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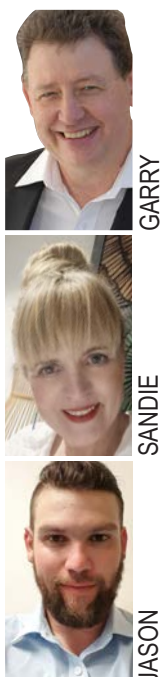
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From the Editor



With the US Trump administration commencing a range of tariffs, and threats of more, global trade is under threat of major upheavals. With Australia's high reliance on international trade, the local economy will inevitably experience repercussions.

The US has announced a 25% tariff on steel and aluminium without exception, although there is still some hope Australia may receive an exemption.

Although the US is not the major destination for Australia steel and aluminium, it is still a significant market.

In terms of aluminium, USA takes around 10% of exports.

The Hunter is of course home to Tomago Aluminium which produces around 37% of Australian aluminium, so the effects could be directly felt locally.

Perhaps an even larger threat is that other countries that lose US market shares decide to dump their products in other markets, including those where Australia has a much higher export.

There is also the threat of trade war, with other countries retaliating with their own tariffs. This has the potential to severely impact international trade.

China has already announced tariffs on a range of US products, including coal and a range of agricultural products.

Of course, with trade disruptions, there are not only threats, but also opportunities.

There may well be additional markets in China with tariffs on US imports.

It is certainly a challenge to the current Federal Government and the winner of the coming election.

They need to firstly continue to make representations to the US to make exemptions for Australian products, particularly considering that the US enjoys a significant trading surplus with Australia.

They also need to support local industries that are negatively impacted. We certainly don't want to lose any domestic steel or aluminium manufacturing capabilities.

Additionally, they need to assist local industries in benefitting from any new opportunities that arise.

With the global political and trading environment being unsettled, we need our politicians to show leadership during these unsettled times.

Garry Hardie
Editor & Publisher

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CareFlight expands operations in Newcastle

CareFlight has announced the expansion of its base in Newcastle, with a permanently based turbo-prop aircraft and jet now enhancing its capability to provide lifesaving patient transport services to and from the region.

The aircraft support CareFlight's patient transport services operated with NSW Health as well as CareFlight's national and international medevac services.

In addition to giving the CareFlight team a larger geographic reach and faster service capabilities, the expansion will also deliver new jobs to the region with employment opportunities for Newcastle- local staff, including nurses, pilots and engineers.

CareFlight patient transport vehicles are also based in Newcastle, staffed by local drivers and specially trained nurses, providing patient transport between the aircraft and hospital. CareFlight's operational teams work 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide support for the aircraft. CareFlight's Operations Centre and specialist teams are equipped to provide logistical support and coordination throughout the patient's journey.

CareFlight CEO Mick Frewen said continuous improvement and service innovation in healthcare is at the heart of the not-for-profit organisation's mission to save lives, speed recovery and serve the community.

"Newcastle is an ideal geographic base for patient transport services for residents in Northern and North-Western NSW, as well as for CareFlight's Air Ambulance services in the Pacific region.

"We're delighted to be improving the service we provide with NSW Health, giving patients from regional areas greater access to the very best level of healthcare to meet their needs, while ensuring they are transported with the highest standards of patient care and safety."



CareFlight group, Minister Catley and Brad Hazzard

CareFlight's Patient Transport Service (PTS) operates as part of NSW Health's integrated high and low acuity transport system. It provides a lifeline for many patients from regional and rural communities in Northern NSW. NSW Health co-ordinates patient movements with CareFlight's HelpPoint logistics team.

The addition of a permanently based aeromedical King Air turbo-prop aeroplane in Newcastle enhances CareFlight's capacity to provide vital patient transport for the community. The service transports patients needing specialist treatment and procedures that are not available locally. Once they have had the treatment or procedure, they are then flown back to their local hospital to recover.

The Newcastle-based aircraft will increase the efficiency of the service and its capacity to readily transport patients from regional and rural NSW to and from John Hunter Hospital, as well as specialist hospital facilities in Sydney.

The Newcastle-based operation has also benefited from further improvements thanks to more than \$1 million in charitable donations from CareFlight's national and local supporter base.



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Rum and brandy add value to historic Hunter factory

Emerging global premium spirits producer Sydney Rum Distillery (SRD) is moving operations into Muswellbrook's iconic Oak factory. SRD aims to capitalise on the growing international recognition of quality Australian distilled spirits. It will leverage this reputation along with Australia's sugarcane and wine industry to create a range of premium spirits primarily targeting global bulk and bottle markets.

The aim is for the distillery in Muswellbrook to be operational in mid-2025. This represents a three-year time saving over building a similar greenfield site.

SRD has assembled a team of experienced talent with a vision of creating and marketing premium Australian rum and brandy at scale in key global markets. The Muswellbrook distillery is an important part of seeing SRD's plans come to fruition while also providing substantial economic benefit to regional NSW. The distillery will create up to 24 full-time jobs. Recent Deloitte Access Economics data shows for every dollar of investment into the distilled spirits industry in regional Australia, the local economic benefit is about \$2.30.

"We recognise the heritage and history of the Hunter Valley Dairy Co-operative and local significance of the Oak brand," says SRD CEO and master distiller Steve Magarry. "The iconic building has been a part of the town's landscape since 1945."

To offer a consumer-focused drinking experience, SRD's product portfolio will use Australian native botanicals and employ a customised wood policy for ongoing aging. There are early positive signs that rum is the next category for global premiumisation. The global demand for Australian rum and brandy is increasing as it has for other spirit categories – gin, vodka, and whisky.

"People are making more considered choices when it comes to alcohol consumption," Mr Magarry says. "They are investing in higher quality spirits. A new generation of consumers are gravitating to brands that place authenticity, transparency, and sustainability at the heart of their operations."

Mr Magarry says planning is underway to deliver an agri-tourism "destination" hospitality venue for local, interstate, and inbound international travellers.

SRD's vision is to operate a globally scaled distillery in Australia and take premium Australian rum and brandy to the world with a portfolio of high-class brands. It already distributes its Cargo Cult Spiced Rum across 10 markets and plans further expansion this year.

"We are the first movers in building premium at-scale Australian rum in rapidly developing global markets," Mr Magarry says. "So, we're excited to announce the achievement of a significant milestone – the acquisition of a globally scaled distillery with a 10-million bottles per annum output, packaging, and barrel-maturation facility in the picturesque Hunter Valley."

Local apprentice baker wins NSW baking competition

A promising apprentice baker from Newcastle has won the NSW Excellence in Baking competition held in January at TAFE NSW Hamilton. Jasper Jobarteh went head-to-head in a bake-off for the NSW title at the annual event hosted by the Baking Association of Australia. Each year, apprentice bakers and patisserie chefs from all over Australia compete for the prestigious title in The Excellence in Baking.

As a state finalist, Mr Jobarteh will compete at the Baking Industry Trade Show in Sydney in June where the national winners will be announced at the Excellence in Baking Awards Night.

The 19-year-old will be completing his final year of his apprenticeship while he studies a Certificate III in Baking at TAFE NSW Hamilton.


"I was a bit surprised that I won but I felt confident in my work," Mr Jobarteh said. "I'd spent 6-7 weeks practicing and testing each product on my family. On competition day, I made a Cherry Ripe scroll, a tea cake with dried strawberries and orange peel, a couple more conventional doughs, and a selection of artisan and savoury doughs."

"I had an interest in baking and decided to leave school in Year 11 to become an apprentice. I really enjoy the technical aspect of baking. The hours are tough but once you know what you're doing it is very fulfilling."


Baking Association of Australia Executive Officer Tony Smith praised Mr Jobarteh's achievement and spoke about the importance of fostering young talent within the industry.

"This competition allows apprentices to shine," Mr Smith said. "There's currently a shortage of bakers and patisserie chefs. Employers who support their apprentices to show their skill at events like this reap the rewards of keeping them in the industry. TAFE also play a significant role in equipping these young apprentices with necessarily technical skills and knowledge to succeed."

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Mai-Wel Joins Forces with Hunter Wildfires

Mai-Wel, a leading Hunter based not-for-profit organisation dedicated to empowering people with disability, has announced a partnership with the Hunter Wildfires Rugby Club.

Through this partnership, Mai-Wel becomes the official charity partner of the Hunter Wildfires, with plans to collaborate on events and activities throughout 2025. Highlights of the partnership include:

Engaging Community Events: Two major events in February/ March and October, held at The Forum, Newcastle University, where Mai-Wel participants can engage with Wildfires players in fun, inclusive activities such as mini games and skill sessions.

Game Day Celebrations: Dedicated events such as "Mai-Wel Day" will feature raffles, fundraising activities, and the opportunity to showcase Mai-Wel's work to the broader community.

Volunteer and Training Opportunities: Participants from Mai-Wel's programs will have the chance to contribute on game days and training sessions by volunteering in various roles, fostering skill development and confidence.

Media and Awareness Campaigns: Joint promotional efforts, including social media stories, photo opportunities, and podcasts, will amplify awareness of Mai-Wel's services and the shared values of inclusion and opportunity.

