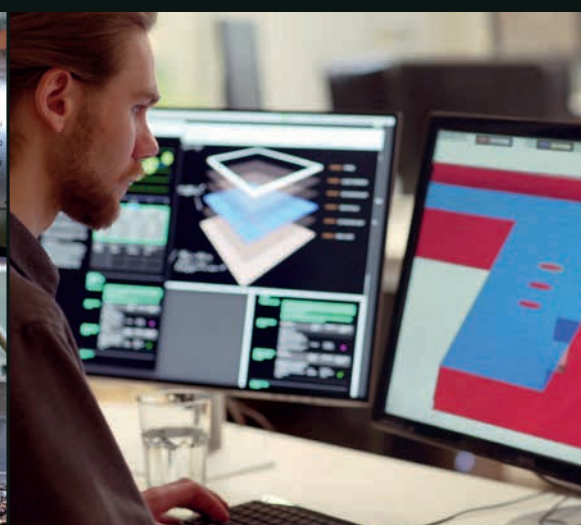
Our future-focused courses use the latest technology, including new augmented reality welding equipment, so your team can develop new skills safely. Courses can be tailored to your organisation's needs and are delivered flexibly: either in the workplace, online, on campus, or a combination.

So, if you're ready to breathe new life into your business, contact TAFE NSW today.

Enrol now for Semester 2, 2024.

Manufacturing and Mining courses include:

- + Welding featuring Augmented Reality
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- + Computer Numerical Control
- + Hydraulics & Pneumatics
- + Non-destructive Material Testing
- + Mining Skills
- + and more





Some of the region's best apprentices, trainees, students and businesses were recognised at the 2024 Zeal Futures Excellence Awards, which were announced in Newcastle on 17 May.

Sharon Smith, CEO of Zeal Futures, said this year's event was particularly exciting, as it was the first Excellence Awards event under the organisation's new brand, Zeal Futures.

"Two weeks ago, we officially rebranded from HVTC Group to Zeal Futures; one unified brand and name to propel our organisation forward," Ms Smith said.

"Our organisation has a long and proud history of creating success stories, since our inception nearly 43 years ago. In that time, we have created learning and employment opportunities for more than 38,000 people across hundreds of vocations and industries, and that number continues to grow as we do.

"The Excellence Awards allow us to acknowledge the achievements of our apprentices and trainees, students, staff, and host employers, and recognise their valuable contributions to vocational education and training"

For the second year running, an Origin Energy employee has taken out the Apprentice of the Year Award. Jan Kubecka completed a Mechanical Engineering apprenticeship, having

already completed a Light Vehicle apprenticeship and deciding to further his studies.

Throughout his apprenticeship Jan was accepted into the Today's Skills Tomorrow's Leaders program and the Zeal Futures Emerging Leaders Program, which he successfully completed, gaining a statement of attainment in Leadership & Management.

Kieran Moss was named the Zeal Futures Student of the Year. Kieran commenced his Certificate III in Engineering – Mechanical Trade in 2022 through an apprenticeship with Zeal Futures and Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group and excelled during the Work Readiness Program.

Centennial was also recognised on the night, winning Large Host Employer of the Year. Since 2007, Centennial has hosted more than 200 Zeal Futures apprentices and trainees, some of whom are still employed in the business, highlighting opportunities for long-term career growth and stability.

"I'd like to congratulate all of our winners and finalists from the Hunter and Central Coast," Ms Smith added.

"Our purpose and passion are to help everyone thrive. We help businesses grow by sourcing, employing, and managing quality apprentices and trainees.

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Hunter Valley Grammar School is the region's leading independent school. Isn't it time you took a closer look? Enquire today.

“We also support people through all phases of their learning journeys, empowering individuals, including apprentices, trainees, students, and our partners, to achieve their goals and realise their full potential. At Zeal Futures, we create success stories.”

