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Hunter Business Review ■

19TH YEAR
OF PUBLICATION

MAY 2023

VOLUME 19 NUMBER 4

Print Post Approved 100002454

**Sales &
MARKETING**

**Business
TECHNOLOGY**

Australia \$6.60

ISSN 2202 - 8838 (Print)

ISSN 2202 - 8846 (Online)



9 772202 883002 >

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PUBLISHED BY:

Hunter Business Publications Pty Ltd
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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 closure of the Liddell coal-fired power station in late April after over 50 years of operation is a historic occasion and marks another important step in the transition to renewable energy.

It was an aging asset and has not been producing at capacity for some time and was probably due for retirement regardless of the renewables push.

In isolation, its closure should not have major implications for the supply of NSW's power.

The expected closure

of Eraring, Vales Point and Bayswater power stations over the coming decade will bring larger challenges with an enormous 6,840 MW of generating capacity being removed.

There is an array of renewable projects in the state, with many being in the Hunter, but Governments must tread carefully to ensure sufficient supply remains.

And it will require different thinking than the past.

Although the large coal-fired stations took years to build, they were more easily coordinated in many ways, being of a relatively small number and the same type.

Now, there are hundreds of renewable projects being separately built, with a range of energy production technologies. As much of this capacity is dependent upon external factors, such as sunshine and wind, the storage of energy is now a new vital factor in securing a reliable power supply. Distribution of energy will also change and require an overhaul of the transmission grid.

The transition to renewables will offer many benefits and should result in lower energy costs in the long run but will need careful management by successive governments to ensure the lights remain on in New South Wales.

Governments will also need to coordinate the many new projects and communicate effectively with the marketplace to provide confidence for continued business investment.

The Hunter has long been the major electricity producing region of NSW and the closure of the large power stations will provide challenges for employment and local economies.

Our region does however have a wide range of energy projects already built, in construction and planned.

Between December 2021 and February 2022, EnergyCo ran a Registration of Interest (ROI) process for the Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone and attracted a significant response with commercial interest in renewable generation and storage projects representing almost 40 GW and more than \$100 billion of potential investment.

While many of these won't go ahead, it still represents an enormous opportunity for the region even if only a fraction make it to development.

The Hunter looks set to continue being the powerhouse of the state, provided the projects can be planned and coordinated effectively.

Garry Hardie
Editor and Publisher

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Singleton's industry leaders called to collaborate on Singleton's economic future

A new program launched in partnership between Singleton Council and Business Singleton will support the growth of core local industries by creating a connected network of businesses to work together on workforce development, building business capacity and industry stability.

The Industry and Workforce Development Program is the latest in Council's suite of economic development programs funded by NSW Government's Resources for Regions Round Eight.

Delivered in collaboration with regional partners and industry stakeholders, the Industry and Workforce Development program will engage local industry in future-focused roundtable discussions to identify and prioritise strategies to address barriers to growth and harness opportunities for the future.

The first roundtable took place on 3 May at Singleton Civic Centre with a focus on the construction industry.

Vicki Brereton, Council's Director Organisation and Community Capacity, said the core industries for this specific program were selected based on their strategic importance to the continued evolution of Singleton's economy.

"The Industry and Workforce Development program will focus on construction, manufacturing, agriculture, retail and hospitality, health and social services and mining services initially, acknowledging that other industries such as tourism already have strong networks in place to support industry development," she said.

"We're inviting leaders from these industries to share their perspectives individually and as part of a number of roundtable discussions which will be facilitated by Jacinta Outlaw, a Business Australia business advisor and founder of digital transformation agency the Fifth Element.

"One of the main objectives of the program will be to anticipate future employment skills requirements, so we can ensure our



Council's Senior Economic Development Specialist Karen Varker, Laura Kelly Business Singleton, Chris Sheppard NBN, Jacinta Outlaw Fifth Element, Wayne Diemar Business Centre and Member for Upper Hunter Dave Layzell MP at a Business Singleton event.

labour force is ready to meet future demand and we can retain jobs in Singleton as our economy evolves."

Danny Eather, President of Business Singleton, said no one understood the challenges of an evolving economy better than local businesses.

"We want to hear first-hand what our industries are currently experiencing and what they'd like us to champion locally and regionally," he said.

"We are also keen to harness their vision for their industry's future, both at a local level and from a viewpoint of linking into future regional trends."

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Clean energy enabled port unveiled

Port of Newcastle has unveiled its blueprint for the Port of the Future, releasing artist impression images of Stage 1 of its future Clean Energy Precinct site.

The 220 hectare parcel of Port land has been earmarked for development to position Newcastle and the Hunter Region as a leading production, storage and export hub for future clean energy products and technologies, including hydrogen and green ammonia.

"As the state's dedicated hydrogen hub, Port of Newcastle has worked for over two years to accelerate plans for hydrogen readiness, domestic decarbonisation and clean energy export. The Clean Energy Precinct is a cornerstone of our diversification strategy and bringing to life, visually, for the community how we are planning to regenerate one of Newcastle's most iconic sites to support future generations marks a significant project milestone," Port of Newcastle CEO Craig Carmody said.

"This project positions us for the future, providing a once in a generation opportunity to reshape the Hunter region's energy economy and drive the development of new trade flows and industries of the future.

"Through the Clean Energy Precinct, Port of Newcastle will support all hydrogen, and clean energy projects in the Hunter by providing land, utilities, storage, transport and export infrastructure and services – in turn generating over 5800 jobs, new educational pathways and expanded economic growth," he said.

Joined by Federal Member for Newcastle, Sharon Claydon, the Port's CEO, Craig Carmody, and Clean Energy Precinct lead, Chief Commercial Officer Simon Byrnes, three visual conceptual renders of Stage 1 of the landmark project were showcased, which has received a \$100 million Commonwealth Government funding commitment.



Federal Member for Newcastle, Sharon Claydon, said Port of Newcastle's clean energy diversification ensures the region remains an energy provider, both domestically and internationally for many years to come.

"Newcastle and the Hunter have powered Australia for generations. Positioning Newcastle as a clean energy hub will ensure we continue to do so for generations to come. The Albanese Labor Government's \$100 million commitment to the Port and investment in Fee-Free TAFE and New Energy Apprenticeships will ensure the Hunter's skilled workforce can take full advantage of new energy jobs."

Minister for the Hunter and NSW Member for Newcastle, Tim Crakanthorp, said the benefits of the Port's Clean Energy Precinct for our region cannot be understated.

"The Hunter's economy is changing, and the opportunities in this Clean Energy Precinct will be massive. As we diversify our skills, business and jobs market the benefits of this precinct, which will be felt all across the Hunter.

Project lead and Chief Commercial Officer, Simon Byrnes, said the Clean Energy Precinct will leverage economies of scale by co-locating hydrogen producers, users and exporters in one location, whilst common-user shared infrastructure will drive down the cost of hydrogen.

"The establishment of Stage 1 of the Port's Clean Energy Precinct would enable future production, storage, distribution and export of clean energy types for further development stages, including green hydrogen and green ammonia, using common user, shared infrastructure," said Simon Byrnes, Port of Newcastle's Chief Commercial Officer.

"The Precinct will support a shared regional, state and national ambition towards decarbonisation, drive innovation, foster connections, accelerate technology to market and promote jobs growth.


"Fully constructed, the project would facilitate clean energy production, storage, transmission, domestic distribution and international export. Stage 1 of the project would comprise establishment of lead-in infrastructure including electrical infrastructure, water infrastructure and ancillary works, construction vehicle and workforce vehicle parking, construction laydown and stockpiles and construction of a clean energy storage facility," he added.

Stage 1 construction is targeted to commence in 2025, subject to relevant planning approvals, with the Port aiming to have the Clean Energy Precinct fully operational in 2028.


The proposed Stage 1 of the Clean Energy Precinct Project development includes:

- Ancillary and civil works including site buildings, offices and administration facilities, internal roads, car parking, warehousing, laydown areas, storage yards, staging areas and a clean energy storage facility with associated pipeline infrastructure.
- Electrical infrastructure including grid connection, transmission infrastructure, substation and switchyard.
- Water and wastewater infrastructure including network connection and supply corridors

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Port Waratah's 2022 Annual Report Suite released

Local community members and stakeholders can now explore Port Waratah's environmental, social and economic performance through their 2022 annual reporting suite.

The suite provides a comprehensive insight into Port Waratah's performance across all aspects of their business and includes the Sustainability Report, Annual Financial Report, Modern Slavery Statement and a dedicated Sustainability website offering an engaging digital experience.

The operational performance summary reports that four reportable environmental incidents and seven recordable injuries occurred in 2022. Port Waratah's CEO, Hennie du Plooy, said that these results did not meet the objectives they had set for the year and will be the subject of renewed focus in 2023.

Port Waratah also recorded a number of positive environmental achievements last year, with the development of Port Waratah's first Climate Action Plan an important step. Other highlights included achieving their lowest annual greenhouse gas emissions intensity, second highest water reuse rate of 88.5 per cent and the best-ever landfill diversion performance for waste at 94 per cent.

Port Waratah's total terminal throughput of 91.9 million tonnes was a decline on the 111.3 million tonnes exported in 2021. As reported by various Hunter Valley coal producers, mine production was affected by adverse weather conditions that at times also impacted logistics across the coal chain. Port Waratah's operational performance was strong, with excellent reliability, high loading rates and low vessel queues.

Mr du Plooy said the positive outcomes achieved were the result of increased awareness and committed action of the Port Waratah team.

"Many stakeholders are interested in our emissions profile and as a result, 2022 activities included developing a Climate Action Plan," said Mr du Plooy.

"Our Climate Action Plan identifies our target to reduce our total scope 1 and 2 emissions by 50% by 2030 and the strategies to achieve this.

"We aim to build relationships based on trust and reporting transparently on all aspects of our business is a key element of those relationships. That is why our reporting also includes a performance snapshot that highlights a core set of targets important to our community and key stakeholders.

"We are also proud to support local business partners. Last year, we spent more than \$125.4 million locally on suppliers, materials

and services in the Hunter and Central Coast and we thank them for their outstanding efforts to secure our needs during a challenging year for supply chains."

The 2022 Annual Reporting suite and Sustainability website are available under Annual Reports at pwcs.com.au. The 2022 Sustainability Report has been prepared in accordance with the Global Reporting Initiative.