Mai-Wel CEO John Cleary expressed enthusiasm for the partnership: "Partnering with the Hunter Wildfires offers an incredible platform to showcase the abilities of people with disability while fostering meaningful community connections. This collaboration will open doors for participants to engage in new experiences and gain valuable skills."



Hunter Wildfires General Manager Stuart Pinkerton echoed these sentiments: "We're proud to align with Mai-Wel as our charity partner. Together, we can make a real difference in our community, promoting inclusion and creating opportunities for individuals to thrive both on and off the field."





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New advanced manufacturing and production facility for JFD Australia

JFD Australia, an established partner of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN), has unveiled its new advanced manufacturing and production facility at Beresfield.

The state-of-the-art centre was officially opened by Minister for Defence Industry and Capability Delivery the Hon Pat Conroy MP and the Federal Member for Paterson Ms Meryl Swanson MP.

JFD Australia's Managing Director, Ms Cathy Falkiner said the company had simply outgrown its previous site at Warners Bay and needed a larger premises to manufacture and export its underwater life support systems.

"From this Beresfield facility, we are producing, maintaining and exporting recompression chambers to navies around the world," said Ms Falkiner.

"The nature of this manufacturing is exacting and precise as the equipment we are providing may be used to save lives which means it is critical that we have a space that is fit for purpose."

JFD Australia is the largest provider of recompression chambers to the RAN, the US Navy and the Royal Thai Navy.

From its base in the Hunter region, the company has exported 137 recompression chambers to the US Navy and seven in the past 18 months alone with a value of \$10 million (the approximate total export value of this is \$67 million).

"We are a proud member of Australia's defence industry, creating local jobs, engaging with local supply chains and supporting local manufacturing," said Ms Falkiner.

Hunter leader on Property Council's new NSW Division Council

One of the Hunter's most respected business leaders has secured an influential role on the newly appointed Property Council of Australia NSW Division Council for the 2025–2026 term.

Julie Rich of Hunter-based Compose Consulting has been re-appointed to the NSW Division Council, bringing a strong Hunter voice to the state's peak advocacy body.

The Division Council will be led by Ranisha Clarke, Managing Director, Lendlease Communities, elected as the new NSW Division President. With over two decades of experience shaping vibrant, sustainable communities, Ms Clarke's leadership comes at a critical time.

"It's an exciting period for the NSW property industry, and I'm honoured to lead such a dynamic group of experts from across the state, including Julie as an influential voice from the Hunter," Ms Clarke said.

"Julie's continued contribution will be invaluable as we tackle the pressing issues facing our sector - particularly housing supply, infrastructure delivery, and supporting regional growth," she said.

Julie Rich brings deep expertise and a strong commitment to the economic and social development of the Hunter, and her re-appointment reflects the region's growing importance in NSW's broader property and infrastructure landscape.

Property Council NSW Executive Director Katie Stevenson congratulated Julie on her re-appointment, highlighting the critical role regional leaders play in shaping future growth.

"The Hunter is key to NSW's housing and economic strategy, and the voices of experienced leaders like Julie will make sure the region's needs and opportunities remain a key focus in our advocacy," Ms Stevenson said.

Ms Clarke said the inclusion of leaders from the Hunter highlights the Property Council's commitment to representing the diverse voices of NSW's property sector.

"The Hunter is critical to NSW's future prosperity, and I look forward to working with Julie to make sure the region's potential is fully realised," she said.

RDA Hunter funding for continuation of ME Program

Regional Development Australia Hunter (RDA Hunter) has secured funding to continue delivering its successful ME Program through the Australian Government's Department of Industry, Science and Resources Schools Pathways Program, a key initiative of the Defence Industry Development Strategy.

The ME Program links Defence Industry and students to help build an industry-skilled, homegrown Hunter workforce. It connects the Hunter's Defence Industry with its future workforce and increases students' awareness of pathways to defence industry careers. It encourages Hunter high school students to engage in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) subjects at school, and aims to inspire them to continue their studies at university or TAFE and pursue employment opportunities in local defence industries.

The ME Program supports 30 diverse high schools across the Hunter by providing STEM equipment and offering a wide range of hands-on activities that inspire students to consider STEM-related opportunities in their future careers.



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Major international skateboarding event heading to Newcastle

South Newcastle Skate Park will be launched onto the world stage when the Jackalope Block Party rolls into town in November with support from City of Newcastle's Special Business Rate (SBR) funding.

Being held outside North America for the first time, the iconic festival will feature elite athletes competing for big prizes, skateboarding demonstrations, live DJ sets and food trucks. But the free community event will also uncover local talent, giving Novocastrians the chance to win a trip to compete in the USA.

The Jackalope Block Party is one of 11 initiatives to share in the latest round of City Centre and Darby Street SBR funding, with almost \$900,000 to be used for the promotion, beautification and development of the business precincts.

City of Newcastle Executive Manager Media Engagement Economy and Corporate Affairs Nick Kaiser said SBR funding is distributed through a competitive application process to the most creative and innovative proposals.

"These events are designed to bring people to the city and support local businesses by increasing visitation," Mr Kaiser said.

"Having already proved to be popular drawcards, some initiatives are returning for another year, such as Shakespeare Under the Stars, Newcastle Food Month and the West Best Bloc Fest, which is held across nine venues, featuring more than 100 local musicians."

Chair of the Community and Culture Strategic Advisory Committee Councillor Jenny Barrie said City of Newcastle is hoping new initiatives will prove just as popular.

"Some of the new events include the Darby Street Festival, which will feature live music, performers and family-friendly



South Newcastle Skate Park

activities, while Bernie's Bar will put on a celebration for the 100th anniversary of the Star Hotel," Cr Barrie said.

"We're also thrilled to be hosting the Jackalope Block Party at South Newcastle, which will bring international attention to this vibrant coastal facility.

"If it proves successful, we'll look to secure the tremendous four-day version of the festival, which would include more sports such as bouldering, BMX and surfing."

Other successful projects supported by this round of City Centre/Darby Street funding include the Kindle Wellbeing Festival, WinterHeat CITYWIDE, the Conscious Couture Festival and 'Acquist' presented by Flipside Dance, a series of free professional performances in Civic Park.



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Wyee town centre slated for economic growth

Wyee is set for increased economic activity with Lake Macquarie City councillors approving a planning proposal to boost commercial and retail development and expand the local centre.

Lake Macquarie Mayor Adam Shultz said the proposal increases the maximum building height to 15 m and removed the minimum lot size requirement to align with other town centre zones in the city.

"Recent population growth in Wyee has increased the demand for local centre services and facilities and this demand is expected to continue with future growth," he said.

"Rezoning the sites to E1 Local Centre will pave the way for local businesses, services, and facilities to thrive, which means more jobs for locals."

"This will support the growing population with shops, a supermarket, food and drink venues, medical facilities, childcare and office spaces."

Councillors also recommended approving donations to three organisations including the Australian Air League NSW – Belmont Squadron, the Heartland Foundation and the Quirky Quilters. Each organisation will receive a grant of \$2000.

In addition, councillors recommended appointing expert Naomi Rucker to represent Council on the Hunter and Central Coast Regional Planning Panel for a term of three years. Two other experts were nominated as alternate panel members. The Regional Planning Panel independently assesses and makes decisions on regionally significant development applications and planning matters, ensuring expert input on large-scale and complex projects in Lake Macquarie.

Councillors also recommended appointing five experts to Council's Design Review Panel for a term of three years and appointed architect Dr Philip Pollard as chairperson. The Design Review Panel provides independent expert advice to Council on the design quality of residential apartment developments, considering architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design to inform application assessments.

\$100 million contract for underwater life support systems for ADF

The Federal Government has invested in local manufacturing and jobs, by securing local maintenance and support of diving and hyperbaric equipment for the Australian Defence Force (ADF) through a \$100 million investment.

This announcement will involve a five-year contract extension with James Fisher Defence (JFD) Australia as the Category Integrator for Support Services to the ADF diving and hyperbaric equipment, for the delivery of operating, engineering, maintenance, supply, and training services applicable to the ADF's dive equipment, recompression chambers and support equipment.

This highly technical and specialised equipment is vital to ensuring the ADF are able to operate effectively and safely in underwater environments. Through this contract extension, another 13 highly skilled and well-paid jobs will be created at JFD Australia, bringing their total workforce to almost 120 nationwide.

The work will be conducted in JFD Australia's facilities across Australia, including the manufacture of recompression chambers at Beresfield in the NSW Hunter region, maintenance of rebreathers and hyperbaric chambers at Caringbah in southern Sydney and support of the submarine escape and rescue systems at Bibra Lake, south of Perth.

The diving and hyperbaric equipment enable a range of joint force operations including mine countermeasures, mine warfare, maritime explosive ordnance disposal, advanced force operations,

reconnaissance, and underwater battle damage repair.

This specialised equipment will be used to perform a wide range of underwater tasks for both Navy's clearance and ship's divers, and Army's work divers.

