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Hunter Business Review

JUNE 2025
VOLUME 21 NUMBER 5
Print Post Approved 100002454

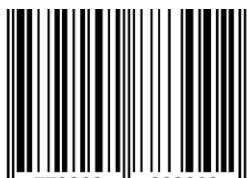
21ST YEAR OF
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**TRAINING &
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ISSN 2202 - 8838 (Print)
ISSN 2202 - 8846 (Online)



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PUBLISHED BY:

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Published monthly (except January)

Hard copy circulation: 5,000

Also available online

www.HBRmag.com.au



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From the Editor



The sluggish economic performance in the March quarter and a continuation of the per capita recession again highlights the need for leadership and reform by the Federal Government to stimulate growth.

The national accounts figures showed economic growth of just 0.2% in the March quarter and -0.2% on a per capita basis.

The annual figure to the end of March 2025 came in at just

1.3% and -0.4% on a per capita basis.

Business investment in machinery and equipment fell 1.7% in the quarter and fell by 3.7% in the year to March.

GDP per hour worked also fell in the year to March by 1%.

It is no wonder that many businesses and individuals are feeling economic pressures.

Productivity growth, or the lack of it, has been a major problem for the Australian economy for many years. With the adoption of new technologies in many industries, one would think that there would naturally have been an increase in productivity per hour worked, but sadly this has not been the case.

We do have a Productivity Commission. In their Media Release of 18 May, Chair Danielle Wood said "Boosting productivity is the only sustainable way to improve Australians' living standards, but productivity growth has stagnated in the past decade. It's now at its lowest ebb in 60 years."

They have identified 15 reform areas to improving productivity, including supporting business through corporate tax reform and reducing the impact of regulation on business dynamism. It

also covers areas of building a skilled and adaptable work force, harnesses data and digital technology, delivering quality care more efficiently and investing in cheaper, cleaner energy and the net zero transformation.

I would argue that the tax reform needs to be more far reaching than just corporate tax reform and that workplace relations also needs reform.

Whichever way you look at it, the Government needs to take action and look at serious reform in a number of areas.

Many improvements in productivity in the past have been as a direct result of major economic reform.

Reform is not always easy politically and the electorate does not always reward reform that may take some time to bear its fruit. It also runs often against the political strategy of creating a small target.

But it is a necessity for sustainable long term economic growth.

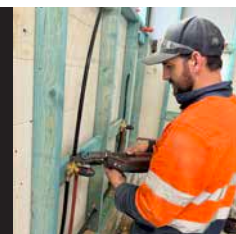
Perhaps the large majority of the newly elected Government may make it brave enough to make the reforms required.

We certainly hope so for the economic prosperity of all Australians.

Garry Hardie
Publisher & Editor

ON THIS MONTH'S COVER

Jake McLaughlin who has made an unlikely career pivot from hospitality to plumbing, with the help of TAFE NSW Maitland. See article on page 20.



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Newcastle Airport announces year-round international flights

Jetstar is coming full circle — the airline that launched its very first commercial service from Newcastle Airport in 2004 will now operate Newcastle Airport's first year-round international route, with direct flights to Bali commencing from 21 October 2025.

Newcastle Airport CEO Linc Horton said launching an ongoing international service with Jetstar was a historic moment for the region and marked the next chapter in a partnership that began more than two decades ago.

"Jetstar has been part of Newcastle Airport's story from their very beginning and it's only fitting that they're the airline to take us into our international future," Mr Horton said.

"Announcing the availability of direct flights to Denpasar International Airport is a perfect way to kickstart a new era of international travel for the region.

"We are delighted to have Jetstar onboard to give Newcastle and the Greater Hunter its inaugural international wings from our new terminal.

"This new international connection to Bali is just the beginning, opening doors to even greater opportunities for the region, stimulating tourism and strengthening ties between the Hunter region and Indonesia.

"On a practical level, this new service saves our Bali-bound passengers the journey to Sydney and starts to solidify Newcastle Airport's position as a genuine alternative for international travel.

"Our long-term plan is to grow our international network and we are working behind the scenes with several airlines about additional routes we may be able to provide."

Newcastle Airport's new international terminal, due for completion in August 2025, is the centrepiece of Newcastle



Airport's ambitious \$250 million expansion project, addressing the growing demand for easy and convenient travel between Newcastle, the Greater Hunter and international destinations.

"Our new international terminal reflects our commitment to the Hunter region's growth," Mr Horton said.

"The connectivity it offers will make the Hunter a more attractive destination for international tourists and a more convenient option for locals looking to explore the world."

The Newcastle to Bali flights will operate three times a week providing travellers from the Hunter region and surrounding areas with convenient access to one of Australia's most popular holiday destinations. The route will carry more than 70,000 passengers annually with flights departing from Newcastle Airport on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. The flight time is just under six hours.

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Muswellbrook Council backing small business

Muswellbrook Shire Council is backing small business as a driver of the Shire's future, with the sector key to a blueprint for a thriving economy in the coming decade.

With consultation on the Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035 now complete, Council has heard loud and clear that small business wants support and a seat at the table in planning for the Shire's future.

Key findings from Muswellbrook businesses and residents include:

- 42% of residents agree there are long-term job opportunities in Muswellbrook and a range of work options
- Only 9% agree there is a vibrant nightlife
- Only 21% believe there are diverse retail options
- With 74% of respondents calling for increased focus on planning for future retail and commercial development

The response highlights that business is concerned about planned mine and power stations closures.

The commencement of the Muswellbrook Bypass in 2027 underlines the urgency to diversify the Shire economy and support small business.

Muswellbrook Mayor Jeff Drayton said the voice of small business is non-negotiable in charting a course for the Shire's next decade.

"We are hearing local business and we need to prepare now to support them through these changes," Mayor Drayton said.

"Small business is critical to local jobs, tourism and the spaces Muswellbrook residents want to be in. That's why we're planning and acting now, not waiting for change to hit us."

Local business owner Lavinia Hutchinson cited the rum-led repurposing of the former Muswellbrook Oak Factory as a boost

for the Shire's business climate.

"It's fantastic news for the entire Hunter region that Sydney Rum Distillery has moved to Muswellbrook. As a cornerstone tourism attraction, it will put us on the map as a must-visit destination, drawing visitors from local, interstate and international markets," Lavinia said.

"This investment will benefit the whole town – boosting employment, accommodation, hospitality, retail, and tourism. It's a sign of confidence and will attract other businesses, helping create authentic experiences unique to the Upper Hunter."

The imminent redevelopment of the Muswellbrook town centre will also provide opportunities for outdoor dining, markets and pop-up retail.

Council has a renewed focus on tourism and events to bring more people into the Shire and is investigating enhancements such as RV parking, overnight camping and dump points.

Mayor Drayton said Council wants to hear directly from small business owners to understand their needs and work collaboratively for opportunities and solutions.

Newcastle Airport launches direct flights to Perth

Newcastle Airport has announced its first-ever direct flights to Perth, with QantasLink services launching from Monday, 8 September 2025, opening a new westward corridor for business, industry and regional development.

The new QantasLink route will operate three times a week on Fridays, Sundays and Mondays with a 150-seat Airbus A319, bringing 900 new weekly seats and over 45,000 annually to and from Western Australia.

Newcastle Airport CEO Linc Horton said the service is a natural next step in the airport's ongoing growth.

"We've worked hard to secure this route because it's one our community and extended region needs," Mr Horton said.

"The five-hour service saves travellers a lengthy drive to Sydney and connects Newcastle and the Greater Hunter directly with WA's resources sector, creating enormous potential for business travel and Fly In Fly Out operations.

QantasLink CEO Rachel Yangoyan said "QantasLink is proud to be the first airline to offer a direct air link between Newcastle and Perth.


"These flights will boost connectivity for Newcastle residents and mean they no longer have to drive to and from Sydney when they want to travel to Perth. We know many customers, particularly those working in the mining and resources sector, are having to do that today.

"We'd like to thank Newcastle Airport and the NSW Government for helping make the new route possible."


Erin Gardner-Associate Director, Aviation & Market Strategy Destination NSW,
Matt Borger Senior Airlines and Partnership Manager Newcastle Airport,
Andrew Warrender EGM Airlines and Governance Newcastle Airport, **Jude Munro** AO Chair Newcastle Airport, **Leah Anderson** Mayor Port Stephens (and Newcastle Airport Director), **Josh Hogan** Regional Sales & Development Manager NSW/VIC Qantas, **Linc Horton** CEO Newcastle Airport, **EGM People & Communications** **Burcak Sezer**



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Powering Sustainable Solutions: GBE Group's Commitment to Energy Efficiency

In the construction industry, sustainability is increasingly a driving force behind innovation and change. Companies are under pressure not only to meet evolving environmental standards but also to adopt energy-efficient solutions that reduce their carbon footprint.

GBE Group, a leader in energy management and electrical contracting services, is committed to supporting the construction and industrial sectors in their journey toward sustainability. Through cutting-edge solutions like LED lighting, electric vehicle charging stations, and net-zero compliance strategies, **GBE Group** is helping businesses build a greener future.

Net-Zero Compliance: Achieving Long-Term Sustainability Goals



As industries move toward Net-Zero Compliance, **GBE Group** is at the forefront, providing comprehensive solutions to help businesses achieve their sustainability goals. Net-zero compliance refers to balancing the amount of greenhouse gases emitted with the amount removed from the atmosphere. With increasing government pressure to adhere to net-zero targets, businesses must implement energy-saving strategies across all operations.

GBE Group works closely with clients to assess their current energy usage, identify areas for improvement, and

implement practical, cost-effective strategies to meet net-zero goals. From installing energy-efficient LED lighting to optimizing overall electrical systems, **GBE Group** ensures that businesses are not only compliant with regulations but also future-ready in terms of sustainability.

LED Lighting: A Beacon of Energy Efficiency



One of the simplest and most effective ways to reduce energy consumption in commercial and industrial facilities is through the implementation of LED lighting solutions. LEDs consume up to 85% less energy than traditional lighting systems and have significantly longer lifespans, resulting in both cost savings and environmental benefits. **GBE Group's** LED lighting solutions are tailored to the specific needs of each client, ensuring that energy efficiency is maximized without compromising on quality or performance.

By replacing outdated lighting systems with LEDs, businesses can reduce their electricity consumption, lower their carbon emissions, and enhance overall lighting conditions in the workplace. This shift not only supports environmental sustainability but also aligns with emerging regulations aimed at reducing energy consumption in commercial facilities.

SMART TECHNOLOGIES FOR SMARTER SUSTAINABILITY

The adoption of smart technologies is central to **GBE Group's** approach to energy management. Integrating automated control systems with energy-saving solutions like LED lighting and EV charging stations allows businesses to further enhance their energy efficiency. Automated dimming, motion sensors, and time-based lighting controls help minimize energy wastage, ensuring that lights are only used when necessary.