The Financial Report provides an overview of Port Waratah's financial performance and disclosures, while the Modern Slavery Statement outlines their intent and actions aimed at eliminating slavery, servitude and debt bondage from our organisation and supply chain.

Buckley Richardson rebrands to PKF Port Stephens

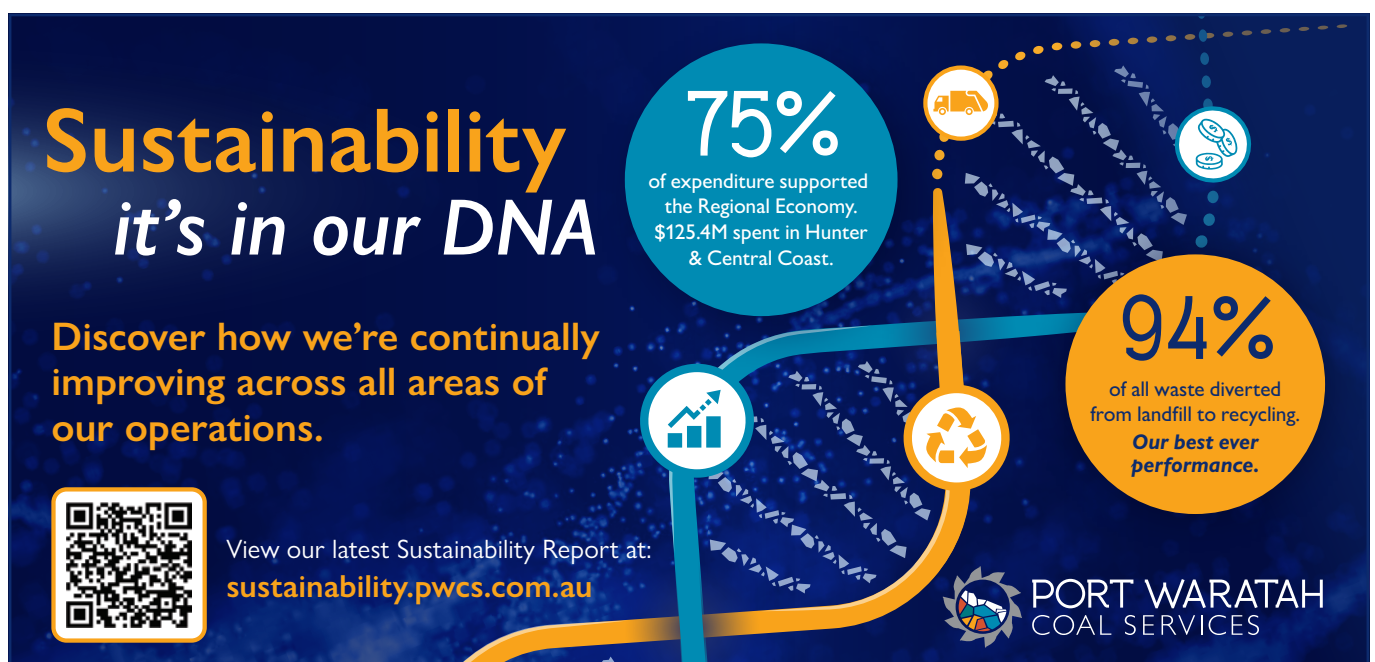
Buckley Richardson Partners rebranded to PKF Port Stephens on 1 April. Forming a powerful partnership with the PKF brand, the firm's connection to the International network will provide the firm with extensive resources, whilst maintaining a local approach to client service.

Buckley Richardson Partners has been providing superior accounting and advisory services to businesses operating in the Port Stephens region since 2002. Their bespoke service offerings encompass taxation, accounting, business development, and superannuation advice, personalised and customised to cater to the unique requirements of individuals and small to medium-sized family businesses. The firm's commitment to delivering practical solutions will only continue to grow, as they merge with the PKF network.

"We are excited for our clients and what the rebranding means for them. Being able to draw on PKF's wide range of services by qualified experienced people means our clients no longer have to look to Newcastle or Sydney to access the services and advice that an international firm offers," said Buckley Richardson Partner, Misty Kero.

"We truly believe that the Port Stephens area is not only ready, but needs, an accounting firm that offers all that PKF can bring to our business community whilst continuing to remain local, loyal, and supportive of the Port Stephens area."

"Bringing PKF Port Stephens into the network here in the Hunter has been a step that we have wanted to take for a while now, and we are very pleased to have them on board," said Partner at PKF Sydney and Newcastle, Andrew Beattie.



Opportunity for jobs and housing in regionally significant Broadmeadow precinct

City of Newcastle will begin planning for the renewal of Broadmeadow as a regionally significant growth area providing new housing and job opportunities during the next 20 years alongside the proposed sporting and entertainment precinct at Hunter Park.

Broadmeadow has been identified in the NSW Government's Hunter Regional Plan 2041 as a regionally significant growth area. Its central location can support diverse and affordable housing options, and become a nationally significant sport and entertainment precinct for Greater Newcastle and the Hunter.

Council unanimously endorsed to prepare a draft Place Strategy in partnership with the Department of Planning and Environment and will now engage with multiple stakeholders including the community to seek input about their vision for the area.

Newcastle Lord Mayor Nuatali Nelmes said the Place Strategy will help set the vision, direction and guide where key infrastructure and services should be located within Broadmeadow.

"Broadmeadow's central location, existing and future public transport opportunities, Government-owned land and large industrial sites offer significant opportunity for open space and community facility improvements along with providing essential housing and the creation of jobs," Cr Nelmes said.

"City of Newcastle is working in close partnership with the NSW Government to ensure that the Department of Planning and Environment proposal to rezone land for additional housing within the precinct fits with the overall vision for this regionally significant area.

"Over the coming months, City of Newcastle will be encouraging locals who live, work and play in Broadmeadow to provide input to help shape the vision to guide future change.

"We want to better understand the precinct's unique opportunities and we'll achieve this by engaging with our local community while also utilising a range of technical studies to support planning for Broadmeadow's future to create a new and enhanced place for the community to use and enjoy for years to come."

Executive Director Planning & Environment Michelle Bisson said the Place Strategy will look holistically at the precinct.

"We will be considering infrastructure, opportunities and constraints, as well as the planning matters in order to enhance the area for both current and future residents. It will be used to guide future planning proposals and development in the area," Ms Bisson said.

Residents in and around the Broadmeadow precinct will receive a brochure with more information about the planning process and how they can get involved, including through an online survey and future information sessions.

A report will be presented to the elected Council in late 2023 to publicly exhibit the draft Broadmeadow Place Strategy for further comment.

Recycled Water project a boost for community resources

With water security identified as a community concern, one of the Lower Hunter's largest industrial consumers of drinking water has implemented a water saving initiative that will see up to 275 megalitres of drinking water saved for use in the region's network every year.

Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group (NCIG) has launched their recycled water initiative that will see the company reduce its reliance on drinking water by up to 50% each year.

NCIG's CEO Aaron Johansen said the initiative was part of the company's commitment to reducing its reliance on the water the

community needs, particularly in times of drought and water scarcity.

"We're always looking for ways to operate sustainably and reduce our environmental footprint. When the region experienced drought conditions in 2018 and 2019, we knew we needed to do more to reduce our consumption of drinking water, so we invested in an alternative water source.

"During a normal year, our recycled water initiative will reduce our reliance on drinking water by up to 275 megalitres, which is a network saving the equivalent of 110 Olympic-sized swimming pools each year, or the annual water usage of just over 1700 residential homes. This is a great outcome for the environment and the community," Mr Johansen said.

NCIG purchases the recycled water from water infrastructure company, coNEXA, whose water recycling plant takes treated wastewater from Hunter Water, and further treats it to a grade that's safe and suitable for industrial use in accordance with national guidelines. The water is then transported to NCIG via an underground pipe network.

coNEXA CEO Kurt Dahl said as part of their partnership with NCIG, their facility had undergone upgrades to meet the needs of NCIG and other recycled water customers.

"To support the project, we have upgraded our Steel River production facility capacity from nine megalitres to 10.5 megalitres per day, ensuring more recycled water is available to meet the peak demands on the hottest days of the year, when it's needed the most.

"We're really proud of the work we've delivered in partnership with NCIG. Like them, we are committed to ensuring the Hunter community have robust and diversified water supply options where the use of recycled water is maximised," Mr Dahl said.

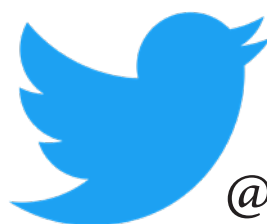
NCIG's recycled water initiative supports Hunter Water's Lower Hunter Water Security Plan, which is a whole-of-government approach to ensuring the region has a resilient and sustainable water future for the next 40 years.

"Through the development of the Lower Hunter Water Security Plan, the community told us they want a safe water supply, and to ensure we make the most of the water supplies we have. With business and industry using approximately 30% of water supplied to customers, initiatives like NCIG's recycled water project will help us deliver a more sustainable and resilient water future," Hunter Water's Executive Manager Strategy and Engagement, Mr David Derkenne said.

After 18 months of quality and safety assessments, construction and commissioning, NCIG's recycled water project is now complete and the recycled water is now utilised as part of their day-to-day operations for dust suppression, machine washdown and landscaping.

"As part of our project feasibility, we identified that the recycled water is completely safe and does not pose any harm to people or the environment. This was another essential factor in determining the project implementation," Mr Johansen said.

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Newcastle and The Hunter's Energy Evolution

Out of the Square Media and Beyond Zero Emissions have released a new independently funded series called "Newcastle and The Hunter's Energy Evolution". The video series will initially highlight ten Power Players of the clean tech industry in the Hunter, showcasing the innovation and manufacturing capabilities of the region, and demonstrating the leadership shown by this region in Australia's clean energy transition.

The series features some of the most innovative and dynamic companies in the clean energy industry, including MGA Thermal, Janus Electric, Energy Renaissance, SwitchDin, Ampcontrol, BME, 3ME Technology, Milltech Martin Bright, Port of Newcastle and University of Newcastle NIER.