\$1 million revitalisation of Maitland's transport precinct

Maitland City Council has secured \$1 million as a pilot partnership as part of the NSW Government's reVITALise - Public Transport Precinct Vibrancy Grant to bring the transformative 'Next Stop: Maitland' project to life and enhance Maitland's key transport hub with place-based improvements.

This initiative will revamp Maitland Station and its surrounding area, making it a safer, more vibrant and welcoming space for residents, businesses and visitors.

The improvements aim to create strong links between Maitland Station and key destinations, including Maitland Park, Maitland Regional Art Gallery and the CBD. Additionally, the project will complement other regional initiatives, such as the Morpeth to Rutherford Shared Pathway Project, reinforcing Maitland Station's role as a vital connector within the Hunter area.

To ensure the community's vision is at the heart of the redevelopment, Council has launched an online survey and will host a series of 'walkshops' – walking workshops and co-design sessions to help shape the vision and inform outcomes for the project.

Final works are scheduled to be delivered by May 2026.



Plan outlines 10-year vision for Lake Macquarie

Lake Macquarie City Council is moving forward with its framework to guide the city's economic, environmental, social and governance goals over the next 10 years.

Councillors voted to approve the Community Strategic Plan 2025-2035 (CSP), which identifies key challenges and risks over the next decade, and how to achieve the city's long-term goals.

The plan's endorsement follows more than a year of community engagement, during which more than 32,000 residents of all ages and from all walks of life engaged with Council on their priorities for Lake Macquarie.

Transport, in particular advocacy to the NSW and Federal Governments on their responsibility for main roads and public transport is front and centre. Walking and cycling infrastructure, local roads and enhancement of the city's natural environment were the most commonly raised themes.

Lake Macquarie Mayor Adam Shultz said the aim was to ensure that Council understood and outlined the needs and desires of people who lived and worked in Lake Macquarie, as well as visitors to the city.

"The key themes and messages from our community were used to update our vision for the future," he said.

"These priorities will act as our guiding principles for the next 10 years as we strive to improve our city"

The CSP is reviewed at the beginning of each new Council term, helping guide other key documents including the four-year Delivery Program, and annual Operational Plan.

Its four main goals, outlining what Lake Macquarie should be like in 2035, describe a city:

- That protects and showcases its natural environment and is resilient to change
- With a diverse and thriving economy
- Where people want to live and work, and feel connected to each other
- Where Council operates with good governance, trust, transparency and respect.

Mayor Adam said the CSP also outlined partner organisations, including the private sector and other levels of government, that Council would need to collaborate with to achieve its goals.

"As we grow the city, advocacy to State and Federal Governments regarding their responsibilities, including improved public transport, will continue to be front and centre," he said.

The new CSP will come into effect from 1 July.

4+ Airport Carbon Accreditation for Newcastle Airport

Setting a new benchmark in Australian aviation sustainability, Newcastle Airport has become the first airport in Australia to achieve an Airport Carbon Accreditation (ACA) of 4+ Transition, placing it in the top 12% of airports worldwide.

Newcastle Airport Interim CEO Andrew Warrender said achieving an ACA of Level 4+ Transition supported the Australian Government's Future Made in Australia plan to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 and highlighted the success of the organisation's long-term, strategic approach to reducing the airport's carbon footprint.

"It takes a long-term, sustained commitment from the entire businesses to be able to achieve an ACA Level of 4+ which focuses on long-term emissions reductions and alignment with global climate goals," Mr Warrender said.

"Level 4+ recognises that we are truly transitioning away from carbon reliance and embedding sustainability into our long-term future."

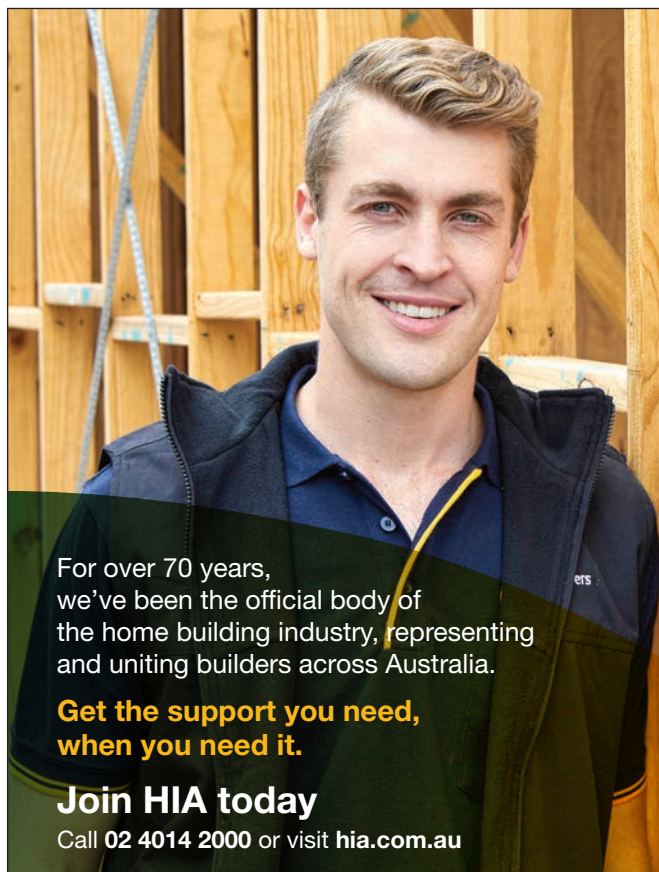
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Offshore wind feasibility licence awarded

On 28 February Novocastrian Wind Pty Ltd, a partnership between Equinor and Oceanex Energy, has been offered a feasibility licence to explore its planned offshore wind farm project for the Hunter offshore wind area.

This finalises the Federal Government's previous preliminary decision to grant a licence to Novocastrian Wind, but not to any other applicants in the Hunter zone.

The project is located a minimum 22 kilometres off the coast of the Hunter and has the potential to deliver 2 GW of renewable electricity - enough to power more than a million homes. The project has the potential to create hundreds of well-paid, ongoing jobs for workers, including engineers, technicians and divers, as well as new opportunities for suppliers and surrounding industry.

To ensure communities and businesses across the Hunter benefit from the new offshore wind industry, Novocastrian Wind is required to maximise its use of local supply chains, industries and workers. A newly established Hunter Wind Industry Committee – comprising Novocastrian Wind, NSW and local governments, First Nations groups, local industry and workers' representatives – will work together to maximise economic and social benefits.

The licence holder must consult further with the community and undertake environmental assessments as part of the feasibility studies supporting their offshore wind project. In addition, they are required by law to consult with the fishing industry and avoid, mitigate and offset any impacts on fishing.

The feasibility licence is granted for up to 7 years and Novocastrian Wind must use this time to obtain all necessary approvals, including working through environmental assessments and approvals, before it can apply for a commercial licence to allow construction to begin.

\$5.6 million to help develop Aboriginal organisations and businesses

The NSW Government is providing Aboriginal businesses and organisations with business investment, skills development and training opportunities that will help them attract new customers, expand their operations and plan and prepare for the future.

A total of 42 Aboriginal businesses and organisations will receive a share of \$5.6 million to invest in business mentoring and coaching, upskilling and training, the development of strategic business plans and governance frameworks and purchasing assets to expand operations.

The Aboriginal business sector in regional NSW is growing and access to training, development, and investment is vital for the success of both Aboriginal organisations and communities.

Dharra Jerky and Secret Harvest in Dubbo, Booma Food Group in Cessnock, Binjang Tea in Wellington, Deniliquin's Barka Treats, and Native Botanical Brewery and Dream Builders on Country on the Central Coast are among the businesses who will boost production and pursue larger market opportunities through this funding.

The NSW Government is closing the gap by removing barriers that hinder access to business training, mentoring and capital investment for Aboriginal people in regional NSW.

These growth opportunities have been made possible by \$1.29 million from the NSW Government's Regional Aboriginal Partnerships Program Round 2 and \$4.33 million from the Regional Development Trust's Aboriginal Economic Development Package.

According to a 2022 NSW Treasury report there are some 737 NSW Indigenous businesses registered with the Aboriginal procurement organisation, Supply Nation, the most of any state or territory.

Median annual revenue for these businesses is \$303,000, with each employing a median full-time equivalent staff of 3.8.

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ANNIVERSARIES

Solar Online Australia

Solar Online Australia is celebrating its silver anniversary. Brett Sutherland started Solar Online Australia back in 2000 at which time it became clear that people wanted a complete solution including design and installation. As such, Solar Power Australia became the design, engineering and installation arm servicing domestic, industrial and commercial customers. The products and applications include commercial solar power systems, solar lights, industrial solar systems built on skids and trailers for mine sites, construction sites and Councils. Further innovation led to building Lithium batteries for EV projects. ELMOFO – ElectroMotive Force was born and became their EV and Lithium battery division. ELMOFO has completed EV conversions on race cars, boats, motorcycles and developed the solar electric drive system for the Byron Bay Solar Train.