**Zeal Futures Awards winners**

**Apprentice of the Year:** Jan Kubecka (hosted by Origin Energy – Eraring); Highly Commended: Luke Hren (hosted by Manildra Energy)

**Trainee of the Year:** Sarkees Yousif (hosted by NSW Premier’s Department); Highly Commended: Mackenzi Exton (hosted by Sutherland Shire Council)

**Student of the Year:** Kieran Moss (hosted by Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group); Highly Commended: Ashlee Pizzigrilli (Diploma of Beauty Therapy) and Ella Peters (Certificate III Business)

**Woman in Non-Traditional Trade Apprentice/Trainee of the Year:** Rachael Pearson (hosted by South32)

**School-based Apprentice/Trainee of the Year:** Emma-Jane Binder (hosted by the Department of Planning & Environment (NSW Parks & Wildlife Service))

**Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Apprentice/Trainee of the Year:** Emily Towney

**Adversity Champion:** Tanya Byrne (hosted by Shoalhaven City Council)

**Small Host Employer of the Year:** Borcat Trailers

**Large Host Employer of the Year:** Centennial

**Host Employer Safety Award:** Peabody

**Host Employer Innovation Award:** NSW Department of Planning & Environment

**Overall Host Employer of the Year:** BlueScope

**Milton Morris Encouragement Award:** Jake Roeder (hosted by Lynwood Country Club)

**Zeal Futures Employee of the Year:** Chelsea Ellul (Compliance and Quality Team Leader)

*Origin Energy’s Jan Kubecka won Apprentice of the Year*



*Student of the Year Kieran Moss (right) with Highly Commended winners Ashlee Pizzigrilli (left) and Ella Peters*



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## Strong results for University of Newcastle

The University of Newcastle delivered strong results in 2023, as outlined in its 2023 Annual Report that was tabled in NSW Parliament in May.

In 2023, sound progress was made against all Looking Ahead Strategic Plan objectives and the University is in a strong position overall at the plan's implementation half-way point. Audited financial statements show that despite sector-wide constraints and broader economic challenges, the Consolidated Group achieved a breakeven result in 2023, reporting a nominal deficit of \$0.3 million.

"While not without its challenges, 2023 was another successful year for our University as we continued to focus on our dual purposes of delivering an outstanding student experience and serving our regions," Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Alex Zelinsky AO said.

"We made further progress against each of our Looking Ahead strategic priorities and we were, of course, delighted to have our efforts recognised with our highest-ever world ranking of 173 (QS 2024 World University Rankings)," Professor Zelinsky said.

"We were immensely proud to lead the way among Australian Universities, being the first to achieve five Cygnet Awards from Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) under the Athena SWAN program.

"This and other achievements are testament to the commitment of our people to our values of excellence, equity, engagement and sustainability."

Mirroring the sector-wide trend, the University of Newcastle experienced a flattening of domestic student enrolments in 2023. In contrast, the University's international student cohort grew in 2023, with the largest ever cohort commencing their studies in Newcastle in Semester 1. At 6500 in 2023, international student numbers are strengthening but are yet to fully recover from the impact of COVID-19.

"While our 2023 results were better than expected, recent changes to international student visas have put more constraints on our operations and will make it difficult for us to reach our targets in 2024. We need reforms to get our international student numbers back to 2019 levels and above. This makes a difference for so many students, both locally and globally," Professor Zelinsky said.

Research income grew by 5% to \$176.9 million in 2023 and it was another strong year for donation and sponsorship income, with the University receiving \$20.33 million from 2,102 supporters. Interest rate rises and a larger investment principal (in part due to lower than budgeted expenditure on capital projects in 2023) delivered investment income of \$9.7 million, up from \$2.0 million in 2022.

However, operating expenses increased by 6% overall. Travel returned to pre COVID-19 levels; employee expenses rose by 9% after the finalisation of the new Enterprise Agreements, as well as small increases in full-time equivalent workforce numbers and increases in leave; and \$64.6 million was expended in scholarships, grants and prizes in 2023 (up by 13%) to support students at all levels of study and to attract international students.

The Vice-Chancellor said that as caretakers of the University's ageing estate, there needs to be a program of investment in the University's capacity to deliver outstanding student and staff experiences and world-class research outcomes.