These 'Power Players' are part of a growing group at the forefront of the clean energy evolution, driving change and championing a sustainable future. The series provides an insight into their inspiring stories, experience and industry knowledge. It covers a range of topics, including the latest innovations in clean energy and clean technology, the importance of manufacturing in the Hunter and Australia, the energy transition, and the skills required for the future.

"We had observed these organisations independently doing great work. But hadn't seen it put in context of how the Hunter as a whole was kicking significant goals. So we wanted to create a showcase that neatly did that, to allow others to promote and celebrate this developing asset," said Marty Adnum, Managing Director of Out of the Square Media.

"This series is a testament to these progressive and industry leading organisations, and the many more still to emerge, which along with our existing advanced manufacturing will put our region in the box seat for future growth."



Sam Mella, Beyond Zero Emissions & Marty Adnum, Out of the Square

Sam Mella, Hunter Engagement Lead from Beyond Zero Emissions, added: "This series is an excellent opportunity to showcase the Hunter region's deep expertise in energy and manufacturing. Hunter businesses are innovating and manufacturing the critical new technologies that are essential for industry, regions and households to reach zero emissions both locally and globally.

'Newcastle and The Hunter's Energy Evolution' is a celebration of the efforts and achievements of the 'Power Players' and a testament to the region's growing contribution to the clean energy industry in Australia."

Videos commenced being released weekly from 24 April 2023 at energyhunter.com.au





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Hunter ready to meet manufacturing challenge

Manufacturers from the Hunter, Central and North Coast regions are enjoying a renaissance, with global demand for products on the rise and a renewed government focus on increasing advanced manufacturing capability across the nation.

This, coupled with the NSW Government commitment to build the next set of trains in NSW, has local industry leaders asking - why not build them in the Hunter?

Recently appointed Hunter Manufacturing Awards Chair Jacqui Daley says long gone are the days of thinking of manufacturing in the region as the stereotypical reference to BHP steel making... today's manufacturing industry is diverse, technically advanced and it's building a name for itself both nationally and internationally.

"The newly elected NSW Government have committed to building new trains in NSW, and we are suggesting that they look no further than the Hunter. We have a strong pedigree in building rolling stock with Cardiff-based Downer building the high-performing Waratah Trains fleet. It has also recently been announced they will be building 65 new six-car trains for the Queensland Government."

In addition, the Australian Government is set to establish the \$15 billion National Reconstruction Fund focussed on supporting Australian innovation and industry. The fund will provide finance options for projects to help Australian industry lead the way in renewables and low emissions technologies, medical science, transport, defence and resources.

"Newcastle based energy technology company SwitchDin are building southern hemisphere's largest test lab for energy products like solar inverters, batteries and EV chargers. We have solvable auto cleaning tablets being made at Caves Beach, hydrogen battery storage at Tomago, and electric boats at Port Macquarie - manufacturers across the region are developing innovative products at a rate of knots."

"We are connected by land and sea to markets around the world and we know how to get products from the factory floor to the customer with minimum fuss."

"Collaboration is at the heart of the industry here, with many businesses - big and small - working together, sharing knowledge and resources. This is when innovation happens and it's great news for expanding our sovereign capability in manufacturing across industries - we can absolutely make things here in Australia."

"Having a supply chain that is resilient to shocks from global disruption is smart business, and the manufacturing industry - especially in the Hunter and surrounding areas - is more than up for the challenge of tackling some of these major projects -

whether it's building a fleet of trains, landing gear on a F35, turbines for an offshore wind farm or ladders to access mining vehicles."

Manufacturing spotlight

- Downer manufactured and maintain 119 Waratah trains in NSW - Australia's largest passenger fleet on Australia's largest passenger network.
- Mits Alloy manufacture high-end aluminium trays and canopies both nationally and internationally. They are based in Mayfield and are seen as the market leader globally.
- Sirron Holdings Group's rapid development of products in response to the corona virus has introduced 230+ consumable products into the market, including a solvable auto cleaning table range officially launched into Supercheap Auto this month, substantially reducing single use plastic, all from their facility in Caves Beach.
- Ampcontrol is at the forefront of developing and supplying advanced technology, products, and services to the resources, infrastructure, and energy sectors. An example includes DRIFTEX, a Battery Electric Vehicle purpose-built to support the mining industry's transition to electrification. Global distribution with their head office at Tomago.
- Newcastle-based SwitchDin have created a platform that securely communicates with and controls virtually any solar system, battery or load, delivering performance intelligence, insight and remote management capabilities.
- Hedweld manufacture jigs, joists, hoists, farm fencing and plenty more. Global distribution, with their head office at Mount Thorley.
- Resourceful Living manufacturer a range of tailor-made products from 100% plastic waste and are based in Kurri Kurri.

Hunter Manufacturing Awards will be launching their annual program this month which culminates in the awards presentation in October 2023.

HMA are a not-for-profit organisation run by a volunteer board. They have recently elected a new Chair Jacqui Daley, with previous Chair Steven Smith stepping down from the role but remaining on the board. The board includes

- Chair Jacqui Daley, The Measured Marketer
- Deputy Chair Brett Allan, Molycop
- Treasurer Andrew Gresham, BAE Systems
- Steven Smith, Emergent Group
- Graeme Vennell, HunterNet
- Frank Sammut, Central Coast Industry Connect
- Kristy Hedley, Hedweld Group
- Steph Loadsman, KPMG



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Overwhelming local support for mine continuation

Recently appointed Hunter Valley Operations' (HVO) General Manager Dave Foster has thanked community members for their feedback on its proposal to extend the life of its Upper Hunter mines. Mr Foster said the proposal to continue mining received overwhelming support during the NSW Government's public exhibition of the Environmental Impact Statement. Of the more than 1,500 submissions lodged, more than 90% were in support of the proposal.

He thanked people who took the time to attend community information sessions at Jerrys Plains and Maison Dieu as well as those people who made a submission to the Government.

"Ongoing community and stakeholder feedback over several years has shaped the design of the proposal," Mr Foster said.

"The strong show of support reflects the benefits of the proposal – continued local jobs as well as continued support to businesses, public infrastructure, community and charity organisations and community projects," he said.

HVO is responding to the submissions in a report to the NSW Department of Planning and Environment. The Government will consider this report as part of its determination process. The proposal is also being assessed by the Federal Government.

"If the proposal is approved, HVO North will continue to operate until 2050 and HVO South will continue to operate until 2045.

"There will be little change to the scale or intensity of mining and no increase to approved annual production rates. At HVO North, the development and disturbance boundaries between Mitchell and Carrington pits will extend. At HVO South, the annual extraction rate will reduce, and some areas approved for mining will remain undisturbed."



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Meanwhile, HVO's latest round of community grants is now open. Not for profit community groups in the Upper Hunter and Lower Hunter can gain funding for their community and environmental projects.

Mr Foster said the grants are open to any project that is about making a community stronger, improving the skills or lives of local people or protecting and enhancing the environment.

"As well as providing local jobs and support for local businesses, we think it is important to support local initiatives that make our community a better place for people to live and work."

Grants are awarded twice a year. Applications for this round close April 30. The last round of grants in 2022 saw eight projects share in almost \$21,000 in funding. Successful projects in that round included funding for the 300 Singleton primary students to undertake a leadership workshop. In the first round of 2022 grants there was support for the Singleton Business Awards and mental health awareness training for Jerrys Plains residents. HVO has provided more than \$350,000 in funding to 82 projects since 2018. This is in addition to its other charity partnerships, sponsorships and workplace giving programs.

In March the last two of five HVO local charity mining trucks began operation and support for Type 1 Foundation and Singleton Community Support. The trucks are painted in the colours of each charity to raise awareness of the charity and its services. HVO will make an annual donation to each charity, based on the truck's haulage, as well as provide other fundraising support throughout the year.

To find out more or apply for a grant visit www.hvo.com.au/community

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Newcastle Airport expansion takes off

Newcastle Airport is embarking on a significant expansion plan, in partnership with Commonwealth Bank, which is acting as sole financier. The \$240 million deal includes the expansion of Newcastle Airport to enhance domestic capacity and develop a new international terminal and finance to accelerate the activation of Astra Aerolab including the construction of commercial A-grade office and industrial facilities subject to current development applications.

Executive General Manager, Commonwealth Bank Regional and Agribusiness Banking, Paul Fowler, said Newcastle Airport was strategically important infrastructure and a key driver of the regional economy.

"The airport's expansion and modernisation will significantly increase its capacity and improve connectivity across Newcastle, the Hunter Valley and the Central Coast, driving new business and employment opportunities that add to the region's prosperity," Mr Fowler said.

"CBA is proud to partner with Newcastle Airport on this exciting project."

Executive Manager, Commonwealth Bank Regional and Agribusiness Banking NSW Newcastle and Hunter Valley, Paul Cragg said CBA supported the community and businesses across the Hunter region for more than 100 years.

"The Hunter population is expected to increase to around 950,000 people by 2041 with Newcastle as a centre for industry innovation," Mr Cragg said.

"Being born in and having raised my family in Newcastle, I see this as an exciting time of change for Newcastle and the Hunter Region. This is why we've expanded our business banking and customer support teams on the ground to assist the growth of diverse sectors including tourism, defence, manufacturing, health, energy, agriculture, education, property and transport. We're looking forward to helping more businesses in Newcastle and beyond take advantage of new possibilities as the economy transitions."

Newcastle Airport CFO, Allanna Ryan said the deal with CBA was a major step forward in enabling its promise to be the airport the region deserves.

"The biggest beneficiaries of the airport's upgrade will be the people of the Hunter region. We are delighted to partner with CBA on this critical development to support the growth and sustainability of our region," Ms Ryan said.

Newcastle Airport CEO, Dr Peter Cock welcomes the partnership, highlighting the benefits this expansion has for the region.

"Driving greater economic and social benefits by broadening our domestic and international destinations and contributing to Newcastle's transformation from a major regional hub into an international destination and a significant second international gateway to NSW, is key to our purpose."

"We also thank the Federal Government for investing a total of \$121 million in our region's international growth."

"Servicing Defence and defence industry participants are both vital to Australia and benefits the regional economy. Astra Aerolab has strong leasing interest and a number of buildings poised to start coming out of the ground. CBA's funding partnership will help us accelerate this activity to meet client demands."