These smart systems offer real-time monitoring and data analytics, giving businesses greater control over their energy usage and providing insights that can drive further improvements in sustainability. With **GBE Group's** expertise in smart technology integration, businesses can optimize their energy consumption in a way that's not only efficient but also easy to manage.

Charging Stations: Empowering the Future of Transportation



Sustainability isn't just about reducing energy use—it's also about adopting new technologies that promote environmental stewardship. As electric vehicles (EVs) become more mainstream, the demand for Electric Vehicle Charging Stations has skyrocketed. **GBE Group** is leading the charge by providing businesses with reliable, scalable charging infrastructure that supports

the transition to cleaner transportation.

By integrating EV charging stations into existing facilities, **GBE Group** enables businesses to cater to the growing number of electric vehicles on the road. This not only promotes sustainability but also positions businesses as forward-thinking leaders in the clean energy transition. Whether for fleet vehicles or employee and customer use, **GBE Group's** EV charging solutions are designed for ease of installation and seamless integration with other energy-efficient systems.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE TOGETHER

Sustainability is no longer a niche consideration—it is central to the future of construction and business operations. **GBE Group** is committed to helping clients meet their sustainability objectives through a holistic approach to energy management. From reducing energy consumption with advanced LED lighting systems to supporting the transition to electric vehicles with EV charging

infrastructure, **GBE Group** provides the tools and expertise necessary to build a greener, more sustainable future.

As businesses across the Hunter region and beyond look for innovative ways to reduce their environmental impact, **GBE Group** is proud to lead the way. By offering practical, cost-effective, and scalable energy solutions, **GBE Group** is not only helping businesses comply with sustainability regulations but also empowering them to take charge of their energy future.

For more information on how **GBE Group's** sustainability-driven solutions can benefit your business, visit www.gbegroup.com.au/energy-management/led-lighting/, www.gbegroup.com.au/energy-management/net-zero-compliance/ and www.gbegroup.com.au/energy-management/charging-stations/

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2025 Newcastle Hospitality & Tourism Awards

Newcastle Tourism Industry Group's (NTIG) 2025 Newcastle Hospitality & Tourism Awards recognize exceptional talent, dedication and achievements across 12 categories, capturing the breadth of the local visitor economy.

Award winners were announced at the annual Awards Gala, held at Newcastle Cruising Yacht Club on 19 May.

"It has truly been a massive, thrilling night for our industry," said NTIG chair and CoastXP founder Dominic May.

"It is such a privilege to be able to showcase the versatility of this vibrant industry and the commitment and excellence of all our finalists and, of course, our award winners.

"We had certainly hoped for less tumultuous weather. But in a way, it's befitting an industry that has to deal with ever changing conditions and that strives to provide every single guest and visitor to our region with a superb, memorable experience – come rain, hail or shine.

"NTIG's membership has increased by 12% over the last 12 months, and by 91% in the past four years. Likewise, our monthly member meetings have grown in popularity.

"As a committee we are delighted to see our industry constantly striving to be more collaborative, to support each other through various means, including forming new relationships, which will ultimately lead to growing our industry, supporting education pathways and fostering a sustainable, accessible and thriving visitor economy in the Hunter Region."

In his address, State Member for Newcastle Tim Crakanthorp MP highlighted the valuable economic contribution of the tourism and hospitality sector and the government's initiatives to evolve the NSW visitor economy strategy, by investing in infrastructure, and marketing campaigns, attracting major events and supporting the night time economy.



Every single day of the year, visitors to the region spend \$16.4m in the local economy. Tourism businesses offer 4.2% of the region's employment. Per year, 4.8 million visitors are welcomed to Newcastle.

The winners included:

- **Industry Support Partner of the Year** presented by Foghorn Brewery -
Winner: Hunt Hospitality
2nd: Fordtronic AV
3rd: Newcastle Food Month
- **Inclusive Tourism & Hospitality Operator** presented by Wilderluxe -
Winner: Bernie's Bar
2nd: Quest Apartments Newcastle West
3rd: Modus Brewery Merewether
- **Best New Visitor Economy Business** presented by Earp Distilling Co -
Winner: Newy Tour Co.
2nd: Showtime Kayaking
3rd: Beach Hotel Merewether
- **Best Tourism Experience** presented by Newcastle Airport -
Winner: Moonshadow Cruises
2nd: Quadbike King
3rd: Nova Cruises
- **Best Event or Festival of the Year** presented by Quest Apartments Newcastle/Newcastle West -
Winner: Newcastle Food Month, Newcastle Events
2nd: Portside/over the Ditch, Earp Presents
3rd: Postie Bike Grand Prix, Charlie McLennan
- **Culinary Excellence** presented by PSP Hospitality Supplies -
Winner: Humbug
2nd: Nagisa
3rd: Roundhouse Crystalbrook
- **Outstanding Accommodation Provider** presented by Newcastle Cruising Yacht Club -
Winner: Quest Apartments Newcastle & Newcastle West
2nd: Rydges Newcastle
3rd: Crystalbrook Kingsley Newcastle
- **Emerging Hospitality & Tourism Leader** presented by Newcastle Business School, University of Newcastle -
Winner: Keira Bourke, Newy Tour Co.
2nd: Jai Boicos, 4WD Tours
3rd: Bernie's Bar
- **Customer Service Champion** presented by Peter Drayton Wines -
Winner: James Camarsh, Quest Newcastle West
2nd: Brent Ebert, Quest Newcastle
3rd: Nicole Minter, Soqual
- **Employer of the Year** presented by Paramount Liquor -
Winner: Rydges Newcastle
2nd: Quest Apartments Newcastle & Newcastle West
3rd: Modus Brewery Merewether
- **Employee of the Year** presented by Good Food Distributors-
Winner: Zoe Tuilotolava, Hunt Hospitality
2: John Simpson, Newcastle Airport
3: Catriona Borg, Earp Distilling Co
- **Industry Leader of the Year** presented by Soqual -
Winner: Paul O'Rourke, Newcastle Cruising Yacht Club
Equal 2nd: Stephen Hunt, Hunt Hospitality and Cameron Burns, Earp Distillery.



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Revitalisation of Hunter Street moves to next stage

Work has commenced on the next stage of City of Newcastle's East End Village project, with onsite crews mobilising in May for the section of Hunter Street between Thorn and Wolfe streets, and on Wolfe Street between King and Scott Streets.

New paving, roadway and footpaths will enhance the area for cyclists, pedestrians and drivers. Stormwater pipes will also be upgraded as part of the project to replace the Hunter Street Mall with a reinstated traditional high street.

The project will deliver a range of streetscape improvements including multi-function street lighting, new street furniture and extensive landscaping, as well as an extension of the two-way cycleway on the northern side of Hunter Street.

Underground site investigations were carried out last year in preparation for the main construction work, which was programmed to begin after the upgrade between Perkins and Brown streets was finalised. That section of Hunter Street was reopened to the community earlier in May.

City of Newcastle's Interim Executive Director of City Infrastructure, Robert Dudgeon, said extensive community input into the East End Streetscape Masterplan helped shape the project.

"This is a shared vision developed in consultation with the community, which will see the reinstatement of a traditional high street where people can enjoy boutique retail opportunities and outdoor dining," Mr Dudgeon said.

"When we complete this stage of the project we will have invested more than \$16 million, which is being delivered in sections to minimise, as much as possible, the disruption for local residents and businesses. "The staged nature of the program also allows us to align our improvements with other developments in the area including that being undertaken by Iris Capital, as



we work collaboratively to enhance the lifestyle and experience offered within our city centre."

This will be the third phase of five scheduled for the East End Village project. Construction initially focused on the block bound by Hunter, Wolf, King and Perkins streets to deliver new paving, service upgrades, street furniture, new gardens and trees, as well as significant upgrades to stormwater, drainage, cycleways and footpaths.

The recently completed second phase has transformed a key pedestrian and cyclist entry point between Perkins and Brown streets, improving and extending the streetscape with new trees, landscaping and paving, as well as extensive work to upgrade and relocate key utilities, and realign the road.

Preliminary design work is already underway for the remaining stages along Hunter Street between Thorn and Newcomen, and then Market Street, with work planned for delivery in the current Council term.

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Hunter Region Business Excellence Awards

Hundreds of business and community representatives gathered on the evening of 30 May at Ben Ean in Pokolbin to celebrate the 30th annual Hunter Region Business Excellence Awards.

The awards are the initiative of Hunter Region Business Hub, the awards are one of the longest running in the Hunter. They continue to demonstrate the resilience, confidence and professionalism in the local economy, with award categories suitable for organisations of all sizes and sectors.

The winners of this year's awards included:

Access and Inclusion - sponsored by Maitland City Council – Winner: Hunter Valley Tours. Julie Newman started her tour business in 2015 as the first Hunter tour business to provide access for those with mobility issues. She sourced a vehicle with a hydraulic hoist to ensure everyone could access the bus to enjoy her wine tours. Julie now has three tour vehicles.

Highly Commended for The Maiwel Group, and Dynamic Business Technologies.

Online Based Businesses – Winner: Network ICT
Network ICT are local phone and internet specialists to provide locally managed high speed, reliable phone and internet services for local businesses. They offer a variety of managed mobile, phone, voice, wifi, CCTV and NBN plans, including installation and set-up, as well as training.

Highly Commended for Jezweb.

Professional Services – Winner: The Marketing GP. Holly Martin established The Marketing GP in response to identifying a gap in

the marketing industry. They offer a comprehensive one-stop-shop solution for all marketing needs covering strategy and delivery, website development, brand design, inbound marketing, events, digital campaigns and public relations.

Highly Commended for Heart HR and Dynamize Chartered Accountants

Home Based – Winner: Newcastle Lymphoedema, Lipoedema, Pre & Post Surgery Clinic. The clinic focuses on delivering comprehensive assessments, treatments, education and exclusive products tailored to patients grappling with lymphoedema, and pre and post-surgery recovery. They also supply compression garments, guidance on dietary practices to support lymphatic health, author books and train to contribute to raising awareness of lipedema and support advocacy efforts.

Highly Commended to Outback Jess.

Personal Services – Winner: Earth & Elm Studio and Wellness Services. Earth & Elm offer a comprehensive suite of holistic health services designed to cater to the physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of their clients. They specialise in alternative therapies including counselling, coaching, hypnotherapy and Reiki treatments. They also do ceremonial tattoos and tattoo laser removal.

Highly Commended to Elements Morpeth and Evolution Hair Co.

Financial and Real Estate Services – Winner: L J Hooker Cessnock. Run by Bryce and Mellissa Gibson. L J Hooker Cessnock is a small family run real estate agency in the Hunter Valley, excelling in property sales, industrial and commercial sales and management, market appraisals and expert guidance for buyers, sellers, landlords and tenants alike. They are actively engaged in community through fundraising initiatives and local events.
Not For Profit – Winner: Carries Place Domestic Violence and Homelessness Service. Carries Place provides a range of culturally appropriate programs for people experiencing domestic and family violence and/or homelessness. They provide case management, court advocacy, accommodation, outreach and groupwork services to assist people moving forward in their lives with independence, safety and security.