"Surpluses allow us to invest year-on-year and investment is crucial for us to compete nationally and internationally. It doesn't take long before a lack of investment in the future impacts the present and we can't afford for that to happen," Professor Zelinsky said.

In 2024 the University of Newcastle is investing in the construction of a new campus in Mann Street, Gosford and much needed student accommodation in the Newcastle CBD.

## Empowering students for future career success

In collaboration with the NSW Department of Education and Training, HunterNet Career Connections (HCC) continues to champion initiatives aimed at empowering students and cultivating a future-ready workforce. Central to this mission are the School Based Apprentice and Trainee (SBAT) Program and the Educational Pathways Program (EPP), which provide invaluable opportunities for students to explore diverse career pathways across various industries.

The SBAT Program and EPP are integral components of HCC's commitment to providing students with immersive, hands-on workshops designed to engage them and foster practical skills. These programs have yielded remarkable success stories, exemplified by individuals like Jaycob and Mariah.

Jaycob and Mariah seamlessly transitioned into full-time apprenticeships and school-based apprenticeships at HunterNet Career Connections Host Employer, R&R Murphy. Their journey underscores the effectiveness of the SBAT Program and EPP in identifying and nurturing talent among participants. Jaycob initiated his journey through SBAT participation, while Mariah successfully completed the EPP.

Year 11 students Harmony Etuale and Bella Purcell are among the inspiring success stories, pursuing SBATs towards their Certificate III in Engineering Mechanical Trade (Fitter Machinist). Both students are completing their apprenticeships alongside their school studies, serving as role models for other young women interested in non-traditional trades.

Bella's path into mechanics was a natural progression, inspired by her family's legacy in the field. With her father and uncles all being machine fitters, Bella saw mechanics as an obvious next step. Her dedication to the craft and encouragement for other young women to pursue similar paths highlight the transformative impact of programs like SBAT and EPP in breaking gender barriers and fostering inclusivity in traditionally male-dominated industries.

Clay Skinner, Operations Manager at R&R Murphy, "Programs such as these help to prepare and build our future workforce for many years to come." Clay highlighted the value of providing individuals like Mariah, Jaycob, Harmony, and Bella with nationally recognised qualifications and on-the-job experience while being paid, particularly in the current employment climate.

Cassie Stevens from the NSW Department of Education and Training commended the EPP Program for offering a supportive environment, especially through the female-only option noting the importance of providing a comfortable space for participants to build knowledge and explore industries.

HunterNet Career Connections are proud to support individuals like Jaycob, Mariah, Harmony, and Bella, as the tangible outcomes and real-world experiences offered by these programs deliver meaningful outcomes for students, thereby shaping the future workforce.

These success stories underscore the pivotal role of programs like SBAT and EPP in fostering talent, creating opportunities, and bridging the transition from education to employment.





## ONE MILLION METRE AUTONOMOUS DRILLING MILESTONE AT MT ARTHUR SOUTH

Leading Cat dealer WesTrac has joined long-term customer and leading global mining services provider Thiess celebrating an autonomous drilling record set at Thiess' Mt Arthur South operation in New South Wales.

The milestone of one million metres drilled autonomously was reached using a fleet of three Cat MD-series drills running with the Cat MineStar Command Autonomous Drill System (ADS).

WesTrac Technology Solutions Manager Nakia Brewer says the achievement not only reflects a highly successful deployment of Cat-built autonomous drills, but the strength of a technology-driven partnership that developed and rolled out the program in a cleverly phased approach.

"When implementing new technology, it is crucial that there is a clear understanding of the problem you're trying to solve – in this case it was to reduce operating costs and increase consistency of drilling," he says.

"The way in which Thiess approach technology, understanding the problem statement and how technology will ultimately solve that for them, is world leading."

WesTrac, Caterpillar and Thiess began the program in 2019 and following a multi-phase three-year journey, enabled a remotely located operator to control the three drills, a Cat MD6250 and two MD6310s, simultaneously.