Dr Cock said Newcastle Airport was committed to reducing its environmental footprint across the airport, with the expanded terminal building being designed and to be operated with 5-star Green Star rating accreditation, the under construction solar powered covered car park powering more than 30% of the airport and with the first Astra Aerolab commercial office building also being successful in attaining a 5-star Green Star rating accreditation.

The second busiest airport in NSW, Newcastle Airport generates around \$1.2 billion in economic activity a year and supports around 5600 jobs. It currently services 12 domestic routes with six domestic airlines, catering for around 1.3 million passengers a year.

The expansion of Newcastle Airport will facilitate the introduction of new domestic and international routes and

address capacity for forecast growth to around 2.3 million passengers a year by fiscal 2028.

Mall building demolition application to be expedited

City of Newcastle (CN) will expedite processing a soon to be lodged Development Application by Iris Capital, to enable the demolition of the buildings located in Phase 3 of its award-winning East End development.

Phase 3 is bound by Hunter, Newcomen, King and Laing Streets and includes the building which previously housed several retail outlets and a food court.

Lord Mayor Nuatali Nemes said CN is committed to the long-term revitalisation of Hunter Street and this is another step towards improving the Mall area as an attractive destination for locals and visitors.

"Delivering the long overdue transformation in the Hunter Street Mall has been a vital project for City renewal. The initial stages highlight the overall vision for the future completed revitalisation of the heritage precinct. The next stage of public domain works are planned and ready to deliver."

"Through close collaboration with NSW Police and Iris Capital we identified that we have some public safety concerns in the final stages of the heritage revitalisation, so action is progressing on the demolition of the non-heritage buildings so the site can be adequately contained," Cr Nemes said.

Iris Capital Development Manager Jamie Boswell said this site completes Iris Capital's contribution to the East End Village and the demolition is an important step towards future development.

"This site provides another opportunity for revitalisation and for Iris Capital to contribute further to the transformation of the Hunter Street Mall and along with City of Newcastle we are committed to public safety and the best outcome for the community is to progress with the demolition of the existing structure as quickly as possible," Mr Boswell said.

The DA for demolition of the buildings will be expedited following concerns about the current state of the buildings and antisocial behaviour from members of the public and local business owners.

Police are aware of reports of antisocial behaviour in and around these buildings and will continue to work collaboratively with the City of Newcastle and increase proactive police patrols in response.

CN's Executive Director Planning and Environment, Michelle Bisson, said her team will undertake the assessment as a priority to ensure all requirements are met, including heritage considerations and expect to have the application determined shortly after lodgement.

The East End Public Domain project consists of multiple phases of work with the long term vision to reinstate Hunter Street as a traditional high street and an attractive destination for locals and visitors, with outdoor dining and boutique retail opportunities.

Lord Mayor Nuatali Nemes with Police Superintendent Kylie Endemi





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Newcastle Permanent named Australia's best bank

Newcastle Permanent named the best bank in Australia in the Forbes' World's Best Banks, an annual list created based on a survey of 48,000 banking customers across 32 countries. The survey asks participants to assess banks at which they are either a past or present customer on factors such as general satisfaction, trust, digital services and customer service.

A total of 415 banks across the globe made Forbes' final rankings in 2023, with Newcastle Permanent topping the tally for Australia.

Newcastle Permanent Chief Distribution Officer, Paul Juergens, said while the accolade was a pleasant surprise, it was also well-earned.

"We have long stated that our aim at Newcastle Permanent is to provide Australia's favourite banking experience and this award shows that we are walking the talk," Mr Juergens said.

"Our customer satisfaction surveys regularly indicate our customers are highly satisfied with our services. In fact, our customers regularly give us a score of more than 90% and this award is further evidence that our customers have high trust in our people, our brand and our services.

"Newcastle Permanent has ranked in Forbes top five banks for Australia for a number of years – coming in third in 2020, second in 2021 and fourth in 2022 – but it's wonderful to see our name at the very top.

"Winning such a prestigious award, one with global recognition, is a feather in our cap of which we are immensely proud. Each day we aim to delight our customers with excellent service, to continue to earn their trust, and provide banking services they need today and will want tomorrow."

The Forbes gong is the latest in Newcastle Permanent's already impressive trophy cabinet, with the customer-owned institution claiming a trifecta of awards at the 2023 DBM Australian Financial Awards: Most Reputable Bank, Most Recommended Home Loan and Most Recommended Owner Occupier Home Loan.

Cutting-edge library museum a first for the region

A Hunter-first library museum opened in April in Lake Macquarie offers visitors a glimpse into the rich history of West Wallsend and its surrounds.

The Sugar Valley Library Museum, *kirantakamyari*, officially opened on Wednesday 12 April, five years after the idea for a state-of-the-art facility first came to light.

Museum Leader Priya Mathew Johnson said Lake Macquarie City Council had collaborated closely with the West Wallsend District Heritage Group to capture and highlight the area's compelling history.

"It has been an enormous task, but I'm so proud that we have been able to protect and present these important objects and stories," she said.

"The Sugar Valley Library Museum is a first for the Hunter Region and a landmark for our city."

As well as showcasing exhibitions, the site will harness immersive technology like virtual reality to tell stories that engage and entertain visitors.

Council worked with local historians Ed Tonks, Dr Michael Williams and Brian Anderson, professional curators and Awabakal traditional owners and elders to curate the exhibition and bring the project to life. The new facility includes interactive screens where visitors can see and hear oral histories of the area, covering everything from West Wallsend's pubs and taverns to how the suburb got its name.

Ms Mathew Johnson said the building, on the corner of Northridge Drive and Portland Road at Cameron Park, could safely store up to 7000 heritage items.

"The collection has been donated by members of the local

community, many of whom are intrinsically linked to the history of West Wallsend – either directly or through their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents," she said.

"It has been a tireless effort by many to document, photograph, catalogue and clean these important objects, but it has certainly been worth it."

West Wallsend was founded on coal mining in 1888, and at its peak had 6000 residents, four separate mines, a steam tram connecting to Wallsend, and a train line to Cockle Creek.

The facility's inaugural exhibition is titled *Westy: we built this history*, profiling the people who lived, worked and played in the shadow of Mount Sugarloaf. They include Maggie Johnston, remembered as a star of the 1890 Minmi Show for her taxidermy birds, fancy wool-work, paper flowers and needle-work. Johnston's 21 stuffed birds in the museum collection remain a resplendent reminder of that era, more than 130 years later.

Council Manager Arts, Culture and Tourism Jacqui Hemsley said Sugar Valley Library Museum also housed a contemporary community library, catering to the city's burgeoning north-west.

"We've designed it to be a versatile, multi-use space," she said.

"That includes an open-plan foyer, flexible exhibition spaces, spaces for multimedia and technology, a workshop and a retail store."

Kirantakamyari is the cultural name given to Sugar Valley Library Museum, in line with Council dual-naming cultural facilities. The word means North Creek in Awabakal language and refers to the traditional name of the Cameron Park area.

Axe throwing opens in Newcastle

MANIAX Axe Throwing opened its newest venue in Newcastle on 19 April. The first urban Axe Throwing company established in Australia, MANIAX has been operating since 2014 and specialises in hosting groups for team-building events, birthday celebrations, hens/bucks parties, date nights or get togethers for any occasion.

The custom-built destination in King Street is the eighth MANIAX location across Australia and offers a Viking-themed axe throwing experience backed by quality food and drink facilities.

The immersive atmosphere has three group lanes (two targets) and six Quick Chuck lanes (single targets), as well as a fully-licensed bar, offering viking inspired cocktails in drinking horns, craft beers, wine and non-alcoholic options. Pizzas are also cooked fresh on-site.

For a photographic memento, there is a warrior's throne, surrounded by an array of horns, shields, axes, helmets and fur-hides.

MANIAX is a member of the International Axe Throwing Federation. It has had close to 500,000 people through its doors across Australia and has seen approximately 15 million axes thrown.



COMING EVENTS.....

23 May 2023, 7:10 am - 8:45 am

nfp connect

May Breakfast – Save the Date

Venue: Soul Cafe

Cost: N/A

www.nfpconnect.com.au/event/2023-may-breakfast/

24 May 2023, 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm

HIA

Industry Trade night

Venue: Maitland Toyota

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

<https://hia.com.au/awards-and-events/events/trade-night/hunter-nsw/2023/hia-information-session-east-maitland-may30>

25 May 2023, 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm

HIA

Industry Trade night

Venue: Scone Mitre 10

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

<https://hia.com.au/awards-and-events/events/trade-night/hunter-nsw/2023/hia-information-session-scone-may25>

26 May 2023, 11 August 2023 & 27 October 2023 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Business Hunter

The Business Hunter Infrastructure series

Venue: McDonald Jones Stadium

www.businesshunter.com/hunter-business-events/our-events/business-infrastructure-lunch-series

1 June 2023 & 9 October 2023

Business Hunter

Business Hunter Innovation Series

www.businesshunter.com/hunter-business-events/our-events/business-innovation-lunch-series

6 June 2023, 9:00 am – 11:00 am

Hunter Futurepreneurs

Business Surviving and Thriving in a Micro or Small Business

Venue: Online

Cost: Free

www.hunterfuturepreneurs.com.au/surviving-and-thriving-in-a-small-and-micro-business/

6 June 2023, 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Hunter Futurepreneurs

Financial Literacy for Small and Micro Business

Venue: Online

Cost: Free

www.hunterfuturepreneurs.com.au/financial_literacy_for_small_and_micro_business/

7 June 2023, 8:00 am – 9:00 am

University of Newcastle

Integrated Innovation Network (I2N) Startup Stories

Venue: I2N Hub Honeysuckle

Cost: Free

www.eventbrite.com.au/e/startup-stories-jess-hodge-resourceful-living-tickets-556364038817?aff=ebdsoporgprofile

7 June 2023, 9:00 am – 11:00 am

Hunter Futurepreneurs

Time Management to Get Things Done

Venue: Online

Cost: Free

www.hunterfuturepreneurs.com.au/events-humanitix-com-time-management-to-get-things-done/

13 June 2023, 9:30 am – 11:30 am

Hunter Futurepreneurs

50+ Business Ideas You Can Start from Home

Venue: Online

Cost: Free

www.hunterfuturepreneurs.com.au/hunter-futurepreneurs-events-50-small-business-ideas-you-can-start-from-home/