Highly Commended to Hunter Breast Cancer Foundation and Newcastle MBA Group Training.

Trades & Industry – Joint winners: Banana Bathrooms and Red Insight. Banana Bathrooms specialises in high-quality bathroom renovations, servicing homeowners who want to transform their outdated or inefficient bathrooms into stylish, functional spaces. Red Insight are WHS consultants who transform workplaces through practical, people-first safety systems, protecting your business and employees. They also assist with audits, inspections and risk risk assessments, as well as tailored training.

Highly Commended to Tailored HQ.

Hospitality and Tourism – Winner: Flamingos Live. Flamingos Live is a premier entertainment venue that combines world-class live performances with exceptional dining. The venue hosts a diverse range of artists from emerging local talent to renowned international performers, across multiple genres. Menus are carefully curated and feature fine food, a premium wine selection, craft cocktails and specialty beers.

Highly Commended to Newy Tour Co, 4WD Tours R Us and Our Italian Table.

General Business – Winner: Dragonfly Cakes at Weston, owned by Fiona Campbell. A trusted name in the wedding industry,



2025 HUNTER REGION BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS Winner

Winner - 2025 Trades & Industry Award

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Dragonfly Cakes specialises in creating bespoke wedding and event cakes with a strong focus on weddings. Each cake is made from scratch using premium ingredients and is designed to be the centrepiece of the event.

Highly Commended to Maitland Business Central.

Health Services – Winner: Initial Response Group. Initial Response Group provide specialised training and safety services focused on preparing individuals and organisations for effective responses in emergency or critical situations. Services are design to equip teams and individuals with the skills and knowledge they need to handle the initial stages of an emergency, crisis, or urgent event.

Highly Commended to 24/7 Care Disability Services.

New Start Business – Winner: Elements Morpeth. Elements Morpeth is a day spa designed to create a peaceful space where you can truly escape and focus on yourself. They describe themselves as a healing oasis where you can be pampered through one of their many services including luxurious face and massage treatments, as well as complimentary wellness therapies to help you look and feel your best.

Highly Commended to All Event Cruises and Confetti Finance.

Customer Service (Individual) – Winner: Ben Sams. Ben is a dining room attendant, cleaning tables, floors and ensuring rubbish is disposed of quickly. His passion is helping people. He also delivers food where required, all in a friendly nonjudgemental atmosphere. He is also ready to throw in and help his team mates to achieve their tasks. Ben is actively involved in Autism Awareness Day. He also assists with fundraising for sick kids.

Highly Commended to Terri-Ann Lepisto from Perfect Sense Counselling and Bryan Hampton from Vintage Connections.

Customer Service for the Whole of Business – Winner: Evolution Hair Co. Hairdressing and related services are a very personal service where trust is key. Evolution Hair Co. have identified this and not only offer a quality service but an exceptional client experience that fosters trust, loyalty and long-term relationships. Every client commences with a tailored consultation to ensure an understanding of the client's individual needs, lifestyle requirements and hair goals.

Highly Commended to I Am Here, Oz Pest and Connect Facility Services.

Young Entrepreneur – Winner: Alice Farrelly from The Reformed Bookkeeper. Alice is the owner operator of The Reformed Bookkeeper and Alice May Web Design which she started at the age of 16. Alice's experience in web design came from volunteering to assist local not for profits. She also volunteers at her local church, assisting them with local events organisation and delivery.

Highly Commended to Jaswinder Singh from Spice Affairs Indian Restaurant and Aleesha Hardie from OAR Holistic Beauty and Wellness.

Business Woman of the Year – Winner: Lee- Anne McAllister from McAllister Legal Services. Seven years ago, Lee-Anne decided to leave paid employment to start her own business. She juggles her career with her personal life caring for her husband and two teenage boys. Lee-Anne wants to see everyone, regardless of age, gender, race, class or financial status, having fair access to the law. Her community work includes community presentations, and she tries to protect the elderly from Elder Abuse by ensuring they know their rights. Lee-Anne is also a Legal Aid Panel solicitor

which allows her to work with families to ensure children in the community are safe.

Highly Commended to Julie Newman from Hunter Valley Tours, Marissa Dimarco from Chamberlains Law Firm and Danni O'Connor from Rubixco/ROC Consulting.

Business Leader of the Year – Winner: Shane Meister from Network ICT. Shane started Network ICT in 2016 when he identified a need in the local community for a reliable and trustworthy local organisation to assist the business community to navigate NBN coming to their areas. Shane uses his business to support a range of community causes with donations of goods and IT support as well as dollars. Shane has been working to provide an alternate course in year 12 for students with an interest in technology. This year it is a reality, with a recognised Certificate 3 IT. This is now in place across Australia. Highly Commended to Steven from L J Hooker Belmont.

Business of the Year – Winner: Earth and Elm Studio and Wellness Services

Other category finalists: Flamingos Live, Initial Response Group and L J Hooker Cessnock.

Earth and Elm Studio and Wellness Services, winners of the Personal Services category as well as Business of the Year



Work underway on Chisholm's first sportsground

Maitland City Council has officially started work on a new \$10 million sportsground in Chisholm to cater to the area's growing population.

Located on Suncroft Street in Sophia Waters, the new facility will be the first of its kind for the area and will include two mixed sports fields, a turf cricket wicket, amenities, irrigation, field flood lighting, fencing and over 100 parking spaces, including accessible parking.

Mayor Philip Penfold says this will support "the sport and recreation needs of people living in Thornton, Chisholm and surrounds for years to come."

"The Sophia Waters Sportsground is a key project in Council's 2025-26 capital works program and it's a great opportunity for local sports clubs and residents to train and play close to home," Mayor Penfold said.

"It will also complement another sportsground we're planning to build in Chisholm along Billabong Parade, and we're proud to deliver this for our community."

Planning is also underway for a new playspace to be constructed next to the Sophia Waters Sportsground, with designs set to be finalised later this year.

Preliminary works are now underway, with construction expected to wrap up in late 2026.

Royal Australian Air Force Links F-35 Simulators on Lockheed Martin Network

The Australian Department of Defence in partnership with Lockheed Martin [NYSE: LMT] connected F-35 simulators at Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) bases Williamtown and Tindal via F-35's distributed mission training (DMT) network.

This establishes Australia as the first international F-35 customer to receive this capability, further enhancing global mission readiness and interoperability of the F-35 fleet.

"With distributed mission training, we're not just connecting simulators – we're connecting pilots and strengthening operations for 21st century security," says Raashi Quattlebaum, vice president of F-35 Training and Logistics at Lockheed Martin.

"By training together in a virtual environment, F-35 pilots can build the skills and confidence they need to dominate the skies and execute their missions."

Lockheed Martin and the RAAF successfully connected the two sites over 2,800 km apart for distributed mission training. DMT connects F-35 simulators across borders, enabling seamless training exercises between F-35 pilots stationed across the globe. By providing large-force training capabilities, DMT allows pilots to practice complex scenarios and build the necessary skills for real-world missions.

"Establishing a distributed mission training network between RAAF bases Williamtown and Tindal provides Australia with an advanced training capability that will enhance the readiness of its pilots while reducing the sustainment costs of its 72 F-35As — the largest fleet of Joint Strike Fighters outside of the US,"

says Rob Weitzman, Lockheed Martin Program Director for F-35 Australia.

"Lockheed Martin has established our most significant F-35 sustainment presence outside the US in Australia, and we are proud to work with the Department of Defence and our local industry partners to deliver this record-breaking training capability milestone."

Within the F-35 full mission simulator, pilots can engage in realistic and immersive training exercises over a secure network. This option provides a safe and efficient learning environment to try new exercises and techniques. This also allows for more repetitions of an exercise in a single training session and reduces sustainment costs for the aircraft.

Lockheed Martin is the sustainment lead for the RAAF's F-35 fleet, partnering with local industry suppliers including Milskill to deliver pilot training solutions at RAAF bases Williamtown and Tindal. More than 75 Australian companies have shared in over AUD\$5 billion in contracts to support the F-35 program through advanced manufacturing, supply chain solutions and sustainment services.

To date, the Lockheed Martin team has trained over 2,915 F-35 pilots and 18,105 F-35 maintainers, operating from 30 customer bases worldwide. The F-35 full mission simulator has proven to be a game changer in pilot training. By fully replicating the hardware and software of the actual aircraft, pilots can experience a seamless transition to real-world missions.

Hunter knowledge economy expected to drive growth and 43,000 new jobs by 2030

The Hunter Region will create an estimated 43,000 new jobs by 2030 as a surge of young workers helps to diversify the local economy with growth in health, education and white-collar jobs. Hunter Region 2024 snapshot included:

- Unemployment rate 3.7% (Rest of Australia excluding Enterprising Cities 4.0%)
- Participation rate 65.3% (Rest of Australia excluding Enterprising Cities 66.8%)
- Employment growth -1.8% (Rest of Australia excluding Enterprising Cities 3.0%)
- Dwelling approvals 4,537
- Five-year job outlook: 43,000 new jobs (down from previous year's forecast of 46,000 jobs)

The findings are highlighted in the annual KPMG Enterprising Cities report, which identifies twelve Enterprising Cities, including the Hunter, that account for over 35% of Australia's economy and punch above their weight, offering better lifestyles, local amenities and opportunities compared to the CBDs of Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne.

In 2024, the region saw increases in the 0-19 cohort as well as the 20-29 and 30-39 age groups, with 1,800, 2,700 and 2,300 new residents, respectively.

There has also been a strong increase in the financial services sector which now employs 10,500 people, up from 8,000 in 2019.

The demographic growth trends are despite negative employment growth for 2024 which will have minimal impact on future trajectory of the region.

KPMG Urban Economist, Terry Rawnsley explains "The Newcastle & Hunter region is coming off extremely strong growth in 2023, so naturally there will be a period of adjustment. What is encouraging is that despite negative employment growth across 2024, the labour market saw a bounce up towards the end of the year suggesting it has turned the corner and solid growth will continue."

Advertisements for professionals rose significantly from 911 in 2020 to 1,317 in 2024, indicating an expansion in white-collar

workers and increasing opportunities for remote work. Job ads for managers increased from 239 in 2020 to 453 in 2024, reflecting steady growth in leadership roles in local businesses.

KPMG Newcastle Partner, Steph Loadsman says growth in the knowledge economy is helping the region entice young people and families who would have previously moved to Sydney.

"The diversification of the region's economy is not just seeing it retain its younger residents but also drawing workers from Sydney who are attracted to the region's lifestyle and relative affordability while also being able to progress their careers."

Health care was the fastest growing sector in 2024 which saw a 12% increase and 7,300 new jobs added.