Thiess Head of Autonomy and Operations Technology Trent Smith says the program's adoption of technology closely considered its integration with people and process, with a strong focus on change management.

"Achieving one million metres drilled autonomously is something we're very proud of," Trent said.

"Working in partnership with WesTrac and Caterpillar we took a drill that didn't have any automation capability and went on the journey as a team to bring through what is now three drills running autonomously with a single controller."

"We initially needed to select reliable technology that could deliver operationally and implement it in the right application. Then we addressed the change management around people and process to ensure we delivered the performance."

"It's been quite exciting to see a technology product from its very infancy all the way through to an autonomous operation, and the Mt Arthur South project realising value from it."

Thiess Group Executive, Assets, Autonomy and Digital Ramesh Liyanage added that Thiess was proud to be a leader in automation and autonomy for mining services.

"Since introducing this technology at Mt Arthur South in 2021, we have recorded a 20% improvement in drilling performance, up to 8% reduction in fuel use, more consistent drill hole quality, accuracy and depth, and drill utilisation of up to 23 hours per day," he said.

"This year, we are also celebrating another momentous occasion; Thiess' 90th anniversary. Since our humble beginnings in 1934, our pioneering spirit has been the driving force behind our success.

"This milestone achieved, safely drilling more than one million metres autonomously at Thiess' Mt Arthur South, is a testament to this spirit, and we couldn't be prouder of the team."

Thiess upskilled more than 30 of its people at Mt Arthur South from traditional drill controllers to autonomous operators, and a range of other support functions during the million-metre journey. And more broadly, it has invested in autonomous mining systems training for more than 500 employees.

Thiess views an opportunity to grow automation capability across trucks, drills, and dozers not just in Australia, but at regional level across Asia and the Americas, as well as investigating rolling out future remote hub operations.



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## 2 YEAR EXTENSION TO ERARING POWER STATION

The NSW Government has secured an agreement with Origin Energy to operate the Eraring Power Station until August 2027. This will manage an orderly exit from coal-fired power to ensure the lights stay on for homes, businesses and industry while NSW delivers the transition to low-cost, reliable renewable energy.

This agreement seeks to guarantee a minimum supply of electricity until the new expected closure date of August 2027.

The latest analysis from the Australian Energy Market Operator confirms without Eraring NSW would face energy reliability risks from 2025. A temporary extension of Eraring will provide time to deliver the renewable energy, storage and network infrastructure projects required to replace the power station.

The state will not make upfront payments to Origin Energy to operate Eraring. Instead, the Government and Origin have agreed to an underwriting arrangement that requires the company to:

- Decide by 31 March in 2025 and 2026 whether it wishes to opt in to the underwriting arrangement for the following financial year.
- Share up to \$40 million per year of any profits it earns from Eraring, if it does opt in.
- Claim no more than 80% of losses Eraring makes from its operations from the NSW Government, capped at \$225 million each year, if it does opt in.
- Report the profits or losses it makes from Eraring in its annual report for each year, if it does opt in.

Under the agreement, Origin must also:

- Ensure Eraring endeavours to generate at least 6 terawatt hours each year, the equivalent to the typical annual output of two of Eraring's four generating units and enough to resolve the forecast reliability gap.
- Substantially maintain Eraring's existing workforce of around 220 people, commit to a maintenance plan and adhere to its licence conditions, which includes environmental protections.

- Origin has given notice it now expects to close Eraring on 19 August 2027. The permanent closure will be managed by Origin in line with its obligations under the National Energy Market and must occur before April 2029. This ensures Eraring's closure will contribute to NSW meeting its legislated 2030 emissions reduction target.

## NSW STRENGTHENS FIRST NATIONS ENGAGEMENT FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY ZONES

The NSW Government is paving the way for more meaningful engagement with Aboriginal communities in the Hunter-Central Coast and the South West Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) with the release of two new First Nations Guidelines.

These region-specific Guidelines were developed collaboratively with First Nations Working Groups. They provide guidance for project proponents to consult and negotiate with Aboriginal communities on projects delivered under the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap within their REZs.