14 June 2023, 9:30 am – 11:30 am

Hunter Futurepreneurs

How to Start a Business in 8 Easy Steps

Venue: Online

Cost: Free

www.hunterfuturepreneurs.com.au/8-steps-to-starting-a-small-business-6/

20 June 2023, 7:10 am - 8:45 am

nfp connect

June Breakfast – Save the Date

Venue: Soul Cafe

Cost: N/A

www.nfpconnect.com.au/event/2023-june-breakfast/

23 June 2023, 8 September 2023 & 23 November 2023, 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Business Hunter

The Business Hunter Energy & Resources Lunch

Venue: McDonald Jones Stadium

Cost: \$110

www.businesshunter.com/hunter-business-events/our-events/business-mining-lunch-series

1 July 2023

Business Singleton

Singleton Business Awards

Nominations Closed 27 March

www.businesssingleton.com.au/singleton-business-awards

2 August 2023, 8:00 am – 9:00 am

University of Newcastle

Integrated Innovation Network (I2N) Startup Stories

Venue: I2N Hub Honeysuckle

Cost: Free

www.eventbrite.com.au/e/startup-stories-mika-koelma-hey-zomi-tickets-536469463607?aff=ebdsoporgprofile

3 August 2023, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm

HIA

Business Admin Workshop

Venue: HIA Hunter Office

Cost: Members \$110, Non Members \$220

<https://hia.com.au/awards-and-events/events/workshop/hunter-nsw/2023/workshop-mayfield-west-aug03>

25 August 2023, 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Business Hunter

2023 Business Hunter Awards

Venue: NEX

Cost: N/A

<https://www.businesshunter.com/hunter-business-events/business-hunter-awards>

20 October 2023

HMA, Inc

2023 Hunter Manufacturing Awards

(applications close 18 August)

Venue: NEX

www.hma.org.au

ARE YOU ORGANISING A COMING BUSINESS EVENT?

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Time to lift the handbrake on building industry

The latest National Housing Finance Investment Corporation (NHFIC) State of the Nation's Housing 2022-23 report confirms builders' concerns about achieving Australia's housing needs.

Master Builders Australia CEO Denita Wawn said the report is more evidence that we are falling well short of the 200,000 homes needed each year to keep up with demand and address housing affordability challenges.

"Rising interest rates and declining sales for new home construction is weakening the pipeline of new housing, which is compounded by a stronger than anticipated recovery in migration.

"There is fragility and volatility in the industry at the moment that has been a consequence of businesses working predominantly with fixed price contracts that were set pre-covid.

"The industry has been relatively resilient over the last decade. Some of the insolvency data we are seeing coming through is a reflection of the challenges over the last 18 months, and we hope the worst is behind us.

"But we are alert to the combination of rising inflation and interest rates, labour shortages and unnecessary government hurdles which are making it difficult for builders.

"A strong building industry is the foundation of a strong economy. The inextricable ties between construction activity and the broader health of the economy are again on display in the current environment.

"To achieve better housing affordability and keep up with demand, changes need to be made to the way we do things, now and over the long term.

"The government needs to take the necessary steps to ensure interest rates do not need to rise any further and take some of the heavy lifting of our correction off mortgage holders and business owners. From here, there are no easy choices.

"There needs to be a conversation around fixed-price contracts and appropriate risk-sharing between banks, developers and builders," said Ms Wawn.

Master Builders' "Delivering the housing needs for all Australians" recommends policies around housing supply, workforce, supply chain risk and cost pressures, simplifying regulatory settings that support investment in housing and business productivity.

"Governments must lift the handbrake on the building and construction industry by bringing down the cost of doing business.

"We need around half a million new entrants into our industry by 2026 to ensure homes get built, and the broader construction ecosystem of infrastructure and commercial premises can be delivered.

"Governments need to look at what impact their regulations and policies have on the cost of building homes and on the cost of building social infrastructure; that includes industrial relations laws, the cost of planning and the need for more titled land.

"The Housing Accord is the start of this national coordination, but we can't wait until 2024; action by states is needed now.

"There is no silver bullet; this will take a concerted effort by all levels of government working in collaboration with industry," said Ms Wawn.

Tax reform needed to address housing affordability

"One of the main contributors to the cost housing is the significant tax added to build a house. The Federal Budget is an opportunity to reform the way home building is taxed to increase the supply of new housing and improve affordability," said Jocelyn Martin, HIA Deputy Managing Director – Policy and Industry.

"Taxing housing only contributes to less houses being built causing rentals to increase and home ownership to decline."

In 2019, the Centre for International Economics (CIE) released a research report Taxation on the Housing Sector which identified the costs associated with bringing land and housing to market and provided a breakdown of these costs as either resource costs, regulatory costs (red tape), statutory taxes (federal, state and local) or excessive charges.

The research showed that the combined costs of the statutory taxes, regulatory costs and excessive charges equate to 50 per cent of the cost of a new house and land package. The situation since 2019 has only worsened.

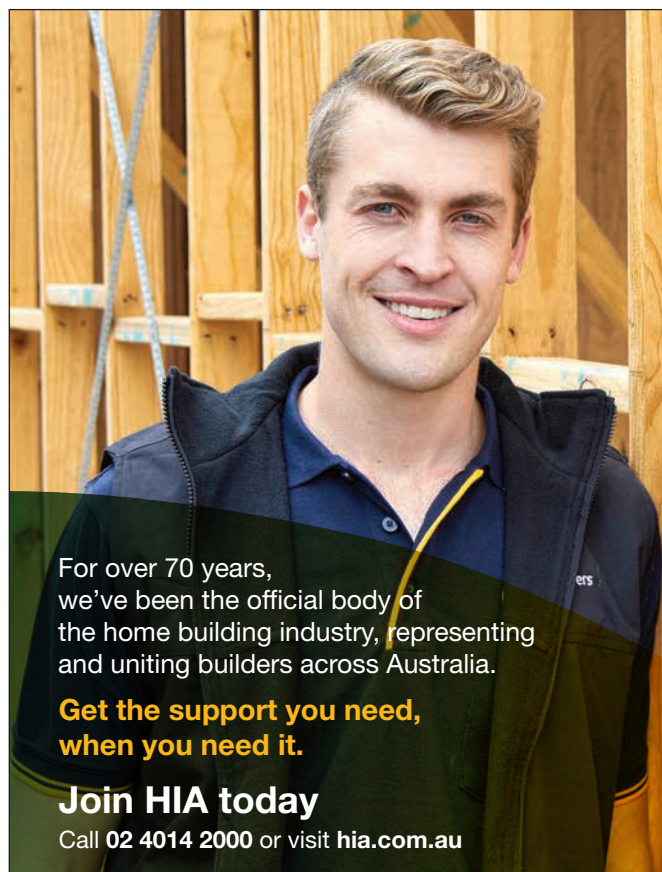
"While many of the taxes are applied by local and state governments, there are a range of federal financial relations mechanisms that could be used to leverage reforms that directly impact the price of new housing.

"The tax that has a direct impact on home ownership is stamp duty. The often large one-off tax is a major barrier to first home buyers getting into a new home. The added cost of stamp duty often means the difference of being able to buy or not.

"The Government needs to lead the way via National Cabinet and encourage the states and territories to universally drop stamp duty and replace it with another more equitable and affordable tax.

"There are also many examples of cascading taxes where a tax paid at one point in the process of bringing a new home to market forms part of the taxable value at a subsequent stage of development further eroding affordability.

"With the Federal Budget just around the corner, HIA believes the opportunity needs to be now for the Federal Government to enter into frank discussions with the states and territories around tax reforms for home building. Addressing the way the industry and home buyers are taxed is key to bringing the problem of housing affordability under control," concluded Ms Martin.



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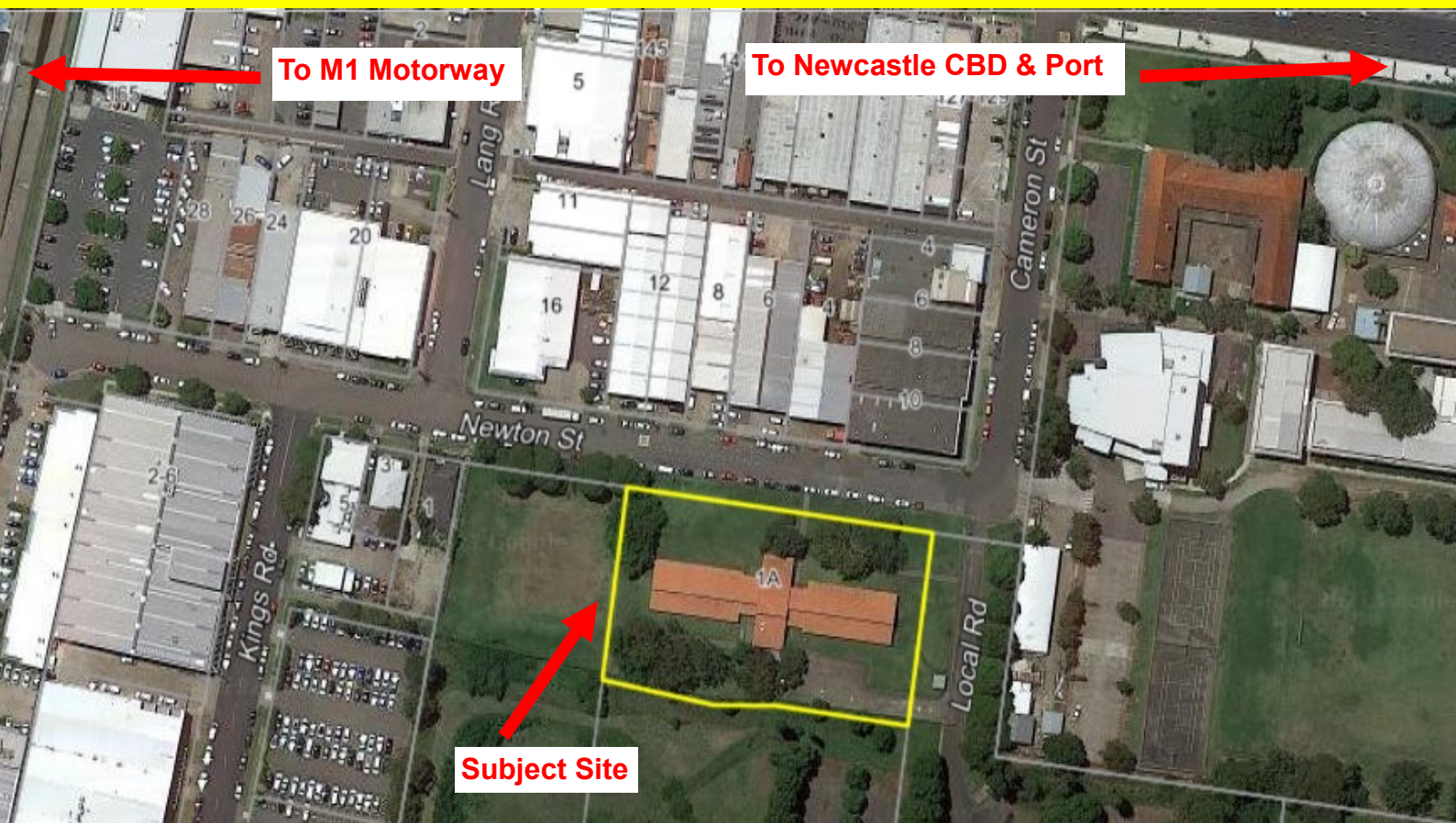