"The \$835 million Maitland Hospital and John Hunter Health and Innovation Precinct has contributed to strong employment growth and signals further maturity as the region caters for a growing population," says, Terry Rawnsley.

A strong pipeline of manufacturing and renewables projects are expected to bolster the regions predicted 43,000 new jobs by 2030.

EnergyCo projects focusing on battery power, transmission, and a Renewable Energy Zone are set to invigorate the local manufacturing sector and expand the range of highly skilled jobs.

"The Future Made in Australia Act combined with the Port of Newcastle container terminal decision has the ability to turbocharge economic growth and see our region continue to be a significant player in international trade," says Steph Loadsman.

Similarly, accelerated defence spending in the Federal Budget by \$1 billion highlights the potential of the Williamtown defence hub which includes the Kongsberg missile manufacturing facility.

"The region has been able to capitalise on its pandemic boom when workers left major metro CBD areas in search of a better lifestyle.

The region continues to foster a favourable environment for business growth, supported by rising workforce participation, a robust labour market, and ongoing population growth," concludes Terry Rawnsley.

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Charlestown Health and Hospital Hub

All systems go for the new Charlestown Health and Hospital Hub located in the heart of Charlestown. Health and Social services are a key industry for Lake Macquarie, being the largest employer by head count and the fifth largest industry sector by annual economic output. This new development will continue the long history of Lake Macquarie in the health sector and build on health precinct across Gateshead and Charlestown.

The new Charlestown Health and Hospital Hub is strategically located on the Pacific Highway in close proximity to the already burgeoning community-based healthcare services and specialist consulting in Charlestown and Gateshead, which includes Lake Macquarie private hospital. With a capital value of approximately \$80 million in land and buildings, and over \$100 million in total investment when the internal surgical and medical fit-outs of the building are included, this is easily the largest healthcare development in the region outside of a major hospital.

The Hub provides over 8000 sqm of floor space over four floors, in addition to 240 car parking spaces. This development is being delivered by GPV Property, a Hunter Region based property fund manager, with a strong track record in development of healthcare infrastructure, representing approximately \$300 million of investment over the last 15 years.

The Charlestown Health and Hospital Hub brings together key industry organisations including Sonic Healthcare, Ramsay Health Care and Novatrials.

Sonic Healthcare operates a suite of primary care services, including General Practice, Diagnostic Imaging / Radiology, Pathology, and a Skin Cancer Clinic. The centrepiece of the primary care service offering is the IPN Charlestown General Practice, with 20+ consulting rooms, making this the largest primary healthcare facility in the Hunter region.

Ramsay Health Care is establishing the Ramsay Surgical Centre Charlestown. The surgical centre will include operating theatres, smaller procedure rooms, endoscopy suites and inpatient beds. This will complement Ramsay's existing hospital operations at Gateshead (Lake Macquarie Private) and Warners Bay (Warners Bay Private).

Novatrials is a Hunter-based clinical research organisation, which provides Hunter Region locals with the opportunity to participate in global studies where cutting-edge treatments for various medical conditions are first available. The new facility will allow Novatrials to expand its core business of running outpatient studies (Phase 2 and Phase 3 clinical trials), adding a 30-bed inpatient facility for Phase 1 clinical trials; one of only 5 such facilities in Australia and the first outside of a capital city.

The remainder of the space will accommodate medical specialists and allied health professionals, such as surgeons in various disciplines, who will benefit from the convenience of the location for patients and staff, as well as the opportunity to do their surgical work on site.

The Changing Nature of Warfare: Join us for the 2025 Hunter Defence Conference

The Hunter Defence Conference is Returning to the Hunter Valley in August!

Now open for registration, this nationally recognised event will bring together over 220 defence, industry, and government leaders to explore the forces reshaping Australia's strategic future.

This year's theme - **The Changing Nature of Warfare** - will examine the new era of integrated, fast-moving, and unconventional conflict. From cyber and space to autonomous systems and long-range strike, the 2025 program is designed to equip stakeholders with the insights, connections, and capabilities needed to lead in a rapidly evolving landscape.

"Set against the backdrop of increasing global instability and rapid technological advancement, this year's theme focuses our attention on how Australia – and our region – must adapt to maintain a decisive capability edge. From cyber and space to autonomous systems and long-range strike, we are entering a new era of integrated, fast-moving, and unconventional conflict", says Tim Owen, AM, Hunter Defence Taskforce Chair.

Conference Dates: 20–21 August 2025

Location: Rydges Resort Hunter Valley

Tickets: Now available on our Hunter Defence website. Early interest is encouraged due to limited capacity.

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Key Agenda Areas of Exploration Include:

- Australia's evolving role in global defence collaboration and security partnerships
- Impacts of AUKUS on policy, capability, and workforce
- Opportunities for SME participation in Defence Infrastructure and Regional Precinct projects
- Workforce development and the future Defence talent pipeline
- Prime and SME collaboration across sovereign capability
- Emerging tech in modern warfare: AI, autonomous systems, advanced surveillance
- Geopolitical change and strategic defence implications

The 2025 program will once again bring together senior leaders from Army, Navy, Air Force, Joint Capabilities and key Primes - alongside a larger SME presence – and provide more curated networking sessions and deeper access to decision-makers across government, industry and Defence.



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\$138 million Cessnock Hospital Redevelopment moves ahead

The \$138 million Cessnock Hospital Redevelopment is a step closer, with a builder appointed to deliver the project, and construction expected to begin in the coming months.

The NSW Government is investing \$138 million in the Cessnock Hospital Redevelopment to enhance health services and facilities for the region.

The redevelopment will include construction of a new Acute Services Building which will include:

- an expanded emergency department
- operating theatre and day surgery spaces
- two new inpatient wards
- a sterilising services unit
- a new medical imaging service
- a modern pharmacy.

Cessnock Hospital will continue to operate during the construction period with minimal disruption to staff, patients and the community.

Following a competitive tender process for the build, Hansen Yuncken has been engaged to deliver the project. The appointment follows the recent statutory planning approval for the project, which has been shaped by valuable feedback from the community throughout the planning and design.

Construction is expected to be completed in 2027.

Minister for Regional Health, Ryan Park said "This important project is moving ahead, and the appointment of the builder marks a key milestone for delivery of the \$138 million Cessnock Hospital Redevelopment for Cessnock and surrounding communities.

"The brand-new Acute Services Building will transform Cessnock Hospital, supporting the latest models of care and providing a welcoming environment for our valued healthcare staff, patients, and carers."

Updated plans approved for revitalisation of Newcastle landmark

The long-awaited restoration of the historic Newcastle Post Office has been given the green light by City of Newcastle following the approval of a modified development application.

The site is owned by Dr Jerry Schwartz, who purchased it in 2018 with a plan to invest more than \$3.6 million into updating the treasured icon to include a state-of-the-art conference centre, retail shops, a café and an Aboriginal cultural centre.

The original proposal was approved by City of Newcastle in April 2021 before the Schwartz Family Company lodged a modification to the approved design in 2024, which included alterations and additions to the existing building, as well as an additional level and an onsite residence.

City of Newcastle CEO Jeremy Bath acknowledged the complexity a heritage site creates but hoped the latest approval would see the project move forward.

"This is the second time City of Newcastle has approved the redevelopment of this iconic piece of Newcastle's history," Mr Bath said.

"The modification application was delayed due to the proposal of an additional level, which was then removed following feedback from City of Newcastle's Urban Design Review Panel, City of Newcastle staff and the Heritage Council of NSW.

"We're pleased to see the restoration begin to take shape ahead of the building being reopened to the public for the first time since 2001."

Lord Mayor Ross Kerridge said he welcomed the approval of the development application and looked forward to returning to the cherished landmark, which has stood for more than 120 years.

"The building in a great example of Federation architecture and was added to the NSW Heritage Register in December 2000," Cr Kerridge said.

"The architectural qualities provide an insight into Newcastle's

prosperity and confidence during the late 19th century coal boom.

"I know the delays in activating the building since the sale by the Federal Government over 20 years ago has been enormously frustrating for the community.

"I have had a number of constructive conversations with Dr Jerry Schwartz who owns the building. I know that he has some exciting plans and I look forward to seeing progress on these developments."

City of Newcastle's Executive Director Planning and Environment Michelle Bisson said the modification application has not substantially changed the original plans.

"There are a range of exciting features that form part of this development that will bring the building back to life," Ms Bisson said.

"Original features such as columns, capitals, windows and doors are proposed to be repaired, with the existing western, southern and eastern arcades on the ground level to be restored.

"The first floor will see the installation of a glass roof over the terrace and the restoration of two existing fireplaces in the proposed function room.

"Our team worked through potential issues with the modification application and are pleased to have been able to resolve these once the owner provided all the relevant information, with the approval now allowing plans for this site to be progressed."



Tesla secures high-profile Newcastle sales facility

Commercial Collective has announced the successful leasing of a landmark Newcastle site to global electric vehicle leader, Tesla. Located at 23 Tudor Street and 214 Parry Street, this significant sales and servicing facility is set to further enhance Newcastle's growing commercial landscape, reinforcing the city's position as a hub for innovation and sustainable technology.

Positioned at a key four-way intersection linking Newcastle's CBD to its western suburbs and Sydney via the M1 Pacific Motorway, the site has been recognised as one of the most prominent locations in its sector. With exposure to 17,466 passing vehicles per day (GapMaps as of 1 April 2025), the property offers matchless exposure and accessibility – an ideal location for Tesla's latest expansion.

The facility includes a 239 sqm high clearance glazed showroom designed to provide a premium display space for Tesla's innovative vehicle range. A dedicated 743 sqm display yard offers ample room for vehicles while maximising exposure to passing traffic. The workshop spans 373 sqm, accommodating a well-equipped six-bay service centre tailored to Tesla's servicing and maintenance needs. The site also features 17 on-site car parking spaces for Tesla's staff and customers.

"This achievement reflects the strength of the commercial property sector here in Newcastle and the opportunities that exist when local expertise meets a global outlook. We're proud to contribute to a growing city that continues to prove its relevance on the national and international stage," said Adam Leacy, National Director of Commercial Collective.

The lease to Tesla highlights Newcastle's continued evolution as a sought-after destination for global brands. The city's strategic infrastructure investments, skilled workforce, and rising demand for premium commercial property have made it an increasingly attractive option for businesses looking to establish or expand their presence in the region. This site's successful leasing underscores the growing confidence in Newcastle's commercial property sector. With ongoing revitalisation, Newcastle continues to be a key contributor in the nation's commercial and industrial real estate landscape.



HUNTER TAFE FOUNDATION

Melissa Rowe has been appointed to the board of the Hunter TAFE Foundation. Melissa is the Chief Operating Officer at Prosperity Advisers and brings senior leadership, strategy formulation, innovation, and system improvement expertise as well as compliance and risk management to the Foundation.