The Roadmap is the State's 20-year plan to transform the electricity system into one that is more affordable, clean and reliable.

Key features of the region-specific Guidelines include:

- An outline of the local Aboriginal communities' goals and aspirations for income and employment opportunities
- Streamlined engagement processes for renewable energy developers seeking to consult with local Aboriginal communities
- A requirement for project proponents to prepare an Industry and Aboriginal Participation Plan which documents the engagement approach and the agreed commitments with local Aboriginal stakeholders.

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water will review the guidelines at least every 2 years to ensure their objectives and requirements are in line with community expectations and state priorities.

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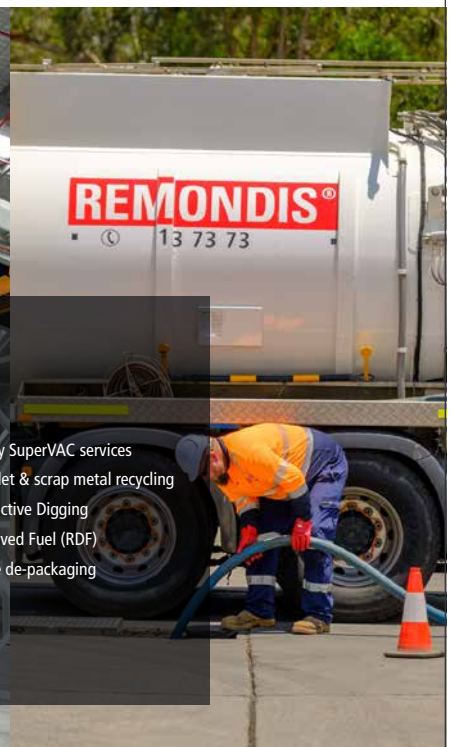
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## CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE RELEASES TO HELP MINING ELECTRIFICATION

Ampcontrol launched the Ampcontrol MegaWatt Charger, designed to support the electrification of the mining industry, at the The Electric Mine 2024 in Perth. It utilises high-capacity charging technology to reduce charging time and operational impact.

The Ampcontrol MegaWatt Charger’s dual-mode charging feature enables multiple vehicle types to be charged via a single unit. It powers vehicles ranging from light passenger vehicles, such as Ampcontrol Battery Electric Vehicle DRIFTEX, to large machines, including electric haul dump trucks, trains, and buses.

Ampcontrol Managing Director & CEO Rod Henderson said “With the mining industry pushing towards decarbonisation and net zero targets, we have developed cutting-edge charging technology that balances charge time and energy management.”

Ampcontrol has been supplying the resources sector with electrical infrastructure and service for decades. A provider of power infrastructure, renewable solutions, electric vehicles, fleet charging solutions, and cabling, all underpinned by extensive electrical engineering services.

Rod Henderson added “We listen to the needs of industry and develop products using our advanced technology and innovative solutions to support our customers. We are excited by the opportunity to showcase how Ampcontrol is challenging the future at The Electric Mine 2024 by launching the Ampcontrol MegaWatt Charger.”



## SPEEDING UP CONNECTION OF BATTERIES TO NSW ELECTRICITY GRID

The NSW Government is accelerating the roll out of major battery projects across the state, boosting electricity reliability to keep the lights on in NSW.

\$8.4 million in new funds has been awarded to Transgrid and the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) to hire more engineers, enabling them to fast-track grid connections for four battery projects of more than 100 MW each.



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The total capacity of these projects is equivalent to 15% of the 2023-24 NSW summer peak demand or supplying approximately 800,000 households with energy during a peak demand event.

The most recent AEMO report forecasts increased reliability risks in NSW from 2024 to 2028, driven largely by retiring coal plants and not enough renewables coming online to fill the gap.

These large batteries will play a critical role in delivering affordable, reliable energy in NSW by storing renewable energy during sunny and windy periods and supplying that electricity to the energy grid during peak demand.