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PKF

PKF Newcastle has promoted **Luke Storey** to Principal in the Newcastle Business Advisory team. Luke is a graduate of the firm's Dare to Aspire program. The leadership program involves a comprehensive outlook on the leadership track of all participants with opportunities to hear from external experts on the areas of growth, effectiveness, communication, and collaboration. Participants are pushed outside their comfort zones to accomplish both career and personal-based goals.



ALLIANCE LABOUR SOLUTIONS

Hayley Mills has commenced as Recruitment Manager Alliance Labour Solutions. Hayley has extensive high-level administration, coordination and sales background. She had previously worked with Alliance at Port Waratah Coal Services on a project basis and has now come back to Alliance in a full time capacity overseeing the Engagement and Allocation of our labour assets nationally. Hayley has hit the ground running coordinating government contracts and overseeing local smelter and port allocations.



HIA HUNTER

Greg Doodson of Suncoast Bathroom Renovations & Building has been elected the President of the Housing Industry Association (HIA) Hunter Region. A Hunter-based builder and TAFE NSW teacher with over 30 years' experience Greg has become the HIA Hunter's seventh Regional President.



COAL SERVICES

Coal Services has appointed **Lachlan Grant** to the role of State Operations Manager of NSW Mines Rescue. Lachlan started in the industry as a Graduate Mining Engineer with Xstrata Coal. He joined Coal Services in 2018 where his previous roles with Mines Rescue included Business Development Manager and Training Coordinator.



ALLIANCE LABOUR SOLUTIONS

Georgia Schiemer is now Inductions and Onboarding Officer at Alliance Labour Solutions. Georgia originally joined Alliance to assist with administration however quickly moved into the Inductions/Onboarding team and is excelling learning the ropes of this division that supports clients nationally to make their internal labour site ready. Georgia's communication and organisational skills are becoming a huge asset to this division and assisting with the expedited scale of this operation that is very in demand.



COAL SERVICES

Alister Wylie is the new General Manager of NSW Mines Rescue and Regulation & Compliance. This follows the recent appointment of his predecessor, Wayne Green, to the role of Chief Operating Officer. Alister commenced his career at Metropolitan mine in 2005 and joined Coal Services in 2019 as the State Operations Manager for NSW Mines Rescue. Alister was also a Mines Rescue brigade member for more than 11 years and captained the Metropolitan rescue team from 2014 for five years.



TSA

TSA has announced **Glenn Thornton** as their new GM, Northern NSW. His appointment strengthens TSA's commitment to the region. Glenn previously worked at the Port of Newcastle and has decades of experience running projects and organisations in the Hunter and across NSW. His experience includes transport, energy, water and environment.



4TEL

4Tel has appointed **Tony Crosby** its new CEO. Tony has been an integral part of 4Tel's growth since joining in 2013 as the General Manager of Services. He has been responsible for the company's customer support contracts and ongoing local and international business development. Tony has extensive industry experience, having worked within the rail industry since 2000 and recognised by Engineers Australia as a Chartered Professional Engineer.



ALLIANCE LABOUR SOLUTIONS

Dipanshi Sharma has been appointed as Inductions and Onboarding Officer at Alliance Labour Solutions. Dipanshi is currently studying a Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Law at the University of Newcastle (Honours) and has joined the expanding Inductions/Onboarding team. Dipanshi has joined our team at a very busy time for Alliance and has provided enormous assistance to this team with the support required for its current growth phase.



TSA

Kathleen Hogan has joined TSA Hunter office as Senior Associate. Kathleen brings over 16 years' experience in providing commercial, transaction, cost management and strategic advisory services on large-scale and complex infrastructure projects to TSA's Hunter office. Prior to joining TSA, Kathleen was on the Sydney Gateway Project, managing Design and Construct contracts with combined value of \$1.5 billion.

Is your brand loveable?

Kara Sullivan
Guts Creative

The marketing holy grail is building a brand your customers love so much they sell it for you. So how do you build a brand that drives your business forward?

What is brand?

Marketers love a buzzword, so let's avoid the jargon and start with the basics. Your brand is more than your logo. In fact, it's an iceberg. It's made up of both the visible parts (logo, colours, name, website, advertising) and the invisible parts below the surface (vision, purpose, reputation, positioning). **See Figure 1.**



Figure 1: Brand Iceberg

Think of marketing as a first date. If you just focus on the surface level stuff, you'll struggle to build a lasting connection with your customer. By building the intangible parts of your brand, you're making your brand more human. It's about what's on the inside; shared beliefs, values, personality, this is what makes your brand loveable.

Why care about brand?

Without a strong brand, your product becomes a commodity, competing on functional attributes alone like price. The most successful brands go so much further than features and benefits. If you can nail both the visible and invisible parts of your brand, you will build a competitive edge impossible for the rest of your market to imitate.

The world's most valuable brand

Think of Apple, the world's #1 most valuable brand for the tenth year in a row. The Apple brand is worth \$482 billion US dollars. How? Firstly, innovation, design, and customer experience are at the heart of why Apple is so successful, it's all these intangible things that make people Apple obsessed. Secondly, Apple's brand consistency across every touchpoint is second to none.

Apple's products deliver on quality and performance. But it's so much more than that. By focussing on the intangible parts like brand, purpose, and ethos, when you buy Apple, you're buying more than a product. This investment in their brand has allowed Apple to defy category conventions, and create innovations

beyond just computers including the iPhone, and apple watch, dramatically increasing their market share and global revenue.

Where to start? Listen first.

We don't all have Apples marketing budget, but you can strengthen connections and attract new customers by listening first. Customer insights may already be under your nose.

Feedback forms, google reviews, online forums, Google trends. Glean insights from your existing feedback loops and go from data to insight by asking why. Further research via focus groups,

online surveys and internal workshops will give you a crystal-clear understanding of the problem you can solve for your customers and also gain buy-in for your new strategic direction. But you must ask the right questions.

Landing that second date

Next is brand strategy. Purpose and vision should be your top priority to build a brand that means something inside and out.

For purpose, think about what you believe, why you started, why you exist. It's about standing for something. And vision. Where are you

going? Rally your troops with a long-term, ambitious, hell-yeah goal.

Walk the talk

The most important bit. You must practice what you preach or don't bother. If your purpose is about making a positive difference in the world, you need to live it. And for companies who previously sat on the sidelines, Gen Z is coming for you. In a transparent world, your silence now speaks volumes. But pick your battles, you don't need an opinion on everything. Be authentic and choose issues relevant to your staff and customers. Just do something.

For organisations looking to grow, your brand can be your most powerful weapon in business. The key is to build a brand that means something and then live it. By going beyond functional and building a lasting emotional connection with your customers, you also grow advocacy, loyalty, brand equity and market share. And if you don't know where to start, trust your gut.

For help building a loveable brand contact Kara Sullivan at kara@gutscreative.com.au or www.gutscreative.com.au



Kara Sullivan is the owner of Guts Creative, a branding consultancy that exists to change the world. Kara has over 20 years experience specialising in marketing and brand strategy. She loves building brands that help the Hunter region go global.

Top tips to get out of your business early!

Marty Adnum
Out of the Square Media

After being tied to Out of the Square for over 25 years the following are my top tips for getting out of your business early, based on my 'mistakes'.

Systems - Some would say this is the backbone of a good business. Ha! If you have Lotus 1-2-3, Corel Draw and Microsoft XP stick with it. So called 'modernising' is simply another fad like Facebook, LinkedIn, and the internet itself. Researching and staying on top of innovations is frankly time that could be better spent on Netflix...as if online video will take off.

Employees - Don't get me started! You have no doubt read stuff about health bonuses, team outings, flexible workplace arrangements, anniversary days off, office pizza lunches, Friday sundowners and on it goes. We are doing all of this and more. As a result, we are stuck with a multitude of long-term employees. Learn from my mistakes if you wish to get out of business early. One phrase comes to mind... 'treat em' mean, keep em' keen'.

Clients - Hit them up for maximum dollars from the outset. The first big kill is the best kill. Otherwise, you will be stuck with them for 10, 15 and 20 plus years, as we are with some of our clients. Don't get involved in or try to understand their business, purely do as they ask. Worry not if you lose one or two, there's plenty more out there.

Leadership - Never admit mistakes. It is a weakness that will be turned against you. As a leader it is your job to appear bullet proof and faultless. Don't mix with 'staff'. At the end of the day, you are more important and worthy than them. Keep them on the outside and fearful of your next move.

Marketing - If your business is doing well, don't bother. If you have enquiries and customers coming to you now, they will always come to you so why spend money keeping your name out there. If you have been convinced by someone to do it then consult family and friends. There's bound to be a friend's cousin's brother-in-law who can pull a detailed marketing plan together, design a logo and knock up an engaging video for you.

Values - blah,blah... this is all hippy stuff. Workplaces don't need something that they spend time developing together and then spend even more time referring to in order to align their approach to achieve some kind of harmony and mutual success. Everyone needs a job so they will just go with whatever you dictate. It's not their business so why should they have buy in.