CESSNOCK CITY COUNCIL

Caroline Booth is the new Economic Development and Tourism Manager at Cessnock City Council. A highly experienced economic development professional, Caroline will continue to deliver on key strategies and plans that advance Cessnock as a vibrant, liveable community. Working with businesses, industry and strategic partners, the economic priorities aim to strengthen Cessnock as a place to live, work, visit and invest. Caroline is also passionate about regional transformation through innovation and is a Director on the Hunter IF Board.



NUsport

Brendan Barrett has taken on a new role at the University of Newcastle, as the CEO of NUsport. The seeds of his career were planted here when he graduated with a Phys Ed degree. After teaching Phys Ed and Outdoor Ed for ten years, Brendan transitioned into sports leadership roles including a 15-year period as the GM of the Sydney Academy of Sport and a further 2 years as GM at Hunter Sports Centre.



PROPERTY COUNCIL HUNTER & CENTRAL COAST

The Property Council of Australia has appointed **Nuatali Nelmes** as Regional Director for the Hunter and Central Coast, bringing a strong record of civic leadership and regional advocacy to some of NSW's fastest-growing communities. As Lord Mayor of Newcastle, she championed city-shaping projects, unlocked major investment, and built deep relationships across government, business, and community.

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HUNTER TAFE FOUNDATION

Sam Gannon has been appointed to the board of the Hunter TAFE Foundation. Sam is the Director and Founder of Newcastle-based Solvd Agency and is a results-driven marketing leader who helps businesses define the messages that set them apart and fuel growth with a strong focus on strategy and performance.

We would be pleased to receive information about your new appointments.
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In today's fast-paced digital world, cybersecurity and artificial intelligence (AI) are becoming increasingly interconnected. To explore this growing relationship, the University of Newcastle hosted a panel discussion featuring:

- **Dr Karen Blackmore**, Head of School of Information and Physical Sciences, University of Newcastle
- **Dr Sky Miao**, Lecturer, Computing and Information Technology, University of Newcastle
- **Cole Cornford**, Founder and CEO, Galah Cyber

Together, they unpacked the rising importance of AI and cybersecurity — and the skills we all need to keep up.

Cybersecurity in the age of AI

Cyberattacks are becoming more frequent and sophisticated, especially with the advent of AI-powered tools. It's no longer just an IT issue—cybersecurity is now a core business risk. Small businesses are just as vulnerable as large enterprises, and everyone must take cybersecurity seriously.

"It is no longer an IT problem—it is a business risk," Cole noted.

Building skills for a cyber-resilient future

Businesses need to be open-minded, curious, and proactive. Understanding critical business assets and how to protect them is essential. Cybersecurity awareness should be embedded across all levels of an organisation.

"Everybody's a target nowadays, and you're ultimately accountable for managing your own risk," emphasised Cole.

Dr Blackmore noted, "There are many emerging vendors that are delivering AI solutions. I really see that having some technical depth of knowledge is critically important for how we deploy AI solutions in business ethically. We need to understand how they work, and we need people within organisations that have some technical understanding".

AI in the workplace

AI can automate repetitive tasks, improve efficiency, and support decision-making. Tools like ChatGPT are becoming common in business operations. Ethical use of AI is crucial—privacy, transparency, fairness, and sustainability must be considered.

"AI tools can help us increase the efficiency of our work and automate operations in the workplace," said Dr Miao.

Preparing for an AI-driven future

Workers should learn how to use AI tools effectively and ethically. Businesses must prepare for AI integration by upskilling staff and updating policies. The University of Newcastle offers courses to equip graduates with AI and cybersecurity skills.

"80% of the workforce has at least 10% of tasks that can be replaced by AI," noted Dr Miao.

Bias and privacy in AI

Bias in AI can stem from data, algorithms, or representation. Privacy concerns are growing, especially with AI models trained on user data.

With governments introducing regulations, Dr Miao stressed "We need to ensure we use AI safely, ethically, and with transparency".

Cyber safety tips

Introduce meaningful friction in business processes (e.g. approval for large payments).

Reduce attack surfaces by limiting exposure.
Be cautious with sensitive data when using AI tools.

Advancing your career with AI education

To prepare for the AI-driven future, the University of Newcastle offers a Graduate Certificate in Artificial Intelligence (Foundations). This program equips students with the technical expertise and ethical understanding needed to navigate the complexities of AI and cybersecurity and is designed to address the challenges faced by organisations head-on. It prepares professionals to lead confidently in the evolving digital landscape, ensuring sustainable growth and positive societal impact.

"I think a university education is invaluable. It teaches people the ability to learn, critically analyse something and gives people a sense of professionalism and pride in their local communities", states Cole.

Learn more about how this program can help you and your business stay ahead in the digital age at <https://www.newcastle.edu.au/degrees/graduate-certificate-artificial-intelligence-foundations>

GRADUATES OF THRIVE AND LEAD AND DARE TO ASPIRE

PKF Newcastle set the stage for a conference that blended learning, collaboration, and connection – delivering insights that will tangibly influence our Real Life.

They have celebrated the recent graduates of two flagship internal training programs, Thrive and Lead and Dare to Aspire, which have prepared a group of talented professionals for the next stages of their careers.

The Thrive and Lead program, designed for employees aspiring to progress towards partnership, saw its 2024 cohort graduate in October last year. Over the 12-month journey, participants engaged in rigorous training, one-on-one mentoring, and strategic leadership projects. This program equips participants with the skills and knowledge required to navigate the complexities of leadership at PKF while reinforcing our firm's commitment to fostering future partners who embody our core values.

Similarly, the Dare to Aspire program, completed in February 2025, supported individuals ready to step into managerial roles. Over 12 months, participants honed their capabilities in people management, operational oversight, and decision-making. This program emphasizes the importance of leadership at every level, empowering participants to embrace responsibility with confidence and skill.

Graduates from both programs have already begun implementing their learnings, taking on increased responsibilities, and delivering innovative solutions for our clients. Their commitment to personal and professional growth has set a high benchmark for future participants and underscores PKF's dedication to cultivating talent from within.

With updated modules, enhanced mentorship opportunities, and a renewed focus on collaboration, the 2025-2026 programs promise to be even more impactful.



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TAFE NSW MAITLAND HELPS JAKE SWITCH FROM PUBS TO PLUMBING

Hunter locals have been urged to look to TAFE NSW to “supercharge” their career options amid a new report revealing more than a third of workers are considering changing jobs this year.

It comes during National Careers Week (12-18 May), which shone a spotlight on the economic, social, and personal benefits of career development.

A survey by global employment company, Indeed, predicted 5.5 million Australians – more than a third of the nation’s workforce – were actively considering a job change this year.

One of many locals to turn to TAFE NSW Maitland to advance their careers is former chef Jake McLaughlin, who with the help of TAFE NSW, made a radical career pivot to plumbing.

Burnt out and struggling with the impact of working hospitality hours, the Mayfield resident was looking for an in-demand career that would be personally and financially rewarding.

“I’d started to do some casual roofing with a friend and I loved the work and being outside, so I decided to give plumbing a crack,” he said.

“My TAFE NSW teachers were all so experienced in the industry and it was amazing to have access to all that experience and knowledge.”

Mr McLaughlin, 30, completed a Certificate III in Plumbing and a Certificate IV in Plumbing Operations, and this month officially became a licensed plumber.

TAFE NSW Managing Director Chloe Read said a rapidly changing jobs market meant it was critical locals continue to invest in new skills.

“The jobs market is going through a fundamental change, shaped by factors like technology, globalisation, and changing demographics,” Ms Read said.

“That means there’s never been a more important time to consider upskilling or reskilling to future-proof your career.”

According to the global 2025 Future of Jobs Survey, 70 per cent of employers are expecting to hire staff with new skills over the next five years.

NSW Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education Steve Whan said National Careers Week was a reminder of the diverse and rewarding career pathways vocational education and training can unlock.

“Vocational education and training opens the door to meaningful, hands-on careers in industries that are growing and evolving,” Mr Whan said.

“TAFE NSW plays a vital role in preparing students with the real-world skills and experience they need to thrive — whether they’re starting out, changing direction, or advancing their career.

“National Careers Week is a great opportunity to shine a light on the many fulfilling careers a TAFE NSW qualification can lead to.”

CAREER HORIZON: Jake McLaughlin has made an unlikely career pivot from hospitality to plumbing, with the help of TAFE NSW Maitland.



NEWLY-REFURBISHED UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE BUILDING OPENS IN HONOUR OF DR. VIC LEVI

May 13 marked a significant milestone at the University of Newcastle with the official opening and renaming ceremony of ‘The Vic Levi Building’, formerly known as the Health and Physical Education Building, at Callaghan Campus.

Dr. Victor (Vic) Levi, who passed away in August 2024, had an esteemed career as a journalist and was a key figure in the community. The ceremony was attended by members of Vic’s family, including his wife Meg and sons Chris, Scott, and Matt, along with key university staff. Attendees participated in a tour of the facilities and welcomed the donation of a portrait of Vic from the Levi family.

Over the past eight months, The Vic Levi Building has undergone significant refurbishment, including upgraded research facilities, teaching spaces and offices. The revamped building now boasts cutting-edge technology, including a multisport simulator, which will be utilised by students in the Bachelor of Exercise and Sports Science program.

University of Newcastle Vice-Chancellor Professor Alex Zelinsky AO said the building will deliver a modern educational experience for current and new students while acknowledging the significance of the building’s new name.

“Vic’s unwavering commitment to our University will be remembered and cherished by all who were privileged to know him. As a community, we are proud to honour his legacy through this building at our Callaghan Campus,” said Professor Zelinsky.

“This year, as we celebrate our University’s 60th anniversary, it is particularly fitting to honour Vic. His contributions have been integral to our history and will continue to inspire future generations.

“An esteemed alumnus and keen sportsman, Vic possessed both personal and professional qualities shaped by his passion for sports.

His collaborative spirit and deep connection to the community were evident in his various leadership roles at the University, including his positions on the University Council, as Warden of Convocation, President of the Friends of the University, a University Union Life Member and University Cricket Club President.

Programs taught in The Vic Levi Building include the Bachelor of Exercise & Sport Science, Master of Exercise Physiology, and Diploma of Exercise & Sport Science. Additionally, the building hosts classes for students from Physiotherapy, Physical Education, Biomedical Sciences, and Nutrition & Dietetics.

Vic Levi’s family including his wife Meg, sons Chris, Matt, and Scott, partners and some of Vic’s grandchildren standing in front of the newly refurbished Vic Levi Building alongside the University of Newcastle Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor



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TOTAL COLLEGE RECOGNISES FUTURE AGRICULTURE LEADERS IN ITS 60TH YEAR

The 2025 graduation of some 180 students from the State's premier agriculture college, Tocal College, also marks the sixtieth year it has been training the State's young agriculture workforce to meet the challenges of tomorrow's evolving industry.

The NSW Government's Tocal College is a cornerstone of agricultural training in NSW and a key component of the Minns Government's commitment to building a strong and resilient agriculture sector.