Morgan Engineering

Morgan Engineering is currently celebrating its gold anniversary. Since its establishment in 1975, Morgan Engineering has been delivering specialised engineering services to the coal mining and construction industries. Specialising in engineering and computer-aided design and drafting (CADD), large capacity computer numerical controlled (CNC) machining and heavy fabrication, Morgan Engineering is at the forefront of innovation in modern machining techniques. The company has grown from a small engineering shop to one of the most extensive in the Hunter, with a team of over 60 highly trained tradespeople.



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Published by Hunter Business Publications Pty Ltd, the Hunter Investment Prospectus is an important promotional project for the Region that is distributed as a high-quality hard copy as well as online.

View a copy of the 2025 Hunter Investment Prospectus online at www.hunterinvest.com.au

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The Hunter Investment Prospectus is only made possible by the following organisations that have supported this project and are active supporters of the growth of the Hunter Region.

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For queries or feedback regarding the **2025 Hunter Investment Prospectus**, please contact:
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VBD BUSINESS, TAX & WEALTH ADVISERS

VBD Business, Tax & Wealth Advisers has welcomed Associate **Joshua Mossop**. With over 20 years of public practice experience, Joshua serves a diverse range of businesses and SMSFs with a personalized client focus. He is proactive and values timely, engaging service delivery. Joshua specialises in tax and compliance services, providing tailored advice to meet each client's individual needs.



ENIGMA

Enigma has announced new leadership structure with **Amy Dascanio** being appointed Managing Director. Amy was previously General Manager, Enigma Media and in her new role will lead Enigma Media's 40-strong media team while working alongside Managing Directors Jack Mason and Joanne Lilley teams across the agency's Newcastle and Sydney offices. She will also contribute to Enigma's leadership group, and the agency's vision and passion for delivering full-service solutions to its clients.



RDA HUNTER

Regional Development Australia (RDA) has appointed **Kate O'Mara** as its new Chief Executive Officer. With extensive experience in regional development and the RDA network, and a deep understanding of the Hunter region's unique opportunities and challenges, Kate will continue to work closely with the Board, local businesses, industry leaders, and government stakeholders to deliver initiatives that identify and profile the region's competitive strengths, support the region's industries and build a skilled, homegrown workforce.



MALABAR RESOURCES

Malabar Resources has appointed **Rob Hayes** as General Manager of the Maxwell Underground Mine. Rob has been an integral part of the Maxwell Mine team since Malabar acquired the operation in early 2018. With over 35 years of experience in the coal mining industry, he has played a key role in technical and operational leadership across Queensland and NSW, including the establishment of new operations and the expansion of existing mines from 3 to over 20 Mtpa. He is also director of the Hunter Valley Coal Chain Committee.



ENIGMA

Enigma has appointed **Justin Ladmore** to the role of Chief Media Officer. Justin, who was previously Managing Director, Enigma Media, will transition into the newly created role of Chief Media Officer and Partner, where he will focus on growth, strategy, and Enigma's connected creativity product, further strengthening the agency's integrated approach.

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



COMING EVENTS.....

26 March 2025, 8am – 9:30am

HunterNet

New.E Knowledge Exchange

Cost: \$15

Venue: HunterNet

<https://hunternet.com.au/event/new-e-knowledge-exchange-february/>

27 March 2025, 11:30am – 2.30pm

HIA

2025 HIA Hunter Building Women Luncheon

Tickets: Members - \$140. Non – Members - \$280

Venue: Earp Distilling Co

<https://hia.com.au/awards-and-events/events/business-partner-hunter-nsw/2025/business-partners-network-carrington-mar28>

8 April 2025, 7am – 9am

Connect for Purpose

Resourcing Purpose Driven Initiatives

Venue: Soul Hub Newcastle

<https://connectforpurpose.com.au/events/resourcing-purpose-driven-initiatives/>

10 April 2025, 7.10am – 8.30am

Mentor Walks

Mentor Walks Newcastle: Get guidance and grow your network

Tickets: \$45

Venue: The Train Sheds at Foreshore Park

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/mentor-walks-newcastle-get-guidance-and-grow-your-network-tickets-1117360247579?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>

11 April 2025, 06:30pm - 11:00pm

HunterNet

HunterNet Industry Excellence Awards 2025

Cost: \$180 + GST, \$160 + GST for apprentice/trainee

Venue: Newcastle City Hall

<https://hunternet.com.au/event/hunternet-industry-excellence-awards-2025/>

12 April 2025, 9am - 12pm

The Business Centre

Business foundations: Compliance and Revenue

Venue: The Business Centre

<https://events.humanitix.com/cost-structures-and-revenue-streams-building-a-strong-business-foundation-series-1-workshop-4>

14 May 2025, 5pm - 7pm

HIA

Industry Trade Night

Tickets: Members - \$35. Non – Members - \$60

Venue: Club Taree

<https://hia.com.au/awards-and-events/events/trade-night/new-south-wales/2025/hia-information-session-taree-may14>

21-22 May 2025, 8am – 10pm

HunterNet

Hunter New Energy Symposium

Cost: \$1309 for full conference package

Venue: Newcastle City Hall

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

17 June 2025, 7am – 9am

Connect for Purpose

Resilience & Wellbeing in Leadership

Venue: Soul Hub Newcastle

<https://connectforpurpose.com.au/events/resilience-wellbeing-in-leadership/>

19 August 2025, 7am – 9am

Connect for Purpose

Embracing Innovation for Social Good

Venue: Soul Hub Newcastle

<https://connectforpurpose.com.au/events/embracing-innovation-for-social-good/>

2 October 2025, 6pm – 11.45pm

HIA

2025 HIA Hunter Housing and Kitchen & Bathroom Awards

Tickets: Members - \$250, Non – Members - \$500

Venue: NEX

<https://hia.com.au/awards-and-events/events/housing-awards-hunter-nsw/2025/hia-housing-awards-newcastle-oct18>

21 October 2025, 7am – 9am

Connect for Purpose

Navigating Change & Uncertainty

Venue: Soul Hub Newcastle

<https://connectforpurpose.com.au/events/navigating-change-uncertainty/>

ARE YOU ORGANISING A COMING BUSINESS EVENT?

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LEADING WITH CLARITY: THE KEY TO ENGAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

Murray Guest
Inspire my Business

Clarity is one of the most critical yet often overlooked elements of effective leadership. When leaders provide clarity, they reduce confusion, stress, and frustration while enhancing engagement, collaboration, and performance. Without it, misalignment, rework, and disengagement become the norm. As Brene Brown famously said, "Clarity is kindness."

The cost of a lack of clarity

What happens when clarity is missing? Over the years, I've asked leaders and teams this question, and the responses are remarkably consistent—stress, confusion, anxiety, frustration, helplessness, disengagement, rework, miscommunication, and lack of collaboration. These issues exist across all industries and organisational levels, proving that a lack of clarity is fundamentally an emotional problem.

Consider this: imagine you're walking on a hot day and come across a clear, fresh river. You can see everything beneath the surface—rocks, logs, any potential risks. It's inviting and safe. Now, imagine coming across a murky pond. You don't know how deep it is or what's inside. It could be harmless or filled with hidden dangers. Without clarity, people naturally hesitate, avoid action, or take shortcuts. This analogy perfectly illustrates the impact of clarity (or the lack of it) in the workplace. When employees lack clarity, they hesitate, second-guess, and make assumptions, leading to inefficiencies and disengagement.

What does clarity look like in leadership?

Clarity is not about micromanaging. It's about setting expectations, defining success, and providing direction. Here's what leading with clarity looks like...

A clear vision: Leaders must articulate a compelling vision that aligns the organisation and inspires action. Employees want to know where the company is heading and why it matters.

Defined roles and expectations: Every team member should understand their role, responsibilities, how success is measured & how they can leverage their strengths. Research from Gallup shows that employees who strongly agree they know what's expected of them are 2.7 times more likely to be engaged in their work.

Regular, meaningful feedback: Employees need to know how they're performing and where they can improve. Feedback should be timely, constructive, and specific.

Alignment between teams: Just like the misalignment between the business owner and the painter in the story shared earlier, organisations often struggle when different teams or departments have different interpretations of "a good job." Ensuring alignment in quality expectations, project goals, and communication can eliminate unnecessary tension and inefficiencies.

Clear risk management: Effective leaders define acceptable risk levels and provide guidance on how to manage challenges without creating a culture of fear.

The power of clarity in action

Clarity in leadership leads to greater engagement, improved performance, and reduced workplace stress. Studies show that when leaders provide clarity, teams experience higher levels of trust, stability, and motivation. Employees don't fear change—they fear the unknown. The more clarity leaders provide, the more confident and empowered their teams will feel.

So, where in your organisation is there a gap between what's specified and what's implied? Where could you bring greater clarity to drive engagement and success?

Leading with clarity isn't just a leadership skill—it's a game changer for building high-performing teams and thriving workplaces.