Purpose - this is a bit like values. There really isn't anything tangible to show for it. Investing time establishing some big 'purpose' or 'goal' to work towards as a team and maybe never achieve can be demoralising. People only care about money. Surely the only purpose you and your staff need is to make that money.

Recruitment - Only pick superstars regardless of their attitude and approach. Your other team members should just adapt accordingly, despite how long they have been with you and whatever past successes they achieved. Workplace 'culture', as they call it, can only be improved by someone that is willing to put the 'I' in team.

Advisors - This stuff is just a necessary evil so simply pick the bare minimum, low-cost operator in each field. Whether it's finance, legal, HR, recruitment etc, who needs the best when there's cheaper options? Gumtree might be a good source of such professionals.

Giving back - Don't! It's your money. You earned it. If others have less means than you, that's not your problem. Assisting others only leads to them wanting more. And at the end of the day, you're just one business, that's hardly going to make a difference. Is it?

I have failed at all of the above which is why I am still stuck with Out of the Square 25 years later and there's still no sign of it closing.

So, ignore this advice at your own peril, in fact doing the very opposite in each case will most likely mean you will still be surrounded by team members and clients and still in business 25 plus years later. Who wants that?

For further information contact Out of the Square Media on (02) 4929 6640, email ideas@outofthesquare.com or visit <https://outofthesquare.com/>

Marty Adnum is the Founder and Managing Director of Out of the Square Media. Out of the Square is leading Newcastle based full-service Agency celebrating 25 years in business. They have proudly received two Hunter Business Contribution the Region Awards in 2019 and 2022 and Newcastle Business Club Organisation of the Year in 2018. Marty Adnum has received Hunter Business President's Award in 2021 and Newcastle Business Club Individual of the Year Award in 2020



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How to plan your marketing budget for the new financial year

Poppy Seed Media

Costs are rising and revenue is falling. With the new financial year around the corner, you are not alone in searching for ways to save (and make) money.

The temptation to cut back on your marketing spend will be great. But slashing your marketing budget isn't always the best option for your business. Especially when times are tough and it's already difficult to get in front of your ideal audience.

Instead of automatically reducing your marketing investment, it makes more sense to review what you're doing to identify what's working and what's not. To do that, you need to take a deep dive to ensure you're getting the most bang for your buck - here's how.

1. Review your current marketing budget

Where did you spend your marketing investment this year? (see <https://poppyseedmedia.com.au/services/management>) If you didn't get the results you wanted, it's time to try something new. If you did get some return on your investment, can you pinpoint what you did right? Understanding your ROI, knowing which channels worked for you and identifying where your budget went is key when planning for the new year.

2. Assess your financial position

Get the jump on tax time by examining your current financial position to see how much you can spend on marketing. Set aside a percentage of revenue for marketing, ideally between 5% (B2B) and 10% (B2C). This is also a good time to explore your eligibility for business grants and funding to boost your potential marketing



budget for the new financial year. (See <https://business.gov.au/grants-and-programs>)

3. Understand your business goals

Revisiting your business goals is vital to marketing and budgeting. (See <https://business.gov.au/planning/business-plans/set-goals-for-your-business>). When you have clear goals, it's easier to measure progress and focus on the right strategies. Have things changed for your business over the last year? Do you need to rethink your marketing plan? Aligning your marketing efforts with your business goals is fundamental to marketing success.

4. Refine your marketing strategy

Your marketing strategy should align with your business goals and guide your marketing budget and efforts for the new financial year. (See <https://poppyseedmedia.com.au/services/strategy>). Do you want to create awareness? Are you hoping to build consideration? Or do you plan on increasing conversions? Your strategy should clearly set out what you want to achieve and how you will measure it.

5. Create your new marketing plan

Drawing on all four of the earlier points, your marketing plan sets out how you'll market your business in the new financial year. This is where you'll decide on the channels and platforms to target, the types of marketing you'll use and where you'll allocate your budget. (See <https://poppyseedmedia.com.au/services/digital>). Remember, your marketing plan and budget should align with your overall goals and strategy.

When it comes to planning out your marketing budget, you can't afford to skimp over the details. Spending time firming up your business and marketing fundamentals before the new financial year is the best way to maximise your marketing investment and see you through economic uncertainty.

How to maximise your marketing budget

If you're struggling to get the most from your marketing investment, it might be time to partner with a marketing expert. With so many approaches to choose from, it's a relief to be guided by someone who knows the ins and outs of marketing and can guide you through it.

Poppy Seed Media specialises in a range of digital services, including paid advertising, organic marketing and social media. For further information contact Poppy Seed Media on 0421 870 159 or to schedule a complimentary 30-minute discovery session visit <https://calendly.com/poppyseedmedia/discovery>

The Poppy Seed Media logo features a stylized green leaf above the text 'POPPY SEED Media'. Below the logo is a group photo of five people (three women and two men) standing outdoors in front of a city skyline. The text 'every business has the right to incredible marketing.' is overlaid on the image.

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every business has the right to incredible marketing.

Poppy Seed Media specialises in a range of digital marketing services, including paid advertising, organic marketing, content production and social media. Take the stress off by talking to us about your marketing planning and budgeting needs for the new year - [we're here to help!](#)

W: poppyseedmedia.com.au **E:** info@poppyseedmedia.com.au

EVENTS WITHOUT STRESS. CREATIVE AGENCY EXPANDS TO ADD EVENT MANAGEMENT TO THEIR OFFERING.

Events, functions, festivals, award ceremonies and business milestones. These are all great ways to engage with your current customers and attract new ones.

However, running a business often means you're strapped for time and the capacity for organising an event is simply not there. That's why **Kis Creative**, a full-service creative agency, located in the Hunter Valley, have recently expanded their business, growing their team and adding event management to their suite of services.

Pairing years of event industry experience with marketing expertise – websites, graphic design, social media management and merchandise coordination – means that all components of the event process are managed on time, on budget and with the targeted audience in mind. Saving **Kis** clients' money and stress.

The team at **Kis Creative** have over 100 years of combined event management experience - from intimate weddings, book launches, concerts, degustation dinners to public festivals attracting 1,000's of visitors.

For more information on event design and delivery, including but not limited to logistics and risk management, volunteer co-ordination and integrated marketing campaigns contact Lisa Fraser on (02) 4934 4556 and to learn more about **Kis Creative** visit their website kiscreative.com.au.

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SMALL BUSINESS, BIG TECH: FIVE TECH TIPS TO BOOST BUSINESS SUCCESS

Tony Heitmeyer
CIBIS International

If you want your business to thrive you need digital tools that will allow you to leverage your data and modernise your business operations.

Here are five tips to help you tap into the power of business technology:

1. Bite off a Bite-Sized Digital Transformation you can Handle (Then another.)

If you're not happy with your accounting software, that's a good place to start. It's worth considering a solution that can do more than accounting, to support future growth.

Next, seek a solution that lets you leverage data across business operations to achieve a quick win. For example data from, accounting, stock, orders and accounts payable can be combined with website activity, payroll and customer profiles to reveal new insights and track expenditures.

A cloud-based solution is a great way to scale if the pricing and features match your needs.

Once you experience a win and establish it as a repeatable process, identify the next opportunity to add value through digitisation.



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2. Find technology designed for SMEs.

Consider cost, ease of use, and scalability.

Here is a common scenario:

Successful SMEs often outgrow basic accounting software and require more features and capabilities. They want to find an easy way to access, manage and leverage more of their business data, streamline processes, find cost efficiencies and make more strategic decisions. Immediate research might point towards an enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution, but these can be too complex and costly for a small business.

Instead, it is possible to piece together a set of tools, software and services to meet increasing technology requirements.

However, it may be more prudent to find a scaled down, cloud-based 'mini-ERP' solution that is specifically designed for SMEs. Look for a platform that combines the management of various aspects of your business – such as payroll, customer relationship management, inventory management, sales, pricing, e-commerce, customer retention (e.g. loyalty programs) and more. This is especially convenient if you're not keen to onboard a handful of digital tools you then must integrate.

3. Invest in cybersecurity

Cyberattacks on some of Australia's largest companies have been in the news of late, but global trends indicate SMEs are also at risk.

In 2022, the Australian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC) revealed that the average cost per cybercrime report is between \$39,000 AUD and \$88,000 for SMEs.

Your technology investment must include cybersecurity measures.

4. Keep up-to-date with technology trends

Tread technology company blogs and business and technology publications. Attend industry events. Join relevant online communities.

5. Engage your employees

Selecting easy to use tools will help encourage your employees to embrace new technologies. Ask your team what's been working and what hasn't to inform new processes. Maximise your return on investment by ensuring staff receive training and support.

Source business technology that suits your business size, needs and budget, and implement it with specific outcomes in mind for measurable business improvements.

**For more information contact Tony by emailing
tony@cibis.com.au.**



Tony Heitmeyer is the Managing Director of CIBIS International, an Australian business software solutions and digital platforms developer and integrator servicing clients across the country and internationally in sectors such as corporate, higher education government, retail, services and more. CIBIS launched Xpect to offer Australian SMEs a contemporary, affordable, cloud-based 'mini-ERP' solution designed for their needs.

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CONTENT AI – THE UPS AND DOWNS IN BUSINESS

Brendan Brooks
Hyperweb

We are currently at a WOW moment that transforms how businesses can use technology - Content AI, or more broadly AI in general as is applied to content generation, image generation, and the forthcoming music and video generation.

I am using the term Content AI to encompass the many software that generates many forms of content based on text inputs. Examples of its potential use include blog posts, social media content, email content, position descriptions, book chapters, and fiction, the sky is the limit. I have been tinkering with an application called Jasper for almost a year and have more recently been able to compare it against ChatGPT, an application that uses artificial intelligence and natural language processing techniques to understand and generate human-like responses to text-based inputs. If you have had a “play” with it, which is what the first interaction feels like, you will have likely had your mind blown. You will also find yourself assessing its upsides and downsides.

After nearly twelve months of experimenting, I have a conflicted view. It has amazing benefits straight out of the box, and the potential is incredible. However, I am worried about the effect it will have on the professional development of anyone working in an industry where the ability to write creatively or technically is a skill to be honed and developed into one's own strength.