The projects which could benefit from the grants include:

- Waratah Super Battery (850 MW, 2 hour storage duration)
- Liddell Battery Energy Storage System (500 MW, 2 hour storage duration)
- Orana Battery Energy Storage System (415 MW, 4 hour storage duration)
- Richmond Valley Battery Energy Storage System (275 MW, 8 hour storage duration)

This investment will bring forward completion dates of these priority battery projects by as much as 12 months, helping to decrease current reliability risks to NSW consumers.

Connecting projects to the grid is highly technical and a lack of qualified staff can cause delays.

Transgrid will use a \$3.2 million grant to fund extra technical staff on grid connections to reduce the risk of delays. Transgrid will also establish two dedicated 'squads' of engineers, technicians and customer support staff, to provide additional grid connection application review and support.

AEMO will receive up to \$5.2 million for additional staff to project manage the grid connection process and coordinate with Transgrid and other project proponents to get the supported battery projects up and running by 2025-2026.



The Australian Minerals Industry Continues To Propel The Australian Economy Forward, Fostering Economic Opportunities And Enabling Government Investments In Vital Services Such As Health, Education, Childcare, Aged Care And Defence.

The industry has once again demonstrated its role as the backbone of the national economy, delivering record company tax and royalty payments in the 2022-23 financial year.

The sector contributed a total of \$74.0 billion to federal, state, and territory governments, an increase of \$9.3 billion from the previous year.

The latest Ernst & Young Royalty and Company Tax Payments report, commissioned by the Minerals Council of Australia reveals that in 2022-23, the sector contributed \$42.5 billion in company tax and a decade-high \$31.5 billion in royalties.

Over the past decade, the sector has significantly bolstered Australia's economic growth, with a cumulative \$356.6 billion in company tax (\$206.2 billion) and royalties (\$150.4 billion).

The mining industry in Australia continues to pay the highest average wages, contribute the most company taxes, deliver the most export revenue, and play a critical role in supporting regions and communities - sustaining 1.1 million jobs in the mining industry and through its supply chains.

The Minerals Council of Australia says that if the government wants to protect these jobs and enhance revenue from mining, it cannot take the sector's strong contributions for granted. Stable and supportive policies are essential to attract the necessary



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It's my wife's birthday soon and she's been leaving jewellery catalogues all over the house. She'll be happy to know I got the hint. I got her a magazine rack!

The doctor asked me how long I'd had amnesia. I said, "For as long as I can remember."

Joe passed away. His will provided \$30,000 for an elaborate funeral. As the last guests departed the affair, his wife, Helen, turned to her oldest friend. "Well, I'm sure Joe would be pleased," she said. "I'm sure you're right," replied Jody, who lowered her voice and leaned in close. "How much did this really cost?" "All of it," said Helen. "Thirty thousand." "No!" Jody exclaimed. "I mean, it was very nice, but \$30,000?" Helen answered. "The funeral was \$6,500. I donated \$500 to the church. The wake, food and drinks were another \$500. The rest went for the memorial stone." Jody computed quickly. "\$22,500 for a memorial stone? My God, how big is it?!" "Two and a half carats."

Doctor: "I am sorry but I accidentally left my gloves inside your stomach during your operation. We have to operate on you again." Patient: "Are you kidding me?!?! Tell you what Doc, take this \$10 bill and buy a new pair!"

An office employee knowing his boss was off for the day transferred the office telephone to his own cell phone and took it with him to play golf. The boss called and asked how everything was going and the employee said fine. The boss then said, "Move a little faster then, will you, I'm in the foursome behind you."

A man is madly in love with a princess and wants to propose, but an evil witch has cast a spell on him, and now he can say only one word a year. So he waits 14 agonising years – accumulating all his words – before approaching his beloved. Finally, the big day arrives. When he sees her, his heart skips a beat. He gathers his nerve, drops to his knees, and intones, "My darling, I have waited many years to say this – will you marry me?" The princess turns around, smiles, and says, "Pardon?"

**QUOTE OF THE MONTH**

"Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young"

- Henry Ford

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