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UPDATE ON THE POSITIVE DUTY TO ELIMINATE SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORK: A MULTI-LAYERED REGULATORY APPROACH

Elizabeth Radley
Megan Wardle
Moray & Agnew Lawyers

Following publication of the Respect@Work Report in 2020, which led to the introduction of the positive duty to eliminate sexual harassment in workplaces, further legislative change has taken place, including the commencement of investigative and enforcement powers granted to the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) and the Fair Work Commission (FWC).

Late last year the final piece of legislative reform linked to Respect@Work also took effect with significant changes to the rules around legal costs, in what is now a multi-layered regulatory approach to addressing workplace sexual harassment and sex discrimination.

By way of background, the first of these material changes was implemented in December 2022 when legislation was enacted requiring employers to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate sex discrimination, sexual harassment and conduct that causes hostile environment in the workplace, including victimisation.

Amendments to the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) now reflect those requirements, creating a legal obligation on workplaces to actively identify, respond to and prevent conduct which breaches the relevant provisions.

While the initial emphasis was on education and awareness of the positive duty, the second wave of reform saw the AHRC and FWC empowered to monitor and enforce compliance with the positive duty, and otherwise respond to workplace sexual harassment through various enhanced dispute resolution processes.

Accordingly, the FWC has the capacity to receive applications from individuals, groups of employees, and/or industrial associations to resolve disputes regarding sexual harassment. Similarly, the AHRC may now make active inquiries into positive duty compliance and, where a failure to comply is apparent, begin proceedings in the Federal (or Federal Circuit) Court of Australia.

The third and most recent wave of reforms then began operation in October 2024 with amendments to the Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth) to include groundbreaking costs protection mechanisms for applicants in sexual harassment court proceedings.

Specifically, from 2 October 2024, the court cannot require an applicant to pay the respondent's costs – even where the claim is unsuccessful on all grounds – unless satisfied the claim was brought vexatiously, the applicant acted unreasonably during the proceedings, or the respondent does not have a significant power or financial advantage over the applicant.

Conversely, the court must issue an order for the applicant's costs to be paid by the respondent where a claim is successful in one (or more) aspects, unless satisfied that an unreasonable act

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or omission by the applicant caused costs to be incurred, in which case the court is not required (but retains the discretion) to order the respondent to pay the applicant's costs.

These reforms were intended to address the situation where the prospect of an adverse cost order could exacerbate existing financial and power disparities between an individual applicant and certain respondents such as large corporations or well-resourced individuals.

From a litigation risk perspective, they mean that a careful assessment of potential exposure should be undertaken at an early stage if a sexual harassment claim is started, and even before that point once an employer becomes aware of a complaint, so that an appropriate response can be implemented.

The key to effectively mitigating the risk of exposure in this changed regulatory environment is to take steps to ensure compliance with the positive duty to eliminate sexual harassment.

The AHRC has released guidelines setting out recommendations for the promotion of respectful workplace behaviour and measures to identify and respond to unlawful conduct.

Importantly, employers should not take a 'one step approach' regarding workplace policies but instead make sure expectations are regularly reinforced across the workplace, including in relation to senior leaders, to ensure up-to-date awareness and ongoing compliance is achieved.

For further information contact Moray & Agnew Lawyers on (02) 4911 5400, email newcastle@moray.com.au or visit www.moray.com.au



Elizabeth Radley is a partner at Moray & Agnew Lawyers. For 20 years Elizabeth has specialised in all aspects of workplace law, including industrial and employment relations, work health and safety, employment and anti-discrimination.



Megan Wardle is an Associate at Moray & Agnew Lawyers. Megan's experience of workplace and industrial relations means she is skilled in navigating the intersection of work and personal life, effectively resolving workplace disputes.

YOUNG ADULTS LEARN ESSENTIAL LIFE SKILLS AT THE APOLLO INTERNATIONAL HOTEL

The Apollo International Hotel says they believe in the power of community, inclusion and opportunity. Recently, they were proud to welcome participants from Academy of Life Skills program "Back to Basics", facilitated by Envision Connection.

The day courses are dedicated to helping school leavers and young adults with disabilities develop essential life skills for greater independence as they enter the community and obtain skills for employment. The Back to Basics program is about more than just learning a skill—it's about empowerment, independence, and inclusion. These young adults will take their new abilities back into their everyday lives, applying them at home and even sharing their skills with others.

According to Zanetta Odorico, Director of Envision Connection, the program is designed to "bridge the gap between what young adults with disabilities learn at school and at home, helping them build essential life skills for greater independence."

Under the guidance of Apollo's Housekeeping Manager Leah and their dedicated support staff, Sam, Kyana, and Tara spent the day learning and perfecting key housekeeping skills at the hotel—from making a bed with crisp, wrinkle-free sheets to folding towels with precision. While these may seem like small tasks, they represent important steps toward independence, confidence, and even future employment opportunities.

Sam is a Year 12 student who takes leave from school to attend the program. A keen chess, soccer, and basketball player, he impressed the team with his attention to detail, ensuring each bed was perfectly made with tight, professional corners. Kyana, 23, participates in various day programs and aspires to study floristry at TAFE in future. A passionate anime fan, she enjoyed learning the art of precise towel folding and took pride in her newfound skills. Tara, 28, has had plenty of experience in programs like this. She arrived nervous yet curious, initially lacking confidence in her abilities but with encouragement from Leah and her support staff, she too presented a beautifully made bed, proving that with the right support, confidence grows. While she usually leaves this job to her support workers, she's now planning to inspect their work—and maybe even tackle the task herself! She celebrated her success with a cheeky belly flop



onto her freshly made bed, buried in pillows and bubbling with laughter.

The Apollo International Hotel said "We believe in creating opportunities that make a meaningful impact. Supporting programs like Back to Basics aligns with our commitment to community engagement and inclusion. It was an honour to host this initiative, and we look forward to continuing our efforts in empowering individuals and fostering a more inclusive future."

AUSTRALIA'S NEW BOARDROOM IN THE BUSH OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE FOR LEADERS AND THEIR TEAMS

In a groundbreaking development for leadership development, team building and employee engagement, a pioneering new location-based experience called the Boardroom in the Bush has been created in the idyllic Hunter Valley town of Wollombi. Created and founded by local leadership and culture expert Alexandra Joy – AJ – the Boardroom in the Bush is a game-changer and antidote to boring, classroom based team workshops and strategic planning days of the past.

More than a venue, the outdoor Boardroom in the Bush offers a unique experience, deeply immersive programs and a chance for leaders and teams to unplug, unwind and think differently in a place steeped with history and culture that is far outside the conventional training and meeting spaces. When you challenge the senses in every way you allow the space and place for deep connection, brilliant creativity, inspiration and innovation.

"People are all zoomed out and they certainly don't want to go to a "Bored Room". People want to be engaged, immersed and to experience something new so they can go deeper and discover more about themselves and their teammates." said Alexandra Joy.

"What I've found from the groups who have been here so far, is that getting back to nature and our roots is good for connection and wellbeing AND good for business."

Just 3 minutes outside the Wollombi Village centre, and accessible by car, the Boardroom in the Bush offers a range of unique and unplugged corporate experiences for team to disconnect from technology and reconnect with nature and each other.



There are several options and packages available including outdoor team building activities that bond, challenge and grow team communication, leadership and trust including building shelters, learning rope tying and planting native trees and grasses, mindful hiking to reduce stress and anxiety, Indigenous cultural immersion exploration of ancient artefacts and sites with teachings from local indigenous elders and community. Especially popular with groups is outdoor survival, animal tracking and campfire cooking and yarning around the lunch table.

An area full of native birds, black rock wallabies and many wombats, reptiles and marsupials, by bringing your team out to the Boardroom In The Bush, your company is tangibly helping the conservation and biodiversity efforts here in the Valley of Joy. For every team that visits, a tree is planted in return as an acknowledgement of walking together towards a sustainable future.

Launched in December 2024, The Boardroom in the Bush has already successfully hosted several team building days and will be hosting a special Indigenous Men's Mental Health Camp over three days this month. Additionally a unique Elders Mystery School is being run by Indigenous Elders over five days at the end of April open to families and community.

To download a copy of the Boardroom in the Bush Brochure and a sample workshop agenda go to <https://go.alexandrajoy.com.au/bitb-brochure-download-page>

For further information on the Boardroom in the Bush and the innovative approach to team workshops and planning days, visit www.alexandrajoy.com.au or contact AJ at aj@alexandrajoy.com.au



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WAGE THEFT LAWS BRING COMPLIANCE MEASURES INTO SHARP FOCUS

Dominic Mather
Kyle Scott
Australian Business Lawyers & Advisors

The Australian workplace relations system is very complicated. It has also been the subject of substantial reform over the past three years under a Labor Government. Unfortunately, those reforms have not made the system any simpler. But they have upped the stakes for businesses in terms of the expectations around HR compliance as well as the consequences for businesses that get it wrong.

New criminal “wage theft” laws

On 1 January 2025, the new criminal wage theft laws took effect, signalling a major shift in accountability for employers. Under these changes, intentional underpayments of wages or entitlements can result in severe penalties, including up to 10 years’ imprisonment as well as fines of close to \$10 million.