Content AI can dramatically reduce the amount of time it takes to create content. However at what cost? The best analogy I can think of is letting a professional swimmer compete wearing flippers. They might get there faster but have they improved their skills and technique? Content AI used in haste and for expediency, or to cover for individual shortcomings, poses the risk that budding content creators become at best pilots that drive the creation of content, or at worst, button pushers and copy and pasters.

Whilst ChatGPT is now the most widely known and has brought Content AI into the mainstream, the technology has been around for a few years. I have been experimenting with Jasper for almost 12 months, with more recent comparisons and testing against ChatGPT. Jasper uses the same GPT-3 engine as ChatGPT, but the interface is structured toward content writers specifically. It has pre-built generators for the different types of marketing content and has inputs for tone of voice and SEO keywords. All of these are available in ChatGPT except you need to include these in your prompt. ChatGPT has many other uses (although Jasper now has a chat interface) including general information gathering, it can even write a happy country song including chord progression, and generate useful code for website development!

The downsides first

Content AI struggles with current events, and it warns that there may not be enough in the tank for anything occurring after 2021. Secondly, because it effectively aggregates tone of voice it is hard for it to localise a tone of voice, e.g. how the world talks about wine is not how Hunter Region winemakers talk about wine. There are also inevitable factual errors and lapses in cultural sensitivities.

There is the risk of duplicate content and SEO penalties. There are already rumblings that the Google Algorithm will be able to detect AI-generated content on websites and penalise for it. This will come at the risk of human-generated content being penalised. In my opinion, ChatGPT poses the biggest risk Google has ever faced, which is why it has released its own version called Bard. Microsoft has invested heavily in ChatGPT integrating it with Bing and its office products. Regarding duplicate content, which can earn an SEO penalty, using AI-generated content could result in your content being largely identical to pre-existing content.

Google already penalises content written for search engines. However, if you can pilot your AI-generated content towards content that is helpful, it will not be an issue. Your content must demonstrate E-A-T (experience/expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness). The danger with Content AI is that the outputs may deviate from that framework. Rigorous scrutiny and editing must be applied to it prior to publishing.

Risk of copyright infringement exists because AI generates content from a massive bank of existing content. There is also a reputation risk if AI content is used in your marketing content and contains factual errors and misleading information.

There is also a wider issue. Because the engines use billions of documents produced the world over, how much of that was originally produced by the western world? And how much of that by white Anglo-Saxon males? What is the potential long-term impact on other cultural and minority voices and tones of voice?

What are the benefits?

The biggest benefit is these tools save A LOT of time. It probably takes me around 2 hours to research, write, edit, and publish a blog post. With the experiments so far, I can generate a reasonable blog post on a basic topic in around 15 to 20 minutes.

Another benefit is that it can help with writer's block. Don't know what to write about? Ask the AI to come up with 10 blog post ideas for your particular service or product category. Once you choose a topic, you can ask it to start a post in a helpful tone of voice aimed at your target market and you are away.

Jasper in particular can create an entire campaign using the AIDA (attention, interest, desire, action) framework for content promoting a particular product or service that can be then rolled out over a campaign period. It isn't great, but it saves time and beats writer's block or idea stagnation.

A less positive benefit is that it lowers the barrier to entry for non-writers to be able to create content. It can offer small businesses without the resources to hire marketing agencies the ability to generate content to help with their marketing.

I have seen a post on LinkedIn from a Content and Social Media professional that you should think of Content AI tools as your intern. I don't mind that analogy, though the author has a self-interest. It can get things started and do a bunch of the grunt work and it learns and only gets better as it goes. The downside is that the operator doesn't necessarily gain a lot of experience or skill development from it other than fine-tuning prompts.

How to manage it?

The danger with AI-generated content is that it can lack the uniqueness and the perspective and tone of the author and business. It is important to ensure that AI content has credibility and is of acceptable quality and follows Google's helpful content guidelines. Perhaps it is a role of a marketing professional to apply quality control guidelines backed by brand guidelines including tone of voice. It must include humans in the content production process, and you can't rely solely on AI to generate content. Lastly, it goes without saying that fact-checking is essential.

I believe every business should put a policy in place regarding the use of AI for producing content and images. This would be in terms of having staff declare when content is AI generated and to include in the quality assurance process the checking of facts, accuracy, and corporate and regional tone of voice prior to publication.

I should point out that like all technologies before it, there are risks that come with efficiencies but there are also huge benefits. My fears of how it will impact certain professions are realities that have been faced and dealt with in the past. I should also point out that this post was written without the use of Content AI. You can probably tell as it sounds a bit like I am an old man yelling at The Cloud.

For further information contact Brendan on (02) 4040 5817, email info@hyperweb.com.au or visit www.hyperweb.com.au

AUSTRALIANS THE MOST LIKELY TO PAY OUT A RANSOMWARE

Nathan Franks

Dynamic Business Technologies

Australian enterprises have shockingly become the most likely entities to capitulate to ransomware demands globally. The surging wave of ransomware attacks has swelled by an alarming 60 percent over the past year, inflicting an estimated \$1 billion blow to the Australian economy. This startling trend underscores the urgent need for businesses to reframe their approach to cybersecurity, focusing on implementing a robust cyber security strategy.

The conventional wisdom of paying the ransom attack - even although generally considered the last option - should be reconsidered. The seemingly pragmatic solution does not only embolden the attackers but also offers no real assurance of the recovery of compromised assets or data integrity.

In this context, the question arises - why are Australian entities so prone to resorting to these payouts? The answer, for the most part, lies in their propensity to view cybersecurity as a cost-centred issue, a perspective that must evolve. Research by Deloitte and others underscores the importance of factoring in behavioural outcomes into cybersecurity strategies. It's a shift from predominantly focusing on risk mitigation to considering the broader spectrum of addressing human error vulnerabilities and managing incidents in real-time.

In the present cybersecurity environment, Australian businesses often resort to monetary and IT solutions for damage control post a ransomware attack. This approach, in line with their existing culture and procedures, makes the option of paying a ransom appear more appealing, albeit misguided.

The implications of such payouts are multifaceted and concerning. It incentivises and perpetuates similar attacks, with no surety of the attackers honouring their end of the deal. A chilling 80% of organisations that succumb to ransom payouts

experience a second strike, nearly half of which are believed to be orchestrated by the same cybercriminals.

Dynamic Business Technologies advocates a proactive approach to cybersecurity. The first step is to instil a cybersecurity-conscious culture within the organisation. Regular staff training on cyber threats, like phishing and other potential attack vectors, can substantially minimise the human risk factor. Additionally, conducting routine phish threat testing can help identify potential vulnerabilities and address them promptly.

It's critical to follow a structured cybersecurity framework such as the Essential 8, which outlines key strategies to safeguard businesses against ransomware attacks. This includes creating regular data backups and preparing redundant work systems as a safety net in case of an attack.

Establishing robust incident response procedures is also pivotal. Instead of scrambling to find a solution during an attack, businesses should clearly define roles, responsibilities, and processes in advance. This proactive approach not only streamlines the response but also bolsters the confidence of stakeholders in the company's readiness to tackle such situations.

Despite the overwhelming challenges posed by ransomware attacks, it's possible to reduce the risk through strategic preparation. Paying a ransom should only be considered as an absolute last resort, and ideally, in consultation with security professionals.

The increasing frequency of ransomware attacks is a clear sign of the pressing need for businesses to reassess their cybersecurity strategies. As the Federal Government deliberates a ransomware attack disclosure bill, it's high time for organisations to review their cyber preparedness.

If you're unsure about your next steps in cybersecurity, turn to Dynamic Business Technologies on 1300 799 094 for guidance and resources.



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A jockey is about to enter a steeplechase race on a new horse. The horse's trainer meets him before the race and says, "All you have to remember with this horse is that every time you approach a jump, you have to shout, 'ALLLEEE OOOOP!' really loudly in the horse's ear. Providing you do that, you'll be fine."

The jockey thinks the trainer is mad but promises to shout the command. The race begins and they approach the first hurdle. The jockey ignores the trainer's ridiculous advice and the horse crashes straight through the center of the jump.

They carry on and approach the second hurdle. The jockey, somewhat embarrassed, whispers "Aleeee ooop" in the horse's ear. The same thing happens - the horse crashes straight through the center of the jump.

At the third hurdle, the jockey thinks, "It's no good, I'll have to do it," and yells, "ALLLEEE OOOOP!" really loudly.

Sure enough, the horse sails over the jump with no problems. This continues for the rest of the race, but due to the earlier problems the horse only finishes third.

The trainer is fuming and asks the jockey what went wrong.

The jockey replies, "Nothing is wrong with me - it's this bloody horse. What is he - deaf or something?"

The trainer replies, "Deaf? Deaf?! He's not deaf. He's blind!"

I just graduated with a degree in Egyptology.

So now I am qualified to teach more students Egyptology. I'm beginning to think this is some sort of pyramid scheme.

A woman and man get into a car accident. Both of their cars are totally demolished, but amazingly neither of them are hurt.

After they crawl out of the wreckage, the woman says, "Wow, look at our cars - there's nothing left! Thank God we are all right. This must be a sign from Him that we should be friends and not try to pin the blame on each other."

The man replies, "Oh yes, I agree with you completely."

The woman points to a bottle on the ground and says, "And here's another miracle. Somehow this bottle of scotch from my back seat didn't break. Surely God wants us to drink this scotch and celebrate our good fortune."

Then she hands the bottle to the man. The man nods his head in agreement, opens it, and drinks about a third of the bottle to calm his nerves. He then hands it back to the woman. The woman takes the bottle, immediately puts the cap back on, and hands it back to the man.

The man asks, "Aren't you having any?"

The woman replies, "No. I think I'll just wait for the police... I'll let them decide who's fault it is."

A blind old lady gets on a bus. All the seats are taken. An old man sees how nobody is willing to give up their seat for her. After a bit of hesitation, he gets up, takes her by the hand, and brings her to his seat. As she sits, he looks at the crowd and scowls as the bus leaves the stop.


Later, the old man comes home with bruises all over his face, crying. His wife comes up and asks "What happened?"

To which he replies "I lost my job as a bus driver"

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Your brand is what people say about you when you're not in the room."

- Jeff Bezos



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