In 2024 alone, Tocal College graduated 179 students and delivered skills training to 2,929 participants across 91 locations throughout the state.

Among the 2024 graduates to receive top honours are:

- Michael Lynch, from Millfield in the Hunter, Dux of Certificate III in Agriculture (Tocal Agricultural Production Program)
- Grace Lawrence, from Rosebrook in the Hunter, Dux of Certificate III in Horse Care (Tocal Stock Horse Breeding and Training Program)
- Mariah Livingston, from Stockrington in the Hunter, Dux of Certificate IV in Agriculture (Tocal Farm Supervisor and Agribusiness Program)
- Harrison Wand, from Hargraves in the Central West, Dux of Certificate IV in Agriculture (Traineeship Program)
- Grace Nesbitt, from Sydney's south, recipient of the Bronze Medal for Excellence in Certificate IV in Agriculture, with her study tour to Peru and subsequent success in Sydney RAS alpaca judging and involvement in the NSW Alpaca Youth event showcasing her leadership in the field.

Tocal's educational outcomes consistently exceed national standards, with full-time program completion rates 44% higher than the national average. An impressive 96% of full-time students who began training at Tocal in 2024 successfully completed their qualification.

Almost half of full-time students received fee concessions or exemptions highlighting the College's support for disadvantaged students. More than 12% of students identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and just over 60% of 2024 full-time enrolments are female.

WHY TEAM TRAINING AND MANAGEMENT TRAINING IS ESSENTIAL FOR SUCCESS

The Importance of Team Training

We have heard business owners ask, What happens if I train my staff and they leave? A more important question is, What happens if you don't train them and they stay?

While most business owners and organisations will tell you their staff is their greatest asset, they may not be giving this asset the support it needs to provide a return on their investment.

It's the responsibility of every business to provide its team members with skills and tools to be effective.

Business and organisational success is achieved through people.

Good people with sound training following solid systems in the foundation of business success.

The Benefits of Management Training

Many organisations recognise the talent and dedication of employees by promoting from within. While these new supervisors and managers might be great at the technical aspects of their role, they may not be skilled at leading and managing others.

Even experienced managers can become frustrated that their team are under-performing or not doing what's asked of them - but not know how to change their behaviour.

Leaders who don't address issues because they don't have the skill or will to have uncomfortable conversations effectively condone the behaviour they ignore.

Inexperienced managers may:

- Not address issues through fear of conflict
- Fix the errors of others instead of discussing mistakes
- Work long hours while the team go home on time

Out of kindness, fear of conflict, or lack of training in how to address poor behaviour and performance, they don't hold team members accountable to their responsibilities. Without realising it, they disempower their staff and limit their growth.

They exhaust themselves and hinder the progress of the business and organisation.

When ignored challenges tend to grow rather than disappear.

Leaders and managers need confidence and solid communication skills to assertively deal with issues as soon as they arise. Dealing with issues respectfully and effectively enables team members, managers and the organisation to grow.

Effective management is a skill that can be learned. When a manager's skills increase, so does their will to manage. And instead of getting drawn into 'people issues', it frees upper management to get on with driving the organisation forward.

For further information contact Yellow Coaching on (02) 4933 6622 or email julianne@yellowcoaching.com.au They provide Team Training and Management Training to businesses and organisations throughout Australia.

Celebrating
60 years
of agricultural education
at Tocal College

Tocal
COLLEGE

www.tocal.nsw.edu.au

SKILLS ON SHOW AT 2025 EXCELLENCE AWARDS

The spotlight was on vocational education and training (VET) at the 2025 Zeal Futures Excellence Awards.

Held on 16 May in Newcastle, the awards celebrated the achievements of the company's best apprentices, trainees, students and businesses from across the state.

Among this year's winners are four Hunter-based recipients, including Matthew Mullen, the Apprentice of the Year.

Initially commencing mechanical engineering studies at university, Matthew decided to pursue a more hands-on pathway, leading him to complete an Engineering Mechanical apprenticeship. Since completing his trade, Matt has also completed a Certificate IV in Fluid Power and continues to work at the Eraring Power Station as a mechanical fitter.

Matt was also selected to be a part of the coveted National, Today's Skills: Tomorrow's Leaders Program in Canberra last year among the top apprentices and trainees in the country.

"Winning Apprentice of the Year is a phenomenal feeling," Matthew said.

"I never expected recognition, but it's been really rewarding to have all the hard work and long hours acknowledged."

"I started my apprenticeship with a clear idea of where I wanted to go, and I've deliberately shaped my journey to become the tradesman I am today.

"The great thing about this apprenticeship is that you get out what you put in. If you're willing to do the hard yards and really engage with the experience, the rewards go far beyond just skills — it shapes your character and can even lead to greater financial opportunities.

"I wouldn't be who I am today without my apprenticeship — and I definitely wouldn't have made it this far without the support of people like Tiarne and Rob at Zeal Futures, my trainers, and all



Apprentice of the Year Matthew Mullen

the supervisors and tradespeople at Origin."

Zeal Futures CEO Sharon Smith congratulated Matthew and all winners and finalists from the Hunter.

"At Zeal Futures, we create success stories, and the calibre of this year's winners is proof of that," she said.

"Vocational education and training pathways like apprenticeships and traineeships give people access to hands-on learning for real jobs.

"As technology advances and markets continue to shift, different skills will be in demand. Apprenticeships and traineeships will ensure we have a skilled workforce that is ready for tomorrow. And with people like Matt coming through the ranks, the future is in good hands."

For a full list of award winners, please visit <https://zealfutures.com.au/excellence-awards>



CELEBRATING SUCCESS STORIES

Last month, we celebrated outstanding apprentices, trainees, students, and host employers at the 2025 Zeal Futures Excellence Awards. Scan the QR code to read more about this year's winners and finalists, and start your own journey to success.



Let's create your success story.

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15 Cessnock students receive Mayoral Scholarships

Cessnock City Council has announced the recipients of its 2025 Mayoral Scholarships during an official presentation held in May at Performance Arts Culture Cessnock (PACC).

Now in its 23rd year, the Mayoral Scholarship Program has awarded 277 local students across the Cessnock Local Government Area with a combined total of \$693,000 since it began in 2002. This year, thanks to the generous support of local sponsors, Council awarded 15 scholarships, each valued at \$2,500.

Cessnock City Council Mayor Dan Watton said the program continues to provide critical support to students pursuing higher education and vocational training.

"We're incredibly proud to continue this tradition of investing in our community's future," said Cllr Watton.

"These scholarships not only ease the financial burden of study, but also help nurture the local talent that will one day lead and strengthen our region."

"On behalf of Council, I'd like to congratulate each of the recipients and extend our gratitude to the sponsors who make this program possible year after year."

Each scholarship provides students with direct financial assistance to help cover costs such as tuition, textbooks, and essential study resources.

The 2025 scholarship recipients are:

- Chloe Newman, sponsored by Austar Coal Mine
- Miriam Palazzi, sponsored by Belford Land Corporation
- Taylee Short, sponsored by Cessnock Leagues Club
- Alex Newman, sponsored by Daracon Group
- Lilly Stace, sponsored by Fulton Hogan
- Daisy Nugent, sponsored by KFC Cessnock
- Darien Checkley, sponsored by Kurri Kurri Community Services Study Hub
- Damian Rocks, sponsored by Lisa McGuigan Wines
- Rachael Palazzi, sponsored by Railway Hotel Cessnock
- Charlyn MacDonald, sponsored by Recycle Central
- Tahlia Draper, sponsored by Retired Mineworkers Association Northern Zone
- Laura Bullen, sponsored by The Bloomfield Group
- Carly Green, sponsored by Cessnock City Council
- Ebony Cheal, sponsored Cessnock Rotary Club
- Cassandra Smith, sponsored by Hunter Resource Recovery

Cessnock Council thanks all sponsors for their commitment to education and community development, and congratulates to all of this year's recipients of the 2025 Mayoral Scholarship Program.

What to do if training isn't landing in your organisation

Sam Robinson
LKS Quaero

Getting the right training in place isn't necessarily easy. Ever been to training that didn't end up being quite what you were after? Or heard from a colleague that they'd been to training that was a break from the day to day, but nothing they'd ever put to use? Or heard about this great training that would have been perfect for people in one team, but the wrong team was sent on the course? It can be frustrating to feel like time and money has been wasted. Here's my advice on what to do if training isn't landing in your organisation.

At LKS Quaero, we see this challenge often, particularly in leadership development: organisations are doing their best to develop their people, but something just isn't quite clicking. The training might be high quality, the participants might be enthusiastic, and the facilitators might be engaging, but the



impact on day to day work is limited. The problem could be the training content itself, but the crux of the issue is often about alignment, preparation, and follow-up.

Orientation for the right direction

One of the ways we help organisations to get more value from their leadership training investment is by building in orientation sessions, both for participants and their managers. These short, focused conversations before the programming starts help everyone to get clear on what the training is about, how it fits with the organisation's goals, and what the participant is expected to get out of it. Crucially, it also helps the manager to understand how they can support their team member to apply what they're learning back in the workplace, including by giving them time, decision-making power, and resources. It's a small investment of time that makes a big difference.

Reviewing in focus

We also build review sessions into our programs, checkpoints along the way where we revisit what's been covered and hear from participants about the impact to date of their assessment tasks back at work. It keeps the learning grounded in real work and helps participants stay focused on outcomes, not just theory. People share some great insights and innovations that often have much wider applicability for their organisations than their own patch.

Reporting back

Finally, we provide post-program reports to share insights from each program. These reports include themes we've observed and highlights of participants' improvement work, which run the gamut from their own leadership practice to safety, finance, and more. We also analyse changes for the participant group between the start and end of the program using a consistent set of measures in what we call a time capsule survey. This reporting helps organisations to make decisions about what to do next, whether that's reinforcing certain skills, shifting focus, or adjusting how training is offered in future.

If you're finding that training isn't working out, I encourage you to take a look at what's happening before, during, and after the program, not just the program itself. Aligning training with organisational needs, involving managers, and building in follow-up can all improve the return on your investment. If you're not sure where to start, reach out for a conversation; we'd be happy to share what's worked for others.

For more information contact LKS Quaero at enquiries@lksquaero.com or 02 4910 4048.



Sam Robinson is Managing Director of LKS Quaero. He works in leadership development, change management, organisational structure, and culture. Sam helps leaders to succeed by connecting people, relationships, systems, and structures. He has worked across the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors.

REAL-TIME DATA VISIBILITY AND MONITORING ADDED TO EVAPORATION EQUIPMENT

Automation integration specialist, JH Tester Industrial Automation, has integrated SaaS based monitoring and data visualisation technology into Water Evaporators manufactured by Minetek. Australian OEM Minetek provides comprehensive water evaporation systems, underground ventilation, and sound reduction solutions for the mining industry.