Under these laws, a criminal offence of wage theft will occur where an employer intentionally fails to pay an amount owed to an employee (e.g. wages, super, entitlements) in full and by the due date.

The new law is not intended to capture inadvertent or unintentional underpayments, which should be comforting for managers and payroll staff. However, inadvertent underpayments (while not meeting the new criminal standard) will still result in a civil contravention of the Fair Work Act, exposing the business to fines, civil prosecution, and other enforcement actions (as well as an obligation to rectify the underpayment).

Increased fines for other contraventions of workplace laws

Separate to the new criminal “wage theft” offence, the maximum fines for civil contraventions of workplace laws were also recently increased. For businesses with 15 or more employees, the maximum penalty for a contravention of the Fair Work Act has increased from around \$90,000 per contravention to \$495,000 per breach.

This is a very daunting development, particularly when you consider that underpayments or payroll errors often lead to multiple breaches of the Act (for example, when an employee is underpaid, there is often a breach of multiple clauses of a modern award, as well as a shortfall in superannuation).

In light of these new and increased penalties, ensuring your business is compliant with workplace laws is now more important than ever.

What steps should businesses be taking to manage this risk?

Businesses should take a proactive approach to ensuring they are compliant with workplace laws. This should involve the following steps:

1. Understand what modern award or industrial instrument applies to each employee.
2. Determine their classification and the corresponding wages and benefits they are entitled to receive.
3. Ensure employment contracts are in place which contain appropriate terms.

Your *Local* team

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Caitlin Vincent
Associate Director

Dominic Mather
Associate

Claudia Simmons
Associate

Kyle Scott
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4. Assess the current pay structure of each employee to ensure it covers the relevant entitlements.
5. Determine if you are paying “per the award” or via some other method (e.g. an “above-award” or “loaded rate”).
6. Where you have “loaded rates” or other arrangements that are different to the applicable award, ensure this is properly established via an employment contract with a robust set off clause.
7. Finally, you should conduct regular payroll audits to ensure that rules or practices adopted are compliant.

ABLA discussed this topic in more detail during a recent webinar which will give you further insights on Wage & Super Theft at <https://ablawyers.com.au/resources/webinars-podcasts/wage-and-super-theft-staying-out-of-jail>

If this article raises issues for your business, seek further advice from a specialist employment lawyer and get in touch with one of the team at www.ablawyers.com.au.



Kyle Scott, Director and **Dominic Mather**, Associate are based in the Newcastle office of Australian Business Lawyers & Advisors (ABLA). Headed up by Kyle Scott, the team are experts in workplace, employment and industrial relations law. ABLA has been involved in significant test case proceedings and consultations testing the latest IR Reform legislations. Acting only for employers, the team have a unique understanding of workplace dynamics in a complex regulatory environment.



BUILDING A POSITIVE TEAM CULTURE

Sam Robinson
LKS Quaero

A positive team culture doesn't happen by chance. It requires thoughtful leadership and a deep understanding of how people interact. At its core, leadership is about creating the environment where individuals can work constructively and realise their full potential. It's not just about managing tasks or delivering outcomes; it's about cultivating a culture where people are motivated, supported, and empowered to succeed.

From walking into a friendly atmosphere at a local petrol station, to being greeted with silence and confusion when checking into that one hotel, there are clues all around us about what works to create a positive culture. But how do you go about this?

The leader's role

Leaders play a pivotal role in shaping team culture and dynamics. Their task is to establish an environment where trust and collaboration can flourish. This begins with relationships built on authority (rather than power), clear expectations, consistent behaviour, and alignment with deliberate organisational values.

In our work at LKS Quaero, we use a consistent theoretical basis to help leaders get this right. Systems Leadership Theory focuses on how human beings engage with one another to create positive and constructive organisations. This approach underpins the work of LKS Quaero across our organisational transformation and leadership development practices, helping leaders to foster environments where people, teams, and organisations can thrive.

Team dynamics

A team is more than just a group of people working together. It's a cohesive unit, including a leader, with a shared purpose. To achieve their goals, team members must interact effectively and rely on one another. These interactions give rise to group dynamics: the system of behaviours and psychological processes that occur within a group or between groups.

Group dynamics can make or break a team. Positive dynamics are characterised by trust, collaboration, and accountability. In such teams, members feel safe to share ideas, work together towards decisions, and take ownership of their responsibilities. This fosters creativity, productivity, and overall effectiveness.

Conversely, poor dynamics – such as unresolved conflict, lack of trust, or unclear roles – can undermine progress, creating barriers

to success. For this reason, leaders must prioritise creating and maintaining positive group dynamics. However, it's easier said than done to foster a culture where accountability becomes a natural and constructive process.

Building the foundations of success

Something I really enjoy in my work is equipping leaders with a practical leadership toolkit and a teamwork model designed to help them to build and sustain effective teams. These tools equip leaders to address the complexities of group dynamics, ensuring their teams can work cohesively and deliver strong results.

By focusing on trust, clarity, and accountability, leaders create environments where positive dynamics become the norm. We help them to do this through consistent, effective use of systems, symbols, and behaviour. The result is teams that are not only high performing, but also resilient in the face of challenges.

Creating a positive team culture is one of the most high impact things a leader can do. When teams function effectively, they drive organisational success through innovation, productivity, and adaptability. By understanding and influencing group dynamics, leaders can ensure their teams are equipped to meet the demands and opportunities they will face.

For more information on our leadership and team culture support, 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.

Committed to Safety: Recruit Personnel Named Finalist for 2025 Hunter Safety Awards!

We are thrilled to announce that Recruit Personnel has been named a finalist for the 2025 Hunter Safety Awards in the Small & Medium-Sized Enterprise category! This recognition re-enforces our commitment to workplace safety, particularly in high-risk industries.

Operating as a family-owned business in Maitland for over 20 years, community and local business support has always been forefront of the business.

“As a recruitment and labour hire business, we operate across diverse sectors, including mining, construction, civil, manufacturing, fabrication, transport, and logistics, while our on-hired employees are placed in high-risk roles across multiple worksites. With this responsibility comes our duty to maximise their safety—wherever they work”

Paul Callinan, General Manager

In 2023-24, we undertook a comprehensive review and revision of our Work Health and Safety (WHS) Management Plan. Focussing on the complexities and risks associated within the industries we work across, we developed a WHS management system designed to protect our workforce and mitigate potential hazards.

Taking our commitment to safety even further, in 2024, we successfully achieved ISO 45001:2018 certification for the provision of labour hire services. This internationally

recognized certification is a testament to our dedication to maintaining the highest standards of occupational health and safety.

As a result, we now have a comprehensive WHS Management Plan featuring updated policies, streamlined processes, and improved safety systems—all with one core focus: ensuring our workers’ safety while reducing incidents and near misses. This framework allows us to uphold the highest WHS standards, no matter the industry or job site.

We are incredibly proud of these achievements and remain committed to continuous improvement, fostering safer workplaces for all.

We are honoured to be among this year’s outstanding finalists for the 2025 Hunter Safety Awards and look forward to continuing our journey of safety and excellence.

Your safety is our priority! Partner with a team that puts workplace well-being first—get in touch today!
Paul Callinan – (02) 4934 9900

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NCIG one step closer to operational net zero with PPA milestone reached

As part of its commitment to achieving Net Zero operational emissions by 2030, Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group (NCIG) has secured Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) for clean energy from the Goulburn River solar farm. The project, developed and owned by Lightsource bp, has now commenced construction.

The signing of the PPA for the Goulburn River solar farm represents a key step forward in NCIG's commitment to transitioning to renewable energy. The project will provide renewable energy at a volume to achieve 100% renewable energy for NCIG's Kooragang Island facility from 2030 onwards.

"The commencement of construction on the Goulburn River solar farm by Lightsource bp marks a significant milestone for NCIG," said Aaron Johansen, CEO of NCIG. "Not only will this PPA supply our facility with reliable, cost-effective renewable energy, but it also strengthens our ongoing commitment to reducing our carbon footprint and contributing to the long-term sustainability of the region."

The Goulburn River solar farm has a capacity of 585 MWdc, contributing to the local grid while advancing the renewable energy capacity in the region. In addition to supporting NCIG's Net Zero goals, the project is set to create local jobs and enhance the regions clean energy infrastructure.

"We are proud to be partnering with Lightsource bp on this exciting project. Their expertise in renewable energy, combined with the shared vision for sustainability, has been instrumental in getting us to this point," Johansen continued. "This PPA not only secures long-term pricing for our energy needs but also paves the way for other businesses in the region to make similar commitments toward a cleaner, more sustainable future."

The Goulburn River solar farm has now commenced construction activities. The project is expected to deliver clean energy to NCIG from 2030, marking a significant milestone in both organisations' sustainability journeys.

You can learn more about the Goulburn River Solar project and NCIG's ongoing commitment to sustainability at <https://ncig.com.au/>.

Mining spending and jobs hit new records in the Hunter

Results from the NSW Minerals Council's latest annual Member Expenditure Survey have confirmed mining's continued critical economic role in the Hunter.

In the last financial year, participating mining companies supported almost 16,600 jobs in the Hunter, an increase of almost 1,300 jobs compared to the previous year, and the highest number of jobs reported in the thirteen year history of the survey.

The same companies also directly injected \$8.8 billion into the Hunter economy in the last financial year – an increase of around \$600 million on the previous year and the highest survey result ever reported.

Since the survey was first conducted, mining's direct spending in the Hunter has almost doubled from \$4.6 billion to \$8.8 billion. Mining jobs in the region have also increased by 50 percent since the survey was first conducted, from 10,800 up to 16,600 jobs.

The \$8.8 billion of direct mining spending in the Hunter last financial year included almost \$2.2 billion on wages and salaries, and \$6.6 billion for goods and services purchased from almost 2,800 mining supplier businesses across the Hunter region.

The \$8.8 billion in direct mining spending last financial year in the Hunter is estimated to have contributed 25% of the GRP of the Hunter region's economy during this period.

"Mining operations in the Hunter have broken local spending records for the second year in a row, while supporting a record number of local mining jobs, highlighting the importance of mining for local communities and the region's economy," NSW Minerals Council CEO Stephen Galilee said.

"The ongoing strength of the mining industry continues to provide a solid foundation for Hunter economy, and with the right policy settings this can continue for many years to come."



NCIG one step closer to Net Zero operational emissions

Funding boost for Hunter Valley community groups

Mount Thorley Warkworth (MTW) has granted over \$190,000 in funding to local community organisations, aiming to make a positive difference to the Hunter Valley region in 2025.

This funding will be shared across 27 local community groups and events that work in the areas of health, social and community, environment, and education and training. Some of the successful organisations include: Business Singleton, Family History Society Singleton, Maitland Saints AFL Club, Hunter Valley Amateur Bee Keeping Association, Rotary Club of Singleton on Hunter, Northern Agriculture Association, Singleton Council, Rural Fire Service for Bowthorne/Hinton, Samaritans Foundation, Singleton Heights Pre-School, University of Newcastle, Singleton Dressage Club, YWCA Hunter Region, United Hospital Auxiliaries (Singleton), and many more recipients.

Also, as part of Ashton and Mount Thorley Warkworth's joint partnership with the University of Newcastle, it will continue to help bring the Science and Engineering Challenge and SMART Science Shows to budding scientists in the Upper Hunter region.

Around 35 representatives from the successful community organisations gathered at a morning tea event to celebrate their success and confirm the financial support.

Mount Thorley Warkworth General Manager, Cris Shadbolt, was excited to be funding local initiatives. "Congratulations to all the community groups receiving donations as part of our 2025 Community Support Program.

"Community groups are the backbone of our community, and we value the important contribution they make to maintaining and creating a strong and sustainable community.

"This funding will enable equipment and facility upgrades, fund local events, education initiatives, technology updates, new health-related gear, training, outdoor facilities and arts programs.

"These are just a snapshot of the diverse range of community groups in the Hunter Valley. However, they all have a common purpose of making a positive impact on the community where we live and work. Supporting them financially is a perfect fit for us.

"It always pleases us to be able to host an event so we can celebrate their success and to hear how they are investing the donations into expanding their programs or services for the community.

"We wish all the 2025 successful recipients the best with their initiatives and look forward to hearing how they progress with making a positive difference on our community," said Cris.

The Mount Thorley Warkworth Community Support Program runs annually and invests in community groups working in the areas of health, social and community, environment, and education and training. It aims to make a positive difference in the local community, and to the lives of the people who work and live in the local area.

"Community groups are the backbone of our community, and we value the important contribution they make to maintaining and creating a strong and sustainable community".

Mount Thorley Warkworth General Manager, Cris Shadbolt

Nigel Robinson, President for the Singleton Mountain Bike Club said, "We are thankful for the funding boost to upgrade our outdoor seating area with picnic tables and shade shelters. As a club, we bring people together for some action-packed fun on the mountain trails and we are thrilled we can now improve our eating area so riders can stay longer."

Since 2004, Yancoal has grown to be one of Australia's largest coal exporters: owning or operating eight producing mines across the country, employing around 5,000 Australians, contributing to the national economy, and investing in regional communities.

Mining networking organisation expands to the Hunter

A successful industry networking organisation is expanding its reach to the Hunter with an inaugural event set for May 14 in Singleton.

The Hunter Mining Club has joined sister organisation the Bowen Basin Mining Club as a dedicated mining and resources community for the region in which it operates. Led by Jodie Currie, the Hunter Mining Club will open the communications pipeline between mining industry producers and the small to medium sized businesses that support the industry.

Ms Currie says that the Hunter Mining Club will forge a unique place in the industry, with a mandate to support the businesses who support mining, loud and proud.

"With over 15 years of experience in Queensland's Bowen Basin committed to the mining and resources sector, we've seen first-hand the difference that networking and relationships can make to industry businesses. The mining industry is one that thrives on face-to-face relationship-building, and there's no better opportunity for that than at a Hunter Mining Club Luncheon event."

"Advocacy for the mining industry starts with information, and we bring that information, first-hand, to businesses over a hassle-free luncheon paired with networking opportunities. Guest speakers are leadership and procurement executives from producers and major contractors, bringing first-hand updates and advice, and are always keen to meet attendees personally. Ultimately, our goal is to bring the same sense of community, camaraderie, and collaboration between projects that has been such a hallmark of the Bowen Basin Mining Club."

The launch of the Hunter Mining Club is already strongly supported by foundation sponsors Thiess, Mastermyne, AAMG and Coxons Group, as well as having the strategic backing of the NSW Minerals Council. NSW Minerals Council CEO Stephen Galilee says the initiative of the HMC will be very positive for the Hunter and surrounding regions in advocating for the region's established coal industry and the businesses who support it.

"The Hunter Mining Club will help highlight the enormous contribution of the NSW coal mining industry, particularly in the Hunter. I commend Jodie's determination to connect the community of businesses that support mining and resources and provide another important voice to advocate for the local coal sector."

After nearly 30 years in business and with a strong footprint across both Queensland and New South Wales mining sectors, Mastermyne CEO Jeff Whiteman says supporting the Hunter Mining Club is directly aligned with their business's strategy.

"We've seen the way that the Queensland industry connects and gathers information at the Bowen Basin Mining Club, and we're looking forward to the same level of relevant, timely project updates at the Hunter Mining Club, plus the benefits of connecting with other businesses to support the industry."

Similarly, foundation sponsor Coxons Group are looking forward to connecting with NSW-based clients in the same way they currently do with their Queensland-based clients at Bowen Basin Mining Club luncheons. Coxons Group CEO Scott Macdonald says that the Hunter Mining Club will be a fantastic boost for the region's coal-focused businesses, including their Singleton workshop.

"We've never been to a Bowen Basin Mining Club luncheon that wasn't an asset to our business development efforts, and we expect that the Hunter Mining Club will offer the same level of networking and relationship-building alongside the latest information on projects that are relevant to us."

The Hunter Mining Club's launch event will be on May 14 at the Singleton Diggers Club, featuring guest speakers Stephen Galilee, CEO of the NSW Minerals Council and Cris Shadbolt, General Manager of Yancoal's Mount Thorley Warkworth mine.

No-maintenance solution to isolator breakdown



Confined spaces can present maintenance hazards and delays to production resuming after breakdowns

One of the challenges of servicing and replacing vibration isolators essential to industrial processes is that they can be located in confined and inaccessible spaces that pose OH&S issues and delays to production processes as a result. Without fully functioning isolators – performing accurately to their original design specifications – machinery used in mineral processing, quarries, food and beverage processing and materials handling can ultimately suffer long-term damage from failing springs.

“This can compound damage to production schedules, as maintenance staff work carefully within often confined spaces to replace beds of springs required to restart processes,” said Vinh Lam, Technical Product Manager, Air Springs Supply.

Where metal springs pose such issues, a compact and easily installed solution is being offered by Air Springs Supply to address the problem of grit, powders, and damp environments wearing out metal springs over time. Air Springs is Australian distributor for robustly engineered rubber-and-fabric Marsh Mellow springs manufactured by Firestone, which are in use worldwide in applications such as shaker screens, crushing equipment, vibrating bins, conveyors, and other equipment subject to vibration.

“Warning bells should ring for operations staff when individual metal springs start to break in isolator sets, because often springs

installed as a set will break down as a set, within six months or so of each other, as they collectively exceed their service life.”

This means that many old metal coil spring sets that came with OEM machinery will need to be replaced completely, preferably with isolators that are easy to fit, don’t break, tolerate wet and aggressive environments and are compact and simple to replace,” says Vinh.

Marsh Mellows do not require upkeep and don’t need lubrication that can attract powders and grit to metal springs. They won’t set (suffer permanent compression) like metal springs, which reduces efficiency and performance. Because of their belted rubber and fabric layer construction, they cannot crack or fragment catastrophically to bring entire processes to a halt. Plus, they are easy to install and replace.

“While no one spring design is ideal for all applications, Marsh Mellows offer considerable advantages over both conventional coils and solid rubber springs for many tasks, says Vinh.