"We saw an opportunity to enhance our portfolio by adopting an innovative technology that allowed remote, real-time reporting of critical assets. The Minetek team was very particular in nominating a highly capable industrial system integrator with a proven track record in delivering custom innovative solutions and successful delivery of major projects," said Michael Fraser, senior electrical design engineer, Minetek.

"JH Tester Industrial Automation was our chosen delivery partner, implementing Rockwell Automation's cloud-based FactoryTalk® DataMosaix technology. This has revolutionised how we work with our customers to critically monitor their remote assets," he added.

With satellite connectivity for remote locations, Minetek can now capture real-time data, store this valuable information on a more secure cloud server, and evaluate real-time performance in intuitive dashboards, anywhere, any time. One of the main things Minetek uses DataMosaix for is data capture, data visibility, analysis, and real-time reporting for the water evaporation side of the business.

"Data security is essential to our customers, and this is built into the system, and is an area of speciality for both Rockwell and JH Tester," he added.

"Minetek wanted to provide its customers with more real-time visibility on the performance of the equipment, to enable proactive maintenance and to validate agreed performance targets," said Murray Tester, Director, JH Tester.

"We had to consider different equipment across multiple sites and needed a solution that could bring everything together neatly, so we chose Rockwell Automation's FactoryTalk DataMosaix," Murray said.

FactoryTalk DataMosaix enabled Minetek to attain more resilient and secure data connectivity – including all the sensor information, alarms, and engineering documents – from a variety of source systems, for each of the remote assets. Customers of Minetek with multiple sites were able to scale deployment quickly for each additional site, because to bring a new site online only required an edge industrial PC running a DataMosaix extractor.

FactoryTalk DataMosaix contextualises and merges engineering technology data with operational technology and information technology data into one solution with the goal of full production automation. By integrating data from any vendor and all parts of the production system, it makes data available, meaningful, and useful, so that standard applications and custom app development platforms can make data valuable.

Minetek opted for a SaaS solution, which eliminates the need for any physical infrastructure and associated maintenance requirements. The data generated enables Minetek's customers to schedule optimised predictive maintenance schedules to reduce downtime and save cost. JH Tester is in the process of rolling out Rockwell's FactoryTalk DataMosaix on Minetek's Water Evaporators. Once all sites are fully integrated, Murray sees potential for even greater value to be realised.

"DataMosaix has huge potential. It can be used for anomaly detection, predictive maintenance and scheduling, and it can compare real-time with historical data to optimise performance," he said.

"There's even the potential to set up DataMosaix at an enterprise level so that all information is in the one place. Each asset can have manuals, technical data, maintenance logs and downtime all readily available in the one place," he added.

"While we are only using DataMosaix for operational technology data currently, it is capable and ready to integrate IT data, should Minetek or its customers wish to add this in the future."



Glencore's contribution adds up for Hunter communities

For more than 25 years, Glencore Coal has been a source of economic stability in the Hunter region. We proudly contribute billions to Australia's regional, state and national economies - ensuring jobs for thousands of people, and supporting our suppliers in regional NSW.



Scan the QR code to find out how our economic contributions add up for the Hunter, or visit glencore.ws/Contributions

GLENCORE

NEW BUSINESS PROSPECTUS SET TO ATTRACT FURTHER INVESTMENT

Chloe Hicks
EnergyCo

The Hunter region has prospered off the back of resources and electricity for generations. From coal exports to power generation to steelmaking, this region has long been the powerhouse of the state's energy system.

Today, our energy system is evolving, and with its existing infrastructure, industrial base and skilled workforce, the Hunter will be at the heart of NSW's energy transition.

I was lucky to grow up in Newcastle but moved away 18 years ago to study and pursue a career in renewable energy. I'm heartened that people can now work in renewables in the Hunter. EnergyCo alone has over 30 full-time staff based in Newcastle, as well as 10 staff working from the Central Coast.

Our Hunter and Central Coast projects will create construction and ongoing jobs. Plus, as a direct result of our infrastructure, power intensive industries will create more opportunities locally.

At EnergyCo, we believe there are three pillars to a seamless energy transition: bulk, low-cost renewable generation driving down energy prices; long duration storage to ensure reliable supply; and a new network transporting energy to where it's needed.

To support this transition, EnergyCo is delivering five projects across the Hunter and Central Coast bringing investment and business opportunities, jobs, and greater economic diversification to the region.

The Hunter Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone is Australia's first distribution Renewable Energy Zone (REZ). This first-of-a-kind model minimises environmental and social impacts by augmenting Ausgrid's existing network to unlock more capacity. AEMO Services has recently authorised the project giving it regulatory approval to proceed.

The Hunter Transmission Project is the backbone needed to power our energy transition. It will enable renewable energy generated inland to get where the majority of energy is used throughout the Hunter, Sydney and Illawara regions.

The Warrah Super Battery – one of the world's biggest batteries – is located at the former Lake Munmorah power station. It has already attracted over \$1 billion in private investment and created 170 site construction jobs – including 100 jobs local to the Central Coast and Newcastle.

The significant logistical operations that come with building new infrastructure across NSW also provide opportunities for the Hunter region.

Our Port to REZ road project involves upgrades to 19 pinch points, and the Newcastle Logistics Precinct will be the gateway to the renewable energy transition, storing renewable energy components unloaded from ships until they are moved to their sites.

One of the aspects of the energy transition I am most passionate about is delivering benefits to the communities.

Our projects represent investment and opportunity in the Hunter, directly and through the broader energy supply chain. Combined, our Hunter projects are expected to create around 4,500 construction jobs and 500 ongoing jobs.

We aim to hire local people, buy from local businesses and create education and training opportunities locally. The energy transition will be a positive for the region for this and future generations and we are working with communities to make this happen.

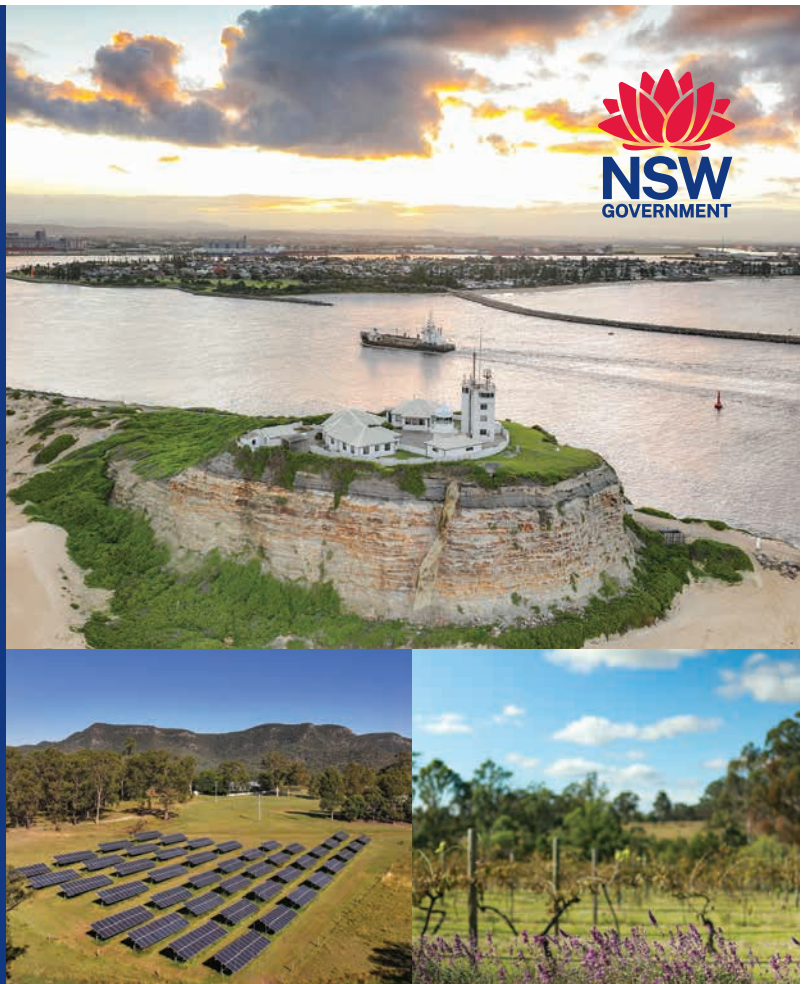
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Find out more about
our work in the Hunter
and Central Coast at
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We've established a dedicated Hunter and Central Coast regional team to make sure we have a coordinated approach to give communities certainty and keep them informed.

Our regional reference group has expanded to work across all five projects, and to ensure the region's voice influences project planning and enhances the ways in which we deliver legacy benefits to communities.

We're working with local councils, landholders, First Nations communities, business and community representatives to make sure consultation is active and ongoing.

The Hunter is at the heart of delivering NSW's clean energy future because of its workforce, industrial base and quality infrastructure. The region has powered NSW for decades and will power the state for many decades to come.

For further information contact EnergyCo on 1800 118 894, email contact@energyco.nsw.gov.au or visit www.energyco.nsw.gov.au



Chloe Hicks is the Executive Director of Strategy and Policy at EnergyCo. Chloe is responsible for driving EnergyCo's corporate and business strategy, strategic policy and advice, and regulatory processes, including access schemes. Chloe has extensive experience and expertise in energy and government processes. She has been instrumental in delivering major energy, climate and economic reforms, including the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap and Renewable Energy Zones. She is passionate about ensuring energy infrastructure is developed in a way that benefits consumers and regional communities.

AGL ACQUIRES UPPER HUNTER PUMPED HYDRO PROJECTS

In May AGL announced the acquisition of 100% ownership of two pumped hydro energy storage projects held by Upper Hunter Hydro Top Trust and its trustee (UHH).

The two early-stage projects are located in the Hunter region, NSW. On current designs, the projects at Glenbawn and Glennies Creek plan to provide 770 MW 10-hour and 623 MW 10-hour pumped hydro energy storage capacity respectively with the future opportunity for integrated wind farms.

AGL Chief Operating Officer, Markus Brokhof, said "Adding long duration storage such as pumped hydro is a focus for AGL as we continue to build out the breadth of our development pipeline to achieve our ambition of adding 12 GW of new renewables and firming by 2035."

"This acquisition adds to AGL's growing development pipeline. The project has favourable topography and is located in the Upper Hunter NSW, continuing our ongoing commitment to the economy in the Hunter region."

"It is crucial the future energy system is developed with a spectrum of storage and firming, encompassing short, medium, and long-term storage technologies. Developing pumped hydro energy storage and other synchronous long duration storage is integral to ensuring reliability and affordability as Australia transitions to a renewable energy system."

"AGL is encouraged by the NSW Government's decision to maintain 8+ hours as the definition for long duration storage as well as its increased targets for long duration storage. Government support will be required to help bring these critical projects to market. The attractiveness of pumped hydro is the long technical lifetime of a project, which can range between 80 and 100 years."