Key advantages of Marsh Mellows include:

- Constant vibration isolation with changing loads.
- Greater deflection capabilities, meaning they can carry a greater load within the same overall size
- High load capacity, meaning fewer springs may be needed, reducing cost
- Lower lateral natural frequency, resulting in excellent isolation of forced frequencies in the range of 800-1200 cycles per minute (13-20 Hz).

“In many cases, Marsh Mellows are the ideal substitute for OEM actuators and isolators that have outlined their usefulness,” said Vinh.



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HVO support for BMX riders

Racing against the clock was all part of the challenge for approximately 680 competitors in the recent AusCycling NSW State Series.

Round 1 of the AusCycling series was recently hosted by the Maitland-Tenambit BMX Club, where riders had the opportunity to test their speed and skills.

The new 'transponder loop', funded by Hunter Valley Operations (HVO), was used to time all athletes around the course, but also to determine the riders who made it from the starting gate to the first corner with the fastest time. Riding at lightning pace, Oliver Moran from the Manning Valley (Taree) BMX club and Sienna Paul from the Terrigal BMX club were the respective winners of the \$500 Holeshot Awards for the fastest male and female sprint to the first corner.

The 'transponder loop' was installed during December as part of the timing system. It works by picking up a signal from the transponder fixed to the rider's bike as they ride over it. Performance data is a key tool in the development of BMX riders' skills and race craft, with the data collected fed into the Sqorz timing system against each rider's profile.

Maitland club coach Harrison Davis said BMX racing was very competitive and using data picked up by the transponder loop helped riders track their progress. He said it was rewarding for riders to see that all the hard work they were putting into their training resulted in faster lap times.

At the recent State Series, competitors were able to watch the action and prepare for their events in comfort under gazebos supplied by HVO. The gazebos and donated hats provided some much-needed shade and sun protection for athletes as they waited in the marshalling area.

Support for the Maitland-Tenambit BMX club is funded by HVO's Community Grants Program. Round one of the program for 2025 will open on April 1 and close on April 30, with application forms available on the HVO website.

Komatsu Australia achieve ISO certifications for safety & environment

Komatsu Australia has achieved ISO 45001 and ISO 14001 certification, the internationally recognised Standards for occupational health and safety management and environmental management respectively.

Executive General Manager - Safety & Sustainability Henrietta Jukes says the exceptionally rigorous Standards are designed to improve employee safety, reduce workplace risks, and create better environmental outcomes.

"Komatsu Australia's certification underscores its dedication to integrating best-practice management across its operations," she says.

"This certification says to our staff and our communities that we are looking after your safety and the environment and to our customers it says here is a business that is absolutely committed to best practice in every part of our operations."

The certification process included extensive audits across multiple Komatsu Oceania sites, assessing the effectiveness of its safety and environmental management systems, policies and procedures. A total of 22 sites were audited over a rigorous six-week period, during which independent assessors evaluated the company's commitment to identifying hazards, mitigating risks and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. The audit process also confirmed that Komatsu was already well aligned with the requirements of ISO 45001 prior to certification,

highlighting the robustness of its existing safety management framework.

"At Komatsu, safety is at the heart of everything we do. Achieving both these accreditations is a testament to our team's unwavering commitment to continuous improvement in workplace health and safety and environmental management. This milestone reflects our proactive approach to identifying and mitigating risks while fostering a culture of safety and sound environmental practices across all levels of our organisation," Henrietta says.

"The management system we had in place at Komatsu did already adhere to the principles of the Standards, because we genuinely do have a big focus on safety and environmental protection, but to actually achieve the certification is a big task. We appointed a National HSSE Assurance and Systems Manager to oversee the process; the organisation made a real commitment to doing this. We did a gap analysis first then we reviewed all our policies, our procedures and went through a process of updating 180 or so procedures to align them to legislation, align them to state requirements, and then also align them to best practice, most importantly."

The environmental audit was conducted by different auditors, in parallel with the safety audits.

"We have very few environmental incidents but there's a lot of new initiatives that we're starting from a sustainability perspective, especially around waste, because of this very rigorous management system," Henrietta says.

Glencore 2026 Graduate Program now open

Applications for Glencore's 2026 Graduate program are open until 27 April 2025.

The structured Graduate Program aims to help participants advance in their career, and get the chance to develop skills, expertise and experience while working with leaders in your field.

Graduate opportunities are available across many disciplines, including:

- accounting/commerce
- chemical engineering
 - civil engineering
- community relations
- electrical engineering
- environmental science
- geology/earth science
- geotechnical engineering
- health, safety and hygiene

As part of Glencore's Graduate Program, participants will:

- Receive structured, professional development with a real focus on-the-job experience
 - Have scheduled networking and social events with other graduates and members of the senior management teams
 - Be mentored by experienced professionals in your field
 - Receive practical support from business leaders
- complete a structured Graduate Professional Development

Program designed to accelerate your leadership potential, and be part of a global company that wants you to succeed and supports your career growth.

Narrabri Coal Handling and Preparation Plant celebrates safety milestone

Whitehaven was proud to acknowledge an outstanding achievement at its Narrabri Coal Handling and Preparation Plant (CHPP) with the team recording more than 5000 days without a Lost Time Injury (LTI), equivalent to more than 13.5 years, and an impressive 60 months free of Total Recordable Injuries (TRI).

Reflecting on the milestone, Surface Operations Manager, Ashley Howland said it shows the unwavering commitment to safety and care exhibited by every member of the team.

“Since we processed the first coal on 5th July 2010, our team has operated without a single lost time injury. This remarkable achievement is a testament to the proactive safety culture we’ve worked so hard to build. Beyond the numbers, it’s also a reflection of how we look out for each other, ensuring safety is always our top priority – both at work and at home.

“This success is the result of everyone’s diligence, vigilance, and dedication. Whether it’s the crews operating on the front lines, maintaining equipment, or supporting operations, our commitment to safety ensures that we continue to thrive without incident,” he continued.

To celebrate this milestone, Whitehaven presented eskies to each member of the team.

Ashley added, “These eskies represent more than just a token of appreciation, they’re a reminder of our ongoing commitment to safety. It’s a way for the team to take that message home with them as they enjoy time with family and friends over summer.

“While this milestone is a remarkable accomplishment, we know there is always more to do when it comes to safety and we must continue to work hard to look out for each other.”



“While this milestone is a remarkable accomplishment, we know there is always more to do when it comes to safety and we must continue to work hard to look out for each other.”





Surface Operations Manager, Ashley Howland

The Narrabri CHPP’s success reflects Whitehaven’s commitment to creating a workplace where safety is paramount, and where every employee goes home safely every day.

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A drunk goes to court. The judge says, "You've been brought here for drinking."
The drunk says, "Great. Let's get started."

At a church meeting, a very wealthy man rose to tell the rest of those present about his Christian faith.

"I'm a multi-millionaire," he said, "and I attribute it all to the rich blessings of God in my life. I remember that turning point in my faith. I had just earned my first dollar and I went to a church meeting that night. The speaker was a missionary who told about his work. I knew that I only had a dollar bill and I had to either give it all to God's work or give nothing at all. So at that moment, I decided to give all my money, a whole dollar to God. I believe that God blessed that decision, and that is why I am a rich man today."

When he finished and moved toward his seat, there was an awed silence. As he sat down, a little old lady sitting in the same pew leaned over and said to him, "I dare you to do it again."

Last night, someone broke into my home and took a dozen eggs, but they left a saucepan filled with warm water...
Police believe it was poachers.

A man always smokes two cigarettes at the same time. One day, his friend asks, "Why do you always smoke two cigarettes at once?"
The man replies, "My brother is in prison. He told me to smoke a cigarette for him every time I smoke one for myself."
Some time later, his friend sees him smoking just one cigarette and, surprised, asks, "Has your brother been freed from prison?"
The man replies, "Nah, man. I quit smoking."

Sometime after Sidney died, his widow, Tillie, was finally able to speak about what a thoughtful and wonderful man her late husband had been.

"Sidney thought of everything," she told them. "Just before he died, Sidney called me to his bedside. He handed me three envelopes. 'Tillie,' he told me, 'I have put all my last wishes in these three envelopes. After I am dead, please open them and do exactly as I have instructed. Then I can rest in peace.'"

"What was in the envelopes?" her friends asked.

"The first envelope contained \$5,000 with a note, 'Please use this money to buy a nice casket.' So I bought a beautiful mahogany casket with such a comfortable lining that I know Sidney is resting very comfortably.

"The second envelope contained \$10,000 with a note, 'Please use this for a nice funeral.' I arranged Sidney a very dignified funeral and bought all his favourite foods for everyone attending."

"And the third envelope?" asked her friends.

"The third envelope contained \$25,000 with a note, 'Please use this to buy a nice stone.'"

Holding her hand in the air and showing off her ten-carat diamond ring, Tillie said, "So, do you like my stone?"

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"I will always choose a lazy person to do a hard job, because a lazy person will find an easy way to do it."

- Bill Gates

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