Pumped hydro works by pumping water from a lower reservoir into an upper reservoir where it can be stored and then run

downhill through turbines to generate electricity. The stored water is potential energy that can be used when the grid needs it, including during peak demand periods.

The outgoing Chairman of UHH, the Honourable Malcolm Turnbull AC, said UHH was pleased that AGL was acquiring the Upper Hunter Hydro projects, given its financial and technical capability to deliver the projects and existing presence in the Hunter.

"Long duration storage will play a critical role in Australia's future energy system, helping to keep the grid reliable by shifting renewable energy to match consumer demand. The Glenbawn and Glennies Creek projects are well placed to create jobs and drive investment in the Hunter which plays a pivotal role in the energy transition," he said.

MGA THERMAL ACHIEVES WORLD-FIRST 24/7 RENEWABLE INDUSTRIAL STEAM

After more than ten years of development and breakthrough materials engineering, MGA Thermal's world-first commercial Electro-Thermal Energy Storage (ETES) system — capable of dispatching industrial-grade steam from renewable energy — has now gone live. This groundbreaking ETES technology significantly outperforms conventional sensible heat thermal storage, offering a viable pathway to 24/7 renewable heat for industries, effectively replacing reliance on carbon-intensive fossil fuels.

MGA Thermal's utilisation of latent heat means that energy is stored more compactly, both in physical plant footprint and storage temperature range. This serves to make latent heat ETES more space efficient, reliable, energy efficient and affordable than sensible heat storage. The fully operational demonstration plant, has produced steam output while the storage material undergoes a material phase change to release latent heat, establishing MGA Thermal as a unique solution provider in the urgent global effort to decarbonise heavy industry.

Steam, the workhorse of industrial manufacturing for centuries, underpins 44% of Australia's energy consumption in heavy industries alone, with half dedicated to heat generation. Globally, industrial heat accounts for 25% of energy use and emissions, historically locking industries into carbon-intensive practices.

MGA Thermal's newly commissioned demonstration plant shatters this paradigm by converting intermittent renewable electricity into reliably stored thermal energy, ready for on-demand steam generation. This breakthrough unlocks a tangible route to net-zero industrial operations, with the potential to scale to GWh storage capacities, meeting the vast clean heat demands of the world's largest production facilities.

Located at MGA Thermal's Tomago site, the compact demonstration unit (12 m long, 3 m wide, 4 m tall) stores 5 MWh of energy with a 500 kW thermal dispatch power, providing continuous superheated steam for a full 24 hours — enough energy to power over 270 homes for the same duration. At its core are approximately 3,700 of MGA Thermal's proprietary Miscibility Gap Alloy (MGA) blocks, specifically engineered for optimal latent heat storage.

"The successful operation of this world-first system is a game-changer, proving that consistent, industrial-grade clean steam is not a future aspiration, but a reality today," said Erich Kisi, Executive Chair, Chief Scientist, & Co-Founder at MGA Thermal.

"Our unique ETES solution efficiently captures and stores surplus renewable energy in a specially designed material, releasing it as high-temperature steam on demand. Our systems react in milliseconds, seamlessly absorbing and deploying energy and therefore at a large scale can participate in grid and energy market stabilisation. This marks a pivotal moment in the journey to decarbonise industries with high and continuous heat requirements."

OLD MINES GIVEN NEW LEASE OF LIFE UNDER CRITICAL MINERALS AND HIGH-TECH METALS STRATEGY

Cutting edge scientific processes have found 28 current and historic mine sites, including several in the Hunter, which could have critical minerals and high-tech metals deposits hidden inside their old waste.

For mines that have closed, these results could mean new opportunities for production, bringing more jobs and investment opportunities to those communities across regional NSW.

The Geological Survey of NSW's Mine Reuse Project collected more than 1,200 samples. These specimens were then run through the latest sampling techniques and underwent high precision chemical analysis to identify critical minerals.

Locally, bismuth and tellurium were found at Hunter Valley Operations and Ravensworth; bismuth, rare earth elements, rhenium and tellurium were found at Mandalong-Newstan; and bismuth, rare earth elements and Tellurium were found at Vales Point Power Station. Researchers were also looking for additional materials at Stratford coal mine.

Critical minerals and high-tech metals are crucial for clean energy technologies, such as electric vehicles, solar panels, wind turbines, along with aerospace applications. The International Energy Agency estimates that, over the next 20 years, the global economy requires six times the current amount of critical minerals to reach net-zero carbon emissions.

Data from Geological Survey projects are used extensively by the industry to guide explorers and miners and assist them in identifying new opportunities for critical minerals mines. Providing free, pre-competitive data helps de-risk projects and draws investment to NSW.

The release of data from projects like this helps focus explorers and miners on the best opportunities for development and could see an increase on the 190 critical minerals exploration titles already being pursued across NSW.

This latest data release is part of the Government's continued focus on delivering the NSW Critical Minerals and High-Tech Metals Strategy 2024-35. It builds on the extensive investments made by the Government to date, including:

- a \$2.5 million co-investment fund for critical minerals explorers;
- a \$250 million royalty deferral initiative for new critical minerals projects;
- the provision of world-class and targeted precompetitive geoscientific data including the recent commencement of the Central Lachlan Seismic Survey around Euabalong to Bathurst and Nyngan to Gilgandra.

The work for the Mine Reuse Project was undertaken in collaboration between the Geological Survey of NSW with the Sustainable Minerals Institute at The University of Queensland and Geoscience Australia.

The Mine Reuse Project data can be accessed at <https://www.resources.nsw.gov.au/geological-survey/projects/mine-reuse-project>

PORT WARATAH INVESTS \$270 MILLION IN SHIPLOADERS

On 6 May Port Waratah Coal Services announced its formal commitment to the next phase of investment in the future of the Kooragang Terminal. The objective of a capital investment programme valued at approximately \$270 million is to ensure that the terminal facilities are positioned to meet customer expectations and Hunter Valley coal chain demand beyond 2030.



Port Waratah 7.09 Shiploader with Vessel

The investment program is headlined by the procurement of a new shiploader, to be installed at Kooragang's K4 berth as a replacement for Port Waratah's original Shiploader 7.08 which commenced operations in 1984. It is expected that the new shiploader will enter operations in 2028.

Also included in the program are major upgrades and life extension works on the other two Kooragang shiploaders, both commissioned in the 1990's. The first of these projects commences in July 2025 with a four-month outage of Shiploader 7.09. Further similar outages will follow over the next four years and include life extension works on Shiploader 7.10.

"This significant investment in our assets ensures Port Waratah is positioned to meet the demands of the Hunter Valley coal industry reliably, flexibly and cost-effectively into the future," said Port Waratah's CEO, Hennie du Plooy.

"The Kooragang Terminal shiploaders are all reaching key milestones within their lifecycles. One of our iconic yellow shiploaders has delivered 40 years of service, with the other two installed in the 1990s. An asset assessment and continued use study completed in 2023 recommended a strategic programme of work on all three shiploaders."

"As we have demonstrated at our Carrington Terminal which has been operating since 1976, strategic investment in maintenance, upgrades and replacement ensures that infrastructure such as this can perform reliably over long periods. Our aim is to find the optimum balance between investment in and the capability of our shiploading fleet over time to ensure that we can meet not only customer demand, but also changing stakeholder expectations for safety and environmental performance."

Port Waratah has entered into contracts for the design, construction and delivery of the new shiploader, as well as the life-extension works on 7.09 shiploader for execution in 2025, with Civmec Construction and Engineering.

Civmec is an integrated, multi-disciplinary construction and engineering services provider to the Energy, Resources, Infrastructure, Marine and Defence sectors. With operations around Australia, Civmec has a major facility in Tomago. The shiploader will be manufactured in Australia using Australian steel suppliers to support the domestic steel & manufacturing industries, wherever possible.

"We are looking forward to working with the Civmec team to deliver the first shiploader refurbishment and getting started on the design for the replacement shiploader."

"The refurbishment works on Shiploader 7.09 will commence in July with an outage of four months to complete structural and strengthening works, replacement of mechanical components, and surface protection. We are confident that Port Waratah will continue to meet customer demand despite this disruption through leveraging the redundancy available in the remainder of Kooragang Terminal and the capacity of the Carrington Terminal," said Mr du Plooy.

The project is anticipated to create more than 100 highly specialised jobs throughout its duration and generate significant local employment and subcontractor opportunities, expanding on Civmec's continued commitment to the Hunter region and bolstering industry capability. The shiploader is due for delivery and handover in 2028."



Australian Government
Coal Mining Industry
(Long Service Leave Funding) Corporation

Long service that doesn't leave.



We connect eligible
employees with
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"SECURE DESTRUCTION - GUARANTEED"

A politician has a rally in a small town...
 He asks, "What can the government do for you?"
 A man says, "We basically have two problems.... The first one is... we have no doctor in town."
 The politician immediately pulls out his iPhone, dials a number, and has a short conversation.
 He hangs up and says, "Settled, there will be a doctor here from tomorrow on... What's the second problem?"
 "We don't have a mobile phone signal..."

A man walks into a bar and tells the bartender, "This is the third time I've been in this bar."
 "Really?" says the bartender.
 "In 1982, I came in the day before my wedding. I was nervous. I was unsure. In retrospect, I was lacking confidence in myself, in my future."
 "Fair enough," says the bartender.
 "Over 40 years later, I came back... the day after my wife died. It's amazing how life can change. How every uncertainty can become the past. How the unknown can come to mean... everything."
 The bartender doesn't know what to say.
 But the man continues. "Those were the two most important days of my life," he says.
 The two stand in silence for a moment.
 "Well then," says the bartender, "what brings you here today?"
 "As fate would have it," the man replies, "I forgot my umbrella."

An American, a Mexican and an Australian walk into a pub.
 The Mexican says "I will have a Corona, the finest in México!"
 The American says "I'll have a Budweiser, the finest in the world!"
 The Australian says "I'll have a ginger ale."

"A ginger ale?" the American says quizzically.
 The Australian replies "Well, if you lot aren't gonna have a beer, why should I?"

A little boy walked up to homeplate in an empty baseball field, with his bat and ball in hand.
 As he threw the ball up in the air, he proclaimed, "I am the best ball player ever!" He swung with all his might but missed.
 He did the same thing and missed again.
 He picked up the ball, tossed it up one more time, said "I am the best ball player in the world!" Then he swung and missed again.
 "Wow!" he said. "What a pitcher!"

A grocer put up a sign that read "Eggplants, 25 cents each — three for a dollar."
 All day long, customers came in exclaiming: "Don't be ridiculous! I should get four for a dollar!"
 Meekly the grocer agreed and packaged four eggplants. The tailor next door had been watching these antics and finally asked the grocer, "Aren't you going to fix the mistake on your sign?"
 "What mistake?" the grocer asked. "Before I put up that sign no one ever bought more than one eggplant."

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Training is a catalyst that can transform lives, companies and even nations."

- Tony Robbins



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